either in the current year or in a previous year's OTL (opportunity to learn). Results show that, generally speaking, the task topics used in the study were assigned at some point in the students' schooling. However, student perceptions in this respect did not correspond completely with those of their teachers. Moreover, when teachers compared student-reported OTL to the mean achievement scores on these tasks the correlation in more than half of the countries was low. Based on the achievement scores, students in most countries found the narrative task the easiest and the reflective task the most difficult, an outcome that had been hypothesized. However, Hungarian and Dutch students found the narrative task to be difficult while the Chilean and Finnish students found the reflective task to be relatively easy.

Another analysis of the IEA writing study data confirmed earlier findings within the U.S. that girls outperform boys in written composition. This paper questioned the sources of girls' superior performance on writing tasks, and the consistency of the relationships between gender and patterns of achievement across countries. Preliminary analysis of the data from Chile, Hungary, Finland, and New Zealand supported the hypothesis that expressive differences between girls and boys are related to the development of different functional communicative competencies which grow out of sex role typing of activities.

The study used two indicators of sex-typed activities: the proportion of male/female teachers and student self-reported preferences and activities. Findings indicated that the size of differences in performance by gender varied across tasks. In these four countries, the smallest differences in performance between girls and boys were found on narrative and persuasive tasks, and the largest differences on reflective and letter writing tasks. Females tended to do better in the countries in which a higher proportion of teachers were female. In general it seems possible to produce a profile of gender activity typing which correlates with performance on the writing tasks.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEATURES FOUND IN ESSAYS WRITTEN BY SELECTED BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP) AND THE NEW JERSEY HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY TEST

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This session began with a summary of the results of a comparative analysis of writing features found in essays written by selected Black and White eighth grade and/or 13 year-old students for the 1983-84 National Assessment of Educational Progress with features found in essays written by 9th grade Black students for the New Jersey High School Proficiency Test.

In phase one of the investigation, four readers read a random sample of 133 essays in an attempt to identify and compare features in the students' writing. In this initial reading, the readers identified fourteen specific features. They classified these features into fourteen categories: grammar and syntax, organization, task perception, and cultural influence. NAEP used this classification scheme in phase two of the investigation to analyze a larger sample (373) of students' essays.

In widely disseminated reports of students' performances in national and state assessments, Black students have consistently scored lower than White students. While this investigation does not evaluate students' writing abilities, it offers a detailed description of observable features in the students' writing. The investigation emanates from the premise that the strategies students use to write essays for assessment purposes can serve as keys to effective instruction and improved performances.

The session included a review of the classification scheme used in the analysis, examples of the features found in four modes of writing (imaginative, informative, persuasive, and narrative), and numerical comparisons of the number of times the features were found in Black and White students' essays.