

**LEARNING TO TALK THE TALK:  
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ADOLESCENT  
SOCIALIZATION TO WORLD POLITICS**

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Several Oklahoma universities sponsor Model United Nations simulations as an extracurricular activity for adolescents from middle school through college. These simulations provide a window on adolescent socialization to world politics, offering an opportunity to examine whether male and female adolescents participate in the same way or have similar experiences. This project assessed gender differences in participation at the Model United Nations of the Southwest (MUNSW) at the University of Oklahoma. Important gender differences in participation were observed in the number of speaking turns taken by male and female delegates, types of committees chosen by participants, and interactions among delegates. The analysis suggests that adolescents already have learned gendered norms of political behavior and they reenact those norms in such extracurricular activities. The structure of the event affects behavior and can be altered to enhance the participation of all delegates, particularly females.

**While much journalistic ink** is spent extolling the advent of globalization and world affairs, we know little about the geopolitical experience of Oklahoma students. Since the roots of adult civic and political participation originate in pre-adult experiences (Verba et al. 1995), adolescent exposure to world affairs nurtures the information, skills, and interest to engage in global concerns. As Glanville (1999) argues, high school extracurricular activities introduce students to ideas and information to which they might not otherwise have been exposed and offer opportunities to develop interpersonal and leadership skills.

Several Oklahoma universities sponsor Model United Nations simulations as an extracurricular activity for adolescents from middle school through college. These simulations provide a window on adolescent socialization to world politics, offering an opportunity to examine whether male and female adolescents participate in the same way or have similar experiences. By focusing on gender differences in important socialization events, we hope to shed light on the challenges of teaching political science and offer advice to maximize the experiences of both young men and women.

In this article, we analyze participation at the University of Oklahoma's 1999 Model United Nations of the Southwest (MUNSW). We investigate how Oklahoma adolescents participate in an important extracurricular socialization activity, whether important gender differences exist in their participation, and how the structure of the conference affects participation. From the analysis, we offer pedagogical insights for teachers, coaches and organizers interested in maximizing participation by the largest number of students.

## WHAT DO WE KNOW FROM THE LITERATURE

Early agents of political socialization shape participation in politics, where gender gaps first emerge. The family and local community are most important to the political cognition of young females (Dowse and Hughes 1971; Greenstein 1961; Sigel and Hoskin 1981; Hyman 1959), while the news media play a primary role in the political cognition of young males (Hyman 1959; Owen and Dennis 1992). The very nature of these socializing sources cultivates a domestic orientation for females,

whereas the media, because they both define and reinforce the male role in national politics, may orient males toward greater political activity.

Studies show that adolescent females and younger girls often *display* less political knowledge or interest than do males of similar ages. These differences may be attributed to lower levels of knowledge or interest on the part of girls or a greater tentativeness to express their awareness. Girls are less likely to engage in political conversation than boys are. Hyman (1959), for example, reported that boys tend to discuss news with their peer groups with increasing frequency as they get older, whereas girls discuss news at a consistently low level irrespective of age.

Studies attempting to measure the political knowledge and interest *held* by males and females have reported varying results. Studies of young children (Moore et al., 1976) and adolescents (Hyman, 1959; Dowse and Hughes, 1971; Owen and Dennis, 1988; and Westholm et al., 1990) found males to be much better informed (i.e. better able to answer questions of political knowledge) than females. Differences often emerge with respect to knowledge about international organizations and events. Dowse and Hughes (1971) found that females between the ages of 11 and 17 are more likely than males to select a political party. Sigel and Hoskin (1981) found no male-female differences in knowledge. Owen and Dennis (1992) found that younger females pay more attention to national news than do adolescent females. Similarly, LaPlant (1998) found that middle school females express a higher level of political interest than do males of the same age.

Findings about participation also are mixed. While Sigel and Hoskin (1981) found gender gaps in participation, they concluded that girls participate more in high school extracurriculars because boys “shun adult-supervised activities” and are more likely to be employed thus limiting time for activities. Nonetheless, college-aged women say they are less interested in and have less understanding of politics than do young men even though the women describe themselves as being quite politically active, suggesting a disparity between what knowledge or interest is held and what is espoused (Rinehart 1988). Numerous studies have indicated a reluctance or timidity on the part of girls to answer political questions; on surveys, females are more likely than men to select the response: “don’t know” (Greenstein 1961, Dowse and Hughes 1971). Westholm et al. (1990) described gaps in knowledge, but reported

differences in political participation of adolescents to be trivial or nonexistent. Thus, the evidence remains contradictory as to whether girls are truly less interested and knowledgeable in politics or are simply less likely to express their interest.

More recently scholars have turned their attention to the gendered nature of political institutions and processes that shape participation as much or more than individual factors. Pedagogical or political settings that reward behavior typically regarded as "male" or "aggressive" may magnify insignificant differences in knowledge, interest, and participation. Females may be discouraged from engaging in "masculine" activities for fear of being perceived as unfeminine. At a minimum, Sigel and Hoskin (1981) argue that women in almost all societies find less encouragement than men, both in terms of obvious expectations of political roles and in implicit social norms of their communities. As a result, politics emerges as a masculine, status-laden domain that seems unapproachable to young females.

### **THE RESEARCH SETTING AND DESIGN**

This study describes and poses explanations for gender differences in participation observed at the 1999 MUNSW, which attracts Texas and Oklahoma adolescents to consider global political issues. Participating schools compose one or more teams representing individual nation(s). Countries are assigned after considering delegate qualifications and experience as indicated on applications completed by the delegates. Delegates select a committee on which they will serve at the conference to discuss and debate resolutions. Delegates debate resolutions for the first three days in smaller committees and then convene in larger assemblies to debate resolutions approved by the individual committees. Delegates are expected to research their country and write resolutions that simulate a position their country would take in an actual United Nations Conference.

The conference is run by OU students who serve as MUNSW committee chairs, parliamentarians, and organizing staff. By popular vote of the delegates, awards are given to the best individual delegates in each committee, and the best overall delegations are selected on the

basis of individual delegate awards and MUNSW staff assessments. Those individuals who are best able to express, debate, and justify their opinions in this setting are more likely to succeed.

Based on the aforementioned literature, several hypotheses framed the research. We expected to find that:

- Adolescent females would display less political interest and knowledge in world affairs.
- Adolescent females would participate less than adolescent males, due in large part to structural variables related to the conference itself.
- Adolescent females would participate more in traditionally gender-appropriate activities and committees.
- Adolescent males would be more satisfied with their participation and more likely to participate again.

To test the study hypotheses, we employed several research strategies. Research assistants coded data on delegate experience and backgrounds from all application forms. Delegates also completed a pre-conference survey focusing on demographic characteristics, motivations, and media attentiveness in world affairs. At the conference, trained coder/observers monitored 97 hours of committee deliberations (67.5 percent of the entire conference and 85.4 percent of the committee sessions) for attendance, sex of the chair, the frequency and nature of speech-making, and the frequency and nature of verbal interruptions. In addition, the coder/observers recorded qualitative observations regarding interaction among delegates, nonverbal behavior, formal and informal leadership behavior, and incidents of discriminatory or sexist behavior. On the final day of the conference, delegates completed a final survey asking them to assess the effectiveness of their own performance, the traits of the most effective delegates, and their satisfaction with the experience. In total, 227 participants completed the pre-conference survey and 207 completed the post-conference survey (response rates of 59.3 percent and 54.0 percent respectively of the 382 delegates).

The coders/observers underwent two hours of training prior to the event in order to ensure consistency in the coding of turn taking by delegates and the type of speaking behavior. At the conclusion of the training, coders completed a pretest, coding a videotaped excerpt of a practice MUNSW debate. The reliability of the pretest of coder identification of speaking turns and speaker sex was almost perfect (Alpha = .99, mean inter-item correlation of coders scores = .92), and the reliability of coder identification of eight different speaking behaviors was also extremely high (Alpha = .99, mean inter-item correlation of coders' scores = .85).

One limitation of the study is the inability to match pre-conference and post-conference delegate surveys with individual delegate behavior. Other limitations of the study are the inability to measure length of speeches or to follow specifically the behavior of active delegates. None of these limitations detract from the ability to draw conclusions about the patterns of participation by male and female delegates or to identify structural features of the event that influence participation.

## RESULTS

Clear gender differences in participation were evident at the MUNSW. To understand the possible sources of participation differences, we consider below who came to the conference and why, who participated and in what ways, how satisfied delegates were with their participation, and finally what factors enhanced participation.

### WHO CAME AND WHY

Females comprised 46.6 percent of the total conference attendance and came with almost identical backgrounds, qualifications and experience as the male delegates. Based on the analysis of all delegate application forms, 45.7 percent of the females and 49.0 percent of the males had at least one year of prior Model UN experience. About one-third had debate experience (39.3 percent of the females and 32.0 percent of the males) or some other public speaking experience (33.5 percent of the females and 30.5 percent of the males).

One of the few significant differences in the backgrounds of the participants is age: female delegates were significantly younger (on average six months). The number of female delegates exceeds that of males in early grades, peaks in the tenth grade and then drops off from that of the males in eleventh and twelfth grade. Table 1 shows the grade in school of the delegates.

Overall, remarkably few of the delegates reported reading about world events on a daily basis or at least four or more times a week. The female delegates reported slightly lower frequency of reading news articles about world affairs, but the difference did not reach

**TABLE 1**  
**Delegates by Grades**

Grade		Female	Male
7 <sup>th</sup>	No.	7	7
	%	5.9	6.5
8 <sup>th</sup>	No.	16	7
	%	13.4	6.5
9 <sup>th</sup>	No.	27	14
	%	22.7	13.0
10 <sup>th</sup>	No.	36	23
	%	30.3	21.3
11 <sup>th</sup>	No.	21	30
	%	17.6	27.8
12 <sup>th</sup>	No.	11	26
	%	9.2	24.1
College	No.	1	1
	%	0.8	0.9
Total	No.	119	108
	%	100.0	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square = 17.686, df 6, p = .007

statistical significance. Only one-fourth of the female delegates (25.2 percent) and one-third of the male delegates (35.5 percent) characterized their attentiveness to world events with this frequency, while one-fourth of female delegates (27.7 percent) and one-fifth of the male delegates (17.3 percent) said they read about world affairs less than once a week.

In the pre-survey, delegates rated the importance of nine different factors that motivated their participation in the MUNSW. Factor analysis of the questions suggest two over-arching motivations that bring students to the event. These include:

- students who are drawn to the substance of the event (e.g. interest in world affairs, enjoyment of competitive events, the attraction of an academic challenge, or an affinity for politics and government); and
- students who are motivated by extrinsic factors (e.g. encouragement from parents or teachers, an opportunity to miss school, to be with friends, or to try something new).

No significant differences in motivation distinguished the male and female delegates.

The evidence of gender preferences in the selection of committee assignments is quite strong. The MUNSW offers students an opportunity to select from among five committees, depending upon the size of the country and its role in international affairs. The four main committees for delegate participation are Human Rights, Special Political, Crime and Criminal Justice, and International Security and Disarmament. Only a handful of countries participate as members of the Security Council, where geopolitical crises dominate the agenda. Because students moved frequently among committees, attendance figures were taken at regular and frequent intervals throughout the conference, and the average proportion of females in attendance was calculated for each committee as an indication of committee preferences.

The composition of the four largest committees is distinctly gendered with female delegates disproportionately over-represented on the Human Rights Committee (56.7 percent of the average attendance) and disproportionately under-represented on the Security Council (34.6 percent of the average attendance) and International Security and



Disarmament (38.6 percent of the average attendance). Clearly these committees more than others are stereotypically focused on issues with a gender perspective. For instance, International Security and Disarmament considers “masculine” or “aggressive” resolutions, including terrorism, nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, land mines, and U.N. jurisdiction in arms issues. The Security Council also focuses on more masculine questions including military conflicts, state terrorism, specific geo-political crises such as the Israel-Palestine problem, Iraq, and Algeria, and peacekeeping missions. The Human Rights Committee agenda was dominated by more “feminine” issues such as contraception and population control, rights of women and children, persecution of racial and ethnic groups, and inhumane forms of punishment. The Special Political Committee and Crime and Criminal Justice Committee considered a variety of issues, including the Internet, outer space, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), few of which have obvious feminine or masculine identifications.

Scholars have debated whether women public officials gravitate toward social welfare, family and children’s issues out of interest, expertise, choice, coercion or opportunity. Research on state legislators demonstrates that women freely choose committees that tend to focus on more “feminine issues” (Thomas 1994). Choice is presumed to be largely determined by gendered socialization that shapes women and men’s interest in different ways and reflects the power and prestige these issues have within the legislative body (Kathlene, 1995). These data suggest that even among novice adolescent statespersons, policy issues had strong gender-stereotypic pulls since student delegates exercise considerable autonomy in choosing their committees. Given their age, committee choice most likely reflects interests and socialization more than expertise or lack of opportunity.

### **WHO PARTICIPATES AND HOW**

In spite of the fact that males and females attend the MUNSW in equal numbers and with very similar qualifications, their participation in debate is anything but equal. Two measures of participation were coded: 1) interrupting behavior, and 2) speech-making behavior. Individual

delegates presented resolutions or amendments for debate. Interrupting behavior included all of the questioning and parliamentary maneuvering that took place in response to a delegate presentation. When a committee was procedurally on debate, delegates made formal speeches in support or opposition to a resolution or amendment. Interrupting behavior was clearly invited and recognized by the chair of the committee after a speech was been concluded (e.g. "Are there questions for the delegate?").

At the 1999 MUNSW, males took twice as many turns as females. Male delegates made 265 speeches, 68.7 percent of all of the speeches recorded in committee deliberations; male delegates also made 965 interruptions, 65.1 percent of all of the interruptions recorded. The 38 field reports of conference coder/observers confirmed the dominance of male turn taking but also highlighted the relatively small number of very active female delegates from a few delegations. In other words, the vast majority of female delegates to the MUNSW participated only minimally if at all. A larger proportion of males took turns, though very active male delegates also dominated, according to the field reports.

While the basic pattern of male dominance was characteristic of all of the MUNSW committees, participation by male and female delegates varied by committee, suggesting the importance of certain factors in enhancing participation. Female turn taking is clearly greater in committees that are smaller, have proportionately more female delegates, are chaired by a female, or operate with rigorously applied rules for recognizing as many delegates as possible. Table 2 shows the ratio of male to female interruptions coded by committee, ratio of interruptions when the chair of the committee was male or female, average percentage of females on the committee, and the size of the committee.

As Table 2 illustrates, three variables are associated with enhanced female participation: a higher percentage of female delegates in attendance, smaller committee size, and a female chair. Using regression analysis to control for multiple effects, these three variables still had significant positive associations with female turn taking. The largest committees (Special Political and International Security and Disarmament) had the lowest proportion of female turn taking. In the largest committee (Special Political), one observer reported a period of almost 90 minutes during which no female was recognized for debate

**TABLE 2****Male/Female Interruptions by Committee and Chair**

Committee	Percent Females in Attendance	Percent Female Interruptions	Average Size of Committee	Sex of Chair	Ratio of Male/Female Interruptions by Chair
Human Rights	56.7	39.2	36.0	Male Female	4.75 1.26
Int. Security & Disarmament	38.6	22.6	73.5	Male Female	3.43 3.03
Crime & Criminal Justice	51.7	52.5	41.0	Male	0.96
Security Council	34.6	35.6	15.7	Female	1.35
Special Political	42.3	22.3	105.8	Male	2.79
Overall Conference	46.6	34.9	N/A		2.12

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

or questions even though several female delegates raised their hands for recognition. The committees with the largest proportion of females (Human Rights and Crime and Criminal Justice) also had the highest proportion of female interruptions. This finding is consistent with Kathlene's (1995) analysis of Colorado legislative committees in which women participate on more equal terms in committees with proportionately more women.

The role of the chair is also critical. Excluding the chair of the Crime and Criminal Justice Committee whose procedural management was unique, MUNSW male chairs on average called on male delegates twice as often as did female chairs. On average, male chairs recognized just over three male interruptions for each female interruptions, while on average female chairs recognized 1.67 male interruptions for each female interruption. This difference in ratios would have a probability of occurring by chance less than one time in a thousand. Kathlene (1995) found that female chairs are more likely to recognize female committee members and thereby to enhance the participation of women legislators. At the MUNSW, the Crime and Criminal Justice Committee chair was the most egalitarian in terms of recognizing delegates. What distinguished that chair's methods was a disciplined application of procedural rules giving preference to first-time speakers or less active delegates over more assertive and highly active delegates who spoke often. The chair kept track of speaking turns and would deliberately call first upon the least active delegates when several delegates sought recognition at the same time.

Aside from these structural features, the qualitative field reports provided evidence that lower levels of female participation stem in part from tentativeness or reluctance to speak. Several coder/observers reported that female delegates and younger delegates delayed joining the debate. These data are consistent with Kathlene's (1995) analysis of taped Colorado legislative committee hearings, in which women, on average, waited until more than two-thirds of the hearing was over before they uttered their first words, while men engaged immediately. At the MUNSW, the general proportion of male-to-female turn taking did not vary over the course of the conference. Notably, however, coder/observers reported that younger males seemed to overcome their tentativeness and join the debate, while female delegates were no more

likely to speak in committee meetings later in the conference than early in the conference.

In delegations with both male and female members, several coder/observers noted instances of female members deferring to male colleagues with regard to speaking responsibilities. Four coder/observers noted female delegates preparing questions or gathering information for their male colleagues who then spoke on behalf of the delegation. Tentativeness may in part be a response to the prevalence of aggressive norms and male dominance in the setting. These findings are consistent with research on classroom behavior. They found that boys communicate ownership of school space by using aggressive or disruptive behavior.

Male and female delegates engaged in parliamentary interruptions and questioning with different frequency depending upon whether the initial speaker was a male or female. Table 3 shows the number of interruptions recorded when the initial speaker was a male or female delegate. On average, males took almost four interrupting turns when the initial speaker was a male but less than three interrupting turns when the initial speaker was a female. By contrast, females took only one and a half-interrupting turns when the initial speaker was male. Female delegates were least likely to question male delegates, but just as likely as the males to question other females. Both male and female delegates discriminate among whom they interrupt. Clearly male to male interactions are more common, and these data confirm the reluctance of females to challenge adolescent males for ownership of speaking time. The MUNSW results also parallel research by Kathlene (1995) who noted that aggressive turn-taking men challenged men more often than women. She argues that more aggressive male-to-male interaction is a form of ignoring women who are treated as intruders into an essentially male domain.

Another factor affecting participation and interaction among delegates was dress. The conference rules require "professional dress or country dress" at all times (MUNSW, 5), however, wide variation in attire was evident. In 33 of 38 field reports, coder/observers made notations about the dress of the delegates and the associated reactions of delegates to each other. The reports focused on how attire affected the level of respect that speakers earned from their colleagues, how dress communicated the appearance of self-confidence of the speaker, and the association between dress and effectiveness of the speaker.

In total, 21 of the coder/observers commented on female attire and only 14 mentioned male attire. Females who were dressed inappropriately, either for the situation or for their sex, generally elicited negative reactions or were dismissed as less than serious by fellow delegates. Several female delegates during one session wore men's suit jackets and ties, suggesting that they perceived male business attire to be the norm for such events. The active female delegates were dressed in more formal business suits, skirts and blouses, while the least active female delegates typically wore sportswear or casual teen fashions. By contrast, active male delegates could be seen in both suits as well as jeans and t-shirts and were generally accepted as serious participants

TABLE 3

**Interruptions in Response to Initial Speaker Sex**

	Male	Female
Mean No. of Interruptions by Male Delegates	3.79	2.85%*
Receiving No Interruptions By Male Delegates	34.0	34.1
Mean No. of Interruptions by Female Delegates	1.43	2.70%***
Receiving No Interruptions by Female Delegates	46.0	47.6

\*  $p < .05$   
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

regardless of their attire or mannerisms. The coder/observers reported examples of male delegates who displayed bantering, theatrical and unconventional behavior and still were regarded as effective leaders. The same did not hold for females. Even among the coder/observers, more commented about the dress of the female delegates than of the males and many joined in to the negative critique of female dress.

Other evidence suggests that active female delegates do not experience the MUNSW conference in the same way as their active male colleagues. Active female delegates are judged more harshly by their fellow delegates than active male delegates. Out of the 31 reports that described reactions to active delegates, the coder/observers noted disproportionately more positive reactions and fewer negative responses directed toward active males by fellow delegates. In addition, fellow delegates are more likely to reward male delegates with best delegate awards.

Based on the past six annual MUNSW conferences, male and female delegates are just as likely to be members of winning delegations, but male delegates are twice as likely to win recognition for their individual performances. In 1999, 20 females were nominated for best delegate in their committees compared with 50 males. By similar proportions of more than two to one, male delegates won more awards as best delegates. Interestingly, almost half of the individual recognitions won by female delegates went to one all-female delegation. While it is difficult to draw too many conclusions from the performance of a single delegation, the success of this particular all-female delegation support those who claim single-sex educational settings are advantageous for girls.

While instances of blatant sexism were not numerous, 12 coder/observers noted examples of preferential treatment toward male over female delegates and flirting initiated by one male MUNSW staff with female delegates and flirting between and initiated by both male and female delegates.

### **HOW DO DELEGATES SEE THEIR OWN ROLES**

The post-conference surveys provide some insights into what delegates liked and disliked about the experience and how the delegates

perceived their own performance. The responses to several items reveal significant differences.

Among the MUNSW delegates, males on average rated their personal effectiveness on a seven-point scale significantly higher than did the females. Overall, however, the male and female delegates did not differ in their responses to questions about their overall enjoyment of the event or their likelihood to participate in future conferences.

Significant differences were evident regarding which aspects of the conference delegates enjoyed most and personal attributes delegates felt would be most important to improve upon to enhance their effectiveness. The males on average indicated significantly greater enjoyment of the competitive aspects of the event (e.g. passing one's own resolution, debating issues, and defeating resolutions).

Delegates were asked to indicate which of ten characteristics would most likely improve their performance; these traits included aggressive, attractive, competitive, confident, considerate, cooperative, diplomatic, friendly, knowledgeable, and outspoken. At least one in three delegates identified the traits of aggressiveness, confidence, knowledge, and outspokenness. One important gender difference emerges from the post-conference survey responses: over 61.0 percent of the female delegates identified self-confidence as a characteristic that they wanted to improve while 35.1 percent of the male delegates identified this factor ( $p < .001$ ). Table 4 reports the characteristics delegates most want to improve.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gendered forms of behavior are learned very early through child's play (Tannen 1998). Traditionally, masculine play behavior is associated with competition and aggression, while female behavior is more cooperative and relationship oriented. While learned in childhood, these styles get reenacted as the dominant modes of leadership among adultpolitical leaders including state legislative committee chairs (Rosenthal 1998). The MUNSW data suggest that in early adolescence these gendered preferences and styles have been learned and are practiced in extracurricular activities.

Even though the adolescents attend in equal numbers, these data suggest that the MUNSW is largely geared toward male adolescents.



TABLE 4

**Performance Characteristics Participants Most Wanted to Improve**

Characteristics	Male	Female
	% Identifying Characteristic	% Identifying Characteristic
Aggression	35.1	41.0
Confidence ***	35.1	61.0
Competitiveness	13.5	19.0
Knowledge	45.9	48.6
Outspokenness	31.5	35.2

\*\*\* =  $p < .001$

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

The similarity between the backgrounds, preparatory experiences, and motivations of the delegates suggest that we must look beyond the delegates for answers to the puzzle of why female adolescents participate at much lower levels than their male colleagues at the MUNSW.

For teachers, coaches and organizers of extracurricular events like the Model UN, important lessons can be learned from these data. First, adolescents have already learned gendered norms of behavior through political socialization, which they reenact in such extracurriculars. Second, if these events are to be effective agents of political socialization, then the structure of the event must be sensitive to gender differences. Third, it is important to be aware of the risks taken by female delegates who want to fully engage in the event.

The MUNSW female delegates reenacted behaviors in this extracurricular activity that were highly deferential. The tentativeness and lack of turn-taking by female delegates suggest that adolescent females already have doubts about whether they are qualified to participate in roles of political leadership. As important as identifying the source of these learned gender behaviors are the normative

implications — reduced female participation in high school extracurricular activities has consequences for future political leadership (Glanville 1999).

Second, such events can be structured to enhance the participation of all delegates and to level the playing field for female delegates. Several useful pedagogical recommendations can be drawn from this analysis. The MUNSW and similar simulations should:

- operate with smaller committees and randomly assign males and females in equal proportions to their overall attendance to ensure a critical mass necessary to promote greater female participation;
- structure committee jurisdictions around a range of issues so that participants get exposed to a variety of issues and are less likely to focus on gender-specific agendas that limit participation;
- train committee chairs to operate with strict decision rules that facilitate recognizing delegates who are more tentative or less assertive over delegates who aggressively pursue speaking on virtually every issue;
- encourage teachers and coaches to redouble their efforts to prepare their students for the event through advance research and practice of speaking and parliamentary skills;
- enforce conference rules with respect to appropriate professional attire and encourage teachers and coaches to counsel delegates about the importance of self-presentation in relationship to effectiveness;
- encourage same-sex delegations so that female delegates are less likely to be in a deferential relationship.

The delegates' perceptions of how to improve their personal effectiveness in the MUNSW also offer useful insights for teachers, coaches and organizers of such events.

Finally, teachers, coaches and organizers of competitive political simulations like the Model UN need to be aware of the risks taken by female delegates who want to fully engage in the event. Boys (more often than girls) have been found to ascribe women politicians with

unfeminine characteristics (Dowse and Hughes, 1971). In classroom studies, even girls are unsympathetic to other girls who regularly chose to compete with boys, regarding them as having overstepped their boundaries. Similarly, many people express doubts concerning women's capabilities in managerial and leadership roles, and these doubts are exacerbated by any tendency for women in these roles to take charge in an especially authoritative manner (Eagly and Johnson, 1990).

The evidence from these data suggest that those females who want to be successful must, at the risk of negative reactions from peers, be willing to adopt more aggressive or "male" styles of behavior. Politics is an area that is traditionally male, and females who enter the domain can encounter harsh reactions. As a result, politics may seem unapproachable and full of risks for young females. We speculate that the drop in participation by 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade female in the MUNSW is due to the cumulative lessons learned about international relations as a male domain, the aggressive turn-taking required in such simulations, and negative experiences that adolescent females may encounter in such settings. Educators can level the playing field by structuring learning experiences to circumvent gender norms and build the confidence of young women for future political participation.

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