

Teaching News Is Elementary December 4, 2015

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition. The library or internet for research.

Article: “Human brains defy categories of male, female”

Page: A8

Date: Tuesday, December 1, 2015

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

Look at the title. What does it mean to defy a category? Do you think male and female brains are different? Why or why not?

Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it's used in the sentence:

“Male brains do seem to be different from female brains. An analysis of more than 100 studies found that the **volume** of a man's brain is 8 percent to 13 percent greater than the **volume** of a woman's brain, on average.”

(the amount of space that is filled by something)

“To find out whether these structural differences translated into **cognitive** differences, scientists examined detailed brain scans of more than 1,400 men and women.”

(of, relating to, or involving conscious mental activities (such as thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering))

“This extensive overlap **undermines** any attempt to distinguish between a “male” and a “female” form for specific brain features,’ Joel and her colleagues concluded.”

(makes (someone or something) weaker or less effective usually in a secret or gradual way)

Journal Writing Prompts:

“Do you have a male brain or a female brain? The answer, according to science, is no.

If you didn’t expect this to be a yes-or-no question, you’re not alone.”

What do you think makes a brain more male or female? Do you think you have female or female brain? Why or why not? Survey your family and friends with the same questions. Do you find that most people you questioned think their brain matches their gender?

Discussion Questions:

Review the excerpt and discuss the following questions:

“When 263 college students were asked about 10 ‘highly gender-stereotyped activities’ like watching talk shows on TV or playing video games, the study authors still found that only 1.2 percent of the students could be classified as exclusively male or exclusively female, compared with 55 percent who had traits from both camps.”

What are other examples of gender-stereotyped activities? Do you think the activities you enjoy are gender-stereotyped? Why or why not? Why is it dangerous to stereotype activities by gender?

Small group discussion and activity:

Male brains do seem to be different from female brains. An analysis of more than 100 studies found that the volume of a man’s brain is 8 percent to 13 percent greater than the volume of a woman’s brain, on average. Some of the most noticeable differences are in areas of the brain that control language, memory, emotion and behavior, according to a 2014 report in the journal *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*.”

In summary, in what way are male and female brains different? Then, use resources in your library and the internet to study which areas of the brain control different functions such as language, memory, emotion and behavior. Draw a picture of where these areas are located in the brain. Then, list the activities you participate in at school and at home on an average day. Which areas of your brain do you use for each activity?