

Women's Success in Math/Science: The Debate Continues

Each group has one of the following *New York Times* articles written in response to the “provocative” comments made last month by Harvard President Lawrence Summers about the success of women in math and science:

- Angier, Natalie, and Kenneth Chang. “Gray Matter and Sexes: A Gray Area Scientifically.” *NYT*, 24 January 2005.
 - Dean, Cornelia. “For Some Girls, the Problem With Math Is That They’re Good at It.” *NYT*, 1 February 2005.
 - Haberman, Clyde. “The Girls Are Smart, Real Smart.” *NYT*, 1 February 2005.
 - Judson, Olivia. “Different But (Probably) Equal.” *NYT*, 23 January 2005.
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A. Find the others with your article and discuss it, considering the following questions:

1. What type of article is this? Is it news, or an editorial (or opinion) piece?
2. Who is the author?
3. What is the position being taken, or what seems to be the main point of the piece?
4. What facts are mentioned? What conjectures or assertions are being made?
5. Do you agree with this article? Did it alter your opinion of Summers’ comments in any way? How?

B. Choose a delegate to briefly summarize the main points of the article and your group’s response to it when we return to the large group.

In Tuesday’s discussion, we discovered that there are two conflicting points of view at the heart of the controversy. These conflicting theoretical positions have been at the core of a broader debate in women’s studies about identity and how we think about what gender is, and where it comes from. Consider how your article relates to the following two camps:

ESSENTIALISM	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
nature	nurture
innate	acquired
born	made
biological	social
sex	gender

C. Finally, consider the implications of making the argument that math/science ability is innate and differentiated by gender. Can such an assertion be substantiated? How? Why should we want to know if women are biologically predisposed against math and science?