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Bryan Nankervis* (bn10@txstate.edu), 2522 Deer Stand Loop, San Marcos, TX 78666. *Gender Inequity in the National Merit Scholarship Program.*

This paper investigates gender inequity in the National Merit Scholarship selection process. Through a statistical analysis utilizing data provided by the College Board, it is predicted that most National Merit semifinalists and finalists are male despite the fact that the majority of participants in the competition are female. This is due to males' higher average scores and greater variability on the mathematics portion of the PSAT, which shares differential validity concerns with the quantitative section of the SAT in terms of gender. These instruments are solely designed to predict first-year college success, but as this study demonstrates, the gender gaps in mathematical performance have little to do with college readiness, but rather are a consequence of the misaligned content of the exams as well as the environment in which they are administered. This study underscores the problematic practice of using PSAT cutoff scores as the sole measure of merit in the first two phases and SAT scores in the final stage of the National Merit Scholarship competition. The selection process is plainly at odds with best practices in the use of standardized tests and has serious implications in terms of recruitment and retention of women in the mathematical sciences. (Received September 18, 2009)