



Bridge: A MindSport For All

Connects People, Challenges Minds

Summary Report Session 3B – Gender, Sexism and Bridge

The *Bridge: A MindSport for All* (BAMSA) Conference 2021 was attended by academics, administrators and bridge players from 62 countries across the world. Session 3B of the conference focused on Gender, Sexism and Bridge. The recording and presentations can be accessed [here](#).

The session was opened by Dr Miriam Snellgrove, University of Stirling who set the scene by discussing how gender inequality can sometimes be seen as an individual problem, but that this overlooks the way this inequality can be ingrained at the institutional level. Bridge organisations, like many other organisations, are an institution that upholds and reproduces gender inequality. The aim of this session was then to consider what solutions the bridge world could take within the wider world of inequality. Panel speakers gave short presentations or had pre-recorded presentations that addressed these issues from different perspectives and global contexts. During the session panellists and attendees addressed key debates around how to make bridge more inclusive and how to encourage more women into the game at all levels.

One debate centred on the roles and responsibilities of clubs and organisations and whether reform should come from organisations mandating it or the ground up. Some argued for more investment, research and leadership from Zonal, Reginal and National Bridge organisations while others suggested women are recruited at club level and that a one-size-fits-all approach would not work. Another debate was the future of the women's game and whether it should be upheld or abolished. Some argued that removing the category would take away a safe space for women. Further, as fewer women play in the open removing the woman's category could remove women from bridge. Others took the opposing view arguing there would not be more woman players until the women's game was abolished. The idea of quotas was another contentious issue both for teams and within the leadership of bridge organisations. Some panellists strongly opposed the idea suggesting only the best players should represent their country and the best person should be selected for the job in organisations others emphatically argued for positive discrimination to help overcome the unique obstacles women face.

The panellists also discussed what obstacles were faced by women in bridge. We discussed the time and travel commitments how this may be more challenging for women due to social pressure to take on more childcare and housework. We also discussed socialisation and how this may impact women's confidence. Microaggressions such as the fact that commentators are almost exclusively men, that the hall of fame is so male-dominated, and that bylaws are usually written with the word 'he' were also discussed. As were more blatant examples of sexism and sexist comments made by men and woman players. Sponsor bias towards all-men teams was also noted. As was selector bias in choosing the open teams.

What is clear from this session is that there is ample internal expertise within the female bridge-playing community that could be harnessed to put forward the well-needed changes required. A report, co-authored by the panellists highlighting suggested changes to tournament and club bridge, could act as a galvanising mechanism for the wider bridge community. The roles of organisations is an important avenue for future research in creating a more inclusive environment in bridge to ensure its survival and other social inequalities also need to be considered including ethnicity, sexuality and disability.

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