

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: SHATTERING THE COLLEGIATE GLASS CEILING:  
UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN  
STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRESIDENTS

Kristen Anne Rupert, Doctor of Philosophy, 2019

Dissertation directed by: Kimberly A. Griffin, Ph.D  
Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special  
Education

In the last few decades, leadership skills have arisen as a core part of undergraduate education. The general outcomes associated with leadership skills in college include decision-making skills, increased cognitive complexity, and navigating group dynamics and relationship building (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). While leadership skills are derived from a variety of experiences on campus, positional leadership experiences help students develop concrete and specific outcomes associated with self-confidence, the development of a sense of competence higher levels of psychosocial development, a stronger ability to clarify their purpose in life, and greater aptitude for career planning and life management (Astin & Leland, 1991; Foubert & Grainger, 2006).

In particular, serving as the president of a student organization has been associated with increased self-efficacy and growth in perceived leadership ability specifically for women (Bardou, Bryne, Pasternak, Perez, & Rainey, 2003; Dugan, 2006; H. S. Astin & Kent, 1983).

However, women less likely to reap these gains, as they are less likely to take on positional leadership roles in college (Stevens, 2011). This is especially apparent in high-ranking leadership role like student government president. The purpose of this study was to better understand women college students' journey to and through being a student government president, and whether and how gender and sexism influenced their presidential experiences. Case study methodology and a narrative approach to data collection was used to answer four research questions.

Participant interviews garnered 5 themes including: (a) Systemic Issues of Diversity and Inclusion on Campus, (b) Catalysts, Influencing Factors, and the Impact of Identity on Running for Office, (c) Impact of Leadership Style, Assumed Biases, and External Feedback on Women Leaders, (d) External Expectations of Image and Presentation, and (e) Relationships with Administrators.

Findings from this study suggest that more research on women in leadership in both college and in the workforce is necessary. They also suggest that administrators and campus community members need to be cognizant of bias and stereotypes when engaging with women student leaders. Lastly, findings indicate that issues of inclusion and diversity on campus impact how women engage in leadership roles on campus.

SHATTERING THE COLLEGIATE GLASS CEILING:  
UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN STUDENT GOVERNMENT  
PRESIDENTS

by

Kristen Anne Rupert

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
2019

Advisory Committee:  
Kimberly A. Griffin, PhD, Chair  
Marylu K. McEwen, PhD  
Candace Moore, PhD  
Daniel Ostick, PhD  
Kathryn Wentzel, PhD

© Copyright by  
Kristen Anne Rupert  
2019

## DEDICATION

*“Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”*

*--Ruth Bader Ginsburg*

To Celia Wright and Leah Lacure for inspiring this research and for continuing to be incredible women.

To all the women and girls who break glass ceilings, make the first crack, or who are striving to show up in spaces where women have been underrepresented. May you stay strong, be fierce, and persist.

With Love,

Kristen

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No journey worth taking is easy, and this was both the most difficult and most rewarding journey I have ever taken. I am so grateful though to have been surrounded by an amazing support network who never failed to love me, guide me, and believe in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. Your love and support means everything to me.

To Holly, Kacie, Mary, Rae, Sadie, and Tally: Thank you for sharing your experiences and time with me. Thank you for trusting me to do this work and allowing me to share you stories with so many others. Without the six of you none of this would be possible. You are all such amazing women and I know that you each will be extraordinary as you navigate your individual paths.

To my advisor and dissertation committee: Dr. Kimberly Griffin Haynes, there are no words to truly thank you for all of your help and support throughout this process. Thank you for believing in me and challenging me to think more critically and deeply. Thank you for reassuring me each time I had a meltdown and for remaining a constant source of calm throughout this process. To say I am lucky to have you as an advisor would be an understatement. Dr. Candace Moore: Thank you for joining the UMD faculty team and jumping right in when I asked you to be on my committee. Thank you for always allowing me to bop into your office to say "hello", and for letting me use you as a sounding board. Dr. Daniel Ostick, thank you for being my cheerleader and the constant smiling face in the room. You always knew exactly what to say to keep me calm and push me forward. Dr. Kathryn Wentzel: Thank you for signing on to be dean's rep for a qualitative dissertation and for engaging in this work with me. Lastly, Dr. Marylu McEwen: Thank you for jumping in at the last minute and being so accommodating. I feel truly lucky to have such an incredible educator show up for me.

To Kate Butler, Melissa Elston, and Annie McCabe: Thank you for being my support system from afar. Your friendship, support, and love saw me through when I didn't know if I could complete this. You answered phone calls and texts at all hours and cheered me on when I needed someone to say I could do it. I am so grateful that Columbus and Ohio State brought each of you into my life.

To my DC and Maryland support system: Leah Tobin, Michael Goodman, Sierra Stites, and Melissa Rocco. I owe so much of this to each of you. Thank you for answering my numerous phone calls, for the writing sessions, advice, support, proof-reading, and endless amount of coffee and love. You were so integral in this doctoral journey and I cannot thank you each enough for seeing me through and for the friendship and love in the process.

To my mom: Karen Rupert. Thank you for nurturing the wild little girl who didn't have a shy bone in her body, into the strong woman I have become. This accomplishment is just as much yours as it is mine. I don't know how to thank you for the endless supply of love and support you have always given me. You are the best friend and mama a girl could ask for.

Lastly, to my wonderful partner Brian: I am so lucky to have met you when I moved to D.C. You have been my constant source of support, love, laughs, and supplier of ice cream over the last several years. Life with you is the most brilliant journey. *I love you and I like you.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Problem Statement .....	6
Purpose of Study and Research Questions.....	8
Overview of Theory .....	8
Significance of the Study .....	11
Key Terms and Definitions .....	16
Engagement in Leadership and Student Outcomes .....	19
Outcomes of Student Leadership .....	20
Positional Leadership Outcomes.....	23
Outcomes for Women in Leadership .....	24
Women in Positional Leadership .....	25
Challenges For Women In Politics .....	26
Gender Differences in Approaches to Leadership .....	32
Leadership Styles, Characteristics, and Norms.....	34
Climate for Women.....	37
Gender Stereotyping .....	37
Micro-inequities .....	41
Safety and Sexist Behavior/Sexual Harassment .....	43
Impacts of Campus Climate on Women’s Educational Outcomes .....	47
Liberal Feminism as a Theoretical Perspective .....	50
The Roots of Liberal Feminism .....	50
Core Tenants and Principles of Liberal Feminism .....	52
Liberal Feminism and College Women .....	54
Liberal Feminism as a Guide for this Study .....	55
Conclusion .....	57
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	58
Epistemology .....	58
Research Design.....	59
Context.....	60
Sampling and Participant Recruitment .....	62
Narrative Inquiry Approach for Data Collection .....	63
Data Collection .....	64
Data Analysis .....	66
Memos.....	67
Coding.....	67
Generating Themes .....	68



Confidentiality .....	68
Trustworthiness .....	69
Dependability .....	69
Credibility .....	70
Transferability .....	71
Confirmability .....	71
Positionality .....	72
Delimitations and Scope of the Study .....	75
Summary .....	76
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....	77
Research Participants .....	78
Holly .....	78
Kacie .....	79
Mary .....	81
Rae .....	82
Sadie .....	84
Tally .....	86
Themes .....	87
Systemic Issues of Inclusion and Diversity on Campus .....	87
Catalysts, Influencing Factors, and the Impact of Identity on Running for Office .....	95
Advocacy .....	95
Challenges, Considerations, and Representation .....	98
External Validation .....	103
Impact of Leadership Style, Assumed Biases, and External Feedback on Women Leaders ..	105
Team oriented behaviors .....	105
Perception of Emotional Responses .....	108
Perceptions of Political Ideology .....	110
Scrutiny .....	111
External Expectations of Image and Presentation .....	116
Physical Appearance and Behavior .....	117
Language and Communication .....	124
Relationships .....	129
Feeling Used by the Institution .....	129
Discomfort with Administrators .....	131
Summary of Findings .....	139
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS .....	141
Overview of the Study .....	141
Discussion of Findings .....	147
The Catalyst for Running .....	147
The Role of Relationships .....	148

Gender Matters.....	158
Implications for Research and Practice.....	164
Implications for Research and Areas for Future Study.....	164
Implications for Practice .....	169
Conclusion .....	172
APPENDICES .....	174
Appendix A: Participant Consent Form.....	174
Appendix B: Pre- Interview Demographic Survey .....	177
Appendix C: Interview Protocol- Interview #1 .....	178
Appendix D: Interview Protocol- Interview #2 .....	180
Appendix E: Participant Bio Chart .....	182
REFERENCES .....	185

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, universities and employers alike have begun to recognize the importance of developing leadership skills as a core part of undergraduate education. According to a recent poll from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) on the top skills employers are seeking, candidates' "soft skills" are of particularly high importance (NACE, 2016). Soft skills are defined as interpersonal, communication, and self-management skills that complement hard skills, or the skills required of a job (Schulz, 2008). These soft skills can include empathy, conflict management, cultural awareness, teamwork, and problem solving and so forth. (Schulz, 2008). In particular, many employers have deemed leadership skills as a critical candidate capability (Davidson, 2016). Many of the skills learned through leadership experiences in college translate to the same skills (see above) employers are looking for when they discuss soft skills (Davidson, 2016). More than 80% of employers polled said they look for evidence of leadership skills on the candidate's resume and in interviews, and nearly as many seek out indications that the candidate is able to work in a team, communicate well, and show empathy in the workplace (NACE, 2016). Another recent report from the Wall Street Journal noted that the desire for soft skills is not singular to one field; rather, it is reflected across industries (King, 2018).

Colleges and universities have identified leadership skills as a core outcome of higher education. Almost two decades ago, Alexander and Helen Astin (2000) contended that colleges and universities are responsible for not only educating students on their specific academic course work, but also for helping to cultivate leadership skills necessary for students to become the new generation of leaders in government, business, science, law, medicine, and throughout many other industries. They argue that when colleges and universities focus on building leadership

skills amongst students they are also “helping to build a better world” (A.W Astin & H.S Astin, 2000, p. 27). Not only do many colleges and universities have mission and vision statements that tout leadership skills as major outcomes of collegiate education, many institutions also advertise that students will leave college as global leaders or leaders of the future, thereby evoking visions of students being fully prepared to lead in the changing landscape of the job market. Inside the classroom, leadership is being woven into academic course work, and academic departments are creating leadership programs or classes specific to academic areas (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, Burkhardt, 2001; Seemiller & Murray, 2013; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Outside of the classroom, student affairs professionals in a variety of functional areas are incorporating leadership focused student programs, leadership retreats, and leadership learning outcomes into their daily work to meet the call for preparing students to leave college as leaders (Cress et al., 2001; Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, & Wagner, 2011).

One of the main reasons leadership skills have emerged as a core outcome of higher education, is the ongoing research on the understanding and outcomes of leadership being driven by researchers at colleges and universities. As this research on leadership has continued to evolve over time, our understanding of what leadership is has evolved with it. Initially, it was believed that leadership skills were hereditary, identifying leaders as those born into positions or families with power and high social status (e.g., royalty) (Bass as cited in Komives et al.). This power and social status was believed to be what allowed someone to be a leader and did not take into account one’s actual ability to lead (Bass as cited in Komives et al., 2011). Over time, society began to question who can and should hold positions of power and leadership, and with that came a shift in how leadership was understood and viewed. In this shift, leadership was identified as trait or skill based, meaning specific skills or behaviors were identified that made

someone, particularly a man, a good leader (e.g., confidence, size and stature, ability to speak well in public, charisma) (Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 2013; Northouse, 2018). This approach to leadership was prevalent for many years and is often referred to as the “great man theory” (Northouse, 2018).

More modern approaches to leadership began to emerge in the 1970s and acknowledged that each unique situation calls for different skills, meaning that the approach to leadership in one situation may be very different from the approach for another. This modern approach to leadership has also focused more closely on relationships, highlighting the importance of the relationship between leaders and followers (Komives et al., 2011). This approach is represented in leadership theories such as Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) and Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), both of which are still used and studied regularly today (Northouse, 2012).

Most recently, this modern approach has evolved into a more holistic and dynamic view of leadership, which suggests that leadership is less about position and more about a process that individuals take part in (H. S. Astin & Leland, 1991; Komives et al., 2013; Komives & Wagner, 2009). This approach to leadership challenges the belief that leadership skills can only be applied or developed in individuals who hold a position of power and instead focuses on how, regardless of position, individuals are able to develop influential relationships that enable change to occur. Examples of the most modern approaches to leadership include the Social Change Theory (Dugan, 2006), the Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006), and Strength Based Leadership (Rath & Conchie, 2009).

As a byproduct of the advancements in leadership theory, research on positional leadership has stalled leaving a wide gap in the literature. Positional leadership refers to the hierarchical approach to leadership, where leadership is given to a person based on the rights

granted by their position and title (Maxwell, 2012). On a college campus, this may include presidents of student organizations, high-ranking administrators, or those other persons who have positions of high responsibility or power based on the position or role they are in. Discussing positional leadership within the landscape of holistic and relational leadership theories is nuanced, as it is difficult to disentangle these concepts from one another. Despite the deep-rooted interconnectivity between positional leadership and relational and holistic leadership, these approaches have separate and distinct roles within leadership research. Relational and holistic leadership espouses positional leadership as one of many alternative ways that students can learn and practice leadership. Conversely, positional leadership promotes tangible application to learn and practice leadership and provides an opportunity that other forms of leadership do not necessarily offer for students to apply, respond, and hone their skills in real world situations.

Outcomes of positional leadership are similar to those of the more modern and holistic approaches to leadership, including decision-making skills, increased cognitive complexity, and navigating group dynamics and relationship building (Kouzes & Posner, 2012), but positional leadership experiences provide a type of leadership training that is unique, leading to a specific set of experiences and outcomes. Positional leadership experiences in college promote self-confidence and cultivate the development of a sense of competence (Astin & Leland, 1991). Additionally, holding a significant leadership role in an organization in college is related to developing purpose (Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, 1994) and positively impacts students' career development (Kuh, 1995). Moreover, students who hold positional leadership roles demonstrate higher levels of psychosocial development, a stronger ability to clarify their purpose in life, and greater aptitude for career planning and life management (Foubert & Grainger, 2006).

Although these positive outcomes appear to be consistent across student groups, additional positive outcomes accrue to women who participate in positional leadership. According to H. S. Astin and Kent's research (1983), although both men and women experience positive outcomes as a result of leadership experiences in college, women show greater gains in self-esteem, and leadership experiences were more beneficial for women than for men. In particular, serving as the president of a student organization has been associated with increased self-efficacy and growth in perceived leadership ability for women (Bardou, Bryne, Pasternak, Perez, & Rainey, 2003; Dugan, 2006; H. S. Astin & Kent, 1983). When women are given the opportunity to lead a group or organization, it also helps to "deconstruct the persisting stereotypes" (Dugan, 2006, p. 219) around women's ability to lead and enhances women's efficacy in their belief that they can be a role model (Bardou, et al., 2003; Dugan, 2006).

These positive gains for women in positional leadership roles are important; however, they are less likely to reap these gains, as they are less likely to take on positional leadership roles in college. According to a 2011 Princeton study, only 21% of high-level student leadership positions were occupied by women (Stevens, 2011). Similarly, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) found that less than 30% of participating student government presidents and vice presidents were women. One reason for this leadership gap may be that men and women understand and practice leadership in different ways, with positional leadership roles favoring a more masculine understanding of leadership (Cress et al., 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000).

Another possible explanation for the leadership gap is sexism. Whether it is implicit or not, sexism and the barriers it creates for women can have lasting effects on how they choose to participate in society (Caplan & Ford, 2015; Baker, 2016). Feminist scholars have cited that

sexist gender norms and expectations for women play a significant role in what opportunities are available to women and how they are treated in certain settings, specifically work and school (Ramazanoglu, 2012; Wendell, 1987). This is especially apparent on college campuses, where women face a regular barrage of sexist messages and behavior. A 2015 study from Harvard's Voices of Diversity project found that although there are explicit sexist acts that happen on campus, sexist microaggressions are more common (Caplan & Ford, 2015). These microaggressions come in many forms, whether it be eye rolling when a woman speaks in class, a woman being talked over in a meeting or being patronizingly explained something she already knows, or being told she is lucky to have earned something like a good grade. Sexist microaggressions can leave women wondering if they were imagining these encounters or if they were a reality, which can deplete confidence and can lead to anxiety around their abilities.

### **Problem Statement**

Although college enrollment figures suggest women outnumber men across the United States 55% to 45%, (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), men still occupy most high-ranking student leadership positions on most campuses (Johnson, 2011). The highest-ranking student leadership position on most campuses is student government president. A disproportionately low number of women are involved with student government on an executive level, and even fewer hold the position of president. According to a 2014 article from *Inside Higher Ed*:

The American Student Government Association estimates that about 40 percent of colleges, including community colleges, have female student body presidents . . . and out of the top 100 institutions ranked this year by *U.S. News & World Report*, about one third have female student body presidents or other top executives (New, 2014, para 4).



Research suggests that, when women run for leadership positions on campus, they are as likely as men to win; however, women are less likely to run and are not actively seeking executive-level positional leadership roles at the same rate as their male peers (Haber-Curran, 2013; McCannon & Bennet, 1996; O’Leary & Shames, 2013). This is problematic as it creates not only a gender gap in higher education, but also perpetuates and reinforces the larger stereotype that this type of leadership position is not for women or that women are not qualified for the position.

Past research on positional leadership in higher education, specifically student government, is limited and relatively dated. Of the past research, a majority of the studies examined leadership outcomes for students who participate in student government (Dias, 2009; Hellwig-Olson, 2000; May, 2009), although two studies specifically looked at the experiences of women student government leaders. One identified the impact of student government on future political aspirations (Spencer, 2003), and the other looked at leadership styles of former women student government presidents (Damell, 2013). These two studies establish a framework for how leadership in student government affected female leaders, but they fail to explore what factors influence their ability or desire to assume these roles and their experiences as leaders. The current state of research on women in student government roles is non-existent past the studies discussed above. This study sought to address this gap in the literature and to serve as the foundation for a research agenda that can explore women in the student government presidency from a variety of perspectives. This study in particular helped to illuminate what women are experiencing through their campaigns and presidencies and how gender and sexism has influenced their specific experiences. Exploring the experiences of these women also helped to clarify some reasons as to why there is a gender gap in the student government president role.

## **Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to better understand women college students' journey to and through being a student government president, and whether and how gender and sexism influenced their presidential experiences. Specifically, I used a case study design to explore their stories and the experiences that have been significant and influential during their time as student government president. Four research questions guided the study, including:

1. How do women student body presidents of large public universities make meaning of their identities, particularly their gender?
2. How do women student government presidents make meaning of their decisions to run for office?
3. How do women student government presidents make meaning of their campaign experiences, specifically in regard to how their gender and sexism shaped their election process?
4. How do they make meaning of the role of gender and sexism in their experiences as student government president?

## **Overview of Theory**

According to Lather (1991), the goal of feminist research is to “correct both the invisibility and distortion of the female experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal social position in society” (p. 71). Feminist theory highlights the conditions that exist for women and are inherent in a patriarchal society (S. G. Harding, 1998). The idea that society is patriarchal is at the root of liberal feminism, which explains that society is based on a power structure that is male-dominated and sexist (Tong, 2013). A liberal feminist theoretical perspective guided this study, which places gender, specifically women, at the core of the study. This was done to better

understand the unique experiences of women and how a student's personal understanding of gender and its role in her life influences her student government leadership experience.

Liberal feminists frame the experiences of women through the lenses of equal opportunity, gender roles, and discrimination (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983). Self-empowerment and self-actualization are at the core of this individualistic approach to feminism (Acker, 1990). Liberal feminists assert that women are viewed by society as less capable and competent than their male counterparts and that for reform to happen, women must establish and maintain their equality through their personal decisions and actions (hooks, 2000; Tong, 2013). Thus, the personal decisions and actions of the women in this study were important to consider as I strive to understand their experiences as student government presidents.

There are three core tenets to liberal feminism. First is the individualistic approach to feminism that has been discussed above which upholds that "women demonstrate and maintain their equality through their personal decisions and actions" (Tong, 2013, p. 18). The second core tenet is that gender identity and behavior are cultural constructs, and not biological mandates (Wendell, 1987). This tenet explains that beliefs about gender and messages about "feminine" and "masculine" behaviors have been created over time and are not descriptive of one's sex or biological traits, but instead are crafted through how society (e.g., media, news, educational materials, etc.) construct what is feminine and what is masculine (Butler, 2004, 2006). What is considered masculine and feminine by society can also change across culture and over time, showing that gendered behavior is not mandated by someone's biology, but is instead crafted by how society believes that gender is performed. (Butler, 2006; Risman, 2004). According to the last core tenet, liberal feminism does not subscribe to the men vs. women ideology apparent in other forms of feminism, specifically radical feminism (Eisenstein, 1981; Jaggar, 1983;

McHugh, 2007). Instead, it approaches feminism from a perspective of equality, contending that women and men should have equal access to education, work, reproductive rights, and other political, legal, and social structures that have historically privileged men (Jaggar, 1983; Wendell, 1987). It is important to note that this study does not employ a theoretical framework; rather, a theoretical perspective is used to ground this work. A theoretical perspective is a “set of assumptions about reality that inform the questions we ask and the kinds of answers we arrive at as a result” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 106). In the case of this study, liberal feminism was used as a lens through which I looked at the interview protocol, data analysis, and coding schemes, as well as provided a way interpret the experiences and social conditions present in the participant’s stories.

### **Summary of Methods**

I used case study methodology as my primary analytical approach. Case study is particularly appropriate for this study as it is often used when a researcher seeks to gain deep understanding of the experiences and meaning-making of a specific group (Merriam, 1998). For this single case study, current and recent student government presidents served as the bounded system, or case (Merriam, 1998). Case study methodology was critical to this research as there is not a large population of potential candidates, and it is difficult to find meaningful quantitative information or other studies on women student government presidents. Therefore, an in-depth understanding from a limited participant pool warranted the use of case study to help foster rich conversations and expanded detail on each individual story that allowed both me and the participants to unpack and explore the emotions and experiences of women in this role.

Although case study was the methodology used, strategies consistent with narrative inquiry were used for data collection. A narrative approach is often used when a researcher wants to “collect stories about the participants’ lived and told experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 41). A

narrative approach, coupled with a case study methodology enabled me to capture distinct pieces of the participants' identities and experiences through the telling of their stories and helped me to discover common patterns and themes across those stories. Using a narrative approach also allowed me to analyze the intention of the language and discover how and why the story was told in that particular way and for what purpose (Riessman, 2008). This data collection approach also "accepts the idea that knowledge can be held in stories that can be relayed, stored, and retrieved" (Fry, Barrett, Seiling, & Whitney, 2013, p. 12), therefore allowing both the researcher and storyteller to engage in the story together as it is being told (Fry et al., 2013). This is especially important for this study as stories are an evocative and powerful form of data collection that deliver real emotions and profound context from each participant.

### **Significance of the Study**

Similar to their underrepresentation in positional leadership roles on college campuses, women are underrepresented in the top leadership roles in business, politics, and higher education (Lennon, 2013). Although women make up 48% of the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), on average, less than 20% of positional leaders are women (Lennon, 2013). In higher education, only 28% of college presidents are women (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Only 32 companies within the 2017 Fortune 500 companies, or 6.4%, had a woman as CEO ("These Are the Women Leading Fortune 500 Companies," 2017). Women hold only 105 of the 535 total seats, or slightly more than 19%, in the U.S. Congress (Center for American Women and Politics, 2017). At the state and local level, only 12% of state governors and 21% of mayors are women (Center for American Women and Politics, 2017). There has also never been a woman U.S. president, even though since 1920, 26 women have run for the office and made it to at least the primary elections (Wikipedia, 2017).

These disparities in who holds positions of leadership are problematic for many reasons. First, in many cases women practice leadership differently from men, and their particular skills are missing in many ways from the leadership landscape (Wilson, 2015). Women's leadership is often more focused on the good of the whole, and research suggests women leaders are able to assess long-term impacts of decisions with greater clarity than their male peers (Helgesen, 1995; Jameison, 1995; Wilson, 2005). According to Wilson (1995), "women's leadership, with its focus on community, could neutralize the nastier aspects of capitalism and shift the balance of our democracy, making it about all the people, using all the resources we have to make 'work' a community value" (p. 115). Second, in comparison to other countries, the U.S. ranks number one in women's educational attainment, but ranks 26th in women's economic participation and 102nd in women's political participation (Interparliamentary Union, 2018; Warner & Corley, 2014). These statistics illustrate how the U.S. is lagging behind international counterparts and setting a precedent that only a limited number of leadership positions are available for women. Third, and most importantly, the lack of change in women's rates of engagement of leadership is troubling. Although there was growth in the number of women taking on leadership roles in business and politics throughout the 1970s and 1980s, growth has stagnated since then. CNN labeled 2018 the year of the woman – emphasizing women on a national scale and promoting women marching, openly sharing stories, and pushing women's issues on to the national stage. Even with this uptick of women in the spotlight, a Pew Research Center survey in the same year (2018) found that 57% of men believed that gender equality had either been achieved or had gone too far, while 59% of women believed there was still more work to be done. Even with widespread coverage on the achievements and struggles of women, a large percentage of the population believes that equality is no longer an issue or has been achieved (Pew, 2018). This

ongoing misperception in the level of equality, particularly in leadership roles, helps continue to perpetuate the lack of opportunities and understanding for younger generations.

One striking trend in politics is that it is not necessarily that women do not win elections; research shows that women are less likely to run for these positions (Anastasopoulos, 2016; Lawless, 2015; New, 2014). Although research has shown that if more women run, more women will win, Lawless (2015) explains that it is not that simple. Many women who would or are qualified to run for these positions face several other barriers that inhibit them from running. For women in politics, part of the issue is recruitment and sponsorship. According to a study of young Americans' political ambitions, college men are twice as likely as women to have considered running for office, and men are 15% more likely to be recruited to run for political office (Lawless & Fox, 2013).

Another problem lies in the inherent sexism and unconscious bias that many people, have towards women and their place in society. Soklaridis and López (2014) found that there are three key sexism issues apparent in politics - homophily, tokenism, and gender stereotypes. First, homophily is the preference for associating with those similar to you. This happens when individuals form more positive evaluations and decisions about people whom they see as most alike to themselves (Soklaridis & Lopez, 2014). This is problematic; it reinforces that those who are already in political leadership positions, primarily White men, will continue to believe that White men are the preferred people to excel at the position. Homophily can lead to tokenism. Tokenism happens when the few women who occupy high level leadership positions are viewed as the "token" or the representative for the rest of their gender (Cohen & Swim, 1995; Sax, 1996; Soklaridis & Lopez, 2014). Tokenism causes women to be more visible, as there are fewer of them in the room. Tokenism results in differences around gender to be seen as over-exaggerated

and causes women to feel like unwelcomed outsiders by their male peers in their jobs (Sax, 1996; Soklaridis & Lopez, 2014). Lastly, persistent gender stereotypes about women and men continue to remain constant when discussing power, leadership, and traits for good bosses or leaders (Soklaridis & Lopez, 2014). A 2002 study found that stereotypically masculine traits were ascribed to good leadership (Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002).

Unconscious bias, a similar but separate issue from stereotyping, is another latent challenge that many women face when running for or serving in political leadership positions. Unconscious biases are “social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness” (Banks & Ford, 2008, p. 56). Unconscious bias, especially towards women, is more prevalent than conscious prejudice and usually incompatible with a person’s espoused values and can often manifest in microaggressions towards women (Banks & Ford, 2008). For example, during a 2017 session of Congress, U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren was asked to stop “speaking in such a shrill tone” and to sit down. When addressed, the senator who made the remark did not see it as a remark about her as a woman, but instead about her talking. Senator Warren’s situation is a prime example of a microaggression as the individual did not focus on what the Senator was saying but rather used a remark about the tone and volume of her voice as a way to diminish what she was saying. This type of microaggression happens often to women when they are speaking in front of large groups. In an article about the war on female voices, the journalist reporting discussed that the war on female voices has little to do with the actual voice of the speaker but is really just a veiled way of saying women should shut up and talk less (Marcotte, 2015). In Marcotte’s (2015) article, several radio journalists and on-air personalities share that complaints about their voices happen so often, they no longer give any weight or attention to the criticism.



In both business and the academy, women face similar issues in attaining top leadership positions. The problem appears to be two-fold. First, like in politics; women are not as likely to throw their metaphorical hat in the ring. Secondly, confidence and perceived bias play a large part in why women are not attaining top leadership positions in these fields. According to several almost-CEOs or women who were in #2 or #3 positions at major companies, the issues women face when trying to attain top leadership positions are less about not being there and more about the confidence to rise to #1, as well as the bias against women's ability to lead at the top (Chira, 2017). In a survey of 786 male and female senior executives, "43 percent said they thought that continued bias against women as chief executives was the primary reason more women did not make it to the top in their own companies" (Chira, 2017, para 28).

Another significant contribution of this study will be to the body of research on leadership in higher education. Although there is some literature on positional leadership outcomes (see A. W. Astin, 1993, 1996; H. S. Astin & Leland, 1991; Cooper et al., 1994; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Kuh, 1991, 1995) it is quite limited and most of it is dated. More recent literature on college student leadership is focused on the holistic and relational side of leadership, while positional leadership has shifted out of the spotlight. This study could help researchers and practitioners to revive that research, investigate the barriers that women and underrepresented groups experience in positional leadership roles, and open the conversation for how we can work together to amplify this research.

Outside of higher education, this study can contribute to the body of literature on women and leadership in a variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and women's studies, by providing another source of meaningful research and additional perspective on the experiences of women in positional leadership roles. A better understanding of how collegiate

women engage in and are impacted by positional leadership may also help shed some light on the reasons behind the leadership gap outside of the college environment, inspiring new research on the gender gap for women in a variety of areas.

The findings of this study may also benefit colleges and universities as they rethink or strengthen programs and services that enrich women's college experiences and opportunities for leadership. Stronger and more impactful leadership training for women could help as they navigate the collegiate leadership world, as well as provide parallels for women seeking positional leadership roles post college or in their careers. This study could provide perspectives into what impedes women's confidence and issues they face when running for positional leadership. This information could then be used to help create stronger programming for women interested in leadership on campus.

### **Key Terms and Definitions**

Gender – refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (World Health Organization, 2017).

Woman – How an individual defines their gender based on aligning with the socially constructed roles and traits that are typically deemed feminine (gender) (Killermann, 2017).

Sex –refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define males and females (World Health Organization, 2017).

Female – An individual who was born with the female biological and physiological characteristics that refer to a female (sex) (Killermann, 2017).

Leadership – One central definition of leadership has not been agreed upon in literature. For the purpose of this study leadership is defined using the modern holistic approach which emphasizes leadership is a continuous dynamic process people take part in and is not defined by specific

traits or positions (H. S. Astin & Leland, 1991; Komives et al., 2013; Komives & Wagner, 2009).

Positional leadership – refers to the hierarchical approach to leadership, where people are considered a leader based on the rights granted by a position and/or title (Maxwell, 2012).

Examples include president of a student organization or high-ranking positions within a business, government, or organization.

Implicit (or unconscious) bias – refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control (Staats, Capatosto, Tenney, & Mamo, 2017).

Structural sexism / institutional sexism –refers to gender discrimination reflected in the policies and practices of organizations such as governments, corporations (workplaces), public institutions (schools, health care), and financial institutions. These practices derive from systemic sexist beliefs that women are inferior to and therefore less capable than men (Nadal, 2017).

Hepeating – when an idea or opinion that has been stated by a woman or non-binary person is ignored but then greeted with enthusiasm when it is repeated by a man (Gagluicci, 2017).

Microaggression – refers to brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups (Sue, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, woman and female are used interchangeably. When I use these terms, I am referring to the definition or concept of woman stated above (gender) and not the biological component (sex). This is important to note, as many pieces in the literature review

also use this language interchangeably, even though the words have different meanings and assumptions.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This review presents literature that informs the study on women in student government and positional leadership roles on college campuses. The first section will explore engagement in leadership and its connection to student outcomes. The second section of the review will explore the campus climate for women and how it impacts educational and academic outcomes. Lastly, the final section will thoroughly explore liberal feminism, which serves as the theoretical perspective for this study.

### **Engagement in Leadership and Student Outcomes**

Leadership is discussed, understood, and taught in many ways on college campuses. Formal leadership programs, leadership courses and minors, leadership organizations, and positional leadership roles are just a few of the ways in which students can engage in leadership. According to H. S. Astin and Leland (1991), leadership experiences in college promote self-confidence and cultivate competence. Students who are involved on campus through some sort of leadership role or activity experience larger gains in efficacy, leading to more successful navigation of the collegiate experience and a heightened ability to advocate for themselves (H. S. Astin & Leland, 1991).

Leadership has become a central outcome of the college education, leading many researchers to study outcomes associated with college student leadership development, as well as the different variables that contribute leadership, leadership development across different populations, and experiences that contribute to student development. Below, I describe research documenting outcomes associated with student leadership development. In such, it is important to note that much of the research on student leadership outcomes is self-reported data, where students are assessing themselves on a variety of scales or outcomes. In higher education, this

type of assessment is practical and commonly accepted as it allows for collecting information about behavior, experiences, growth, and outcomes in a realistic manner (Haber-Curran, 2011). It is also important to note that this way of measuring student leadership outcomes may result in higher or lower student self-appraisals of their abilities due to the complexity of understanding leadership and the possibility of skewed self-awareness (Haber- Curran, 2011). Much of the body of research on student leadership also looks primarily at students who are already engaged in campus involvement opportunities (e.g., student government, leadership courses, involvement in student organizations, volunteerism etc.) that emulate leadership outcomes (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Fischer, Wielkiewicz, Stelzner, Overland, & Meuwissen, 2015). This is important to note, as findings from these studies may be confounded by participating in activities and programs that are supposed to bring about a certain set of outcomes (Smart, Ethington, Riggs, & Thompson, 2002).

### **Outcomes of Student Leadership**

Much of the student leadership research has evolved from four large-scale, multi-institution research projects on student leadership: the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) (Dugan & Komives, 2007), the Leadership Identity Development study (LID) (Komives et al., 2005), a multi-site study on Emotionally Intelligent Leadership (EIL) (Shankman & Allen, 2008), and the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (Wabash College, 2009). These 4 projects laid the groundwork for several other studies that used the same models, measures, and assessment techniques to focus on unique student populations or smaller sample sizes.

These 4 research projects are the modern seminal pieces in leadership education and outline many of the major outcomes associated with student leadership. Although each project addressed different yet intersecting pieces of student leadership, many of the outcomes found

across datasets and subsequent studies were similar. One major evident outcome identified across studies was that opportunities to engage in leadership translated to better collaboration skills. Collaboration refers to a students' ability to recognize the need to work with others and having the skills to do so (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Komives et al., 2005; Shankman & Allen, 2008). Several researchers have found that an influential component of leadership training is active learning through collaboration, as collaboration is built into many leadership trainings, experiences, and curricular courses (Cress et al., 2001; Kuh, 1995; Ray & Kafkka, 2014; Shertzer, Saunders, Zheng, Shelley, & Whalen, 2003; Shertzer, Wall, Frandsen, Guo, Whalen, & Shelley, 2005; Wielkiewicz, 2000; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhard, 1999). In the LID study, researchers found that of the students who had engaged in leadership to some extent, the majority of students, identified with stage 4 ("leadership differentiated") of the model in which students recognize and value the contributions of others in the leadership process, including the ability to effectively work in teams and groups, and collaborate with those who have different or diverse perspectives (Komives et al., 2005; Wielkiewicz, 2000). Collaboration was also noted as a significant outcome of student leadership experiences and training in both the MSL and EIL (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Shankman & Allen, 2008).

Another significant outcome discussed is self-awareness or consciousness of self. In an analysis of MSL data, Dugan and Komives (2007) report that consciousness of self was one of the statistically significant outcomes associated with leadership among all students. Similarly, data from the Wabash Study suggests that students who had exposure to leadership experiences during college showed growth in self-awareness between their first and fourth years of college (Wabash College, 2009). Findings from other studies have also indicated strong correlations between involvement in leadership experiences with higher rates of self-awareness (e.g., Dugan

& Komives, 2010; Haber, 2006; Kuh, 1995; Shertzer et al., 2005; Shankman & Allen, 2008; Shertzer et al., 2005; Wagner, 2016; Whitney, 2010; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhard, 1999).

Engagement in the community, as measured by civic engagement, civic responsibility, and commitment, was also found as a significant outcome related to engagement in leadership. Community engagement ranges from involvement and commitment to college or community organizations to social responsibility in both the college and larger community (Dugan, 2006). Some form of higher levels of community engagement, commitment, or civic responsibility were found in several studies across the literature and include examples of students exhibiting higher levels of commitment across many different communities (Greek life, religious involvement, student organizations etc.) versus peers who did not associate with leadership experiences (Cress et al., 2001; Dugan, 2006; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Ray & Kafka, 2014; Shankman & Allen, 2008; Shertzer et al., 2005; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhard, 1999). This outcome is especially important as civic engagement is also linked with positive outcomes for college students including stronger academic engagement (Hurtado and DeAngelo, 2012), higher levels of emotional intelligence and conscientious community action (Bernacki and Jaeger 2008), and deepened learning and understanding of higher order skills, including critical thinking, math, writing, and communication (Cress, 2004; Gallini and Moely 2003).

The last major outcome associated with leadership education across a broad cross-section of the literature is self-rated leader identity (or leadership efficacy), meaning students identify as a leader on campus or in their community based on their understanding and involvement with leadership experiences. Several studies leveraging MSL data have found that students who participate in campus involvement have slightly higher leadership efficacy, meaning they identify as a leader or with leadership skills, while students who participate in leadership specific



activities (e.g., officer of a student organization, leadership classes or conferences, leadership trainings) have higher levels of leadership efficacy than their peers (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Dugan, Bohle, Gebhardt, Hofert, Wilk, & Cooney, 2011; Kodama & Dugan, 2013).

### **Positional Leadership Outcomes**

Although the literature on specific positional leadership outcomes is sparse and dated, two studies indicated that having a significant leadership role in an organization can amplify many of the positive outcomes associated with engaging in leadership practices. The first study examined the development of college students who were involved in student organizations and leadership roles on campus over a three-year period using the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory (Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1987) as their assessment tool (Cooper et al., 1994). The second study also used the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory (Winston et al., 1987) to assess the effects of involvement in organizations on first year and fourth years students at a mid-size institution (Foubert & Grainger, 2006). Both studies note that students who hold positional leadership roles in college illustrate higher levels of psychosocial development and a stronger ability to clarify their purpose in life. Both studies also indicate that students who hold positional leadership roles have greater gains in developing purpose, educational involvement, cultural participation, confidence in their ability to manage change, and more participation in their overall college experience (Cooper et al., 1994; Foubert & Grainger, 2006). An additional associated study also focused on the outcomes of involvement and leadership in student government. A 1994 study that examined the benefits associated with involvement in campus governance, found that involvement in student government positively impacted gains in practical competence, including decision making, understanding

organizational structures, communication skills, group processes, teamwork, leadership, cooperation, and followership (Kuh & Lund, 1994).

### **Outcomes for Women in Leadership**

Although both men and women experience positive effects as a result of leadership experiences in college, women benefit more readily and uniquely from these experiences (Astin & Kent, 1983; Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). H. S. Astin and Kent (1983) determined that, “if women are to emerge from college feeling strong, independent, self-assured, and well-prepared to take on whatever roles they have chosen—further study, a career, marriage, and family—they must be given more leadership experiences as undergraduates” (p. 324). According to extant research, women develop higher levels of self-esteem from leadership experiences and leadership experiences may be more beneficial for women than for men (Astin & Kent, 1983; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). For women, being actively involved in a student organization was also noted as the strongest predictor of leadership ability, social self-confidence, and the ability to build relationships and influence others (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Women involved in leadership experiences also perceived their growth in social and intellectual confidence at higher rates than their male peers (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Recent research on leadership experiences for women indicate that positional leadership roles are a “strong, positive predictor of leadership efficacy for both men and women” (Dugan & Komives, 2007, p. 16) but serve as a greater predictor for women. In particular, serving as the president of a student organization is associated with greater increases in self-esteem and growth in perceived leadership ability for women than men (Astin & Kent, 1983, Dugan & Komives, 2007).

## **Women in Positional Leadership**

The role of women in positional of leadership has once again prompted intense debate and polarization on the subject, especially in the political arena. The political climate from 2016-2018 provided many interesting examples of the adversities and obstacles women in leadership must overcome in their rise to the position and while serving in the role. Congress presented multiple examples of women experiencing gender bias and sexism, including the President tweeting that Senator Kirsten Gildbrand would do “anything” for campaign contributions, implying sexual favors, and Senator Kamala Harris being talked over and interrupted several times by male senators during her questioning of the nominee for Attorney General during his confirmation hearing (Diaz, 2017; Rogers, 2017).

The 2016 presidential race also showcased on a national stage that sexism can greatly impact a woman in her run for major political office. Hillary Clinton faced a barrage of sexist attacks and criticism from the media, other politicians, and supporters of other candidates during her campaign for President. At a New Hampshire rally, “two hecklers waved signs and chanted, 'Iron my shirt!'" (Collette, 2016, para 22). One business posted signage displaying the “Hillary special: 2 fat thighs, 2 small breasts...left wing” (Collette, 2016, para 5). Obvious examples of sexism and misogyny during her campaign were ignored by many, but Collette argued that if someone had yelled an equivalently demeaning remark at Obama – “like, say, 'shine my shoes!' - the public response likely would have been very different” (Collette, 2016, para 23). Another example of gender bias and sexism faced by Clinton included the media calling her “grandma in chief,” (Beinart, 2015, para 1) implying that a woman with a grandchild was laughable or unqualified to be President even though many male presidents before have been grandfathers while in office, with no scrutiny on their status as grandparent.

## **Challenges For Women In Politics**

The challenges present when women run for Congress, Governor, or another political office are not all too dissimilar from those young women face when pursuing elite leadership roles on campus, especially student government president. The following section will explore the factors that impact a woman's decision to run for elected office both in college and in the political arena, research on the differences between men and women in leadership styles, and an overview of women's experiences in elected positions. Factors that impact women's decisions to run for office.

According to the PEW research center (2016) at the state and local level, women are just as likely to win elections as men, but so few women run that the number of women serving in office remains low. In a 2012 report on the impact of gender on a potential candidate's choice to run, researchers found that there many barriers impacting women's decision to run for political office, including bias against women in the political arena, a lack of exposure to prior women in political office, women's' perceptions of their lower qualifications, a lack of encouragement from others to run, and familial responsibilities (Lawless & Fox, 2012).

Bias against women in the political arena. Perceived bias against women running for office is a significant barrier to women running. One study by Lawless and Fox (2012) found that only 50% of women surveyed believed that women who run for office were as successful as men, while 70% of women in the same survey doubted that a woman candidate could raise as much money as a man (Lawless and Fox, 2012). The same study by Lawless and Fox suggests Hillary Clinton's 2007 Presidential primary campaign and the Sarah Palin's 2008 Vice Presidential campaign significantly impacted perceived bias against women running for political office. They found that two thirds of female respondents in the study believed that "both candidates were

subjected to sexist media coverage” (p. 8). While 50% of all respondents, both men and women, believed Sarah Palin faced a gender bias, while 80% believe that Clinton did (Lawless & Fox, 2012). Researchers argue that these high-profile candidacies served to reinforce many women’s beliefs about gender bias in politics and in some cases weakened the political ambition of women who previously had thought about running for office (Lawless & Fox, 2012; Mo, 2015).

**Prior women in the office.** Prior research has indicated that a key factor in women not running for political office is the lack of visible female role models already in office (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Elder, 2004; Wolbrecht & Campbell, 2007, 2016). Electing a woman to a major office (i.e. Governor or U.S. senator) is associated with a “2 to 3 percent increase in women's representation in state legislatures four years down the road” (Showalter, 2015). Showalter also argues that if applied to the presidency, watching a woman run for and win the presidency would remove some of the stigma and threatening feelings women may feel when running for Congress or Governor, especially for those early in their political careers. She explains, “If a woman President was able to inspire just a two percentage-point increase in female representation at lower levels, we’d get one additional governor, eleven more members of Congress, and 148 new state legislators” (Showalter, 2015). Wolbrecht and Campbell (2016) found that the presence of new, viable female candidates created more political discussion and engagement in young women specifically, increasing the likelihood of younger women running for political office.

Visibility is also crucial for getting more women into office (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Homan & Schneider, 2018). Holman and Schneider indicate that it is not just about having more women run or win, but also about presenting women in politics in more prominent ways. This includes more time in print media, more time spent on televised events, and equal representation

in the media (Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad, & Gaffney, 2012; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Homan & Schneider, 2018). Often women in politics spend less time in front of the media than their male peers, which makes them less visible to the public during the election cycle (Bligh et al., 2012; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Homan & Schneider, 2018). Higher visibility for women in politics could also encourage more women to run. More visibility increases the likelihood that women will see others that look like them running and people aspire to be and do what they can see. In fact, since Hillary Clinton's historic presidential campaign in 2016, more than twice as many women have started the process to run for political office (Kurtzleben, 2018, Emily's List, 2018). Although no studies have proven that this uptick in women running is directly correlated with Clinton's campaign, anecdotally, many interviewed by NPR noted that they saw Clinton's campaign as a milestone which gave them the confidence to run.

Women in collegiate student government face similar issues with a lack of role models in visible leadership roles. Although women participate in student government at almost equal rates as men, they are highly underrepresented in the president and vice president positions (Dias, 2009; Miller & Krauss, 2004). Research indicates some of this disparity is rooted in the lack of female role models on campus and the absence of prior representation by women in the role of president or vice president (Dias, 2009; Miller & Krauss, 2004; Spencer, 2003). Two studies also indicated that in their samples, the number of females elected as vice-president or president increased the likelihood of having a female president in the future (Dias, 2009; Miller & Krauss, 2004). Interestingly, one study showed that the presence of a female student government advisor was correlated with a higher likelihood of having more women in the vice president role; however, the likelihood of women running for president still remained low (Miller & Krauss, 2004).

**Women's perceptions of their qualifications and level of confidence.** Women's perceptions of their own qualifications can be damaging barriers to running for office. According to Lawless and Fox (2012), 57 percent of women thought they were qualified enough to run for office as compared to 73 percent of men, even though they had equally relevant experience in leadership positions (i.e. extensive policy research, public speaking, soliciting funds and interacting with public officials). Another study by the same authors indicates that although women are less likely to rank themselves "very qualified", if they do perceive themselves to be "very qualified" to run for political office, the likelihood that they will run for office goes up by 11%. The authors also note that self-perceived qualifications are the strongest predictor for women running for political office (Lawless & Fox, 2013).

The confidence gap for women in entering the political arena is also a key factor in why fewer women choose to run for office at any level. Research indicates that women have lower levels of political confidence than men (Elder, 2004; Lawless & Fox, 2012). Many women undervalue their qualifications, where men often over value their qualifications; "women's self-doubts are important not only because they speak to deeply embedded gendered perceptions, but also because they play a much larger role than do men's in depressing the likelihood of considering a candidacy" (Lawless & Fox, 2012, p.10). In addition to gender norms, the confidence gap may be rooted in how men and women are socialized. Men have been conditioned from a young age, through school and sports, to be confident in their abilities, even if they are not the most competent or talented in the room, while women have had less exposure to that type of thinking (Elder, 2004).

The confidence gap is also present in collegiate politics. In a dissertation on female student government presidents, participants often remarked about their lack of confidence or

their perception they were not qualified for the role. (Spencer, 2004). In a 2014 Inside Higher Ed article on women in student government, a former student government vice-president, Omika Jakari, remarked that “the women I've talked to [about running for student government] say they feel like they're not qualified to run, and nobody has ever suggested otherwise” (New, 2014). These findings reflect a sentiment held by many women who choose not to run for positional leadership roles, a sentiment that their skills, experiences, and accomplishments do not qualify them to for the position. Furthermore, many women do not consider running a viable option even when they are overtly qualified (Spencer, 2004; Lawless & Fox, 2012). In both their 2001 and 2011 studies, Lawless and Fox (2012) found that when women met all of the desired qualifications to run for office, they were only 53% likely to run, while men who met the same qualifications were 76% likely to run.

**Encouragement to run.** Encouragement can also play a major role in women choosing to run for office. Lawless and Fox (2012) say the gender gap in political recruitment exists at all levels of office (local, state and federal), noting “women were significantly less likely than men to report ever receiving the suggestion to run for office” (Lawless & Fox, 2012, p. 13). Research suggests that when someone suggests to a woman that they might run for office they are half as likely as their male counterparts to consider running. However, when a woman is approached to run from someone already in politics, the likelihood of considering a run more than doubles (Lawless & Fox, 2001; Lawless & Fox, 2008). Unfortunately, women are approached and encouraged to run less often, even if they have shown prior interest (Lawless & Fox, 2001). Even with the increase in women’s organizations that specifically target women to run for office, it takes additional asks and encouragement, usually from friends or community members, for women to consider running (Lawless & Fox, 2008).



Not only are women less likely to be asked to run, but when they are asked, it takes more persistent asks for women to run than for men (Keith, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012). In an NPR interview with female members of Congress, many of the Congresswoman expressed that on average they were asked three times before they really considered running for their position (Keith, 2014).

**Family responsibilities.** Family responsibilities also remain a key barrier to women running for political office. Lawless and Fox (2008, 2012) argue that even though many women in their 2008 study were top level professionals, they still bore an unexpectedly high amount of the family labor. Statistics from a study by the Pew Research Center indicate that women who live with a spouse or partner are responsible for almost seven times more household responsibility than their partners (Parker & Stepler, 2017). When women have children, they are over fifteen times more likely to be responsible for daily childcare than men with children (Lawless & Fox, 2008; Parker & Stepler, 2017). Recently there has been an uptick in women, both with and without families, showing political ambition or running for office. One gender and politics scholar characterized this change in political ambition in the contemporary environment, saying, “women may now think about running for office, but they probably think about it while they are making the bed” (Duerst-Lahiti, 2011). This shift in thinking about politics and familial responsibilities adds a complex set of choices for women in thinking about running in comparison to male peers. In the literature, families are often talked about from a parent/child perspective and tend to focus on the adult age range. Given the institutional context and sampling criteria, my participants will most likely be full time-first time, traditional aged college students whose family situation may not reflect this. Although the women in my study may not have children, this study will explore how other family related responsibilities or factors may shape

their experiences, therefore including family as a factor that can impact the decision to take on leadership remains relevant to this study.

### **Gender Differences in Approaches to Leadership**

Leadership development research illustrates there are two key distinctions in how women engage in leadership as compared to their male peers: (a) women define and practice leadership differently (Cress et al., 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Wielkiewicz et al., 2012) and (b) have different motivations to lead (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Yeagley, Subich, & Tokar, 2010).

A study of first-year college students found that men and women had different beliefs and definitions about leadership (Wielkiewicz et al., 2012). Although men and women both held strong opinions about their leadership abilities, men were much more likely to promote hierarchical approaches to leadership, while women favored more interpersonal and relational leadership styles (Wielkiewicz et al., 2012). Instead of assuming more hierarchical leadership positions within an organization, many women take on roles that are people-oriented or “high-impact/low profile” (Hill et al., 2016). High impact/low-profile roles are those that do a great amount of good for an organization but are not often positions that others see or that are in the spotlight. A Princeton University report on student leadership also showed women were less visible than men in formal positional leadership roles (ex. student government president, major student organization president...etc.) despite the large number of women undergraduates engaging in leadership on campus (Stevens, 2011). The report explained that the committee found “women, more than men, tend to hold behind-the-scenes positions or seek to make a difference outside of elected office in campus groups” (Stevens, 2011, p. 11).

The literature also reveals the factors that influence unique patterns in women's reported motivation to lead. In their study, Boatwright and Egidio (2003) considered four primary areas they suspected influenced a woman's motivation to lead: (a) self-reported femininity, (b) connectedness needs, (c) self-esteem, and (d) fears of negative evaluation. They concluded that the greater a woman's interest in creating healthy and meaningful relationships, the more likely she is to express interest in seeking leadership positions (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003). Additionally, they found that women who have lower fears of negative evaluation are more likely to aspire to leadership positions, and women who identified with traditionally feminine gender stereotypes were less likely to aspire to leadership positions (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003). Additionally, Yeagley et al. (2010) found that women who had already held leadership positions, and who had a high sense of self-efficacy around their ability to lead, were statistically more likely to think about taking on an elite leadership position (Yeagley et al., 2010).

Another significant finding in the literature was the relationship between outcome expectations about leadership positions and the aspirations to enter these positions (Chan and Drasgow, 2001; Fouad & Guillen, 2006; Yeagley et al., 2010). Outcome expectations are based on "symbolic thinking (e.g., imagining possible consequences), vicarious learning (e.g., witnessing other individuals experience positive or negative results), and/or the evaluation of incentives (e.g., pay rates, recognition, occupational advancement)" (Fouad & Guillen, 2006, p. 132). Examples of outcome expectations can be anything a person perceives to be a positive potential outcome of a role. This could include tangible things like increased pay or promotions, or non-tangible things like increased competence, respect of peers, or influence to do high level work or set agenda for an organization (Fouad & Guillen, 2006). Self-efficacy and outcome expectations appear to contribute to women's interests and self-rated readiness in taking on

future elite leadership positions (Chan and Drasgow, 2001; Fouad & Guillen, 2006; Yeagley et al., 2010). In other words, when women are confident in their ability to perform well, they are more likely to pursue an elite or high-ranking leadership role.

### **Leadership Styles, Characteristics, and Norms**

Over recent years, there has been a rise in research on gender in leadership, specifically on the growing number of women in college and in the workforce, especially in predominantly male dominated majors or jobs (e.g., business, STEM, engineering). Particular attention has been focused on determining whether women have their own ways of leading. Historically, discussions around gender and leadership styles have indicated a nature (biological characteristics) versus a nurture (socialization of the person, often viewed through traditional norms) perspective (Gilligan, 1987; Sax & Harper, 2007). Leadership styles among men and women have also been viewed from the deficit versus the advantage model; in many cases, women are described as having a deficit or insufficient characteristics in leadership skills and motivation, while positive characteristics are often attributed to their male peers (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Sax & Harper, 2007; Shanmugam, Amaratunga, & Haigh, 2007). Sax and Harper (2007) clarify that characteristics like quiet, indecisive, lenient, and too compassionate have been framed as deficits, while assertive, visionary, confident, and unyielding have been described more positively. Similarly, Eagly and Karau (2002) explain that in scenarios where a leader or leadership qualities are being sought, “women are perceived less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 577), as the typical agentic men’s qualities are valued more than the communal women’s qualities.

More recent work on gender and leadership styles has focused on whether women use a different leadership style and what the difference is (Bornstein, 2007; Dahlvig & Longman,

2010; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Much of the current research on leadership differences categorizes male leadership with more agentic tendencies and female leadership with more communal tendencies (Bornstein, 2007; Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). For men, these characteristics involve an inclination to be more assertive, controlling, and confident, with characteristics often describes as “aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident, and competitive” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783). In workplace (or organizational) settings, this means that men often speak with more authority, are more assertive, are considered influencers, and tend to create solutions that focus on problems or issues. Women are labeled with more communal characteristics that are primarily focused on concern for the welfare of other people. These are often described as “affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783). In workplace (or organizational) settings, these communal behaviors include speaking tentatively, listening versus speaking, accepting direction from others, supporting others, and contributing to larger solutions for issues (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Generally, these behaviors and styles frame men as task-oriented (or transactional) leaders, while women are described as relationship-oriented (or transformational) leaders (Ayman, 1993; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Northouse, 2010).

Research also demonstrates that college women tend to assume a more relational view of leadership than college men (Arminio et al., 2000; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). This indicates that women place higher importance on "including all members so that no one would feel excluded or marginalized" (Komives et al., 2005, p. 610). This relational view of leadership is perceived as more approachable and inclusive and was rated as the most desirable leadership trait by women,

and people of color when surveyed on leadership styles (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). MSL researchers have also found that women scored significantly higher than men on seven of the eight self-reported outcomes of socially responsible leadership, while for men, the only reported significantly higher measure was leadership efficacy (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008). This suggests that women are more proficient in almost all of the outcomes associated with socially responsible leadership even though they rate themselves lower than men on their leadership efficacy, meaning that although women perform better than men, they rate themselves lower (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008).

In the collegiate setting, Sax and Harper (2007) found that leadership behaviors also are often impacted by gendered perceptions of leadership. According to their research, men are more likely than women to consider themselves to be strong leaders, in part because they are aligning themselves with the more masculine or agentic behaviors. Women rated themselves higher on leadership ability when leadership was paired with issues of social activism or commitment to social issues (Sax and Harper, 2007). This has implications for women who choose to run for student government president as well. Two studies on women who have run for student government president indicate that many women run for the position because they do not see another viable candidate or are determined to address ongoing campus issues that have historically been ignored (May, 2009; Spencer, 2003). Many of the issues discussed in the studies (May, 2009; Spencer, 2003) are considered social issues on campus, which tie back to Sax and Harper's (2007) finding that women are more comfortable taking on leadership roles that include social activism or social issues. Examples of issues from the studies that served as the catalyst for women to run include sexual assault on campus, race, gender, or citizenship related issues, and environmental issues (May, 2009; Spencer, 2003).

## **Climate for Women**

The term campus climate has been defined broadly as the “current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define an institution and its members” (Bauer, 1993). Climate is often focused on student populations and their perceptions of campus, including subgroups of students by race, gender, socio-economic status, and other demographic characteristics. This review focuses specifically on how women experience the campus climate. In 1982, the Association of American Colleges (AAC) Project on the Status and Education of Women published a report entitled *The Campus Climate: A Chilly One for Women?* (Hall & Sandler, 1982). In the report, Hall and Sadler coin the term “chilly campus climate”, which is defined as the “overt and covert behaviors of students, faculty, and staff” on campus that contribute to women feeling less welcome and valued in the college environment (Hall & Sandler, 1984). A chilly or sometimes hostile climate for women on campus can have short- and long-term impacts on how women engage with campus both in and out of the classroom (Hall & Sadler, 1984; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Kane & Rose, 2015).

Various studies have identified three major issues that contribute to the chilly campus climate for women, including gender stereotyping (Astin, 1993; Billing & Alvesson, 2000, Eagly, 2007; Heilman, 2001, Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Sax, 1996), micro-inequities (Beagan, 2001; Forest, Hotelling, & Cook, 1984; Kuk, 1990; Rowe, 2008; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000;), and sexist behavior/sexual harassment and safety (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Kane & Rose, 2015; Kelly & Torres, 2006; Rowan, 2002).

### **Gender Stereotyping**

The literature discusses the impact of gender stereotyping on women’s experiences in college. Alexander Astin concluded that “colleges do not serve to eliminate or even reduce many

of the stereotypical differences between the sexes...it would seem that their educational programs preserve and strengthen, rather than reduce or weaken, stereotypic differences between men and women in behavior, personality, aspirations, and achievement” (Astin, 1993, p. 405-407). These gender norms or gender stereotypes often create oppositional narratives of men and women; illustrating one gender as deficient in an area that another is dominant (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Eagly, 2007; Heilman, 2001). Billing and Alvesson (2000) explain that gender stereotypes, especially in leadership, can cause undue harm particularly to women and often cause unfortunate consequences as they give priority to biological sex, and “the enormous variation in the constructions of men and women is disregarded” (Billing & Alvesson, 2000, p. 154).

Gender stereotyping can be especially detrimental to college aged students who may exhibit certain traits that do not fit in with the narrative of how their gender is supposed to be performed (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). If a woman enters college exhibiting traits such as independent, ambitious, or competitive, which according to the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; see Bem, 1981) are primarily descriptive of men, they may experience a gender dissonance. This is especially true for women in athletics, leadership roles, or male-dominated majors who may exhibit more agentic or masculine traits (Sax, 1996).

Gender stereotyping can also negatively impact the experience of women as they take on leadership roles on campus. In an article regarding the challenges women face in leadership, Eagly (2007) discusses that woman leaders face a double bind, “women are expected to be communal because of the expectations inherent in the female gender role, and they are also expected to be agentic because of the expectations inherent in most leader roles” (Eagly, 2007, p. 6). Eagly notes this can be harmful to both women and men as it creates a prejudicial view of



gender, placing the masculine characteristics as good, while also identifying that women who display those more masculine characteristics as undesirable (Eagly, 2007, p. 10). Research suggests that when all else is equal (age, time in position, skills...etc.), male leaders are generally perceived by peers as more effective than female leaders (Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008). Female leaders who exhibit masculine leadership traits are often evaluated less favorably than male leaders who exhibit the same traits (Eagly, 2007; Eagly et al., 1992; Sax, 2006), but that it may not be the presence of the masculine traits that results in the devaluing of female leaders, but the absence of feminine behaviors (Johnson et al., 2008). They add that in order for women leaders to be perceived as qualified and effective they need to balance performing both masculine and feminine behaviors such as strength and empathy (Johnson et al., 2008). This coupled with the added demands that female leaders have in terms of their expected behavior, may explain why fewer women reach top leadership positions.

Once they are in leadership roles, women continue to experience the impact of sexism and gender stereotypes. A 2004 study indicated that when women succeed in stereotypically male tasks, they are less liked and more personally devalued than when men succeed at the same task (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins. 2004). Other similar studies indicate that women experience three connected, but distinct, “double-bind dilemmas” in leadership roles. The first is extreme perceptions of leadership, where women leaders are perceived as “never just right” (Catalyst, 2007, p. 8). If they act consistent with gender stereotypes, they are considered too soft, but if they defy gender stereotypes, they are considered too tough (Catalyst, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). Women in leadership also face higher standards and must work doubly as hard as men for less reward (Catalyst, 2007). Lastly, the study reveals that even when women leaders are deemed competent by exhibiting traditionally valued leadership behaviorist, they are considered not

personable or well-liked, while those who adopt a more stereotypically feminine style are liked but not seen as competent (Catalyst, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). The results of these studies indicate that gender stereotypes can negatively impact women even when they have proved themselves to be successful and demonstrated their competence (Catalyst, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2008).

Gender norms and stereotyping also impact patterns of engagement for women both inside and outside of classroom, specifically in on-campus activities and student organizations. An older ethnographic study by Holland and Eisenhart (1990) followed women majoring in math and science from two different colleges to examine why bright, highly motivated young women fail to fulfill their academic and career goals. Their research suggests that many women joined organizations on campus or participated in activities that aligned more with gender expectations (ex. fashion club) than their academic interests. Although Holland and Eisenhart (1990) did not directly correlate this with why women were not successful in their majors, they did regularly notice that the women “felt it an obligation” (p. 96) to be part of these organizations. Gendered expectations of how women join and engage in student organizations and on campus could be associated with why fewer women engage in positional leadership, especially at elite levels, such as student government president. Other studies have hinted at the connection between what organizations women join and stereotyped gender traits. Two studies on sorority membership indicate that sorority membership is often influenced by gender norms and stereotypes. Risman (1989) offers that in joining a sorority, women are choosing to enact certain gender norms and that the behavioral patterns encouraged in sororities, which function effectively as a means for traditional gender role socialization during and post college. Another study indicates that even though women may join sororities as a means empowerment and way to pursue meaningful

relationships, networking, and leadership roles, traditional sorority archetypes on campus can create an environment where the organizations fail to challenge the system of gender relations and actually reinforce the need to conform to stereotypes that some women are trying to escape through membership (Handler, 1995).

### **Micro-inequities**

Women also face subtle forms of discrimination known as micro-inequities, which may discourage and prevent them from pursuing leadership roles on their campuses (Forrest et al., 1984). Micro-inequities are small, covert, often brief and hard-to-prove events (often actions) which are usually unintentional and frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator (Rowe, 2008). Micro-inequities are different from micro-aggressions, which are small acts (usually verbal) that stereotype or denigrate the recipients and usually involve more active behaviors (Solorzano et al., 2000). A micro-inequity might be a woman being left out of a meeting or not being spoken to in a room of male peers, while a micro-aggression would be someone commenting to a Black peer that they do not sound Black. In many cases women also face micro-aggressions, but micro-inequities tend to be the more pervasive form of discrimination that affects women on campus (Solorzano et al., 2000).

These subtle or inadvertent experiences that favor male values, language, or leadership styles can have a damaging effect on a woman's psyche and self-confidence (Forrest et al., 1984; Hall & Sadler, 1982; Kuk, 1990). Hall and Sadler discuss many microinequities in their original work on chilly campus climates for women. They label them as "covert" experiences which include making eye contact or nodding and gesturing to men more often than with women; using a patronizing or impatient tone with women; appearing more attentive when male students speak; calling on men more than women; calling male students by name more often than female

students; waiting longer for men than for women to answer a question; interrupting women students or allowing them to be interrupted by peers more often than men; using classroom examples that reflect stereotyped gender roles; and using generic male terms to represent both men and women (Hall & Sandler, 1982).

Furthermore, these covert events or micro-inequities (Rowe, 1977), usually occur without the perpetrating faculty, students, or staff being aware of it, which further exacerbates the issue (Forrest et al, 1984). The subtle nature of these events influences women over time, and in turn can undermine their confidence or efficacy in participating in certain roles or positions (Kuk, 1990). A common example of a micro-inequity on college campuses is that often women are referred to as girls, while men are called men (Beagan, 2001). The language, written or verbal, used on campus by other students, faculty, staff, and administrators can slowly condition women into believing that they are less worthy than their male peers (Beagan, 2001). Taken individually, each experience with a micro-inequity may feel minor and not worth "calling out"; however, the daily, collective burden of continuously experiencing micro-inequities is significant (Beagan, 2001; Haslett and Lipman, 1997). Over time, these micro-inequities form a difficult barrier to performance, productivity, and achievement (Haslett and Lipman, 1997). This can be especially harmful on a college campus, where for the most part, a commitment to equality and diversity is regularly espoused. For college-aged women, micro-inequities create an institutional climate that may marginalize and alienate some students, in turn, reproducing hierarchies of inequality despite an institution's commitment to equality and diversity (Beagen, 2001).

Few studies have considered the impact of microinequities on college women. A 2015 study found that women who were exposed to sexism on campus where they had also experienced a variety of microinequities showed lower levels of self-esteem as compared to

women who were exposed to sexism but were protected in some way from microinequities (Spencer-Rodgers, Major, Forster, & Peng, 2016). Another study found whether a woman leaves college is more determined by outside social forces than academic ones (Kunkel, 1994). The researcher states that, “women’s needs on college campuses are unique and different from men’s needs because of this country’s historical tradition of ignoring, excluding, and trivializing women and treating them as less productive, less rational, and less serious than men” (p. 16). Kunkel (1994) also discusses that the unequal treatment of women on campus is less obvious or blatant and often happens without the perpetrator realizing that they are undervaluing or diminishing women’s experiences. Examples of micro inequities women face on campus include but are not limited to: women receiving less attention and less useful teacher feedback from faculty, women talking significantly less than men in the classroom, women rarely seeing the contributions of women in curricula, and women more frequently being the targets of unwanted sexual attention from administrators and faculty (Landry, 2002). In a literature review on retention of college women, Landry (2002) indicates that the presence of microinequities impacts how and when female students choose to take on leadership roles and notes that male students are more likely to hold positions of leadership on college campuses than their female peers (Landry, 2002).

### **Safety and Sexist Behavior/Sexual Harassment**

Feelings and perceptions of safety show up in much of the literature as a reason why women experience the college campus climate differently from their male peers. Two studies by Janz and Pyke (2000a, 2000b) found that women students’ perceptions of chilly campus climates were significantly related to feelings of alienation (Janz & Pyke, 2000a). Janz and Pyke (2000b) also noted that women students experienced sexist attitudes and treatment on campus, which was

strongly correlated to feeling unsafe on campus. Hall and Sandler (1984) believed that all students should have the opportunity to experience the academic and social opportunities of college (regardless of their gender or race), but “when the climate is perceived as more hostile by some groups of students, equality has not been achieved” (p.111).

In addition to Jan and Pyke, two other research studies have investigated the relationship between chilly campus and women students’ perceptions of safety. A 2006 study on women students’ perceptions of safety on campus found that women expressed fear and concern about their safety on campus, which limited how they interacted with campus environment (Kelly & Torres, 2006). Participants in the study noted many systematic and structural issues that perpetuated feeling unsafe, including: victim blaming in sexual assault or harassment instances, faculty and staff ignoring sexist or sexually explicit comments by male students, physical safety concerns such as lighting and transportation, and negative experiences with campus police. The study also indicated that the “culture of fear on campus felt inevitable” (p. 30), as campus was a microcosm of society where this type of fear for women is normalized (Kelly & Torres, 2006).

An earlier, but similarly relevant study on campus safety indicated that student mobility on campus was impacted by feelings of safety for female students. Currie (1994) found that women in her sample would avoid the undergraduate libraries, parking lots, and Student Union building in the evenings due to feeling unsafe in those areas. She also discussed that three-quarters of the respondents indicated that if their safety could be assured, they would be “far more likely to use campus more frequently or extensively in the evenings” (p. 34). The limited mobility of women students on campus in the evening hours has implications for how and when women students are involved on campus or in the campus community considering many campus activities happen in the evening hours.

Sexual harassment and sexist behavior also add to the feelings of a chilly or hostile campus for many women and impacts their feelings of safety on campus. Approximately 40% to 60% of women report experiencing sexual harassment in college (Hill & Silva, 2005; Kalof et al., 2001; McGinley, Wolff, Rospenda, Liu, & Richman, 2016), while less than 10% of that group reported these incidents to a college or university employee (Hill & Silva, 2005). Sexual harassment in a school setting is described as “any sexual behavior that interferes with a student's right to an equal education and can include any type of unwanted sexual behavior based on a student's gender, such as inappropriate touching, sexist jokes, and requests for sexual favors” (Title IX - 92 S. 659, 1972). A 2005 report on campus sexual harassment by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) found that a majority of students surveyed experienced noncontact forms of harassment, including sexual remarks in person and through electronic messages, while nearly one-third of the students surveyed experienced some form of physical harassment, such as being touched, grabbed, or forced to do something sexual (Hill & Silva, 2005).

According to a report by the AAUW (2011) women are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment on campus, which impacts their feelings of safety and comfort, and impedes their access to education, and ability to participate in campus life. Research indicates that after a sexual harassment incident, women are more likely to change their behavior in some way as a result of the experience (Hill & Silva, 2005; McGinley et al., 2018; Mitchell & Wooten, 2015; Pearsell, 2015). More than half of female victims involved in sexual harassment avoid the person who harassed them or avoid a particular spaces or places on campus associated with the person that cause them to feel unsafe (Hill & Silva, 2005; McGinley et al., 2018; Mitchell & Wooten, 2015; Pearsell, 2015). Academic dissatisfaction and increased dropout rates have also been

linked with sexual harassment in college (Roosemalen & McDaniel, 1999; Wolf, Rospenda, & Colenari, 2017).

Research also indicates there are several negative long-term health outcomes associated with sexual harassment of college aged women. Several studies indicate psychological distress (including fear, anger, nervousness, and depression), nausea, and sleeplessness have been associated with long term impacts of sexual harassment (Huerta, Cortina, Pang, Torges, & Magley, 2006; Monks, Tomaka, Palacios, & Thompson, 2010 as cited in Wolf, Rospenda, & Colenari, 2017). Another long-term health consequence associated with sexual harassment is amplified negative drinking behaviors including binge drinking, black out behaviors, and long-term alcohol problems (Monks et al., 2010; Roosemalen & McDaniel, 1999).

Sexist behavior, a subset of sexual harassment, is a leading cause of hostile campus environments for women (Bond & Allen, 2016). Dirty jokes with women as the punch line, derogatory and sexually explicit signs, and comments rooted in sexist gender stereotypes are often commonplace on college campuses (Zellinger, 2015). When these issues are not confronted and addressed, sexist behaviors are normalized as acceptable and are more likely to continue and spread across the campus (Bond & Allen, 2016; Hill & Silva, 2005). In a study on sexist behavior on college campuses, Bond and Allen (2016) found that sexist behavior is often ignored or given a “slap on the wrist” when brought to the attention of administrators, as it is considered a minor infraction. Like the micro-inequities discussed above, when women are exposed to a constant barrage of sexual jokes, innuendos, and gender-based slurs, it has an impact on their feelings of safety and security on campus (Bond & Allen, 2016). One student recounted that she stopped going to off campus spaces, which limited her access to friends, study spots, and food options, after one particularly rough day where she encountered so much sexist behavior that she



went back to her room and cried. Another student noted that ...“sexist behavior never stops, the [perpetrators] either deny they meant it, call it a joke, or think it’s funny when you call them out”, she goes on to say she has just accepted that it is a part of life at her university (Bond & Allen, 2016). Findings from a 2008 study also indicate that overall, women perceive the campus as less safe, while non-White students and younger students found the climate to be chilly regarding perceptions of sexist attitudes and treatment, and a majority of women students found the climate to be somewhat chilly regarding their experiences in the classroom and with course material (Morris and Daniel, 2008).

### **Impacts of Campus Climate on Women’s Educational Outcomes**

Campus climate can affect how women interact with their campus community and have detrimental effects on their experiences in the classroom, and on campus generally. Hall and Sandler (1984) argued that the climate for women on many college campuses reduces their self-confidence, diminishing their academic and professional aspirations. Others have argued a chilly campus climate affects more than just aspirations; it can also hinder a student’s personal or identity development, as well (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Kuh et al., 1991; Whitt, 1992). In two similar studies, Pascarella et al. (1997) and Whitt et al. (1999) examined the relationship between female students’ perceptions of a chilly campus climate and their cognitive and personal developmental outcomes. Pascarella et al. (1997) found that women’s perceptions of a chilly campus climate in their first year of college were negatively related to their cognitive and personal development. Two years later, Whitt et al. (1999) ran a follow up study and found an even stronger negative relationship between a chilly campus climate for women and cognitive and personal development for third year students. Cress (2008) similarly found a significant

relationship between a chilly campus climate for women and academic disengagement and lower self-ratings of academic and social self-concept.

**Academic and classroom outcomes.** In a 1987 study of the college experience, Boyer found that a chilly climate on campus impacted how women participated in courses. He explained, “there were subtle, yet significant, differences in the way men and women participated in class... in many classrooms, women are overshadowed. Even the brightest women often remain silent. ... Not only do men talk more, but also what they say often carries more weight” (Boyer, 1987, p. 150). When talking to many of the women in his study, it seemed that they had been ignored for so long in the classroom that they resigned themselves to less participation, focusing on their academic work completed individually (or outside of the actual classroom). Many women in the study explained that over the years they began to lack confidence to speak up in the classroom based on their previous high school and early college experiences. According to Boyer (1989) and others, a chilly academic climate causes women to experience a decline in their performance expectations and perceptions of their intelligence from high school to college, women tend to express lower levels of academic confidence than their male peers, even when their abilities are equal to men, and even though women report higher college GPA’s than their male peers they tend to perceive they are not as talented (Arnold, 1996; Astin, 1993; Hafner, 1989; Sax, 1998; Sax 2008; Zhao, Carini, and Kuh, 2005). Astin (1993) also found that the chilly climate for women can start as early as grade school, noting that by the time women do enter college, they already differ substantially from their male peers in “self-rated emotional and psychological health, standardized test scores, GPAs, political attitudes, personality characteristics, and career plans”(Astin, 1993, p. 405-406). Astin also emphasizes that a hostile campus for women serves to widen this gap during the collegiate years as well

(Astin, 1993). These studies demonstrate that the chilly climate for women begins much earlier than college, but its impacts are shown in how women perceive their ability in the classroom, as well as, how they participate in the college classroom.

**Outcomes outside of class.** Perceptions of a chilly or hostile campus climate can also impact how women engage in campus activities or other out of the classroom experiences. Research indicates that a hostile campus contributes to diminished psychological wellbeing including social connectedness, social appraisal, and perceived stress for women (Cross & Madson, 1997; Lee, Keough, & Sexton, 2002) Literature on psychological wellbeing for women, indicated then when women perceived their campus climate as hostile they were less likely to form strong relationship with others on campus, less likely to engage in campus organizations, and lacked a sense of belonging on campus (Lee, Keough, & Sexton, 2002). A chilly or hostile campus environment can also perpetuate emotional and mental health issues (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004 as cited in Soet & Sevig, 2006; Hill & Silva, 2005; Pearsall, 2015). A 2006 study on mental health issues on campus indicated a rise in women seeking mental health support or counseling due to sexual assault or harassment issues on campus (Soet & Sevig, 2006). According to the same study, a lack of social support on campus, academic and classroom issues, and issues with male peers were 3 of the 5 most reported reasons for seeking mental health help.

There was no identified previous literature on the link between a chilly or hostile campus and women's decisions to engage in leadership; however, considering the negative impacts of climate on confidence, self-esteem, and self-perception, one could speculate that it would impact a women's desire and drive to run for a leadership position. The literature identifies that there are destructive impacts on confidence, self-esteem, and self-perception in the presence of a chilly or hostile campus and when women are less confident in their abilities, they often opt out of

pursuing future opportunities. (Ehrlinger, & Dunning, 2003; Hill & Silva, 2005; McGinley et al., 2015).

### **Liberal Feminism as a Theoretical Perspective**

At its core, liberal feminism is an approach to achieving equality between men and women that emphasizes the power of an individual person to alter discriminatory practices against women (Serva, 2015). Liberal feminism is the theoretical perspective used to guide this study. It impacted research questions, interview protocol, data collection, and data analysis. This section will outline the history and principles of liberal feminism, how it guided the study, and how it helped me to understand the experiences of college women in positional leadership.

### **The Roots of Liberal Feminism**

Modern feminism is organized into three distinct waves beginning in the late nineteenth century and extending to current day. Each wave speaks to a different impetus for women's rights, first wave feminism focused on women's suffrage and voting rights, educational equality, rights of marriage and children, rights to their own bodies, and rights to work and work safely (Walters, 2005). First wave feminism and the women who pushed for these initial rights propelled the modern feminist movement. This wave of feminism is also considered the beginning of liberal feminism (O'Connor, 2010). The following two waves of feminism stemmed from first wave feminism but adapted and transformed to the time period and the social and political conditions present during that time.

Second wave feminism began in the 1960's as a reaction to the re-domestication of women post World War II (Dicker, 2016). Second wave feminism widened its scope and drove cultural and political issues to the center of the movement (Walters, 2005). Second wave feminists understood that culture, politics, and legal issues were intrinsically intertwined, and

focused on issues of reproductive rights, sexual violence, workforce and family rights, and oppression and discrimination (Riley, 1988). This was also the era of feminist writers like Betty Freidan, Susan Brownmiller, and Gloria Steinem, who spread second wave feminism to the masses (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; Riley, 1988). The second wave of feminism also marks the split in feminist movements, with the rise of radical feminism amongst some, and the continued perseverance of liberal feminist ideals among others (Dicker, 2016, p. 58).

The last wave of feminism began in the 1990's and although holds similar characteristics to first and second wave feminism, third wave is considered to have grown from the backlash to second wave feminism and reverts back to the individualistic ideals of first wave feminism (Haywood & Drake, 1997). It emphasizes the expansion of feminism to include people of different races, cultures, and gender identities and expands its focus to embrace intersectionality (Gillis, Howie, & Munford, 2004, p. 17). The third wave feminist movement is more ambiguous and individualistic than second wave and concerns itself less with what women "need or don't need" and instead asserts that women can make whatever decisions are best for them (Haywood & Drake, 1997; Dicker, 2016, p.107).

Modern feminists can be categorized into one of four different types of feminism: Marxist feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, and liberal feminism. Marxist feminism focuses on capitalism as the root of women's oppression (O'Connor, 2010), while radical feminism is more focused on breaking down and reforming social and political structures and norms that are inherently patriarchal (Dicker, 2010). Socialist feminism is a broadened version of Marxist feminism that focuses on both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression (Dicker, 2016). Lastly, liberal feminism is focused on the full and equal inclusion of women into current social, legal, and political structures (Beasley, 1999).

## **Core Tenants and Principles of Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminism is considered the oldest form of feminism, with roots firmly planted in the first wave of feminism (O'Connor, 2010; Whelehan, 1995). Liberal feminism asserts that women are societally viewed as less capable, competent, and proficient than men and therefore are marginalized and discriminated against within the confines of broader society (Tong, 1989). It emphasizes that men and women are equal, and as such men and women should have equal opportunities and access to education, the workplace, and daily life (hooks, 1984). Since its inception, liberal feminism has been credited with many of the major successes of feminist movements, including the right to vote, right to equal education, equal pay for equal work initiatives, and the enactment of anti-discrimination laws (Marilley, 1996; Dicker, 2010). Liberal feminism has deeply entrenched roots as one of the foundational women's movements, and the track record of successes and openness to diversity of thought and leadership paved the way for women from different cultures, ethnicities, and socio-economic classes to feel engaged and empowered to push for change and equality (Dicker, 2010).

Liberal feminism is guided by three core tenants: (1) individualism, (2) dismantling gender norms and expectations, and (3) equality across structures and systems. According to the first tenant, women can have their own visions and experiences of what equal means to them (Tong, 2013). Liberal feminism does not subscribe to a men versus women ideology, but instead approaches change from an equality perspective, contending that women and men should have equal access to education, work, reproductive rights, and other political, legal, and social structures that have historically been privileges granted to men (Jaggar, 1983; Wendell, 1987). In addition to equality, liberal feminism is centered on the notion of choice and not having one's options or ambitions predetermined or influenced by gender. Women should be given the choice

of being a stay at home mom or CEO or anything in between, and not pushed in to one position or the other simply because of their gender or under the guise of fighting for equality. Equality and choice are mutually related drivers of liberal feminism, working in tandem to achieve meaningful change (Jaggar, 1983). Liberal Feminism also asserts that personal relationships and interactions between men and women serve as the basis for transforming society (Jaggar, 1983). A recent example of this is the #MeToo movement. The movement empowered women to tell their individual stories about the corruption, underlying bias, and sexual exploitation perpetuated by people and systems while also including broader dialogues with men and other women about the significance of these stories and how to address these systemic issues.

The next tenant speaks to how gender norms and stereotypes impact women in a multitude of ways. According to feminist scholars, gender norms and expectations for women and men play a significant role in what opportunities are available to women and how women are treated in certain settings, specifically work and school (Ramazanoglu, 2012; Wendell, 1987). This includes the gendered socialization of children, where “feminine and masculine gender-norms reinforce women's subordination so that women are socialized into subordinate social roles: they ‘learn to be passive, ignorant, docile, and emotional’” (Millett 1971, p. 26). Millett and other scholars have suggested that upending these gender norms or challenging how we socialize children could positively impact both men and women and create a more equal society (Millett, 1971, Ramazanoglu, 2012; Wendell, 1987).

Lastly, the third tenant of liberal feminism centers on working within current structures and systems to address issues (Tong, 2013). This is especially important as many of the political, legal, and educational systems in our country are deeply rooted in established perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, and addressing these longstanding issues could require confronting our

own history and reorganizing the makeup and structure of those systems (Henry, 1992).

Dismantling the system is a radical approach, and liberal feminism advocates driving forward with change rather than attempting to rewrite the past by working within the systems to advance the positions of women, fundamentally address organizational limitations and bias, and achieve equality (Tong, 2013).

### **Liberal Feminism and College Women**

Liberal feminism is the largest and most widely practiced type of feminism and is often the preferred feminist ideology of younger demographics (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997; Renzetti, 1987). Researchers surveyed college women who had self-identified as feminists to determine which subset of feminism was most prevalent. They found that 80% of the women in the study identified with core beliefs and attitudes that aligned with liberal feminist ideals (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). There are many potential reasons why young women identify with liberal feminism, but literature presents three primary explanations. First, liberal feminism emphasizes the fundamental similarities between men and women, striving for equality instead of an “us versus them” mentality (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). This proclivity for equality seems to be less alienating to young feminists, especially college women, who share work and home spaces with men (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997). Second, liberal feminism served as a catalyst and driving force behind many women’s movements, increasing awareness of the ideology and providing young women with noticeable examples of how to fight for equality (Simon, Loewy, Sturmer, Weber, Freytag, Habig, Kampmeier, & Spahlinger, 1998). As such, when young women begin to explore women studies, feminism, or equality for women, the examples showcased in textbooks and the media



prominently reflect liberal feminism (Marilley, 1996; Simon et al., 1998). Lastly, liberal feminism is individualistic and promotes women making their own decisions about who and what they want to be rather than boxing them in to a defined construct of a feminist woman (Jaggar, 1983; Tong, 2013). As college women navigate career paths, family and home life, and romantic relationships, their connection to liberal feminism does not dictate their choices, instead advocating that they craft a life where they are equal parts career and family (Tong, 2013).

Liberal feminism is the most practiced ideology for college women (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997), and is applicable in understanding how and why women take on leadership roles on campus. Literature tells us that college women excel in roles that align with their purpose or drive (Dugan and Komives, 2007). Results from the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (Dugan & Komives, 2007) identify that holding a positional leadership role for women is positively correlated with each outcome on the scale, with the strongest effect being common purpose and citizenship. Other studies indicate that women were more likely to take on leadership roles in community service or social justice organizations (Stevens, 2012), which reflects the communal nature of how many women view and understand leadership and aligns with the purpose driven, change agents ideals of liberal feminism (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

### **Liberal Feminism as a Guide for this Study**

This study sought to uncover the unique experiences of female student government presidents, as such, using a feminist framework where gender is central to the inquiry and guided the research questions is essential. Liberal feminism was chosen as the key framework for this study because it retains a focus on the individual person and promotes personal empowerment. Since liberal feminist theory is individualistic in nature, using it as a guiding framework allowed

me to more deeply explore the individual experiences of each woman, as well as view their experience through the larger patriarchal structure of higher education and society. Liberal feminism asserts that women must establish and maintain their equality through their “personal decisions and actions” in order for reform to happen (Tong, 2013, hooks, 2000). The personal decisions and actions of the women in this study were important to consider as I strove to understand their experiences as student government presidents and to understand what role their gender and sexism played in their experience.

Using liberal feminism as the theoretical perspective for this study allowed me to explore how academic institutions are bounded in a patriarchal structure as part of the guiding context. In their 2007 book, Mary Dee Wenninger and Mary Helen Conroy use a liberal feminist framework to explore the historical gender disparities within higher education. They argue that, “born of a patriarchal tradition, higher education continues to marginalize women at every turn as students, administrators, faculty, and athletic leaders. Women are being penalized consistently for their gender” (Wenninger & Conroy, 2001). This is important to the study as these women were all serving or served in the highest-ranking student leadership position at their institutions. Most of which had few female student government presidents in the past. By asking students to describe the culture of their campus in the interview protocol, I gained a better understanding of underlying structures and systems that are sexist or gendered in nature, that favor men either consciously or unconsciously. Liberal feminist theory also addresses gender socialization, gender norms, and gender stereotypes. This was important to understand and search for in the data as I tried to understand how and why gender and sexism had impacted their experience.

Finally, liberal feminism asserts that change is possible through the modification of current structures and systems, whereas other forms of feminism assert that dismantling

structures is essential (Jaggar, 1983; Tong, 2013). Considering higher education is an established structure rooted in hundreds of years of history, the notion of dismantling the structure is unrealistic. However, the system can be reformed from the inside to attain greater equality (Tong, 1989). Student government organizations tend to mirror the environment of the larger campus (Spencer, 2004), so understanding how women worked within the organization's structure was an important question to examine.

### **Conclusion**

Current research offers a limited understanding of the experiences of college women in positional leadership roles. Previous research on this population is dated and has only been addressed in a small number of studies. In those studies, researchers evaluated a number of topics related to women who have served as student government presidents, but there is no research to this point that has approached this subject specifically through lens of how gender impacts the experiences of women in these positions. Further, the majority of this research was done with women who attended smaller institutional types that are less representative of broader societal environments and systems. There is also a significant gap in the current literature in how gender and sexism impacted these women and their experiences. This study was purposefully designed to address that gap and explore the nuanced nature of the experiences of college women in elite student government roles to better understand how gender and sexism impacts their choice to run, their campaign, and their term as president.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative study was guided by a case study methodology to help answer four research questions focused on personal experience and meaning making:

1. How do women student body presidents of large public universities make meaning of their identities, particularly their gender?
2. How do women student government presidents make meaning of their decisions to run for office?
3. How do women student government presidents make meaning of their campaign experiences, specifically in regard to how their gender and sexism shaped their election process?
4. How do they make meaning of the role of gender and sexism in their experiences as student government president?

#### **Epistemology**

This study was developed using a feminist epistemological lens. Feminist epistemology considers how gender, specifically womanhood, influences a person's understanding of knowledge and inquiry. It places an emphasis on the salience of gender, and how patriarchal social structures shape the knower's understanding of objectivity and knowledge (Harding, 1992, 2004). Feminist scholar Elizabeth Anderson (1995) characterized feminist epistemology as "the branch of social epistemology that investigates the influence of 'socially constructed conceptions and norms of gender and gender-specific interests and experiences' on the production of knowledge" (p. 54), meaning that gender implicitly impacts the production of knowledge and how a person understands what knowledge is and, in turn, how they view the world. More specifically, this study uses a particular subset of feminist epistemology - feminist standpoint

epistemology. Feminist standpoint epistemology focuses on social structures and how marginalized groups or individuals navigate and understand those structures. Marginalized groups experience social situations and structures differently and apply a unique worldview that members of a dominant group may not experience. Sandra Harding (1998) argues that thinking about and understanding knowledge from the perspective of marginalized groups or individuals positively influences and enhances the development of new sets of research questions and priorities.

Throughout my work in higher education, I have observed that women experience the college campus in many different ways from their male peers. Through my research, I have found that most studies on women in positional leadership seek to define why men and women are different, or explain how they practice leadership differently, labeling their actions and strategies as good or bad, masculine or feminine (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Sax & Harper, 2007; Shanmugam, Amaratunga, & Haigh, 2007). Highlighting the individual experiences of women in positional leadership roles and trying to understand how women work within the social structures of student government allowed me to take a more holistic look at how women experience high ranking positional leadership. Thus, in this study, this epistemology guided me to look at each woman's experience individually, as well as within the social structures in which she works and lives.

### **Research Design**

For this study, case study was utilized to develop a better understanding of how women student government presidents make meaning of their experiences. A case study is defined as “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual group, institution, or community” (Merriam, 2002). The purpose of case study methodology is to observe participants,

whether individuals or groups, in order to determine conclusions about those participants in general. According to Yin (2003), case studies are an appropriate research design “when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). Case study designs also include boundaries or “specific, set examples” (Merriam, 1998) in which researchers view and study the phenomena of interest. These boundaries, or cases, can be determined in a variety of ways, for example, a case could be a single person, a group of people, or a complex system. The phenomenon of interest is then studied within the boundaries of the case, for instance, students who participate in a specific campus program on a single select college campus (Merriam, 1998).

For the purpose of this study, the bounded system, or case, is being a female student government president, specifically at a large Research I institution. This case study utilized a single case study approach to “yield a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1998).

## **Context**

Participants for this study were recruited from large, public, Research I (highest research activity) institutions based on the Carnegie classification guide. This institutional type was chosen for three reasons. First, Research I institutions have fewer women in top leadership positions or positions of power on campus, including the university president (Lapovsky, 2017). A 2017 study on the college presidency by the American Council on Education (ACE) determined that 30% of all college presidents are women. When narrowing this research to only Research I Institutions, only 8% of university presidents are currently women (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). In looking beyond the top leadership position across campuses, women also account for only 38% of tenured faculty and 25% of Chief Academic Officers at Research I schools (Johnson, 2017). This small representation of women in significant positional leadership roles at these institutions contributes to a lack of tangible

examples for emerging women leaders on campus and potentially reinforces the perception that high-level leadership positions are not available or attainable by women.

Second, large, public Research I universities are some of the oldest educational institutions in the United States and, in many ways, are still embedded in patriarchy with historical roots that have often left women out of the educational environment (Wechsler, 2017). Although public institutions have existed in the United States since the early 1800s, women were not broadly admitted to most public institutions until the late 1800s and early 1900s (Wechsler, 2017). Even then, women may have been admitted to the university but still dealt with prohibitive campus environments and policies enforced solely based on gender, specifically restrictions in major, when and how they were allowed to socialize, and what buildings and rooms they were permitted in on campus (Wechsler, 2017). It wasn't until 1972 with the introduction of Title IX for federally funded schools that women were granted the same rights and opportunities as men on campus (Kernie, 1992). It has taken public institutions far longer than needed to achieve this level of equality, and the campus environments at many of these institutions are still rooted in established principles and practices that inadvertently favor men (Wechsler, 2017).

Lastly, in a review of the limited research available, the majority of women interviewed across studies who served as student government president attended private liberal arts institutions, women's colleges, or other small private schools (Hellwig-Olson, 2000; May, 2009; Spencer, 2003). Making the focal point of my research women at large research driven institutions helped to create new scholarship around the experiences of women in these roles in a relatively unstudied population and address a gap in prior research on this subject.

## **Sampling and Participant Recruitment**

A purposeful sampling method was used based on the notion that the researcher wants to uncover new knowledge and therefore must have the best possible sample for the study (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). In my efforts to identify and recruit high quality candidates for this study, I began by engaging my network of former women leaders and higher education and student affairs professionals for recommendations. I then reached out to upper-level student affairs administrators at large Research I institutions to discuss my research and to help identify universities with potential participants. I also reached out to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Running Start, two nonprofit organizations dedicated to advancing women in leadership on college campuses, to identify potential candidates that participated in their programs and trainings for women student government presidents. I vetted all potential candidates and selected participants based on the following criteria:

1. Participant identifies as a woman;
2. Participant is a current or recent student government president (serving within the last 3 years); and
3. Participant was or is student government president at a large, public, Research I (Highest Research activity) institution.

Once I identified participants, I reached out to each possible participant to see if they were willing and able to participate in the study, while noting the time commitment for each interview. When participant recruitment was finished, I ended up with six participants. For the purpose of this study, this sample size is characteristic of the population and is realistic given the number of women in the pool of women student government presidents. A smaller sample size also allowed me to engage in longer interviews and to collect data through multiple means to



gain a deeper understanding of each participant's experience and story. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) suggested that a small number of participants in a qualitative framework based on interviews facilitates the "researcher's close association with the respondents, and enhances the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry" (p. 486). They also shared that in qualitative research, the term sample is not always appropriate since the type of research and the participants associated with the study are not always sampled from a "target population"; rather, the participants share a life experience or particular social setting in common (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

### **Narrative Inquiry Approach for Data Collection**

The qualitative approach to data collection that was utilized in this study is narrative inquiry. Researchers who use narrative inquiry not only collect stories from their participants, they also use other data, including artifacts, observations, and images to help make meaning of a participant's experiences (Riessman, 2008). Researchers who use narrative inquiry strive to attend to how a story is constructed, for whom and why, as well as the cultural discourses upon which it draws.

Narrative inquiry also attends to both the personal and social conditions that shape an individual's story. Personal conditions refer to individual feelings, reactions, and moral dispositions of an individual's story, while social conditions refer to the circumstances under which an individual experiences the cultural, social, and institutional context surrounding a narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Riessman, 2008). Connelly and Clandinin (2006) argued that social conditions are intertwined with personal experience and cannot be removed or overlooked as part of the individual's narrative. Both the researcher's and participants' views of the world and personal views of social conditions surrounding a narrative cannot be subtracted

from the inquiry, meaning that how both parties come into the research relationship can influence how the story is understood and told.

Narrative inquiry was an appropriate method for data collection in this study as I was seeking to understand the specific experiences of the participants and the social conditions and settings that influence their experiences. Hearing the participant stories and how they use language helped me to better understand the significance of their story and the details involved. This method of inquiry requires a close reading of transcripts and attention to detail in recorded interviews to infer themes based off not only the story itself, but also how the story is told, paying attention to what and how something was said, as well as what was not said (Riessman, 2008). This method of inquiry also gives the opportunity for those with marginalized experiences or voices to participate in the construction of new knowledge or how the interpretation of previous research is understood.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through two 60- to 90-minute interviews with each participant. The first interview was done through Zoom, a video-conferencing service, and was recorded for transcribing purposes. The second interview was done in person at a location of the participant's choice. This interview was also recorded. In-person or visual interviews were used to allow me to pick up on subtle body language or language changes or pauses that may not have been as detectable during a phone or audio-only interview and ensured that each interviewee had two face-to-face interview experiences, therefore creating trust and building a relationship between interviewee and interviewer. This is important when using narrative data collection, as how the participant says something is just as important as what a person says during an interview.

Each interview followed a semi-structured design that included open-ended questions, with a focus on how gender shaped their decision to run, campaign experiences, and presidency. Two interviews were completed to give each woman as much time as she needed to tell her story and to create trust in the process. The first interview focused on Research Question 1, exploring how women understand their identities. The second interview focused on their experiences as and candidacy for the position of student government president, considering their perceptions of how gender shaped their experiences and exploring their respective journeys in the role. In addition to interviews, I used newspaper articles supplied by the participants as an elicitation technique. An elicitation technique is a method of data collection used to gather knowledge or information directly from participants and can include the use of case studies, brain storming, documents, graphic images, or focus groups (Borgatti, 1999; Cooke, 1994). For this study, one or more newspaper articles were solicited from each participant and served as an elicitation device. The act of reviewing and discussing the article was used to help to support the participants in remembering parts of their experience they may have left out or forgotten, as well as provided a place for them to express the emotions attached with the experience (Barbour, 2013). During my initial correspondence with participants, each woman was asked to send me one article from the student newspaper that documented her campaign or something she did during her term. During the second interview, the article was discussed with the hope that it might help me understand the participant better and to gain insight into what types of issues and subjects were particularly meaningful to her during her campaign or presidency.

Open-ended interview questions were developed to allow the participants to describe their experiences from their own perspective over as much or as little time as they saw fit. According to Elliot (2005), interview questions using a narrative approach should focus on four

main areas: (a) understanding what experiences people have had by letting them tell their stories, (b) gaining an understanding of what is currently happening, (c) asking questions that focus on what they are doing, and (d) gaining an understanding of what it means to/for them. Using these four types of questions as a guide helped me to address my primary area of interest in the study, which was to understand the role of gender and sexism in women student government presidents' experiences.

### **Data Analysis**

I used inductive analysis to construct meaning from the stories shared by the participants. Using inductive analysis allowed me to concurrently see the participants as both the source of the data and as an interpreter of data (Merriam, 2009). This type of approach helped to find the “why” in each person’s story, which in turn allowed me to generate themes from the data. This approach also allowed me to infer meaning based on the stories shared of the participants’ experiences. Leiblich (1998) indicated that inductive approaches are intended to aid in the understanding of the meaning (or the why) in complex data through the development of themes or categories from the transcribed data. To do this, a transcription company, capturing what was said, as well as pauses, ums, and any other breaks in the language, was used to transcribe each interview. Transcripts were then read several times to identify themes, categories, and a coding structure. As new categories or codes emerged, the transcripts were then be re-read to include the new coding structure in previously read transcripts. Data were analyzed through a feminist lens, which uses the notions of liberal feminism discussed above to create a filter through which I viewed and looked at the data. Specifically, I looked for examples of unequal treatment, disadvantages the women experienced, and any primarily patriarchal forces that showed up in the data.

## **Memos**

Throughout the data collection process, I wrote structured memos within 3 hours of completion of each interview to document what I heard and saw and capture in writing the phrases or quotes that struck me as particularly important during the interview. I also memoed regularly throughout the process to stay close and connected to the data. For this process, I constructed analytic memos to document the process and reflect on themes and patterns that emerged throughout the process.

These memos enabled meaning to be extracted from the data and permitted me to maintain momentum in tracking my thought processes and analysis of the data (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008; Saldaña, 2013). As I was memoing, I also highlighted quotes I found to be particularly poignant or that I deemed important. Polit and Beck (2006) discuss the importance of memoing throughout the process; no matter how inconsequential the researcher might believe specific thoughts, feelings, and impressions may initially seem, establishment of a “record in the form of memos ensures the preservation of such ideas that may later prove significant” (p. 28).

## **Coding**

Codes were created through both an inductive and deductive process. Deductive codes were used to help create an introductory coding structure prior to data collection and to connect the literature, research questions, and theoretical perspective. These codes were compiled prior to data collection and came from the existing data on positional leadership and feminist theory (Saldaña, 2013). Initial deductive codes were of limited help, and allowed for the separation of data into large categories.

Next, inductive codes were generated from the data that emerged from participant interviews, memos, and the interview transcripts (J. Harding, 2015). Data were coded in an

ongoing process that evolved as data were analyzed. The initial inductive codes came from memos during interviews and from interview transcripts and were mapped along with the deductive codes so I could begin looking for emergent themes (Saldana, 2013). I engaged in a second round of coding after the second interview cycle. In the second round of coding I looked for associations between codes, and developed sub codes (Merriam, 1999; Saldana, 2013). I used Hyper Research coding software for the coding process to organize and map codes in a clear and efficient manner. A table of both inductive and deductive codes is found in Appendix F.

### **Generating Themes**

Themes were generated from the deductive and inductive codes and a code map was made. Codes were then linked to quotes and categorized within like groups to find similarities and differences (J. Harding, 2015). They were then analyzed to determine potential themes and patterns within the data (J. Harding, 2015; Saldaña, 2013).

I used a narrative approach to data analysis. Using a narrative approach put the participant's story at the center of data collection and considered the relationship between the participant's past, present, and future experiences as interconnected (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). This was important in this study, as participants were asked to spend time discussing their identities, which in many cases sparked participants to discuss stories from their past and present. This also provided evidence for how the participants saw the world and their place within it (Jones et al., 2013). This study centers on gender, so understanding how participants found and made meaning of their surroundings and experiences was an important piece of analysis.

### **Confidentiality**

In order to protect privacy, the identities of participants and institutions will remain confidential. Interviewees were randomly assigned a pseudonym, and actual names did not

appear in interview data or in the final product. Institutions were also kept private for the purposes of anonymity. Since very few women have served as student government president at large Research I institutions it was imperative that all information that could identify the women was concealed. The key linking the real participants and institutions to pseudonyms was kept in a separate document on my computer, in a password protected folder. Information identifying the participant will be disclosed only if the participant gives her consent to provide such information. Each participant also chose where the interview would be held so that she could pick a place where she would feel that her privacy would be protected. Permission to record the interview, including when I turned on the recorder, was verbally granted by each participant. Each participant granted her permission for the transcription service to hear her narratives. Each participant was told her participation in this study was completely voluntary and informed consent was obtained in writing from each woman in the study.

### **Trustworthiness**

Jones et al. (2013) established that the trustworthiness of a study is about confidence in the research findings and noted that many researchers define and understand trustworthiness differently in qualitative research. In their book, Jones et al. (2013) preview many ways researchers can communicate trustworthiness of a study to their audience, including the four components of trustworthy research discussed by Morrow (2005): (a) dependability, (b) credibility, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is similar to reliability in quantitative research and deals with the ubiquitous issue in research that “the way in which a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques” (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). Thus, the process of

completing the research and the findings should be explicit and repeatable. Creating a clear audit trail throughout the process helps to create dependability in a study. For this study, I kept evidence of how the data were collected, reviewed, and analyzed to provide a thorough audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **Credibility**

Credibility is the counterpart to validity in quantitative research and refers to the “prolonged engagement with participants” (Morrow, 2005, p. 250) throughout the study and is enhanced by a thorough description of the data through “thick rich descriptions” (p. 252). Morrow (2005) indicates that it is about the researcher demonstrating confidence in the truth of the findings and representing a correct depiction of the experience of the participants. Therefore, it is necessary to consider my relationship with participants, and any potential unconscious biases I may bring to the study that need to be acknowledged and accounted for at the onset of my research (Morrow, 2005). I prevented the inclusion of possible underlying biases in my research through the use of thick, rich descriptive data. I used participant quotes to ensure I accurately and authentically conveyed participants’ stories through my writing. In order to challenge any unconscious biases or latent assumptions that may have unknowingly influenced my research, I also utilized peer debriefing as a strategy for establishing credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest finding a professional colleague who is not part of your research to serve as a peer debriefed to assist with accountability and credibility, especially when the researcher is expressly close with subject matter and experiences of the participants. Although peer debriefing was used, it was not incredibly helpful to the study. The two peers with whom I asked to serve as my peer debriefers did not provide much challenge or did not read the manuscript in a timely manner. Therefore, although peer debriefing was attempted it did not serve to be extremely helpful for



this study.

### **Transferability**

Transferability in qualitative work is concerned with to what extent the findings are able to be applied to other similar situations or populations (Merriam, 2009). Part of transferability is in the researcher providing sufficient detail about oneself as the instrument and setting the context for the participants, process, context, and other applicable research that may be comparable. To achieve transferability, I provided ample details in my work and created connections to how the findings of the study are significant to other women in positional leadership roles in college.

### **Confirmability**

Like objectivity in quantitative research, confirmability is centered on the acknowledgment that research is rarely objective. It addresses the core issue that “findings should represent, as far as is (humanly) possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, theories, or biases of the researcher” (Morrow, 2005, p. 253). Confirmability is important as it gives the readers a window to understand how the researcher came to her conclusions and displays that the findings of the study are a result of the participants’ stories and not of the researcher’s potential bias. To achieve confirmability, I used member checking. Member checking is a process by which the researcher sends the participant their emerging conclusions and allows them the opportunity to correct potential wrong interpretations or inaccuracies in what was reported (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It also gives participants the ability to provide more context or detail around specific scenarios. After the completion of the interviews, transcription, and coding I sent my emergent themes and categories to participants to ensure that I interpreted their words and stories both realistically and accurately. I informed participants of

this process before the initial interview and encouraged participants to participate in the process by explaining the importance of the correct interpretation of the data. Only half of the participants opted to participate in member checking, and only two responded when they were sent the emergent themes and categories. The two participants who did respond both followed up indicating that they felt their words and stories were interpreted realistically and accurately. I would have preferred to have each woman participate in member checking but that was not the case.

### **Positionality**

In qualitative research, the researcher is not only the data collector, but also serves as an instrument of the research. This means that the relationship between the researcher and those they study can be very complex. To address possible bias in the study, it is important for the reader to know the unique lens through which I view the study and the participants, as well as how I formed an interest in studying this topic.

For six years, I worked as an administrator at The Ohio State University, where I served in various roles, including the Coordinator for the Center for Student Leadership and Service. In this role, I had the opportunity to observe and work with the leadership of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) over several terms. During this time, I noticed there were very few women involved in the highest leadership positions of USG. During the 2015 election cycle, two women were running as president and vice president of USG for the first time in the institution's history. After a long, and at times uncivil, election, the team of women won. Although I knew both women prior to their campaigns, I developed a closer bond with the team after the election. It was through this relationship that I came to have a deeper understanding of the challenges they experienced throughout their campaign and were experiencing daily during their terms. Their

leadership style was in stark contrast to the administration before them and they received a lot of negative attention from students who did not support them. What made this attention more damaging than normal criticism was that it centered on their gender. They shared that they often felt like every decision they made was viewed “under a gender microscope,” and good policy decisions were often undermined by gendered criticism.

Although I could recognize that I empathized and felt angry on their behalf, this experience affected me more than I knew at the time. As a doctoral student and researcher, I knew I wanted to study women in leadership, but was not sure where to begin. Through reflection, I realized that my experience with the two women mentioned above had served as a catalyst for my interest in undergraduate women in positional leadership roles. With that in mind, I decided to research the experiences of women serving as student government presidents.

As a feminist, I bring a specific set of beliefs about women and equality to this research. I believe that our society is grounded in a patriarchal set of standards and that college campuses tend to mimic society in this way. For this study, these beliefs influence the way I viewed the institutions from where each participant came and the particular challenges that college women in leadership roles face on campus. This inherently shaped how I view the research, and also allowed me to more deeply engage with the research and the participants. I recognize that, as a feminist researcher, I started from the assumption that gender has an impact on the experience of these women. However, I was cognizant throughout all points of the research that this may not be the case and recognize that some participants may not see gender as a salient part of their identity or as an impactful piece of their student government experience. It was important that I was aware of my own positionality during the study as well as aware that the participants may not see have seen or experienced the world in the same way I do.

As a strong supporter of women generally and women student leaders, I am passionate about this research and the impact it may have for future women who choose to serve in this type of leadership role. Throughout the study I found myself needing to take breaks when reading transcripts or writing as I found myself emotionally connected to their stories in a way that was often draining. As someone who has known the difficulties of how gender can impact a person's career or experiences, I found myself often empathizing and placing myself in the shoes of the women in the study. For me, it was difficult at times to separate my own feelings on gender and leadership from the stories and experiences of the participants. This, at times, required me to step away from the work to give myself time and space to feel the effects of my previous experiences without letting those feelings impact the study. This was challenging and time consuming, but necessary, in order to best tell the stories of the women in the study and to not let my own feelings impact how I interpreted their experiences.

The political and social climate of 2017 and 2018 has also called more mainstream attention to the issues women face daily. The 2016 presidential election provided evidence that a highly qualified woman could run for president and yet lose to a much less qualified man. The two year span during the election was also filled with what CNN called "deliberate attacks on women," including the slashing of essential reproductive and health benefits for women, the dismissal of cases surrounding equal work for equal pay, and the epidemic of reports of sexual harassment and assault in various sectors of society, such as business, politics, and Hollywood (Schnall, 2017). Although many media outlets have dubbed 2018 as "The Year of Women" in response to women speaking out and standing up for their rights (Schnall, 2017), there is still a lot of work to do to ensure equality in today's society. The skills and lessons students learn in college can stay with them long after they graduate; therefore, it was important to do this

research, as I hope it will help put a narrative to what is happening for women student leaders on campus and may help to create a pathway for women into more leadership roles.

### **Delimitations and Scope of the Study**

This study focused on the specific experiences of women student government presidents at Research I institutions. Data were collected from 6 women, which was appropriate given the small number of women who had served in the role. Two key delimitations were used in this study to help define the scope. Delimitations are choices made by the researcher that describe specific boundaries that have been set for the study. The first delimitation was time since serving in the role. Participants for the study were either currently serving as student government president or had recently, within three years, served in the role. This delimitation was set to keep the focus of the study on the more recent and current experiences of women in the position. The second key delimitation for this study was the focus on only participants at large, public Research I institutions. I deliberately set this delimitation to ensure consistency in the research environment and because the majority of previously identified student government presidents from my initial literature review all came from regional, liberal arts, or community colleges. Conversely, larger public institutions have historically had far fewer women student government presidents according to a 2014 survey from Elect Her and therefore have a unique perspective to share (Elect Her, 2014). I hoped that in setting these delimitations the findings might be transferable to young woman in a variety of leadership roles, both on college campuses, and in the workforce. Findings could also be relevant to administrators and faculty on college campus who work with women in a variety of leadership or positional roles. Specifically, the institution choice was made to ensue relevance across fields as Research I institutions best represent the makeup of the workforce in terms of gender breakdown and diversity (Johnson, 2011).

## **Summary**

This chapter introduced the qualitative research methods and narrative approach to data collection that was employed in this study. Six participants were selected from the available candidates who meet the three criteria: (a) participant identifies as a woman (b) participant is a current or recent student government president (serving within the last three years), (c) participant was or is student government president at a large, public, Research I (Highest Research activity) institution. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant with a focus on how gender and sexism shaped her decision to run, campaign process, and presidency.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom videoconference and in person and were recorded and transcribed. Memoing took place across many stages of the data collection and analysis. Both inductive and deductive coding were used to highlight themes and patterns found in the data. Themes and patterns from data analysis were used to help illuminate the common and unique experiences of female student government presidents. Thorough methods for ensuring transferability have been identified and were engaged.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter I present the major findings from my study on the experiences of women student government presidents. This study examined the experiences of six current or former female student government presidents at large research I institutions. Each participant was chosen based on three criteria: (a) participant identifies as a woman; (b) participant is a current or recent student government president (serving within the last three years); and (c) participant was or is student government president at a large, public, Research I (Highest Research activity) institution. I conducted two individual interviews with each participant.

First I present a bio of each participant including major accomplishments from their terms. I then present five themes that arose from the data and that address 1 or more of the research questions. The themes include (a) Systemic Issues of Diversity and Inclusion on Campus, (b) Catalysts, Influencing Factors, and the Impact of Identity on Running for Office, (c) Impact of Leadership Style, Assumed Biases, and External Feedback on Women Leaders, (d) External Expectations of Image and Presentation, and (e) Relationships with Administrators. The first theme explores the general diversity and inclusion issues that the women identified on their campuses and sets up context for understanding their experiences. The next theme addresses the influencing factors of running for office as well as looks at how the individual identities of each woman impacted their experience in the student government president role. Theme three presents some of leadership challenges the participants experienced and identified as having gender-based components, as well as how they perceived their own leadership. The fourth theme is centered on external expectations of image and presentation and presents the advice they received and how it related to gender norms and conforming to them. In the last theme I present how relationships with administrators affected the participants during and after their term. These

themes tell a story about how the participants make meaning of their experiences as student government president as well as their salient identities while centering woman at the core of those identities.

### **Research Participants**

Below is a short biography of each participant which includes demographic data, narrative information, and accomplishments from their term. Participants are listed in alphabetical order.

#### **Holly**

Holly identifies as a straight White woman from an upper middle-class family. She grew up in the South in the same state in which she attended college. Holly has two sisters, a twin and a younger sister. She lived with both parents until they divorced during her freshman year of college. When Holly and her sister were born, Holly's father made her mother quit her career as a nurse to take care of the family. Holly stated, "my mom basically raised us, she was doing everything in the house. My mom paid the bills. My mom mowed the lawn. She did so, so much. She ran the whole household and did a lot of things that were considered stereotypically male, especially in a very small conservative town like I grew up in." Holly credits her mom with her drive to succeed. Her mom regularly conveyed to her and her sisters from a young age that they could do whatever they put their minds to, and that gender was not a barrier to success. She also believes that she was motivated to break traditional gender stereotypes as a reaction to her father's conformity to stereotypical gender roles. Holly noted that when she looks back now, she understands that her father exhibited a lot of traits of toxic masculinity, even though that was not something people were talking about then.



Holly attended college at a large, southern, public land grant research institution. She was a member of student government starting from her first year of college and remained actively involved until she graduated. When Holly was elected there had not been a woman president in 15 years, and she was only the 7<sup>th</sup> woman to run for the position in the history of her university. During Holly's tenure as student government president, two other women were elected into the other two most powerful student leadership roles on campus. This was so rare that it made national news.

During her presidency Holly had the unique opportunity to work with her state legislature as the student government president at a flagship state institution. In her state, the legislature meets once every two years and during that time, student government presidents from state institutions have the opportunity to be part of the proceedings. This gave Holly the opportunity to not only work to make change for her institution, but for also the state. The three main issues Holly focused on during her presidency and time meeting with the legislature were tax-free textbooks, medical amnesty laws, and increased mental health care on campuses. On her own campus she focused on streamlining student government processes and working to create a more efficient organization. Holly graduated in 2016 and currently works as a consultant for a large company in her home state.

## **Kacie**

Kacie identifies as a straight White woman from a middle-class background. She grew up in the same southern state where she attended college, which was a large public land grant institution. Kacie's experience was unique in comparison to the other participants; she was not involved in student government in any way until she decided to run for office and was only involved during her one-year term in office. Kacie studied women's leadership and was actively

involved in a women's rights organization. Her involvement in those organizations exposed her to the roots of White male dominance at her institution and gave her a unique lens to see how that continually played out in campus culture and traditions.

Kacie decided to run for president because she felt and saw a lot of social inequities on campus. She thought she could use running for president as a platform to expose people to some of the social issues on campus, specifically around minoritized students and students in the LGBTQ community. She never thought she would win or even be in the top teams to run; she just wanted to make a statement. During her term Kacie had high hopes of creating a safer and more inclusive campus for minoritized students; however, she felt that she was stifled by the administration and was not able to make many changes. However, Kacie did say that she believed she got people invested in the student government election process who had never been before, and she raised a lot of awareness of issues on campus.

Kacie said that she believes she was the seventh woman to serve as president in her institution's history and that there has not been a woman to run since her. Kacie graduated in 2018 and currently works for a large non-profit organization that supports women. She plans to attend law school and hopes to practice civil rights law and eventually work for the American Civil Liberties Union.

When I asked Kacie about prior experiences that shaped how she felt about being a woman, she explained that although she has had many negative experiences being a woman, both in college and post-college, she believes there is something powerful about the connections that woman can share. She said,

Instances like sexual harassment, people being condescending, people assuming that I don't know something just because of me being a woman. Those have all kind

of impacted how I felt about being a woman, at times, pretty negatively. But then, there's like other times, just like when you're with other women and you just share a moment that you couldn't have otherwise shared... it's so special that you can have these close friendships that people don't judge you for, that you could love other people so deeply and intimately in ways that I don't think men are able or do right now.

## **Mary**

Mary identifies as a straight White woman from a middle-class background. Mary grew up in a midsized southern city and called her upbringing “unusual, but normal.” Mary’s parents both worked, but Mary’s mother had the more high-powered career and was the bread winner for their family. Growing up she always knew this, and her mom talked to her a lot about what it means to defy gender roles and socialization. Mary’s dad was always supportive of her, but he was a very quiet laid-back man, while her mom was the more vocal parent. She believes that this impacted her career goals and perceptions of what it could mean to be a woman in today’s society. As we talked about what it meant to be a woman today, Mary disclosed that the 2016 presidential election had a strong impact on her. Not only was it her first time voting in a presidential election, but as a woman with an interest in law and politics, she followed Hillary Clinton’s campaign very closely. Although she loved seeing Hillary in the spotlight and having a woman run for such an important position, the campaign also shed light on the scrutiny women experience in leadership.

Mary attended a large public land grant research institution in the Mid-Atlantic and was involved in student government for the majority of her time in college. Mary could not identify how many women had been president in her institution’s history, but she did know she was the

first in ten years. During her term, Mary worked on fulfilling a campaign promise to make student government more accessible. She appointed students to her cabinet who had never been in SGA before; she planned monthly town hall meetings for all students on topics like student fees, mental health and urban development [in her college town]; and live streamed each SGA meeting to ensure that it was open and accessible even to those who could not make it to the meeting. Mary also noted that increasing funding for Title IX was by far her most important accomplishment and the thing she is most proud of. After graduating from her alma mater in 2017, Mary joined a presidential political campaign as a communications specialist and hopes to continue that work for the foreseeable future. Her long term dream is to run for public office.

## **Rae**

Rae identifies as a straight Indian American immigrant woman from an upper middle-class family. She immigrated to the United States with her family as a young child and grew up in a large city on the West coast. Rae's parents were extremely supportive of her growing up,

I am blessed in that my parents are so supportive. You'd typically find that immigrant kids are encouraged to become doctors and engineers and financially stable professions as they are described...because these are risks for our families that come from pretty much nothing and what our parents and grandparents had to go through and all of that....At the same time, once my parents really realized that I have such ambitions [business and politics], they've always been so supportive and encouraging. Lots of discussions in the household about politics and national issues and international issues. I think that really definitely encouraged me as a kid.

When Rae told her parents she wanted to work in politics one day, her parents shared many

stories with her about her grandfather, who was actively involved in local politics in his village. Although her grandfather only participated in politics at a local level, Rae shared that he was well admired and considered very successful. Rae said that knowing this about her grandfather has always served as a reminder that with hard work she can succeed.

Rae originally attended a large Jesuit school on the east coast. She transferred during the second semester of her 1<sup>st</sup> year to fulfill her dream of attending her alma mater, which is a large private research institution on the west coast and is considered an elite institution in her home state. Rae was involved in student government throughout all of high school and college. Rae was one of only two women who had served as student government president in her university's history and was the first woman president elected in a decade. She and her vice-presidential running mate were also the first female ticket to win in the history of their athletic conference. Rae ran on a ticket around providing a voice and opportunities for underrepresented groups on campus, specifically targeting the racist and xenophobic issues happening on campus. During her term she drove a major diversity and inclusion movement on her campus amidst campus protests and was featured in the media during the time. Rae continued to advocate for students on her campus after she graduated and was integral in getting a high-ranking administrator fired from the institution for inappropriate sexual contact with students and racist remarks made to other administrators.

Rae graduated in 2016 and has since lived in two large U.S. cities. She works as a management consultant for a Fortune 100 company. She would like to work in politics one day as well. Rae is “incredibly proud” to be a woman, and part of that is celebrating the real achievements of women around her. When I asked Rae about what being a woman meant to her, she said that it is about support and uplifting other women. She shared that she had taken that

morning off work to watch the speaker of the house votes on CSPAN and had tears in her eyes as Katie Hill cast her vote for Nancy Pelosi, saying, “this is for future generations of women. My vote is for Nancy Pelosi.”

## **Sadie**

Sadie identifies as a straight Black woman from a middle-class family. Sadie is the daughter of immigrant parents and identifies strongly as a first generation American and as an Ethiopian woman. We talked a lot about her identity as a Black woman and how she saw that play out in her role on campus. She felt her race and gender could not be untangled, because they were so intertwined with how people perceived and treated her based on both her race and gender. She noted,

I feel as though Black vernacular or showing up late to a meeting by a few minutes, the things that happen, those slipups that come with being a human are taken as more serious if I were to commit them than if my White counterparts would, or even if my White female counterparts would. There's an added layer of pressure of making sure everything is perfect, and you're not just achieving at whatever normal threshold, but you're going above that.

Sadie also discussed that being a Black American and being a Black Ethiopian influenced how she viewed herself and the Black community, and how they viewed her. She noted that there is privilege in sameness, especially within cultural communities, saying “cultural identity in the Black community was you're Black, but you're also African, so that makes you a little different. There's layers of privilege in all that, too.”

In discussing her identity as a woman, Sadie indicated that her culture played an important role in her understanding of what it meant to be a woman when she was growing up.

She and her brother had very different responsibilities and expectations at home. She was expected to cook and do chores, while her brother was not. She was not allowed to go to Prom or get a driver's license and her brother was. Sadie believed that the distinction between her and her brother's upbringings taught her discipline and responsibility, while she said her brother struggles with those things and matured at a much slower rate.

At the time of our interview, Sadie was a student at a large public research institution in the Midwest and was in her term as the president of her student government. Sadie became involved in student government in her second year and was involved for three years. Sadie is only the 10<sup>th</sup> woman to serve as student government president at her institution in its 200-year history. During her term Sadie said she was most proud of writing and helping to pass a university resolution that would remove the name of a slave owner and known racist from an academic college. She said,

There was a lot of controversy around that topic. I personally don't want someone's name on my degree who didn't want me in the country, let alone the college. I think it will benefit our community in that we're impacting this conversation by telling the whole narrative of who this individual is to our university. For a lot of us it seems like you're erasing the past, but the reality is you're just now telling the whole truth.

Sadie also mentioned that working to help create an online reporting system for bias-related incidents on campus and increased spending on mental health resources were her other two major accomplishments. She graduated in the spring of 2019 and is planning to pursue a career in medical research.

## **Tally**

Tally identifies as a LGBTQ+ Asian American woman from an upper-middle-class family. She grew up in a mid-sized city in the mid-Atlantic and attended college out of state. During our interview Tally discussed that her many identities (woman, a first-generation American, a South Asian person, and a Queer person) have been so intertwined that she at times was unable to separate one from any of the others when trying to make meaning of her experiences. She felt very privileged to have two parents with graduate degrees and is aware that her ability to attend college and work in her current career in the non-profit sector are predicated on the fact that she could always fall back on her parents for financial help and support.

Tally attended a large public land grant institution in the mid-Atlantic. She first became involved with student government during her time in college and was the first woman of color to serve as student government president in the history of her institution. Tally said she could only identify two other women presidents who came before her, and both were White women. Tally did not come out as a member of the LGBTQ community to her peers during college, but she suspects she was also the first Queer person to serve as president as well. Tally graduated in 2016 and currently works for a non-partisan policy group. During her term Tally was focused on giving a voice to those on campus who were overlooked and voiceless. She said, “what motivated me to become SGA president was the fact that I, as a student, could create sustainable change on our campus that could better the student experience.” The major issue Tally worked towards during her term was making sure that all students were represented by the institution, no matter who they were or what their background was. Other issues she pushed for included working with the Division of Student Affairs on inclusivity and diversity workshops and helping to create financial literacy programming on campus.



Tally felt being a woman in today's society was both a privilege and a burden. She felt an immense sense of responsibility to "obtain equality and pave pathways for future women." For her this conveyed that being a woman means thinking about your own success and struggles while also creating opportunities for the next generation. In discussing gender in today's society, Tally shared that she regularly sees gendered behavior in the business environment she works in. In her field, she sees a sort of socialization to what it means to be corporate or professional and it is all male and White dominated. She says, "for example, golfing or talking about sports in the office or drinking scotch. It's such a male thing and they've managed to gender business; I think certain things are really hard to wedge your way into as a woman". Tally really enjoys working in a bi-partisan environment, but she also does not rule out working for a political campaign one day, although she says she has no interest in running herself.

## **Themes**

### **Systemic Issues of Inclusion and Diversity on Campus**

The first theme serves as a precursor for other factors that influence and have impact on a woman's decision to run for office and the experiences during her tenure. All of the women in the study referenced the influence of institutional issues on their campuses, and how this environment consistently reinforced the concept that women and minoritized students were less than or not worthy of admission in to positions of prestige or elite spaces on campus (e.g., student government, secret societies, board memberships). They mentioned how their institutions were still combating deep-rooted structural issues with sexism and grappling with addressing other issues related to inclusivity for multiple other identities.

University history and traditions. According to Holly, many of the practices and traditions at her school are entrenched in patriarchy and stem from the days well before women were even permitted to attend the institution.

We're a school that very much still takes pride in tradition and a lot of those traditions, if you examined them, find root in excluding minority communities and women or kind of pushing them off to the side. So, there was a lot of unspoken sexism that was kind of woven into the day to day life at [my university] ... certainly at [my university], men were much more prominent in leadership roles and women were like the go to vice presidents who really ran everything. A lot of our phrases are also just dominated and built for men. Our fight song talks about boys and men and that kind of thing. It's really interesting because I'm a big proponent of tradition. I think it's important. I think it's what makes a university unique, but I also think we need to evaluate, are we naturally creating an environment that is not inclusive when we lean so heavily on these traditions?

For Holly, as the first woman student government president at her institution in over 15 years, she could see how the climate of the university shaped how others viewed women in leadership roles.

When I asked Kacie what she struggled with when running for student government president she said, "The fact that [university] just it isn't welcoming for women. You could see so much history there that just wasn't meant for women, but you were like forced to acclimate to this school instead of the school acclimating to include women." She went on to discuss the absence of women in leadership on campus.

There are not women in higher leadership positions. And there was one woman

who was the vice president, and she was not great. And so, it was hard to like look around and you don't see yourself reflected in these leadership positions, and the one person you do see reflected is this woman who has worked at [the university] forever... and it's kind of like the stereotype of the woman who tried to fit into the good ol' boys club, and like you don't really see this powerful woman who is kind of leading on her own. And then, there are smaller things too, like there's not a building on campus named after a woman. So, they're all named after men, especially like confederate soldiers or White supremacist men. And so, it's just like you have this university that cares that you're there, but not enough to put you in their history, or talk about it, or show that we have these great women. And so, it's really hard.

Thus, for Kacie, the university's explicit and historical erasure of women on campus served as a daily reminder that women and minoritized students held less value on campus than their White male counterparts. In addition to this, the lack of women role models in position of power on campus did not provide an example or roadmap of how to lead at an institution that already did not demonstrate that women were welcomed or valued on campus.

Like Holly and Kacie, Tally's institution also has a long history of women being excluded on campus and campus traditions that favor men. Her institution has never had a university president who was not a White man, even though 58% of students on campus are women, and the institution ranks above average in racial representation, with 44% of students identifying as people of color. Tally laughed and fidgeted when talking about the appointment of the most recent university president, saying "our president has never been anything but a White

man.” She continued saying, “when I went there, we got a new president and I think that was the first White man under the age of 60 to be president. Which was kind of crazy because they were like ‘This is diversity.’ and it is so clearly not.” Tally went on to discuss some of the traditions on campus which still favor men and traditional gender roles:

[My university] is a majority female campus, but there's so much patriarchal stuff going on within the university. There's a ring dance, men have to ask women; they have to get a ring and put it on them. I'm saying this as someone who was involved in all this stuff in college... but the gender stereotypic norms are certainly not being bent in any way.

Thus, although Tally knew the campus had a lot of systemic gender and race issues on campus, she continued to participate in them. In later themes, Tally discusses in further detail the pressures to conform to campus culture as a way to integrate with the status quo.

Diversity and inclusion on campus. Mary was also very critical of her campus. For her though, it was less about the history and tradition of the university, and more about the congruence between some students’ words and thoughts on inclusivity and diversity. She discussed,

[My university] is full of people, White guys, especially who think they're progressive, who think they're feminist, who think they're not racist, and in reality because everybody in [my university] is so progressive, they don't actually talk about their racism, their biases, et cetera, if that makes sense. There are all these people who claim they have their best interest in mind and they actually are taking leadership spots from you, are saying things that are actually super offensive to you all the time.

For Mary, issues on campus were less overt and more covert. She witnessed actions and behaviors by people who said they supported women and minoritized students, but whose actions did not align with their words. This created a culture where women and students of color were told they were welcome but did not always feel a sense of equality on campus.

Mary, Kacie, and Sadie were also critical of how women in power were talked about or treated on their campuses. Mary acknowledged that her student government president predecessor made what she believed were sexist comments regarding Jan, one of the only high-level female administrators on campus. She recounted,

He said to me, "I don't like Jan, I think she's calculating, and she pretends to be friends with people so that she can get things that she wants." I remember thinking, Jan is calculating, but Greg [male VPSA] isn't? Like, Jan and Greg do the same things all the time. In fact, Jan does more than Greg does to get things done. That doesn't make her calculating, that makes her effective.

The way her male peer discounted Jan's leadership style revealed to Mary that when the same actions are taken by a man and by a woman, he perceived the actions of the man in a positive light reinforcing his opinion of them while looking negatively at the women's actions and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Kacie also noticed that women in power were talked about differently from men. When discussing that her university had just hired two new female deans, she mentioned the gendered language used in the university press release. She said, "even when they talk about them in their announcement, they talked about their work life balance, and how many children they have, and things that you don't see on dean announcements for men."

Sadie also felt that men and women on her campus faced different expectations, specifically in terms of workload and contribution. Saying that “in my eyes at least, I constantly feel like women are overlooked and that we work 10 times harder than our male counterparts but are never recognized for it. That's just the overarching theme of, I mean, all of campus.” She goes on to say,

Even my advisor, who is the assistant dean of student affairs, I mean, the woman sacrifices her entire life, basically. She has two children who are really small, and she's constantly available to students, on top of also leading a team of members of student affairs, but I don't see a guy working as hard as she is in the same department. I don't think she gets recognized enough.

For Sadie, this demonstrated that women work twice as hard and also carry the burden of responsibility for family while not getting credit and recognition at the same level as men.

Sadie also believes women of color on campus face a form of academic oppression. There is a Black woman who has been the interim dean at our college of law now for about two years. She went to Harvard Law. She's overqualified in every capacity. The entire college of law adores her, but for some reason, our provost hasn't appointed her officially to dean. She's just been interim. Which sucks, because she also makes interim salary, which is not the same.

For Sadie, seeing that a highly capable and qualified woman of color is not being recognized or compensated for the work she is doing is frustrating, especially since she was experiencing similar feelings about her own work as student government president. This is a form of oppression that women of color in academia face on many levels. Studies have indicated that women of color in academia face an uphill battle to reach promotion and tenure, as well as compensation, at the same rate as their colleagues (Hurtado, 2016).

Exclusive campus organizations. Greek organizations, secret societies, and other exclusive organizations came up several times as well. Four of the six participants discussed how Greek organizations play into campus culture issues, and about the power that comes from being in a White, male Greek organizations. Rae believed that power structures in the Greek community were the cause of some campus issues. She discussed,

Not to peg Greek life as the sole source of the bad things on campus. The issues for women exist everywhere, but if I were able to identify places and pockets where it was very apparent that women didn't have the kind of agency that they needed to have to really be successful and seen and heard and all that, I would say that there were definitely some issues arising from those types of, I guess you could say, power structures that existed in the Greek community.

For Rae, she saw women in the Greek community having less agency and often falling into stereotypical gender roles present in Greek organizations. Although she is aware that gender issues are happening across campus, Greek men held far more power than their female counterparts.

Kacie also recognized that Greek life on her campus was responsible for some of the culture issues, especially for female students. "Greek life dominates campus, even though it's only 25% of the body. That's where the money and power is steeped. It creates...in several ways, a huge hook-up culture. That's the problem. That contributes to the rape culture on campus."

Mary, who was a member of the Greek community at her institution, was appalled by the Greek system on her campus and the negative culture it created for women in the Greek community. She shared,

I would say, there are women who are in Greek life, who frankly are treated awfully. I think they have a lot of expectations to live up to in ways that I just think are ridiculous. I feel like women in Greek life are expected to look great all the time, also be smart, also party all the time. I think that kind of goes across the campus too, but it's very specific in Greek life. Men don't want to be friends with you if they're not hooking up with you. They don't think you can do anything besides or shouldn't do anything besides like party and look cute.

For Mary, this related to climate issues on campus, as the majority of students involved in leadership roles at her institution were also members of the Greek community even though Greek students only make up about 20% of the undergraduate population. Mary discussed that the power and connections that came from the Greek students and alumna on campus were also evident in and out of the Greek community. The Greek community on Mary's campus has also been under fire by the institution and in the national news for several years due to many examples of sexist and racist behavior stemming from fraternities or happening at fraternity related events.

Secret societies that benefit specifically men on campus were also discussed by participants. Rae mentioned that a secret society on campus helped get men elected into student leadership positions, "I knew for a fact that the previous student body president was involved with a secret campus organization meant for just men that would help just men get elected to these positions. There were all sorts of political machines that worked to support them [men]." Kacie mentioned a similar type of organization on her campus as well, "I know that there are secret organizations on campus that help the gentlemen run for office, that help the fraternity man get in these positions." Kacie went on to discuss



that these secret societies also hold power, prestige and connections that if you are not a member can inhibit you from access to important people.

I was the first student body president, female student body president and I think the second student body president ever who wasn't in these secret societies. And so, my experience as a student body president is drastically different from theirs, because I also didn't have these deep-rooted connections that they had. Because our board of trustees are all in these secret societies, it's all very like old money, very like old connections. And so, my experience was very different from theirs, because they had these platforms to stand on kind of, and I didn't.

Secret societies on campus, like fraternities and sororities, serve as conduits for power, access, and connections, which in turn can be detrimental to those running against people from such organizations.

### **Catalysts, Influencing Factors, and the Impact of Identity on Running for Office Advocacy**

When it came to the “why” or the catalyst for running, all six participants explained that they wanted to solve a problem or fill a void for underserved groups on campus. This echoes much of the prior research on women student government presidents that indicates women run because they have a desire to address ongoing campus issues that have recently or historically been ignored (May, 2009; Spencer, 2003). Five of the six participants discussed that there was a lack of advocacy on campus for underrepresented students and lack of response from administration in regard to the problems these students were experiencing.

All of the women in the study indicated that they perceived many of the previous student government presidents or men they were running against were doing so for ego related reasons;

they did not run for validation or self-fulfillment. Holly said of her experience, “a lot of people before me had run and then done it to just further their own interests or to get what they personally wanted from [the university], not what students wanted.” Rae echoed this sentiment saying, “I really saw myself as an advocate for these communities who weren't talked about because the elected leaders were too busy campaigning on things like, we're gonna bring a Jamba Juice to our quad. Or just ridiculous things that I never felt like served a purpose.” Kacie who was not previously involved in student government before her election ran because she thought there was so much wrong with how students were being treated on campus. She said,

... I didn't think I'd win, but it was just kind of like running just to talk about things that I thought were important [race issues, LGBTQ issues] and maybe get some of these other people to talk about these issues too... instead of just talking about stupid things like having more concerts that don't actually impact people's actual experience on campus. And then, it ended up resonating with a lot more people than we expected it to. And so, that was really exciting... We were campaigning on social issues that are just so personal for people, it's like this is worth it because if I hadn't done this, nobody else would have done this and people still would have felt left out and not seen.

For Kacie, the decision to run had little to do with her own ambitions. She was far more concerned with using the election as a platform to bring about a dialogue around social issues. She told me she was “shocked” with how many people felt the same way she did about the issues on campus. She assumed she was one of the only people to see inequities and how minoritized students were treated on campus, but during her campaign she was relieved to find that many other students from minority and majority groups felt similarly.

She credits her win to getting people who usually did not care enough to participate in student government elections engaged with the campaign.

Rae had similar comments to Kacie regarding her university and her catalyst for running. As a spring admit, she experienced a side of the university that did not feel supportive and encouraging the way it did for her peers who started in the fall.

The spring admit and transfer population became a population I was very much committed to advocating for. That exposed me to other populations of students who were underserved in the [university] community. That included our students with disabilities. That included our marginalized students or students who came from lower socioeconomic classes and our Black students, predominantly. Those students I found were often the ones who suffered the most on our campus.

Rae's experience as a transfer admit feeling underserved exposed her to other populations on campus who were having similar experiences. This became the platform she felt was the most important to base her campaign upon.

Mary was also focused on underserved groups on her campus. At the time she ran, her institution was experiencing a surge in student activism around racism. In her opinion, administrators were showing a lack of response to the growing number of protests and the concerns of the students.

[The university president] would blow these women off. They were saying all these problems like, "I feel like my professor isn't taking me seriously because I'm Black. I don't feel like I'm safe on this campus because I'm a person of color." They couldn't get to talk to anyone because the president only wanted to talk to White people, which I'm not saying is true, but that's what it felt like to them...I

ran because I just think student advocacy is really important. Advocacy on a lot of levels is important.

Mary believed that running for student government president would give her access to advocate for the students whose voices were not being heard by the university president and administration.

### **Challenges, Considerations, and Representation**

Representation had an impact on the women's decision and confidence to run, including whether or not they thought that they could win. They had to think about what it means to be a woman in a position where there have not been many women who have run and won, as well as the implications of their choice of running mate on their chances of winning the election.

Confidence arose as one of the challenges and considerations that the women experienced as they considered running for student government president. Holly spoke about her personal level of confidence, noting that she struggled with believing she was qualified before she decided to run. Holly always felt like she needed to be overqualified for any job, position, or role that she went after. Her perception of her male peers growing up was that few of them felt they needed to be super qualified to take on a role. She often felt that they went after jobs and leadership positions because they were available, not because they actually were qualified for them. She said, "... as women we naturally want to check every single checkbox before we go do something. Whereas the men, it's like, oh, I hit five out of 10, cool, I'm going to go for it. I wish I could have that kind of confidence. I don't." Holly reflected that when she ran for student government president, she felt like she was the most qualified person for the job and even then, she said she was not super confident about doing it. Mary also had moments where she questioned herself, her values, and her desire to remain in an organization that had little

representation of women and people of color as that did not match up with who she was and what she valued.

When I was younger in SGA (student government association) I was one of only two women in the cabinet. And I really hated that, and it made me upset, it made me feel like I was a part of something that I didn't really felt like matched up with my values. And also, as I progressed through SGA I found that one of the biggest problems I could see was that there were people who, people of color and women, who weren't being asked about things when decisions were being made that would affect them. It left me unsure of a lot of things.

For Mary, the experience of being in student government often felt like an uphill battle. She would fight to have a voice in the room, only to find someone else was silenced. This was an ongoing issue for her both during her time in student government and during her presidency. She felt that often well-meaning peers or friends would take her thoughts or ideas before she could express them and state them for her. Mary was never the loudest person in the room or the first one to speak, which left her vulnerable to being spoken over or spoken for in many student government spaces. It also left her wondering at times if she should continue to remain engaged in an organization that did not seem to value minoritized students.

Along with confidence, representation was another challenge that women participating in the study faced. Prior research on women in positional leadership indicates that a lack of female role models on campus and the absence of prior representation by women in the role of president can negatively impact women when they consider running for the position (Dias, 2009; Miller & Krauss, 2004; Spencer, 2003). Three participants specifically talked about the lack of prior role models or other women to look up to that were student body presidents at their institutions.” Rae

said, “We get a lot of women in ‘other leadership roles’, but when you take a look at student government in that truly top position on campus, it becomes so intimidating. It's just a really scary thing because if you don't see a lot of people like you doing the work, it's hard to imagine yourself in that position.” Holly explained that when you are the first, or the first in a long time, you lack a roadmap for how to be successful. “I was the first female to win in 15 years and the first woman to run in seven. So I had no blueprint. That definitely impacted me.” For Holly, this meant she sought a lot more outside validation from peers and mentors and leaned heavily on her running mate for support during the campaign and her presidency. Holly also mentioned that she often mentors other women looking to run for student government president or other leadership roles now, so others don't feel the way she did, lost or even unwelcome, when she ran for the role.

For Tally, who identifies as a Queer woman of color, representation impacted her experience both in student government but also generally at the university. She said,

It's so funny because [my institution] doesn't really have that many women of color in leadership, it's like the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion goes to all of the minority ceremonies during graduation and my mentor goes to all of the LGTBQ and minority and female ceremonies during graduation. That's who we have for representation, that's it.

The lack of representation of women of color in leadership positions on campus had a resounding impact on her own impressions and those of her peers in terms of what leadership roles were available and open to women of color.

Another challenge that Tally and others had to take into consideration during their campaigns was whom to choose as a running mate, and how that running mate might impact their chances of winning. Tally believes she was partially successful in her presidential run because of her choice of a vice president running mate. She said,

I think the biggest challenge was being a woman of color because like I said, people make assumptions about you. Where I went to school, it's mostly, it's certainly predominantly White. It's predominantly White men in leadership positions and I think that sort of makes it hard to get people on your side, but I think I was strategic in choosing a running mate who was very active in White male fraternity organizations. And so that helped.

Tally saw representation as a barrier, which informed how she chose her running mate. She believed that the lack of representation of women on campus in leadership roles influenced how people thought about who a leader was and who was not, and might influence whether or not she could win the election. Although Tally discussed during the interview that she and her running mate were friends and ended up working really well together, his race and social status on campus as a straight White fraternity man, influenced whom she chose to run with during the campaign based on how she believed the students at her institution viewed who should be in leadership roles.

Rae experienced a unique challenge in terms of representation when she chose another woman as her running mate. She explained that she felt her identities stacked on each other and made her feel almost “unrelatable” to some of the student body. Rae described her internal conflict of whom to pick as vice president:

I was thinking of who my vice president should be, and at first, it seemed that the best pick, given like the riskiness of potentially being the first woman president in a decade. I'm not affiliated with any of the Greek sororities on campus, and I'm a person of color. All of these things kind of stacked against me, so people were like, "You need to pick a Sigma Chi. You pick a White fraternity member. That's going

to be your best bet in order to pull from all of these sides." But when I really thought about it, I realized that, for me, the person that was going to be my vice president really had to be my partner in this and had to pull their weight and just had to jive with me, and so, I ended up choosing [an experienced woman of color] who I had worked with for quite some time.

For Rae, choosing another woman of color to be her running mate was potentially a risky move. Not only because Rae and her running mate were not members of organizations who had held clout in previous student government elections, but also because at the time she had no prior examples of two women running for office together. Rae did not know of any other all woman tickets in the school and conference history, there had never been two women to run together.

I didn't really think this was going to be a major obstacle at first, the fact that the two of us were women of color, but I did have my hesitations. So, I started actually googling, and I started looking, okay, where are other dual tickets, female tickets, across the country? ...Everything I looked up, it was mostly men. It was really hard to even find women student body presidents. So when I did find two women, I was like, "Holy heck. I'm so happy right now. I'm going to look at their whole Facebook page. I'm going to message one of them." I sent all of that content to [my VP], and then, we started building this campaign team.

When Rae stumbled across the other team of women who had run and won their student government election at another school, it gave her the example she needed to continue to build a campaign. Representation mattered in this moment, as it gave Rae and her running mate a roadmap for what worked for other women who approached this type of election.



## External Validation

Each of the participants explained that it took at least one person they respected or trusted telling them they should run before they believed they could do it. Four of the participants shared that it took two or more people telling them to run before they felt “qualified” to do so. Sadie shared that she did not even consider running until two people she respected encouraged her to run. After a debate hosted by student government on campus, a friend approached Sadie about running for student government president. She said, “We were sitting in a room, and one of my mentors [an older male student with a lot of student government experience] had run for student body president previously and lost. He was saying, ‘You know, Sadie, you should run. After hearing you talk in this debate the other day... I really feel like you'd do so well in the position.’” The initial encouragement was a confidence booster, but she continued to feel hesitations about running. She discussed that “another friend pulled [me] aside and said, ‘I really feel like campus needs you to run. You should do it. I believe in you’ Again, I felt hesitations.” Thus, even after two people Sadie greatly respected encouraged her to run, she still felt hesitant to do so. The boost of confidence was helpful from her peers, and it got her to consider running, but Sadie also had to reconcile what running meant for her life on campus (academics, time, social concerns, and her life beyond campus). Although she felt supported, running for the position felt risky and it took her some time to come to terms with the fact that the feelings of risk might actually be her pushing herself to do something hard and a little scary. The support of friends and peers also helped to mitigate some of the feelings of risk as she knew she would have others to fall back on for support and help if and when she needed it.

Peer encouragement was important for many of the women in the study, but it was not always enough to mitigate the feelings of uncertainty. For Holly, it took more than peer

encouragement to feel confident enough to run. She recounted a conversation she had with an upper level administrator,

He said, “Are you going to run? ... You, you should.” He was like, “I’ve seen 20 student body presidents...you have what it takes, you can do this.” And that was truly the moment where I was like, wow, if he thinks I can do it, I can do it.

Even though Holly had peers who had previously encouraged her to run, it took the support of an administrator with whom she respected and who had several years of experience to solidify for her that she could do it.

Tally reflected on an experience she had with her vice president, who was also a friend and peer in student government. Tally and her friend had previously talked about running together for president and vice president but had not yet thought about who would run for which position. Tally said she texted her friend and ran the idea past him.

The second I told him [my VP] I wanted to be president and I hesitated, because I’m like, does he want to be president? Let me see if he wants to be president...I sent him a text and I was like; I think I want to be president. And he was like, okay, I’ll be vice president, that sounds great. I was originally thinking why wouldn’t he want to be president, you know. He’s a White guy, all White guys want to be president. So, I think ... That’s the way it worked... I think I was very lucky.

She went on to discuss that the validation from her VP, especially as a White male peer, was refreshing. This sentiment from men often times conveyed a stronger sense of validation than receiving similar support from female peers. She said,

Sometimes. It's like actually refreshing when someone is like, “hey I think you're a capable person. And you're really smart and I trust you.” And you're like “oh my God a man hasn't said that to me in so long.” It's kind of sad... and don't need to hear it but thank you for acknowledging it.

For Tally, receiving not only validation, but support from her White male peer gave her both the confidence to run, but also reminded her that not all of her male peers viewed her or women in the way she sometimes felt they might. She discussed that this conversation also allowed her to think that she and her VP might win if others saw her as capable as he did.

### **Impact of Leadership Style, Assumed Biases, and External Feedback on Women Leaders**

This theme examines the impact of leadership style, effect of presumptuous characterizations of traits and political ideologies by others based on identity, and influence of feedback from peers and administrators on the women in the study. This section includes an assessment of their beliefs about leadership and the comments and perceptions of others as a result. This theme specifically delves in to how their team oriented, relational leadership styles generated perceptions they were less capable than their male peers, which resulted in increased scrutiny during their term as president.

### **Team Oriented Behaviors**

The women in the study consistently and strongly endorsed team orientated leadership styles and behaviors. Most indicated their leadership styles were more communal, relational, or team orientated. Mary described her style of leadership as relational. She explained that for her, a leader must listen to the group first before making decisions as to avoid making assumptions about what you think the collective group might want or need. She also identified this type of

leadership as central to her value system. Mary discussed advice that her predecessor gave her on how to be successful that was in direct conflict with what she believed about leadership. “He told me not to worry what anyone thought – to just do what I wanted and to push ahead no matter what people are saying. Which really conflicts with my leadership style and also what I believe about representation, which is that you listen to people first then you act.” When reflecting back on her leadership style, she felt like people took advantage of her care for others. She recounted a time shortly after her term when members of the student senate approached her about the new president.

...they said they missed having somebody in leadership who would take care of them. And I'm still not really sure how I feel about that. Yeah. And so, reading back through this I felt ... I thought about that statement and I felt bothered by it, but I also felt like maybe men should be better at being leaders who take care of people. Maybe there should be more men willing to be emotional and real with the people they run teams with.

Thus, the student senate members liked Mary's relational style, she assumed this was because she was listening to them, and they read it as being taken care of. In leadership, this often happens to women who are more relational in nature; they are often equated to a parent or mom figure instead of being seen as a leader (Bennet, 2017). When reflecting back on this, Mary mentioned that in her current job, she still makes sure she listens before she acts, as do many of the women who work with her. She still believes it is one of the most effective ways to show people you are there to serve them, even if not everyone sees it that way.

Sadie also discussed what she referred to as her “utilitarian” leadership style, which she believed some saw as a weakness, but she recognized it as one of her greatest strengths. When asked what she meant by this, she shared a utilitarian leader looks at the larger picture and determines how to serve the greatest number of people based on their decisions and actions. She revealed,

I think as a woman, any time you're thoughtful, people see that as a weakness rather than a strength. Our male counterparts don't necessarily have to have that, right? As women, I totally believe we think generationally, and it's not just our term that we're considering. It's the terms after ours, whereas in men, they're very shortsighted. It's just while they're in office, this is what they want to accomplish, but when I do things in leadership, I think about, "Okay. Well, maybe I don't need a great relationship with xyz administrator, but the next person will, so I need to make sure I maintain that relationship for their sake.”

Sadie knew that cultivating positive relationships was not just necessary for her, but necessary for any women who might come after her. This is often something women in leadership roles are tasked with thinking about. When a woman is the first, or one of only a few in a place of leadership, their actions reflect not just them, but can also impact all the women who are in the roles after them, creating unfair and imbalanced expectations (McDonald, Toussaint, & Schweiger, 2004).

In terms of decision making, Sadie also explained that bringing other opinions into the group is not about uncertainty; it is about recognizing diversity.

I think it's so important to get a group consensus because that diversity of thought piece and identity, that is showcased when you have everyone's perspective involved

in a decision is important. But when it's just you leading the charge, you're bound to make errors. You're bound to be exclusive, and so many other issues. I see that trend not just with myself, with so many other women, too. Let's get everyone involved. Let's hear everyone's thoughts. It's what I've found to be effective.

Thus, Sadie understood that she alone could not represent all of the students on campus, she needed to hear from others and know their thoughts on major issues before she made a decision. She knew that without a variety of voices being heard an issue might go unresolved for folks whose voice was not in the room or whose voice she did not think/ know to represent. For Sadie, diversity is not just about who is present in a room, but also about hearing the voices of all of the constituents she is representing.

### **Perception of Emotional Responses**

The topic of emotions came up for many participants. They often felt they were not taken seriously or not given the same opportunities as their male counterparts because they were perceived to be more emotional. Each woman described a time when the perception of any kind of emotion was detrimental to them.

Any time Mary showed any sort of emotion, people would call it out as a weakness or would perceive her differently because of it. She said, “. . . the second I would even get angry or mean people would be like, ‘Why are you doing this? You're being so mean.’ And then I'd be like, ‘Fuck, was I mean? Now I feel awful.’” As she internalized their perceptions of her showing emotion, it just made her angrier. She reflected that “If he [the previous president] was hard on people and angry, people took him more seriously. But the second I got upset and angry about something people were like, ‘Oh my god, shut up. You're being so annoying,’ or like, ‘Are you mad at me?’ kind of thing. I'd think, yeah, I'm mad at you, you're stupid.” For Mary, the

fact that she could not get mad without people either not taking her seriously or responding condescendingly was frustrating. She perceived that they took her less seriously than her male predecessors, but yet she feared that if she did lash out, they would perceive her as too emotional. This became a no-win situation for Mary throughout her presidency.

Sadie reflected that administrators would often pull her off a project or a speaking event she was passionate about because they thought she was too emotional, saying “I would be told that I'm being emotional or this is an emotionally charged event, that I should pass it to someone else and the person I should pass it too is usually a guy who I know is less experienced.” She described the insecurity she felt about speaking up about race or gender related issues because the response would always end up being that she was too emotionally connected. She said,

I think it made me feel really insecure because I felt like they [administrators] see me as my identities [Black, woman, young, immigrant] versus seeing my ability. I speak up on issues and agendas of equity and inclusion, like renaming a college on our campus right now that has a really strong history to slave ownership and racism, or the #MeToo movement and I'm met with, “Okay, well, this is an emotional thing for you. You are coming from a perspective of this is your community” versus [them] understanding I represent the whole student body, and this is a bill that was passed through all of our elected senators, not just proposed by me.

Sadie was treated as if she could not separate her work as student government president from her individual identities. Because she held certain identities there was an assumption that she would be too emotional or too involved in certain issues. For Sadie, and other women, this is a common issue, where women felt boxed in by their identities, and by others perception of them, which limits their capacity to do their jobs

## **Perceptions of Political Ideology**

Each woman was considered leftist or progressive during her term, even if she did not represent her actual political beliefs. Many of the women believed this was because they were women in a position that was usually held by men and they had run on platforms that were vastly different from the presidents who came before them. This included addressing the needs of underrepresented students on campus or engaging people/groups in the election who had not usually taken part in the past. Sadie, Rae, and Tally all described occasions when other students, administrators, and the campus newspaper critically viewed their perceived progressive or leftist views. During Rae's campaign and presidency, she regularly spoke out about the treatment of communities that were receiving less time and attention from the institution, including the transfer student population, the LGBTQ community, and students of color. During her campaign and presidency, Rae often faced comments posted about her on anonymous bulletin boards such as Yik-Yak; she said, "There was some horrible things said on those anonymous bulletin board apps, on campus, everything from, 'Here is our crazy, liberal president pushing her liberal policies down on us', or 'a vote for Rae is a vote for ISIS.'" Rae faced a barrage of anonymous online insults that not only denigrated her role as president based on gender but also on assumptions of her racial and ethnic background. Thus, Rae not only was dealing with direct critics who did not agree with her position on underrepresented groups on campus, but she was also dealing with anonymous attacks directed at her as a person and not as president.

Sadie was the target of similar comments, mentioning, "there's been a lot of pushback [to my election], not necessarily racial but they put me in a box of very leftist, very progressive. I don't really know where that has come from." During her campaign, Rae focused on issues around underrepresented populations on campus including transfer students, minoritized students



and international students. Interestingly enough, these are the issues that caused people to believe she was leftist or progressive even though the populations she spoke out for did not necessarily represent any political ideology.

Tally discussed that even though her running mate was a White male fraternity man, they both were targeted by students before their term even began, “there was a group of conservative students who thought that me and the vice president were kind of like two leftists and we were going to turn student government into a liberal organization.” She goes on to discuss specific comments people made about her on comment boards of the school newspaper when an article was written about her openness to meeting with a variety of campus groups “I think they thought I was like a socialist, like a woman of color who went and protested on the weekends, super feminist, bra burning type person who couldn't interact with people who weren't like me.” Thus for Tally and her vice president, their openness to meeting with a variety of groups on campus insinuated to the conservative group of students that they must be liberal when in reality they were trying to be open to hearing from all of the student body whom they represented, including the conservative groups.

### **Scrutiny**

Mary, Holly, Rae, and Sadie discussed the extra scrutiny they were under in their role, both as people and with decisions they made or issues they supported. Mary discussed how her vice president always felt the need to attend events for her or with her. “I feel like a lot of people didn't take me as seriously as my [male] VP. He is very intent, very serious. [He] always seemed to think that he needed to go to things for me or with me because I couldn't handle it or because people wouldn't take me seriously.” Although Mary felt discounted by her vice president and often scrutinized in her role, Rae discussed her whole life was under a microscope, “My personal

life was scrutinized. My partying habits were scrutinized. My classroom habits were scrutinized. My work was scrutinized. So, it's like suddenly, I had such a public persona.”

Although not all participants felt like their every move was scrutinized, four participants shared that they felt like every decision they made was closely watched and as a result, they felt a need to be the most prepared person in the room. Holly discussed the pressure of being the first woman in the position in 15 years.

People would say, “you’re the first female in 15 years. You've got a lot to prove.”

I understood that. I knew that I was being scrutinized naturally because of the role but also because of being a woman in the role, so I knew that whatever decision I was getting ready to make, I needed to be prepared and confident in it to back it up.

I wanted to have as much quantitative research as I possibly could for every single example. I did a lot of that.

Thus, Holly felt the need to be prepared for every situation so that she not only was prepared for every decision but also so that she was prepared for any gender-based feedback or scrutiny she received. Holly also discussed knowing that what she did could impact future women in the role, indicating that her actions could negatively or positively affect the next woman to run for student government president.

Mary felt similar to Holly in regard to preparation. She shared that she always felt the need to be the most prepared person in the room to avoid scrutiny. She said,

The biggest thing I did that didn't really help me out is I would do so much research.

I would over prepare. Honestly, I feel sometimes like I wasted time googling and reading. I was so worried that if I didn't read every document of the facility's fee agreement that I wouldn't be prepared for whatever meeting was coming up and

people would think I wasn't competent. And then we wouldn't even talk about the thing I spent so much time researching. And I think often it kind of hindered me from making decisions and doing things. But I will say I knew everything that I was talking about and I was so prepared to answer questions and I feel like I know the university so well now

Kristen: Where do you think that came from? That need to be overly prepared.

Mary: I feel like I'm firing off answers so quickly that it's probably like, "She couldn't possibly actually know this." But this is something I've thought about a lot... When I was younger in student government, I watched all of these men, all these men who seemed to know so much. They knew everything about [specific board members]. They knew everything about the facility's fee or the governmental affairs stuff that was going on. And I was always like, "How do they know all of this?" I feel like I need to do more to understand all of this... And so, I feel like I tried to over prepare all the time and read everything because I thought that would help me. And then I realized that they actually didn't know anything they were just totally making stuff up, but they sounded confident about. They were just literally for lack of a better term, pulling it out of their ass.

Being over prepared allowed Mary to alleviate her feelings of self-doubt and ensure that when questioned on an issue, she would always have an answer and would not face scrutiny, especially on issues some might deem too personal to her. These feelings of increased scrutiny and the need to mitigate it with over preparedness is something many women experience in leadership roles. According to the Pew Research Center (2015) 40% of people in America believe that there is a double standard for women seeking to climb to the highest levels of either politics or business. The Pew Research Center outlined that women are asked to do more and know more than their

male counterparts to prove themselves. For Mary, this experience also made her re-evaluate what she had previously thought about how much prior male leaders knew and how often they were just posturing or making things up. Mary indicated how damaging she thought that practice was, discussing that not having correct knowledge on an issue could negatively influence how decisions were made and in turn have consequences for people whom the decisions affected.

Other women in the study felt they were scrutinized more than their male peers as well. Sadie felt that no matter how much research she did or how prepared she was, she still felt her views and opinions were always scrutinized by administrators. She said,

I think I was expected to be obedient, if that makes sense, not to rock the boat, to take what I'm given and to not ask for more... or being told I don't understand what the role entails, but even with excessive research, looking to peer institutions to pull examples from, my suggestions or insight aren't necessarily taken as serious. So, I think that sucks, but that's definitely a thing. I don't know if that's because ... No, I know, yeah, it's because I'm a woman. Yeah.

Like Mary, Sadie felt a strong need to be over prepared for each situation. Even when she was the most prepared person, she still felt she wasn't taken seriously. The assumption that she wouldn't understand what something entails was especially insulting for Sadie, who mentioned that as a double major and a Dean's list student to assume she could not understand something or for someone to question her ability was extraordinarily offensive.

Rae shared that as a woman of color she felt she experienced more aggression and an increased analysis of her actions in comparison to her White and male peers, especially when she stood up for underrepresented voices. She described an experience where student senators were

angry at her for calling out the lack of representation of women and students of color in the senate during a vote on funding for a new race and equity center:

I told them [the few women and people of color in the room] “this is what happens when you have unopposed seats, you have unrepresented voices.” So, I said something to that effect, and it just became this whole controversy of like, “Rae’s trying to undermine these senators,” and it’s like yeah, I was, honestly because they postponed a vote on something that we had given you weeks to prepare for, and decided that it wasn’t worth their time to talk about it that day. So, there was a clear dynamic in a lot of the things that came about, a racial dynamic, a gender dynamic, because of the topics that we were discussing, students’ rights, students of color, and yeah, all of those things, I was just questioned more than White male peers.

Thus, Rae was not only scrutinized for being a woman, but also felt increased aggression and questioning of her actions and motives when she did speak to the larger student government population. This example in particular demonstrates how women in leadership, particularly women of color, are treated vastly different from their White and male peers. Rae mentioned several times in our interviews that her gender and race were regularly brought up by peers and administrators when they were discussing her decision making, or issues she was passionate about, like only a woman or woman of color could care about the issue at hand.

Similar to Rae, Mary also shared that she experienced scrutiny when she cared too much about something, but she also experienced increased hostility from peers when she was not as vocal on issues her peers assumed she should be vocal on. She shared an experience at an early

debate in the student government president election where she was called out by a male peer saying that, as a woman, she needed to speak up more about sexual assault on campus.

He stood up and essentially said, "Mary is a woman and she doesn't even understand how to prevent sexual assaults." Almost suggesting that it was only a women's issue, one, and two that even though I was a woman I didn't understand it. Something so nonsensical but still very offensive. And then after the debate he said to me, "You have no idea what it's like to be a victim of sexual assaults and if you knew what it was like to be raped you would do more."

Thus, Mary experienced increased scrutiny and criticism around the issue of sexual assault prevention on campus. Her peer in the debate treated sexual assault as if it was an issue she must speak out on as a woman, and made the assumption that because she did not speak out on it at that specific time that she both did not understand it and had no experience with it, assumptions that she felt were both offensive and rooted in sexism. Conversely, if she did speak up more on sexual assault she might be accused of being too self-interested.

Participants regularly faced increased scrutiny when they made decisions and believed that this negative attention was because of their gender. If they cared too much people called them too emotional or too invested, but if they did not give enough attention to certain issues, especially ones dealing with their specific identities, they were vilified for not standing up for "their community" or whichever of their identities others felt they represented at the specific time (immigrant, Black, woman, Black woman immigrant).

### **External Expectations of Image and Presentation**

A theme that arose for each participant centered on how they should look, act, dress, or present themselves. Each participant felt that this feedback and advice was centered more on

their gender than it was on their position. They also reflected on how the language others used to describe them was overtly gendered as well.

### **Physical Appearance and Behavior**

Each woman reflected on at least one experience she had in regard to the external expectations of what she looked like, how she carried herself, or how she should dress. These experiences stemmed from solicited or unsolicited advice they received from peers or administrators. For some women, suggestions on their appearance were couched in other advice they received, while others indicated that they were approached out of the blue and offered advice about their appearance or behavior. When I asked Kacie what advice she would have for other women running for president, she mentioned she would tell them to be authentic and recounted how she let people mold her into something she was not with their often gendered advice. She said,

Don't feel like you have to dress a certain way to run. Don't feel like you can't run with another woman because that's not winnable. I think just being authentically you and running on what is important to you is what you should do. I really think that's the most important. It's like people will try to mold you into what they think people want to see. Because I know people told me how to dress while I was running. I had to wear makeup and I don't normally wear makeup. . . It felt unnatural to me. There are things that I regret that I did but I shouldn't have had to and that was one.

Kacie looked distressed during this portion of our interview; she began to look down and almost disengage from me, I saw this behavior as her still feeling raw or sensitive to succumbing to pressures of what she should dress or look like. After our interview, Kacie,

who works for a non-profit that supports women and whose staff is comprised almost entirely of women, told me that she still processes this experience regularly with the women she works with. She called it a defining experience in learning to be authentic.

Sadie solicited advice from mentors and former student government presidents on how they believed she could be successful in the student government president role before she started her term. One previous woman president, whom she considered a mentor, told her,

She mentioned making sure you know how to have executive presence [she described this as what you wear, how you speak, even the signature line on your emails] and how to speak and punctuality and making sure you fit the part as president. She amplified that so much, but I think it's because she personally struggled being a woman in that space, whereas the men I spoke to were all about what can you get out of this position, how can you reap the reward. So, I saw that as different.

Sadie saw the direct conflict between the advice men shared with her about the student government position and the advice women shared. When her female mentor offered her advice, she was trying to provide insight into how to navigate a gendered organization and sexist climate so that Sadie might avoid experiencing the same thing, while advice from men was often directly tied to what to do in the position.

Similarly, Tally received advice about what she should and should not wear during her term. She was laughing when she shared,

I remember someone telling me not to wear heels, which I was like, I would never wear, like I'd never wear heels, I'm six feet tall, and also I can't walk



in heels, but I remember this person being adamant that it would make me look unapproachable. And then of course everyone at [my institution] gets a dress from Ann Taylor, they sell dresses in [school colors], so they told me to get one of those for orientation, which I literally did and I wore it every single day. I had a one hour speaking arrangement and I would just put it on and then I would go and then take it off. Like a uniform.

For Tally, this advice felt laughable. She would not describe herself as a stereotypical woman, so putting on a dress in school colors each day for orientation was like putting on a uniform. At one point she even referred to it as “playing dress up” for what they think I should look like for the role I’m in.

Holly also discussed the unsolicited advice she received from members of her cabinet or former student government presidents at her institution on what she should wear. She said,

I got a lot of advice on what to wear. I did a lot to challenge that. Typically, before me the student body president wore a suit every single day. I thought that was the most ridiculous thing in the world. One, if we're trying to make this role accessible to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, it doesn't make sense to have 10 suits. Also, you're a student. Students don't wear suits every single day. When you have a meeting that requires a suit, wear a suit, but when you're just meeting with students, business casual, jeans and a nice top... it just makes sense. I got a ton of pushback, and a lot of people made comments about it. Former presidents made comments about it and were like, "You need to be wearing professional clothes all the time." That was always tied into me being a girl. I fought back against it, and students, who to be fair, I cared the most about current

students' opinions because they're the ones that I'm elected to represent, they were like "Cool, awesome. We like that you're approachable."

For Holly, being accessible and relatable to the student body was more important than dressing professionally each day. Although all of the previous presidents had worn business attire, Holly challenged that in a lot of ways. When she did receive feedback that she needed to look more professional each day, she interpreted those comments as not just about professionalism, but as being a woman and what professional means and looks like for women versus men.

Like Holly, Rae also struggled with the expectation of business attire and what that means for men versus women, although for Rae the struggle was more complex and more about what and how she expressed her professionalism as woman. During our interview she recounted an experience with a respected peer in student government.

She told me, "Rae, you always wear these black dresses. You need to not wear them." And the way she said it was just so frustrating because I remember a few presidents before me, he dressed up in suits every single day, and he took pride in that. He loved that he dressed up in full business attire, suit, I'm talking tie, everything. People praised him for it, she praised him for it, and here I am trying to strive for the same standard, taking my job seriously, showing up to the office in business wear every single day because I had those meetings. I wasn't also doing it for fun.

Rae felt she was caught in a double bind. She wanted to look professional and strived to do so in the same way her male peers had previously done, but her professional dress was criticized and challenged. She wanted to be taken seriously and viewed in a way that

allowed her to be seen as a leader but yet to a respected peer, her black dresses seemed to be off-putting.

Mary, Sadie, and Rae also experienced criticism on what they wore, and each one also reflected on what that meant and the internalized stress and pressure it created. Mary attended college in the mid-Atlantic where during fall semester it is often still 90 degrees and very humid. She described the regular criticism she received about her weather appropriate outfits. "I constantly got told my outfits were inappropriate. I constantly got told that I needed to wear sweaters over my shoulders if I wore something without sleeves. Which is just so basic sexism." For Mary, the idea that sleeveless dresses or sleeveless dress tops were unprofessional was disconcerting. She indicated that it felt in some ways that her shoulders were being sexualized, which to her felt "weird and gross." Thus, it was indicated to her that bare shoulders were a part of a woman's body that were not professional or sexualized in a way that was both confusing and frustrating to Mary.

Rae discussed the double standard that exists with women in power in terms of physical appearance. She said,

Those are the extra and unnecessary things and the baggage that weigh on women and make us less effective because we have to worry about the complete BS that men never have to think about. I have to wake up and think about, "Am I wearing too much makeup to this meeting or not enough makeup to this meeting? How am I doing this? Doing my hair, should I put it up? Should I wear a black dress? Is that too serious?" And it's these little things that the voices in your head drive you insane.

Thus, for Rae the excess baggage and the constant questioning of herself led to some feelings of doubt and lack of confidence.

Sadie, who is a neuroscience major, spent a lot of time thinking about the differences in how our brains react to photos of women versus men. In our interview she shared an article and series of photos of her from the student newspaper that she had spent a lot of time reflecting on. She recounted,

I find that most of the time, at least from my experience at [my institution], when you see these men, 'cause it's usually men, being elected to leadership positions, they make such a pronounced presence as executives, as leaders, and as young professionals. In my photos, some of them do look like that, but some of them are also I would say humanizing, which can have good and bad connotations to it, but I found that interesting. For example, I think of my photo, I'm putting my hair behind my ear, which I don't know if you heard the psychology behind it, but usually it's a sign of insecurity or nervousness, which I probably was in a moment. I was giving a speech, but I found it interesting that you chose that one versus the one where I'm at the podium looking really confident. So, interesting, yeah. I'm also a neuroscience major so I look at these things.

For Sadie, the impact of her presence both in person and in photographs was important to her. She was surprised that even though many photos of her were taken at a speaking engagement, the campus newspaper chose a photo that portrayed her as weak or vulnerable versus the one of her looking more confident, thus implying that she needed to be humanized in some way for her to be likable.

Tally, whose birth name is more traditionally Asian, chose to not use her full name during her campaign and presidency to be more relatable and electable. Instead of her name, she used a nick name, which she was told would make her more approachable.

I was told freshman year that it would help me get elected...Like no one knew me by my full name. Even now, people from college call me [nickname], and people in New York are like who is that? Like when my friends mix, they're like why are they calling you that? So, I think like that was hard, and looking back, I think it did help me, but I would never, I mean... I wouldn't have done it that way again. Thus, Tally felt pressure to change her name and in turn make it easier and more “American” to acclimate to her school and be more approachable for her peers, something she now believes she would change if she was in that position again.

Tally also joined a Greek organization as a way to assimilate to campus.

When I went to [my university] I joined a sorority. Looking back on it now, I never would have done that. It was like what do I have to do to assimilate, to do the things that I want to do. It was a price that I felt like I had to pay to be elected, to be a student leader. For women in the queer community, who might not want to join things like Greek life, or for English is a second language students for example, all these women, it places an even bigger burden because you're already an outcast if you're a woman in this male, White dominated university. In addition to that, if you're a woman who's an international student you face this additional thing. If you're a Muslim woman, there was significant Muslim bigotry that came out when I was on campus and that was going on. I think there's all these layers to it.

Thus, Tally felt she had to be a “joiner” and make change from within and assimilate to the culture of the institution in order to fit in and do the things she wanted to on campus.

### **Language and Communication**

Many participants reflected on words used to describe them or gendered and racist experiences tied to their names and identities. Women in the study did not just receive advice on what to wear or how to look, but they also experienced advice on how to exist in spaces with administrators, board members, and other powerful university stakeholders, specifically around how to speak and what to talk about. Tally discussed an experience where she received unsolicited advice to how to succeed in spaces with older men. She said,

A woman who was fairly older than me told me, “If you ever want to go in a meeting and really know what you're talking about, you should learn sports.” I kind of found that weird, because the idea that we all have to learn this one thing to connect seems weird to me, no matter if you identify as a male, female, whoever you are.

Thus, the advice that Tally must learn sports in order to interact with the older men at the university reinforced the culture of sexism that exists in how men and women in communicate in professional spaces.

Kacie also discussed sports, but unlike Tally, discussed how sports were used as a mechanism to exclude her. She described the weird “golf relationship” that exists at her institution between male administrators and young men in positions of power. She detailed how often other men in student government would get the opportunity to play golf with the university president while she was struggling to get a meeting with him. She said,

I even noticed that within the men in leadership, and male students in student government.... Like the men go play golf together. That's this whole symbolic and literal place like, I'm not there?

Kristen: Were you ever invited?

Kacie: No, of course not.

For Kacie, being left out of golf was not just about playing the game but was about this physical space where these men in power were meeting that she was not invited to and did not have access to.

Women also described how microaggressions and incidents of implicit bias played into how women in leadership roles were addressed. Sadie shared a recurring example of what she believed was a microaggression. During her presidency, she was addressed by her first rather than her last name, unlike the men she worked with. She recounted, “We address each person by their position and last name, so it's Senator X or Senator Y, but for me it'll be President Sadie. Sometimes I literally just will get Sadie. My last name's pretty long and difficult to say, but you can learn.” Sadie attributes this partially to gender and partially to her ethnic background, noting that “It's hard to determine which it is when all of my identities are so interconnected, I can't separate them”.

Tally experienced a form of implicit bias during her term. She discussed that although she was the expert on the student government constitution, people would never come to talk to her about questions they had, even after she had made it clear in many meetings that she was open to questions or meetings during her office hours. She recounted a time where her vice president told the legislative body that if people had questions on upcoming legislative procedures they should talk to Tally. She said,

My vice president, he made the announcement one time at a legislative meeting that was like, if you ever need to know anything about the SGA Constitution, she is the expert. And he points to me because being the vice president, he oversees the legislative branch. And at my next office hours, all these people are walking in asking me questions. And I'm like, you had to just hear it from him, I mean I've only been saying this the whole time. It was really frustrating.

Thus, although Tally had been offering her knowledge and time regularly throughout the semester, people did not respond or follow up with her until after her male vice president told people that she was the expert.

Along with implicit bias, structural sexism and “hepeating” came up in two interviews. “Hepeating” is a term that was coined by a female astronomer in 2017 to describe the phenomena of men getting credit for things women have said or done (Spencer, 2017). Mary recounted a time where she was feeling particularly stressed about a student fee proposal presentation to the university president about Title IX funding, which is something she was particularly passionate about, when her well-meaning vice president stepped in and took it over.

For the Title IX fee proposal, I did all this research for that. I looked through everything I could find...because I was worried that if we did this, the [university] president would look at me and go, "You're crazy," and I'd go, "You're right. I'm crazy, I shouldn't have done this and I'm sorry." And one day my VP was like, "You know what, we're doing it and I'm gonna do it." And he just proposed the fee and I was like, "Well that sucks, I did all this work for that, this was my



thing." And now he's the one getting interviewed about it and getting the credit for it. Which it shouldn't matter but it did.

For Mary, the Title IX fee proposal was an issue she cared deeply about, and although she was aware her vice president was just trying to help, it was especially frustrating that all of her work and the credit that comes with that was given to her vice president instead of her.

Holly was given advice by a woman in a leadership role at her institution that addressed the structural sexism that is often apparent when women interact in spaces that have previously been built for and by men. Holly recounted that one woman had given her advice on how to use a microphone, saying

I had someone, it was really interesting, she talked to me about she'd done all these studies on women in leadership or mostly read a lot of studies on women in leadership and talked about how microphones have been designed for males in the octave or whatever. She gave me advice for speaking into a microphone, which was fascinating. Also, I was like, "I hate that we have to have this conversation, literally everything in the world is built for men."

The fact that so many things were designed with men in mind due to systems of structural sexism created additional hurdles that a man in her position would not have to overcome.

Stereotypical comments and jokes about women also were discussed. Rae remembers some of the gendered jokes people made about her,

People were making tons of women in the kitchen jokes [e.g. "Go back to the kitchen and make me a sandwich, implying women belong in the kitchen and not in the space they are currently taking up]. People said it's just a joke, but it seared

into me. I remember spending time crying in my little office with our senior director of communications just being like, is this even worth it?

Similarly, Holly recounted the comments she received during her campaign that she found particularly cruel, “Both from other candidates and then just random people. I had literally so many people say, ‘I’m not going to vote for you because you’re a woman, and when you’re on your period, you’re going to be emotional.’” Mary recounted how she would often be referred to as “mom” or the mom of the group by other members of student government.

You never hear somebody say to a man, "You're the dad of the team." But how often do you hear people say to a woman, "You're the mom of the team?" All the time. And it's supposed to be nice, but I wish you would look at [the president] who came after me, and say, "You're like my dad." Why don't you say that to him? Probably 'cause you see him as a boss and not a mom.

Mary also discussed that often even the most well-meaning people on campus would make weird gendered comments to her. She reflected on a few experiences she had with the campus police chief and how she still has trouble reconciling her feelings about them:

I worked with the police a lot and they were all so nice to me and they treated me with so much respect. But when we did our safety walk around with the police department and you basically identify problems and safety issues, the police chief kept telling me, "You know you shouldn't be walking out here by yourself at night." "You know that you shouldn't run with your headphones on." And I couldn't help but think, "Is this because I'm small and a woman?" Why are you talking about this? It's very weird. Every time I interacted with him, he felt the need to tell me

that I needed to be safe. That I needed to watch out for people. That I needed, he told me once that I shouldn't be going to protests on campus because I was small, and he was worried about me getting hurt. Which is very sweet, but you're not my dad. I have not invited that relationship with you.

Mary often found that the police chief, who she believed was coming from a place of genuine concern and sincerity, would also discount her ability to participate in certain situations or environment simply based on her gender and stature.

### **Relationships**

Combative, disrespectful, or uncomfortable relationships with administrators and the impact they had on the participants was discussed more than any other topic throughout the interviews. Participants shared at least one negative experience they had working with administrators that they believed affected their ability to be effective presidents. Three of the participants shared positive experiences, but in each case their positive interaction was with a woman administrator.

### **Feeling Used by the Institution**

When Holly was elected student government president on her campus, two other women were elected into the next two highest ranking student leadership roles on campus as well. It was the first time all three roles were held by women. The presence of women in all 3 roles turned into a public relations story for the institution. She discussed, "Oh my gosh, they used women student leaders as pawns and a public relations agenda." She went on to say,

It was the first time in the university's history that all three top student leadership roles were filled by women and the university absolutely pimped us out. We were expected to go to all these things and speak to all these things when administration

wanted us to, and you know, they were, "Oh, we're so proud of these ladies, look at these wonderful women," but you turn around and have a meeting with these people about something that's actually affecting the students and they totally wrote you off. So that was really, really frustrating and feeling like the only reason that the university really cared, or the university administration really cared about being in your role is so they could use you to further their communications agenda and branding. I've fought really hard for this position and I had three years of experience to get me to this position and I'm worth so much more than an Instagram post so you can get more females to apply to the university.

Holly felt like her institution was more interested in her as a photo opportunity or marketing ploy than actually being in the position. It appeared her university wanted women in senior leadership without the institution's making change, doing anything differently, or leading. This was only amplified by two other women being in the next two highest student leadership roles on campus. Tally also experienced feelings of being used by the university. She felt like her term was a constant battle to support students, especially those who were underrepresented, and still gain administrators' respect.

I think the university wished that I would go to more of their fundraising things and be on their side a little bit more, but a part of me thinks because I am the way I am, because I look a certain way, I couldn't be a figurehead for the university until I felt like they would support people who looked like me in the future...our platform was for the students, by the students. We're not going to do anything that administrators want us to do that the student body doesn't.

Thus, Tally felt like she was being used by the university as an example of diversity and inclusion. She was opposed to being a poster child for the university in these areas until she felt that the environment and opportunities on campus more accurately reflected the reality they sought to present. She was reluctant to provide additional support for the university until she felt the university adequately supported her and others like her.

### **Discomfort with Administrators**

Sadie had a slightly different experience with administrators. She found that male administrators, even the well-meaning ones, did not seem to know how to work with her and were seemingly uncomfortable in rooms with her. She reflected on how glaring the contrast was between their interactions with her and her male vice president. She said,

I think for the guys, it's easier for them to just be casual in spaces. Whereas men nowadays really feel as though they're uncomfortable being around women because there's all this heat around sexual harassment and you could interpret something the wrong way and I can't be comfortable with them, and they are more open with men... I definitely feel as though the guys before me have had these really man-on-man, just the boys' experiences with administrators, whereas I'm kind of talking about the weather and your family and kids. This is what I have to work with because they don't feel as comfortable enough with me, and I don't necessarily know how I can bridge that gap. Even when my vice president's in the room, I'm much more of an articulate, eloquent speaker than he is, but they will chop it up with him better than they can with me.

Sadie goes on to discuss that for her, it is just as much about being Black as it is being a woman.

I get a lot of them talking down to me, or I think sometimes my presence as a Black woman can be intimidating. I also have a really strong resting bitch face, so maybe that's it too, but I find that sometimes it keeps them on their toes. They'll say something, for example, with admissions and our retention rate with Black students and then look at me. I sit there like, "Okay. Well, yeah, it's not great. I don't know what else I can say about this that's gonna warrant change." In those situations, I get talked down to I think, and then I also get a little intimidation, like they don't really know what to do with me. Do they approach me? Are they extra nice? Do they just distance themselves?

For Sadie, it wasn't that administrators were specifically negative or rude, it was more that their discomfort with a woman of color leads them to act in ways that are not consistent with how they treated others and left Sadie in a deficit position. Even though Sadie knew she was prepared, articulate, and deserved to be in the room, she felt that administrators discounted what she said or discounted her as a person.

Kacie felt that her negative relationships with administrators stemmed from the battle between what they wanted her to do and say versus what students wanted, which led to contentious relationships.

It was incredibly frustrating. I think because I could get them to say one thing to me personally, but never say it to the students. I'm like, you're putting me in this position where it's just like I can't do anything. Because I know your point of view and I know the students' point of view and I don't know how to reconcile that as a 21-year-old who's not getting paid and in this position. Or it's like trying to figure out things I could and could not do and arguing and pushing back on that. I don't

think people argued with them before and I did. It was just very much like, this is [university name], this is how we've always been doing things, and that's not going to change.

Thus, for Kacie, there was a constant battle to get anything achieved. She argued with administrators in ways she felt like her predecessors before her had not, but she also struggled to make any actual changes. Kacie ran on a platform to help minoritized students on campus, but in the end noted that although people were more aware of the issues after her term, she felt administrators blocking her was the number one reason she did not get much accomplished.

**Negative interactions.** Participants also discussed experiences with administrators who wrote them off or did not take them as seriously as previous male presidents. Kacie discussed that until she was awarded a prestigious scholarship, many high-ranking administrators would not even meet with her. She reflected, “they wouldn't take me seriously. They started to take me more seriously because I won the Truman Scholarship and I was a finalist for the Rhodes. From then on prestige was like the only access point for me to get them to have some sense of respect.” Tally had similar experiences with administrators. She regularly felt invisible in spaces where she was supposed to have a say, “I was sitting in rooms with administrators that clearly didn't think I was valuable or intelligent, honestly. And they were talking over me.”

Although Kacie and Tally felt invisible, Mary felt disrespected and treated in a condescending manner. She discussed that the treatment she received was not just evident to her but evident to others (her VP, another administrator, and peers) as well. She reflected on her many experiences with the male assistant vice president of student affairs at her university, saying:

He was one of the people who really treated me like a little kid. And always called me sweetie, which I thought was really condescending...and it was incredibly telling of what he thought of me. And he absolutely did not treat my male counterparts that same way ever. And it was so stark that one of them was like, "That's insane. You should tell him to stop saying things like 'sweetie' or 'I don't think you can handle this' or 'Can you take the notes for this meeting that we're in?'"

When reflecting on this, Mary discussed that it was one of the experiences that stuck with her most during her tenure as student government president. It is interesting to see that not only Mary saw the condescending ways she was treated, but others saw it as well. What makes this more interesting is that no one ever said anything throughout the many times this happened. Mary also discussed that her experiences with some administrators felt like a constant battle, while she felt others were far more respectful in their interactions. She said,

I feel like there are actually two types of administrators...there are those who are supportive and helpful and if you're doing the wrong thing, they will tell you respectfully. And then there are those who treat you like a kid and tell you what they think you should do and if you don't do it right they get angry with you and they don't want to talk to you anymore... it's all very childish.

Tally often felt silenced by administrators in meetings and saw that women administrators were often silenced in those spaces as well. She reflected one particular situation where the one woman administrator in the room, who also in many ways served as a mentor to her, was silenced by men who would talk over her or not yield space for her to speak.



So, it would be like we're going to name this the, for example, Bob Smith building, and [female administrator] and I were the only two women in the room. And these guys were like, of course they're all White men over the age of like 65, I swear. And they're like arguing over each other and like talking over each other and any time we'd try to get a word in, talking over us. And I remember I saw [female administrator], and I've never seen her like this, she completely pulled back, she's drawing all over her paper, not participating at all. And I was like, this is crazy, because I've literally like never seen her sit in a room and just like not participate. She's always asking questions or encouraging, asking other people what do you think, and she just like completely pulled back, drawing on her paper and didn't participate and I think ... Yeah it was tough seeing one of the only female administrators that you look up to do that.

For Tally, the feeling of being considered as lesser than or as if her opinion did not matter when she was silenced by administrators was a devastating blow to her passion and opportunities to enact meaningful policies and change through her position. However, she actually found herself more discouraged when she witnessed similar reactions to comments and input from a woman administrator she considered a mentor and role model. As reinforced throughout this study, a woman's decision to run and her experience as a leader on campus are often directly influenced by seeing others like her in similar leadership positions. When Tally saw someone she admired and considered a leader being overlooked or silenced despite being an equal participant in those spaces, it created a deep sense of pessimism in terms of her own position and aspirations to make an impact in future leadership roles.

The longer-term impacts of negative relationships. For some participants, the negative relationship with administrators went beyond just a difficult work relationship and ended up affecting the rest of their term or their time at the university. Holly's negative relationship with the university president strongly influenced her ability to do her job as student government president and her view of her institution as an alumna.

I got a lot of pushback from administration and doors started being closed. They don't like when you stand up to them. They don't like when you have opinions that don't align. They don't like when you just don't take what they say and run with it. I got steamrolled a couple of times by administration into things that I did not want to do that I ended up having to do. Great example is the university president came up with the idea to do this fundraiser because the university had just had some flooding. He was like, "You're going to be in charge of it," and I said, "What?" "Yeah." I was tasked with trying to raise \$50,000 in two weeks, and it became an absolute nightmare. When I reported back to him and I was like, "I did it. I got you \$50,000, but this is trash, and this is disgusting," the door was closed, and the door was closed for the remainder of the semester. It was when we're in public we're going to be nice to each other, but the invitations to important rooms stopped coming, which was hard because I needed to be there not for ego, not for myself but for the students. Yeah, it wasn't very good.

For Holly, standing by her convictions and being open and honest with the president to discuss situations or requests that made her uncomfortable or felt out of scope for her position ended up stalling her ability to accomplish her own objectives during her term. Holly also discussed that when she looked back on those experiences now, it is what shaped her current opinion of her

alma mater. Now that she is further removed from the experience she looks more critically on her time in office and at her institution realizing that the institution is not set up to support students who do not think or do exactly as the institution and administration want.

Rae realized that she had to sacrifice good relationships to actually achieve change in her time as president.

When you're nice, and you want to just get lunch with them and talk about your career and how they can help you, of course, they're going to love you, but when you start asking them the hard questions, they don't like that. Many administrators clearly demonstrated to me that they did not deserve my trust, and so, it was in those moments that I decided I need to start leading in a way that things are actually going to get done around here because I have a limited amount of time, and I'm not going to waste it.

Rae went on to discuss that her relationship with the university president did more than influence her term, but it also affected the rest of her time in school and her long-term view of the institution.

Towards the end of my term, I knew for a fact that the administration was retaliating against me, and I even considered taking that up as an issue with the administration. For example, I was denied membership into an organization, a secret society, that every previous student body president and vice president has been admitted to, and I discovered from the chair of that secret society that the exact reason why I was denied that admission was because of the concerns raised by the chairman of the board of trustees and the president of the university. So, I had the frank discussions where people were telling me the things that you did

this past year made people upset, and you aren't going to get all of the things that everybody else got when they graduated because of that. There was a couple of other honors things that weren't given to me and opportunities, and I think when I graduated, for the longest period of time, I held such resentment and bitterness because of that because even though I felt like we had accomplished so much, but when you're a graduating senior, those things matter, and it kind of stings, and so, now, I think being three years out of school, I look back, and I'm like, "Oh, hell yeah. I'm glad I didn't get that stuff because that's, again, buying into the system and the institution that I so strongly stood up against."

For Rae, standing up to her institution and the administrators had some direct and immediate consequences for her. She did not receive the same awards and accolades that her predecessors did and felt as if she was used by her institution. Even though in hindsight she is happy to not have received the recognition, at the time for a graduating senior who worked hard for recognition, it was tough to experience that rejection.

**Mental health.** The impact mental health had on the women in the study and how it affected their experience as student government president also came up in talking to four of the women. Stress, anxiety, PTSD, counseling, and mental health were all recurring words participants talked about. Holly discussed a particularly difficult experience where a male member of student government posted some crude and sexually explicit comments regarding her younger sister, who was 16 at the time and did not attend the school, on a private social media group. The comments were leaked to both student government and the campus newspaper. Holly received a lot of backlash when that male student was removed from his student government position after a particularly scathing article was written in the

student newspaper. Holly recalls the harassment as one of the key triggers of her mental health issues during her term as president.

When the article came out, I almost had a panic attack, still do when I think about it. The physical reaction to these things still exists very much so. So pretty much the same reaction, not necessarily about the comments, because they said terrible things about me. I don't care. I had a lot of people say a lot of bad things about me, and I've got the thickest skin in the world because of my term. But coming from a place of care for my little sister and then the things that followed, I was harassed by one of the guys who made the comments by both him and his dad, followed through town. . . His full adult father showed up at my office, followed me through a parking garage, threatened to sue me for slander, and I'm like, "It's not slander if you said it, so can't really change that. You should fix your son." The things that came from that really, it's still very hard to deal with.

Although Holly's experience was not the norm, other participants also reflected on mental health concerns that stemmed from their time as student government president. Sadie discussed the stigma of being the current student government president who is going to counseling services on campus, and another participant who wished to not have their name included discussed issues with depression and anxiety that resulted from the particularly contentious relationship she had with the university administration.

### **Summary of Findings**

This chapter explored a variety emergent themes across the twelve interviews completed with the six participants in the study. This study explored how each of these women made meaning of their experiences as student government president on their campus, as well as how

they made meaning of how their multiple identities influenced their experiences. The data first revealed that across participants, systemic issues of inclusion and diversity on campus was a factor that affected how the women in the study experienced their time as student government president. Furthermore, the issues of campus climate also influenced why some participants chose to run for the position and came up as campaign issues for each one of the six participants.

From the experiences of each participant, four core take-aways emerged. First, lack of representation, outside validation, and advocacy all played a role as influencing factors on why the women chose to run for the student government president. In addition, the impact of the identities each woman held was important in why she chose to run and how others reacted to her decision to run and campaign. The next core take-away centered on how the women in the study perceived their own leadership behaviors as it related to their gender, as well as how they felt others perceived them. This theme indicated that many of the women in the study preferred team-oriented leadership styles and practiced leadership from a place of care rather than a place of power. In this take-away I articulated that women in the study felt more scrutinized around decision making than their peers or predecessors. Take-away number three discussed how gender played a major role in the external expectations of how the women in the study were supposed to act, dress, and speak as dictated by their peers, mentors, or others who offered solicited and unsolicited advice or feedback. Lastly, the final take-away found that relationships with administrators, primarily male ones, were often negative and damaging to the women and impeded their ability in many cases to make change on campus. For some women, these negative relationships also had longer term impacts on the remainder of their time at their institution.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **Overview of the Study**

The primary objective of this study was to document and evaluate the catalysts for running for office, the role and influence of gender during candidacy and their terms, and the common themes from the experiences of women student government presidents who served at large Research I institutions within the past three years. Although women are enrolled in college at a higher rate than men (55% to 45%), fewer are involved in executive level leadership roles on campus (Johnson, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). This is especially prevalent in student government, where although women and men are represented equally at lower levels, as one looks up the ranks, men hold a dominant amount of the high-level positions, especially student government presidents.

Research on leadership outcomes among college students indicates that leadership experiences in college promote self-confidence and foster competence in a variety of areas including large gains in self-efficacy and a heightened ability to advocate for oneself (H. S. Astin & Leland, 1991). Over the last 15 years there has also been an increase in research on the outcomes of leadership practices in college. Four major studies have looked at leadership from a variety of perspectives and served to lay the groundwork for much of the research on leadership. The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL; Dugan & Komives, 2007), the Leadership Identity Development study (LID; Komives et al., 2005), a multi-site study on Emotionally Intelligent Leadership (EIL; Shankman & Allen, 2008), and the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (Wabash College, 2009) are major multi-institution research initiatives that assessed a variety of outcomes on student leadership. This research uncovered four major outcomes across studies associated with student leadership including collaboration, self-

awareness, community engagement, and leadership efficacy. Collaboration in this regard refers to a student's ability to not only recognize the need to work with others to accomplish a goal but also having the requisite skillset to actually coordinate and work with a team (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Komives et al., 2005; Shankman & Allen, 2008). Collaboration, teamwork, and respect and acknowledgment for the contributions of others in teams and groups were evident in the outcomes of each study and contributed to the active learning of participants in the studies. Self-awareness or consciousness of self was another significant outcome associated with leadership among the students and across the four studies. The Wabash study indicated that students who had exposure to leadership experiences during college showed higher growth in self-awareness throughout their four years of college (Wabash College, 2009), while findings from other studies indicated strong correlations between involvement in leadership experiences with higher rates of self-awareness (e.g., Dugan & Komives, 2010; Haber, 2006; Kuh, 1995; Shertzer et al., 2005; Shankman & Allen, 2008; Shertzer et al., 2005; Wagner, 2016; Whitney, 2010; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhard, 1999). Community engagement was identified across the four studies and included examples of students participating in their communities (i.e., Greek life, religious involvement, student organizations, and community engagement outside the university) at higher levels than peers who did not engage in leadership experiences (Cress et al., 2001; Dugan, 2006; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Ray & Kafka, 2014; Shankman & Allen, 2008; Shertzer et al., 2005; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhard, 1999). Community engagement was also associated with other positive outcomes for college students including academic engagement (Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012), emotional intelligence and higher order skills including critical thinking, math, writing, and communication (Cress, 2004; Gallini & Moely 2003). Lastly, across the studies, findings indicated that participation in campus organizations is associated with a



slight increase in leadership efficacy, while participation in specific leadership experiences is associated with higher levels of leadership efficacy than their peers who are not involved on campus and who do not hold leadership positions (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Dugan, Bohle, Gebhardt, Hofert, Wilk, & Cooney, 2011; Kodama & Dugan, 2013).

Despite recent advances in research on leadership outcomes among college students, there are limited studies on positional leadership outcomes, many of which are outdated at this point. However, the research that does exist indicates that students who serve in leadership roles on campus demonstrate greater confidence in their ability to manage change and higher levels of psychosocial development, educational involvement, cultural participation, and engagement in their overall college experience (Cooper et al., 1994; Foubert & Grainger, 2006).

Literature on college women in positional leadership indicates women develop higher levels of self-esteem from leadership experiences and that they observed growth in social and intellectual confidence at higher rates than their male peers (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Being actively involved in a student organization was a predictor of leadership ability, social self-confidence, and the ability to build relationships and influence others for women (H.S. Astin & Kent, 1983; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

Additionally, research on women in politics can be used to identify possible challenges that women in student government might face as they approach the role. Women in politics are underrepresented at similar levels to women in student government leadership roles (Lawless & Fox, 2012). Across the body of research, five barriers were identified that influence women's decision to run for political office including bias against women in the political arena, a lack of exposure to prior women in political office, women's perceptions of their lower qualifications, a

lack of encouragement from others to run, and familial responsibilities (Lawless & Fox, 2012; Mo, 2015; Showalter, 2015; Wolbrecht & Campbell, 2016).

Differences in how men and women practice and participate in leadership also may affect the rate in which women take on positional leadership roles. Prior findings from a variety of studies and across a large subsection of literature reveal two key differences in how women engage in leadership as compared to their male peers: (a) women define and practice leadership differently (Cress et al., 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Wielkiewicz et al., 2012) and (b) women have different motivations to lead (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Yeagley, Subich, & Tokar, 2010). Although not indicative of each person, research illuminates generalized differences in how men and women practice leadership, labeling men with more agentic tendencies and women with more communal tendencies (Bornstein, 2007; Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Agentic tendencies are often described as “aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident, and competitive” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783), and communal tendencies are described as “affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783). Generally, task-oriented (or transactional) leadership styles are practiced by men, and relationship-oriented (or transformational) leadership styles are practiced by women (Ayman, 1993; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Northouse, 2010).

Research also indicates that campus climate can influence how women interact with their campus community and in turn can have detrimental effects on their experiences in and out of the classroom. Three issues related to campus climate for women arose in the research including gender stereotyping (Astin, 1993; Billing & Alvesson, 2000, Eagly, 2007; Heilman, 2001,

Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Sax, 1996), microinequities (Beagan, 2001; Forest, Hotelling, & Cook, 1984; Kuk, 1990; Rowe, 2008; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000;), and sexist behavior/sexual harassment and safety (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Kane & Rose, 2015; Kelly & Torres, 2006; Rowan, 2002). Both covert and overt issues of sexism, microinequities and bias against women showed up in the research, which broadly indicated college campuses still favor male values, language, or leadership styles which in turn can have a damaging effect on a woman's psyche and self-confidence (Forrest et al., 1984; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Kuk, 1990).

This study sought to address gaps in the literature on women in positional leadership and women student government presidents and to serve as a foundation for more research in both of these areas. The specific purpose of this study was to better understand women college students' journey to and through being a student government president, and whether and how gender and sexism influence their presidential experiences. Following a case study design, I interviewed six current and former women student government presidents twice to better understand (a) women college students' journey to and through being a student government president and (b) how gender and sexism influence their presidential experiences.

In place of a theoretical framework, a theoretical perspective was used to help me frame and better understand the data. A liberal feminist theoretical perspective was used to guide the work and to place gender, specifically women, at the core of the study. The liberal feminist perspective asserts that women are societally viewed as less capable, competent, and proficient than men and therefore are marginalized and discriminated against within the confines of broader society (Tong, 1989) and emphasizes that men and women are equal, and as such men and women should have equal opportunities and access to education, the workplace, and daily life

(hooks, 1984). A liberal feminist perspective was used as the theoretical perspective for this study because liberal feminism maintains focus on the individual person instead of groups of people. This allowed me to more deeply explore the individual experiences of each woman, as well as view her experience through the larger patriarchal structure of higher education and society. This was done to better understand the distinctive experiences of women and how a students' personal understanding of their gender and other identities influence their student government leadership experience.

Four research questions guided the study, including:

1. How do women student body presidents of large public universities make meaning of their identities, particularly their gender?
2. How do women student government presidents make meaning of their decisions to run for office?
3. How do women student government presidents make meaning of their campaign experiences, specifically in regard to how their gender and sexism shaped their election process?
4. How do they make meaning of the role of gender and sexism in their experiences as student government president?

I analyzed the data inductively to construct meaning from the stories shared by the participants. This method allowed me to concurrently see the participants as “both the source of the data and as an interpreter of data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 18), meaning that they got to both tell their story and reflect on what it meant to them or how they understood the implications of the story.

In this chapter, I first share the key findings from this study that were uncovered through all the narratives across three key topics: (a) the catalyst for running, (b) the importance of relationships to the participants, and (c) the impact of gender on the experience. I then offer insights into the contributions this study adds to the body of literature on student government presidents and women in campus positional leadership roles. Finally, I present potential applications for this study in future research and practice.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **The Catalyst for Running**

Each participant identified that her desire to be student government president stemmed from an unmet need or problem on campus, which served as the catalyst that prompted them to run for the position. Often, the students that were affected by the unmet need or problem were from marginalized groups. Rae ran for student government president after she saw first-hand the way transfer students and other underrepresented groups on campus were treated. Kacie ran for the position, even though she did not believe she had a shot at winning, to bring about discussion on the ways her institution was ignoring and silencing students from minoritized groups.

This is consistent with prior research on women student government presidents. Women often run because they do not see another viable candidate or they see an ongoing campus issue that is currently or has historically been ignored (May 2009; Spencer, 2003). Sax and Harper (2007) also determined that women take on leadership roles that are centered on social activism or social issues far more often than their male counterparts. Participants' motivation patterns also parallel the research on women in politics, which indicates more women run for office when they see issues that affect women and underrepresented groups going unaddressed by current politicians. For example, in 1992 after the Anita Hill hearings, there was a surge of women

running for Congress, with 24 first-term women elected to seats in the House of Representatives that year (Tognotti, 2018). Similarly, in 2016, more women, including a large increase in women of color, ran for public office after an unqualified man with allegations of sexual assault and racist behavior beat the highly qualified woman running for president (Tognotti, 2018).

Although running for the position, regardless of reason or motivation, is significant, what is important is that women are more likely to run when they feel a deep-rooted connection to an issue or cause on campus. This reliance on social justice as a key motivator to run is not sustainable though and if the status quo on campus is perceived as positive or neutral, it is likely that fewer women will run for the position without this driving factor.

### **The Role of Relationships**

One of the underlying factors that influenced the terms for each of the women in this study was the type of relationships they had with the administration, peers, and others on their campuses. In one form or another, each of the women touched on the significance and effect that both positive and negative relationships played during their term as president. When dissecting the comments from these participants, it becomes apparent that positive relationships were critical in reaffirming their confidence and passion for the position and served as a contributing factor to their ability to succeed in the role, while negative relationships limited their ability to deliver and undermined their responsibilities and the legitimacy of their position despite serving in one of the highest ranking student leadership opportunities on campus.

**Relationships with family.** The relationship with their families was an important factor identified by the women for its effect on their confidence and perceptions when running for student government president. Research has shown that positive relationships with parents, especially ones in which the parents demonstrate behaviors that encourage and nurture their

daughters, increases the internal motivation and had a positive impact on self-confidence for women (Freeman & Schumacher, 2010; Orenstein, 2013; Parish & McCluskey, 1993; Slicker, Picklesimer, Guzak, & Fuller, 2005). In the context of this study, Rae shared that she was overwhelmed with gratitude for the support of her immigrant parents who encouraged her to follow her own dreams versus a more myopic focus on realizing the “American dream” by becoming a doctor or lawyer, which was often the compelled aspiration from parents of her immigrant friends. Mary shared that her mother was the primary bread winner in their home and was always encouraging Mary to “do hard things” and shaping her development and confidence by strengthening Mary's belief that she was capable of great things. Research shows that young and adolescent girls struggle with confidence and self-image (Orenstein, 2013), in turn it is crucial for them to have positive influences in their lives that encourage healthy self-esteem and positive perceptions of their own abilities. Several of the women in this study described positive and encouraging relationships with their parents, especially their mothers, and shared stories of how they were inspired at a young age to pursue activities and hobbies that they were interested in. This affirms research on the impact of parenting style on life skill development in college aged students. Slicker et al. (2005) found that young adults whose parents demonstrated responsive parenting exhibit higher levels of life skill development, including: interpersonal communication, confidence, decision making, and identity development skills. Responsive parenting refers to how accepting parents are of their children, and in turn the nurture and encouragement parents provide to their children (Parish & McCluskey, 1993; Slicker et al., 2005; Schmitt-Rodermund & Vondracek, 1999). This is particularly impactful when the parent is the same gender as the child involved in responsive parenting (i.e., mother/ daughter relationships) (Parish & McCluskey, 1993; Slicker et al., 2005). In turn, Freeman & Schumacher (2010) found

that students who were raised to make their own decisions and who were supported in doing so displayed higher levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, and personal agency in decision making. Conversely, two participants reflected on the influence and impact of having one or both parents treat them in accordance with gender related norms of society. For Holly, although her mother was a source encouragement for her and her sister, her father often treated his daughters as if they were less capable than men. She discussed that this did not discourage her though, but rather served as a spark for her to work harder to accomplish her goals. Sadie also indicated that her immigrant parents, unlike Rae's family situation, often treated her very differently from her brother and simply because she was a woman. However, she credits her ability to manage hard projects and multi-task to the stringent rules her parents placed on her. The experiences of these two women deviates from research on gender role stereotypes and parenting. This research indicates that parenting styles that play in to or substantiate gender role attitudes and stereotypes (i.e., girls need monitoring and protection, girls get more household chores, girls are less academically capable... etc.) can lead to young women feeling "lesser than" or that their value is not equal to that of a man (Montgomery, Chaviano, Rayburn, & McWey, 2017). Overall, the women in this study who served as student government presidents illustrate the value that positive relationships and encouragement from one or both parents can play on shaping drive, self-perceptions, and confidence for women.

**The influence of positive mentoring relationships.** The importance of role models and mentors for the women in the study was evident throughout their narratives. Many of the student government presidents named mentors or role models who encouraged them to run and discussed specific ways in which their guidance and support both influenced their decision to run and how their advice shaped how they approached their run and presidency.



Each woman in the study identified one or more mentors who encouraged her to run for the position or who served as a source of support throughout her presidency. Three women talked specifically about the value of having a woman mentor, while the other three participants discussed the impact of mentors, but gender was less important. For the women in the study having someone who believed in them and told them they were qualified and capable was very important. Five of the six women in the study identified that discussing their decision to run with a mentor helped reinforce that it was the right choice and increased their confidence that they could win the position if they ran. For Holly, having a mentor who had worked with many student government presidents tell her that he believed she was a great candidate further reinforced her decision to run and enhanced her self-perception as a qualified candidate. Mary experienced this as well and credits the increased confidence in her ability to succeed to the encouragement she received from her female mentor who also had many years of experience with student government at her institution. These examples are not one-off experiences from this study but substantiated by findings from prior research on mentorship and the impact on confidence. This research suggests that during transitional or particularly stressful situations in which someone takes on a new role or challenge with increased responsibility and / or visibility, being able to turn to a mentor can help validate one's "ability, talent, and intelligence" (Sandford, Ross, Blake, & Combiano, 2015, p. 34).

To further this point, three of the women in the study specifically identified the benefits of having a female mentor. Tally looked to her female mentor during her presidency not only for guidance in her role, but also as a role model in how to deal with sexism she ran into with other members of student government as well as administrators. Watching how her mentor navigated male dominated spaces gave Tally strategies to use when she experienced similar things. Mary

had a similar experience with her female mentor, who would often give her advice on how to navigate university politics, specifically in spaces that were dominated by men. Sadie identified two women on campus she looked up to, but instead of them giving her direct advice, Sadie noted that she would often watch how they responded in certain situations and she would determine how that strategy worked. Literature also discusses that women who mentor other women can provide unique support (Brown, 2005; Reinhold, 2005). Female mentors are important for women in leadership roles at all levels, as women mentors and role models can recognize potential, help instill confidence, and model positive leadership behaviors (Fochtman, 2011). Research on women college presidents suggests that a mentor of the same gender or race can “buffer experiences of overt and covert forms of discrimination, lend legitimacy to a person or position, and provide guidance and training in the political operation of an organization” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 100). Women mentors can also help other women make meaning of specific challenges they experience based on their gender (Fochtman, 2011). Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, & Ulku-Steiner (2006) suggest that individuals need role models whom they connect with as an identity match (e.g., someone of the same race or gender) to mitigate feelings of doubt and legitimize confidence in holding a high-level position where there are few others who have had a similar experience. One study on identity matching and mentorship suggested that when a student is mentored by someone of the same identity (gender and/or race) it enables students to gain a sense of self-efficacy as well as provide a sense of comfort and confidence to have the “guidance of someone who has already solved some of the problems confronting one’s own demographic group” (Sosik & Godshalk, 2005, p. 42). Specifically, studies have shown that gender matching provides students with a greater sense of security (Allen, Day, & Lentz, 2005)

and more psychosocial support (Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Kark & Shilo-Dubnov, 2007) when they have female mentors than when they have male mentors.

**The influence of peer relationships.** The role that peers can play as both mentors and support systems was another important finding throughout the study. The impact of supportive peers was twofold in that it not only provided an additional confidence boost in the decision to run for the women in this study but also served as a necessary constituency for recognizing their own potential and remaining focused during their terms for several of the women. Social and peer support was identified by the women in the study not as a catalyst to run but rather as an assuaging network of reinforcement that helped provide a sounding board for ideas, reduce their feelings of apprehension, and even alleviate stress during their candidacy and terms. Four women in the study discussed specific conversations with peers whom they held in high regard that helped them better recognize their own value, increased their self-confidence, and reaffirmed that they were great candidates for the position. For example, Sadie discussed that a former member of student government and a peer that she looked up to was the first person to provide encouragement following her decision to run. She noted that having a peer, especially one with a lot of experience in student government, believe she was the best candidate was an important motivational factor that spurred her confidence and drive when running for the position. Three women in the study also noted that close peers provided an invaluable support system and served as some of their strongest allies throughout their presidencies.

Research reaffirms the findings from this study in regard to the influence and impact of social and peer support. Casazza and Bauer (2006) state that student development and success are strongly tied to support for college students, while A.W. Astin (1993) identified that peers were an integral influence on the college experience and influenced achievement and persistence

in students. Other research indicated friends and peer support networks can reduce feelings of alienation and benefit development in college students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), and the social support of friends and peers in college can also serve to buffer stress and is associated with better mental and emotional health (Adams & Blieszner, 1995; Arnett, 2000; Swenson, Nordstrom, & Hiester, 2008).

**Representation.** The representation of female leaders in positions of influence on campus who can serve as role models and inspirational figures is critical to the advancement of other women as they show that the potential to shatter the glass ceiling is possible and pave the way for other women to aspire towards and achieve similar roles. None of the women had been on campus when a woman student government president was elected, and if they could identify the last woman student government president, it was several years prior. For three of the women, they were the very first in some way on their campus, either the first woman of color or first dual female ticket. Each of the women in the study indicated that a lack of representation of previous women in the role was challenging. This lack of representation made their run more difficult as they had not seen a woman successfully navigate a student government president election previously. Holly indicated that the men who had held the position before her had a clear path of expectations and examples from past men in the position to help guide their behaviors and approaches and that set the bar in terms of their measure of success. Meanwhile, the only gauge she could use for her own performance and approach was those same men, who she knew did not lead in the same ways she did and as would be expected for a woman in the position. This left her to figure out how to be successful through trial and error versus having an example to compare herself to. Another example of this was Rae, who was not only the first woman to run in quite a while, but she also chose another woman of color as her running mate. Rae ended up

searching the Internet to find other dual woman tickets in order to have an example of others who had run and won.

Representation is also crucial for getting more women engaged in leadership roles at all levels. Representation and role modeling translate to women feeling like they can run and win, partially because they have role models and can generate ideas about what presidential leadership looks like when women do it. This assertion can be extrapolated from research on women in politics that says increased visibility in women running for and serving in key political positions increases the likelihood that more women will run in following years (Bligh et al., 2012; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Homan & Schneider, 2018).

A major component of the lack of representation in the role was that each president felt she had a lot to prove as she approached the role of student government president. Many of the women discussed they not only wanted to succeed for themselves but felt added pressure to succeed as to not disadvantage women who came after them. This pressure to succeed for those who may come later reminded me of the F.O.D (First Only Different) concept coined by Shona Rhimes and shared in her 2015 book, *Year of Yes*. Rhimes said, “When you are an F.O.D., you are saddled with that burden of extra responsibility — whether you want it or not. Second chances are for future generations. That is what you are building when you are an F.O.D. Second chances” (Rhimes, 2015, p. 139). The burden of being the first places excess pressure and responsibility on an already difficult position like student government president. Research on women in high-ranking leadership roles in business offers similar insight into the added stress and pressure of being the “only or the one of few.” Judith Oakley calls women in senior management roles like this “tokens.” She indicates that tokens are subjected to more pressure and scrutiny than their peers as they are more visible to the rest of the group and that visibility

increases performance pressure (Oakley, 2000). Similarly, a 2018 report on women in the workplace calls these same women “onlys.” The report indicates that “onlys” are more likely to have their abilities or judgment challenged in their areas of expertise, are expected to provide more evidence of competence, and are more likely to be subjected to unprofessional and demeaning remarks (Krivkovich, Robinson, Starikova, Valentino, & Yee, 2018). The report also indicates that “onlys” often become a “stand-in for all women—their individual successes or failures become a litmus test for what all women are capable of doing” (Krivkovich et al., 2018, p. 7).

**Negative relationships.** Whether it was rooted in sexism, unconscious bias, or simply the inability to bridge a generational gap to work collaboratively with college students, negative relationships with administrators played a role in the tenure of each woman in the study. The women all shared at least one experience they had with administrators that was particularly negative. Mary discussed at length the negative relationship she had with the vice president of student affairs at her institution. Not only did she regularly feel disrespected and talked down to, but she was also not given opportunities others were due to her relationship.

Administrators also appeared to write the participants off or not take them seriously. Kacie shared that she received no respect or attention from the university president with whom she was supposed to work closely until she was awarded a prestigious national honor. After that she felt the only reason he spoke to her was to leverage the prestige of the scholarship she received. Tally indicated that not only did she feel ignored and disrespected by many administrators, but she also felt they wanted to use her more as a pawn than to allow her space at the table to make decisions. Holly discussed that she felt used by the university president and his

cabinet as well, who only listened to her when they needed her to serve as a “poster child” for the institution, often publicizing her being a woman in the role.

The women in the study also had more formal relationships with the administrators on campus as compared to their male predecessors. Sadie discussed that the university president always seemed uncomfortable around her and would only talk about the weather, while in the same meetings he joked and chatted freely with her male vice president. Kacie recounted that other men in her cabinet were invited to go golfing with the president, while she was not given that opportunity and was having trouble getting even a 30-minute meeting with him. Although the men previously in the position were invited to go golfing, attend university sporting events, and to “talk shop,” the women in the study were not offered the same opportunities. This is often referred to as the “good old boys club or network” and is an informal form of gate keeping where men mentor or provide opportunities for other men because they are like minded (e.g., men, and usually White) (Nelson, 2017). This type of gate keeping often keeps women out of the places where informal networking and decision making are happening and sets them up to experience more formal and less effective relationships with male bosses and peers (Bradshaw & Wicks, 2000).

This theme reveals the strong impact negative relationships with administrators can have for women and how often the relationships between male administrators and young women presidents can be wrought with bullying, bias, and behaviors that leave women out of the places and spaces they need to be in to do their jobs. This finding indicates that administrators, particularly men, need to be more aware of how they interact with women student government presidents, including challenging their own biases and taking a deeper look at their actions and how they continue to foster a culture of sexism.

## **Gender Matters**

The significance that gender played in the experiences of the women in the study emerged often throughout the narratives. At the onset of the interview process, gender was a topic that came up tangentially in each women's reflection and at first only when they were specifically asked identity related questions. However, once the women began talking more about their experiences and telling stories from their terms, identity, especially gender, came up far more often and arose as something that was deeply interconnected with their student government experience. The question "What is it like to be a woman on your campus?" elicited several personal stories from the participants about how they made meaning of being a woman on a college campus generally, and more specifically how their specific campus treated women and underrepresented students. Their stories exposed profound feelings of resentment and frustration around gender and other identity related challenges that they had experienced on campus both as a student and as student government president.

Intersectionality. For three of the participants in the study their inability to separate their identity as a woman from other salient identities posed a particular challenge as they navigated running for office and their presidency. Each of the three participants touched on how their identities as woman, woman of color, and immigrant were intertwined deeply and could not be separated to just view their experience from a single identity. This perspective is referred to as intersectionality, and it acknowledges that people, women especially, cannot be understood in independent terms, but rather through the interaction and intersection of their two (or more) identities that often reinforce one another (Crenshaw, 1989). For Sadie, this was her identity as Black and woman, which she believed influenced her experience on campus with White male peers and administrators, particularly around their discomfort and inability to find common



ground in conversation. Both Tally and Rae discussed how their culture, ethnicity, and gender intersected for them, especially regarding how other people perceived them as “brown skinned women” and what others (especially peers) assumed that meant about them. These women faced additional barriers to success in their role as student government president because they not only had to deal with sexism, but also racism, and xenophobia.

**Time for reflection.** Throughout the course of the interviews, as women were reflecting on their experiences, they would often say “I don’t know if this was because I was a woman” and second guess their experiences but as they continued to reflect and tell their stories they always circled back to being confident their experience was rooted in sexism. For many of these women reflection that took place during, between, and after the interviews allowed them to view their experience through a different lens. After our two interviews, Holly identified that many of the stories she shared with me she had not thought about since her term ended. She shared that when re-telling the stories, she realized how often her experiences on campus were rooted in sexism. She believes that time, reflection, and maturity played a part in her ability to now view her experiences for what they truly were and not with the intense emotions that were felt in the moment. This rang true for many participants as they shared stories and reflected on their terms as student government president. For many of the women, time away from the position gave them a more critical lens that allowed them to make meaning of their experience as student government president, allowing them to see how gender and sexism affected their experience.

**Perceived emotional response.** The women in the study also identified examples of other people misconstruing passion and dedication with emotions. Participants indicated that anytime they were particularly passionate about a topic, or for some just interested in exploring

it, they would be perceived as being too emotionally connected to the topic. Often, the topics at hand would directly be tied to one or more of their salient identities. For example, Sadie recounted an experience when several administrators believed she would be too emotional in terms of a few diversity and women's issues as a Black woman and suggested she let her vice president take the lead. What was particularly interesting in the case is that Sadie's vice president was also a student of color but is male identifying. Kacie recounted a time when several student senators and two administrators left her in the dark about a sexual misconduct issue that was being brought up in student government. When she later asked why they hadn't filled her in, they responded that they didn't want to "emotionally exhaust" her, implying that since the issue involved sexual harassment aimed at a young woman, she would not be able to process it effectively. The findings of this study suggest that if a woman was passionate about a particular issue or decision, especially if it was tied to one of her identities (i.e., race or gender), this conviction or enthusiasm would often be deemed as being "too emotional" and would in turn negatively influence her future remarks or recommendations.

Although there are differences in the environments and research participants, the findings of this study are similar to those for women in the workplace that indicate women are stereotyped not only as more emotional than men, but often as too emotional in a general sense (Shields 2002). Emotion is a central stereotype of women in professional settings where a display of emotion by women is often scrutinized and exaggerated (Smith, Brescoll, & Thomas, 2016). When women express emotion, be it excitement, frustration, or anger, they are judged as overly emotional, which ultimately undermines their ability or competence (Smith, Brescoll, & Thomas, 2016). The same level of emotion for men is received as passion or dedication while for women it is labeled overly emotional (Smith, Brescoll, & Thomas, 2016).

**Campus climate.** Conditions still exist on college campuses that are far from favorable towards women. This point was clearly evident throughout the narratives as the women described campus climates fraught with sexism, and struggling with diversity and inclusion. Although campus climate was not originally intended to be a focus of this study, the topic was raised often by the participants. It certainly impacted how the women experienced their campus and their role as student government president. The liberal feminist perspective used in this study indicates that sexism and other forms of oppression are structural in nature and built into the fabric of colleges and universities and how they function (Nadal, 2017; Wendell, 1987) . Examples of this include historically male only organizations, course work and readings that favor the voices of men and/or only white people, and the names of physical spaces or programs on campus that are named in honor of foundational members of the institution prior to women or minoritized people being admitted. Throughout the interviews, it was evident that participants experienced this structural sexism through their experiences on campus and with the campus community, administrators, faculty, and alumni.

The impact of campus climate cannot be underestimated as it relates to women on campus, especially in the student government role as those women have more exposure to the interworking of campus at higher levels than many other students would on a daily basis. Through the conversations with these women, it would appear that the climate on college campuses for women in 2019 remains just as “chilly” as it was in 1982 when Hall and Sandler (1982) coined the term “chilly campus climate” in their Association of American Colleges (AAC) report on the status and education of women. Although women comprise the majority in terms of student population on many campuses, they are still treated as an afterthought in terms how structures and processes are enacted on campuses. It is an unpleasant reminder that there is

still a great deal of sexism to contend with in traditional spaces that are assumed to have undergone change because of the number of women in the student population. When asked “what is it like on your campus for women?” participants in the study shared examples of male dominated campus traditions, the lack of women in leadership roles (both students and administrators), and the names physical spaces on campus (i.e. buildings or colleges) that were primarily named after men.

Issues with race, sexual orientation, national origin etcetera are also present in colleges and universities (Vaccaro, 2010). Although campus have experienced a great deal of change over the years, subtle structural issues still leave minoritized students and faculty out of the places where decisions are made, and leave them to feel othered by traditional and historical structures. According to Baker (2018), “what makes the issues with sexism and other forms of oppression so unique in Higher Education is the assumption that somehow colleges and universities are detached from the common prejudices and biases of the ‘real’ world” (Baker, 2018, p. 32). Higher education is based on meritocracy, “it’s supposedly a system in which people are judged by their accomplishments, not who they are or where they come from, and those who work hard enough will be rewarded” (2018). The problem then lies in the fact that meritocracy functions as a shield for the structural sexism and racism of higher education institutions (Baker, 2018, p. 33). Meritocratic systems are designed to reward employee based on merit alone, yet many studies have shown that stereotypes based on gender, ethnicity, race and so forth actually harm the way that merit is evaluated (Cooper, 2015; Mijs, 2016). These stereotypes serve as” filters through which we evaluate others, often in ways that advantage dominant groups and disadvantage lower-status groups” (Baker, 2018; Mijs, 2015, p. 18). For example, when identical resumes were compared, the ones with the white and male sounding names were appraised more

positively than identical resumes of minorities and women (Cooper, 2015). This inherently is the problem with meritocracy, it allows people to think that they evaluating others fairly and impartially, but stereotypes and unconscious bias are always present which in turn advantages dominant or already advantaged groups (Cooper, 2015; Mijs, 2016). This aligns with the beliefs of liberal feminism as well that outline that structures, especially those built for white men, often subtly punish women for their gender while appearing to place value on equality (Bennet, 2016).

Any studies or findings about the campus climate for women students generally are also absent from the recent literature that focuses more on minoritized students, women faculty and minoritized faculty, and women and students of color in STEM. However, women still experience the effects of structural sexism and bias in many of the same ways they did over 30 years ago when the initial campus climate research was done by Hall and Sandler (1982). When the climate for women on campus is discussed, researchers and administrators alike often reference the implications of sexual assault and violence, but there is a significant gap in how underlying sexism on campuses continues to perpetuate cultures and practices that disregard the specific needs and challenges experienced by women. This glaring gap in the literature still needs to be addressed as women, especially women in leadership roles, continue to face an environment where they are forced to experience campus differently from their male peers.

### **Limitations of Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminism was used as the theoretical perspective for this study. In some ways it mapped to the findings and informed how the research was conducted and analyzed, but it was not without limitations. The tenants of liberal feminism were apparent in the findings around the structural and cultural dimensions of sexism, as well as individual decision making of each of the participants, including that each participant chose to run for the position and made their decisions

regarding what it meant to be a woman in the role. However, many of the findings were far more nuanced than what is outlined in liberal feminism and were clearly impacted by each woman's individual identities, institutional characteristics, and other characteristics that contradicted liberal feminism.

## **Implications for Research and Practice**

### **Implications for Research and Areas for Future Study**

The stories of the six participants in this study provide a glimpse into the experiences of women who seek to run for high-ranking student leadership positions on campus and document valuable lessons and insights that can help inspire and inform how other women approach running for these roles in the future. Although each participant shared her own distinct story, the findings from their collective stories help us to better understand how women student government presidents make meaning of the journey to and through the role. They also offer insight into future research that could amplify how women understand and navigate leadership roles during college and beyond.

**Positional leadership.** Although this study is focused principally on the specific experiences of women student government presidents, it also touches on critical points related to the broader need for women in leadership positions at colleges and universities. In the last 20 years, there has been a minimal amount of research conducted to explore positional leadership for college students, and the majority of research on the subject was published in the mid to early 1990s (see A.W. Astin, 1993, 1996; H. S. Astin & Leland, 1991; Cooper et al., 1994; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Kuh, 1991, 1995).

Another shortcoming of the prior research is that in addition to being dated for a current generation of students and administrators, very little of it assessed the experiences of women in

leadership positions. With a generational shift in the thinking, motivations, and experiences of the modern college student as well as the potential for more women to pursue opportunities for leadership roles on college campuses, future research could benefit from more qualitative explorations into the experiences of women student leaders on campus so that we might better understand how collegiate women engage in and are influenced by positional leadership.

This study helps to advance the discourse on women in positional leadership by examining the experiences of women student leaders who hold high-ranking positional leadership roles on campus. Through a qualitative approach, the study broached critical subjects related to the experiences of women student government presidents and how they navigated the campus environment, gender stereotypes and bias, and other challenges faced in a high-ranking leadership position on campus. This study limited participation to only women from Research I institutions, which are the most representative institutions for the context of women in the workforce as well (Johnson, 2011). The narratives of the women from this study as well as the findings and common themes of their experiences will help further research on positional leadership by re-invigorating the positional leadership research and beginning to fill the gap in research on women in positional leadership. Additional research on women students in other campus positional leadership roles could help broaden how we look at and understand positional leadership. For this study, an assumption was made that student government president is the highest ranking leadership role on campus, and for many institutions this is correct, but it is not all inclusive. As campuses differ, so do the leadership roles in which students strive to be a part of. There could certainly be other primary positions (either elected or not) that have high visibility on campuses that are equal to or possibly held in higher esteem than student government president. Studying women in other positional leadership roles is important in order

to both compare and contrast how their experiences compare to that of student government presidents, as well as to provide a bigger picture for what women student leaders are experiencing on campus.

As discussed earlier in the study, the larger field of leadership education has also re-focused in recent years, spending less time on the outcomes of positional leadership, and instead has focused on engaging in leadership as a practice. As research on leadership education has changed, educators have encouraged students to be more thoughtful and reflective in terms their leadership experiences. Findings from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (Dugan, 2008) have indicated that women are often more reflective than their male peers and engage in leadership more thoughtfully (Dugan, 2008). This type of reflective practice and the thoughtful nature in which women engage with leadership activities can often seem in opposition to outcomes of positional leadership which favor more decisive decision making skills and more forceful leadership styles (Eagly & Karau, 2002, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Sax & Harper, 2007). Although this study highlighted women specifically in positional leadership roles on campus, they all seemed to spend a lot of time reflecting on their experiences and how these experiences shaped them. This is important as it in many ways bridges the gap between the newer, more nuanced view of leadership in research with the prior study of positional leadership. Future studies could look at how women are reflective from a variety of leadership experiences and compare how we ask women to be more reflective in terms of experience than their male peers.

**Leadership gap.** Women are not only currently underrepresented in leadership roles on campus, but also in comparable leadership positions in the corporate, political, and educational sectors of the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). This underrepresentation in the



workforce has been classified as the "leadership gap." Although women in the U.S. hold roughly 52% of all professional roles in business and education, they comprise a significantly smaller proportion of top management and leadership positions than their male counterparts (Warner, Ellmann, & Boesch, 2018). Additional comprehensive longitudinal research, including tracking the career trajectory of former student government presidents over a period of years, would allow researchers to evaluate if and to what degree holding a high-ranking positional leadership role in college prepares women for leadership roles when they enter the workforce. It could also help provide insights on how their experiences as student government presidents helped or hindered their interest and drive to pursue leadership roles in the workforce. Better understanding the influencing factors, experiences, and impact of women in collegiate leadership roles and how that translates to the way women navigate obstacles and practice leadership in the workforce would be invaluable to campus practitioners in developing leadership programs tailored more directly to helping shape and cultivate women.

Additional research on why women do not run for political office could also prove beneficial. Current research suggests that when women do run for political office, they win at a similar rate to their male peers; the problem is that fewer women run (Lawless, 2015). Prior research has looked at this phenomenon generally, but research could be expanded to account for age and generational differences of women running for office currently, as well as to include more women from underrepresented groups. This research could also help identify the barriers that women experience when they consider running for office. Reaching out to organizations like *Emily's List* and *She Should Run*, which track women who show an interest in political office, could be a great way to recruit participants.

In turn, a longitudinal study on women student government presidents could track how the experiences of women who take on these roles approach leadership, work, and other challenges over a longer time frame. A prior study on women student government presidents looked at their political participation post college and asked women to reflect on how their time as president impacted their current political participation (Spencer, 2003). Building upon that study, to look at how women navigate the workforce and leadership generally over a longer time frame would allow for me to make connections on how positional leadership experiences in college influence how women approach leadership in the workforce. A longitudinal study would also allow the women more time to reflect on their prior experiences and provide deeper connections to how that time has influenced how they view leadership.

**Other demographics.** This study chose to focus on college women, given the continued shortage of women in positional leadership roles both in college and in the workforce. However, it would be beneficial to examine the differences and similarities in the experiences of both women and men in the role of student government president. For example, this study found that having support from mentors was especially impactful for the women in the study. Since men were not included in the study, it is uncertain if support from mentors would have also been as impactful for men.

Research could also benefit from a similar study that focuses on women with other minoritized identities. Findings from the study indicate that gender matters, but race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other identities played a role in how each individual woman experienced her time on campus and her time as student government president. A focus on women with a variety of underrepresented identities would add to the breadth of knowledge regarding the intersection of leadership experiences, gender and other identities.

Similarly, a comparable study that looks at other institutional types could provide more context as well. This study focused on Research I universities, as their size and focus on high research output makes them structurally complex (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006) and they seem to often mirror the sexism that is imbedded in society. However, a study that explores a variety of institution types, or that focuses on a different institution type could illuminate how women experience a variety of structures. As an example, a study on women student government presidents at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) could explore the culture of HBCU's as well as look at how women navigate that culture and the structural issues that may be different from Research I schools.

This study adds to the small body of work that informs what we know about women student government presidents and takes a more detailed look at their individual experiences than prior research had. This study looks more deeply at what factors influence their ability or desire to assume these roles and their experiences as women leaders, while prior research on women student government presidents examined leadership outcomes for students who participate in student government (Dias, 2009; Hellwig-Olson, 2000; May, 2009), the impact of student government on future political aspirations (Spencer, 2003), and leadership styles of former women student government presidents (Damell, 2013). This population of women on campus has been understudied and this study served to begin to fill that gap and open the door into further research.

### **Implications for Practice**

The benefits of student involvement and leadership have been studied for years and are extensive. These benefits include but are not limited to amplified decision-making skills, increased cognitive complexity, higher levels of psychosocial development, interpersonal

competence and relationship building, and greater aptitude for career planning (A.W. Astin, 1993, 1996; Cooper et al., 1995; Foubert & Grainger, 2006, Kuh, 1995; Martin, 2000; Terenzini et al.,1996). However, involvement alone does not provide the real-life experience of leading in diverse environments in the same way positional leadership roles do. Strengthening programs and services that enrich women's college experiences and opportunities for leadership by creating more impactful leadership training for women could be especially beneficial for collegiate women. This study explored the experiences of women in a high-ranking student leadership role on campus and found that although women have the desire to run and have a strong understanding of the needs of students on campus, they lacked both confidence and examples of past success to encourage them to pursue their position. Findings from this study indicated that mentorship and positive relationships with administrators on campus provided the encouragement and confidence boost needed for women to enter the race for student government president. It is crucial for campus professionals to encourage women to take on leadership roles and provide women leaders with the support to do so. Additionally, the relationships between administrators and student leaders are a crucial part of their development, and positive relationships could alleviate the apprehension many collegiate women experience when they take on leadership roles. It is also important for administrators to encourage more women to pursue leadership positions in student government. Advisors and administrators can help by recommending to women that they get involved in lower-level positions and find issues that matter to them early in the student government experience. Additionally, the role of student government president should be publicized widely to students as the opportunity to be a change maker and help shape the future direction of the campus environment versus as simply a leadership role or position that stands out on a resume. This re-framing of how the role is viewed

and understood could aid in getting more women interested in running for the position.

According to the tenets of liberal feminism, women often understand and practice leadership from a more purpose-driven and communal perspective. Therefore, reframing how this role is presented and the value of the position would better reflect the communal nature of how many women view and understand leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

The development of emerging leader programs, academic course work on leadership, and programs specifically geared towards women's leadership would also be particularly beneficial in not only recruiting more women into leadership roles on campus, but also in identifying women with great potential who may need more support or encouragement. Programming targeted specifically at women could provide a space where young women can interact with each other, as well as with faculty and administrators who provide mentorship and support. The increased mentorship and role modeling as well as peer support could affirm confidence in women and help to provide them with opportunities to get involved with leadership.

Representation of women in high-ranking leadership and administrative positions on campus was also identified in the study as particularly significant as they provide examples of how to understand and navigate complex political and leadership situations. Creating opportunities for college women to meet with female administrators on campus and other female leaders in the community could provide the women with multiple archetypes of how to be successful in leadership roles. Mentoring or other programs that allow emerging female leaders to hear from a variety of women in leadership roles about their successes and barriers would be especially valuable. This research sheds new light on the meaning-making of women student government presidents, and how they experience their journey to and through the role of student

government president. Continuing to support, encourage, and prepare women to take on these roles is essential for campus professionals. Increasing the number of women in leadership roles on campus sends a powerful message to campus communities that women are just as interested, qualified, and capable of taking on leadership roles on campus as their male peers.

Negative relationships and interactions with campus administrators also showed up as one of the main challenges the women in the study experienced. Many of the negative interactions the women had stemmed from implicit bias and structural sexism issues on campus. Training administrators on implicit bias and providing spaces where women feel valued and respected could go a long way in mitigating these negative interactions.

It would also be beneficial for administrators on campuses to take a deeper look at structures and practices that leave women out of the spaces they need to be in to do their jobs. This includes assessing administrators, faculty, staff and student perceptions of gender inclusivity on campus. The University of California's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) offers both a faculty survey and a diverse learning environment survey (DLE) that can be used as a model to create surveys that help to identify gender related issues on campus. A survey that is inclusive of gender, race, and other identity related campus issues could help those in leadership positions at colleges and university assess the inclusivity of the campus climate and give them data to help pinpoint areas in which they need to further address climate related issues.

### **Conclusion**

The lessons learned and the knowledge shared from the six participants during this journey have left me with a tremendous feeling of honor and gratitude that they chose to share their stories and time with me. Their narratives offered a powerful glimpse into the experiences of women student government presidents, and their individual stories delivered compelling insights into the trials, tribulations, and successes of each individual woman while collectively

joining together as a cohesive narrative that depicts the common successes and challenges of collegiate women in high-ranking leadership roles. The findings from this study shed light on the obstacles that women face in leadership positions, as well as the experiences that positively influenced their journey to and through the student government president role. The narratives of these women showed us that positive, reinforcing relationships are important and can serve to boost the confidence of women, but that negative relationships can seriously hinder their experience. Relational leadership styles were also very present within each woman's narrative and coincided with the catalyst for running for each woman as well.

As I reflect on my conversations with the women in the study, I've spent countless hours pondering the meaning and significance of being the first ever or the first in a long time in a role like this, and am reminded of a quote by Clare Booth Luce who said, "Because I am a woman, I must make unusual efforts to succeed. If I fail, no one will say, 'She doesn't have what it takes.' They will say, 'Women don't have what it takes.'" After all that I have heard, discussed, and analyzed for this study, no quote could more accurately capture the sentiment of these women and their experiences. Each one felt an immense pressure to succeed in her role, as if the weight of more than just her own success and legacy rested on her shoulders. Even if the six current or former women student government presidents in this study never outright said it during their time in office, they all recognized during this opportunity to reflect that their role and what they were able to accomplish during their tenures as the first woman student government president or the first in a long time had implications for the women that would come after them. Unlike the countless men who held the position before them, their failures and successes would determine if and when another woman would be interested in running for the position and considered capable of holding the role on campus again in the near future. My hope is that the stories of these women and the learnings and themes identified through this study provide encouragement and guidance for future generations of women who will lead on campus and in life. As a pioneer in her sport who has paved the way for others, Serena Williams put it best when she said "the success of every woman should be the inspiration to another. We must raise each other up."

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Participant Consent Form**

Project Title	Shattering the Collegiate Glass Ceiling: Understanding the Experiences of Women Student Government Presidents
---------------	---



Purpose of the Study	<p>This research is being conducted by Kristen Rupert at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you were identified as a current or former female student government president at a Research I institution. The purpose of this research project is to better understand the experiences of women student government presidents.</p>
Procedures	<p>The procedures involve two interviews with me, the principal investigator, and any follow-up conversations as needed following the interview. After you agree to participate, I will contact you to set up dates, times, and locations that are feasible and comfortable for our interviews. If we are unable to meet in-person, video conferencing technology may be used to supplement. Participants will also be asked to consent to video and/or audio recording of all interviews.</p> <p>Participation consists of engaging in conversation with me, guided by a series of interview questions. Each interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes. Interview questions will ask you to share about your experience as a woman in college and your experience as student government president. Sample questions include: “How would you describe the environment on campus for women?” “Tell me about how you decided to run for student government president?” “How do you think your experience has been similar and different from your male predecessors?”</p> <p>You will be informed of the researcher’s wish to audio record and/or video record the interview for purposes of accuracy and transcription; however, participants will have the right to decline being audio and/or video recorded. All participation will be voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. You will be asked to sign a consent form to participate in the study.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<p>There is a minor risk of breach of confidentiality. In order to protect privacy, the identities of participants and institutions will remain confidential. Interviewees and institutions will be randomly assigned a pseudonym, and actual names will not appear on interview data</p>
Potential Benefits	<p>There are no direct benefits from participation in this research. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study by using the findings to better understand the experiences of women student government presidents and support them properly during their terms.</p>

Confidentiality	<p>In order to protect privacy, the identities of participants and institutions will remain confidential. Interviewees and institutions will be randomly assigned a pseudonym, and actual names will not appear on interview data. The key linking the real participants and institutions to pseudonyms will be kept in a separate document on the Principle Investigator's computer, in a password protected folder. Information identifying the participant will be disclosed only if the participant gives his or her consent to provide such information. Data, including transcripts, notes, and audio and video recordings, will be securely stored on the principal investigator's computer and external hard drives. Computers and hard drives will be password protected to guard participant data. Hard copies will remain in a locked file cabinet. All data will be destroyed (shredded or erased) after ten years, or when their use is no longer needed, whichever comes first.</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you are an employee and/or student, neither your employment standing, nor academic credit will be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Kristen Rupert 330-606-6341 karupert@umd.edu</p>
Participant Rights	<p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of</i></p>

	<i>Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i>	
Statement of Consent	<i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</i>	
	<i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

## Appendix B: Pre- Interview Demographic Survey

*This will be used only for record-keeping purposes and names and institutions will be changed to ensure privacy and anonymity*

1. Name:

2. Age:
3. Where are you from (City, state):
4. Undergraduate Institution:
5. Year in school or year graduated:
6. Years you were student government president ? :
7. Identities you identify with (Race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, Socioeconomic status etc.), please list all that you are comfortable including:
8. Other Identities including GPA, major, other activities you are involved in...etc:
9. On your campus, how many of the student government presidents in the recent past have been women?

### **Appendix C: Interview Protocol- Interview #1**

Introduction to students:

Hello, and thank you for being here today! My name is Kristen, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland. I appreciate your participation in my study about the experiences of women student government presidents. This study will consist of two interviews done at different times in order to be mindful of your time and to break up questions in a way that makes sense. Is this okay with you?

I would like to address some logistics of our time together:

- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to stop the interview, please let me know. You may withdraw at any time without consequence.
- I would like to audio/video record our conversations today. Only I will have access to the recordings, and they will be used to for note taking purposes. You have the option to decline from audio recording on the consent form. (*Provide consent form—ask student to sign before we move on*)

*Questions in this interview are designed to focus on research question #1: How do women student body presidents of large public universities make meaning of their identities, particularly their gender? And Research question #2: How do women student government presidents make meaning of their decisions to run for office?*

Potential Questions/Topics (semi-structured):

- In the demographic data I asked you to list out identities you identify with, can you tell me a few of those and which ones are most salient (or most important) to you?
  - What does being a woman mean to you?
- Can you tell me about any specific experiences you have had that impact how you feel about being a woman?
- How did you think about your identities growing up? If someone asked you “what are you or who are you when you were growing up – what would you say?”
  - Did your family talk about your identities at home?
  - How was gender discussed in your family? What are some examples?
- What do you think is the hardest thing about being a woman on your campus?
- How would you describe the environment on campus for women? (What does it mean to be a woman on your campus?)
  - What is environment for women student leaders?
  - How about administrators? How many high-level women administrators do you know or know of on campus?
- What does the term glass ceiling mean to you? How about gender bias?
- If I told you tomorrow that there would soon be a woman president of the United States how would you react? How would that make you feel?
- What other student orgs have you been a part of on campus?
  - Did you hold any leadership positions in those organizations?
- How did you get involved in student government?
  - Were you involved in H.S.?
  - What other student government positions or committee have you been a part of?
- Tell me about how you decided to run for student government president.
  - Who were your supporters during this process (friends, family, mentors)?

- How did their support or lack of support impact your choice to run?
- On your campus, how many of the student government presidents in the recent past have been women?

#### Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to discuss with me or tell me with the time we have remaining? Do you have any questions for me? Thank you for your time, I will follow up soon to set up a second interview if you are still interested and able to participate.

### **Appendix D: Interview Protocol- Interview #2**

Introduction: Thank you for meeting with me for a second interview! Today I'd like to talk about why you chose to run for student government president and hear more about your campaign and presidency experiences.

*Interview #2 focuses on interview question numbers 3, and 4. #3. How do women student*

*government presidents make meaning of their campaign experiences, specifically in regard to how their gender and sexism shaped their election process? # 4. How do they make meaning of the role of gender and sexism in their experiences as student government president?*

*The first few questions discuss the article I asked the student to send me ahead of time*

- Why did you choose this article to send to me?
  - Why is this article important or representative of you or your time as president?
- Do you remember your initial reaction when you first read this article?
- Re-reading it now do you feel differently about it or does anything new strike you as important?

*--- if there is a picture or pictures attached to the article---*

- Tell me a little about the picture?
- Why do you think this photo was picked?
- What message do you think it sends?
- Would you change anything about this picture?

Potential Questions/Topics (semi-structured):

- Tell me about your campaign experience.
  - Who were you running against?
  - How did you think about and develop your campaign strategy and materials?
    - Was your gender discussed or mentioned in any of your competitor's campaign materials or any publicity related to the campaign (including school newspaper articles)?
  - Did you experience any hostility during the experience? If so, regarding what?
  - How did people respond to you as a candidate?
    - How do you think being a woman impacted your campaign experience? What about your other identities?
- Tell me about the campus reaction/response to you being elected?
  - Was there a difference between how your male peers reacted to you versus your female peers?
- What advice (solicited or unsolicited) did you receive on how to be a successful president?
  - Who did this advice come from?
  - Did this advice address your gender or identity?
- What has your experience with administrators been like since you've been elected?
- How do you think your experience has been similar and different from your male predecessors?
  - Why do you believe this experience is different (or the same)?

- Tell me about your process in making a big decision – how confident were you that you were making the right choice? What factored into the level of confidence you felt?
- Did you have mentors or someone you looked up to providing you with advice or guidance during the election or during your presidency?
  - How did you find or meet this mentor?
  - What advice or support did they give you?
- Who do you think people expected you to be/how did people expect you to lead?
  - What were these expectations based on?
- How did people respond to your agenda and accomplishments?
- What kind of compliments and critiques did you receive?
- How has your experience been overall with administrators during your term?
- Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other women who are looking to run for student government president?
- [If you have already graduated] -- what do you know or see now that you didn't during your time in office?
- What are you doing now/what are your plans for the future?
- How did being student government president impact your future decisions?

Conclusion: Is there anything else that I didn't cover that you would like to add or talk about in the time we have remaining? Do you have any questions for me? After this interview I will work to transcribe both of our conversations, and once I have done that, I will provide you with the chance to review the transcription if you would like. Thank you again for speaking with me today and for being a part of this study. If you have any other questions, please follow up.

#### Appendix E: Participant Bio Chart

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Background Info</b>	<b>School and Student Government Info</b>	<b>What They Are Doing Now</b>	<b>Experience as Student Government President</b>
Holly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Straight</li> <li>▪ White</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large, southern, Public, Land</li> </ul>	Consultant for a large consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall difficult experience.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Upper Middle Class</li> <li>▪ Grew up in the South</li> <li>▪ Two female siblings</li> <li>▪ Parents Divorced, Mom primary caregiver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant Institution.</li> <li>▪ 7<sup>th</sup> Woman Student Government president at her institution</li> </ul>	firm in her home state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ She was diagnosed with some mental health concerns after her term stemming directly from her experience as president</li> </ul>
Kacie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Straight</li> <li>▪ White</li> <li>▪ Middle Class</li> <li>▪ Grew up in the South</li> <li>▪ Not involved with student government before running for the position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large, South Eastern, Public, Land Grant Institution.</li> <li>▪ 7<sup>th</sup> Woman Student Government president at her institution</li> </ul>	Works at a non-profit organization that supports women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall neutral experience.</li> <li>▪ Had some challenges during her presidency, felt she did not accomplish what she set out to do.</li> </ul>
Mary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Straight</li> <li>▪ White</li> <li>▪ Middle Class</li> <li>▪ Grew up in the South</li> <li>▪ Mom was breadwinner in home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large, Mid-Atlantic, Public, Land Grant Institution.</li> <li>▪ She was the first woman president in 10 years</li> </ul>	Works for a presidential political campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall positive experience.</li> <li>▪ Indicated she would do it again, but understands now the challenges associated with being a woman in the role</li> </ul>
Rae	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Straight</li> <li>▪ Indian American</li> <li>▪ Upper Middle Class</li> <li>▪ Grew up on the West Coast</li> <li>▪ Very supportive parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large, West Coast Private, Elite Institution.</li> <li>▪ Transferred in to her alma mater</li> <li>▪ 1 of only 2 women to serve as student government president</li> <li>▪ 1<sup>st</sup> all female President/VP ticket</li> </ul>	Works as a management consultant at a Fortune 100 firm. Interested in pursuing politics one day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very challenging experience that was surrounded in controversy and continued to impact her past graduation.</li> <li>▪ After graduation she was integral in getting a high-level administrator fired.</li> </ul>
Sadie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Straight</li> <li>▪ Black</li> <li>▪ Middle Class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large, Mid-Western Public Institution.</li> <li>▪ 10<sup>th</sup> woman to serve in student</li> </ul>	Works in medical research, specifically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall positive experience.</li> <li>▪ Helped to write and pass a resolution removing the names</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immigrant /1<sup>st</sup> generation American</li> <li>▪ Grew up in the Midwest</li> <li>▪ Family had different rules/expectations for her versus her brother</li> </ul>	government president role at the institution		of slaves off university buildings and helped to create a reporting system for bias incidents on campus
Tally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LGBTQ+</li> <li>▪ Asian American</li> <li>▪ Upper Middle Class</li> <li>▪ 1<sup>st</sup> generation America</li> <li>▪ Grew up in the Mid Atlantic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large, Mid-Atlantic Public, Land Grant Institution.</li> <li>▪ 1<sup>st</sup> woman of color to serve as student government president</li> </ul>	Works for a non-partisan policy group. Interested in running for political office in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall positive experience.</li> <li>▪ Helped create financial literacy programs for her institution and create inclusion and diversity workshops in the division of student affairs</li> </ul>

## REFERENCES

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society, 4*, 139-158. doi: 10.1177/089124390004002002
- Acker, J., Barry, K., & Esseveld, J. (1983). Objectivity and truth: Problems in doing feminist research. *Women's Studies International Forum, 6*, 423-435.  
doi:10.1177/0038038592026002002
- Adams, R. G., & Blieszner, R. (1995). Aging well with friends and family. *American Behavioral Scientist, 39*(2), 209-224.
- Allen, T. D., Day, R., & Lentz, E. (2005). The role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships. *Journal of Career Development, 31*, 155 – 169.
- Allen, S. J., Shankman, M. L., & Haber-Curran, P. (2016). Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: The Need for Deliberate Practice and Collaboration Across Disciplines. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2016*(174), 79-91.
- Akbarov, A., & Hadžimehmedagić, M. (2015). The influence of personal factors on student's college success. *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education, 8*(7), 7-20. doi: 7-20,245,248-249
- Atwater, L. E., & Yammarino, F. J. (1992). Does self-other agreement on leadership perceptions moderate the validity of leadership and performance predictions?. *Personnel Psychology, 45*(1), 141-164.
- Anastasopoulos, L. (2016). Estimating the gender penalty in House of Representative elections using a regression discontinuity design. *Electoral Studies, 43*, 150-157. doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2016.04.008

- Arnett, J. J. (2014). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Arnold, K. (1996). *Lives of promise: What becomes of high school valedictorians*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. (1996). Involvement in learning revisited: Lessons we have learned. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37, 123-134.
- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of college student personnel*, 25(4), 297-308.
- Astin, H. S. (1996). Leadership for social change. *About Campus*, 1(3), 4-10.
- Astin, H. S., & Kent, L. (1983). Gender roles in transition: Research and policy implications for higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 54, 309-324.
- Astin, H. S., & Leland, C. (1991). *Women of influence, women of vision*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Baker, K. J. (2018). *Sexism ed: Essays on gender and labor in academia*. Raven Books.
- Banks, R. R., & Ford, R. T. (2008). (How) Does Unconscious Bias Matter: law, Politics, and Racial Inequality. *Emory LJ*, 58, 1053.
- Barbour, R. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research: a student's guide*. London, UK: Sage.
- Bardou, K. J., Bryne, S. M., Pasternak, V. S., Perez, N. C., & Rainey, A. L. (2003). Self-efficacy and student leaders: The effects of gender, previous leadership experiences and institutional environment. *Journal of the Student Personnel Association at Indiana University*, (40)1, 33-48.

- Baxter Magolda, M. (1992). *Knowing and reasoning in college. Gender-related patterns in students' intellectual development*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Beagan, B. (2001). Micro inequities and everyday inequalities: "Race," gender, sexuality and class in medical school. *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 583-610.
- Bennett, J. (2016). *Feminist fight club: A survival manual for a sexist workplace*. Penguin UK.
- Billing, Y., & Alvesson, M. (2000). Questioning the notion of feminine leadership: A critical perspective on the gender labeling of leadership. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 7(3), 144-157.
- Birks, M., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2008). Memoing in qualitative research: Probing data and processes. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 13, 68-75.
- Bligh, M. C., Schlehofer, M. M., Casad, B. J., & Gaffney, A. M. (2012). Competent enough, but would you vote for her? Gender stereotypes and media influences on perceptions of women politicians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 42(3), 560-597.
- Boatwright, K. J., & Egidio, R. K. (2003). Psychological predictors of college women's leadership aspirations. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44, 653-669.
- Bond, M. A., & Allen, C. T. (2016). Beyond difference: Gender as a quality of social settings. In *Feminist perspectives on building a better psychological science of gender* (pp. 231-254). Champaign, IL: Springer.
- Borgatti, S. P. (1999). Elicitation techniques for cultural domain analysis. *Enhanced ethnographic methods*, 3, 115-151.
- Boyer, E. L. (1987). *College: The undergraduate experience in America*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Bradley, E. H., Curry, L. A., & Devers, K. J. (2007). Qualitative data analysis for health services research: developing taxonomy, themes, and theory. *Health services research*, 42(4), 1758-1772.
- Bradshaw, P., & Wicks, D. (2000). The experiences of White women on corporate boards in Canada. In *Women on corporate boards of directors* (pp. 197-212). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Brown, B. (2010, June). The power of vulnerability [Video file]. *TED*. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018, June 1). *Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2006). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In *The Routledgefalmer Reader in Gender & Education* (pp. 73-83). London, UK: Routledge.
- Campbell, D. E., & Wolbrecht, C. (2006). See Jane run: Women politicians as role models for adolescents. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(2), 233-247.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1996). From critical research practice to critical research reporting. *Tesol Quarterly*, 30(2), 321-330.
- Caplan, P. J., & Ford, J. (2014). The Voices of Diversity: What Students of Diverse Races/Ethnicities and Both Sexes Tell Us About Their College Experiences and Their Perceptions About their Institutions' Progress Toward Diversity. *Aporia*, 6(4), 30-69.

- Carter, S. M., & Little, M. (2007). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 17(10), 1316-1328.
- Catalyst. (2007). *The double-bind dilemma for women in leadership: Damned if you do, doomed if you don't*. New York, NY: IBM Corporation.
- Center for American Women in Politics. (2017). *Women in elective office 2017*. Retrieved from <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-elective-office-2017>
- Chan, K. Y., & Drasgow, F. (2001). Toward a theory of individual differences and leadership: understanding the motivation to lead. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 481-498.
- Chira, S. (2017). Why women aren't CEOs, according to women who almost were. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/21/sunday-review/women-ceos-glass-ceiling.html>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cohen, L. L., & Swim, J. K. (1995). The differential impact of gender ratios on women and men: Tokenism, self-confidence, and expectations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21(9), 876-884.
- Cohn, D. & Livingston, G. (2016). Americans' views of women as political leaders differ by gender. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/05/19/americans-views-of-women-as-political-leaders-differ-by-gender/>
- Colbeck, C. L., Cabrera, A. F., and Terenzini, P. T. "Learning Professional Confidence: Linking Teaching Practices, Students' Self-Perceptions, and Gender." *Review of Higher Education*, 2001, 24(2), 173–191.

- Collette, M. (2016, August 6). The Era of 'The Bitch' Is Coming. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/the-era-of-the-bitch-is-coming/496154/>
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 375-385). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cooke, N. J. (1994). Varieties of knowledge elicitation techniques. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 41(6), 801-849.
- Cooper, D. L., Healy, M. A., & Simpson, J. (1994). Student development through involvement: Specific changes over time. *Journal of College Student Development*, 35, 98-102.
- Cooper, M. (2015). The false promise of meritocracy. *The Atlantic*, 1.
- Cranston, P. (1989). Sex differences in undergraduates' experiences of campus micro-inequities. *Journal of College Student Development*.
- Cress, C. M. (2008). Creating inclusive learning communities: the role of student-faculty relationships in mitigating negative campus climate. *Learning Inquiry*, 2(2), 95-111.
- Cress, C. M., Astin, H. S., Zimmerman-Oster, K., & Burkhardt, J. C. (2001). Developmental outcomes of college students' involvement in leadership activities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42, 15-27.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (X ed.). Boston, MA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 124-130.



- Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H. (2006). The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. *Social Science Information*, 45, 483-499.
- Dahlvig, J. E., & Longman, K. A. (2010). Women's leadership development: A study of defining moments. *Christian Higher Education*, 9(3), 238-258.
- Damell, K. (2013). *Women's leadership identity development as former student government presidents* (Doctoral dissertation, Fordham University).
- Davidson, K. (2016). Employers find 'soft skills' like critical thinking in short supply. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/employers-find-soft-skills-like-critical-thinking-in-short-supply-1472549400>
- Dias, M. H. (2009). *The leadership perspectives of former student government presidents* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global database. (UMI No. 3349576)
- Diaz, D. (2017, December 13). Gillibrand on Trump's tweet: It was a 'sexist smear'. *CNN Politics*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnn.com/2017/12/13/politics/kirsten-gillibrand-donald-trump-tweet/index.html>
- Dolan, K. (2010). The impact of gender stereotyped evaluations on support for women candidates. *Political Behavior*, 32, 69-88.
- Dolan, K. (2014). Gender stereotypes, candidate evaluations, and voting for women candidates: what really matters? *Political Research Quarterly*, 67, 96-107.
- Drago, R., Colbeck, C., Stauffer, K. D., Pirretti, A., Burkum, K., Fazioli, J., et al. (2005). Bias against caregiving. *Academe*, 91(5), 22-25.
- Dugan, J. P. (2006). Explorations using the social change model: Leadership development among college men and women. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47, 217-225.

- Dugan, J. P., & Komives, S. R. (2007). *Developing leadership capacity in college students*. College Park, MD: National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.
- Dugan, J. P., & Komives, S. R. (2010). Influences on college students' capacities for socially responsible leadership. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(5), 525-549.
- Dugan, J. P., Bohle, C. W., Gebhardt, M., Hofert, M., Wilk, E., & Cooney, M. A. (2011). Influences of leadership program participation on students' capacities for socially responsible leadership. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 48(1), 65-84.
- Dugan, J. P., Komives, S. R., & Segar, T. C. (2008). College student capacity for socially responsible leadership: Understanding norms and influences of race, gender, and sexual orientation. *NASPA journal*, 45(4), 475-500.
- Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female leadership advantage and disadvantage: Resolving the contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(1), 1-12.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eagly, A. H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. (2001). The leadership styles of women and men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 781-797.
- Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T. (1990). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 233-256.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109, 573-598.
- Ehrlinger, J., & Dunning, D. (2003). How chronic self-views influence (and potentially mislead) estimates of performance. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 84(1), 5.

- Eich, D. (2008). A grounded theory of high-quality leadership programs: Perspectives from student leadership development programs in higher education. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 15, 176-187.
- Eisenstein, Z. R. (1981). *The radical future of liberal feminism*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Elder, L. (2004). Why women don't run: Explaining women's underrepresentation in America's political institutions. *Women & Politics*, 26(2), 27-56.
- Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Ensher, E. E., & Murphy, S. R. (1997). Effects of race, gender, perceived similarity and contact on mentor relationships. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50(3), 399 – 417.
- Fischer, D. V., Wielkiewicz, R. M., Stelzner, S. P., Overland, M., & Meuwissen, A. S. (2015). Changes in Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Associated with the College Experience: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 14(1).
- Fochtman, M. M. (2011). High-achieving women. *Empowering women in higher education and student affairs: Theory, research, narratives, and practice from feminist perspectives*, 85-103.
- Fouad, N. A., & Guillen, A. (2006). Outcome expectations: Looking to the past and potential future. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 14, 130-142.
- Foubert, J. D., & Grainger, L. U. (2006). Effects of involvement in clubs and organizations on the psychosocial development of first-year and senior college students. *NASPA Journal*, 43, 166-182.

- Fox, R. L., & Lawless, J. L. (2011). Gendered perceptions and political candidacies: A central barrier to women's equality in electoral politics. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(1), 59-73.
- Freeman, T. M., Anderman, L. H., & Jensen, J. M. (2007). Sense of belonging in college freshmen at the classroom and campus levels. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 75(3), 203-220.
- Fry, R. E., Barrett, F., Seiling, J., & Whitney, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field*. San Francisco, CA: Greenwood.
- Gagliardi, J., Espinosa, L., Turk, J., & Taylor, M. (2017). *American College President Study 2017*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Gidengil, E., & Everitt, J. (2003). Conventional coverage/unconventional politicians: Gender and media coverage of Canadian leaders' debates, 1993, 1997, 2000. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, 36(3), 559-577.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Haber, P. (2006a). Cocurricular involvement, formal leadership roles, and leadership education: Experiences predicting college student socially responsible leadership outcomes. Master's thesis. University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
- Haber, P. (2011). Formal leadership program models. In S. R. Komives, J. P. Dugan, J. E. Owen, C. Slack & W. Wagner (Eds.), *The Handbook for Student Leadership Programs* (pp. 231-258). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Haber-Curran, P. (2013). The delicate balancing act: Challenges and successes facing college student women in formal leadership roles. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 6, 71-98.
- Haber-Curran, P., & Shankman, M. L. (2018). Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: An Applied Model for Developing Individuals and Advancing Organizations. In *Emotionale Intelligenz in Organisationen* (pp. 213-225). Springer VS, Wiesbaden.
- Hafner, A. L. (1989). The traditional undergraduate woman in the mid-1980s: A changing profile. In C. S. Pearson, D. L. Shavlik, & J. G. Touchton (Eds.), *Educating the majority: Women challenge tradition in higher education* (pp. 32-46). New York: ACE-Macmillan.
- Hall, R. M., & Sandler, B. R. (1984). Out of the classroom: A chilly campus climate for women?
- Handler, L. (1995). In the fraternal sisterhood: Sororities as gender strategy. *Gender & Society*, 9(2), 236-255.
- Harding, S.G. (1992). Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is "strong objectivity?". *The Centennial Review*, 36(3), 437-470.
- Harding, S. G. (1998). *Is science multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, feminisms, and epistemologies*. Indiana University Press.
- Hart, J., & Fellabaum, J. (2008). Analyzing campus climate studies: Seeking to define and understand. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(4), 222-234.
- Heilman, M. E., Wallen, A. S., Fuchs, D., & Tamkins, M. M. (2004). Penalties for success: reactions to women who succeed at male gender-typed tasks. *Journal of applied psychology*, 89(3), 416.
- Helgesen, S. (1995). *The female advantage: Woman's ways of leadership*. New York: Doubleday.

- Hellwig-Olson, B. A. (2000). *Exploring the college student body president leadership phenomenon*. University of Northern Colorado
- Hernandez, K., Hogan, S., Hathaway, C., & Lovell, C. D. (1999). Analysis of the literature on
- Hill, C., Miller, K., Benson, K., & Handley, G. (2016). Barriers and bias: The status of women in leadership. Retrieved from: <https://www.aauw.org/research/barriers-and-bias/>
- Hill, C., & Silva, E. (2005). *Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus*. American Association of University Women Educational Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/drawing-the-line-sexual-harassment-on-campus.pdf>
- Holland, D. C., Eisenhart, M. A., & Eisenhart, M. A. (1990). Educated in romance: Women, achievement, and college culture. University of Chicago Press.
- Holman, M. R., & Schneider, M. C. (2018). Gender, race, and political ambition: how intersectionality and frames influence interest in political office. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 6(2), 264-280.
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Boston, MA: Pluto Press.
- hooks, b. (2014). *Teaching to transgress*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hunter, J. D. (1992). *Culture wars: The struggle to control the family, art, education, law, and politics in America*. New York, NY: Basic Books
- Jaggar, A. M. (1983). *Feminist politics and human nature*. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jamieson, K. H. (1995). *Beyond the double bind: Women and leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Janz, T., & Pyke, S. (2000). A scale to assess student perceptions of academic climates. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 3, 89-122.

- Johnson, J. (2011, March 13). On college campuses, a gender gap in student government. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/oncollege-campuses-a-gender-gap-in-student-government/2011/03/10/ABim1Bf\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/oncollege-campuses-a-gender-gap-in-student-government/2011/03/10/ABim1Bf_story.html)
- Johnson, H. L. (2017, June). Pipelines, pathways, and institutional leadership: An update on the status of women in higher education. *Association of Colleges and Universities*. Retrieved from: <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Higher-Ed-Spotlight-Pipelines-Pathways-and-Institutional-Leadership-Status-of-Women.pdf>
- Johnson, S. K., Murphy, S. E., Zewdie, S., & Reichard, R. J. (2008). The strong, sensitive type: Effects of gender stereotypes and leadership prototypes on the evaluation of male and female leaders. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 106(1), 39-60.
- Jones, J. M., & Moore, D. W. (2003). Generational differences in support for a woman president. *Gallup Report*, 17, 235-248.
- Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2013). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kane, E. L., & Rose, S. E. (2015). *Campus Climate for Women at the University of Minnesota Duluth* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Katz, S. (2015). Qualitative-Based Methodology to Teaching Qualitative Methodology in Higher Education. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 27(3), 352-363.
- Kark, R., & Shilo-Dubnov, R. (2007). The effects of gender on proteges' perceptions of mentoring relationships in Israeli academia. *Megamot*, 44, 707 – 735.

- Kay, K., & Shipman, C. (2014). The confidence gap. *The Atlantic*, 14, 1-18. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>
- Keith, T. (4 May, 2014). Best way to get women to run for office? Ask repeatedly. NPR. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2014/05/05/309832898/best-way-to-get-women-to-run-for-office-ask-repeatedly>
- Kernie, P. W. (1992). Protecting individuals from sex discrimination: Compensatory relief under the Education Amendments of 1972. *Washington. Law. Review.*, 67, 155. Retrieved from: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix-education-amendments-1972>
- Kezar, A., & Moriarty, D. (2000). Expanding our understanding of student leadership development: A study exploring gender and ethnic identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41, 55-69.
- Kinzie, J. "Women's Paths in Science: A Critical Feminist Analysis." *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2007, 133, 81-93.
- Killermann, S. (2017). *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*. Impetus Books.
- Klenke, K. (1996). *Women and leadership: A contextual perspective*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Kodama, C. M., & Dugan, J. P. (2013). Leveraging leadership efficacy for college students: Disaggregating data to examine unique predictors by race. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(2), 184-201.
- Komives, S. R., Longerbeam, S., Owen, J. E., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2006). A leadership identity development model: Applications from a grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(4), 401-420.



- Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (2006). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Jossey-Bass.
- Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (2013). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference* (3rd ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Jossey-Bass.
- Komives, S. R., & Wagner, W. (2009). *Leadership for a better world*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Komives, S. R., Dugan, J. P., Owen, J. E., Wagner, W., & Slack, C. (2011). *The handbook for student leadership development*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kuh, G.D. (1991). *Involving Colleges: Successful Approaches to Fostering Student Learning and Development outside the Classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- Kuh, G. D. (1995). The other curriculum: Out-of-class experiences associated with student learning and personal development. *Journal of Higher Education*, 66, 123-155.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2006). What matters to student success: A review of the literature. Commissioned Report by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Kuh\\_Team\\_ExecSumm.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Kuh_Team_ExecSumm.pdf)
- Kuh, G. (1991). *Involving Colleges: Successful Approaches to Fostering Student Learning and Development outside the Classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- Kuk, L. (1990). Perspectives on gender differences. *New Directions for Student Services*, 51(1990), 25-36.
- Krivkovich, A., Robinson, K., Starikova, I., Valentino, R., & Yee, L. (2017). Women in the Workplace 2017. *McKinsey Report*.

- Kunkel, C. A. (1994). Women's Needs on Campus: How Universities Meet Them. *Initiatives*, 56(2), 15-28.
- Kurtz-Costes, B., Helmke, L. A., & Ulku-Steiner, B. (2006). Gender and doctoral studies: Perceptions of Ph.D. students in an American university. *Gender and Education*, 18(2), 137-155.
- Landry, C. C. (2002). Retention of women and people of color: Unique challenges and institutional responses. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 4(1), 1-13.
- Lapovsky, L. (2014, May). Why so few women college presidents? *Forbes*. Retrieved from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lucielapovsky/2014/04/13/why-so-few-women-college-presidents/#7e21ff5366bc>
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Lawless, J. L. (2015). Female candidates and legislators. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18, 349-366.
- Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2013). *Girls just wanna not run: The gender gap in young Americans' political ambition*. Washington, DC: Women & Politics Institute.
- Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2012). *Men rule: The continued under-representation of women in US politics*. Women & Politics Institute.
- Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2008). *Why Are Women Still Not Running for Public Office?*. Brookings Institution.

- Lee, R. M., Keough, K. A., & Sexton, J. D. (2002). Social connectedness, social appraisal, and perceived stress in college women and men. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 80(3), 355-361.
- Lennon, T. (2013). *Benchmarking women's leadership in the United States*. Colorado Women's College at the University of Denver. Retrieved from:  
<https://womenscollege.du.edu/media/documents/BenchmarkingWomensLeadershipintheUS.pdf>
- Leiblich, A. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading, analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 45(1), 79-122.
- Lincoln, S. Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Liss, M., O'Connor, C., Morosky, E., & Crawford, M. (2001). What makes a feminist? Predictors and correlates of feminist social identity in college women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25(2), 124-133.
- Margolis, J., Fisher, A. and Miller, F. "The Anatomy of Interest: Women in Undergraduate Computer Science." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 2000, 28(1/2), 104–127.
- May, W. P. (2009). *Student governance: A qualitative study of leadership in a student government association*. Georgia State University.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Sage publications.

- McCannon, M., & Bennett, P. (1996). Choosing to participate or not: A study of college students' involvement in student organizations. *College Student Journal*, 30, 312-315.
- McDonald, T. W., Toussaint, L. L., & Schweiger, J. A. (2004). The influence of social status on token women leaders' expectations about leading male-dominated groups. *Sex roles*, 50(5-6), 401-409.
- McGinley, M., Wolff, J. M., Rospenda, K. M., Liu, L., & Richman, J. A. (2016). Risk factors and outcomes of chronic sexual harassment during the transition to college: Examination of a two-part growth mixture model. *Social science research*, 60, 297-310.
- McHugh, N. (2007). *Feminist philosophies AZ*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Menasce, J., Parker, K., & Stepler, R. (2017) Wide partisan gaps in U.S. over how far the country has come on gender equality. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/10/18/wide-partisan-gaps-in-u-s-over-how-far-the-country-has-come-on-gender-equality/>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: a guide to design and interpretation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mijs, J. J. (2016). The unfulfillable promise of meritocracy: Three lessons and their implications for justice in education. *Social Justice Research*, 29(1), 14-34.
- Miller, C. D., & Kraus, M. (2004). Participating but not leading: Women's under-representation in student government leadership positions. *College Student Journal*, 38(3)p. 423-427.
- Mitchell, R. W., & Wooten, S. C. (2015). Introduction. In *The Crisis of Campus Sexual Violence* (pp. 13-24). Routledge.
- Mo, C. H. (2015). An implicit bias against women as leaders means that many are reluctant to vote for women candidates. *USApp-American Politics and Policy Blog*.

- Montgomery, J. E., Chaviano, C. L., Rayburn, A. D., & McWey, L. M. (2017). Parents at-risk and their children: Intersections of gender role attitudes and parenting practices. *Child & Family Social Work, 22*(3), 1151-1160.
- Morris, L. K., & Daniel, L. G. (2008). Perceptions of a chilly climate: Differences in traditional and non-traditional majors for women. *Research in Higher Education, 49*(3), 256-273.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 250-261.
- Myaskovsky, L., & Wittig, M. A. (1997). Predictors of feminist social identity among college women. *Sex Roles, 37*, 861–883.
- Nadal, K. L. (Ed.). (2017). *The SAGE encyclopedia of psychology and gender*. SAGE Publications.
- Nelson, A. (2017). Women and the good ole boys club. *Psychology Today, 28*.
- New, J. (2014, November 4). Getting women to run. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/11/04/female-students-still-scarce-student-government-executive-positions>
- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice (5th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice (7<sup>th</sup> edition)*. London, UK. Sage publications.
- Oakley, J. G. (2000). Gender-based barriers to senior management positions: Understanding the scarcity of female CEOs. *Journal of business ethics, 27*(4), 321-334.

- O'Leary, P., & Shames, S. (2013). Shattering the glass ceiling for women in politics. *Scholars Strategy Network*. Retrieved from <https://scholars.org/brief/shattering-glass-ceiling-women-politics>
- Orenstein, P. (2013). *Schoolgirls: Young women, self esteem, and the confidence gap*. Anchor.
- Outlook, J. (2016). The Attributes Employers Want to See on New College Graduates' Resumes. *News from NACE: National Association of Colleges and Employers*. Retrieved from [http://www. naceweb.org](http://www.nacweb.org)
- Parish, T. S., & McCluskey, J. J. (1993). Parenting styles, young adults' self-concepts, and evaluations of parents. *School Community Journal*, 3(2), 85-88.
- Parker, K & Steepler, R. (2017). Americans see men as the financial providers, even as women's contributions grow. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/20/americans-see-men-as-the-financial-providers-even-as-womens-contributions-grow/>
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research* (Vol. 2). San Fransico, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E. T., Whitt, E. J., Edison, M. I., Nora, A., Hagedorn, L. S., Yeager, P. M., & Terenzini, P. T. (1997). Women's perceptions of a "chilly climate" and their cognitive outcomes during the first year of college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38, 109-124.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative social work*, 1(3), 261-283.

- Pitre, N. Y., Kushner, K. E., Raine, K. D., & Hegadoren, K. M. (2013). Critical feminist narrative inquiry: Advancing knowledge through double-hermeneutic narrative analysis. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 36(2), 118-132.
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2006). The content validity index: are you sure you know what's being reported? Critique and recommendations. *Research in nursing & health*, 29(5), 489-497.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 52(2), 137.
- Posner, B. Z. (2009). A longitudinal study examining changes in students' leadership behavior. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50, 551-563.
- Powell, G. N., Butterfield, D. A., & Parent, J. D. (2002). Gender and managerial stereotypes: have the times changed?. *Journal of management*, 28(2), 177-193.
- Prentice, D. A., & Carranza, E. (2002). What women and men should be, shouldn't be, are allowed to be, and don't have to be: The contents of prescriptive gender stereotypes. *Psychology of women quarterly*, 26(4), 269-281.
- Ramazanoglu, C. (2012). *Feminism and the contradictions of oppression*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Rath, T., & Conchie, B. (2009). *Strengths-based leadership*. New York, NY: Gallup Press.
- Ray, J., & Kafka, S. (2014). Life in college matters for life after college. Retrieved from: [http://k12accountability.org/resources/ForParents/Life\\_in\\_College\\_Matters\\_for\\_Life\\_After\\_College.pdf](http://k12accountability.org/resources/ForParents/Life_in_College_Matters_for_Life_After_College.pdf)
- Reinhold, B. (2005). Smashing glass ceilings: Why women still find it tough to advance to the executive suite. *Journal of Organizational Excellence*, 24(3), 43-55.

- Renzetti, C. M. (1987). New Wave or second stage? Attitudes of college women toward feminism. *Sex Roles*, 16, 265–277.
- Rhimes, S. (2015). *Year of yes: How to dance it out, stand in the sun and be your own person*. Simon and Schuster.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Risman, B. J. (1982). College women and sororities: The social construction and reaffirmation of gender roles. *Urban Life*, 11(2), 231-252.
- Risman, B. J. (2004). Gender as a social structure: Theory wrestling with activism. *Gender & society*, 18(4), 429-450.
- Rogers, K. (2017, June 4). Kamala Harris Is (Again) Interrupted While Pressing a Senate Witness. *New York Times*. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/13/us/politics/kamala-harris-interrupted-jeff-sessions.html>
- Roosmalen, E. V., & McDaniel, S. A. (1999). Sexual harassment in academia: A hazard to women's health. *Women & health*, 28(2), 33-54.
- Rowan, M. A. (2002). The gender gap: Anticipating discomfort: A look at the effect of shifting gender-related enrollment on three campuses. *College Board Review*, 197, 36-43.
- Rowe, M. (2008). Micro-affirmations and micro-inequities. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, 1(1), 45-48.
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sanford, A. A., Ross, E. M. R. M., Blake, S. J., & Cambiano, R. L. (2015). Finding courage and confirmation: resisting impostor feelings through relationships with mentors, romantic partners, and other women in leadership. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, 35, 31-41.



- Sax, L. J. "The dynamics of tokenism: How college students are affected by the proportion of women in their major." *Research in Higher Education*, 1996, 37(4), 389–425.
- Sax, L. J. *The gender gap in college: Maximizing the development potential of women and men*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- Sax, L. J. "Undergraduate science majors: Gender differences in who goes to graduate school." *Review of Higher Education*, 2001, 24(2), 153–172.
- Sax, L. J., & Harper, C. E. (2007). Origins of the gender gap: Pre-college and college influences on differences between men and women. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(6), 669-694.
- Sax, L. J., Astin, A. W., Korn, W. S., & Mahoney, K. M. (1999). *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1999*. Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.
- Schnall, M. (2017, December 17). 2018 will be the year of women. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2017/12/14/opinions/2018-will-be-the-year-of-women-schnall/index.html>
- Seidman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- Shakeshaft, C. (1995). Gendered leadership styles in educational organizations. In B. Limerick & B. Lingard (Eds.), *Gender and changing organizational management* (pp. 18-45). Rydalmere, Australia: Hodder.
- Shanmugam, M., Amaratunga, R. D. G., & Haigh, R. P. (2007). Leadership styles: Gender similarities, differences and perceptions. In *7th International Postgraduate Research*

*Conference in the Built and Human Environment*, 28th - 29th March 2007, Salford Quays, UK.

- Shertzer, J., Wall, V., Frandsen, A., Guo, Y., Whalen, D. F., & Shelley, M. C. (2005). Four Dimensions of Student Leadership: What Predicts Students' Attitudes toward Leadership Development?. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 25(1), 85-108.
- Shertzer, J., Saunders, K. P., Zheng, J., Shelley, M., & Whalen, D. (2003). Influences on residence hall undergraduates' perceptions of student leadership. *Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 31(2), 12-21.
- Simon, B., Loewy, M., Sturmer, S., Weber, U., Freytag, P., Habig, C., Kampmeier, C., & Spahlinger, P. (1998). Collective identification and social movement participation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 646–658
- Showalter, A. (5 February, 2015). Madam president: role model in chief. Medium. Retrieved from: <https://medium.com/thelist/madam-president-role-model-in-chief-45bac4ac6147>
- Slicker, E. K., Picklesimer, B. K., Guzak, A. K., & Fuller, D. K. (2005). The relationship of parenting style to older adolescent life-skills development in the United States. *Young*, 13(3), 227-245.
- Smart, J. C., Ethington, C. A., Riggs, R. O., & Thompson, M. D. (2002). Influences of institutional expenditure patterns on the development of students' leadership competencies. *Research in higher education*, 43(1), 115-132.
- Soet, J., & Sevig, T. (2006). Mental health issues facing a diverse sample of college students: Results from the College Student Mental Health Survey. *NASPA journal*, 43(3), 410-431.
- Soklaridis, S., & López, J. (2014). Women for a change: closing the leadership gap. *Academic Psychiatry*, 38(6), 731-746.

- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 21(3) 60-73.
- Sosik, J. J., & Godshalk, V. M. (2005). Examining gender similarity and mentor's supervisory status in mentoring relationships. *Mentoring and Tutoring*, 13(1), 39 – 52.
- Spencer, M. (September 25, 2017) "Hepeating" is the new word you need to know about since you've probably experienced it. Evening Standard. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/london-life/hepeating-is-the-new-word-you-need-to-know-about-a3642991.html>
- Spencer, G. L. (2003). A qualitative analysis of female student body presidents.(Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from: <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=8873791>
- Spencer-Rodgers, J., Major, B., Forster, D. E., & Peng, K. (2016). The power of affirming group values: Group affirmation buffers the self-esteem of women exposed to blatant sexism. *Self and Identity*, 15(4), 413-431.
- Smith, J. S., Brescoll, V. L., & Thomas, E. L. (2016). Constrained by emotion: Women, leadership, and expressing emotion in the workplace. In *Handbook on well-being of working women* (pp. 209-224). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Staats, C., Capatosto, K., Tenney, L., & Mamo, S. (2017). State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2017 edition. *The Ohio State University, Kirwan Institute*.
- Stevens, R. (2011). Presidential committee makes recommendations to strengthen student leadership. *News at Princeton*. Retrieved from: <http://wayback.archive-it.org/5151/20171216222943/http://www.princeton.edu/reports/2011/leadership/documents/SummaryFindingsRecommendations.pdf>

- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Swenson, L. M., Nordstrom, A., & Hiester, M. (2008). The role of peer relationships in adjustment to college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(6), 551-567.
- These are the women leading Fortune 500 companies. (2017). *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2017/06/07/fortune-500-women-ceos/>
- Tong, R. (2013). *Feminist thought: A comprehensive introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Degree granting institutions and branches, by type and control of institution and state or jurisdiction: 2013-2014* [Data file]. Retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics website: [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10\\_276.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_276.asp)
- U.S. Department of Education. (2017). *Undergraduate enrollment update: 2016-2017* [Data file]. Retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics website: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cha.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cha.asp)
- Vaccaro, A. (2010). What lies beneath seemingly positive campus climate results: Institutional sexism, racism, and male hostility toward equity initiatives and liberal bias. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 43(2), 202-215.
- Wagner, W. E. (2016). *Leadership for a better world: Understanding the social change model of leadership development*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Warner, J. & Corley, D. (2014). The women's leadership gap: Women's leadership by the numbers. *Center for American Progress*, 1-7. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2017/05/21/432758/womens-leadership-gap/#fn-432758-33>

- Wechsler, H. S. (2017). *The qualified student: A history of selective college admission in America*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wielkiewicz, R. M. (2000). The leadership attitudes and beliefs scale: An instrument for evaluating college students' thinking about leadership and organizations. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 41, 335-347.
- Wendell, S. (1987). A (qualified) defense of liberal feminism. *Hypatia*, 2(2), 65-93.
- Wilson, M. C. (2006). *Closing the leadership gap: Why women can and must help run the world*. Chicago, IL: Penguin Group USA.
- Wielkiewicz, R. M. (2000). The Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale: An instrument for evaluating college students' thinking about leadership and organizations. *Journal of college student development*.
- Wielkiewicz, R. M., Fischer, D. V., Stelzner, S. P., Overland, M., & Sinner, A. M. (2012). Leadership attitudes and beliefs of incoming first-year college students: A multi-institutional study of gender differences. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 11(2), 1-25.
- Winston, R. B., Miller, T. K., & Prince, J. S. (1987). *Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory [SDTLI], Form W-87*. Student Development Associates.
- Whitt, E. J., Edison, M. I., Pascarella, E. T., Nora, A., & Terenzini, P. T. (1999). Women's perceptions of a "chilly climate" and cognitive outcomes in college: Additional evidence. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(2), 163-177.
- Wolbrecht, C., & Campbell, D. E. (2007). Leading by example: Female members of parliament as political role models. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(4), 921-939.

- Wolff, J. M., Rospenda, K. M., & Colaneri, A. S. (2017). Sexual harassment, psychological distress, and problematic drinking behavior among college students: an examination of reciprocal causal relations. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 54(3), 362-373.
- Yeagley, E. E., Subich, L. M., & Tokar, D. M. (2010). Modeling college women's perceptions of elite leadership positions with social cognitive career theory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77(1), 30-38.
- Zimmerman-Oster, K., & Burkhardt, J. C. (1999). Leadership in the making: A comprehensive examination of the impact of leadership development programs on students. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 6(3-4), 50-66.