

DIVIDED BY GENDER, UNITED BY CHOCOLATE: DIFFERENCES IN THE BOARDROOM

(Why the 'gender divide' in the Boardroom is a red herring)

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes of men as agentic and women as communal no longer work. Gendered leadership research is inconclusive at best and contradictory at worst¹⁻⁴, with new research using neural imaging showing very little physical difference between male and female brains⁵⁻⁸. We need a new theory of leadership to make sense of gender inequalities in the Boardroom. Only with new understanding can we begin to resolve the issues.

A NEW THEORY OF LEADERSHIP: LEADERSHIP TEMPERAMENT TYPES

It has been suggested that personality is underpinned and driven to a large extent by our biological chemistry⁹⁻¹¹. Using psychobiology, this author has applied that theory to leadership and related the 4 chemicals of dopamine, oestrogen, testosterone and serotonin to Charismatic, Relational, Transactional and Transformational leadership styles.

THE FOUR BIOLOGICAL CHEMICALS WHICH UNDERPIN THE THEORY

Dopamine A neurotransmitter which reduces concern for risk. It is associated with arousal and reward and encourages sensation-seeking. Relates to Charismatic Explorers.

Oestrogen The 'female' hormone, it promotes nurturing and compassion. It is associated with kindness, flexibility of thinking and offers protection from stress. Relates to Relational Negotiators.

Testosterone The 'male' hormone, it provides confidence and stamina, promotes social dominance and aggression and makes people competitive. Relates to Transactional Directors.

Serotonin A neurotransmitter which moderates mood and behaviour. It promotes stability and attachment and is associated with caution and social compliance. Relates to Transformational Builders.

IN SUMMARY

Relational Negotiators (Oestrogen)	Transactional Directors (Testosterone)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People focused • Warm and caring • Collaborative • Value relationships • Comfortable with ambiguity • An extreme 'female' brain? • Need intimacy and connectedness • Hate superficiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task focused • Cold and dispassionate • Competitive • Value success • Need things clearly defined • An extreme 'male' brain? • Need intellectual stimulation • Hate losing
Charismatic Explorers (Dopamine)	Transformational Builders (Serotonin)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk and thrill seeking • Innovative and unconventional • Likely to change their minds • Charismatic and exciting • 'Reckless' • May have flexible ethics • Need adrenaline and excitement • Hate being bored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk averse and cautious • Traditional and conventional • Consistent and reliable • 'Dull' and can be 'boring' • Cautious • Staunchly ethical and moral • Need stability and familiarity • Hate dishonesty

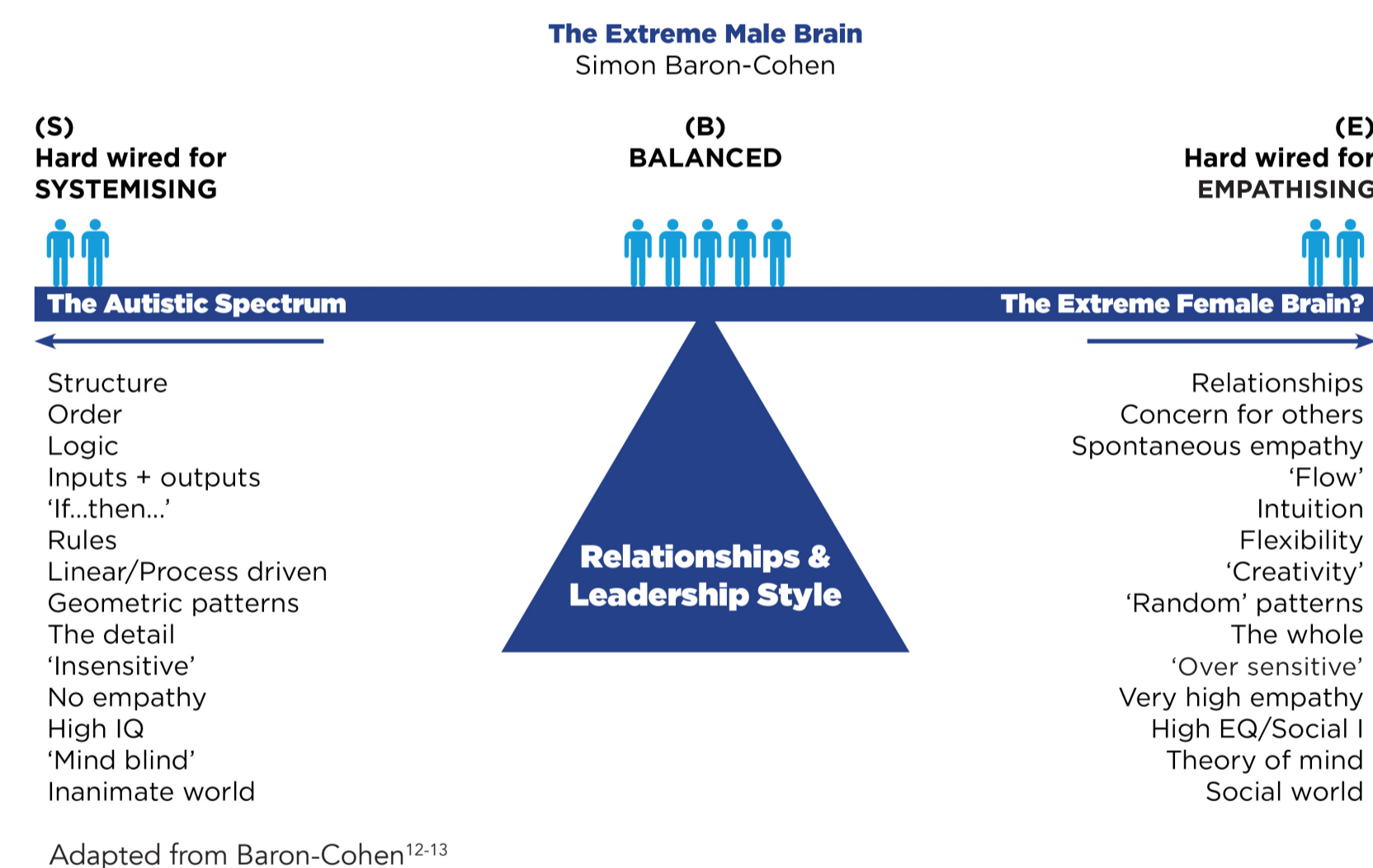
PERCENTAGE POPULATION FIGURES¹¹

Relational Negotiators (Oestrogen)	Transactional Directors (Testosterone)
29.1% of general population of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20.4% are men • 35.8% are women 	16.3% of general population of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24.8% are men • 9.7% are women
Charismatic Explorers (Dopamine)	Transformational Builders (Serotonin)
26% of general population of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27.1% are men • 25.1% are women 	28.6% of general population of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27.6% are men • 29.4% are women

Population sample: 39,913 US adults¹¹

THE EXTREME MALE/FEMALE BRAIN THEORY¹²⁻¹³

It has been suggested that men are 'hard-wired' for Systemising and women are hard-wired for Empathising. Quite apart from ignoring 'plasticity', social, cultural and environmental influence, flexibility and agency, we all know women who systemise and therefore think like men, and men who are empathetic and nurturing; therefore immediately this model doesn't work. We need a new and flexible model to explain what is really going on.



Of course, there's no such thing as a gendered brain per se⁵⁻⁸ however, as a framework and as a psychobiological metaphor, viewing the brain through the lens of behaviours which are predominantly considered to be 'male' due to the effects of the male hormone testosterone, compared to those behaviours which are predominantly considered to be 'female' due to the effects of the female hormone oestrogen, does seem to yield a useful perspective and fits very well with the theory of Leadership Temperament Types.

WHY WOMEN-ONLY SHORTLISTS DON'T WORK!

- Gendered leadership studies are inconclusive⁴. The stereotypes don't match experience
- They offend men as well as women
- They are illegal under the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act
- Do we want equality of opportunity or equality of outcome? One may preclude the other
- Surely we want the best person for the job, regardless of gender?
- Women want a seat at the table because of the quality of their thinking and what they have to offer, not because of their gender or because they are a 'token' woman.

KEY POINTS: THE THEORY OF LEADERSHIP TEMPERAMENT TYPES

- Leadership Style is, in part, biologically driven; it's psychobiological
- Increasing self and other awareness increases individual, team and organisational resilience
- The Male/Female Brain Theory is simply a framework, not a literal absolute
- We all know men who are flexible, caring, nurturing and supportive (Communal), and women who are dominant, competitive, aggressive and directive (Agentic)
- Therefore the Gender Divide in the Boardroom, from a behavioural perspective, is a red herring!
- We don't need diversity of gender, we need diversity of thinking and a balance of leadership styles in the boardroom
- The Theory of Leadership Temperament Types can provide this.

CONTRIBUTION

A completely new theory of leadership which adds insights to the gendered leadership debate from a psychobiological perspective¹⁴. The author recognises that more research into the theory is required to understand the nuances within the theory which are already beginning to emerge.

THE LINK TO CHOCOLATE!

Caffeine suppresses serotonin. Cocoa raises it. Therefore, the higher the cocoa content of chocolate, i.e. the darker it is, the more serotonin is released. Transformational Builders, who are driven by serotonin, are often particularly keen on chocolate. If you know anyone who doesn't just like chocolate, but absolutely loves it, it's quite likely that they will also have some other Transformational Builder traits.



Dr Fiona Beddoes-Jones
can be contacted via www.unitedbychocolate.com

REFERENCES

1. Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T., (1990). Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 108, (2), pp.233-256.
2. Eagly, A. H., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C., & van Engen, M., L., (2003). Transformational, Transactional and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 129, (4), pp.569-591.
3. Kent, T. W., Blair, C. A., Rudd, H. F., & Schuele, U., (2010). Gender Differences and Transformational Leadership Behaviour: Do Both German Men and Women Lead in the Same Way? *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 6, (1), pp.52-66.
4. Andersen, J. A., & Hansson, P. H., (2011). At the end of the road? Differences between women and men in leadership behavior. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 32, (5), pp.428-441.
5. Joel, D. et al., (2015). Sex beyond the genitalia: The human brain mosaic. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Published online before print November 30, 2015, doi: 10.1073/pnas.1509654112.
6. <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/nov/30/brain-sex-men-from-mars-women-venus-not-so-says-new-study>
7. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn28582-scans-prove-theres-no-such-thing-as-a-male-or-female-brain/>
8. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn28584-a-welcome-blow-to-the-myth-of-distinct-male-and-female-brains/>
9. Fisher, H. E., et al., (2010). Four Primary Temperament Dimensions. Poster at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association. Available online at www.helenfisher.com.
10. Andersen, J. A., & Hansson, P. H., (2011). At the end of the road? Differences between women and men in leadership behavior. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 32, (5), pp.428-441.
11. Fisher, H., (2009). *Why Him Why Her?* Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications.
12. Baron-Cohen, S., (2003). *The Essential Difference: Men, women and the extreme male brain*. London: Allen-Lane.
13. Baron-Cohen, S., (2002). The extreme male brain theory of autism. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol.6, (6), pp.248-254.
14. Beddoes-Jones F., (2016). *Divided by Gender, United by Chocolate: Differences in the Boardroom*. Blue Ocean Publishing.