

The Forensic

of Pi Kappa Delta

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Putting the Gender in "Gender Parity": Breaking New Methodological Ground in the Debate over Gender Equity in Forensics

JENNIFER FURGERSON, WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
JUSTIN RUDNICK, OHIO UNIVERSITY

Are They Getting What They Need? An Analysis of the Skills Former Collegiate Forensic Competitors Find Most Useful in Their Current Careers

JACE T. LUX, WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Service-Learning and Forensics: A Systematic Literature Review

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The *Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta* invites authors to submit manuscripts related to scholarship, pedagogy, research and administration in competitive and non-competitive speech and debate activities. *The Forensic* welcomes submissions from forensic coaches, communication/rhetoric scholars, and students (undergraduate and graduate).

The Editor and Editorial Board invite scholarly discussion of making competitive individual events and debate powerful tools for teaching essential citizenship practices, including clear and ethical communication. Topics of particular interest to the Editor and Editorial Board include, but are not limited to: ways to increase diversity in forensics, speech/argumentation pedagogy, and transfer as it relates to forensics (e.g., transfer among individual events, debate, and interpretation; transfer between competition and the classroom, and vice versa; transfer between forensics and careers).

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Putting the Gender in “Gender Parity”: Breaking New Methodological Ground in the Debate over Gender Equity in Forensics

JESSICA FURGERSON, WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
JUSTIN RUDNICK, OHIO UNIVERSITY

Abstract: *This piece furthers the longstanding tradition of research concerning gender parity in forensics yet departs methodologically by using self-assessed sex roles rather than post-hoc name coding to operationalize the variable of gender. Supported by theoretical advancements in the study of gender, the authors propose the use of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) as a more appropriate measurement for the performance of gender in competitive forensics. The results of a pilot study using the BSRI as a measure are revealed and implications are discussed concerning the application of this methodology for future study.*

The forensic community has been researching and documenting the role of student gender in collegiate forensics for decades (see Friedley & Manchester, 1985; Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, & Piercy, 1998; Ralston, 2003). Such research has operated on the foundation that men and women make use of different communication styles that affect each gender's success in competitive public speaking. Murphy (1989) argued that forensic activity follows a “rational world paradigm” that privileges the white male communicative style, thus preventing alternative speaking strategies from becoming successful. Such unequal privileging has serious repercussions for students of minority status, considering subordinated students are less likely to value their own voices when those voices are devalued by a larger community (Bartanen, 1995). Almost ten years ago, Bartanen (1995) issued the call to forensic coaches and judges to equally privilege all voices in the activity in order to counteract the natural tendency to privilege majority groups over minority ones—namely, men over women. The extent to which that call has been answered, however, is still being debated.

Despite the wealth of research on gender parity in forensics, the existing literature is riddled with methodological shortcomings pertaining to the measurement of gender. This essay revisits the issue of gender parity, which first became a major subject of interest in the forensic community in the 1980's. In doing so, we make within our

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pilot study two important methodological departures from previous research. First, rather than using a competitor's first name to identify gender in binary terms (male or female) we utilize the Bem Sex Role Inventory to identify one's self-perceived sex role (masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated) providing us with a more inclusive view of gender. Second, while other studies have conducted post-hoc analyses of tournament tabulation reports to assess differences in competitive success between males and females, our study focuses instead on the distribution of participant sex-role categories across the three event genres. After revealing the results of our pilot study we argue that using the BSRI to operationalize the variable of gender both avoids the problematic conflation of sex and gender characteristic of previous research and brings us closer to an understanding of parity in forensics by examining participation levels in relation to an individual's self-perceived sex role rather than their anatomical sex.

Parity in Forensics

The issue of gender in forensics has been discussed within a number of contexts, including the transition from high school to college debate (Shelton & Patterson, 1997), gendered communication styles in debate (Larsen & Vreeland, 1985), and the relationship between student gender and competitive success in both debate (e.g., Larsen & Vreeland, 1985; Millsap & Millsap, 2006; Parker, 2002; Ralston, 2003) and individual events (e.g., Friedley & Manchester, 1985; White, 1997). Those studies that examined gender as it relates to success have typically focused on the number of competitors of each gender that advance to various levels of elimination rounds, as well as the number of men and women who become event champions.

The research reports that have been published thus far almost unanimously point to clear differences between men's and women's success in competitive speech and debate. Findings pertaining to debate have demonstrated a variety of gender differences: women are unequal to men likely due to debate's "masculine" nature (Boone, 2007, p. 25); women have lower retention rates in NPDA than men, which leads women to have lower chances of advancing to elimination rounds due to their comparative lack of experience (Parker, 2002); women are more hesitant and polite in their speaking styles during debate cross-examinations (Larsen & Vreeland, 1985); and female/female parliamentary debate teams are less successful than male/male teams (Ralston, 2003). Upon examining six years of NPDA national debate tournaments, Mazur (2001) found a consistent split in the number of men and women participating in elimination rounds, with elimination rounds being comprised of approximately 70% men and 30% women. Mazur (2001) further reported that of the 380 teams who participated in elimination rounds over a six year period, a mere 39 were female/female teams, only 10 of which ever advanced beyond double octo-finals. At the time of writing, Mazur (2001) noted that no female/female teams had ever won the NPDA

national tournament—a fact that remains true to this day.

Similar results have been documented in individual events research. White (1997) reported that men were more likely to participate in extemporaneous speaking than women, and Olson (2001) found that men receive higher ranks than women in extemporaneous speaking. Friedley and Manchester (1985) uncovered significant gender differences in both the number and success of men and women at both the American Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament and the National Forensic Association Individual Events Nationals. At the 1984 AFA-NIET, 58% of the 861 participants were male whereas 42% were female. However, the gender makeup of competitors in elimination rounds became further divided: 65% of the quarter-finalists were male, whereas only 35% were female. The gap widened in semi-finals with 71% of the semi-finalists being male and 29% being female and was most prevalent in the final rounds of the NIET, with only 13 (20%) of the finalists being females. Similar though less severe trends were found at the 1984 NFA Individual Events National tournament; 52% of the 1096 competitors were male as opposed to 48% female, and 59% of the quarterfinalists, 57% of the semifinalists, and 58% of the finalists were male (females represented 41%, 43%, and 42%, respectively). Replicating their study in 2001, Manchester and Friedley (2003) found similar results, indicating little change in the almost 20 years between cases.

Methodological Shortcomings

The gender gap in participation and success in collegiate forensics is problematic enough, but also of concern for us are the ways in which previous research has observed, measured, and/or reported gender. The most widely used method of determining the gender of competitors in existing forensic research is by categorizing them as either male or female based on their names. However, even if one assumed a high level of congruence between sex and gender—a move that would validate previous conclusions about gender parity in forensics—the use of first names to determine a person's gender is equally problematic. Parents often assign their newborn a name based on two factors: their biological sex and the desired level of androgyny within the name (Liebersen, Dumais, & Baumann, 2000). According to Liebersen, Dumais, and Baumann (2000), parents wishing to avoid androgynous names such as "Jordan" (p. 1250) are more apt to name their children conventionally gendered names such as "John" or "Mary" (p. 1255). Their findings suggest that not only are names primarily dictated by sex rather than gender, but that, if and when they do reflect gender, the gender being reflected is not that of the child but that of the parents' desired gender identity. Though it is possible when dealing with a college-aged population for participants to have adopted a different name than the one assigned at birth, it is highly unlikely that all participants would have pursued a name change to reflect their felt gender identity.

Even in the event of a mass renaming, there is no reason to believe that one's name is associated with their gender or, more specifically, their performance of maleness or femaleness. Rickel and Anderson (1981) found no significant relationship between sex, first name classification (male, female, androgynous), and BSRI categories, indicating that first names are not an appropriate way to operationalize neither sex nor gender. Regardless, the most common method of identifying competitor gender continues to be through the "coding" of first names. Millsap and Millsap (2006) explained that they determined competitor sex based on the first name of the student, but reported the competitor's *gender* in their findings. Similarly, Friedley and Manchester (1985), Ralston (2008), and White (1997) all reported to determine sex and/or gender based on first name, contacting various members of the forensics community to help differentiate students with "ambiguous" names. Mazur (2001) claimed to have "coded" the data for gender, leaving us to assume that the distinction was also based on competitor name. Therefore, while previous research might tell us something about participation/success levels of people with stereotypical male or female names, it tells us little, if anything, about sex or gender differences in forensics.

Few studies have articulated other methods of determining student sex or gender, though cases do exist. For example, Nadler (1985) asked participants to self-report their gender, yet provided only two options (male and female). Similarly, Parker (2002) asked participants to report their gender but did not explain whether the question was open-ended, allowing for participants to self-report their gender, or closed-ended, providing participants with pre-selected choices for gender that are conflated with biological sex. As an additional method, Larson and Vreeland (1985) explained that "the cross-examination periods of eighteen Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) debates were recorded" (p. 19) and that their sample was comprised of "forty-three men and twenty-one women" (p. 20). Unfortunately, Larson and Vreeland did not explain how the genders of the participants were determined, leading us to suspect that gender was equated with the participants' observable biological sex. Similarly, Olson (2001) used experimental design to determine "who received higher scores [in extemporaneous speaking], men or women" (p. 11) without explaining the means by which the gender or sex of the competitors were determined. The ambiguity present in how competitor gender was determined in these studies opens the door for questioning whether competitor gender or biological sex was used as a variable in the research. These methods lead us to question whether what we know about "gender parity in forensics" is an accurate portrayal of inequity based on gender or merely descriptive of sex segregation in the activity.

Also concerning is the large swath of research in forensics concerning gender parity that deployed methodologies conflating gender and sex. As discussed above, one common methodological approach utilizes a participant's name to identify both their sex and gender as if

the two were interchangeable. Friedly and Manchester's (1985) study, which has often been cited as a model for successive studies of gender in forensics, is demonstrative of such a conflation; as they explain, "the participant's [*sic*]sex was determined by noting obviously sex-typed first names. When a participant's first name was not gender-specific, identification was determined through consultation with various directors of forensics" (p.3; see also Manchester & Friedley, 2003). However, "treating sex and gender as though they represent identical phenomena provides a limited understanding of the myriad ways in which any kind of identity informs behavior" (McDermott & Hatemi, 2011, p. 91). The conflation of sex and gender in previous forensics research also prompts us to ask whether our concern is about parity between biological males and females or between individuals who self-identify with masculine or feminine gender roles. If our concern is on the latter, which previous research would seem to suggest, then the methods used to measure competitor gender roles in prior research simply cannot speak to this issue.

Incorporating a New Methodology

The first and most important methodological modification was the use of survey data rather than post-hoc analyses of tournament results. Survey data is uniquely valuable for two reasons. First, unlike post-hoc data analysis, the collection of data via survey methods allows participants to self-report their own biological sex *and* gender identity. Therefore, survey data allows us to overcome the shortfalls concomitant with using names as a marker of sex/gender and to draw conclusions specifically pertaining to either sex, gender, or both. Second, collecting surveys allows researchers to make sense of ambiguous data that with a post-hoc analysis of results is typically discarded. White (1997) reported having to dismiss 72 cases (out of 1,345 or 5.3%) with ambiguous first names in her study of gender inequity in Persuasive and Extemporaneous speaking because she could not determine the participant's sex even after consultation with members of the forensics community. Survey methods therefore provide a more accurate and more complete picture of gender in forensics than is possible through post-hoc analysis of tournament results.

When collecting survey data, sex and gender information is typically solicited through a single question (i.e., "What is your sex?" or "What is your gender?") with two response options (male or female); however, this approach "does not allow researchers to organize information at a level of specificity needed to create advances" (Tate, Ledbetter, & Youssef, 2012, p. 3) in their particular contexts. As such, we suggest the use of a two-question method that asks participants to self-identify both their sex and gender, which allows researchers to classify participants as either cisgender (persons whose gender identity is the same as their birth-assigned sex category) or transgender (persons whose gender identity differs from their birth-assigned sex category). This approach not only recognizes the pivotal distinction between sex and gender, but also enables researchers to draw richer

conclusions about gender inequity within forensics by moving outside the binary conceptualization of gender that fail to account for persons who do not identify as either male or female. The forensic community has long prided itself on being a place for all persons, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, age, or ability to come together, and it is time our research reflected this openness.

In addition to asking participants to self-report their sex and gender, we believe it is equally important in the context of forensics to measure one's perceived gender identity or sex-role as previous research has attempted to explain differences in parity based on masculinity and femininity without accessing these traits. Although various instruments exist that measure levels of self-perceived masculinity and femininity, such as the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, the most reliable for measuring gender identity is the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974). Utilizing gender schema theory (Bem, 1981), which holds that individuals understand maleness and femaleness through a system (or schema) of linked associations, the Bem Sex Role Inventory seeks to assess the degree and nature of an individual's perceived personal sex typing, or gender identity, through the sole use of self-report items. McDemott and Hatemi (2011) argue:

No *a priori* assumption regarding the relationship between an individual's gender construction and biological sex exists in this theoretical model. Each factor can vary independently, such that individuals can be defined as masculine females or feminine males; alternatively, one may be both highly masculine and feminine or neither. (p. 90)

Using the BSRI in conjunction with participant self-reporting of sex and gender provides two key benefits for researching gender parity in forensics. First, unlike previous research, the use of the BSRI allows us to account for individuals whose gender identity diverges from their biologically assigned sex or their assumed gender identity. Second, using the BSRI enables us to speak about parity in gendered terms (masculine and feminine) rather than biological terms (male or female), providing a more accurate view of participation/success levels and the underlying causes of inequity.

Although Bem's categorization depends on what some would consider a problematic binary between maleness and femaleness, Schmitt and Millard (1988) highlighted the construct validity of these categories, noting that both male and female sex-typed individuals demonstrated considerable bipolarity in their responses to the M/F items whereas androgynous and undifferentiated participants demonstrated little variance in their M/F scores. The items on the BSRI were originally developed by asking 100 male and female college students to rate the desirability of personality traits for either a woman or a man; however, it is important to note that the BSRI is not intended to assess the desirability of sex role traits, but rather to measure the self-perceived presence of such traits amongst respondents.

Follow up analyses testing the applicability of the BSRI's trait items to different cultures (e.g., Colley, Mulhern, Maltby, & Wood, 2008; Leung & Moore, 2003; Peng, 2006) and time periods (e.g., Fernandez & Coello, 2010; Hoffman & Borders, 2001; Holt & Ellis, 1998) than Bem's original 1970's college undergraduate population have demonstrated the relative stability of these constructs despite varying contexts of application. Though the BSRI has been criticized as essentialist and stereotypical in its definition of masculinity and femininity, factor analysis of the 60 items on the BSRI demonstrates the validity of these constructs; Choi, Fuqua, and Newman's (2008) research revealed that both males and females continue to rate feminine traits as highly desirable for females (mean score of 5.45 on 7-point scale) and masculine traits as highly desirable for males (mean score of 5.95 on 7-point scale). It is for these reasons that, despite theoretical and methodological concerns, "the BSRI continues to be the most widely used measure in all areas of gender research" (Hoffman & Borders, 2001, p. 40). While we agree that the trait items and the corresponding constructs of masculinity and femininity within the BSRI are both over-limiting and problematic, the inventory remains one of the only valid instruments for measuring the participants' perceived performance of maleness and femaleness, which has resulted in its continued scholarly use and our selection of it herein.

Previous research on gender parity in forensics is riddled with methodological deficiencies that undermine the legitimacy of their findings. Through the use of self-report survey methods in addition to the deployment of the Bem Sex Role Inventory, we believe these deficiencies can be corrected. In order to determine the feasibility of this methodology a pilot study was conducted using the following research questions to guide our study:

RQ1: Is there a difference between a participant's reported sex and BSRI category in Limited Preparation events?

RQ2: Is there a difference between a participant's reported sex and BSRI category in Oral Interpretation events?

RQ3: Is there a difference between a participant's reported sex and BSRI category in Public Address events?

Methods

Participants

Participants for this study were 117 undergraduate students entered in a nationally competitive regular season tournament held in the fall of 2012. This tournament was chosen because of its reputation to draw a sizeable portion of the forensic population from various regions of the country; 47 schools from 21 states were present at the tournament. Participants varied from novice competitors ($N = 37$) to varsity competitors ($N = 80$). When asked to self-report their sex, 42.7% ($n = 50$) of our participants identified as male, 51.3% ($n = 60$) identified as female, and seven participants did not provide a label. In

terms of self-reported gender, 54 participants (46.2%) listed some variation of masculinity (e.g., male, guy, heterosexual male), 58 (49.6%) listed some variation of femininity (e.g., girl, woman, female), one participant listed both masculine and feminine, and four participants did not provide their gender. After we calculated each participant's sex-role based on the BSRI measure, 48 participants (41%) were categorized as male-sex typed, 21 (17.9%) were female-sex typed, 21 (17.9%) were categorized as Androgynous, and 27 (23.1%) were categorized as Undifferentiated. Participants also varied in the number of years they participated in forensics ($M = 4.81$) and the number of years they participated in collegiate forensics specifically ($M = 2.08$). The median number of events participants were entered in at the tournament was 3, with the number of events ranging from one to five. Number of events did not include Duo Interpretation, as that event involves two competitors.

Procedures

After securing IRB clearance, we recruited participants via convenience sampling by distributing surveys at the tournament. Competitors were notified of the study prior to the tournament by way of a flyer advertising the study which was distributed through the Individual Events Listserv. Surveys were compiled and packaged into envelopes for easy distribution and return; each envelope contained an informed consent form, a two-page survey (one page requesting demographic information, the other containing the BSRI) and a granola bar as compensation for participation in the study. Surveys were made available to competitors throughout the course of the tournament weekend at the Visual Aid check station in addition to being distributed to competitors by judges. The surveys consisted of open-ended prompts which asked each participant to report their name, tournament code, sex, gender, and number of years competing in collegiate forensics. Competitors were then directed to indicate whether they were competing in novice or varsity divisions as well as all events they were entered in. Following this, participants completed the BSRI by rating how "true" of themselves they felt each of the 60 attribute items were by rating each item on a scale from 1 ("never or almost never true") to 7 ("always or almost always true").

Measures

Following completion of the data collection process, the participant demographic portions of the surveys were used to match participants with their preliminary round scores to code for those participants who advanced to elimination rounds. Participants were assigned a code for each event they entered resulting in 323 unique data points. However, due to low sample size, significant conclusions about competitor success could not be drawn from the data.

Sex-role type. The BSRI consists of 60 attribute items that are ranked by respondents on a 7-point Likert-type scale to indicate the

extent to which they believe an item describes them; 20 items reflect general cultural assumptions about masculinity ("M"; e.g. aggressive, analytical, self-reliant), 20 items reflect general cultural assumptions about femininity ("F"; e.g. yielding, affectionate, loyal), and the remaining 20 items are neutral ("N"; e.g. helpful, moody, conventional) in nature (see Appendix for the full BSRI and identification of items). Responses are then converted into an M-score and an F-score by taking the mean score for the corresponding items. Respondents are then placed into one of four corresponding sex-role categories based on their M- and F-scores (see Table 1 for category divisions). Individuals falling within either the male sex-typed or female sex-typed categories are considered gender schematic and are more likely to associate themselves with traditional standards of masculinity/femininity than those considered gender aschematic, who fall within either the androgynous or undifferentiated categories.

Table 1: Sex-role Type based on Masculinity and Femininity Scores

	M-score >4.9	M-score <4.9
F-score >4.9	Androgynous	Female sex-typed
F-score <4.9	Male sex-typed	Undifferentiated

Each participant’s BSRI category was determined using the standard scoring procedure; each participant’s M-score, F-score, and BSRI category were transformed into variables for the purpose of our analysis. In the event that a participant could not be cleanly placed into a BSRI category (i.e. M/F score = 4.9), their androgyny score was calculated by subtracting the M score from the F score. Participants with androgyny scores $\leq .5$ were placed in either the androgynous or undifferentiated categories based on their other score (for example, participants with an M-score = 4.9 and F-score = 5 would be placed in the androgynous category whereas a participant with M-score = 4.9 and F-score = 4.8 would be placed in the undifferentiated category), and participants with androgyny scores $> .5$ were placed in the sex-role category with the highest score (Bem, 1974).

Results

We performed a series of Chi-square tests for independence to determine if a significant difference exists between participant sex and their BSRI category within the three genres of forensics competition offered: Limited Prep, Oral Interpretation, and Public Address. In performing this test, the BSRI categories Androgynous and Undifferentiated were combined to account for aschematic individuals not performing either a traditional male or female sex-role.

Limited Prep

RQ1 asked “Is there a difference between a participant’s reported sex and BSRI category in Limited Preparation events?” A chi-square test for independence indicated a significant difference between a

participant’s sex and gender role in the Limited Preparation events, $c^2(2, 89) = 6.749, p = .034$. Table 2 shows the frequency distribution across each BSRI category for males and females competing in the Limited Preparation events.

Table 2: Sex and BSRI Category Distribution in Limited Preparation Events

BSRI Identity	Males	Females	Total
Masculine	24	20	44
Androgynous/ Undifferentiated	21	11	32
Feminine	3	10	13
Total	48	41	89

A closer examination of these frequencies shows that the distribution of sex-roles, or gender identities, skews heavily towards the masculine with a majority of participants – both male and female– adopting a masculine sex-role (49.44%) compared to either androgynous/undifferentiated (35.96%) or feminine (14.61%). These findings lend some credence to previous reports of a male bias specifically in the event of Extemporaneous Speaking (White, 1997). However, because our data is comprised of an almost equal amount of males and females it is impossible to reduce these differences to biological sex as has previously been done.

Oral Interpretation

RQ2 asked: “Is there a difference between a participant’s reported sex and BSRI category in Oral Interpretation events?” A chi-square test for independence indicated a significant difference between a participant’s sex and gender role in the Oral Interpretation events, $c^2(2, 127) = 14.942, p < .001$. This suggests that there is a significant relationship between a participant’s sex and gender role in the events of Poetry Interpretation, Prose Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation, and Programmed Oral Interpretation. Table 3 shows the frequency distribution across each BSRI category for males and females competing in the Interps.

Table 3: Sex and BSRI Category Distribution in Oral Interpretation Events

BSRI Identity	Males	Females	Total
Masculine	30	23	53
Androgynous/ Undifferentiated	17	38	55
Feminine	2	17	19
Total	49	78	127