



Evidence for Sex/Gender Differences in Cognition

The notion that inherent differences between the sexes do not exist has been part of politically correct thinking for half a century. Government policies to “level the playing field” and “break through the glass ceiling” have been mandated since the 1970s. Books, particularly textbooks, routinely place men and women in roles which do not mirror what men and women traditionally have done in human society. Correcting “sexist” attitudes toward gender differences has been forced into the policies not only of government but of the business community, the entertainment industry, and almost every other institution of public life.



There are many reasons for doubting this notion of the equivalence of the sexes. Animals, particularly those animals which are closest biologically to humans, have sexual roles which are very similar to those sex-based roles in different cultures around the world: Males tend to be explorers and defenders; females tend to stay with children and conduct communal activities at home.

Although human civilizations around the world have profound differences in many areas of social interaction, gender-based roles in these civilizations look very much the same. This is not only true of great civilizations, like Roman or Japanese civilizations, but also of very small and isolated social groups. The gender-specific roles that appear in these human civilizations also mirror closely the sexual roles of different high-level animals. The odds against these similarities being mere accident are very small.

Biologically, men and women have many differences beyond those differences which are obvious. The male and female brains are designed differently. Hormonal differences also ought to make the two sexes behave and feel differently. The natural differences between men and women are great enough that anthropologists can tell which skeletons are male and which are female.

Men and women also perform very differently on intelligence tests. Males, on average, routinely do better in areas like spatial reasoning and analytical ability, while females tend to be more adept at verbal communication and intuition. Feminists have long decried intelligence tests as biased against women and feminists have also insisted that our culture discourages women from entering fields like engineering and accounting in favor of more traditional female work.

But at least one area of human competition, however, produces a compelling argument that traditional sexual roles are real, sound, and reasonable: Chess. This ancient game is pure logic. There is no element of chance in chess. Bigotries have no influence in chess. How removed is chess from invidious bias, psychological pressure, and social conditioning? Chess has often been played by mail. Computers can play chess.

Perhaps more significantly, great chess players have often come from groups in human society that



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have suffered from irrational discrimination. Jews, for example, have excelled at chess. Eastern Europeans, often the victim of degrading humor, have also excelled at chess. Physically unattractive people, poor people, and unpopular minorities — all of these types of people have found in chess a way to win competitions which human prejudices would have prevented them from winning, if those prejudices had been effective.

If men and women had identical mental powers, then a substantial number of the best chess players would be women. But that is not the case at all. Out of the top 100 chess players in the world, only one is a woman, Judit Polgar. A few years ago, Judit had been ranked among the ten best players in the world. FIDE Chess rankings for the last quarter of 2009, though, showed that Judit Polgar had dropped to the 46th best chess player in the world. Her ratings have been dropping steadily for years.

But that is only part of the story. Judit Polgar was raised by parents who were very good chess players. Her sister, Sofia, is also a powerful chess player. Judit's father took her out of school when she was young to immerse her in chess, and to prove that sex was irrelevant to ability at chess. Judit Polgar is, by anyone's definition, an extraordinarily good chess player, but what Papa Polgar proved is just the opposite of what he intended: Obviously the male and female brains are constructed in ways which give men much stronger ability in games like chess.

This is even clearer when the lives of some of the best chess players in history are examined. Jose Paul Capablanca, for example, learned the game of chess when he was four years old by simply watching family members and friends play the game. He is generally considered to have created the publicity tool of playing a number of different chess games at the same time. Capablanca could look at a Chessboard which great players had been studying for days and at a glance determine the right move.

Yet Capablanca was not pulled out of school to focus solely on chess like Polgar. He had a career entirely separate from chess. In fact, chess was not even Capablanca's favorite recreation: He loved baseball and played shortstop on the Columbia University Baseball team. In a much more cluttered life, Jose Paul Capablanca did much better at a game in which male intellectual tools were critical than a very disciplined, well schooled, and focused Judit Polgar.

If men and women are inherently different, then affirmative action plans and other similar government efforts to redress an imagined discrimination against women become irrational and destructive. The playing field for competition ought to be level, but a level playing field will often mean that 99 percent of the winners are men (or, in other cases, 99 percent of the winners are women).



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