PROJECT FEMINIST U

How Gender Impacts a Student's Experience on Campus

Survey Results
January 2015

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PROJECT FU

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2014, the Students' Union emailed all undergraduate students a voluntary survey titled "Does Gender Affect Your Campus Experience?" The purpose of this survey was to determine whether a student's gender has affected their experience on campus, and if so, how. Ultimately, the survey data will be useful in the promotion and execution of "Project FU".

The mission of Project Feminist University/You is to provide a venue for the University of Alberta community to gather, particularly undergraduate students, in order to share ideas, to have conversations, and to debate issues regarding the intersection of gender, politics, leadership, and feminism. There are two goals that the Students' Union has for PFU: (1) to better the Students' Union by creating an institution that recognizes and mitigates gender-based barriers to involvement in leadership and politics; (2) to have conversations about what a feminist campus looks like by acknowledging how our structures and institutions may limit students due to perceptions of gender.

In February of 2015, PFU will work with community members to host a series of events and workshops that meet this goals and our mission

METHODOLOGY

This is a voluntary survey that was sent to all undergraduate students at the University of Alberta in October 2014. There are certain biases present, considering that all respondents voluntarily chose to complete this survey. Despite this, the results reveal a number of patterns about how students feel regarding their gender and experience at the University of Alberta.

This report begins with a cursory overview of the characteristics of survey participants. Following this, the answers from each question are discussed and analyzed. In questions where written responses were asked for, there are quotations provided. The quotations chosen represent a reoccurring pattern or theme found throughout all the answers; they are meant to be representative of key ideas. Finally, the report ends with a section titled "Conclusions"; here, the discussions are expanded on to provide concrete steps moving forward.

VARIABLES

Existing Research

Research undertaken by the University of Alberta Students' Union (UASU) in the past indicates that the participation of female candidates for Executive and Students' Council positions is not equal or proportionate to the sex ratio of the student body.[1] The undergraduate population at the University of Alberta has a greater number of female than male students. In the 18-24 age group, 56% of full-time students are female.[2] Across Faculties, there are a greater or approximately equal number of female students in each faculty, with the exception of Engineering, in which 20% of full-time students are female.

From 2004-2012, there have been 85 candidates contesting the Students' Union Executive positions. Of those candidates, 22% have been female. Of all successful candidates, only 18% have been female. Given 19 female candidates and seven successfully elected female candidates, there is an attainment rate of 36% for females. In comparison, there is a 45% attainment rate for males.[3]

Demographics for Students' Council demonstrate historically disproportionate representation by male Councillors versus female Councillors. However, recent years have shown more proportional representation. In 2010-2011, there were 17 male Councillors and 14 female Councillors. In 2011-2012, there were 16 male Councillors and 12 female Councillors.[4]

Survey Variables

This survey had a total of 468 participants. The average age of the participant is 21 years old, with age varying from 17 to 54 years. Another variable similar to the category of age is the year of enrolment, with 26.7% of participants being in their third year, followed by 25.9% being in their fourth year. In general, fewer participants were in their first or second year as opposed to those in higher years of study.

311 (67.9%) participants identified as female, whereas **143 (31.2%) participants identified as male**. Seven participants identified as some variation of gender queer, two identified as non-binary, and five did not specify. Self reported gender-queer and non-binary students represent 1.92% of respondents. Given such a small sample size, it is not possible to do a statistical analysis. As such, this group is not included in any further quantitative

analysis but there are a number of written responses included in this report that illuminate the experience of students who identify as gender-queer and/or non-binary.

The **academic Faculties** that had the most participants overall are Science (26.9%), Arts (26.1%), Education (12.4%), and Engineering (11.8%). The response rate changes when categorized by gender.

Of all **female participants**, the Faculties with most participants are Arts (32.5%), Science (24.8%), Education (16.1%), and Engineering (5.8%). The order changes for **male participants**: Science (30.1%); Engineering (25.9%); Arts (11.9%); Agricultural, Life, Environmental Studies (4.9%); and Education (4.9%).

Table 1: "Which Faculty are you enrolled in?"

Faculty	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
ALES	32	6.84	24	7.72	7	4.90
Arts	122	26.07	101	32.48	17	11.89
Business	22	4.70	9	2.89	13	9.09
Education	58	12.39	50	16.08	7	4.90
Engineering	55	11.75	18	5.79	37	25.87
Law	2	0.43	1	0.32	1	0.70
Medicine/Dentistry	18	3.85	9	2.89	7	4.90
Native Studies	2	0.43	1	0.32	1	0.70
Nursing	14	2.99	12	3.86	2	1.40
Pharmacy	11	2.35	7	2.25	4	2.80
Physical Education & Recreation	6	1.28	2	0.64	4	2.80
Science	126	26.92	77	24.76	43	30.07
Total	**468**	**100.00**	**311**	**100.00**	**143**	**100.00**

Table 2: "What undergraduate year are you in?"

Year	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	88	18.80	52	16.72	33	23.08
2	77	16.45	49	15.76	24	16.78
3	125	26.71	88	28.30	32	22.38
4	121	25.85	83	26.69	37	25.87
5+	57	12.18	39	12.54	17	11.89
Total	**468**	**100.00**	**311**	**100.00**	**143**	**100.00**

Table 3: "How old are you?"

Age	Frequency	Percent
17	6	1.31
18	50	10.92
19	60	13.1
20	81	17.69
21	99	21.62
22	54	11.79
23	41	8.95
24	21	4.59
25	15	3.28
26	5	1.09
27	5	1.09
28	7	1.53
29	1	0.22
30	3	0.66
31	3	0.55
32	1	0.22
33	1	0.22
35	1	0.22
37	1	0.22
40	1	0.22
46	1	0.22
54	1	0.22
Total	**458**	**100.00**

Table 4: "What is your gender identity?"

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	311	55.45
Male	143	30.56
Non-binary	2	0.43
Gender Queer	7	1.50
Not Specified	5	1.07
Total	**468**	**100.00**

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Feeling like a Gender Minority

In response to the question "*are you a gender minority in your academic program?*" 81.8% responded "no", while 18.1% responded "yes". Participants who answered in the affirmative were then asked, "*has this presented any problems for you?*" Of the 18.1% that responded "yes", they are a gender minority, **26.1% of those students indicated that "yes", being a gender minority *has* presented problems for them**.

The intent of these two questions is to understand how students perceive their standing in their academic program. However, the **answers to the above**

questions changes depending on gender. In response to "*are you a gender minority in your program?*" 14.8% of women stated "yes" whereas 18.9% of men responded with "yes". In response to the subsequent question of whether or not being a gender minority has presented problems for students, **37.8% of female participants said "yes" whereas only 7.1% of male participants said "yes".** Thus, even though more male students feel they are minorities in their programs, it is mostly the female students that feel as if it affects them negatively.

Table 5: "Are you a gender minority in your program?"

	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	383	81.84	265	85.21	116	81.12
Yes	85	18.16	46	14.79	27	18.88
Total	**468**	**100.00**	**311**	**100.00**	**143**	**100.00**

Table 6: "If yes, has this presented any problems for you?"

	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
N/A	5	5.95	4	8.89	1	3.57
No	27	67.86	24	53.33	25	89.29
Yes	22	26.19	17	37.78	2	7.14
Total	**84**	**100.00**	**45**	**100.00**	**28**	**100.00**

Quotations

"Feeling like I don't belong, like I represent all girls in CST just because there's so few of us. Overall, there's a lot of pressure, especially in difficult courses. And I can't think very well under pressure. Also the amount of women quitting their tech careers due to harassment and the continued feeling of not belonging does not feel very encouraging" (Female, Science III).

"My complaints and comments on sexism and misogyny are not taken seriously by my peers, especially in context of my academic program, and sometimes results in verbal attack. One of my peers harasses women and no one cares. I can't be a part of things that celebrate women in science without being

questioned and demeaned for participating. Overall, I feel uncomfortable and sometimes unsafe around a lot of my male peers" (Female, Science IV).

"Sexism isn't really loud in engineering – no one tells you that you don't belong because you're a woman, but you feel it, which is somehow worse because then you think it's in your head. My best analogy for this is imagine you're wearing a sweater that looks like what everyone else in your Faculty is wearing. But instead of a nice cashmere or angora or whatever, yours is synthetic polyester and every time you wear it, you feel terrible. But yours looks the same as everyone else, so you can't explain the subtlety of it (without the other person trying it on). And to get meta, if you complain about your sweater to a bunch of people, they think you're being shallow and then it sucks. That sweater is the feeling of being in engineering. It's subtle, it makes you feel like you don't belong, and makes you want to leave" (Female, Engineer IV).

"Yes, I am one of very few females in my program. I feel that people often doubt my abilities. I also have issues studying with my classmates, as the guys just won't leave me alone" (Female, Science V).

"I'm transgender so I have issues regarding washrooms, misgendering in the class by students and profs, and having to lie about myself. I am studying a gendered language and could get assignments marked down if I use the female adjective in talking about myself" (Female, Arts IV).

"All throughout schooling, females have typically received more help and praise then the males. Professors almost always offer better advice when talking to females. Sometimes, I stand behind females in line to ask for help hoping they ask the same question I have because they will receive better quality help" (Male, Science IV).

Discussion

According to these female participants, the academic environment in these programs is characterized by subtle feelings of being treated "differently" by male peers and to some extent, by male instructors. The most often articulated concern by female students choosing to respond to this question was a feeling of being underestimated by their male classmates and their male instructors, which in turn prompted the feeling of being under pressure to perform, and particularly, that failure is not an option.

Additionally, these participants also highlighted the uncomfortable culture where they might often think twice about expressing themselves freely, either in the classroom or outside with their peers. A few indicated outright

discrimination characterized by sexist and misogynistic sentiments in their interactions with male peers, such as being objectified and sexualized. A few **female students in Science also pointed out the lack of female instructors in mathematics and statistics programs**, thereby outlining specific concerns about the lack of female mentorship and role models in academia.

A handful of male students indicated that they feel part of the gender minority in their program, yet there was very few that listed any problems associated with this. A couple male participants from faculties traditionally dominated by female students, such as Arts and Education, worries about "stealing the spotlight" in articulating their perspectives during classroom discussion. This suggests that some male students might be aware of the space they occupy when asked to speak up. On the other hand, **a male student identified that it sometimes feels difficult to have his opinions "validated" when speaking up in a Women and Gender Studies course**. However, he noted that this is not a significant barrier to class participation for him.

Among almost all participants who self-identify as gender-queer, transgender, and/or non-binary, no matter their disciplinary background, they have **concerns with regard to being misidentified**. The decision to articulate their preferred gender identity before the instructor, administrators, or peers, can be challenging and uncomfortable.

Involvement on Campus in Relation to Perceptions of Safety and Level of Responsibilities

In response to the question, "*Have you ever felt unsafe on campus?*" 80.3% of students responded "no" and 19.6% responded, that as "yes". Following this, they were prompted to answer, "*Does your perception of safety impact your level of involvement on campus?*" 51.1% of students replied with "no" while 25.4% of students responded with "yes". The survey question does not expand on a definition of safety; it is meant for students to assess their environments in a general manner.

When categorized by gender, **25.7% of female students said they felt unsafe on campus**, while only **4.2% of male students** indicated that they felt unsafe on campus.

However, when asked if their perception of safety affects their level of involvement on campus, the results were similar for male and female students. 25.4% of female students responded with "yes" and 24.5% of male students

responded with "yes". More women feel unsafe on campus than do men, yet their involvement on campus does not seem to differ because of this. Nevertheless, it is concerning that a quarter of the students who participated in this survey report feeling unsafe.

Table 7: "Have you ever felt unsafe on campus?"

	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	376	80.34	231	74.28	137	95.80
Yes	92	19.66	80	25.72	6	4.20
Total	**468**	**100.00**	**311**	**100.00**	**143**	**100.00**

Table 8: "Does your perception of safety impact your level of involvement on campus?"

	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
N/A	110	23.50	77	24.76	31	21.68
No	239	51.07	155	49.84	77	53.85
Yes	119	25.43	79	25.40	35	24.48
Total	**468**	**100.00**	**311**	**100.00**	**143**	**100.00**

The next set of questions was related to the **level of involvement on campus as being dependent on the number of other responsibilities a student has**. In response to "*Do you feel that your non-curricular responsibilities impact your ability to participate in campus life?*" 14.3% of students responded with "no", 55.3% responded with "sometimes", and 22.4% responded with "yes, always". Examples of non-curricular activities included in the survey question were "work", "volunteer with a student group", "leadership role in a student group", "volunteer position off-campus", and "caregiving".

When sorted by gender, there are slight differences between male and female students. 56.9% of female students responded with "sometimes" and 23.5% responded with "yes, always". In comparison, 52.5% and 21% of male students responded with "sometimes" and "yes, always", respectively. When these two categories are combined, **80.4% of female students and 73.5% of male students report being affected by their responsibilities** such that it limits their participation on campus.

Feeling Inadequate for Leadership Positions

The Students' Union does not have data available on the number of students (and their demographics) that contest all elected positions on campus. There is only limited data regarding Students' Council and SU Executive candidates. This survey asked if students had considered running for any leadership position on campus, which includes the many Faculty and Departmental Associations. Nevertheless, it is fair to assume that if a student does not feel prepared to run for a position on a Faculty Association, they will not feel prepared to run for the SU Executive.

Following questions about safety and responsibilities outside of academics, participants were asked, "*Have you ever considered running in a student election?*" ("Student election" was described to include "student groups, Department and Faculty association, Students' Council, etc.") In total, 64.3% of the participants indicated "no", they had not considered such positions. Nevertheless, 35.7% of students did express interest, which is a relatively high number. These numbers are highly consistent when categorized by gender: **35.1% of female and 35% of male students indicated "yes," they had considered running in a student election.**

Table 9: "Have you ever considered running in a student election?"

	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	301	64.32	202	64.95	93	65.03
Yes	167	35.68	109	35.05	50	34.97
Total	**468**	**100.00**	**311**	**100.00**	**143**	**100.00**

However, the results differ significantly between gender regarding the following questions: participants were asked, "*Have you ever felt you did not possess enough skills, knowledge, or qualifications to apply or run for a job or position of responsibility and/or leadership on campus?*" Those that responded "yes" were asked to elaborate with a written answer. 56% of students responded "no", while **44% of students indicated that "yes" they did feel inadequate or ill prepared for such positions.**

Of those students, **49% of female participants versus 32.9% of male participants felt they did not possess the requisite amount of skills**. These results show that more female students have feelings of inadequacy than do male students, even though both genders express equal interest in leadership positions.

Table 10: "Have you ever felt you did not possess enough skills, knowledge, or qualifications to apply or run for a job or position of responsibility and/or leadership on campus?

	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	262	55.98	158	50.80	96	67.13
Yes	206	44.02	153	49.20	47	32.87
Total	**468**	**100.00**	**311**	**100.00**	**143**	**100.00**

These results are further strengthened by the written responses. Female participants, irrespective of faculty, are more likely to feel they *do not* possess enough skills, knowledge, or qualifications to apply or run for a job or position of responsibility and/or leadership on campus.

The male participants who felt they did not possess the requisite amount of skills identified time constraints and lack of ability to juggle multiple responsibilities as the primary reason for not applying for a leadership position/position of responsibility. Unlike male participants, **among female participants there were three dominant themes for not applying or running for a leadership position/position of responsibility**:

1. *Lack of Knowledge and Skills* – The primary theme was the lack of knowledge and skills, including a poor understanding of campus politics and student concerns. The overwhelming responses were related to "lack of confidence", "lack of assertiveness", and the absence of adequate knowledge "to be taken seriously on an issue". This suggests that **female participants worry about how they will be judged and whether they are adequately prepared to run.** The underlying worry among female participants seems to be that they would be held to "higher expectations". Additionally, failure to present the aforementioned skills could lead to being underestimated, if not entirely dismissed, emphasizing the importance of credibility.

2. *Lack of Demonstrated Capability* – A sizeable portion of female respondents also pointed out the lack of "demonstrated capability" and "proven success" resulting from a lack of association or participation in prior opportunities, such as student clubs, organizations, work experience, etc. Meaning, **they felt they could not establish themselves as candidates *worthy* of running for office**. Many female participants seemed to believe that typical student leaders had been involved in campus life from day one of their arrival on campus, and that they had therefore built up a reputation.

3. *Lack of Networks* – The third most frequently cited reason for not choosing to run/apply for such positions was the lack of "the right people" to support and mentor them and help them put together a campaign. Many female students cited not having "the right friends", not knowing those popular on campus, and not having connections or affiliations with campus groups.

Quotations

"I feel like I haven't been involved enough in other ways on campus to run for a student position. So many of the people who run are amazing and have done so much already since their very first term on campus. It took me a lot longer than that to figure out how to get involved and now I feel like it's too late to go much further. I don't feel like I'm a good leader and I don't feel like I know the right people on campus, at least not well enough, to even be more involved. It feels like a bit of an elite group that runs things and I don't have the confidence to join in" (Arts, Female V).

"Although I have extensive leadership experience, I have held back from applying for positions before. In particular, I have feared being seen as not assertive enough because I am naturally introverted. On the other hand, I am confident expressing my views, but I've also been concerned about being seen as too aggressive if I do vocalize those thoughts" (Female, Science III).

"There seems to be a lot more pressure on female candidates running in anything higher than a faculty association, in my experience, which is part of the reason why I never aimed higher" (Female, Arts V).

"Sometimes it can be a case of not having experience simply because you are not taken on – it can breed a vicious or virtuous cycle depending on where you stands. Moreover, there are a certain core of students who are very involved in leadership positions because they were historically involved; these students are

especially empowered and have the relevant skills. I wish that the campus made an effort to provide more leadership opportunities to students, particularly to reach out less-than-involved students" (Female, Science IV).

"I feel as though I am not emotionally stable enough to handle the stresses and criticism that frequently accompanies leadership positions" (Female, Nursing V).

"I feel like there should be some sort of training through the SU for leaders and executives of council to learn how to be good mentors so that they don't feel overwhelmed by taking on a student with a little less knowledge or qualifications" (Female, Science IV).

"I generally feel that I do not have the strong leadership skills required to have others elect me. I fear that my leadership style, as a woman, might cause me to come off as 'bossy' or 'shrill' or worse and negatively impact my electoral chances. I am not all that confident in my ability to win over enough support to have a clear mandate to act on behalf of my fellow students" (Female, Law I).

"Felt I was too introverted or shy for the position; felt excluded as someone who doesn't drink; have been I told I am too passive as a male" (Male, Science IV).

"I lack experience in various ways and I feel that another individual with said experience would be better suited for the position" (Male, Business III).

Discussion

Given the above information, it is curious that even though the interest among all genders is equal, the election outcomes are not. This implies the existence of barriers specific to women and gender minorities. The above responses among female participants speak to the level of vulnerability women feel when exposing themselves to opportunities for leadership roles with substantial responsibility. This vulnerability seems to stem mostly from being judged by "male standards" of what success and leadership are understood to be. Typically, and existing research demonstrates this, people tend to associate more "masculine" traits with leadership such as "confidence" and "being assertive". This harms both men and women. For instance, a male participant feels he is "too passive" to be considered a leader.

A handful of self-identified upper year and mature female participants also reported time and resource constraints in considering running/applying for a leadership position. The responsibility of being a single parent and

breadwinning for the family, while also being in school, was the most frequently cited concern among these participants. A few mature students also expressed concerns about age-based discrimination manifesting in subtle forms, resulting in feelings of "not belonging".

The three most frequently cited reasons by many female participants are directly correlated. Knowledge of issues and skills are enhanced by campus involvement, which also helps to build a supportive and encouraging network, a network that is imperative in feeling prepared to run for a leadership position.

Perceptions of Desirable Leadership Skills

Participants were asked, "*What do you think are the desirable skills, knowledge, or qualifications of students involved in high-level positions of leadership/responsibility?*" There were two types of responses to this question. First, the skills and traits usually associated with success in any position of responsibility, particularly in the professional environment. Such as, good time management, multitasking, intelligent, clear thinker, articulate speaker, good oral and written communication, hardworking, and so forth. Second, the interpersonal skills typically associated with leadership. These included a wide variety of skills such as honesty, transparency, accountability, critical thinking and problem solving skills, knowledge of post-secondary education and university politics, knowledge of student issues, drive and determination, ability to work inclusively, personable, and so forth.

Quotations

"*The ability to garner respect from those around you, to be strong-willed and capable of completing all tasks, to bring enthusiasm to the position, and the ability to manage ones time correctly*" (Female, Science IV).

"*Ability to put themselves out there, take judgment, interact with anyone and everyone, maintain a good public image (accurate or not)*" (Female, Science III).

"*Empathy, compassion, desire to do things for the greater good*" (Female, ALES V).

"*Passion, organization, selflessness, equanimity, drive, determination, commitment, and professionalism*" (Female, Arts V+).

"Intelligence, experience in leadership roles, knowledge of government systems, having opinions and the ability to back them up, knowledge of campus groups and organizations" (Female, Arts V).

"Respectability, humility, assertive not aggressive, must have some class and confidence without coming off obnoxious or arrogant. Have the ability to follow – let others have a voice, lead by example, self confident and assured of themselves" (Female, Nursing III).

"Good communicator, strong work ethic, passion for their job, active listening skills, ability to balance multiple commitments, able to plan out tasks strategically, work on tight timelines, work well with others, keep focused" (Male, Science IV).

"Integrity, listening to the student body, defending the rights of minority groups" (Male, Arts III).

"The ability to listen to our problems, instead of jumping to conclusions based on their perspective of the circumstances" (Male, Education I).

"The desirable skills, knowledge or qualifications of students involved in high level leadership/responsibility roles it that they should be able to unite a group and motivate them in order to work as a team, efficiently and achieve their goals. The leader should have multiple problem solving skills and should be engaging with each and everyone. The student should be self-motivated and should be able to motivate others in the group. The student should point out weakness and ask for opinions within the group or should come up with ways to turn a weakness into strength and most of all the skill required is to keep a group united and happy" (Male, ALES I).

"Understanding of minority groups, knowledge of campus life, able to be unbiased, open to all opinions, able to admit when they are wrong, knowledge of institutional policy" (Feminine Gender Queer, ALES IV).

"Taking initiative even when no one is there to support you; not being afraid of changing norms, being critical of any operations, especially when you have to be accountable to a large body of students; actively seeking for ways to collect student input (like this survey!); having a good handle on organizational history" (Gender Queer, Science II).

Discussion

The above responses suggest that participants expect those running for positions of leadership/responsibility to be "ready" before they choose to run. They might be less forgiving of students who may consider leadership positions as learning opportunities in and of themselves. This is also consistent with earlier responses about the feelings of inadequacy and lack of readiness to run for high-level positions of leadership/responsibility.

The responses do not seem to vary widely by the participant's gender, although **male participants seem to focus more on the formal, "professional" skills**, particularly multitasking and communication. **Among female participants there is a higher tendency to emphasize the importance of inter-personal traits related to the ethical dimension of one's personality**, such as being respectful, inclusive, honest, open minded. Yet these differences should not be overstated, for there is not enough evidence to indicate that this difference in opinion is strictly gendered.

Barriers and Perceptions of Barriers Faced by Women

Participants were asked, "*Do you think women (trans-inclusive) face barriers on campus that others do not?*" 58.1% of participants said "no" and **41.9% of students think women do face additional barriers**. However, these responses vary significantly when broken down by gender and then by faculty.

For instance, **46.3% of women think women face additional barriers, whereas only 30.1% of male students think women face additional barriers**.

Students in the faculty of Arts were most perceptive of the additional barriers women face, with 60.4% of female students saying "yes" and 52.9% of male students saying "yes". In Education, 40% of female students and 28.6% of male students said "yes"; in Science 42.9% and 34.9% of female and male students, respectively, responded "yes". **The faculty with the most divergent responses is Engineering, where 55.6% of female students and only 13.5% of male students believe women face additional barriers.** This is very significant, especially considering earlier written responses by women in engineering.

Of those who responded "yes", participants were asked to explain what they believed those barriers to be. A variety of concerns emerged among those who responded "yes" to facing barriers on campus. The majority of these

respondents were female and transgender/non-binary, but a few male students articulated similar concerns as well.

Table 11: "Do you think women face barriers on campus that others do not?"

	All Survey Participants		Female Survey Participants		Male Survey Participants	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Arts						
No			40	39.60	8	47.06
Yes			61	60.40	9	52.94
Education						
No			30	60.00	5	71.43
Yes			20	40.00	2	28.57
Engineering						
No			8	44.44	32	86.49
Yes			10	55.56	5	13.51
Science						
No			44	57.14	28	65.12
Yes			33	42.86	15	34.88
Total			**246**	**100.00**	**104**	**100.00**
No	272	58.12	122	50.30	73	67.53
Yes	196	41.88	124	49.71	31	32.48

Quotations

"Imposter syndrome – the feeling that you don't deserve the great positions, etc. that you get. Men are seen as non-gendered, the neutral, whereas women always have femininity and sexualization attached to them" (Female, Arts V).

"I think the entire culture of academia is less suited for women. And women trying to break into those areas lack role models that make them believe it is possible to achieve their goals. This is the same for leadership roles on campus" (Female, Science V).

"I think women are judged a lot more – women's mistakes are representative of the entire gender. It still feels like a boy's club, and often I find that there are not enough female mentors or role models to approach or get advice from. It always feels like you can't have or do it all. As an engineering student, I feel like I'm gauging how far I can before I have to stop instead of just how far I can go" (Female, Engineering III).

"Double standards in terms of vocalizing opinions (i.e men seen as knowledgeable while women may be called know-it-alls). A greater focus on physical appearance. Being seen as "softer" in general. Fear of being seen as whiny if perceived barriers to women are vocalized as student and participant in student groups, I have seen women criticized for their physical appearances and for strongly expressing their viewpoints where men have not been" (Female, Science III).

"I don't think it's an obvious/explicit prejudice, it's just that I have never seen a female SU President. I think it's simply a matter of not enough girls running for positions. You miss 100% of the shots you don't take!" (Female, Science IV).

"Perceptions of women in leadership: ascribing women words like "bossy" or "bitchy" when a man would be "assertive" or "goal oriented" (Female, Nursing IV).

"I think that everyone faces barriers of some kind. I do think that women experience more barriers than men, but men still do experience some. For example, each discipline has a gender assigned to it – there tend to be very few women in computing science, and there tend to be very few men in nursing. As such, the minority gender in each field gets under-represented and they can often feel less important or ostracized. The reason I believe women face more of this opposition than men is that there are more traditional "male jobs" than "female jobs". Thus there are more fields where women feel they are discredited or under-represented based solely on their gender. We need to all work together to end the biases of gender-roles, because frankly, women are just as good as men (and vice-versa)" (Male, self-identified homosexual, Science II).

"I know that a number of my female friends have felt a pressure to move on with their careers more quickly than to extend their degrees or become sacrifice their academic success and progress for extracurricular engagement. They are still highly talented and capable leaders, but are somewhat forced to balance their ambitions with their career and family plans" (Male, Science IV).

"For example, Pharmacy, which has far more females than males in the student body and several female faculty; has only one female Professor. All other female faculty are either junior level or in a non-tenure track. What kind of message does this send?" (Male, Pharmacy V).

Discussion

Given the above, the variety of concerns include the perceived abilities of female students, the *implicit* connection of that perception to

underrepresentation in positions of leadership and responsibility, and other factors such as general experiences of discrimination or biased treatment, particularly in male dominated academic programs.

Few participants also identified safety concerns with being on campus outside regular hours; either too early in the morning or too late in the evening/after dark. Those who highlighted the safety concern perceived it to be a barrier against female participation in leadership, since they associate such professional engagements with working odd hours. However, fewer participants mentioned safety in comparison to the two concerns highlighted above.

Female and gender minority participants identified the pressures resulting from being judged unfairly and being compared to their male peers, as the single most significant barrier experienced by them, whether in academics or in running for leadership positions. They identified that women are often judged based on their looks, attractiveness, and their sense of dress as opposed to their opinions and actions. Therefore, women who believe they do not fit the "ideal" or who feel they might be objectified and/or sexualized could stay away from participating in positions of responsibility and leadership. Further, some pointed out the unfair judgment imposed on female leaders or successful career women as being "bossy", "bitchy"; i.e. overtly aggressive. In essence, **women face the difficult choice of being perceived either as "fake" or as "undeserving", which is in essence the imposter syndrome**. Some also pointed to the lack of female role models, particularly never having witnessed a female Students' Union President or female SU executive, as also influencing their decision to participate in such positions.

Female participants also expressed concerns about how they might shoulder the burden for their "gender" should they fail to achieve success, or at least success to the extent expected of them. They indicated how **individual failure is often attributed to gender stereotypes.**

Many female and some male participants also identified barriers for women and gender minorities in the academic environment with obvious spill over effects on their sense of self-worth and respect. There is a lack of female representation among their instructors; excessive judgment of in-class comments made by women resulting in silencing and choosing not to speak up; being underestimated by male professors in STEM faculties and so forth. This certainly has an impact on students' extra-curricular and professional decisions.

Being Encouraged and Encouraging Others to Run in an Election

The results of the above question point to some interesting patterns when combined with the results of the following questions. Survey participants were asked, "*Has anyone ever encouraged you to run in an election?*" A large number of students, 32.5%, stated that "yes", they had been encouraged to run. Despite this, 30.9% of female students had been encouraged to run whereas as 34.3% of male students had been encouraged to run. This is a slight difference but a gendered difference nonetheless.

The next question asked, "*Have you ever encouraged a friend/colleague/peer who is a woman, trans, and/or non-binary to take on a leadership role?*" 41.7% of respondents indicated that "yes" they had encouraged such students to run. 42.4% of female students said "yes" while 39.2% of male students said "yes".

Additional Comments

Participants were asked to provide additional comments about the underrepresentation of women and other gender minority groups in student politics on campus. This question was answered by only a handful of participants, with a bias in favour of male participants.

Quotations

"*Do not forget to take into account other interlocking systems of oppression when dealing with the under-representation of women and gender minorities on campus. My experiences as a white Caucasian woman are very different from women of colour, disabled women, trans women (and any combination thereof), etc.*" (Female, Arts IV).

"*There are those who have qualities for leadership and others who clearly don't, whether they or others like it or not. Among those that do, some of them are men, some women, and some of other genders, and based on my personal experience, being a specific gender has never presented an insurmountable barrier to involvement if one has all the qualities that are otherwise necessary. I would offer a word of caution in assuming that a disproportionate male:female:gender minority ratio in student involvement is due to specific issues of gender. There are so many other factors that come into play, and just because gender minority issues are coming to the forefront now, doesn't mean they're the cause of everything*" (Female, Science III).

"Our campus needs more female professors (as in full professor) and more female vice-deans. This will set the precedent for more women or trans or non-binary students to take up a position as a leader" (Male, Pharmacy V).

"I don't believe it exists in Canada personally. I have worked in the trades and for the federal government (military), area's whose wages are determined by rank, years, or education. To believe gender inequality openly occurs in our society is naïve. As far as on campus, I believe feminists get advantage. I do not agree with feminism in N/A … I believe in equality. There is a very real distinction between individuals that identify with either group (feminist vs. 'equality enthusiasts"). I have real issue with the perceived necessity of neutrality of character" (Male, Science II).

"This survey is sexist against males. Sexism is wrong. I am for equality and this survey has nothing to do with gender equality, it only deals with empowering women. Fewer and fewer Albertan males attend university. The institutionalization of sexism against males is one reason why" (Male, Science IV).

Discussion

Despite some of these responses being inconsistent with the majority of the survey results, there were some important remarks made in regards to not oversimplifying gender as the only variable in assessing the situation of female and gender minority underrepresentation in student politics. Though not explicitly mentioned nor directly intended as such by most male respondents, this does suggest that other variables are important, such as other axis of identity including race, class, and disability. A number of participants throughout the survey identified the underrepresentation of women in general among the academic faculty and the broader implications this has for students. Additionally, there were also a few, mostly male, participants who believed inequality manifested on campus in many ways, not simply in terms of gender.

CONCLUSIONS

These survey results provide a good overview of some of the gendered issues on campus. Overall, there are patterns indicating that female students perceive feelings of discrimination both in and apart from their academic experience on campus. This is especially significant for female students in Engineering and Science. It is important to realize that the majority of female participants were from Arts, Science, Education, ALES, and Engineering; there was much lower representation from other programs. As such, the reality of female students in those Faculties may be slightly different. Regardless, the survey results indicate that awareness of barriers faced by women and gender minorities is uneven, and in some Faculties, quite low. Furthermore, all participants who identified as non-binary and/or gender-queer have concerns about being misidentified and the toll that takes on their daily lives. The University of Alberta Students' Union can alleviate these perception issues through educational projects and activities targeted at all members of the University community.

In regards to safety on campus, 20% of participants feel unsafe on campus – of these 20%, 26% of female students feel unsafe whereas only 4% of male students feel unsafe. The University of Alberta and the University of Alberta Students' Union should be aware that perceptions of safety are, to an extent, gendered. Therefore, they should endeavour to create spaces where all students feel safe. In relation to student politics specifically, this suggests that female students may be more wary of job requirements such as irregular work hours.

The majority of students on campus report that they have not considered running in a student election. However, of those that have considered running, both male and female students display an equal level of interest. This becomes troubling when we see a greater proportion of male candidates over female candidates, and subsequently, a greater proportion of male elected representatives. There is a gendered gap in representation of women in leadership positions that the Students' Union should continue to address through means that include Campaign Schools and other advertisements.

Generally speaking, students with many non-curricular responsibilities (such as work, childcare, and volunteering) report that those responsibilities impact their level of involvement on campus. Additionally, mature female students identified time and resource constraints specifically in regards to family responsibilities. Consequently, the Students' Union and the University of Alberta may need to consider equity-based programs such as a flexible work

place, child-support programs, etc. This is important for the Students' Union to consider when discussing representation in leadership. Yet it is equally important for the University to consider regarding gendered representation of professors and teaching staff.

More women than men feel unprepared for leadership positions. This pattern mirrors existing research regarding the "imposter syndrome". Programs such as campaign schools that address the gaps in knowledge are extremely important. They should also address students' feelings of their perceptions regarding capability and potential. Ultimately, the Students' Union needs to identify strategies to combat the vulnerabilities specifically felt by women. Both social and educational programs should be developed and there should be the establishment of stronger links between existing female students in leadership positions and those that aspire to them. Mentorship is incredibly important. Similarly, programs to ensure support *for* mentors are also important. For example, the Students' Union could look into the idea of the creation of an undergraduate Women's Caucus by female members of Students' Council, SU Executives, Faculty Association Representatives, and other elected representatives, as a mentorship tool.

Finally, there needs to be greater awareness and education about the types of leadership positions available and the requirements to fulfill them. The Students' Union currently utilizes strategies such as job-shadow days, but more can be done to demonstrate the leadership opportunities available to all students.

There are reoccurring themes and patterns identified by students which warrant the University's and Students' Union's time and resources to conduct a more rigorous examination.

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