

Gender and PSI revisited: Do Men and Women Differ in Psi Ability and/or Performance?

by Dr. Christine Simmonds

Historically, paranormal experiences are associated more with females than with males (e.g... more females than males tend to report spontaneous psi experiences and have out-of-the-body experiences.) Females also seem to be more represented as the agent in poltergeist cases. Women also report greater belief in psi and fear of psi than do men, although men are more likely to believe in the existence of UFOs and aliens, indicating a cultural influence on “paranormal” belief. While research often shows differential psi scoring according to gender, there have not been consistent patterns related to gender alone. Cross-sex pairing in ganzfeld research (gender of experimenter and participant) suggests that the system may be more important than gender considered in isolation.

Gender differences are noted in conventional science, for example, in the internal brain structure (corpus callosum connection between the left and right hemispheres) and in various sensory abilities. As such, we might expect gender differences in psi performance as well. In some instances there are similarities between parapsychological and psychophysiological studies. For example, male’s brains react strongly in real time psychophysiological studies and in pre-stimulus response parapsychology studies to just erotic targets while female’s brains respond more to both erotic and violent stimuli.

These gender/psi differences may be understood better by looking at how gender moderates other variables such as boundary thinness. This is a personality trait that determines whether one sees the world as black or white (thick) or as blurry (thin), which is a trait in which the genders differ (females score “thinner” than males). It may also help to look at gender role rather than gender per se. Four such categories delineated by Sandra Bem are Feminine, Masculine, Androgynous, or Undifferentiated. Dr. Simmonds proposes that individuals who rate high on Androgynous traits, i.e. reflecting both masculine and feminine ways of thinking may show more psi ability than other groups. This has been noted in subjective paranormal experiences where both rational and intuitive modes of thinking were better related to paranormal experiences than intuitive or rational thinking by themselves. This way, the person would be able to (rationally) make use of psi information which may be experienced in an emotional/intuitive form. It was noted that a number of famous mediums/psychics may have been effeminate males which is one form of androgyny. Ingrid Sell (ITP) also noted that paranormal experiences are very common among “third gendered individuals” who are often working as shamans or healers.

Plans are underway to look at the relation between psi as measured in a forced-choice test with fruit targets as compared to paranormal belief, gender role, and boundary thinness. Participants will be female college students at Liverpool Hope University.