



12th EBL NBO Officers' Seminar

Empowering Women in Bridge: Gender Segregated Tournaments

Professor Samantha Punch

Bridge: A MindSport for All (BAMSA)

With Sophia Baldysz (Poland), Amber Lin (USA), & Sofie Sjodal (Norway)

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Views collated from:

Petition with junior women 2020 and...



Sophia Baldysz (Poland)



Amber Lin (USA)



Sofie Sjodal (Norway)

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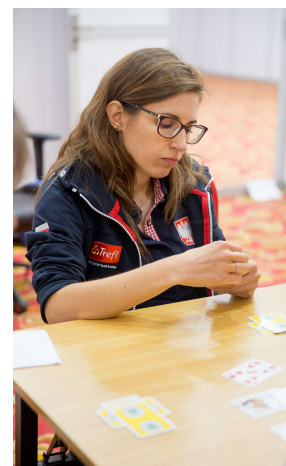
BAMSA research: sexism & gender inequalities

<https://bridgemindsport.org/home/research/bridging-gender/>

- Participation gap

Possible solutions?

- Grow the mixed category
- BUT implications at junior level
 - Unintended negative consequences?
- Junior women have strong views



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Benefits of U26 Womens Category

- . **Valuable opportunity to create more serious female players**
 - Gives girls more chances as less experienced players
 - Gain confidence & more coaching opportunities
- . **A "safe space" for junior women to compete and train**
 - Male-dominated junior bridge is an unattractive space for many women
 - Develop support groups and networks within these spaces
 - Other sports & STEM have all-female youth programs
- . **Transition to Open Junior events (for some)**
- . **Incentivizes countries to grow their junior women's programmes**
 - Girls may recruit other girls – Importance of role models

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Focusing on Mixed Category

Adult Mixed: men (bigger pool) are often more experienced than the women

- **useful mentorship opportunity** (stronger partners/opponents cf. Womens)
- works best well when Mixed event not run concurrently with Open/Women

Junior Mixed: should be considered differently

- **Playing with peers:** not the male players' role to mentor the female players
- **A development space:** more unequal gender-based power dynamics
- **Possible immaturity:** male and female banter is different
- **Sends message:** girls need boys to help them improve

"Creating a supportive female environment is crucial to women's bridge"
(Sophia Baldysz, Poland)

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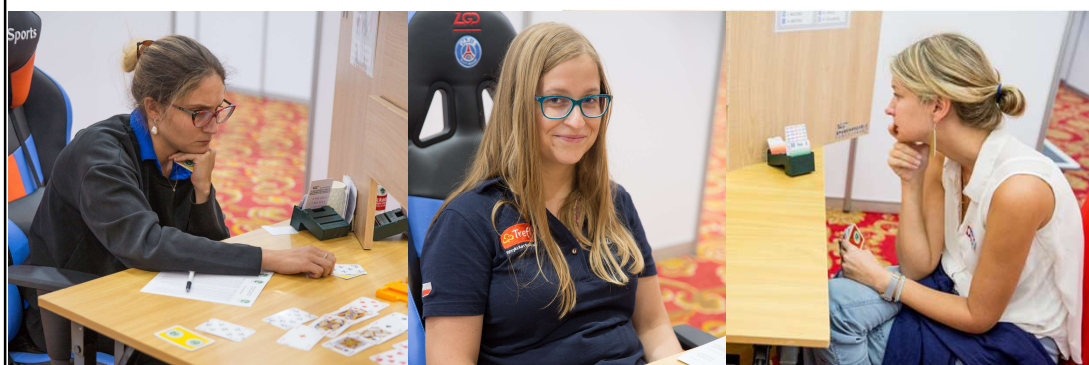
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Advantages of a Mixed Junior Category

- A helpful stepping stone for women to transition to open bridge
- In addition to U26W or replacing it?
- Increasing or decreasing the number of young women players?



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Comparison of U26 Womens and Mixed

	U26 Womens	U26 Mixed
LEVEL	● Lower level than Open ⇒ <i>improve women training programs</i>	● Expected to be higher than Womens but would include male/female players “not good enough” for Open if concurrent events
OPPORTUNITY	● 6 more spots per team for women	● 2-3 more spots per team for women
POSITIVE EXPERIENCE	● Creates all-female space <u>necessary for many women to want to play bridge.</u> = confidence & support networks	● While typically more women on a Mixed than Open team, the likely power dynamics of the men as stronger players than the women on the team would diminish the voice of the women
NUMBERS	● Examples of women transitioning from the U26W to U26 Open but some countries pressuring female players to play in U26W instead of Open	● No data. May be similar to U26W - some countries may give players choice but others could still pressure female players to play in Mixed instead of Open
RECRUITING	● U26W incentivizes countries to recruit more women to compete	● Less likely to incentivize recruitment of women as only 2-3 players needed

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Other issues

Sequencing of picking best junior teams (U26 then U21 then U26W)

- U26W/Mixed should not hurt girls' chances to play in open

Training sessions: separate or combined?

- upsides and downsides

Anti-harassment guidelines for all junior players & mentors (developed in USA)

Greater gender equality before abandoning the women-only game (if ever)



“Removing the girls/women’s category will discourage girls to play bridge and only a small elite will remain” (Sophia Baldysz, Poland)

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“We learned after the event that the boys on the team had been frequently talking behind our backs, making fun of certain plays, and bonding over ‘playing with the weaker women.’ It was terrible for building our confidence.”

(Female junior, NABC 10K Mixed Teams)

“It was a Mixed event, so I was trying to steal the NT... open light... do all the classic ‘clienting’ techniques.”

(Male junior, EBL Mixed Championships 2023)



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Bridge: A MindSport For All
Connects People, Challenges Minds

BAMSA B-A-M

Saturday 27 April

2 session Board a Match (2x20 boards)

Fundraising for youth & schools bridge worldwide

Open to all - online on RealBridge
15.00 UK (BST) - 16.00 CET - 10.00 EDT
Entry: £15 per player (£60 per team, concessions U21s)

Register via [SBU Competitions](#)
Enquiries to: tournament@sbu.org.uk

Special prizes + hand commentary

Can't play but would like to support Youth Bridge?
Donations welcomed @ [Keep Bridge Alive Crowdfund](#)



www.bridgemindsport.org

Evidence-based Resources



Research Animation

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Discussion

- Pros and cons of the mixed category growing (and women's bridge decreasing)
- Would a new U26 Mixed Category (replacing or in addition to the U26W) lead to an overall increase or decrease in women's participation in bridge? Why?
- What might the implications be of a new junior mixed category for your country?
- What can be done to increase women's participation at junior level?