

Harvard sex controversy

WARM UPS

1. CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about men and women / gender and intelligence / sexism / sexist comments / Harvard University / housework and child-raising / ...
Change topic / partner frequently to energize the class.

2. MY COUNTRY: Talk about the levels of sexual equality/inequality in your own countries.

3. 2-MINUTE DEBATES:

- (a) Men are more intelligent than women. vs. Women are more intelligent than men.
- (b) Women are better leaders than men. vs Men are better leaders than women.
- (c) Women are more mature than men. vs Men are more mature than men.
- (d) Men are more romantic than women. vs. Women are more romantic than men.
- (e) Men are better map readers than men. vs. But women are safer drivers.
- (f) It's the woman's job to stay at home and look after the husband, house and family. vs.
- (g) There's nothing wrong with househusbands.
- (h) Men are more violent than women. vs. Women are more violent than men.
- (i) Men have easier lives than women. vs. A woman's life is easier.
- (j) Other teacher / student created mini-debates – dependent on cultures of students.

PRE READING EXERCISES

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries, or a search engine, to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'sex', and 'gender'.

TRUE / FALSE: Predict from the headline whether these statements are true or false:

- (a) The president of Harvard University is under fire for having sex with his students. T / F
- (b) He suggested women are not as good as men at sciences, engineering and mathematics because of genetic differences. T / F
- (c) He is being heavily criticized by his peers. T / F
- (d) A female lecturer attending his presentation blacked out and vomited because of his comments. T / F
- (e) The Harvard president said discrimination is everywhere in Harvard University. T / F
- (f) Last year he appointed 4 women and 28 men as lecturers or researchers. T / F
- (g) The Harvard president said more research is needed into the respective intelligences of both sexes. T / F
- (h) He said men have more innate or God-given ability than women. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| (a) under fire | God-given |
| (b) sexist | justify |
| (c) criticized | distinguished |
| (d) innate | gifted |
| (e) reason | in the hot seat |
| (f) throw up | attacked |
| (g) brilliant | entangled |
| (h) embroiled | discuss |
| (i) prestigious | vomit |
| (j) defend | discriminatory |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases based on the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| (a) under | differences |
| (b) sexist | as men |
| (c) genetic | fallen |
| (d) He further embroiled himself | fire |
| (e) women weren't as willing | his comments |
| (f) greatly | conditioning |
| (g) He has tried to defend | things to socialization |
| (h) social | in controversy |
| (i) God-given | comments |
| (j) be careful in attributing | ability |

Harvard sex controversy (Wed 19 Jan)

bNE: The president of Harvard University, Lawrence Summers, is _____ fire today for his sexist comments suggesting women are not as good as men at sciences, engineering and mathematics because of genetic _____. He is being _____ criticized by his peers for suggesting that women have less innate ability than men to reason and rationalize. One female researcher, biologist Nancy Hopkins, walked out of Mr. Summers' presentation, and stated, "It's so upsetting that all these brilliant young women [at Harvard] are being _____ by a man who views them this way." She also said that if she had stayed, "I would've either blacked out or thrown up."

differences
heavily
under
led
defend
careful
greatly
willing

He further embroiled himself in controversy by saying there are fewer female lecturers and professors because women weren't as _____ as men to work long hours, and because of child raising and housework responsibilities; not because of discrimination. However, since becoming president of Harvard, one of the most prestigious institutions of learning in the world, the number of female lecturers has _____ fallen. He appointed four women and 28 men as lecturers last year.

He has tried to _____ his comments by saying more research is needed into the respective intelligences of both sexes. He told the Boston Globe newspaper that people want to believe differences in male and female intelligence are due to social conditioning and not innate natural or God-given ability, "you have to be _____ in attributing things to socialization. ... That's what we would prefer to believe, but these are things that need to be studied."

DISCUSSION: Students ask each other the following questions:

- (a) What do you think Mt Summers' comments?
- (b) Do you think man are more intelligent (or vice versa)?
- (c) Do women have equal opportunities to enter science and engineering-related jobs?
- (d) Is your society a sexist society?
- (e) What do men / women complain about in your society?
- (f) What three changes would you make create greater sexual equality?
- (g) Who wears the trousers in your house?
- (h) Is it OK for little boys to play with Barbie dolls and for men to cry in the movie theatre?
- (i) Should women be allowed to fight on the front lines in war?
- (j) Are men and women intellectually different from birth?
- (k) Are men born leaders and women born home makers?
- (l) Does your language contain built-in sexism? (in English host, bachelor, master are all male and are generally positive, while hostess, spinster, mistress are all female and generally carry negative association)
- (m) Are men really better at reading maps?
- (n) Why do women like shopping so much?
- (o) Why do men drive fast and cook barbecues?
- (p) Who is more vain, men or women
- (q) Teacher's / Students' additional questions

HOMEWORK

1. **VOCAB EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or the Google search field to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. **INTERNET / WEB LINKS:**

The Boston Globe article:

http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2005/01/17/summers_remarks_on_women_draw_fire/

The English language and sexism – some examples:

<http://webster.comnet.edu/grammar/unbiased.htm>

Womens' rights

<http://www.feminist.org/>

Harvard University

<http://www.harvard.edu/>

Biography of Lawrence H. Summers, President of Harvard University:

<http://www.president.harvard.edu/biography/>

Biological Perspectives on Gender Differences

<http://salmon.psy.plym.ac.uk/YEAR1/inttopic/gender.html>

3. **POSTER:** Create a poster about the good or bad things about being a woman / man.

4. **LETTER TO LAWRENCE:** Write a letter to the Harvard President explaining what you think about his views.

FULL TEXT

Harvard sex controversy (Wed 19 Jan)

BNE: The president of Harvard University, Lawrence Summers, is **under** fire today for his sexist comments suggesting women are not as good as men at sciences, engineering and mathematics because of genetic **differences**. He is being **heavily** criticized by his peers for suggesting that women have less innate ability than men to reason and rationalize. One female researcher, biologist Nancy Hopkins, walked out of Mr. Summers' presentation, and stated, "It's so upsetting that all these brilliant young women [at Harvard] are being **led** by a man who views them this way." She also said that if she had stayed, "I would've either blacked out or thrown up."

He further embroiled himself in controversy by saying there are fewer female lecturers and professors because women weren't as **willing** as men to work long hours, and because of child raising and housework responsibilities; not because of discrimination. However, since becoming president of Harvard, one of the most prestigious institutions of learning in the world, the number of female lecturers has **greatly** fallen. He appointed four women and 28 men as lecturers last year.

He has tried to **defend** his comments by saying more research is needed into the respective intelligences of both sexes. He told the Boston Globe newspaper that people want to believe differences in male and female intelligence are due to social conditioning and not innate natural or God-given ability, "you have to be **careful** in attributing things to socialization. ... That's what we would prefer to believe, but these are things that need to be studied."