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The impact of gender on international relations simulations

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The Impact of Gender on International Relations Simulations

Susan Engel, Deborah Mayersen, David Pedersen, Joakim Eidenfalk

Abstract

Model United Nations (MUN) simulations are an increasingly popular approach to teaching international relations, in both secondary and tertiary education. There is some evidence, however, that these simulations disadvantage female participants. Studies by Rosenthal et al. (2001) and Coughlin (2013) found that female students participate less in simulations than their male classmates. This may limit the value of simulations, which have otherwise been recognized as an effective active learning technique. This study investigates the impact of gender, and an intervention designed to address gender disparities in participation, on a MUN simulation conducted in a second-year undergraduate course. The study confirmed previous findings that women participate less than men, relative to their representation, and that this impacted their resulting grades. Participation was lowest on traditionally masculine topics. Furthermore, women enjoyed the simulation less than men, felt less included, and were less likely to report an increase in their confidence as negotiators following the simulation. The intervention we conducted, designed to ameliorate gender disparities in participation, was unsuccessful and may have inadvertently created a stereotype threat. This highlights that students come to the classroom with strongly gendered expectations, and that a short-term, explicit approach to addressing such expectations is insufficient.

Keywords: gender, simulations, international relations, Model United Nations

Introduction

Gender disparities persist both in the practice and teaching of politics and international relations (IR). Women remain underrepresented in most parliaments, in many key global governance forums, and in the teaching of IR. In Australia, women comprise well over 50 per cent of undergraduate students in the Arts and Humanities and 47 per cent of PhD candidates in politics and IR, yet only 28 per cent of permanent staff in the field (Cowden et al. 2012). Despite such disparities, as Levintova (2018, 90) argued “gender effects in the teaching and learning of political science remain unexamined” (see also Bengo 2018, Knight 2019). This is true outside the discipline too and a lot of literature on gender in tertiary classrooms is dated (Bachman et al. 2009, Ramachandran 2010).

Model United Nations (MUN) are experiential learning simulations in which participants role-play as model diplomats to discuss ideas and develop solutions to global challenges. Research suggests that they are an excellent active learning technique allowing students to develop “skills in leadership, decision making, negotiation, and communication beyond those required by most citizens” (Rosenthal et al. 2001, 633). We have run a MUN as a subject for four years and systematically reviewed the effectiveness of our design, assessments, and use of social media ((Engel, Pallas and Lambert 2017; Pallas, Eidenfalk and Engel 2019) also finding positive outcome. Yet, the

very limited literature indicates that women participate less in MUNs relative to their representation than men (Rosenthal et al. 2001; Coughlin 2013).

Our MUN is a second year core subject in an undergraduate IR major. In Australia, subject enrolments can range from 20-300+ students. Students generally attend lectures together and are divided into smaller groups (maximum 28 in our case) for one or two hour tutorials each week of semester (called discussion sections in the US). Our subject runs over a semester of 11-12 weeks of two-hour tutorials, the last four of which comprise the simulation. With guidance from the teaching staff, students choose a current global issue to debate and then address it by developing a pertinent resolution or resolutions. After collectively establishing a topic, each tutorial composes a list of nations most relevant to their topic and individually select a country to represent. We use a flipped classroom model, with students actively making key decisions throughout semester. Prior to the simulation, students undertake modules on the structure and functions of the UN, diplomacy and negotiation, as well as training on writing policy and briefing papers. The assessment tasks are linked to the module topics and consist of a multiple choice quiz on the UN system (20% of the final mark), a country and position paper (40%) and the final simulation (40%).¹

In 2018, we studied what impact gender has on our simulation and whether we can positively influence this impact through a deliberate gender intervention. At completion of the subject, 137 students had enrolled into six self-selected tutorial groups, only five of these groups are studied as one tutorial had only one male student and was thus excluded. In order to undertake the study, we reviewed the literature on the role of gender in teaching IR and politics, and in simulations specifically, which is presented in the first two sections of the article. We examined literature on the role of gender in negotiation and decision-making, outlined in section three. Further, we developed a methodology to promote women's engagement in the MUN and assess the impacts outlined in the fourth section of the article. The fifth section outlines the results, demonstrating some clear gender disparities in the simulation component and little to no impact from the intervention.

Gender in Politics and IR

Gender is pervasive in the classroom no less than in society. Gender is a social construct, continually shaped and reshaped by human social interaction in myriad different ways. It can be considered as a process, through which gendered dynamics create and reinforce gendered norms and expectations – in families, in schools and universities, and in workplaces (Lorber 1994). Deeply embedded in everyday life, gender forms part of the structure of society, which very often functions as a constraint

¹ The curriculum and learning outcomes were developed using insights from existing literature and are described and analyzed in [ref removed for anonymous review].

on the paths women can take, and those they choose to take (Risman 2004). A structural conception of gender allows for a critical approach that examines the mechanisms currently constructing inequality and question how they might be mitigated through a process of social transformation (Risman 2004). Critical approaches can contribute to a reduction in gendered outcomes, and the ongoing gender disparities, that remain inherent in society.

Gendered norms and expectations still have profound impacts on the practices of politics, women are consistently underrepresented in government with the global average of female politicians being 24.3 per cent (UN Women 2019). Why this is the case is still debated. In the US, Conway (2001) identified ingrained patriarchal norms, the differential acquisition of political skills and the strong influence of mostly male political powerbrokers and ‘gatekeepers’ as significant hindrances to women’s political participation. Investigating women’s political underrepresentation globally, Norris and Inglehart (2001) employed a systematic cross-national methodology to explore gender differences. Finding that cultural perspectives of women’s political representation in post-industrial societies had improved in recent years, but not in post-communist and developing societies, they contended that a nation’s political culture is a significant hinderance to women entering politics. In another cross-national study, Paxton and Konuwich (2003) found that underrepresentation of women results from the combination of a nation’s social structures, its institutional differences in political systems and, most importantly, its ideology. Women’s political participation also continues to be constrained by women having lower perceived political efficacy in both online and offline spaces, although this can be mitigated, to some extent, by feminist identity (Heger and Hoffmann 2019). This literature provides essential insights into women and national politics, however, there has been a limited focus on gender dynamics within multinational organizations such as the United Nations (Enloe 2017).

The substantive representation of women approach looks not just at women’s (under)representation in the sense of the number of women and men, it also focuses on the activity carried out by representatives, that is, the actual, substantive, engagement with gender issues (Celis and Childs 2008). For example, UK research highlighted that the Parliamentary Labour Party’s Women’s Committee has played an important role in ensuring women’s issues are heard (Allen and Childs 2019). Itzkovitch-Malka and Friedberg (2018) illustrated how women in the Israeli parliament tend to emphasise “softer issues” of more importance to women than men, as opposed to for example national security issues. It follows that both the level of representation of women and the substantive representation through topics debated are likely to have a strong impact on MUN simulations, though equally that broader gendered structures already exist in the classroom.

The tertiary classroom environment has traditionally been seen as male dominated and students enter it with a range of gendered experiences from their homes, peers, and previous education (Bachman et al. 2009). Research demonstrating that teachers call on male students more frequently than female students to answer questions and interrupt them less often led Hall and Sandler (1982) introduced the “chilly climate” thesis, suggesting that the norms that developed in the classroom favor men over women. However, as women have become the dominant group in a range of university classrooms, this argument has been regarded as outdated.

The limited new literature indicates inconsistencies in the impact of gender (Hayward 2015). For example, Howard, Zoeller and Pratt (2006) demonstrated that, while more female students as a percentage took part in discussions, their male counterparts were more frequent in speaking up. Canada and Pringle’s study (1995) showed that women were more likely to initiate discussion than men. There are indications that different results can be linked to the research methodology employed. Observational studies have shown little or no differences from gender (Brady and Eisler 1999), while student surveys are more likely to indicate a gender bias (Auster and MacRone, 1994; Crombie et al. 2003). The gender of the teacher can also have an impact on participation. It is quite possible that the “chilly climate” of classrooms may have evolved over time to become a more complex gender environment (Tatum et al. 2013), but gender is still of crucial importance.

There is only a limited literature on the impact of gender in the politics and IR classroom (Bengo 2018, Knight 2019, Levintova 2018), though there is work on teaching gender and politics or IR (e.g. Stienstra 2000). There are also studies on gender’s impact on curriculum and on citation practices (see Knight 2019). Knight (2019) confirmed that the “hidden curriculum” concept remains valid and that it likely perpetuates stereotypes about not just gender, but also ethnicity and power (see also Bengo 2018).

Gender in Model UN Simulations

Using simulations to teach IR has become increasingly popular, especially in the US with MUNs being a favorite method (Crossley-Frolick 2010; Glasgow 2014; Leston-Bandeira 2012; Taylor 2013). Many aspects of teaching MUNs have been explored, however, there is limited literature on the role of gender. Bridge and Radford (2014) reported on students’ perception of the impact of gender, asking them if they felt it played a significant role in their simulation on IR theory, with the vast majority of participants stating it did not. Rosenthal et al. (2001) and Coughlin (2013) both found that women do *not* speak as much as men during MUNs. In both cases, this conclusion was based on measuring the number of speaking engagements of male and female participants in MUNs relative to their overall representation. In addition, Coughlin (2013) found that, despite there being more female

participants in the MUN, they tended to play supportive roles to male students, who were more active in formulating committee resolutions. This fits with broader research on women in negotiations, which has found that women are often not heard in formal negotiations, with Kolb (1996, 141) commenting that “the formal negotiating table is an alien place for many women.” Rosenthal et al. (2001, 643) found that girls did take a more active role if the committee chair was a female and when the topic “deals with less masculine issues.”

Rosenthal et al. (2001) argued that female students do not participate on even terms with male ones in MUNs thanks to gender and political socialization. Citing a range of research, they conclude that: “Gender differences in political socialization emerge prior to adolescence. At an early age and continuing into adolescence, young females appear more reluctant than males to display and act upon political knowledge” (Rosenthal et al. 2001, 635). Socialization has also contributed to women’s reduced influence in negotiation scenarios, due to gender stereotypes teaching women to be deferential or portraying women as bothersome if they speak up. Indeed, Rosenthal et al. (2001) observed not only a significant difference in the level of active participation between young men and women, but in how their performances were judged. They found that “Active female delegates were judged more harshly by their fellow delegates than were active male delegates,” which contributed to a higher level of dissatisfaction among girls at the conclusion of the MUN (Rosenthal et al. 2001, 641). Their MUN experience contributed to students interpreting politics as masculine, which will most likely impact their future political participation (Rosenthal et al. 2001).

Both Rosenthal et al. (2001) and Coughlin’s (2013) research focuses on high school level MUNs and we have found very limited research on the impact of gender on university-level MUNs or simulations in politics and IR. Hunt (2018) looks at simulations utilizing a zombie theme, which might be thought of as a traditional male issue. This small-scale research showed no gender differences in students’ enthusiasm for the topic or in pre- and post-test scores assessing the impact of their learning from the simulation.

Given the gender discrepancy in MUNs suggested in the literature, we aimed to examine, at a university level, whether first there is a gender disparity in engagement in our MUN and second, assuming there would be, whether it could be reduced by gender-related training in the curriculum for half of the classes in the subject. The main way this was achieved was via training students on the impact of gender in negotiation.

Gender and Negotiation

Our tutorial intervention focused specifically on negotiation, rather than diplomacy for a number of reasons. First, while diplomacy is seen as the “engine room” of IR (Sharp 1999, 34), negotiation, “is

the principal means of handling all international disputes. In fact, in practice, negotiation is employed more frequently than all other methods put together” (Merrills 2017, 2). Given our simulation highlights the UN as a mechanism of conflict resolution it was useful to concentrate on negotiation dynamics between delegates. Second, the literature on MUNs and gender focuses on negotiation with Rosenthal et al. (2001) concluding that males tended to use more aggressive negotiation tactics, yet Coughlin (2013) finding no significant differences in negotiating styles between genders. Third, our MUN simulation already had a tutorial plan on negotiation, which was easily modified to include a short session on gender, whereas addressing gender and diplomacy would require additional class time to address, which was not possible in an already busy schedule.

There is now quite a large literature on the impact of gender on negotiation in particular on negotiating employment conditions, with less on global governance negotiations. Overall this literature shows that women are concerned about being perceived as aggressive, that they face backlash when negotiating in a range of ways (Harvard Law School 2013), and that they tend to negotiate more cooperatively than men. As Babcock and Laschever (2003, ix) state, “although negotiation has always been an important workplace skill, it has long been thought to be the province of men: a competitive realm in which men excelled and women felt less capable.”

Turning specifically to gender and negotiations in simulations, Croson and Buchan (1999) found that women were more reciprocal than men in a simulation involving a “trust-game.” Boyer et al. (2009), studying a simulation with middle and high school children, found that all female groups used significantly more collaborative bargaining strategies than mixed or all male groups, though the gender differences narrowed as the students got older. However, they concluded that adding more women and girls into the decision-making process in a negotiation impacted the process itself. This supports the representation of women literature outlined earlier. The argument is supported by Kolb (1996) who found that women tend to use a problem-solving approach through dialogue when framing negotiations. Furthermore, Babcock and Laschever (2003) highlight that women focus more on communication between negotiating parties and relationship building, all factors that increase the likelihood of successful outcomes to negotiations.

This all demonstrates the importance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which states that women possess important values essential to the negotiation table given their socialization experiences, but laments that they have persistently been excluded due to the exclusionary nature of international negotiations (Boyer et al. 2009). As outlined in the methodology section below, we drew on this literature to develop a short tutorial discussion around gender and negotiation.

Research Question and Methodology

Our research question was: in what ways does drawing attention to issues of gender inequality in negotiations improve women’s participation in, and satisfaction with, their experience in a MUN?

The study adopted an exploratory, experimental research design, utilizing a mixed-methods approach. The exploratory research design reflects the limited previous research on the influence of gender in university MUNs and attempts to mitigate that impact. The mixed methods approach enabled collection of quantitative data on participation by sex across control and intervention groups, while qualitative data facilitated a focus on students’ perception of the impact of gender on the simulation and their enjoyment of it. Before commencing with data collection, ethics clearance was obtained from the university’s Human Research Ethics Committee, which operates in alignment with Australian national guidelines for ethical conduct in research involving humans.

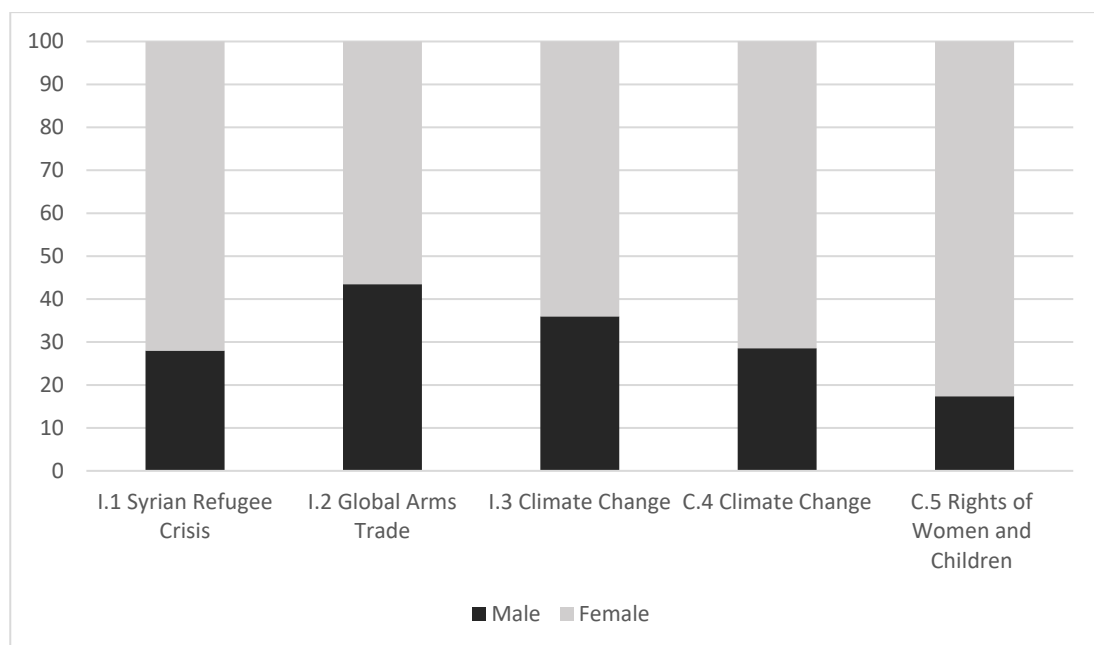
As noted above, one tutorial group had only one male participant was thus excluded from the study. Of the five remaining groups, three were selected as intervention groups and two as control groups (see Table 1). The method comprised two main components: first, a one hour tutorial activity on gender in the three intervention tutorial groups. This involved a background reading on gender in negotiation and a class activity (Harvard Law School 2013). The teaching staff also discussed issues of gender with the intervention groups in a number of tutorials. Second, we assessed the impact of gender and of the intervention by a) recording student participation in the MUN by male and female participants, including speaking time and initiation of strategic actions; b) undertaking a survey of student satisfaction and perceptions; and c) examining student grades by sex.

Table 1. Speaking Times by Sex and Tutorial Group

	I.1 Syrian Refugee Crisis	I.2 Global Arms Trade	I.3 Climate Change	C.4 Climate Change	C.5 Women and Children	Total / Average
Men	7	10	9	6	4	36
Women	18	13	16	15	19	81
% Women	72%	57%	64%	71%	83%	69%
Men’s speaking times (mins)	123	169	65	78	56	491
Women’s speaking times (mins)	209	150	150	162	202	873
Women’s speaking time as % of men	63%	47%	70%	68%	78%	64%
Speaking time per man (mins)	17.57	16.90	7.22	13.00	14.00	13.74
Speaking time per woman (mins)	11.61	11.54	9.38	10.80	10.63	10.79

There was a somewhat lower percentage of men in the control group compared to the intervention groups (see Table 1 and Chart 1). As the literature review noted, there is an argument that men and women can respond differently to different topics. Tutorial groups decided their own topics and the allocation of intervention and control groups was done after topic selection to get a distribution of potentially “masculine” and “feminine” topics, particularly in the intervention group. Two of the groups selected climate change which is not easily defined as a traditional male or female topic, so we had one each in the control and intervention groups. The group with the highest percentage of men chose the most clearly masculine topic, the global arms trade. They were also included as an intervention group along with a class focusing on the Syrian refugee crisis, a more feminine topic. In addition to climate change, the control had a group debating the rights of women and children, a feminine topic.

Chart 1. Composition of Tutorial Groups by Sex, Intervention (I) or Control (C) Status and Topic



There were 137 students in total and 100 of these were identified as women. We did not have any students who identified as LGBTQI+ either in class or in the survey (discussed later). This is a notable gap as they make up at least 3% of the Australian population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018). Our teaching team was half men and half women plus an additional male was part of the research team and there was a male student intern. Female chairs have been shown to adopt a leadership style that supports participation by female delegates (Kathlene 1995; Rosenthal et al. 2001). Each of our simulation classes had one male and one female teaching assistant in the classroom and we trained chairs on gender bias in speaker selection. Mostly due to timetabling reasons, the intervention tutorials were chaired by a man and the controls by women.

Student engagement in-class was recorded by the intern. He was given training on gender issues in teaching but was not informed which groups were control or intervention. The speaking times of participants in all tutorials were recorded by sex without informing the students so as not to affect their conduct. The intern recorded each students' contribution by length and gender dividing speaking times into 60 seconds (maximum allowed in the simulation), 45, 30 and 15 seconds. Separately, he recorded perceptions of any gender dynamics in part to ensure the internship had analytical content. The reflections were useful but were only a minor data source with the focus on our subsequent data analysis. The intern was introduced as tasked with recording observations about the flow and style of the simulation in order to better train students in future negotiations. Having the observer separate from the teaching team who marked student participation also helped ensure that the research had no impact on grading.

On the last day of the simulation, the control and intervention groups were asked to complete an anonymous survey providing some basic demographic data and their evaluation of the subject and its gender elements using a Likert scale. There was also a free text area to record any observations about their experience especially related to gender dimensions. The survey was developed from Coughlin's (2013) survey of a high school level MUN exploring perceptions of satisfaction, inclusion and gender differences. Completing the survey was optional and it, of course, did not affect student marks if they did not do so. Analysis of participation, grades and the survey was not undertaken until all grades were declared.

A limitation of the methodology is that the sample size, though large in comparison to many studies on politics and IR simulations, is still limited. This and our inability to allocate students to tutorials, means the control groups have a lower proportion of male students. Also, the separation of the intervention and control groups could have been contaminated by cross-tutorial group friendships and discussions, whereby those in the control group may have heard of the discussion on gender from peers, which could have impacted the results a little. The gender composition of the teaching team and the chairs may too have impacted student participation, grades and our analysis.

Data and Discussion

Starting with the issue of the relative contributions of men and women in speaking during the in class simulation, Table 1 outlines the composition of each tutorial group by sex, the length of time men and women spoke during the simulation in minutes, and the difference between the women's representation in the group and their speaking time.

There is variation across the tutorials, but women spoke less than their representation in four of the five tutorials. The differences are not that great when viewed in terms of the composition of

the class with women speaking 5.2% less than males overall. The largest gap was in the intervention group (I.2) with the highest proportion of men focusing on a clearly masculine topic, where there was a 10% gap. Whereas, the lowest gap was the class with the highest proportion of women and doing a clearly feminine topic (C.5).

Table 2. Average speaking time per student in minutes by gender and group

	Intervention	Control
Men	13.7	13.4
Women	10.8	10.7

When viewed in terms of speaking time per student the difference become clearer. Men spoke an average of 13.74 minutes whilst women spoke 10.79 minutes, meaning women spoke only 78.6% of the men’s speaking time (Table 2). Further, in the group on the arms trade, women spoke just 68.3% of men’s speaking time and removing this group from the average increases women’s speaking time to 81.9% of men’s time. This confirms the trend found for high school MUNs by Rosenthal et al. (2001) and Coughlin (2013), though our differences were slightly less. Rosenthal et al. (2001) found that female delegates took one third less speaking turns than male ones, while Coughlin (2013, 329) found that while women were “55% of our sample, they accounted for only 35% of the speeches we observed.” Given our simulation was assessed, this may have provided the female delegates more motivation to talk. Still the gender differences confirm that findings from the representation of women in politics literature is relevant to thinking about tertiary teaching in politics and that the “chilly classroom” thesis should not be dismissed.

Chairs may have unconsciously selected men to speak slightly more often. Particularly when discussing masculine substantive topics, men are expected to dominate discussions. A less directly gendered issue was that men were only one third of the class, so unconscious attempts to obtain a balance and diversity of speakers may have resulted in overrepresentation by men. There was a male chair for all three intervention groups but a diversity of outcomes and female chairs for the two control groups. The gender of the chair likely had an impact on the classroom and results, though we aimed to mitigate this by having a male and female teacher in each classroom and through the gender training.

The discussion of gender in the intervention groups appears to have made no difference to the outcomes in those groups, with two of the three intervention groups having the largest gender disparity. In the third group, women spoke more than men, but the overall speaking times were lower in this group indicating it was somewhat of an outlier. Further, Table 2 shows that men’s speaking time in minutes was higher in the intervention group, again the arms control group being a key reason.

Table 3. Motions per Student by M/F and Control or Intervention Group

Motions per student	Intervention	Control
Men	1.5	2.5
Women	1.7	1.7

Table 3 examines motions, which are a key component in MUNs and are marked in the simulation. Women were not under-represented when it came to the number of motions they made. There was quite a bit of variation across the tutorials, but overall female students were only one percent below their percentage of the class. Table 3 indicates the intervention may have had some impact as men made less motions per student in the intervention group than in the control group. Notably, the intervention group on the arms control was one of two groups where women had a higher number of motions per student than men. The other group was intervention 3 on climate change.

Table 4.1 Median and Average Grades by M/F Students and Assessment Task (out of 100)

	Composite	Quiz	Briefing Paper	Simulation
Women median	72.4	72.0	74.0	70.5
Men median	73.2	72.0	75.0	75.0
Women average	70.9	70.8	72.7	70.1
Men average	71.9	70.6	71.6	72.8

Table 4.2 Women's Median Grade by Control and Intervention and Assessment Type (out of 100)

	Composite	Quiz	Briefing Paper	Simulation
Control	75.2	72.0	75.0	73.0
Intervention	70.4	72.0	74.0	68.0

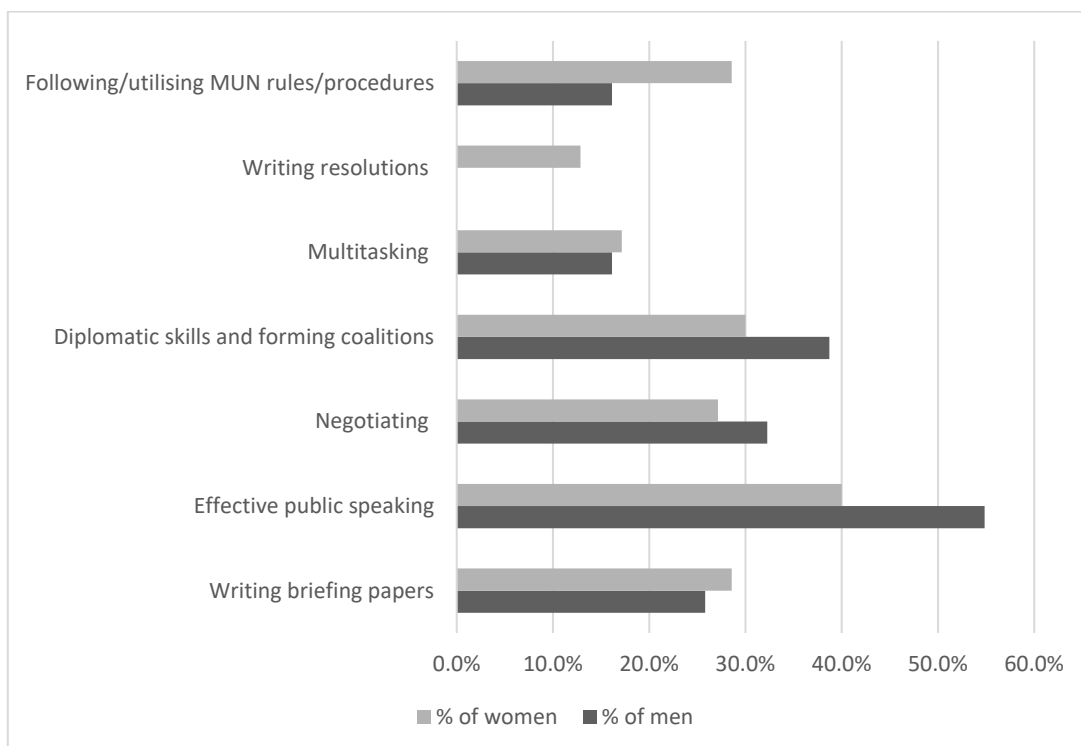
Table 4.1 shows student grades by sex and assessment task and it demonstrates that while median male and female grades were exactly the same for the quiz and only marginally different for the briefing paper, there was a 4.5 mark difference for the simulation. The average for women was minus 2.7%, which is notable compared to the differences in other grades (-0.2 and -1.1%). Further, the grade difference correlates to the finding that men spoke longer. The standard deviation for men at 10 was also lower than women at 12.2, indicating a greater spread of marks for female students. Table 4.2 demonstrates that the marks for the simulation for women in the intervention group were 5 points lower than those in the control group and this produced a significantly lower overall grade for the female students in the intervention group. We also examined the impact of separating the

intervention group on the arms trade, given their substantially lower speaking time for women. However, women’s median mark in that tutorial was 70, in other words higher than the intervention overall. Their marks reflected the relatively high level of motions per female student in the class but also contributions to drafting resolutions.

Our results suggest that the gender intervention inadvertently created a stereotype threat, that is, a situation where people are, or perceive themselves to be, at risk of conforming to stereotypes about a group that they are part of. A well-known example is that women perform worse at math tests when their gender is highlighted. The phenomenon has been shown to impact academic performance in a range of areas and people do not have to believe in the stereotype for it to impact their performance (Smith 2006).

Turning to the survey data, there were 101 respondents for the survey, meaning a very high response rate of 86%. There were 70 women and 31 men and no selections for LGBTQI or prefer not to say. This means that 69% of respondents were women, the same as for the group overall. The survey showed that 25 of them spoke a language other than English at home, meaning just under 25%, compared to the Australian average of 21% (ABS 2017). Only three of the respondents were over 25 and 32 were the first in their family to go to university which is fairly representative of our student cohort with only a small number of mature age students and one-third first-in-family but the absence of LGBTQI+ students was not representative. All of the respondents completed all of the questions. The survey also showed quite significant differences by sex as outlined below.

Chart 2. “Which MUN skills do you feel you excelled at most?” As a percentage of M/F respondents



Men and women perceived they excelled at different skills as shown in Chart 2. Women were more likely to identify strengths in following MUN rules and procedures and writing resolutions, while men perceived they were better at public speaking and diplomatic skills. This conforms to gender norms found in the literature whereby women prefer process and backroom tasks and men self-select for more public roles.

We asked students whether they felt more confident as a negotiator as a result of participating in the simulation. Some 51.7% of men felt “quite a bit” or “very much” more confident compared to 34.3% of women. Still, the vast majority of students felt some greater confidence in their negotiation capacity after the subject, which is one of the learning objectives.

Chart 3. “I enjoyed the simulation” by M/F Respondents

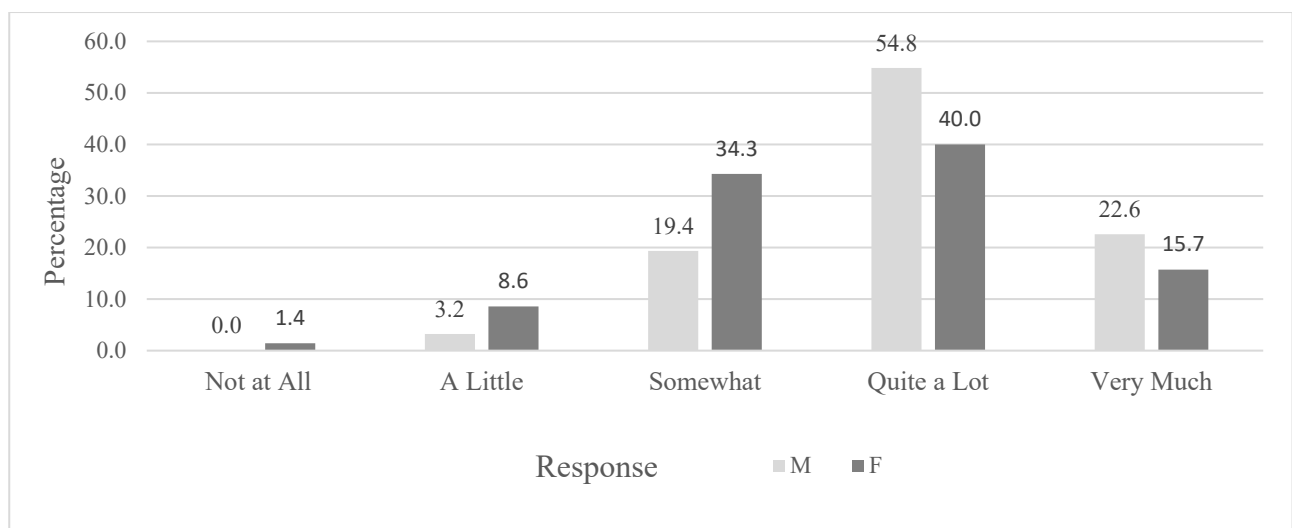
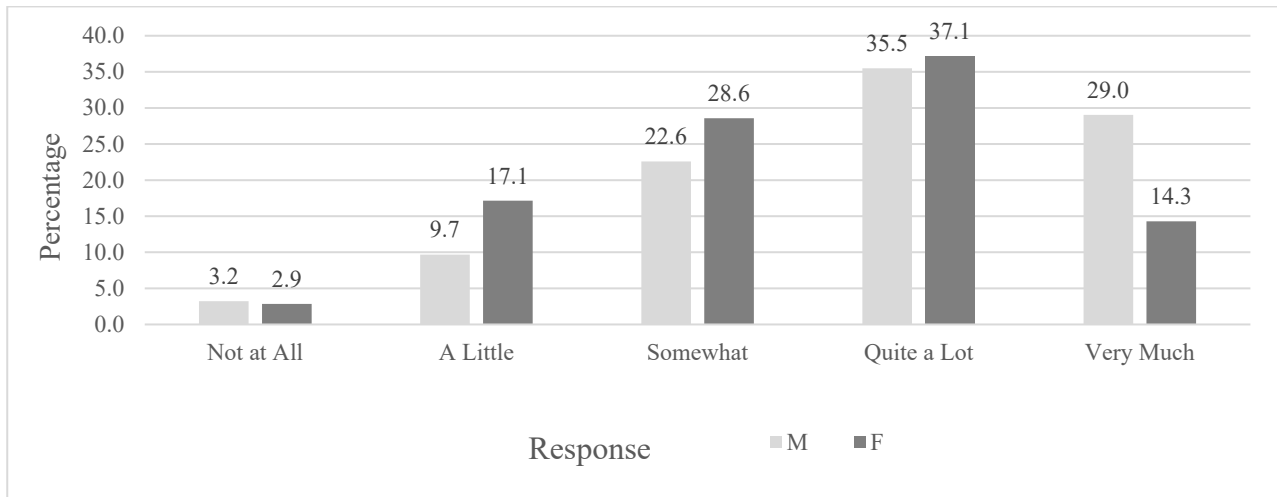


Chart 3 demonstrates that men enjoyed the subject more, with 77.4% expressing that they liked the subject “very much” or “quite a lot,” compared to 55.7% of women. Similarly, on the question of whether they were glad they took the subject, 83.9% of men were in the highest two categories while only 72.9% of women were. This is in line with Rosenthal et al.’s (2001) finding of male delegates enjoying MUNs more than female ones, though Coughlin (2013) found no significant difference. We also looked at women’s enjoyment in the control and intervention groups and found that those in the control group were more likely to enjoy the subject “quite a lot” or “very much” (66.6%) versus the intervention group (29.1%). Some of this difference may be attributable to individual preferences in the tutorials, however, it also strongly indicates that our interpretation that we inadvertently invoked a stereotype threat is correct.

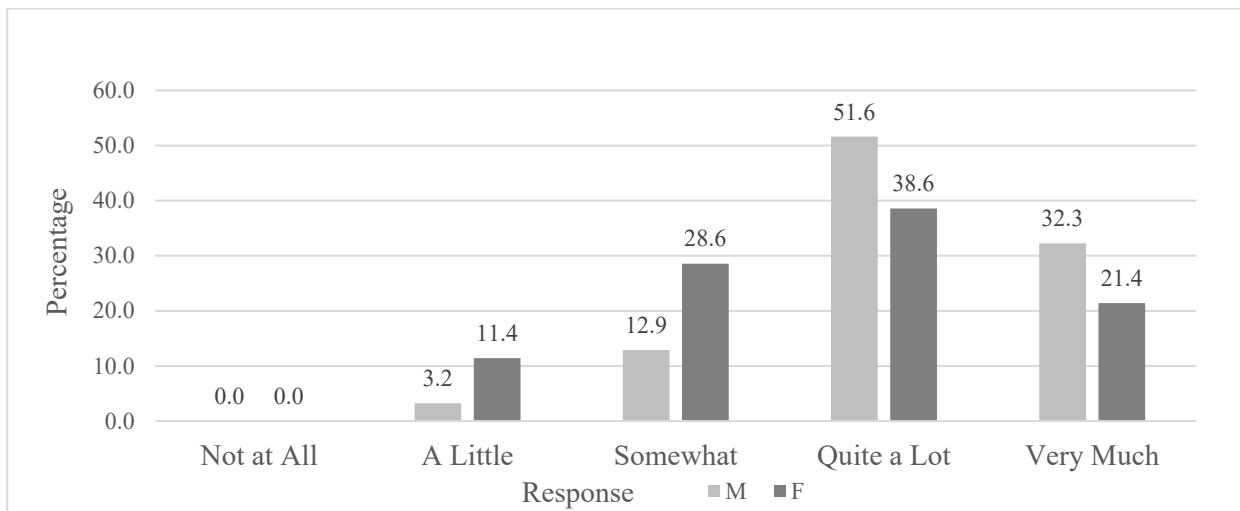
Asked whether they enjoyed the subject more than others this semester, Chart 4 demonstrates that men were more likely to indicate they enjoyed the subject “very much”, while there was a greater portion of women who enjoyed the subject “a little” or “somewhat.”

Chart 4. “I enjoyed this subject more than other subjects this semester” by M/F Respondents



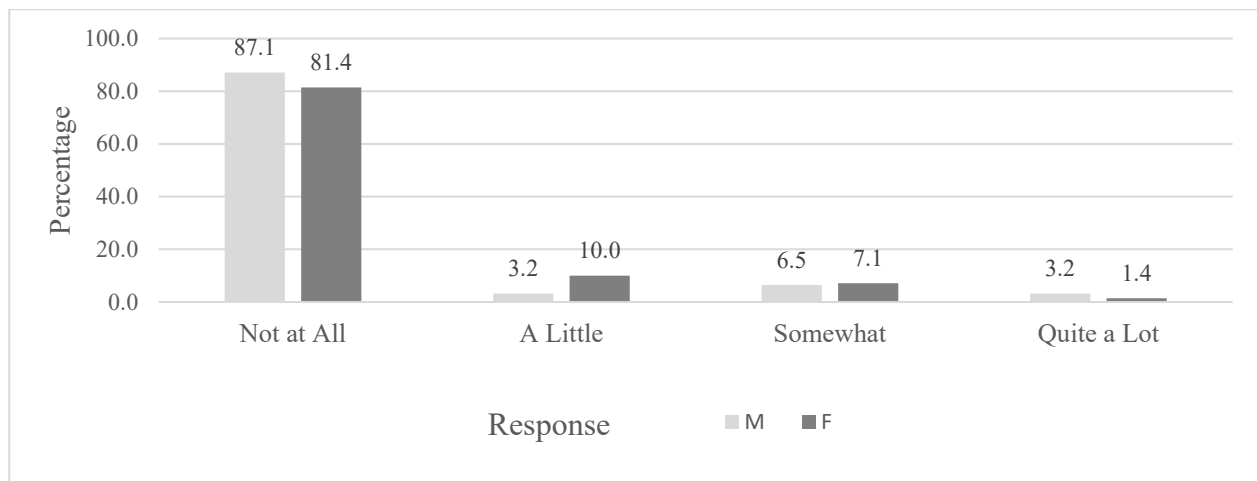
The response to the question of whether students felt fully included in the simulation (Chart 5) again demonstrates men felt more positively about the subject with 83.9% either feeling “very much” or “quite a lot” compared to 60% of women. We also examined the response of women in the control and intervention groups and again the control groups felt more included than the intervention groups with 70% saying they felt “quite a lot” or “very much” included versus just 50% in the intervention group.

Chart 5. “I felt fully included in the simulation” by M/F Respondents



On the questions of whether delegates felt they had to struggle to get other delegates to listen to them, 27.2% of women indicated that they struggled “somewhat” or “a lot” compared to 12.9% of men. In contrast, Coughlin (2013) found just 16% of women said they struggle somewhat and none said they struggled a lot. Still, 77% of the overall cohort felt that they did not struggle much or at all, demonstrating that the rule-based structure of the MUN is quite inclusive.

Chart 6. “The point of view of men was taken more seriously than women in the simulation” by M/F Respondents



As per Coughlin (2013), the vast majority of students felt that gender was not an issue in the simulation (Chart 6), despite the fact that we found gender disparities in speaking times and in perceptions. There was also a free text box for student comments with a particular focus for observations on gender dynamics. Of the 40 students who commented on gender, 33 felt that gender had no or only a very small impact on the simulation. A typical comment was: “Our class consisted of a female majority. I didn't personally feel that gender played a role in the simulation itself, however I attribute that to the fact that there was a greater representation of females and these voices were not drowned out.” However, this student was in a class where men spoke more relative to their representation. Indeed, only one student of the 40 considered that “men probably spoke more in relation to there [sic] smaller size.”

The student intern also took an in-class poll during the debrief session after the simulation on how many students would want a career in IR, 55.5% of the men indicated they would while just 25.9% of the women wanted one. Only one student, a male, commented on this in the survey:

Gender plays an enormous part in every aspect of the MUN. Wider social factors impact how we approach asking and answering questions, the need for furthering the support of females into leadership roles is paramount to our future and this is made evident in the high quality of their performance in the simulation yet none strongly thought they could have a career in the field.

In the discussion on gender, three of the tutorials identified employer perceptions of women’s role in parenting as a major limitation on women in IR careers and in one of these tutorials they also said that politics being a “boy’s club” was a key deterrent to women, as did one other tutorial. One tutorial said there were no gender biases and that women could pursue successful careers in IR.

Conclusion

We have three main conclusions, first that the chilly classroom thesis still has applicability to the contemporary politics and IR classroom. Indeed, perhaps it is more relevant than in most other humanities and social sciences classrooms given gendered socialization around politics and the gendered nature of both the academy and the public sphere of politics and IR. Men were overrepresented in speaking times but very few of the students perceived any significant differences in participation related to gender. This is despite having read a paper demonstrating that the majority of “women are unaware of having personally been victims of gender discrimination and deny it even when it is objectively true and they see that women in general experience it” (Harvard Law School 2013, 21). Second, the percentage of men and women in each class had some impact on classroom participation and the topic debated had an even greater impact with clearly masculine and feminine topics producing the greatest disparities in speaking time. Thus, the substantive representation of women was more important than just representation. Yet, even on relatively gender-neutral topics like climate change or the Syrian refugee crisis, there were clear disparities in engagement and enjoyment with female students speaking less than male ones despite being the majority in the class and they enjoyed the class less too.

Third, our intervention to try to improve women’s engagement was not useful, indeed it may have contributed slightly to a poorer performance by female students and certainly seems to have contributed to a reduced enjoyment of the subject with around 66% of women in the control group liking the subject “quite a lot” or “very much” versus just 29% in the intervention group. In fact, we almost certainly inadvertently created a stereotype threat with the intervention. Common results of stereotype threats are not persisting in the field and aiming to avoid displaying ineptitude, rather than aiming to demonstrate competence (Smith 2006). This helps to explain both women’s lower performance in the simulation and their enjoyment.

We only focused a little on the issue of gender and negotiation tactics. Broadly we observed a problem-solving and cooperative negotiating style dominated the classroom, though some students did take the less cooperative approach of the countries they represented. This cooperative approach is likely to be a result of the high proportion of women in the classroom (Boyer et al. 2009) and the broadly collaborative structure of Model UN. Still, our observations and comments in the survey support the argument that women who negotiate “aggressively” tend to be regarded less positively by peers (Harvard Law School 2013).

Coughlin (2013) argued that his similar results of girls partaking less than boys in a high school MUN needed to be framed in terms of the broader oppression of women at a macrosocial level, which many women are unaware of. We agree with that analysis but conclude that the equally

important point is that, despite the increasing prominence of gender in analysis of politics and IR, there has been insufficient attention to applying a gender lens to our own classrooms. There is, as a consequence, little material available on how to make classrooms less gendered. Our attempt to make the negotiation table a more comfortable space for women by discussing gender biases and the fact that women negotiate as well as men when they are not negotiating for themselves (Harvard Law School 2013), backfired likely due to the stereotype threat.

Clearly, one hour of discussion and analysis and a few brief references to gender is simply not enough to counter a lifetime of gendered expectations. Gendered expectations surrounding IR careers were already strong as, while about two-thirds of the students in the degree are women, only a minority of them saw the degree as a pathway to an IR career, compared to a majority of male students who were planning an IR career. While a lifetime of gendered socialization shape students' expectations around politics and IR, it does seem clear that Model UN with its focus on public diplomacy and negotiation reinforces gender norms. The next question for focus is then whether most teaching in politics and IR still has this effect?

To address these concerns, gender needs to be mainstreamed in the curriculum so that by the time students reach the MUN, they will have a range of knowledge around gender and strategies to address gender dynamics. Further, in this process the curriculum should be constructed to better reflect the interests of women and other marginalized groups and demonstrate diversity in authorship of set texts and readings. As Atchison (2013) argued, such gender mainstreaming could increase the number of women in academia, while Doherty (2013) maintained that this may extend beyond academia to politics and the public sphere more generally. We would add that more attention needs to be given to gender disparities in university classrooms in general and politics and IR ones in particular.

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