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# A Qualitative Study Of Women In Student Government At A Midsize Comprehensive University

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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A Qualitative Study of Women in Student Government at

a Midsize Comprehensive University

(TITLE)

BY

Mary A. Ham

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs


IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS


May 2010

YEAR

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## ABSTRACT

The present qualitative case study examined women's participation in student government at a mid-size comprehensive university of 12,000 students, with a focus on either their leadership experiences in student government or lack thereof. A review of literature revealed that for women to succeed in male driven atmospheres a female role model was necessary to help combat both negative perceptions of female leader stereotypes and perceptions that men traditionally hold leadership roles.

Seven female students who are either currently serving or had recently served on student government were interviewed for the study. Students were interviewed about their participation and perceptions about student government both as leaders and senators, their perception of their male peers, and why their female peers did not participate as either senators or leaders within student government.

Findings indicated that while the idea of men traditionally serving in leadership roles still survives, there is a possibility of change. The men may still currently participate more visibly, but in the current student government it is not because women feel at a disadvantage. Having a sitting female Student Body President serves as a female role model, which could improve the chance of greater female participation.

DEDICATION

To the person closest with me in the world

(Especially on the DNA level)

My Twin, Erin Ham

&

My greatest source of support

(Both emotionally and monetarily)

My Parents, Bruce and Brenda Ham

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The creation of this thesis has been a long process that is thankfully coming to an end. After great reflection, I have come to the following conclusions of who needs to be thanked.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In Higher Education, it is well known that women are attending college in greater numbers, with their percentage reaching 57% for total undergraduate enrollment (Schmidt, 2008). Eastern Illinois University has been right on target with the national average with enrollment of women at 58.4% in 2008 and 58.8% in 2009 (Planning and Institutional Studies Eastern Illinois University, 2009). As women have become a larger proportion of enrolled students, one would believe that they would also begin to take on more campus leadership roles, such as through student government.

Student government is an organization that is made up of students who are meant to represent and serve the student body. At Eastern Illinois University the mission of student government is to “protect the rights and interests of the students” (The Student Government of Eastern Illinois University: Our Mission). One would think that an organization meant to represent the views of a student body would have similar composition to the group they represent. This has not proven to be the case in the elected leadership positions of student government, where women have been found to be under-represented (Miller & Kraus, 2004).

It has been thought that perhaps women’s lack of representation is linked to their overall lack of participation in politics. Women are still unequally represented in politics nationally, and women may find this to be discouraging when running for leadership positions in the political world of student government. Perhaps women

find the world of student government does not match their communication styles or perceptions.

The under representation of women in student government is also reflected in data at Eastern Illinois University (Tables 1 & 2). Baxter Magolda's theory of knowing and reasoning suggests that women are more likely to enjoy "peer interaction to hear and share ideas" while men have "a preference for debate" (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 155). Student Government may be seen as an arena where debate and conflict are often a part of the deliberative process, which women may find distasteful. Alternatively, it may not be that women are not choosing to participate in student government, but that their differing leadership and communication styles, perceived and real, are a hurdle in getting elected. Research focused on gender differences in student leadership is limited (Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008). This limitation extends to women's participation in student government and warrants a need for further study.

Table 1

*2003-2009 Spring Election Candidates by Gender at Eastern Illinois University*

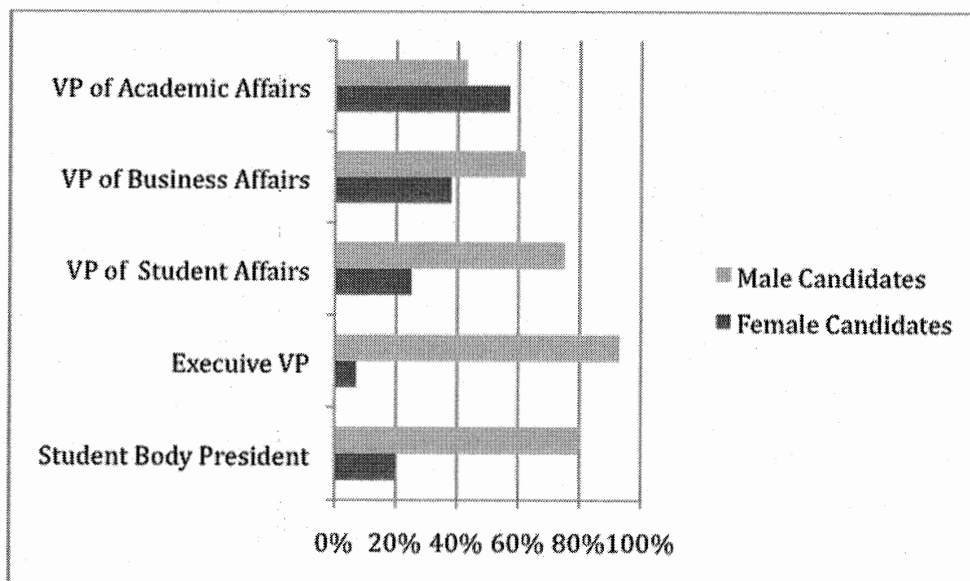
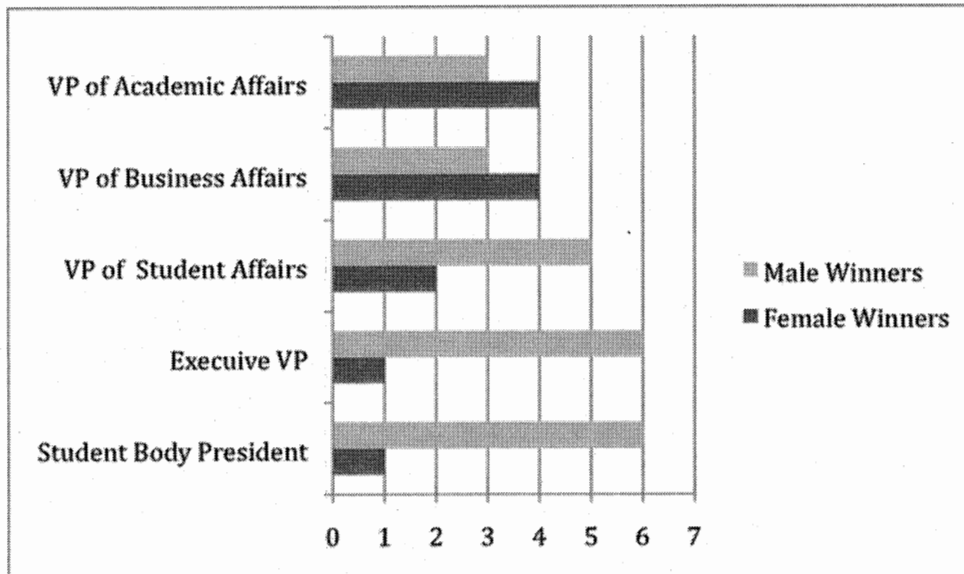


Table 2

*2003-2009 Spring Election Winners by Gender at Eastern Illinois University**Purpose of the Study*

While there has been growth in the development of leadership programs at institutions of higher education nationwide; there is still relatively little research that exists on characteristics of student leaders (Dugan, Komives & Segar, 2008). Gender differences among student leaders have not received sufficient attention, particularly the involvement of women in student government.

The focus of this qualitative study will be the participation of women in student government, focusing on their leadership experiences or lack thereof. Gaining more knowledge about women who have had leadership experience within the top levels of student government and those that have simply served as a senator will broaden knowledge about women's experiences in an organization that is still perceived as being more male driven.

### *Research Questions*

The study was designed to learn more about women's participation in student government, both as leaders and senators. The research with the senators explored their thoughts about their own leadership aspirations, other female-peers' student government aspirations, and the male student-government members' participation in the organization. Research that involved women that hold or have held executive board or committee chair positions explored how they viewed their roles/interactions in the male dominated organization. Student government leaders' research took an in-depth look at the participant's own leadership styles, how they feel perceived by their student-government peers, and the male student-government members' participation in the organization.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following two terms are defined to aid the reader of the present study to understand the discussion of leaders and senators.

1. Student Government Leader or Student Government Leadership Position refers to a student that is holding a student-body wide elected position, a Senate-elected position, or a Senate-Speaker appointed committee-chair position.
2. Senator or Student Senator refers to a student that is currently holding or has held a senator position for at least one semester prior to the study and is not currently holding a Student Government Leadership Position.

### *Design of the Study*

A total of seven students participated in the qualitative study, three Senators and four Student Government Leaders, in the spring of 2010. Participants ranged from current Student Government members to recently past participants. Each interview lasted up to one half hour.

The interviews were “in-depth,” open-ended interviews (Patton, 1990, p. 289) and included up to eleven predetermined questions dependant on the group of which the participant was a part. The interviews focused on participant experiences as members of student government and sought to determine if there were any perceived gender differences recognized by the participants. The open-ended nature of the interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions where appropriate.

### *Limitations of the Study*

This study was limited due to the fact that it was an in-depth study of women in one student organization at one university. It would be difficult to generalize the results to all female student leaders or even other women in student government at other institutions. This is due to the fact that not all student governments are organized in the same manner, and that female student government leaders may not be reflective of other women in student leadership positions.

### *Summary*

This study’s focus was to gain more knowledge in the area of women student government senators and leaders, which has not received much attention in



research. Through a qualitative study of women senators and student government leaders, the researcher hoped to gain a holistic perspective on their perceptions and participation in student government. Chapter II will be a literature review regarding women's leadership as viewed through the differing lenses of gender, student leaders, and student government leaders. A focus on women in government is also included in the review. Chapter III will describe the methodology used, Chapter IV includes an analysis of data through presentation of themes, and Chapter V will conclude the study with conclusions and recommendations

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### *Women's Leadership as viewed by the Genders*

Pondering the role of women as leaders in student government includes examining the ways in which women and men view women's leadership potential. Lips (2000) found that even when female college students were asked to just imagine holding powerful leadership positions they were less likely than their male counterparts to believe that would be possible for them. The women in the study were particularly adverse to political leadership positions, as many of them perceived being a prominent leader would cause relationship issues.

Women trying to envision powerful possible selves, then, may feel caught in a double bind: if they try to imagine themselves in certain powerful roles, they cannot escape the uncomfortable feeling that they would be either violating expectations for themselves as women (if they behave in strongly powerful ways) or that they would be unable to live up to the requirements of the powerful role (if they behave in stereotypically feminine ways) (Lips, 2007, p. 55-56).

Other researchers have found that women at conflict with holding a powerful, typically-male role perhaps feel more encouraged when they are given a "female leader model" after whom to fashion themselves (Carbonell & Castro, 2008, p. 781). Carbonnell and Castro "sought to examine how the gender of this leader model might influence the high dominant women's decisions to take on the role of leader" (p, 776). This was examined when

undergraduate women with prerequisite characteristics to be effective leaders (as defined by high scores on the California Psychological Inventory's [CPI; Gough 1957] Dominance Scale) were paired with a man or woman who scored at least two standard deviations lower than them on the Dominance scale. ... The task was demonstrated for each pair with either a male or female confederate in the leader role. (p. 776)

Carbonell and Castro found that their high dominant women were more likely to surface as leaders when in "the presence of a female leader model" at 60%, while only 20% appeared as the leader under "the presence of a male leader-model" (p. 781). These researchers believed a way to mediate the "double bind" that Lips described was "by presenting successful examples of women in leadership roles" (p. 781). This need for women to have successful female role models was found to be significant in two studies by Lockwood (2006). In the first study Lockwood "explored the extent to which gender matching is important in determining the impact of role models on self-perceptions" (p. 38). Lockwood compared female participants that were matched with same-gender role models as well as those participants that were given opposite-gender role models. The same was also done for male participants though the gender of the role model was not found to impact greatly whether or not they identified with a role model or their own self-perception. The females though benefited and were better able to self-identify when given a same-gender role model. Females also "viewed themselves as more successful" when they were given a female role model (p. 40). In the second part of the study Lockwood "examined the role models that individuals choose in their day-

to-day lives" (2006, p. 41). "In Study 2, women were more likely to nominate female than male role models, and women who chose a same-gender role model were most likely to report that gender influenced their role model choice" (p. 43-44). Both studies showed the importance for women to have same-gender role models, even though that is not as important for men. The need for women to have female role models may be especially essential in areas where "by demonstrating their competence in traditional male occupations, highly successful women may undermine traditional gender stereotypes about women, thus reducing the damaging potential of stereotype threat effects" (p. 44). Even as women are able to be viewed as leaders, it is important to notice how their leadership role is perceived by others as well as themselves.

Jackson, Engstrom, and Emmers-Sommer (2007) tested the theory of "think-male, think leader" by having " participants viewing a mixed-sex group with a man and women at each end of the table" select a leader in an effort to see if they would "favor one gender over the other" (p. 714). While they found that more often than not participants favored leaders of their same gender, the reason behind their selections still told a story of inequality. Through the comments of both female and male participants that selected men " it appears that the think leader, think male heuristic influenced in some manner the decisions" they made (p. 720). While many of the comments made by women who selected women as leaders seemed to recognize "women's minority status as leaders and the expression of in-group support, and... even bias" towards women (p. 721). Even though the results showed that the student participants were willing to see women as leaders, their reasons for

selecting them proved they were not commonly seen as a leader. Men and women who selected male leaders were able to assert that their selection was based on the normalcy of selecting a male leader. Taken together these results show the idea of male dominant leadership is still seen as the norm.

#### *Women's Leadership as viewed by Student Leaders*

While the previous research used college students as their participants, none of the researchers specifically included student leaders as the focus of their work. It is important to go further and examine how student leaders themselves view leadership differences based on gender. Romano's (1996) qualitative study of women student leaders gathered data on 15 women from three large institutions, thus adding to the trustworthiness of the findings. Among the results it was found that women student leaders shared the commonality of having "the influence of strong women in their lives" (p. 678). Having strong female role models is consistent with the findings of other leadership research (Lockwood, 2006). The women student leaders' leadership styles were also found to support other relevant research that suggest women have a focus on relationships (Lips 2000, 2007).

Romano(1996) found that the women

emphasized their relationship with organizational members. Words that women used to describe their practices were nonhierarchical, interactive, accessible, one-to-one, equality, and team-member. Bringing issues to the members of the group for decision making was a common theme as respondents described their leadership practices (p.679).

The focus on relationships and collaboration found in these women student leaders was also reflected by Offermann and Beil (1992). Their study compared the results of female student leaders “attending a national conference” against scores of males and females from “two universities, one eastern private university and one western public university” on the Achieving Styles Inventory, the Power Apprehension Scale and the Texas Social Behavior Inventory (p. 42-43). After analyzing the results they found that men

          were significantly more oriented toward enjoying power and authority than were women and derived intense satisfaction from competing against others and winning... Women in campus leadership roles were as likely to dislike the competitive aspects of achievement as were other women and were as likely to reject using social relationships as vehicles for advancement (p. 50).

This rejection of the “competitive aspects of achievement” (Offerman & Beil, 1992, p. 50) is reflected in the collaborative nature that the women from Romano’s (1996) study described. Women were also shown to favor collaboration over men by Dugan, Komives, & Segar (2008) where they collected data from 52 schools using the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership that is mainly comprised of “an adapted version of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale” (p. 482). The instrument is designed to assess leadership across eight values “Consciousness of self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common purpose, Controversy with civility, Citizenship, and Change” (p. 484). After completing a multivariate analysis of variance with “gender as the independent variable” they found “women reporting higher scores than their male peers on all scales except Change” (p. 486). Their

higher scores were definitely in line with the previous discussed research that suggested that women are more collaborative and care about relationships in their leadership styles (Lips, 2000; Offerman & Beil, 1992; Romano, 1996).

#### *Women's Leadership as viewed by Student Government Leaders*

While not as much is known on gender differences between student leaders even less research has been done on leadership within Student Governments. The one study by Miller and Kraus (2004) "explored whether women were equally represented in leadership roles in college student governance at 21 Midwestern comprehensive universities" (¶ 1). Overall Miller and Kraus (2004) found that "while women were elected as representative to student government, they were under-represented in presidential or vice presidential positions." (¶ 1). They found two possible explanations to explain why women were lacking in leadership positions in student government.

One explanation offered was that women did not run for leadership positions because they did not have female mentors that served as role models of leadership or that encouraged them to run. This hypothesis was tangentially supported by the fact that having a female faculty advisor was correlated with a higher likelihood of having a current female vice president (¶ 14). Miller and Kraus (2004) also felt that "incumbency helped women (or men) get elected" due to "the fact that having a higher number of females elected to the vice president position increased the likelihood of having a current female president" (¶ 15). While Kraus and Miller once again found support for the need of female role

models for young women (Lockwood, 2006), the limitations of their survey could not fully answer why women are lacking in student government leadership roles.

### *Women in Government*

When looking at the leadership difference in women in Student Government it is important to study their real world representatives. Weikart, Chan, Williams, & Hromic (2006) conducted a survey to examine the gender difference between male and female mayors. Much of their findings were in keeping with the collaborative female leaders from Romano (1993), such as in the area of budgets, where “Women wanted to become more inclusive and broaden the participation of citizens in the budget process” (Weikart, et al, 2006, p.129). Women’s inclusive nature was also found by Rosenthal (1997) in a study on the leadership style of men and women state legislative committee chairs. The survey focused on “Two aspects of leadership style... : personal motivations as committee chair, and the frequency with which a chair uses inclusive behaviors in committee management” (¶ 30). In the study Rosenthal (1997) found that “59.3% of all women scored at or above the mean on the scale of inclusive behaviors, compared with only 48.3% of the men”(¶ 36). This more inclusive nature was complimented since “results show that women chairs on average are significantly more motivated by people and policy goals even when controlling for differences in background, sex composition of the legislature, and type of legislature”(¶ 44). This difference in leadership style perhaps explains why some women still find barriers to their participation in government.

Weikart et al. (2006) found that 65% of the women they studied “faced particular gender-based obstacles as mayor” (p.131). Many of them “identified not



being taken seriously, reported that men had no respect for them, and that they lacked credibility with men... Women also worried about being seen as too aggressive” (Weikart, et al, 2006, p.132). Perhaps these feelings of lack of equality can be contributed to the fact that political roles are still being viewed as more male. Elder (2004) sought to “better understand why women are less likely to decide to run for political office,” through the distribution of a survey across “four different age cohorts in a central New York county” (p.32). Interestingly Elder found that college women in the survey almost unanimously rejected traditional stereotypes about women in politics, yet statistically significant gender gaps between high school and college women and men concerning political interest, ambition, and confidence strongly suggest that political gender role socialization of some type is still occurring during the adolescent years (p.45).

Even while the young women rejected the traditional gender stereotype, it seems that they were subconsciously accepting it through their lack of political confidence. It is telling that “college and high school women were significantly less likely than their male counterparts to think that they would win if they put together a good campaign” (Elder, 2004, p.40). Even while their opinions do not necessarily match their actions, the “importance of having visible female politicians to serve as role models” was made evident in the study (p.43). Whereas “about half of the women singled out a women politician”, none of the “college or junior high school males” named a women politician as one “they admired” (p.43). “This distinctive gendered result adds further evidence that female role models have a unique and positive

impact on women's political interest, knowledge and engagement" (p.44). This finding was in keeping with other research that supports the importance of strong female role models as done by Carbonell and Castro (2008), Lockwood (2006) and Miller and Kraus (2004) for young women.

### Summary

While much is not known about the gender differences in student government leaders, there is still a gender gap (Kraus & Miller, 2004). Perhaps this gender gap is due to the fact that while women believe that being a leader is a role more accepted by society, they still feel less confidence in their own political aspirations (Elder, 2004). One might also take into consideration that women have until the last political election seen few females that they could consider as role models. The need for them to have same gender role models has been found to be significant in multiple studies (Carbonell & Castron, 2008; Lockwood, 2006; Miller&Kraus, 2004; Elder, 2004). Perhaps it is women's own different approach to leadership that keeps them from being elected. Their more relationship based and open communication approach as found in several studies (Weikart et, 2006; Romano, 1996; Rosenthal, 1997; Lips, 2000&2007) is in line with the characterization of interpersonal knowing as described by Baxter Magolda (Evans, Forney,& Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 154-155).

Interpersonal knowing, used by more women, is characterized by an involvement in learning that includes gathering ideas from others, peer interaction to hear and share ideas, a valuing of rapport with instructors to facilitate self-expression, a preference for evaluation geared to individual

differences, and an approach to resolving uncertainty that employs personal judgment (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 155).

Still further knowledge is needed to understand why so few women are visible in leadership roles in today's student government.

Chapter III will describe the methodology used in completion of the present study. Chapter IV includes an analysis of data through presentation of themes that were found using the methodology of Chapter III. Lastly, Chapter V will pull it all together with a summary of findings, a comparison to the literature review, a look at recommendations for future research, and the final conclusions.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

#### *Qualitative Research Methodology*

The qualitative research method was determined to be the most appropriate form for gathering data, as it allowed the participants the greatest freedom in their answers (Patton, 1990). This freedom led to more detailed and content-rich answers than would have been available in other research methods. The selected interview format provided both stability and the ability to adapt to differing participant's responses.

#### *Sample*

The study's participants were all involved with student government at a Midwestern comprehensive university of about 12,000 students. The seven participants were made up of two groups: three women that have served as senators for at least one term and four women that served on the executive board or held committee chair positions (Table 3). They were selected using the methods of criterion and snowball sampling (Patton, 1990, p.182-183). The researcher worked with the office of Student Life to identify present and past student government members that met the criteria to participate in either one of the interview groups. The researcher was then able to follow up with the participants to find other student government members that fit the criteria

Table 3

*Participants*

<b>Name (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Student Government Position</b>
Elizabeth	Student Government Leader
Katherine	Student Government Leader
Erin	Student Government Leader
Kierstin	Student Government Leader
Annie	Student Government Senator
Emily	Student Government Senator
Sophia	Student Government Senator

*Data Collection*

Data collection came from in-depth, open-ended interviews with each participant. The pre-determined questions limited the researcher's influence over the interviews and assure that each participant was treated similarly (Patton, 1990, p.289). Two sets of pre-determined questions (Appendix A) were used in recognition of the different roles that senators and student leaders hold. While there was over-lap between question sets, the appropriate questions were asked of the participant depending on the role they hold or have held in Student Government. The researcher worked to insure that all interviews occurred in private places, where students felt comfortable answering the questions. To insure the quality of the data the researcher audio recorded each interview along with taking notes during the interview. An informed consent document (Appendix B), approved by the

university's Institutional Review Board, was presented to each research participant prior to the interview. The consent form explained the purpose of the research, and indicated that they may withdraw from the interview at any time.

### *Data Analysis*

After the completion of each interview data were transcribed from the digital tape recording. Transcripts of recordings were forwarded to participants for member checking purposes prior to formal data analysis. Final transcriptions were analyzed using the constant comparison method "in which the research is continually searching for both supporting and contrary evidence about the meaning of the category" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 377). Codes were identified first within individual transcripts, then across transcripts. Codes were grouped into categories, and finally, four themes were identified from careful analysis of the verbal data.

### Summary

Chapter III has outlined the methodology used in this qualitative study of seven female student government members found using both criterion and snowball sampling (Patton, 1990, p.182-183). In-depth, open-ended interviews were performed with each participant, and were followed by transcription and member-checking of transcriptions before cross-comparative analysis. Chapter IV includes an analysis of data through presentation of themes that were found using the methodology of Chapter III. Finally, Chapter V will include a summary of findings, a comparison to the literature from Chapter II, a look at recommendations for future research, and the final conclusion.

## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

This chapter is built around the themes and ideas found in the interviews completed for this study. A selected sample of seven student government members at a Midwestern comprehensive university of about 12,000 students were interviewed using the in-depth, open-ended interview method (Patton, 1990, p.289). Three of the participants had been senators for at least one previous semester, and four of the participants held either appointed or elected leadership positions within student government. The senators were interviewed about their participation in student government, their perceptions about their male peers, and why other females were not members or leaders in student government. The student government leaders were interviewed about their participation and leadership within student government, their perceptions about their male peers, and why other females were not members or leaders in student government. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed into word documents, and returned to participants for member checking. The four major themes discussed below were developed based upon the research questions and a cross-comparative analysis of the qualitative data. The four themes were (1) men lead to men, (2) greater male participation, (3) relationships, and (4) women's double-bind.

#### *Men lead to Men*

All seven respondents acknowledged a tradition of male leaders in government, especially nation-wide, could be one of the reasons that women are not as involved in student government leadership or senate roles when compared to

their male peers. As Sophia, a senator, said, " I think it's something that's typically viewed as a male occupation [student government]... I mean, obviously guys have always had... err... males have always had a bigger part in government." Or as Emily, another senator, put it "...traditionally like women have always... aren't as interested in politics... I think it's something that's typically viewed as a male occupation."

If a tradition of men in government leads to more male participants, then three participants agreed it could lead to more male executive board members. As Elizabeth, a student government leader, explained,

I mean, maybe it comes out to a lot of our exec. board is - we're senators beforehand - so I just keep going back to if they're more males on student government to start with then there's going to be more males who like, keep going up the ladder.

Even when men pick an all-male executive board Erin felt that it was due to strategy, not conscious discrimination against females. Perhaps, Annie had it right.

I don't know if the guys just, you know, a lot the time it's just who you know when you're getting a party going.... And if there's already guys there to begin with they're gonna ask their guy friends. They're not probably going to branch out...

In Annie's statement picking only men is not males being discriminatory, but is a result of people asking their friends to run with them. The student government election system at the university revolved around students getting together to form parties. These parties were then associated with both executive board candidates



and senators that competed against one another for seats. Few people run for executive board positions without being a member of a party, though it is not as uncommon among the less-competitive senate seats. As people build their parties they ask friends or acquaintances to run with them on their party; this was certainly true for four of the participants. As Sophia, who was asked to run for senate by a student body president candidate, pointed out

It's kind of hard unless, you like, know people already and a lot of people on student government already knew each other from outside. And being part, like if you don't know anyone it's kind of like with anything you have to have your foot in the door, kind of, already. That was probably the hardest thing....

Two of the students, Elizabeth and Katherine, felt they joined senate based upon their own initiative, though they learned about student government from their friends. All six demonstrated how knowing someone who is or plans to be a participant, plays a role in making the decision to run.

Leadership positions, especially executive roles, are not just a matter of if a senator would like to run for a position, but more of a question of time. Has the senator spent enough time on senate to run for a seat or do they even feel they have the time to participate. Kierstin, a student government leader, hypothesized that perhaps women did not join student government early enough to spend enough time on senate. As she stated, "I don't know if women are getting involved later in their college career and by the time they have a year on senate it's already, you know, they're getting ready to graduate." This thought seemed confirmed by Annie, a senator, who said, "I was only here for three years, so by the time I got involved

enough it was too late [to run for an executive position]." Sophia, a senator who is very involved outside of student government felt that women have other commitments, as she stated.

...you know girls, like, they are involved in other things, like sororities and, you know, athletics and they have like, they have more other things that they're involved in, rather than just student government. And that may be why they don't run for exec. positions.

Even as the participants discussed why women did not join senate or hold leadership positions within student government, one of the more hopeful senators spoke about how that's changing. Sophia, a very positive senator, felt that

...they haven't seen that, maybe with [names female president], you know, being student body president they'll [women] see and go "oh it's okay" and more and more people will start to kind of get on board....check back in a couple years and I think it will definitely be equal as far as women and like men on student government....

Even though others did not express the same sentiments as Sophia's statement, they did give evidence that supports the idea. Katherine, an executive board officer, even said "I don't wanna toot my own horn, but a lot of the women senators that sit around the table are there because I'd, I'd found them and asked them to run." Of course, having more women senators increases the chances that they are starting young, which could lead to a new cycle. This new cycle was demonstrated best by Elizabeth, a committee chair who wanted to run for an executive position, when she talked about joining as a freshman and how being a senator lead to getting more

involved as a committee chair. Elizabeth demonstrated that holding a senate seat, and thus having previous experience, can lead to larger participation roles for women. Perhaps Sophia will be right and in the future it will no longer be just men lead to men, but women and men lead to women and men.

### *Greater Male Participation*

Arguably, the two largest parts of student government are legislation and senate meetings, and all the participants agreed that men participate more in both of areas. Some of the participants agreed completely that there was a difference in female and male participation in senate. Such as Elizabeth who answered, "I would say that males participate more.", when asked if the genders participate equally during senate meetings. Other participants only came to the conclusion when they were asked to think about who came to mind when they thought of the most vocal members of senate meetings. As Katherine put it "...I think every year there are probably three to five voices that you're gonna hear that almost turn into drones because they talk so much, umm, and they're typically men." Men were also seen being more aggressive by some of the participants, Sophia and Erin both talked about how men were at times given warnings by the speaker of the senate. Even though the participants agreed that men were the most verbose, they did not all agree that it was a positive trait. Such as Emily, who said, "I mean they [the males] carry on and that's how our meetings get to be hours and hours and hours." If the men were seen as some of the more talkative, most of the interviewees felt that women speak-up less often, but speak pointedly. Erin, who had spent a number of years on student government said

I hate stereotyping but when you look back at your whole experience the females, uh, tended to, to speak when they had something to say and they didn't get on the speaker's list repetitively, it was typically to make a point.

The participants had two ideas why women speak-up less frequently. Katherine felt like

the women who talk, over talks, stop getting listened to, umm, they know it. I know it. Everybody in there knows it. It's the same with both men and women, but when it happens, in my opinion, it happens faster with women.

While the other interviewees did not mention Katherine's opinion, several of them did mention not speaking up unless they felt something was missing. As Annie put it,

I know the girls that I sit by in meetings like we don't put our names on the speaker's list because people just keep saying the same thing. And we don't want to just keep saying the same point over and over again. We want to get in and get out....

This was not the feelings of all the females, as Katherine pointed out.

When I was on senate, I had no restriction, and I had nothing keeping me from debating and fighting and making a scene... I think we've got two or three women in particular, umm, that have absolutely nothing keeping them from debating, and I think it's great. The debate is where the heat is in the senate.

Among the participants Katherine seemed to be a bit of the exception to the rule, but she was not the expectation on her opinion of equality. Katherine, Elizabeth, Erin, and Sophia all expressed at one point that meeting participation had

to be close to equal. Even if they agreed the most vocal members of the senate tended to be male, they felt as Sophia did when she stated, "I think it's pretty much equal the guys, there's a few guys that talk, talk a little bit more." These views were expressed by women who held leadership roles either in student government or previously in other organizations. While all the participants said they felt respected by their male peers, these felt that participation was equal. Perhaps this is because of how they view themselves as strong women, equal in stature to men. Katherine, Elizabeth, Sophia, Annie, all at some point suggested that any inequality in male to female participation was directly linked back to their being more males to start with on senate. As Annie stated "Well, here the guys talk a lot more than the girls do, umm, and actually like do things, but that's probably cause there's more of them." Her theory could be applied to legislation as well, where five of the participants agreed that men tend to write more pieces of legislation than women. Even Katherine agreed with this statement as she said, "That's probably fair to say [men write more legislation than women], I think that men do that. I don't know why, I guess I never really thought about it." From the interviews three possible causes for men writing more legislation were offered, (1) women write less, (2) women help without credit, and/or (3) men tend to hold more power. Elizabeth was a perfect example of women writing less when she stated the following.

I've only written one resolution my time on senate. Which is kind of, that's kind of sad because I've been on like a year and half now, umm, but that's just the way it worked out. I think I've had a few signatures on some other things, but actually writing, one. I've only written one.

While Elizabeth just did not write much, Kierstin explained that

girls are kind of staying in the background and doing the busy work, and getting the fine details together and not so much the big picture... like sometimes, most of the time I'm asked to edit. Like anything that I sit down I write, my name goes on, but if I'm editing or just adding one or two things my name's not usually on it.

The final cause is closely related to the idea that there are just more men, as when Annie stated,

I think that the people that are typically writing all the bills are the ones that hold like more power, like the speakers a male currently, so he writes, he get's his name on a lot of bills and authors them.

Still, even if "men tend to, to dominate" as Erin stated, there can still be exceptions to the rule. Such as Erin who said "I'm tooting my own horn, but I was one of the few that I can remember that ever really led the charge, so umm, I wrote a lot of legislation, especially being AB [Apportionment Board] chair with VPBA [Vice President Business Affairs]. I think I hit the record of like sixty-seven pieces of legislation. Even though there was at times a disparage among the writers of the legislation, all the participants asked agreed they felt their legislation was as likely to pass through voting as the males.

While the participants agreed that men could be more participatory in student government, they felt a certain sense of equality and respect by their male peers. While women as a whole may seem to take a more supportive role, there are always those that refuse to conform.

### *Relationships*

The thought that women placed value on relationships is not uncommon and is the clear link between both the selection of role models and their described leadership styles. Of the six participants that said they had a role model, four named a parent or family member. Three of them mentioned a female family member, such as Elizabeth who described her “really cool aunt.”

I have a really cool aunt that I always look up to....she’s just a really, really strong person and really strong woman, and is very much this is my own life and I don’t need, you know, any extra support. I can support myself. I can be happy by myself, and umm, I think her difficult situation really, really showed everyone just how strong person she is, and I really admire that.

Erin was the only one to favor her dad more, when asked who was a role model for her position.

Female or male, my parents have always been so good and they’ve always been so supportive of me because they, my dad had to strive really hard into a leadership position at his work, and uhh, and he kind of had the Cinderella story, and I guess my parents would be the role models.

The two other participants who named role models both selected people that have held a larger role in state government. Katherine selected Jim Edgar, a former Governor of Illinois who was EIU Student Body President as an undergraduate, because he had joined student government in order to make a romantic gesture to his future wife. Annie name Sarah Palin, because she “could run for a small office like she [Sarah Palin] would”.

The women who selected family members as role models also showed the importance they placed on relationships when talking about their meeting styles. The main themes that developed when reviewing the participants' discussion of their preferred meeting style were respect, listening to others, and being inclusive of others. Katherine and Erin, two of the more senior interviewees, were very focused on being sure that people respected one another during their meetings. As Erin stated, "...the core of my meetings were run, umm, with respect." While Sophia, Kierstin, Annie, all spoke about listening to others, Kierstin and Sophia made a point about listening and then collaborating. Kierstin stated it best when she said, "I would say that my leadership style is kind of open to hear other people's ideas, but I know how to bring everybody back to focus". Elizabeth went a step further than just listening, when she put her focus on being inclusive of her committee in the process.

I really do try to give my committee members a lot of ownership over our committee. I'm definitely not one to, you know, come up with the idea and do it all myself, and just say but you were on my committee and uhh, I really try to talk with my committee members about their ideas and incorporate their ideas into our big project for the semester. And I make sure to give them, like, homework every week, so they're doing a large chunk of the committee work. So I guess, I try to make sure we're all equal, that all our ideas get the same input, all of ideas get the same work done with them, and really try to delegate everything.



Elizabeth's response truly showed a leadership style that was member focused and therefore relationships focused. The spotlight on respect, listening, and inclusiveness were all examples of the women placing importance on relationships.

### *Women's Double Bind*

While the women spoke about feeling respected and equal in importance with their male peers, they at other times made statements that did not portray fellow women in such a positive light. Some spoke about what happens when women are too powerful, while others spoke about women in negative feminine stereotypes. Between these polar opposite is the "double bind" (Lips, 2007, p. 55) that exists for women.

Emily summed it up best when she said "I also think men can be intimidated by women who are in power". Katherine is a very strong personality, and at the time of the interviews, she held the highest role of those interviewed. Perhaps this explains why she is the only one that spoke about being seen as too strong, too powerful. When we were talking about if she was respected she said,

...that I was a person, who, uh, was very aggressive in everything I did, and I think I have lost, uh, a lot of respect from a couple individuals on the senate, and on my exec. board. I don't think it has to do with me being a woman.

When asked if she thought a male would have lost respect of their peers, if he held her position and had been aggressive like her, Katherine said, "probably not.". As the researcher pursued this idea further, Katherine stated the following.

Umm, I think that, uhh, overall I, again sad to say, think that expectation was lower for me, different or maybe just different for me. Uhh, being a female,

and the routes that I chose things I chose to pursue were not typical female things, I started with athletics and I did all of that and I think people were umm, I don't know if they were turned off by it, if they were, felt like I was being too aggressive, but like I said in the beginning there's a fine line between sitting pretty and being too aggressive and they think that you're doing too much. And I just think, uh, it's hard to please people, and it's and I feel like it's harder if you're female, umm, and maybe it is that I was, maybe people thought me being too aggressive, was not an appropriate female characteristic.

While Katherine may describe herself as too aggressive, the label of aggressiveness would rarely be applied to males in her same position. Perhaps the reason she alienated others through her behavior was due to the fact that when women act with similar forcefulness to males it can have a negative impact on their image as a woman.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, women can also be seen as too feminine, less than a male. When the interviewees were discussing why women did not run for positions or talked about greater male participation, that is when many of them speculated on how women were less capable. Kierstin, Emily and Katherine all made statements that indicated that women did not participate in certain areas due to lack of confidence. When Kierstin was discussing why women did not participate as much in writing legislation, she said " I just, I think that they [women] aren't quite ready if they're new to step out of their comfort zones yet." Before that Kierstin had stated that, "...males are a little bit more confident when it comes to,

you know, stating their opinion". It was not that participants only thought women had less confidence; Katherine and Elizabeth felt that women had problems being taken seriously. As Elizabeth surmised,

...some other women on senate are kind of viewed as, you know, they don't understand things as fast as some other people might, and so maybe they feel like they're not taken seriously enough as a chair, so they don't go up for a chair.

While Katherine agreed with Elizabeth that women are not always taken seriously, she also focused on how women can be more fearful or emotional. When discussing why women do not run for senate seats Katherine said,

It's an intimidating environment, that would, that would be my most obvious answer. umm, I think people uhh, are scared of it because it's intense. I think a lot of women would feel like they might be umm, attacked because the debate can often be misconstrued as an attack because women take things very personally, and when someone says something its, uhh, you are responding to a person, not the idea. and when someone is in your face umm, that's an intimidating environment that, uhh, a lot of umm, softer individuals can't handle. And I'm not, I don't...I think there are men that can't handle it, so, I don't know if that's a completely a gender thing but it's definitely umm, when I, if I were to come in a new person it's just, it's a heated, serious, umm, very systematic and environment that is uhh, very obviously intimidating.

Even as Katherine tried to distance gender from the equation, her use of the words "softer individuals" evoked thoughts of feminine traits. The word, "softer," is only

positively used to describe women, but it is negatively invoked to describe less-masculine males. Katherine was not alone in her perspective that women might be fearful, Sophia also talked about women not running for office due to fear of rejection. As Sophia stated “ ...Like, I think [women] are just afraid... if you [the female running] don't get elected you go well, I didn't get elected and now I can't do this, I'm not good at that.” While Sophia was in agreement with Katherine on women's fear of rejection, Katherine was the only participant to talk about women being too emotional. Katherine first talked about the need to make sure that she did not come off as too emotional or overstressed in her job, as she asserted “ I think it's the most important thing for people to uh, to not feel uh, like you're overworked, like you can't handle your job. “ She again emphasized that women are seen as emotional people when discussing respect among senators, as Katherine said, “I think everyone is very respectful to the females. Especially because they feel like they could hurt their feelings, and they're [the women] emotional, so they're [the men] very careful” The theme of women being too emotional was carried over to her final statements about why she did not select more women to run on her ticket for the executive board. Katherine revealed,

I choose people on the exec. board that I ran as president and they were all men. I work better with men. I think that when there are too many females it gets too emotional, people stop taking each other seriously, umm, and because I thought I'd grown a personality that I can compete, umm, and be neck and neck, and aggressive with the men on my board. That I felt like there was only room for one, and there was only going to be room for one to

be taken seriously it was hard enough for me. umm, and I didn't need to add anymore, anymore uh, estrogen to the fire.

Katherine may have been the most vocal on women being too characteristically feminine, but she was not alone. While the several other participants' views may have been less extreme many of them placed women and feminine traits in to a negative context. Their negative-stereotyped views of women as too emotional, fearful, and unconfident, along with the idea that a powerful woman can be a negative quality, only helped to confirm the double bind placed upon women.

#### Summary

Chapter IV explored the four themes that were found through analysis and comparison of the seven transcriptions. The first theme was men lead to men, which discussed the role of tradition and incumbency play in elections. Next was men's greater participation, which focused on how males tend to be dominating in senate. This was followed by relationships, which focused on the value women place on relationships. Lastly, women's "double bind" (Lips, 2007, p. 55) explored how women can be seen as both too strong and too weak. Chapter V will provide a summary of findings, a comparison to the literature from Chapter II, recommendations for future research, and the final conclusion.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a greater understanding of women as both senators and leaders within student government at a mid-size comprehensive university of about 12,000 students. The researcher interviewed a total of seven women from student government, three senators and four student government leaders, to learn about their perspectives on their participation in student government, their male peers' participation in student government, and why other female peers choose not to participate in student government as senators or student government leaders.

The study showed that overall women felt respected by their peers, including the males. None of the interviewees indicated that they felt intimidated to participate in senate meetings or write legislation. When it came to participation in senate some indicated they participated less because they only spoke when they felt they had a valid point to add and did not want to prolong the meeting's discussion. If they wrote less-legislation it was because they simply did not author as many bills or did not help enough with the bill to warrant being a signer. The participants that spoke about their meeting styles described leadership styles with a focus on inclusion, listening to others, and respect. This relationship-friendly approach when coupled with many of them selecting family members as role models, demonstrates the importance of relationships for many of the participants. All students agreed that men had greater participation in senate, legislation, or both. Most agreed that the most vocal and most likely to be on the speakers list often were males. The

males were also seen as more aggressive, as men were the only ones reprimanded by the speaker of the senate in debates. Still there were exceptions to both rules, with participants identifying women that were equally willing to debate or who had written even greater amounts of legislation than the males.

When participants discussed why women did not join senate or move up to leadership positions within student government, there were two main themes found, a tradition of male representation or women were too weak. Several commented that men holding government roles was a tradition both nationally and on the board. Some participants felt this was due to men having participated in senate for a greater number of years, and how this was perceived to correlate with an increased likelihood of running/holding a higher office. Others felt that women did not join or move up because they possessed traits that made them weaker candidates. Many talked about women being too emotional, less confident, intimidated, or fearful of rejection. A few even felt that women were just taken less seriously. If women began participating in senate earlier in their college career, it could play a role in increasing their chances of running/holding leadership positions, especially executive positions. Also, seeing females holding large executive roles could cut down on the perception that it is a male tradition. None offered a solution for what to do about women being viewed as the weaker candidate, and perhaps that is where the greater problem exists.

#### *Comparison of Research Findings to the Literature*

The women's thoughts and responses matched up very well with ideas found in the literature review. The "double bind" as described by Lips (2007, p. 55) was

most evident in Katherine's responses, where she felt there was a line between meeting others expectations and being too aggressive. As Katherine stated "there's a fine line between sitting pretty and being too aggressive". Katherine's worry of being too aggressive also fits Weikart, Chan, Williams and Hromic's (2006) conclusions that found the same worry among women mayors. Katherine's and Elizabeth's belief that women are not always taken as seriously was also supported by Weikart, et al. (2006), as Elizabeth said, "women on senate are kind of viewed as, you know, they don't understand things as fast as some other people might, and so maybe they feel like they're not taken seriously enough as a chair". The importance of having a female role model to mediate Lips' double bind as described by Carbonell and Castro (2008) was also evident in many students' selection of female role models, as well as Sophia's examples of how a current female executive board member could lead to more female participation. As Sophia stated, "maybe with [names female president], you know, being student body president they'll [women] see and go "oh it's okay" and more and more people will start to kind of get on board". Sophia's statement was especially in agreement with Lockwood (2006) and his finding that "highly successful women may undermine tradition gender stereotypes about women, thus reducing the damaging potential of stereotype threat effects" (p.44). Sophia's example was also very supportive of Miller and Kraus (2004), who held that women were more likely to hold the presidential position in student government, when they had female role models. The importance of female role models was also supported by Elder (2004), who found that "female role models have a unique and positive impact on women's political interest,



knowledge and engagement” (p. 44). The selection of female role models by the women in the present study also shared a commonality with the female leaders from Romano’s (1996) qualitative study about undergraduate women leaders.

The women were also supportive of Romano (1996) when they discussed their leadership styles as having a focus on respect, inclusion, and listening to others. These themes were best described by Elizabeth, who said,

I really do try to give my committee members a lot of ownership over our committee... I try to make sure we’re all equal, that all our ideas get the same input, all of ideas get the same work done with them, and really try to delegate everything.

Their leadership styles also complimented Offermann and Beil (1992), who found that women focused on relationships and collaboration. Their inclusive behaviors as committee leaders were also in keeping with Weikart, et al (2006) and Rosenthal (1997), who both found that women upheld collaborative ideals even while holding local or state government positions. Their interest in inclusion and listening to others also falls in accordance with Baxter Magolda’s theory of Knowing and Reasoning in College, where Magolda stated that women value “peer interaction to hear and share ideas” (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 154-155).

The women’s discussion of men holding political roles traditionally fit well with Lockwood’s (2006) research. When the women asserted that having men in leadership roles is a tradition both nationally and/or in student government, they were stating it as the norm. Emily’s chosen words clearly communicated this idea, when she said “...traditionally like women have always... aren’t as interested in

politics... I think it's something that's typically viewed as a male occupation."

Lockwood (2006) found when men or women selected male leaders many based their choice on the normalcy of having male leaders. Elder (2004) extended the idea further, when he found women to be lacking in political confidence, which by default asserted the tradition of male dominance in politics. This lack of political confidence was visible through Sophia's statement " , I think [women] are just afraid... if you [the female running] don't get elected you go well, I didn't get elected and now I can't do this, I'm not good at that". The finding of men in student government leadership roles also supported Miller and Kraus (2004) who felt that "incumbency helped women (or men) get elected" (§ 14). The Miller and Kraus (2004) "incumbency" (§ 14) theory also supported Elizabeth, who wanted to run for a larger executive board role, while a female was currently president.

### *Recommendations*

After reviewing the results and the previous research there are two clear steps that could be taken to improve women's participation in student government. The first is that women need to be targeted early for membership in student government. It would be better if student government representatives, preferably female, approached organizations with large numbers of female constituents. Female representatives would be best because women respond well to same-sex role models, and from the study it was found that most women ran for senate or appointment after being asked to join student government. The second step is providing same-sex role models for women in student government. While the study focused on student government, the role model rule could prove useful for

organizations beyond student government. Since all women leaders and participants could benefit from female role models, it could be beneficial to start a group that meets bi-weekly or once a month for women leaders and future leaders. By encouraging women to join early and providing female role models, one could increase participation in senate and in leadership roles.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Recognizing the limitations of the present study, the following list of recommendations for future studies is suggested.

1. This study included a sample of women that were either currently serving on student government or had recently served. Future research would be better served by interviewing a more inclusive list of women leaders from the past decade.
2. The current study was limited to one university. A cross-institutional study of similar sized and type universities would make the findings more generalizable to student governments at similar institutions.
3. The present study focused on women who participated in a male-driven student government. It would be interesting to compare student governments with more male participation to student governments with more female participation.
4. This study focused solely on the experiences of women in student government. It could be of interest to compare female leaders across co-educational organizations that are either heavily female or heavily male in membership.

5. A mixed-methods approach in future research on women who participate in student governments that are male driven would increase generalizability and practical application of findings. An instrument that could be used would be the California Psychological Inventory's [CPI; Gough 1957] Dominance Scale, allowing one to compare the dominance rating of student government leaders and senators. This quantitative data would be complimented by qualitative interviews with a select group of the women to understand their conception of dominance as a leadership trait.

### *Conclusion*

Women's participation in student organizations with a history of greater male leadership is not well understood. It is clear from the current study that participants did not see themselves as being at a disadvantage, but when one takes a deeper look it seems that they might have been on unequal ground. Past statistics (Table 1) at the institution which was the site of the present study showed that women were not often the incumbent, and even when they ran for office they were not as likely as males to be elected to executive positions (Table 2). Both the present study and past literature show that the traditional idea of men holding leadership positions still exists (Lockwood, 2006). Still women at the present institution are currently at an advantage with a sitting female Student Government President, who serves as both the incumbent and the female leader role model that literature suggests is necessary to increase female participation (Miller & Kraus, 2004; Carbonell and Castro, 2008). Even as Elizabeth's desire to run serves as

incidental evidence of change, only time will show whether there is an increase in female student government leaders or not.

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database.



## APPENDIX A

## Senator Questions

1. What led you to run for a Senator position?
2. Describe a role model that inspired you to run for your current position.
3. Did you feel that there were any obstacles in running for a senator position? What were they?
4. Would you run for a Student Government Leadership position?
5. Do you feel that your male peers respect you?
6. What must you do, compared to what males do, to get your initiatives approved through student government?
7. Do you feel that women and men participate equally in Student Government?
8. How would you describe your communication style in the group?
9. Do you feel that you receive the same amount of respect from other members of student government as the male senators?
10. Why do you think that fewer women than men run for senator positions?
11. Why do you think that fewer women than men hold Student Government Leadership positions?

## Student Government Leader Questions

1. What led you to run for a Student Government leadership position?
2. Describe a role model that inspired you to run for your current position.
3. Did you feel that there were obstacles to running for a Student Government Leadership position? What were they?
4. How would you describe your leadership style?
5. Do you feel that women and men participate equally in Student Government?
6. Do you feel that female senators are as respected as male senators?
7. Do you feel that your male peers and senators respect you?
8. What must you do, compared to what males do, to get your initiatives approved through student government?
9. Why do you think that fewer women than men run for senator positions?
10. Why do you think that fewer women than men run for Student Government leadership positions?

## APPENDIX B

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH****A Qualitative Study of Women in Student Government at a Midsized Comprehensive University**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mary Ham, master's candidate in college student affairs, and Dr. Charles Eberly, Professor, from the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a member of one of two groups. You are either a past or present female student government senator or female student government leader, holding a position on the executive board or as a committee chair.

**• PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The focus of this qualitative case study is participation of women in student government, focusing on their leadership and/or senator experiences. The goal is to gain more knowledge about women who have had leadership experience within student government. This study will broaden knowledge about women's experiences in student government. The study will specifically be designed to learn how these women view their leadership style and how they feel they interact with their male and female peers. Interviewing both elected or appointed leaders and senators will give a holistic perspective of women in student government and perhaps give ideas of how to increase women's participation in leadership roles within student government.

**• PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in a one-on-one interview that will last approximately one hour. You will be asked ten pre-determined questions as well as follow-up questions when appropriate. The interview will take place in a room where private conversation can occur. The interview will be recorded through the researcher's notes as well as a digital audio recording. The audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher at a later time, then returned to you for member checking the accuracy of the transcription prior to using the transcript in data analysis.

**• POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Student participants may find that some questions cause them feelings of discomfort or possibly even anger. No long-term physical, psychological, or social risks are foreseeable with this research as participants are asked to share their thoughts and feelings.

**• POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Student participants will benefit from this study as it allows them to verbalize their thoughts and feelings about their experiences in student government. This reflection will give them a clearer understanding of how participation in student government has aided their growth. The knowledge gained from the analysis of the interviews will aid Student Life in a deeper understanding of their female Student Government members and provide staff members and research participants with information that might facilitate greater leadership among women in student government.

## • INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will be eligible to receive a \$10 gift card to Starbucks after the completion of their interview. If participants choose not give consent for the interview they will not be eligible to receive the incentive. Participants that complete the interview but choose to later withdraw from the study will still be able to keep their incentive.

## • CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with a research participant will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping the notes, digital audio recordings, and transcriptions only on the principal investigator's personal password protected laptop, as well as a USB drive to create a back-up. The principal investigator and her faculty advisor will be the only ones to have access to the notes, digital audio recordings, and transcriptions. This is so that the faculty advisor can aid the student in data analysis. The digital audio recordings, notes, and transcriptions will be kept on the researcher's personal laptop and the USB format for three years then deleted. If a subject chooses to leave the study during or after the interview all data and hard copy will be destroyed. Digital data will be deleted and hard copies will be shredded.

## • PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering and still complete the interview.

## • IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Mary Ham  
Principal Investigator  
1011 Woodlawn Dr., Apt. 105  
Charleston, IL 61920  
Telephone: (318) 376-3504

or

Dr. Charles Eberly  
Faculty Sponsor  
Buzzard Hall Rm. 2107  
600 Lincoln Ave.  
Charleston, IL 61920

Email: [maham@eiu.edu](mailto:maham@eiu.edu)

Telephone: (217) 581-7235

Email: [cgeberly@eiu.edu](mailto:cgeberly@eiu.edu)

## • RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board  
Eastern Illinois University  
600 Lincoln Ave.  
Charleston, IL 61920  
Telephone: (217) 581-8576  
E-mail: [eiuirb@www.eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@www.eiu.edu)

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

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I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date