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499T/499P Honors Thesis: Contract and Registration Form

Contract submission deadline date: November/December for spring semester registration; April/May for fall semester registration.

↓ STUDENT SECTION			
Last Name, First: Oliver, Tegan VanBuskirk		Grad Year: 2023	Spire ID: [REDACTED]
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Member of Commonwealth Honors College: Yes		Departmental Honors Dept. (if applicable): N/A	
This is a (check one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Portfolio		<input type="checkbox"/> I need these credits to reach 12 credits for fulltime status for my 499T/P semester. <input type="checkbox"/> If necessary, I have obtained overload permission from my Academic Dean so these credits can be added to my SPIRE schedule.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I have read and followed the instructions from the section of this form titled "PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS" <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I understand that the attached plan is binding and part of my permanent UMass record; it may be shown to graduate schools upon request.			
Student's Signature: Tegan Oliver		Date: 11/17/2022	
↓ FACULTY SECTION - COURSE REGISTRATION INFORMATION and APPROVAL			
The UMass credit norm is 3 hours of student work per credit per week; For example: 3 credits = 9 or more hours of work per week for 13 weeks; 6 credits = 18 or more hours of work per week for 13 weeks			
COMMITTEE CHAIR: I have reviewed and approved the student's Honors Thesis proposal (attached). I 1) approve that the number of credits requested below be added in the course registration department noted 2) will take responsibility for guiding lab safety, human subject testing, or proprietary issues so that the resultant manuscript may be made public through the Du Bois Library archives.			
Check only one box	Part II: 499T Thesis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3cr <input type="checkbox"/> 4cr		Committee Chair must provide justification <input type="checkbox"/> 5cr <input type="checkbox"/> 6cr
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	Part I and II combined in one semester (granted as rare exception): <input type="checkbox"/> 499T Thesis 6cr OR <input type="checkbox"/> 499P Project 6cr		
499T/P Registration Department/SPIRE Subject Area: POLISCI		499T/P Registration Semester and Year: Spring 2023	
Chair's Name: Fountain, Jane		Email Address: [REDACTED]	
Department: School of Public Policy		Phone: [REDACTED]	Address: Thompson Hall
Chair's Signature: **** 11/18/2022 ****			
COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) I agree to serve as a Committee Member for this student's work as described in the attached Honors Thesis proposal. ↓ Info and Approval			
Name: La Raja, Raymond		Name: [REDACTED]	
Email Address: [REDACTED]		Email Address: [REDACTED]	
Signature: **** 11/22/2022 ****		Signature: [REDACTED]	
For DH students: HONORS PROGRAM DIRECTOR of DH department: ↓ Approval as DH Requirement			
HPD Name: N/A		HPD Signature: N/A	Date: N/A
HONORS PROGRAM DIRECTOR of department in which the course is to be registered (as noted above): ↓		The expectations outlined in the attached proposal do or do not meet the standards of my department. This 499 coursework <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> may <input type="checkbox"/> may not be registered in my department.	
HPD Name: POLISCI: Musgrave, Robert P		HPD Signature: ****	Date: 11/22/2022

WORKING TITLE: Socialized for Success: Exploring the Gender Gap in Political Ambition at the Undergraduate Level

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this honors thesis is to identify whether there is a gender gap in political ambition among undergraduates at the University of Massachusetts Amherst with the goal of extrapolating to broader undergraduate populations. Using a survey of undergraduate students enrolled in a range of general education courses, this thesis will explore the research questions: What is the relationship between gender and political ambition among undergraduate students?

Research shows that women win elections at approximately the same rate as men (Dolan, 2014). Thus, assuming men and women ran for office at similar rates, public offices would have nearly equal representation. But that is not the case. In the 117th Congress, 27 percent of the House of Representatives and 24 percent of the Senate were women, despite women representing more than half of the general population (Pew Research Center, 2021). Rather than a gap in ability or votes, the gender gap in public leadership is attributable to a gap in political ambition—a concept researchers use to describe the propensity to run for elective positions.

The gender gap in political ambition has been demonstrated through a robust body of literature (Fulton et al., 2006; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2013). Only a few studies, however, have examined the gap at the collegiate level (Lawless & Fox, 2013; Gates, 2021; Schneider et al., 2016), when political engagement and career exploration are critical. Moreover, the results of the studies focused on college students have been mixed. This thesis project seeks to expand upon existing conclusions to examine political ambition at the undergraduate level with a survey assessing political ambition, political engagement, demographics, and other

factors. Political ambition will be defined and operationalized at three levels: low, medium, and high political ambition, based on participants' consideration of running for office. In addition to comparing political ambition by gender, the research will stratify by type of major, examining political ambition among students in policy- and politics-related fields compared to those in unrelated fields. For this research, policy- and politics-related fields will include the following majors: political science; legal studies; sociology; public health; public policy; resource economics; social thought and political economy; sustainable community development; economics; and women, gender, and sexuality studies. These majors have been chosen because of their curriculum's proximity to policy and politics.

The research will explore three hypotheses based on the existing literature. Hypothesis 1 ("H1") predicts that woman-identifying undergraduate students have lower levels of political ambition than man-identifying undergraduate students across all surveyed majors. H1 reflects the consensus of the existing body of literature, which suggests that women have lower political ambition than men. Hypothesis 2 ("H2") predicts that woman-identifying undergraduate students in policy- and politics-related majors have lower levels of political ambition than man-identifying undergraduate students in policy- and politics-related majors. H2 is also a reflection of the existing literature's conclusions. Hypothesis 3 ("H3") predicts that there is no statistically significant difference between the political ambition of woman-identifying undergraduate students in non-policy- and politics-related majors and the political ambition of man-identifying undergraduate students in non-policy- and politics-related majors. H3 is based on the prediction that students who do not pursue policy- or politics-related studies may have minimal interest in pursuing elected office. In other words, there may not be a gender gap among these students because the young men and women are equally uninterested in public office.

Broadly, the motivation for this research is simple: representation matters. Young people internalize the appearance of the elected officials they see. A 2022 study found that of more than 1,600 children, 66 percent drew men when asked to draw their perceptions of politics (Bos et al.). Equal representation of genders in public office is critical for empowering younger generations to get involved in politics and make change. If young women are less inclined to enter elections, leading to disproportionately low representation of women in office, a cycle begins. Women also tend to be more effective in office than their male counterparts: nine percent more federal spending is brought home when there is a woman representing a district in Congress compared to when a man is representing the district—an extra \$88 per capita per year (Anzia & Berry, 2011). As undergraduate students explore potential career paths and delve into their interests, they should feel empowered to pursue any path that they choose, regardless of its gender makeup.

This thesis serves to expand upon the existing research on the gender gap in political ambition by clarifying the gap at the undergraduate level and determining whether the gap is specific to students with a demonstrated interest in policy and politics, based on major. By contributing to the body of literature on this topic, the research will help to inform programs encouraging women to enter politics and guide programs focused on this work at the university level, in particular.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abstract

Women continue to be underrepresented in public offices, despite similar success rates in fundraising and election outcomes. Thus, women's underrepresentation may be attributed to a

disinclination to run for office in the first place. To explore the relationship between gender and political ambition (consideration of running for elected office), this literature review provides an overview and discussion of several relevant observational and experimental studies on the topic. The studies show a significant gender gap in political ambition in which men are more likely to consider running for public office than women, persistent across several life stages and professions. The findings also suggest multiple mediating mechanisms at play, including gender socialization, gaps in encouragement of men and women to run for office, perception of elections, and differences in self-efficacy. These results have important implications for programs attempting to target and narrow the gender gaps in political ambition and public office, though more research is needed on specific populations, such as undergraduate students, and on the progression of political ambition over time.

Introduction

Research shows women win elections just as often as men when they choose to run for public office (Dolan, 2014). Thus, the outcomes of elections do not explain the persistent gender gap among public officials. Women only represented approximately a quarter of Members of Congress in the most recent session, despite representing more than half of the general population (Pew Research Center, 2021). Although women can win, research suggests they may feel less inclined to run in the first place (Fulton et al., 2006; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2013). Researchers refer to this propensity to run for elective positions as “political ambition.”

Political ambition can be broadly defined as having considered running for elected office. However, researchers use a variety of definitions and measures across different studies. Bos et al. (2022) defined political ambition in children based on the number of political careers they

expressed interest in relative to the total number of careers they were interested in. Fox and Lawless (2005) used the phrase “nascent political ambition” to describe the “potential interest” in pursuing elected office that occurs before one enters an election. In another study, Fox and Lawless defined political ambition based on individuals’ likelihood of considering running for elected office and their interest in seeking office (2012). The consideration of and interest in seeking elected office underscore definitions across the available literature, though measures demonstrating these concepts vary.

Gender—specifically the identities of man and woman—is the central independent variable in this research area. Researchers have taken several approaches to understanding the mechanisms by which gender shapes political ambition, such as gender socialization (Bos et al., 2022), encouragement to run for office (Fox & Lawless, 2005), and perception of competitiveness in elections (Schneider et al., 2016). Gender socialization can come in the form of exposure to political information, encouragement to consider politics as a career option, and engagement in competition-focused activities like organized sports (Lawless & Fox, 2013). Young men may be encouraged to run for office more often than women (Lawless & Fox, 2013). Women may perceive elections as more competitive than men (Lawless & Fox, 2012). These variables are generally understood to be mediating factors between the independent variable, gender, and the dependent variable, political ambition.

This literature review seeks to collect and examine the existing body of literature on the subject to explore the research question, “What is the relationship between gender and political ambition?” The following paragraphs will explore research collected from relevant databases and analyze commonalities and differences among results of various studies, as well as the need for

further research. The objective of conducting this review is to develop informed conclusions to better contextualize efforts to close the gender gap in political ambition and elected office.

Methods

This literature review involved a search of relevant databases, including JSTOR and ProQuest Political Science, for articles examining the relationship between gender and political ambition. Search terms included “gender,” “women,” “political ambition,” “gender gap,” “elected office,” and “running for office.” Boolean operators used in conjunction with keywords, such as “(gender OR women) AND ‘political ambition,’” refined results. Inclusion criteria included: (1) published in 2002 or more recently; (2) free full text available through University of Massachusetts Amherst; (3) published in a peer-reviewed journal; and (4) demonstrated a focus on gender and political ambition. Relevant studies published by universities, such as Lawless and Fox’s 2017 study, “The Trump Effect,” published with American University, were exceptions to the “peer-reviewed journal” inclusion criterion. Systematic reviews and meta analyses were excluded except to find further literature. University of Massachusetts Amherst faculty members in relevant fields provided suggestions for literature to include.

Results

Connecting Gender and Political Ambition

There are several mediating factors that may explain the demonstrated connection between gender and political ambition. Gendered political socialization, for example, describes children’s internalization of gender stereotypes and the disparities in exposure to political information and career prospects that impact children’s political ambition (Bos et al., 2022). The lack of representation of women in politics and subsequent perception of politics as a male-dominated field are significant factors in gendered political socialization and political

ambition as young women age (Bos et al., 2022). Young men are more likely to receive encouragement to consider elected office than young women (Lawless & Fox, 2013). The prospect of engaging in a competitive election can also deter women from running (Kanthak & Woon, 2015; Lawless & Fox, 2012). Each of these mediating factors, individually and in aggregate, may impact women's levels of political ambition.

Overview of Findings

This literature review examines the research question: What is the relationship between gender and political ambition? The body of literature shows a significant relationship between gender and political ambition, with women showing lower levels of political ambition than their man-identifying counterparts. Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless, who have done extensive research on gender and political ambition, found women had a probability of running for office of 0.56 compared to 0.70 for men (2004). In a later study, Fox and Lawless found that men were twice as likely to have thought about running for office "many times;" women were 20 percent more likely to never have considered running for office; and men were two-thirds more likely to plan to run than women (2014). Fox and Lawless also found women were 45 percent more likely to say they would definitely never run for office (2014). Fulton et al. found that even among state legislators, women were 10 percent less likely to express ambition for running for a United States House of Representatives seat (2006). From children to adults in political careers, research shows women have significantly lower levels of political ambition than their male counterparts. One study, a student thesis focused on the undergraduate population at the University of Connecticut, found that the gender gap in political ambition shifted in the opposite direction, with results indicating surveyed women had more political ambition than surveyed men (Gates, 2021). Though there is general consensus among the available literature regarding the presence

of a gender gap, studies differ in their examination of the mediating factors connecting gender and levels of political ambition.

Socialization and Encouragement

Young women are socialized to not consider politics as a career and are less often encouraged to consider running for elected office; these factors can significantly diminish political ambition (Bos et al., 2022; Fox & Lawless, 2005; Lawless & Fox, 2013; Fox & Lawless, 2004). Bos et al. (2022) surveyed 1,604 children from grades first through sixth across four regions of the United States (greater Boston area, upstate New York, northeastern Ohio, and New Orleans). They examined the research questions: How do children perceive gender in politics? Do these perceptions impact political interest and ambition? The survey explored children's perceptions of politics. Bos et al. found that children primarily (66 percent) drew male figures when asked to draw perceptions of politics, while only 13 percent of students drew a woman. With age, girls were more likely to draw men as political leaders. Levels of interest in political activities (2.55/2.63) and in political careers (1.03/1.32) were lower for girls than boys. These findings demonstrate the socialization of young boys and girls to see politics as a male-dominated field and the simultaneous lack of political ambition among young girls.

Fox and Lawless (2005) surveyed 3,800 men and women, or "potential candidates," to explore the research question: What factors contribute to nascent political ambition? Fox and Lawless used the phrase "nascent political ambition" to describe the "potential interest" in pursuing elected office that occurs before one enters an election. They found that minority status (including women) and a politicized upbringing, a form of socialization, were the second and third most significant predictors of participants' political ambition behind "strategic considerations." The average woman researchers surveyed had a 49 percent predicted probability

of considering elected office, compared to 62 percent for men. Fox and Lawless also found a racial gap in political ambition of about 15 percentage points, with Black participants being less likely than their white counterparts to consider elected office. Those with a politicized upbringing had greater likelihood of considering candidacy, with an average increase of 17 percentage points; experience running for a position as a student added another seven percentage points.

In a later study (2013), Fox and Lawless surveyed 2,100 college students aged 18 to 25 about their exposure to politics and other factors impacting political ambition. They sought to answer the research question: Does the gender gap in political ambition exist at the college level? They found that men and women had similar levels of exposure to politics in their upbringing, though men were significantly more likely to have discussed politics at meal times. Fox and Lawless found that 29 percent of women respondents, compared to 40 percent of men, had been encouraged by a parental figure to consider politics. Moreover, women (18 percent) reported more often than men (13 percent) that their parents would prefer they pursue a career in a field other than politics. This gap persisted across other relationships, too: men were more likely to receive encouragement to run for office later in life from grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and friends. Fox and Lawless found that across a wide range of categories, men had significantly greater exposure to politics and political information than women. Men were more likely to take government classes in college, discuss politics in class, participate in College Democrats or Republicans, run for a student office position, hold a student office position, and discuss politics with friends. Fox and Lawless examined participation in organized sports as a mediator and found that though it does not eliminate the gender gap in political ambition, women's participation in sports narrows the gap;

the 20 percent overall gender gap they found among surveyed college students dropped to 11 percent between women who played organized sports and men who did not.

In an earlier study, Fox & Lawless (2004) surveyed 2,036 men and women to answer the research question: What factors explain the gender gap in public office? The survey focused on measuring the level of encouragement adults received to consider running for office. Fox and Lawless found that women who received no encouragement had a probability of considering running for office of 20 percent, while men who had not received encouragement had a probability of 32 percent. The disparately high level of political ambition among men, without consideration of encouragement to run, indicates that encouragement can not fully explain the gender gap in political ambition.

Perception of Competition and Qualifications

Research indicates that women's perception of elections as competitive and their lower levels of self-efficacy also contribute to the gender gap in political ambition (Schneider et al., 2016; Fulton et al., 2006; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Fox & Lawless, 2004). Building on Fox and Lawless's 2013 study, Schneider et al. (2016) examined political ambition at the undergraduate level. They conducted three studies: a classroom study of 413 college students at a Midwestern public university, an online survey of 327 college students, and an online survey of 353 adults. The classroom study involved asking students to rate how a career in Congress would fulfill goals related to power (e.g., self-promotion) and communal values (e.g., serving humanity), as well as how enjoyable these tasks would be. The online surveys included a range of questions measuring political ambition and participants' interest in various tasks of either power or communal nature. The classroom study yielded results confirming that students tend to see the role of Members of Congress as more power-based than communal-based. In both online studies,

Schneider et al. found that men expressed greater interest in power-related tasks than women (mean = 2.25 and 2.12 for students; mean = 2.41 and 2.28 for adults), while men and women expressed similar levels of interest in communal-focused tasks. Women also showed significantly lower interest in or tolerance of conflict across both online studies. Finally, Schneider et al. found a significant gender gap in political ambition among both college students and adults and found that the previously discussed factors, such as conflict tolerance and interest in power-related tasks, were positively correlated with political ambition.

Fulton et al. (2006) examined data from the Candidate Emergence Survey, a mail survey of state legislators with 875 respondents. The survey included questions about ambitions for higher office and perceptions of costs of public office, with the goal of answering the research question: Do men and women differ in their decision making calculus for higher office? Fulton et al. found that women generally have lower political ambition but put greater weight on the benefits of seeking office, leading them to be just as likely to seek congressional office as men because of a tendency towards strategic thinking.

In a 2012 study, Lawless and Fox surveyed 4,000 adults, or “potential candidates” (lawyers, business leaders, educators, and political activists). They explored the research question: Is there a gender gap in political ambition for adults who are “potential candidates”? Lawless and Fox found that women were more likely than men to perceive both local and congressional elections as highly competitive (55 percent of women, 39 percent of men for local elections; 62 percent of women, 50 percent of men for congressional elections). Women were also less likely to believe that women won elections and raised money as often or as much as similarly situated men. Lawless and Fox found that women were 50 percent more likely to think it would be “very unlikely” that they would win their first campaign, and among men and

women that perceived themselves as not at all qualified to run for office, women were significantly less likely to consider running.

In Fox and Lawless's 2004 survey, they found that self-perceived qualifications were the only statistically significant mediator between gender and political ambition. Men were 22 percent more likely to consider themselves "somewhat qualified," 11 percent more likely to consider themselves "qualified," and four percent more likely to consider themselves "very qualified." As these numbers demonstrate, the gender gap in self-perceived qualifications narrows at higher levels of perceived qualification.

Summary of Results

The available body of literature shows a gender gap in political ambition across several life stages and career types. The literature suggests a range of possible mediating factors to explain this relationship, including gender socialization, encouragement from peers and adults, distaste for competition and conflict, perception of qualifications, and low self-efficacy. Each of these factors, and more likely a combination of them, may decrease women's likelihood of considering running for elected office.

Discussion & Conclusion

Contributions to the Field

The literature demonstrates a persistent gender gap in political ambition (Bos et al., 2022; Fox & Lawless, 2004; Fox & Lawless, 2005; Fox & Lawless, 2010; Fox & Lawless, 2014; Fulton et al., 2006; Kanthak & Woon, 2015; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2013; Lawless & Fox, 2017; Preece, 2016; Schneider et al., 2016). There is one exception to this consensus in the existing literature: a student thesis conducted in 2021 at the University of Connecticut found that surveyed women were more likely to want to run for office than surveyed

men (Gates). Gates surveyed 349 students—188 women and 161 men—in COMM 100, an introductory communications and General Education course at the University of Connecticut. Students self-selected to participate in the survey and were majority (79 percent) first- and second-year students. Gates found that 81 percent of women and 70 percent of men had plans to run for office at some point. These numbers are strikingly high compared to other recent studies, such as a survey of college students by Fox and Lawless (2013), which found that only 14 percent of men and seven percent of women had definite plans to run for office.

There are several potential explanations for the results of this study, which deviate from the rest of the existing research. Volunteer bias may be contributing to a higher proportion of politically ambitious respondents than the average population, as politically motivated students may be more likely to choose to take the survey. The small sample size and nature of the population, undergraduate students in New England, a hub of higher education and relative wealth, may also contribute to outsized levels of political ambition. The difference in results between Fox and Lawless's 2013 study and Gates's 2021 findings may also be related to the increase in representation of women in politics, including Vice President Kamala Harris's election and Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Warren's presidential candidacies, among others, which may have increased young women's likelihood to consider politics as a career. Research also suggests an increase in women's political ambition may be a response to former president Donald Trump's election; Fox and Lawless found that 28 percent of women in their survey considered running for office after the 2016 election, though they had never previously considered it (2017).

The studies showing a gender gap in political ambition show a range of underlying causes, including gender socialization, gaps in encouragement to run for office, and differences

in self-efficacy. Research on these potential mediating factors can inform programming intended to close the gender gap in political ambition by targeting specific gaps, such as exposure to political information. These efforts are further informed by the range of life stages covered in the existing literature, from children, to undergraduate students, to the general adult population and “potential candidates,” such as lawyers. Researchers found a gender gap in political ambition at all of these stages. Among children, researchers found a gender gap of nine percentage points (Bos et al., 2022). Among college students, researchers found a gap of 20 percentage points, though results across studies of undergraduates are inconsistent (Fox & Lawless, 2013). Among adults, researchers found a gender gap of 16 percentage points (Lawless & Fox, 2012). The ability to target specific factors contributing to the gender gap at these various life stages and to determine when the gap emerges is more effective than targeting any factor individually. The body of research makes these efforts possible.

Strengths of Existing Research

The large sample sizes of the included studies strengthen the results. Ten of the 14 included studies had more than 1,000 participants (Bos et al., 2022; Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010; Fox & Lawless, 2004; Fox & Lawless, 2005; Fox & Lawless, 2010; Fox & Lawless, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2013; Lawless & Fox, 2017; Schneider et al., 2016). Eight had more than 2,000 participants (Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010; Fox & Lawless, 2004; Fox & Lawless, 2005; Fox & Lawless, 2010; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2013; Lawless & Fox, 2017). The large sample sizes lower variance levels, meaning the observed levels of political ambition and other measured factors are closer to the true values of the population than they would be with a smaller sample.

The literature also includes a range of study designs, including observational surveys (Bos et al., 2022; Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010; Fox & Lawless, 2004; Fox & Lawless, 2005; Fox & Lawless, 2010; Fox & Lawless, 2014; Fulton et al., 2006; Gates, 2021; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2013; Lawless & Fox, 2017) and experimental surveys (Kanthak & Woon, 2015; Preece, 2016; Schneider et al., 2016). Both study types allow for close examination of the impact of various mediating factors on the relationship between gender and political ambition. Experimental designs are particularly helpful for controlling for potential confounding variables affecting results. All of the experimental studies found a gender gap in political ambition related to factors such as positive reinforcement and a disinclination toward competition (Kanthak & Woon, 2015; Preece, 2016; Schneider et al., 2016).

Limitations of Existing Research

The conclusions are limited by the study designs, as surveys capture a moment in time, but not the potential long-term impact of individual mediating factors nor changes over time in the gender gap in political ambition. The majority of included studies are observational, which limits the ability to make causal claims regarding gender, political ambition, and potential mediating factors. The studies also vary in the life stages they capture, making it difficult to determine the point at which political ambition emerges and declines. For example, Bos et al. found a gender gap in political ambition among children as young as first grade (2022). Lawless and Fox found a gender gap in political ambition among college-educated adults in full-time careers (2017). Other studies examined life stages in between children and adults, such as college students (Gates, 2021; Lawless & Fox, 2013; Schneider et al., 2016). Though researchers found a gender gap in political ambition at all stages, the cross-sectional nature of the individual surveys

makes it difficult to grasp how political ambition changes over time and, thus, how the gender gap in political ambition changes with age beyond the snapshots the studies provide.

There are other potential sources of bias that should always be considered when examining a body of literature. For example, publication bias describes the bias that results from the fact that studies are more likely to be published if they show significant findings in favor of a hypothesis. In the case of political ambition, it is possible that studies that did not find a gender gap in political ambition, or that found no impact of factors like socialization, are less likely to be published and thus less likely to be included in this review.

What's Next?

The existing literature provides a solid foundation for establishing the presence of a persistent gender gap in political ambition across several mediating factors and life stages. Moving forward, research should focus on contextualizing and expanding upon these conclusions. Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox, along with others, began the exploration of the gender gap in political ambition at the college level. Future research should focus on this population, since it represents the stage in between gendered socialization that occurs during childhood and skill-building and career exploration that occurs in adulthood. Undergraduate students are at a crucial time in their academic and career trajectories, and understanding how the gender gap in political ambition presents at this age is an important first step in efforts to narrow it.

A prospective cohort-based study, examining the political ambition of a randomly sampled group beginning in childhood and continuing through adulthood, would be the most effective method of exploring changes in political ambition over time. This type of study, coupled with the existing body of literature, would help to inform programs attempting to target

the gender gap in political ambition and public office. It would also be helpful to compile data on the effectiveness of existing versions of these programs at various life stages, such as undergraduate programs designed to provide young women with professional development skills in politics. This review shows a demonstrated gender gap in political ambition and discusses the forces behind it. Upcoming research efforts should seek to take this a step further by examining efforts to act upon the data and refine measures of factors at different life stages.

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Schneider, M. C., Holman, M. R., Diekmann, A. B., & McAndrew, T. (2016). Power, Conflict, and Community: How Gendered Views of Political Power Influence Women's Political Ambition. *Political Psychology*, 37(4), 515–531. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44132905>

METHODS

The primary research method will be a survey of undergraduates, including questions on demographics, interest in elected office, and political engagement. The survey will ask participants how many times they have been told they should run for office, among other questions, to measure external factors related to political ambition. I will use Qualtrics to conduct the survey.

I will survey approximately 400 students from the target population of undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I will target students in general education courses with the goal of surveying a population that is representative of the broader undergraduate student body. I will use a chi-square test to analyze the relationship between gender and political ambition, comparing categorical variables of low, medium, and high political ambition (based on quantitative values related to the number of times one has considered running for office, among other things) with gender and major (policy- or politics-related and non-policy- or -politics-related).

I constructed the independent and dependent variables and their corresponding measures and survey items using a range of existing research on political ambition. The chi-square test will allow me to analyze the relationships among independent variables (gender and major type) and several variables that may impact and/or measure political ambition. Using this method, I will explore how the measures of political ambition, such as considering running for office and engaging with political news or work, relate to one another.

SURVEY

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled Socialized for Success: Exploring the Gender Gap in Political Ambition at the Undergraduate Level. This study is being done by Tegan Oliver at the University of Massachusetts Amherst as part of an honors thesis project. You were selected to participate in this study because of your enrollment in a selected General Education course at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The purpose of this research study is to identify whether there is a gender gap in political ambition among undergraduates at the University of Massachusetts Amherst with the goal of extrapolating to broader undergraduate populations.

You will be asked to complete a series of questions regarding your demographic information, interest in elected office, and political engagement. The questions will be multiple choice with a few open-ended questions. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes.

While you may not directly benefit from this research, we hope that your participation may help contribute to the body of knowledge on the gender gap in political ambition.

We believe there are minimal risks associated with this research study; however, a risk of breach of confidentiality always exists and we have taken the steps to minimize this risk. To the best of our ability your answers in this study will remain confidential. We will minimize any risks by limiting access to survey responses to researchers directly involved in the study.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher, Tegan Oliver (toliver@umass.edu). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or humansubjects@ora.umass.edu.

By clicking “I agree” below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read this consent form and agree to participate in this research study. You are free to skip any question that you choose. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

Demographics

What is your class year?

- First-year
- Second-year
- Third-year
- Fourth-year
- Beyond fourth-year

What is your primary major?

[list of all undergraduate majors available at UMass Amherst]

What is your secondary major (if applicable)?

[list of all undergraduate majors available at UMass Amherst]

Which best describes you?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to disclose
- Additional gender category/identity not listed

Which best describes you? (Select all that apply)

- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- White or Caucasian
- A race/ethnicity not listed here
- Prefer not to disclose

Which *best* describes your ideology?

- Liberal
- Moderate
- Conservative
- I don't know

Which political party do you identify with?

- Democrat
- Independent
- Republican
- Other
- I don't know

[branching logic] Do you consider yourself a strong or weak Democrat?

- Strong
- Weak

[branching logic] Do you consider yourself a strong or weak Republican?

- Strong
- Weak

Interest in Elected Office

Have you considered running for office?

- Yes, I have seriously considered it.
- Yes, it has crossed my mind.
- No, I have never thought about it.

Do you plan to run for office in the future?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Not sure

[branching logic for Unlikely/Very unlikely] If you are unlikely to run for office, why not?
(Select all that apply)

- I am not interested in politics
- I have other career plans

- I would not be qualified to run
- I do not believe I would win
- It would be too much of a financial risk
- Other [please explain]

Has someone suggested that you should run for office?

- Yes
- No

[branching logic] Who suggested that you should run for office? (Select all that apply)

- An elected official
- A non-elected political official or activist
- A friend, family member or acquaintance professor
- Someone else [please specify]

Based on where you see yourself in your career in the next 10-15 years, how qualified do you feel you will be to run for office?

- Very qualified
- Somewhat qualified
- Somewhat unqualified
- Not at all qualified

If you were to become a candidate for public office, how likely do you think it is that you would win your first campaign?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Not sure

What is your attitude toward running for office in the future?

- I would definitely like to run in the future
- I might run if the opportunity presented itself
- I would not rule it out, but currently no interest
- I would never run for office

If you were to run for office in the future, at which level of government would you likely run?

- Local
- State
- Federal

Political Engagement

Are you registered to vote?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Sometimes it's hard to get out to vote. Were you able to vote in the 2022 midterm election?

- Yes
- No

[branching logic] If you voted in the 2022 midterm election, which party did you vote for for members of Congress (Senators/Representatives)?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent

Sometimes it's hard to get out to vote. Were you able to vote in the 2022 primary election?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever volunteered for a political campaign?

- Yes
- No, but would consider it in the future
- No, and would not consider it in the future

Have you ever contacted a public official?

- Yes
- No

How often do you intentionally read, watch, or listen to political news?

- Daily
- A few times a week
- Once a week
- Once every few weeks
- Rarely

How frequently did you talk about politics with your parent(s)/guardian(s) growing up?

- Rarely

- Sometimes
- Frequently
- All the time

Who controls the Senate as of the 2022 midterm elections?

- Democrats
- Republicans

Who is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court?

- (2-3 justices, famous political name (Kamala Harris))

[open-ended] If you are interested in the idea of elected office but don't see yourself running, why is that? What factors do you believe make you hesitant to run for office?

[open-ended] What qualities or skills make a person qualified to run for elected office?

[open-ended] Do you have a role model in politics?

EVALUATION

499 T/P Goals:

- Conduct a survey of 400 undergraduate students at UMass Amherst.
- Aggregate the survey results.
- Using the survey results, analyze the relationship between gender and political ambition using a chi-square test.
- Write a summary and analysis of the results in the form of a final research paper.
- Create a research presentation summarizing results.
- Present the research findings with the Thesis Committee.
- Present the research findings at the Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference.

I will send biweekly updates to my Thesis Committee regarding my progress and request feedback as appropriate. I will use a shared Google Drive folder to facilitate feedback throughout

the semester. My Thesis Committee will assess the viability of my research based on the feasibility of my plan for data collection and statistical analysis.

COMMUNICATION

I will meet biweekly with my Committee Chair to provide an update on my progress and receive feedback on my work. For each meeting, I will complete the planned work and upload it to a shared Google Drive folder for review. I will make an agenda for each meeting, including questions as appropriate. Every other meeting (once per month), I will meet with my second Committee Member to provide an update and solicit feedback. Between these biweekly meetings, I will commit approximately 15 hours to writing and data analysis.

TIMELINE

Manuscript Outline: February 13, 2022

Draft Introduction: February 20, 2022

Draft Summary of Existing Literature: February 27, 2022

Draft Methods: March 6, 2022

Draft Results and Conclusion: April 3, 2022

First Draft Manuscript: April 10, 2022

Second Draft Manuscript: April 17, 2022

Third Draft Manuscript and Presentation: April 24, 2022

Final Manuscript: May 1, 2022

Presentation to Thesis Committee: May 8, 2022

COMMENTS

Musgrave, Robert P (Honors Prog Dir) | Student+Faculty | Approval Confirmation | 11/22/22 09:13

I might consider changing the name of the survey in the consent form so that you don't prime desirability/response bias--perhaps something that avoids "gender" and "ambition" and instead just looks at "attitudes" would work better as a title.
