

Understanding Gender Intelligence and its Competitive Advantage

Since the beginning of *mankind*, men have been perceived as superior in the professional field, thus attaining a higher social status. Dr. Dean Keith Simonton, a distinguished psychology professor at the University of California, Davis, identifies in his article named “The Science of Genius”, the top ten geniuses of all time including, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Leonardo da Vinci, Emanuel Swedenborg, Bobby Fischer, and Galileo Galilei, all of which have a prominent similarity: they are all men. Moreover, Simonton concludes that only “a female or two might make the cut” to be labeled as a genius, explaining that a genius is one who is able to identify a problem and “almost blindly” finds a solution to it, “exploring dead ends and backtracking before arriving at the ideal answer” (Simonton). The claim that a female is less likely to perform at a level of genius compared to a man becomes evident in Simonton’s analysis. Unfortunately, Simonton’s claims follow under the many stereotypes that assume men more intelligent and are predominantly more successful in the workfield. Therefore, in order to adequately analysis the truth behind the popular stereotypes and take the differences between males and females to our advantage, we must first ask: does the difference in the brain wiring of men and women affect their performance in the workfield and their intelligence? By fully understanding these differences, how do companies restructure their institutions to maximize performance?

Behavior and Performance in the Workfield

The difference in brain development of males and females affect their behavior and performance. Ian Sample, a doctor in biomedical materials reporting for the Guardian, reports a study published by the National Academy of Sciences on the sex differences in the structural

connectome of the human brain. The study found that nearly a thousand brain scans of both men and women indicate the major contrast between the brain wiring of both genders (Sample).

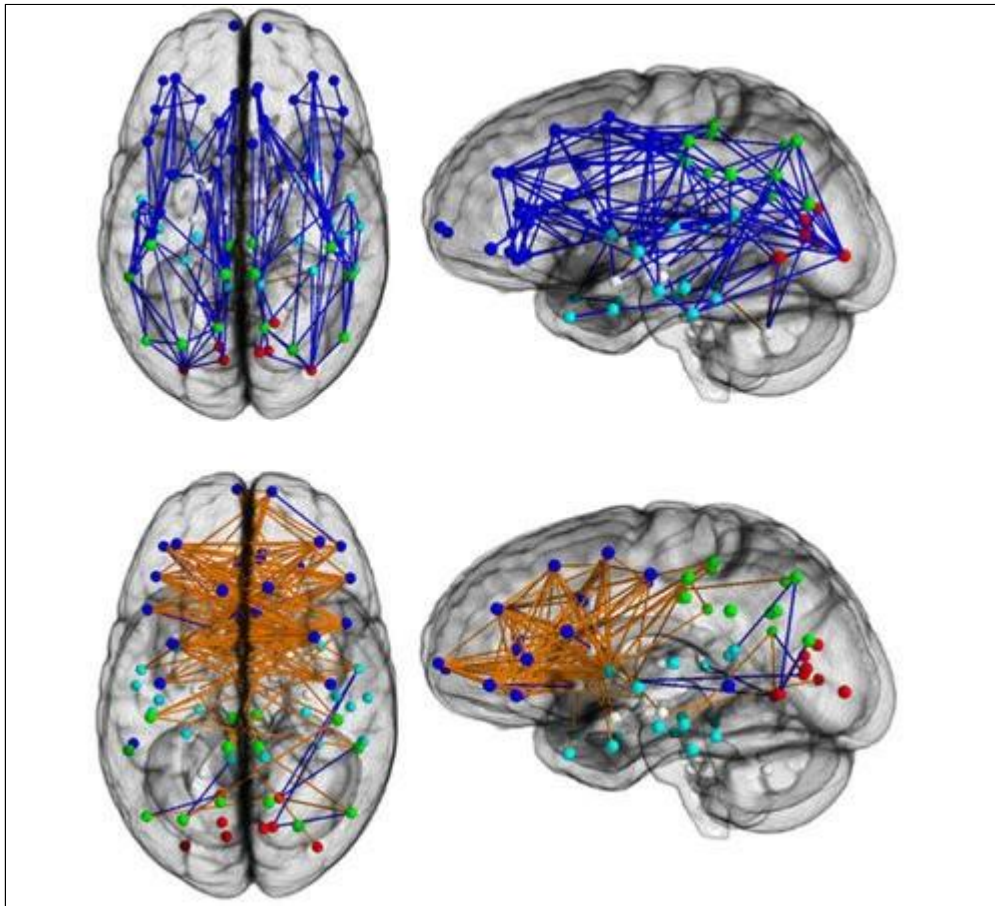


Figure 1: Brain Networks - Connectome Map
Credit: Ragini Verma, PhD, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

Figure 1, a connectome map of brain connectivity of men (upper) and women (lower), exhibit that on average, a woman's brain is highly connected across the left and right hemisphere, suggesting that women are more wired for communication skills and memory, making them better at multitasking. On the other hand, the connectome map reveals that the male brain has stronger connections between the front and back region, indicating that men are more wired for perception and coordination (Sample). Dr. Ruben C. Gur, Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry

and co-author of the aforementioned study, claims that the brain of a male and a female are complementary. Moreover, Ragini Verma, a professor at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, explains that the connectome map above provides “a potential neural basis as to why men excel at certain tasks, and women at others” (Verma). Because the brain wiring for each gender is different, men and women have different ways of thinking, performing tasks, and are typically better at specific ventures.

Many critics of the study using connectome maps argue that the different brain wiring between males and females are not because of their genders. Jürgen Hänggi, with a Ph.D. in neuropsychology and neurosciences at the University of Zurich, explains that the wiring differences in males and females are due to the size of the brain rather than the sex (“Crossed Wires”). However, Hänggi does not necessarily indicate the credibility of the study. Hänggi fails to realize that the main factor in brain size is gender. Larry Cahill, Professor in Neurobiology and Behavior at the School of Biological Sciences in the University of California, explains that even if “brain connectivity differs according to brain size”, there is still a significant sex influences that impact the brain connectivity, leading to the distinct behaviors and performance in the workforce (“Crossed Wires”). In response to Hänggi claims, Dr. Ruben C. Gur explains that even when taking into account brain size as a factor in their study, the sex effect on brain connectivity remained.

The different wiring of the brain affects how both genders participate and perform in the workforce. Keith Merron, founder and managing partner of Avista Consulting Group, a consulting and leadership development organization specializing in gender diversity, depicts the difference in behavior and performance in the corporate world. Men are typically “linear in

thought process and more narrow in their focus, so they are able to break down problems into their component parts and solve it”. In contrast, women tend to view problems with a holistic approach, understanding the situation instead of breaking it into parts (“How Men and Women Differ”). According to a 2005 study about gender bias conducted by Catalyst, a nonprofit New York research group organization that promotes inclusive workplaces for women, men demonstrate behaviors such as delegating and managing up and women “demonstrate higher levels of compassion and team-building skills” in workplaces (“Maximizing Mentoring”).

Intelligence

The contrast between the general intelligence indicated by the intelligence quotient, or IQ, between males and females have been debated for nearly a century, ever since IQ testing began. Many psychologists and scientists argue whether or not there are differences and if so, if they are statistically significant. Dr. Roberto Colom, professor of psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, explains that although males, on average, have larger brain sizes which are positively associated with higher IQs than females, it is generally stated that there is not a significant difference in general intelligence. The study conducted comes from the “largest sample on which a sex difference in g, general factor, has ever been tested”, concluding that there are negligible differences between the intelligence of males and females (Colom).

Differences in intelligence between genders are variable based on age, as both genders develop at different rates. Michael Gurian, an American author and social philosopher, explains in his book, *Leadership and the Sexes: Using Gender Science to Create Success in Business*, that as brain science becomes more sophisticated, studies have consistently proven that men and women are equal in terms of intellectual performance (Gurian). Plainly, the only difference between the

two genders is *how* they perform specific tasks. For example, a man and woman may have the same IQ score on an IQ test. However, when completing the test, the man and woman are most likely to solve problems in different ways.

Gender Intelligence in the Corporate World

The understanding of the difference in brain development of men and women and how we make decisions, problem-solve, and communicate is known as gender intelligence (“Center for Women”). Barbara Annis, a defined keynote speaker and an expert in gender intelligence, explains that when companies have gender intelligence, they are able to offer a competitive advantage. By understanding that our minds do not think alike and taking that knowledge to apprehend the contributions both men and women can bring to the professional workfield, companies can be more successful.

The distinct differences in brain development of males and females affect how they perform in the workplace. According to Dr. Ruben C. Gur, Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry and co-author of the aforementioned study, when tested on cognitive abilities, women tend to score better on “attention, word, and face memory, and social cognition” while men score better “on spatial processing and sensorimotor speed” (“Men and Women’s Brain”). These biological differences can be used to diversify working environments to create more productive and satisfying results. Barbara Annis, the world renowned leader in corporate gender intelligence training, explains that “as men and women come to understand each other’s ways of thinking and acting, they step up to a new and powerful level of conversation. They begin to include each other more confidently and more willingly”.

The power in understanding the abilities of both genders is incredible when companies put this into play. Companies that incorporate gender intelligence into their sectors find more strategic “decision making”, “produce more relevant products and services that mirror the market, and, as a result, achieve superior financial results” compared to companies who fail to understand and take advantage of the gender differences of men and women (Annis).

The corporate world has advanced dramatically with incorporating both genders into the workforce. However, it appears that in the status quo, the corporate world seems to be stuck.

John Hart, Founder and CEO of the Impact Center, a premier leadership development organization, illustrates that “women are more likely to leave a company not because of work or life issues, but because they don’t feel valued” (“Gender Intelligence”). The phenomenon is seen in the accounting division of Deloitte Canada, a leading professional services firm, who experienced an average turnover rate, the percentage of employees in a workforce that leave during a certain period of time, of 27 percent among senior women compared to 10 percent among senior men, costing the company over \$40 million a year. When looking in depth into the reason why women were quitting their job at Deloitte Canada and accepting positions from Deloitte competitors or other accounting jobs, post-exit interviews revealed “that women didn’t feel they were valued at Deloitte, regardless of their level of commitment and quality of work”. The positive implications of becoming gender intelligent is seen when looking into the Deloitte case. By understanding the flaws in their accounting division, and becoming gender intelligent in using men and women to cohesively work together, Deloitte became one of the first companies to focus on retaining both women and men, dropping the female turnover rate from 27 percent to 11 percent (Annis). The benefits of incorporating gender intelligence and understanding how

to take the differences between genders to the corporation's advantage changes the playing field. It allows companies to have a competitive advantage over other companies in their industry and save millions by reducing turnover rates.

Similarly, after attending a Gender Intelligence session, American Express CEO, Kenneth Chenault, declared to reconstruct its business units at American Express by "increasing the company's understanding of the value of gender differences in communication, problem solving, and decision-making". Just like Deloitte and American Express, many companies are discovering that simply setting a quota for equal gender employment does not ensure the best results possible (Annis). When understanding the different ways males and females perform, behave, and think, companies can take the qualities of both genders and use it to their advantage. A gender-intelligent organization not only maximizes its corporation's potential, but it allows for the most productive, gender-equal, corporation.

Conclusion

The difference between the way men and women are wired affect they way they behave, perform, and complete tasks in the workforce. After reviewing a multitude of studies, it is clear that the general intelligence of both genders are basically identical, and the only difference is the process or technique each gender uses. The basis on understanding the difference between the way men and women operate is imperative in order to successfully have a gender-equal society. Gender equality is not achieved through simply advocating for equal pay and equal representation. When corporate leaders and companies learn the gender intelligence, the unique differences between both genders, and the brain science supporting those differences, they are

able to organize their institutions in a way that acknowledges what both genders can bring to the table, overall maximizing their performance.

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