

What Men Don't Know About the Power of the Female Brain

Not that it's a secret. Men just haven't been paying attention.

The female brain is making powerful decisions everyday. Gone are the days of male control of the checkbook as **women account for 85% of all consumer purchases**. Broken down into specific categories women control the financial decisions when it comes to:

- 93% of food
- 92% of vacations
- 91% of new homes
- 89% of bank accounts
- 80% of healthcare
- 66% of personal computer
- 65% of new cars

Now, the question is does the female brain make those decisions any differently than the male brain.

According to Jonah Lehrer the author of *How We Decide*, gender differences can't be explained by most behavioral studies and the generalizations of women being intuitive thinkers and men being abstract thinkers. Rather he profiles a study by research scientists Colin Camerer, (Cal-Tech) and Read Montague (Baylor College of Medicine) who devised **a game of trust using \$20 of imaginary money**. Both men and women play either the **role of the investor or the trustee**. They have the option as investors to place some of the money with a trustee or keep it all for themselves.

Money given to a trustee will have a 3x return rate but the trustee has the option to decide how much to return to the investor. This places pressure on the investor as to how much

to keep back and how much to trust the trustee. Over ten rounds of playing **both investor and trustee have a stake of self interest to trust one another** if they are both going to benefit.

While the game was being played, brain imagery was recorded and showed a **surprising gender brain difference**.

When women were trustees and had to decide how much to return to the investor, two areas in the female brain were activated – the **ventromedial prefrontal cortex** and **ventral striatum** which regulate potential reward and the **caudate nucleus** that regulates worry and detection of error. Women were already simultaneously **worrying and wondering** about the consequences of their decisions before they notified the investor.

Men on the other hand, when faced with the decision of how much to return as trustee or place with the trustee had the medial **cingulate sulcus** activated – the area that handles potential reward and calculation of numbers. It seemed that once the numbers were calculated and the decision was made, the **male brain area deactivated** itself. Therefore a done deal.

Lehrer suggests that further research in neuroscience will tell us more specifically how gender differences occur when it comes to making decisions. In the meantime, **women appear to place greater brain activity into making decisions** around social interaction.

Well then, the cingulate sulcus in the female brain must be working overtime.

Maybe we are worrying if we are making the right decision, but it hasn't stopped us from making the big decisions.

By Joyce Hansen

