

Debate: Are men falling behind or women getting ahead?

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by Emily Burlinghaus

Students and locals gathered last night in NYU's Skirball Center to catch the latest Intelligence Squared Debate. This time around, panelists posed the question: Are men truly lagging in such areas as academia and the work force, or are women simply catching up in fields that were previously ruled by men?

Arguing for the notion that women were rising in their ranks were Dan Abrams, ABC News legal analyst and author of the book "Man Down" and Hanna Rosin, a journalist for Slate and The Atlantic. On the opposing side, arguing that men are under-performing academically, were philosophy professor and feminist scholar Christina Hoff Sommers and David Zinczenko, editor-in-chief of Men's Health Magazine.

Prior to the debate, 22 percent of the audience voted for the notion, 54 percent against and 26 percent said they were undecided.

All panelists agreed that men and women were created inherently equal and that both sexes complemented each other. Neither side argued for the total domination of one sex, nor did they refute the existence of certain modern biases against men in education, politics and the workforce.

"If women do something better than men, that's evidence of their superiority," Sommers said. "If men outperform women, that's proof of discrimination and the continuing male culture." Zinczenko agreed and said men are still dominant in many industries, especially those in which innovation is key.

"It is men who flood the patent offices with their ideas," he said, referring to business tycoons like Steve Jobs and Bill Gates.

On the other side of the debate, Rosin addressed the issue of college education. She posed a rhetorical question asking why women were attaining substantially more success in the workplace than before.

"The answer is college," she said. "For every two men that get a college degree, three women will do the same."

Abrams, Rosin's ally in the discussion, picked out points that he felt Rosin had neglected to address.

"What about politics, finance and taking care of the planet?" he asked.

Citing evidence and studies from scholarly journals, Abrams revealed that women vote more, that they are less corruptible and that they are more likely to make eco-friendly decisions.

After hearing the arguments, the audience made its final decision. With 66 percent voting in favor of and 29 percent against the motion, and 5 percent remaining undecided, the majority of the audience agreed that men "really are finished."