Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition

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Abstract: Based on survey responses from a national random sample of nearly 4,000 high school (ages 13 to 17) and college (ages 18 to 25) students, we uncover a dramatic gender gap in political ambition. This finding serves as striking evidence that the gap is present well before women and men enter the professions from which most candidates emerge. We then use political socialization – which we gauge through a myriad of socializing agents and early life experiences – as a lens through which to explain the individual-level differences we uncover. Our analysis reveals that parental encouragement, politicized educational and peer experiences, participation in competitive activities, and a sense of self-confidence propel interest in running for office. But on each of these dimensions, women, particularly once they are in college, are at a disadvantage. By identifying when and why gender differences in interest in running for office materialize, we uncover the origins of the gender gap in political ambition, which until now had been elusive. Taken together, our results cast a cloud over prospects for gender parity in U.S. political institutions, and suggest that concerns about substantive and symbolic representation will likely remain serious for generations to come.

Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition

For decades, one question has guided much of the research on gender and elections in the United States: Why do so few women occupy elective office? In an attempt to answer this question, gender politics scholars have employed a multi-faceted and eclectic approach. They have surveyed and interviewed candidates and elected officials to assess levels of discrimination against women. They have combed fundraising receipts and vote totals to determine how women fare at the polls. And they have analyzed institutional barriers, such as the incumbency advantage and women's proportions in the professions that lead to political careers, to uncover structural obstacles women face. Yet they have found that despite women's gains in the educational and professional spheres that precede a career politics, as well as evidence that points to broad public acceptance of female candidates, women remain significantly under-represented at all levels of elective office in the United States. When the 113th Congress convened in January 2013, 81% of its members were men. This places the United States 95th in the world in the percentage of women serving in the national legislature (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2013).

This paradox has led scholars to identify the candidate emergence process as one the biggest obstacles to women's numeric representation (e.g., Sanbonmatsu 2002; Carroll 1994).[1] Indeed, data from the Citizen Political Ambition Studies – three national surveys of women and men who work in the professions from which most candidates for elective office emerge – reveal a striking gender gap in political ambition (Lawless and Fox 2012; 2010; 2005). Women are less likely than similarly

[1] Focusing on the candidate emergence process is a result of the fact that, over the course of the last few decades, scholars have developed a much fuller understanding of the extent to which other factors impede women's election to public office. The explanatory power of overt discrimination, for example, has been largely discarded. Female candidates tend to fare at least as well as their male counterparts, both in terms of vote totals and dollars raised (e.g., Fox 2010; Lawless and Pearson 2008; Smith and Fox 2001; Dolan 1998). Situational factors have also lost some of their strength in accounting for the low proportion of women in politics; women have substantially increased their presence in the pipeline professions that lead to political careers (Catalyst 2008; American Bar Association 2006). Even the power of institutional inertia is less dramatic than previously thought. Although incumbency continues to pose a serious obstacle (Palmer and Simon 2008), combating incumbency with term limits has not improved women's representation (Kousser 2005; see also Carroll and Jenkins 2003).

situated men to consider running for office; less likely to run for office; less like to believe they are qualified to seek office; less likely to receive encouragement to run for office; and more likely to perceive a competitive, biased electoral environment (see also Fulton et al 2006).

Although the existing work on candidate emergence identifies and explicates the contours of the gender gap in political ambition among well-established potential candidates, virtually no political science research examines its origins. We are very limited in the conclusions we can draw about the roots of the gap or the manner in which early life experiences shape it. This omission in the literature is critical because a general interest in, or openness to, running for office early in life can set the stage for a political candidacy decades later. Young people's career goals, after all, tend to be excellent predictors of the occupations they ultimately attain (Ashby and Schoon 2010; Mello 2008; Trice and McClellan 1994; 1993). Not only are boys and girls with aspirations for a professional job more likely to pursue higher education and achieve a professional career as adults (Schoon and Polek 2011), but there is also a strong correlation between specific job aspirations at age 16 with those attained by age 35 (Schoon and Parsons 2002; Brown et al 2001; Schoon 2001). Many gendered attitudes about running for office, then, may result from deeply embedded socialized norms that are conveyed long before women and men find themselves in the candidate eligibility pool. Yet we simply do not know when young women and men's political ambition diverges, the extent to which it does so, or the factors that contribute to it. If the seeds of political ambition are planted at an early age, then gaining a complete understanding of the gender gap in ambition demands that we pinpoint and explicate its origins.

This paper provides the first investigation to do just that. Based on survey responses from a national random sample of nearly 4,000 high school (ages 13 to 17) and college (ages 18 to 25) students, we uncover a substantial gender gap in political ambition. This is striking evidence that the gap is, in fact, present well before women and men enter the professions from which most

candidates emerge. We then use political socialization – which we gauge through a myriad of socializing agents and early life experiences – as a lens through which to explain the individual-level differences we uncover. Our analysis reveals that parental encouragement, politicized educational and peer experiences, participation in competitive activities, and a sense of self-confidence are associated with interest in running for office. But on each of these dimensions, women, particularly once they are in college, are at a disadvantage. By identifying when and why gender differences in interest in running for office materialize, we uncover the origins of the gender gap in political ambition, which until now had been elusive. Taken together, our results cast a cloud over prospects for gender parity in U.S. political institutions, and suggest that concerns about substantive and symbolic representation will likely remain serious for generations to come.[2]

Studying Political Ambition Early in Life: The Research Design

For the last forty years, scholars have provided compelling evidence of the transmission of political attitudes and activism through key agents of political socialization, such as family, education, peer associations, and media (for a review, see Stoker and Bass 2011; Jennings 2007; Sapiro 2004; Sears and Brown 2003). Studies that investigate the manner in which socializing agents among youth populations affects political behavior, however, do not examine political ambition. Our canvass of major data sets available on youth – from a variety of disciplines and archived through both ICPSR and Roper – uncovered no existing data set that includes questions about interest in running for office as a career goal or aspiration. So, even though the extant research can

[2] Scholars have uncovered evidence, at both the national and state levels, that male and female legislators' priorities, preferences, and activities differ (e.g., Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez 2007; Swers 2002; Thomas 1994); and that women's inclusion infuses into the legislative system a style of leadership that emphasizes congeniality and cooperation, as opposed to hierarchy (Weikart et al 2007; Rosenthal 1998; Kathlene 1995; 1994). Political scientists also point to symbolic effects that women's presence in positions of political power confers to female citizens (see Mansbridge 1999). With more women in positions of political power, not only would gender salient issues receive greater attention, debate, and deliberation, but the government would also gain a greater sense of political legitimacy.

shed light on the relationship between early socialization and many types of political attitudes and behavior, it cannot speak to political ambition or the role gender plays in its formation.[3]

Whereas the literature pertaining to early socialization does not consider political ambition, the candidate emergence literature is limited in uncovering the origins of the gender gap for at least two reasons of its own. First, it focuses on samples of adults who are already established professionally. In most cases, respondents are actual candidates and office holders, all of whom, by definition, exhibited political ambition when they entered their first political contest (e.g., Maestas et al 2006; Gaddie 2004; Canon 1993). But even the research that analyzes potential candidates relies exclusively on adults' retrospective assessments of their early life experiences (Lawless and Fox 2010; 2005; see also Stone and Maisel 2003).[4] Scholars of political psychology and attitude formation, however, warn about the substantive and methodological problems involved in relying on survey questions that ask people to reflect on previous time periods. Analyses of panel data show, for example, that recollections about political beliefs "correspond poorly to attitudes as originally expressed" (Markus 1986, 41-2; see also Schuman and Rodgers 2004). Further, well-documented errors in terms of the relationship between memory and self – such as absent-mindedness,

[3] We did find two surveys that asked young adults about their interest in running for office. A 2009 national survey of students taking the Law School Admission Test revealed that male and female pre-law students had similar life goals, such as earning money and having a family. But women were only half as likely as men to report that they would "definitely" consider using a law degree as a stepping stone to a political career in the future (10% of women, compared to 20% of men). Women were almost twice as likely as men to write off that possibility altogether. A 2003 study of 18 to 24 year old college students uncovered similar findings. Male and female undergraduates were equally likely to participate politically, but women were 40% less likely than men to imagine running for office in the future. Although these data suggest that the gender gap in political ambition is in place by young adulthood, neither survey included questions that provide insight into, or allow for an analysis of, the origins of gender differences in interest in running for office. We thank Russell Schaffer and Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions for the LSAT data and David King for the data from his 2003 study.

[4] Prior to the Citizen Political Ambition Studies, research on political ambition tended to focus on structural circumstances involved in running for a particular office at a particular time (e.g., Maestas et al 2006; Stone and Maisel 2003; Rohde 1979; Black 1972; Schlesinger 1966). The paradigm assumes that, when faced with a favorable political opportunity structure, a potential candidate will enter a race. But if the notion of a candidacy has never crossed an individual's mind, then he/she never faces a political opportunity structure. Traditional gender socialization provides ample reason to suspect that women and men's attitudes and experiences differ such that they will not be equally likely to consider a candidacy and ultimately face the political opportunity structure.

misattribution, and bias – can frequently lead to versions of past life experiences that do not accurately reflect reality (Schacter 1999; see also Schacter, Chiao and Mitchell 2003).

Second, even if we are cautious when interpreting reflections of previous experiences, the age distribution of women and men in the candidate eligibility pool does not allow us to leverage the data to shed light on when the gender gap in ambition emerges. The average age of the potential candidates in the Citizen Political Ambition Studies is the 50 years old. So, even though the 2011 survey reveals that a gender gap in potential candidates' ambition exists among respondents under the age of 35 (Lawless and Fox 2012), and the 2001 survey uncovers a gender gap in ambition that is largest among those under the age of 40 (Lawless and Fox 2005), these cohort analyses are based on small samples. Moreover, hardly any of the respondents are younger than 30.

To account fully for the role early life experiences and political socialization play in generating the gender gap in political ambition, it is critical to survey respondents at a time that is more proximate to the original formation of attitudes about running for office, as opposed to relying on retrospective assessments of events that occurred decades earlier. Thus, we conducted the first national survey of high school and college students' political ambition. From September 27 – October 16, 2012, we surveyed a national random sample of 1,121 male and 1,042 female high school students (ages 13 to 17), and 1,020 male and 1,097 female college students (ages 18 to 25).[5] The survey allowed for an in-depth examination of whether a gender gap in political ambition exists among young people, as well as the factors that might contribute to or sustain it. More specifically,

[5] In carrying out this study, we contracted with GfK Custom Research LLC (formerly *Knowledge Networks*), which relies on a probability-based online non-volunteer access panel. Panel members are recruited using a statistically valid sampling method with a published sample frame of residential addresses that covers approximately 98 percent of U.S. households. The sample consists of about 50,000 adult members (ages 18 and older) and includes women and men who live in cell phone only households. In addition to the adult members, the sample also includes approximately 3,000 teens, ages 13 to 17, whose parents or legal guardians have provided consent, as well as several thousand individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 who are enrolled in college. In our case, panel members were supplemented with a companion sample of respondents from an opt-in web panel. The same screening criteria were used for both sample sources to identify the eligible sample for the survey, as well as to calibrate the surveys from the non-probability sample source and correct for sampling error and self-selection bias in the non-probability web panels. Political science journal publications based on GfK data attest to the quality of the sample and methodology (see Ansolabehere 2007; Berinksy 2007; Jacoby 2006).

we designed the survey so that we could operationalize the effects of political socialization on political ambition, which no prior empirical work had done.

Important for our purposes, the male and female respondents were very similar in race, religion, household income, region, and age (see Appendix A). As expected, women were slightly more likely than men to identify as Democrats, whereas men were more likely than women to identify as Republicans. But the few statistically significant gender differences within the sample were substantively small (and our multivariate analyses control for them). Accordingly, any gender gap in political ambition that we uncover does not result from socio-demographic differences between male and female respondents.[6]

Establishing the Gender Gap in Early Political Ambition

Similar to most adults, the majority of young people do not envision running for office. Among those who do, however, there is a substantial gender gap. Young women and men are not equally politically ambitious. We asked our respondents whether they ever thought that, someday, when they were older, they might want to run for any political office. Forty-one percent stated that the idea of running for an elective position had at least "crossed their mind." The data presented in Figure 1A, however, highlight a significant gender gap: men were almost twice as likely as women to have thought about running for office "many times," whereas women were roughly 20% more likely than men never to have considered it. Put somewhat differently, 35% of women, compared to 48% of men, considered running for office. When we turn to the question of young people's plans to run

[6] We restrict the sample in our empirical analyses and the description of the sample in Table 1 to college students and the 83% of high school students who plan to attend college (88% of female high school students and 81% of male high school students indicated plans to enroll in college post-graduation; gender difference significant at $p < .05$). Although the results of our analyses are generally comparable when we include the entire high school sample, the restricted sample is a better representation of what the next generation of potential candidates will look like; the overwhelming majority of elected officials at both the state and federal level hold college degrees. In fact, not one respondent – male or female – among the 17% of high school students who did not plan to attend college expressed "definite interest" in running for office in the future.

for office in the future, the prospects for women's full inclusion in electoral politics are just as bleak. Men were two-thirds more likely than women to report that they "definitely" plan to run for office at some point in the future. Women, on the other hand, were 45% more likely than men to assert that they would never run (see Figure 1B).

Figure 1A - The Gender Gap in Political Ambition:
Have you ever thought that, someday, when you're older, you might want to run for political office?

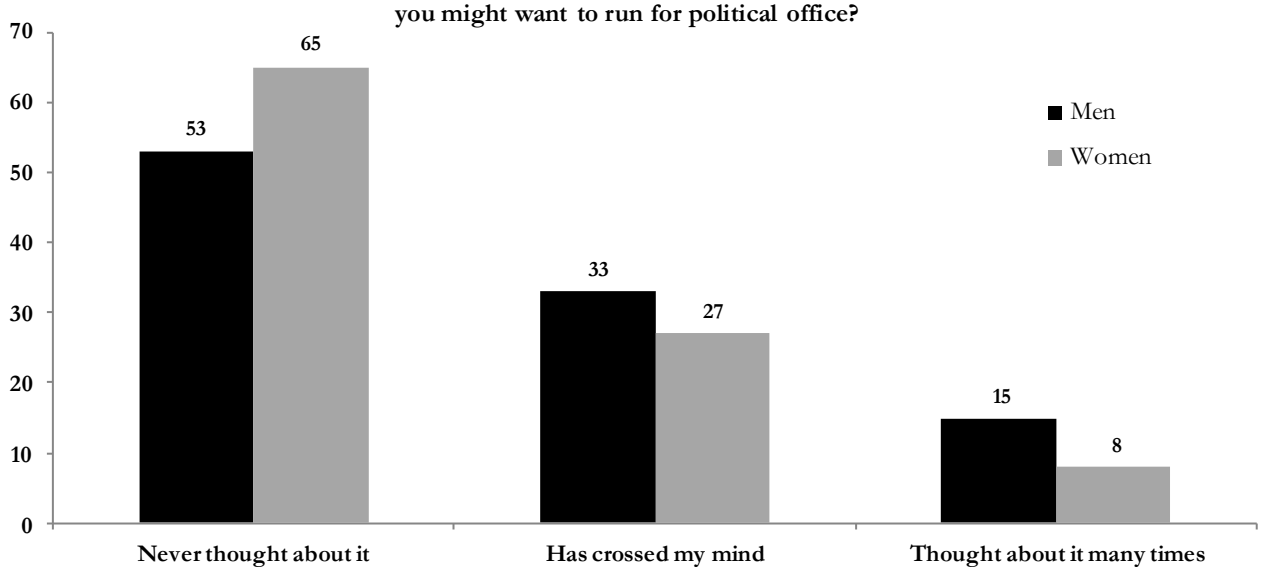
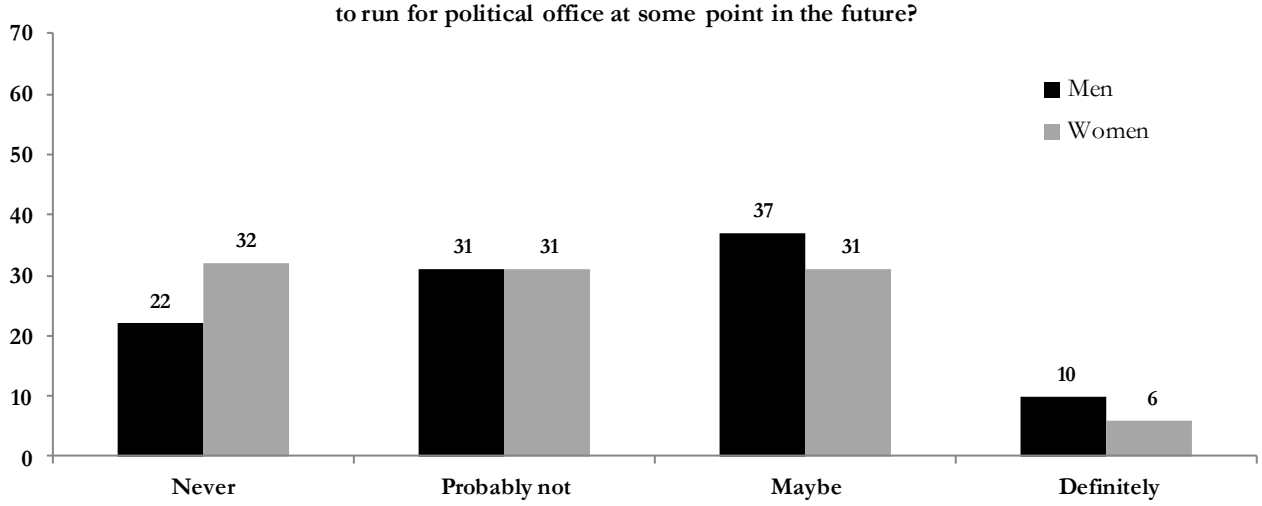


Figure 1B - Interest in Running for Office in the Future:
Even if you've never thought about it, how likely would you be to run for political office at some point in the future?



Notes: Data are based on responses from 1,923 men and 2,011 women, all of whom are either in college or plan to attend college. Bars represent the percentage of men and women who fall into each category. In all responses except "probably not," the gender gap is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

These gender differences are especially notable given that the notion of running for office may seem very far off in the minds of high school and college students. But we measured the gender gap not only by asking explicitly about the likelihood of a future candidacy, but also by asking respondents a series of questions about jobs they would most like to hold in the future. And here, too, our results reveal gender differences in political ambition.

In a first scenario, we presented respondents with four career options – business owner, teacher, mayor of a city or town, and salesperson – and asked them which they would most like to be, assuming that each paid the same amount of money. Although both women and men ranked owning a business and being a teacher as more desirable than serving as a mayor, men were almost two-thirds more likely than women to select mayor as their preferred job (see Figure 2A). When we asked respondents to indicate which of the four positions they would least like to hold, a substantial gender gap emerged as well; 43% of women, compared to 31% of men, reported that mayor was their least likely profession (this was the top answer for women).

We then asked respondents to indicate which of the following four higher echelon jobs they found most appealing: business executive, lawyer, school principal, or member of Congress. Once again, women were significantly more likely than men to eschew the possibility of a political career. The data presented in Figure 2B reveal that men were 60% more likely than women to select a position as a member of Congress. And 43% of women, compared to 33% of men, reported that serving in Congress was the least desirable professional option.

Finally, we provided respondents with a list of jobs and asked them to check off all they could imagine themselves holding in the future. The data reflect clear gendered occupational segregation. We uncovered gender gaps in receptivity toward the three political positions about which we asked, as well as a series of other careers that can be classified as either historically male or historically female. For all three public offices – president, member of Congress, and mayor – men

were at least one-third more likely than women to be open to the position. Men were more likely than women to be attracted to a career in business and science, whereas women were more likely than men to express interest in eventually being a teacher, nurse, or secretary. In fact, nearly twice as many female respondents were open to being a secretary as were open to serving in Congress.

Figure 2A - A Mayoral Career:
If the following jobs paid the same amount of money, which would you most like to be?

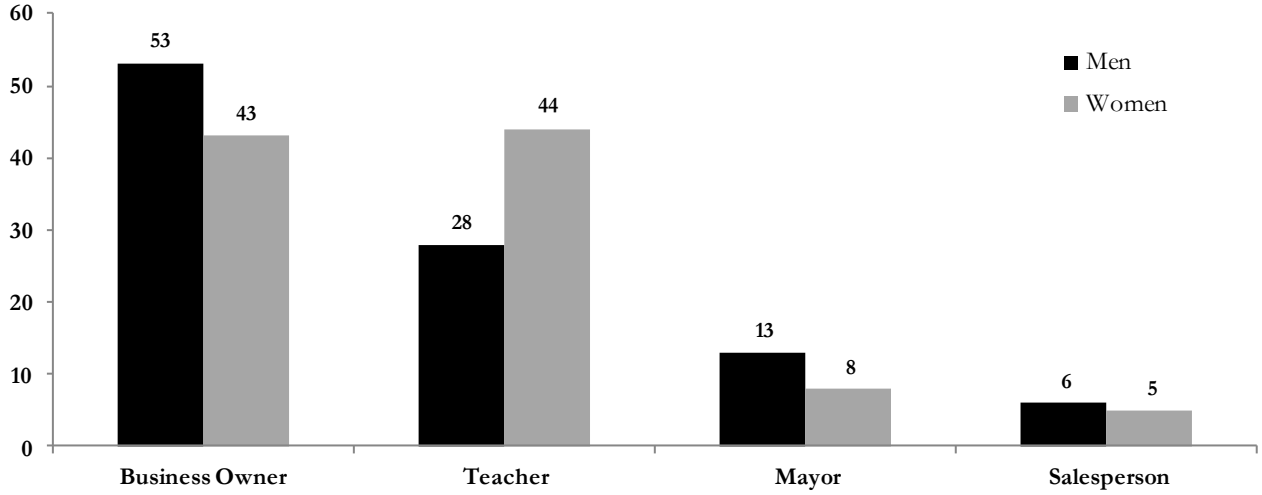
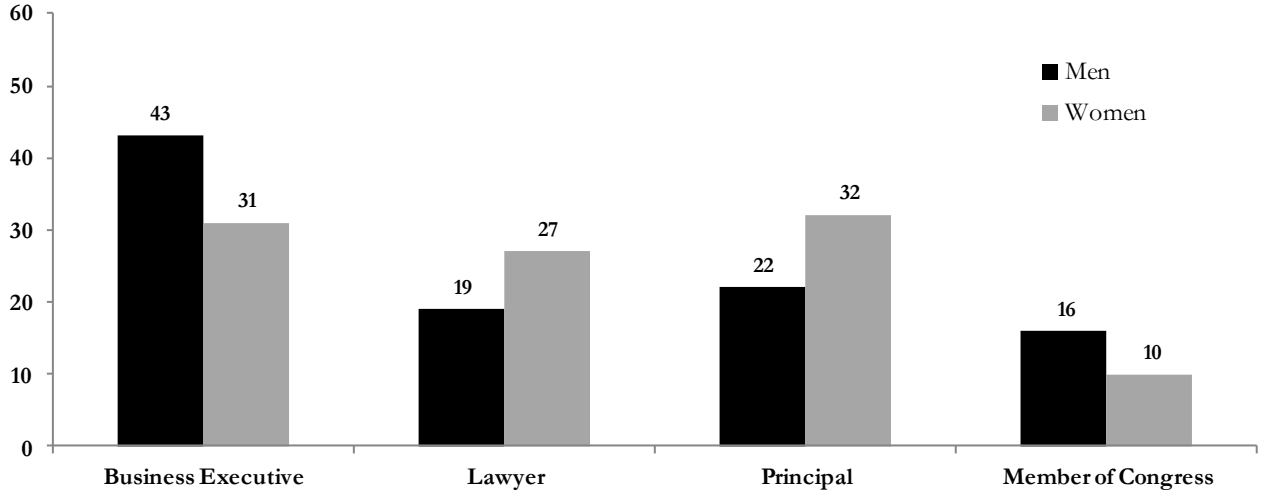


Figure 2B - A Congressional Career:
If the following jobs paid the same amount of money, which would you most like to be?



Notes: Data are based on responses from 1,907 men and 1,998 women, all of whom are either in college or plan to attend college. Bars represent the percentage of men and women who ranked each position as their most desirable when presented with the list of four options. The gender gaps are statistically significant at $p < .05$ in all comparisons except salesperson.

These gender gaps in political ambition are striking not only because female and male respondents were similarly situated demographically, but also because they were equally likely to have participated in political activities. From voting, to attending a protest or rally, to blogging or emailing about a cause, to posting about or following a politician or political issue on a social networking site, we uncovered comparable rates of activism. They also held similar attitudes about politics and politicians; female respondents were no more likely than male respondents to hold politicians in low regard, for example. Thus, if attitudes toward politicians and levels of political activity situate young people to think about running for office, then female respondents are as well-positioned as their male counterparts. Yet these data make clear that young women and men are not equally likely to consider running for office a desirable future endeavor. Our findings – based on a number of measures – establish a consistent and considerable gender gap in political ambition that predates women and men's entry into the professions that tend to lead to political careers.

Explaining the Gender Gap in Political Ambition among Young Citizens: Theory and Literature

Where does the gender gap in political ambition come from? Political socialization – which we define to include any experiences that either directly or indirectly shape political attitudes and behavior in childhood and early adulthood – offers a compelling theoretical framework through which to understand the gender gap in political ambition among young women and men. We argue that the multifaceted lens through which individuals come to see the world politically affects not only the propensity to express interest in running for office, but also accounts for gender differences therein. Although the extant research stops short of linking interest in running for office to political socialization directly, we draw on scholarship and empirical evidence from literatures on candidate emergence and political participation to derive five expectations about the origins of the gender gap in political ambition and the specific early life experiences that contribute to and sustain it.

***Family Socialization*:** Family experiences early in life have lasting power to shape adults' political attitudes and behavior. Political party affiliation, for instance, is often handed down from parent to child (Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009; Fiorina 1983; Acock and Bengston 1978; Niemi, Ross, and Alexander 1978). Notions of good citizenship and political activism and interest can also be traced back to political passion and activity in the childhood home (Jennings and Stoker 2012; Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 2005; Jennings and Markus 1984). And recent studies suggest that adolescents who discuss politics with their parents develop higher levels of political knowledge and demonstrate a greater propensity to vote, attend community meetings, and engage the political system through signing petitions, participating in boycotts, or contributing money (McIntosh, Hart, and Youniss 2007; Andolina et al 2003; Jennings 2002). It follows, therefore, that high school and college students who live(d) in politicized homes might be more interested in running for office later in life than those who live(d) in less politicized family environments.[7]

Certainly, socialization in the family unit can shape both young men and women's political interest and ambition. But women may be less likely than men to experience a politicized upbringing. A survey of lawyers, business leaders, educators, and political activists found that women were nearly 20% less likely than men to remember speaking about politics with their fathers; and they were 15% less likely than men to report that their parents had encouraged them to run for office (Lawless and Fox 2010, 66). Perhaps as a result of these family experiences, 15% of men, compared to only 9% of women, reported that they first considered running for office before they graduated from high school (difference significant at $p < .05$). Although these findings succumb to the aforementioned methodological limitations involved in relying on adults' retrospective accounts

[7] Scholars have also begun to explore the extent to which political attitudes and behaviors are the result not only of environmental and socialized factors, but also genetic factors passed on from one generation to the next (see, for example, Charney and English 2012; Beckwith and Morris 2008; Fowler and Dawes 2008; Alford, Funk and Hibbing 2005).

of their childhoods, they reflect patterns of socialization that promote men's greater suitability to enter the political sphere.

Political Context. Beyond the primary socializing agent of family, other contextual factors – school experiences, peer associations, and media habits – also affect young people's political behavior. In terms of educational experiences, politicized classroom programs in high schools can increase students' intentions to vote (Billig, Root, and Jesse 2005; see also Campbell 2008) and their sense of political efficacy (Pasek et al 2008). Outside the classroom, adolescent participation and leadership roles in extra-curricular activities, community clubs, and organizations increases the propensity to participate civically and politically as an adult (Hart et al 2007; Kirlin 2003; Glanville 1999). Volunteering for politicized clubs and groups, as well as associating with the people in such groups, are strongly linked to political interest later in life (McFarland and Thomas 2006). Finally, media – particularly internet and web-based technologies – can teach civic skills, bolster future civic engagement and efficacy, and increase youth political interest and voter turnout (Iyengar and Jackman 2004; Montgomery, Gottlieb-Robles, and Larson 2004). Thus, we expect young women and men who navigate politicized environments at school, with their friends, and through the media to be more politically ambitious than those with educational and peer contexts that are less politically charged.

Like family, these contextual factors should affect both young women and men's ambition. But gender differences in exposure to these agents of political socialization might result in an advantage for men. Historically, male college students have been more likely than their female counterparts to demonstrate interest in politics by majoring in political science and government (APSA 2010). These gender differences are relevant because exposure to, and the influence of, faculty and peers in college can affect political beliefs (Dey 1996). Similarly, research regarding internet habits reveals that young men spend more time than young women reading news and

absorbing political information (Fuller 2004). The educational, peer, and media contexts in which young women and men operate, therefore, may provide men with more exposure to experiences that spur interest in running for office.

***Competitive Experiences*:** There is broad acceptance of the notion that anyone who ultimately decides to seek high-level office is competitive and driven. Although high school and college students' experiences with competition might be far different from that of political candidates, their affinity to compete – either in student government elections or through sports – is likely a good indicator of their openness to entering the electoral arena in the future. Further, the skills and competitive traits that these experiences foster and reinforce are politically relevant. A growing body of research finds that athletic participation carries longstanding positive economic and psychological benefits. Former high school athletes receive higher wages and better benefits later in life than do their non-athlete counterparts (Ewing 2007; see also Stevenson 2010; Barron et al 2000). Athletic participation also often enhances discipline, confidence, self-esteem, motivation, and a competitive spirit (Lechner 2009; Erkut et al 1996), all of which are relevant for political success. Student government elections operate similarly; participating in a campaign, even in high school or college, can demystify the political process and prepare young adults to embrace competition (see Lawless and Fox 2010). Hence, we expect a positive relationship between indications of competitive behavior early in life and an openness to running for office later in life.

Although women and men can benefit from the competitive environments provided by athletics and student elections, female high school and college students may be less likely than men to take advantage of them. When comparing professional performance in competitive and non-competitive environments among adults, investigators find that men are more likely than women to seek out competitive environments and to exude confidence when competing (Niederle and Vesterlund 2007; Gneezy, Niederle and Rustichini 2003). Moreover, although public support for

gender equality in athletic opportunities is high (Sigelman and Wilcox 2001), Title IX has not eliminated unequal access to sports for girls (see McDonagh and Pappano 2009).[8] Young women, therefore, may be at an overall disadvantage in terms of the socialized benefits they can accrue from these activities.

***Self-Confidence*:** Running for office requires a number of personality traits – most notably confidence – and skills, such as knowing how the policy and governing process works, public speaking, fundraising, and navigating coalitions of voters. The extent to which individuals perceive that they possess these skills and traits shapes their assessments of whether they are qualified to run for office. Among adults, these perceptions are central predictors of interest in running for office (Fox and Lawless 2011).

Evidence suggests, however, that whereas men are socialized to be confident, assertive, and self-promoting, cultural attitudes toward women as political leaders continue to leave an imprint suggesting to women – if even only subtly – that it is often inappropriate or undesirable to possess these characteristics (Thomas 2005; Enloe 2004; Flammang 1997). Indeed, women's tendency to diminish and undervalue their professional skills and achievements is in place by the time of adolescence. Male and female students in mathematics and language arts, for example, have vastly different perceptions of their own skills; male students overestimate their skills and female students underestimate theirs relative to objective indicators of competence (Pajares 2002; Wigfield, Eccles, and Pintrich 1996). Gender also exist in the confidence women and men exhibit regarding their credentials and backgrounds. Social psychologists find that, in general, men are more likely than women to express confidence in skills they do not possess and overconfidence in skills they do

[8] Data from 2011 – 2012 reveal that the number of college students participating in intercollegiate athletics has grown steadily for the last several decades and now surpasses 450,000. The gender gap in participation, however, has not closed. Men comprise roughly 57% of NCAA athletes, a proportion that has held steady for the last decade (Brown 2012). Among high school students, data from 2008 – 2009 show that 55% of students participated in high school athletics, but the gender gap was sizeable; 3.1 million high school athletes were female, compared to 4.4 million who were male (Howard and Gillis 2009).

possess (Kling et al 1999). Men tend to be more "self-congratulatory," whereas women tend to be more modest about their achievements (Wigfield, Eccles, and Pintrich 1996). Men tend to overestimate their intelligence, while women tend to underestimate theirs (Furnham and Rawles 1995; Beloff 1992). And men often fail to incorporate criticism into their self-evaluations, whereas women tend to be strongly influenced by negative appraisals of their capabilities (Roberts 1991). Although high school and college students may not have fully formed opinions about their qualifications to run for office, the literature suggests that men will be more likely than women to express the confidence that, someday, they will be qualified.

***Gender Roles and Identity*:** Traditional family dynamics and role orientations – in which women are the primary caretakers of the family and exist in the private domain, but men are the primary breadwinners and occupy public roles – persist in a substantial number of households (Marks, Bun, and McHale 2009). When women do enter the workforce, analyses of the labor market confirm occupational gender segregation with the persistent grouping of "women's" and "men's" careers (Hegewisch et al 2010). Holding political office has always been considered a "men's" career, so we expect that young women who have been socialized to hold attitudes that embody traditional gender roles and orientations may be less likely to exhibit political ambition than those with more egalitarian views about family dynamics and career options.

Whereas traditional gender role orientations might stunt young women's political ambition, exposure to female role models might promote it. Female role models from high schools to doctoral programs, for example, can help facilitate women's success (Marx and Roman 2002; Nixon and Robinson 1999; Neumark and Gardacki 1996). In terms of politics, Atkeson (2003) finds that women who live in states with successful, visible female candidates are more likely to be politically engaged. Women's levels of political proselytizing (Hansen 1997) and political interest (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001) also correlate with the presence of female elected officials. More

directly, a cross-national examination found that the presence of female political leaders increased adolescent girls' likelihood of planning to be politically active (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). Thus, we expect that the more female role models on whom young women rely for career advice, the more likely they will be to express interest in running for office in the future.[9]

Undoubtedly, these five research expectations are interrelated, and there are likely some complex causal relationships among them. But together, they represent a series of early life experiences and socialized attitudes and behaviors that may influence political ambition. The gendered component of each suggests that they will also account for the bivariate level gender gap we uncovered in young people's interest in running for office.

Explaining the Gender Gap in Political Ambition among Young Citizens: Data and Analysis

To examine why some young women and men express interest in running for office in the future, while others do not, as well as to delve into the roots of the gender gap in political ambition, we developed four regression equations (see Table 1). Models 1 and 2 report ordered logistic regression coefficients for equations that predict interest in running for office using a 4-point scale. Respondents could have scored between a 1 ("absolutely no interest in a future candidacy") and a 4 ("definitely plan to run in the future"). Because the majority of our respondents are neither certain they will run for office nor have dismissed the possibility outright, we also perform our analysis with a collapsed version of the 4-point scale. Models 3 and 4 predict political ambition with a dichotomous dependent variable that indicates whether the respondent is at least open to the idea of running for office in the future.

[9] This expectation focuses only on female respondents. Certainly, the extent to which young men are exposed to traditional versus egalitarian family and career dynamics in their childhood homes varies, as do young men's attitudes toward women's capabilities to work in traditionally "male" domains. But Tolleson-Rinehart (1992, 33) convincingly argues against the merits of "male gender consciousness," explaining that men tend not to assess their societal, economic, and political status relative to other groups. Rather, the status of the white male tends to be the yardstick against which other groups evaluate their own fortunes.

Table 1 –Political Socialization and Interest in Running for Office
(Logistic Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors)

	4-Point Ambition Scale (Ordered Logit) Model 1	4-Point Ambition Scale (Ordered Logit) Model 2	At Least Open to Running (Binary Logit) Model 3	At Least Open to Running (Binary Logit) Model 4
Sex (Female)	.03 (.21)	-.31 (.37)	.02 (.28)	.06 (.50)
Family Socialization				
Parent(s) encouraged a candidacy	.98 (.09) **	.96 (.09) **	1.17 (.10) **	1.16 (.10) **
Other family member encouraged it	.47 (.10) **	.45 (.10) **	.66 (.13) **	.68 (.13) **
Politicized household growing up	-.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.04 (.05)	-.03 (.05)
Political activities with parents	-.04 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	-.02 (.04)	-.00 (.04)
Political Context				
Political discussion in classes	.17 (.03) **	.17 (.03) **	.15 (.03) **	.15 (.04) **
Political discussion with friends	.08 (.02) **	.09 (.02) *	.07 (.03) *	.07 (.03) *
Leadership activities / roles at school	.04 (.02) *	.04 (.02) *	.04 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Teacher encouraged a candidacy	.19 (.11)	.24 (.11) *	.22 (.15)	.28 (.15)
Political activities in high school	.01 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.00 (.03)	.02 (.03)
Time spent on political websites	.39 (.05) **	.37 (.05) **	.39 (.06) **	.37 (.06) **
Competitive Experiences				
Ever ran for student government	.39 (.09) **	.40 (.09) **	.30 (.11) **	.30 (.11) **
Competitiveness playing sports	.11 (.03) **	.11 (.03) **	.04 (.04)	.04 (.04)
Self-Confidence				
Self-assessment of qualifications to run	1.28 (.06) **	.13 (.06) **	1.19 (.08) **	1.17 (.08) **
Political traits index	.09 (.03) **	.10 (.03) **	.15 (.04) **	.16 (.04) **
Political skills index	.05 (.03)	.06 (.03)	.08 (.04)	.09 (.04) *
Gender Roles and Identity				
Women's roles index		.05 (.03)		.02 (.04)
Women's roles index * sex		.05 (.04)		.01 (.06)
Political job stereotypes index		-.02 (.07)		.08 (.09)
Political job stereotypes index * sex		-.10 (.11)		-.07 (.15)
Number of female role models		-.08 (.04) *		-.15 (.05) **
Number of female role models * sex		.02 (.05)		.03 (.06)
Constant			-4.92 (.41) **	-5.02 (.51) **
Threshold 1	3.08 (.30) **	3.39 (.37) **		
Threshold 2	5.13 (.31) **	5.44 (.38) **		
Threshold 3	8.62 (.33) **	8.95 (.41) **		
Percent Correctly Predicted			79.1	79.2
Pseudo-R^2	.51	.52	.51	.51
N	3,776	3,730	3,776	3,730

*Notes: Models include controls for Black, Latino, Democrat, Republican, Income, Age, and Political Participation, as well as whether the respondent is in high school or college, and an interaction between sub-sample and respondent sex. Levels of significance: * p < .05; ** p < .01.*

The models operationalize the research expectations we identified with a series of original measures that tap into high school and college students' experiences (see Appendix B for a description of the variable coding). Because we expect gender roles and identity to affect only female respondents' interest in running for office, we interact the three gauges we use to measure this expectation with respondent sex. And to ensure that our results are not an artifact of the multiple interaction terms, we also perform the analyses without the gender roles and identity variables (Models 1 and 3). Each equation includes a series of demographic and political controls: race, age, region, household income, party identification, and political activity. We also include an indicator variable for whether the respondent is in high school or college. Although our expectations apply to both high school and college students, college students may be more likely to consider a candidacy; as people get older and accumulate more diverse experiences, they are more cognizant of opportunities they had not previously considered. Finally, our models include an interaction between sex and whether the respondent is in high school or college; this allows us to determine whether the size of the gap varies at different stages of the life cycle.[10]

Although most of the results that emerge from the regression analyses are consistent with our expectations, three broad findings merit discussion because they allow us to gain leverage over the factors that contribute to young citizens' political ambition, as well as speak to the origins of the gender gap in interest in running for office in the future.

Identifying the Origins of Political Ambition

Our results demonstrate that political socialization provides a useful framework through which to analyze young people's political ambition and openness to a future candidacy. Regardless of whether we code ambition using the 4-point scale or as a dichotomous variable, family

[10] The substantive results do not change when we perform the analysis separately on the high school and college sub-samples.

socialization, political context, competitive experiences, and self-confidence affect interest in running for office in the future.[11] The Gender Roles and Identity expectation is the only one for which we do not uncover support.[12] Figure 3 presents the maximum change in probability conferred by each of the four significant expectations (based on the results presented in Table 1, column 3).[13]

Because the regression equation includes an interaction between respondent sex and sub-sample (high school versus college), we calculate four sets of probabilities. These probabilities were calculated by setting all continuous independent variables to their sub-sample means and dummy variables to their sub-sample modes for the three expectations not under consideration. Within each individual expectation, we assessed the maximum change in probability for all statistically significant variables. The Family Explanation probability, which is presented as the first bar in each quadrant of Figure 3, reflects the fact that a respondent who was encouraged to run for office by at least one parent and one other family member is, depending on sex and sub-sample, between 41 and 43 percentage points more likely than a respondent who received no such encouragement, all else equal, to be open to the idea of running for office later in life. [14]

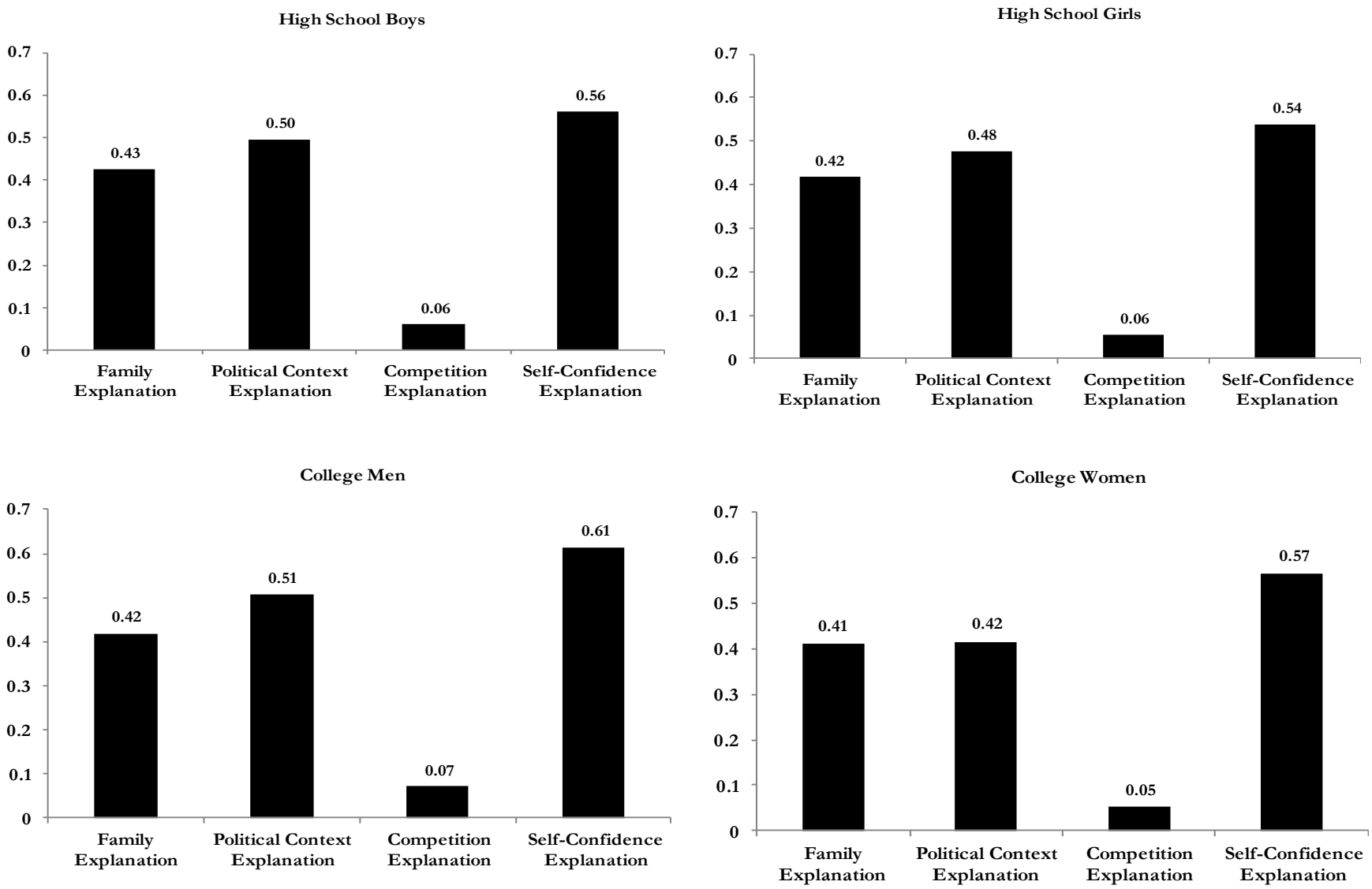
[11] Most of the control variables work in the expected ways. Level of political activity is positive and significant, and household income is negative and significant, as is also the case among adults. Latino respondents are slightly more likely than White respondents to articulate interest in running for office in the future. In none of these cases, however, do we uncover notable gender differences. And in no case does interacting these control variables with respondent sex approach statistical significance. Respondents' party identification and region are not statistically significant, either alone, or when interacted with sex.

[12] Respondents – male and female – with more female role models are *less* likely to express interest in running for office in the future. The interaction with sex, however, is insignificant, which is where we expected an effect.

[13] As indicated in Table 1, taking on more leadership activities at school and a heightened sense of competitiveness when playing sports attain significance when we use the 4-point ordinal measure, but not the dichotomous indicator of political ambition. The effects of these variables, therefore, may be driven, at least in part, by the way we code ambition. To err on the side of caution and ensure that we do not attribute substantive findings to possible measurement error, we generate predicted probabilities from the results of the binary logistic regression equation presented in Model 3. The magnitudes of the effects are comparable when we generate predicted probabilities based on the equation presented in Model 4 (which includes the Gender Roles and Identity variables).

[14] Because the other two variables included in the Family Explanation are not statistically significant, the maximum changes in probability do not include varying those measures from their minimum to maximum values. Differences in substantive effects of the four explanations across sub-samples are never statistically significant.

Figure 3 – The Substantive Effect (Maximum Change in Probability) of Each Explanation on Political Ambition, by Sex and Sample



Notes: Changes in probabilities are based on the logistic regression results presented in Table 1, column 3. These probabilities were calculated by setting all continuous independent variables to their means and dummy variables to their modes for the three expectations not under consideration. Within each individual expectation, we assessed the maximum change in probability for each statistically significant variable (i.e., the family explanation probability reflects the fact that a respondent who was encouraged to run for office by a parent and another family member was 41 – 43 percentage points more likely (depending on sex and sub-sample) than a respondent who received no such encouragement, all else equal, to consider running for office).

In addition to family, several other primary agents of political socialization correlate positively with future interest in running for office. Navigating a more politicized environment – at school, with friends, and through the media – generates a similarly powerful impact. Consider the independent effect of media habits. On average, a respondent who visits political websites every day is more than twice as likely as one who rarely or never consults such sites to be open to the possibility of running for office (0.36 compared to 0.15 predicted probability). Further, respondents who frequently discuss politics in their classes are 14 percentage points more likely than those who do not to express ambition to run for office. Talking about politics with friends is associated with a 6 percentage point boost in interest in running for office in the future.

Beyond these classic agents of socialization, the regression results make clear that experiences with competition, as well as an overall sense of confidence in one's own abilities, are associated with heightened levels of political ambition. Running for student government, a relatively short-term experience, confers the same substantive effect as does speaking about politics and current events frequently with friends. Respondents who play sports and self-assess as very competitive and consider winning very important are three times as likely as respondents who never played a sport to report "definite interest" in a future candidacy.[15] A sense of confidence exerts the largest relative effect on political ambition for each of the four sub-samples. More specifically, respondents who contend that, at some point in the future, they will know enough to run for office are approximately 55 percentage points more likely than those who doubt their future knowledge to express interest in a candidacy.

Young people's political ambition, therefore, is related to and shaped by a variety of experiences, traits, and activities early in life. Our evidence suggests – not based on retrospective

[15] As indicated by the statistically insignificant coefficient on the "competitiveness playing sports" variable, the effect does not emerge when we model only openness toward a future candidacy. This variable does, however, confer explanatory power for modeling definite interest in running for office (and, in terms of relative effects, rivals the Family Explanation).

assessments, but rather, in real time – that these circumstances leave an important imprint, as they affect the educational, professional, and political decisions women and men will make later in life.

Accounting for the Gender Gap in Ambition

The socializing effects of early life experiences are important not only because they help us understand what types of young people are interested in running for office, but also because they account for the gender gap in high school and college students' political ambition that we uncovered at the bivariate level. In no equation does the sex of the respondent achieve statistical significance.[16] The same is true when we perform the analyses separately on the sub-samples of high school and college students. And the same predictors are significant when we analyze the sub-samples of women and men separately (results not shown).

The statistically insignificant coefficients on sex, however, must be interpreted in light of the significant gender differences in the variables that affect political ambition. The data presented in leftmost columns of Table 2 reveal important gender gaps on the key measures included in our models of interest in running for office.[17] On all ten indicators, women are less likely than men to benefit from socializing forces, experiences, and characteristics that spur and reinforce political ambition.

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[16] Important for our purposes, sex is statistically significant in a model that includes only the demographic and political controls. Only by supplementing that model with our measures that tap into the various facets of political socialization do we account for gender differences in political ambition. We should also note that model specifications that code the dichotomous dependent variable as "definitely interested in running for office" against all other levels of ambition, as well as "absolutely no interest in running for office" against all other levels of ambition yield similar results. Parental encouragement, politicized school experiences, exposure to political websites, participation in student government, competitiveness while playing sports, and a broad sense of confidence are all statistically significant and in the expected direction. Respondent sex is never significant. Moreover, when we interact each of the explanatory variables with respondent sex, none is significant.

[17] The comparisons displayed in Table 2 are taken from the questions used in the regression analyses presented in Table 1. In most cases, we present the percentages of women and men who fell at each end of the continuum of the variable in question. We operationalize the Self-Confidence Explanation, for example, with a three-point scale that asks respondents to assess the extent to which they believe that they will, at some point in the future, be qualified to run for office (See Appendix C). In Table 2, we present the gender comparisons on the two endpoints of that scale.

Table 2 – Gender Differences in Predictors of Political Ambition among High School and College Students

	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	High School Boys	High School Girls	College Men	College Women
Family Socialization Explanation						
At least one parent suggested running	35 % **	28 %	34 %	32 %	36 % **	26 %
Another family member suggested running	21 **	16	18	16	23 **	16
Political Context Explanation						
Discusses politics at school at least once a week	37 *	33	39	37	35 *	30
Discusses politics with friends at least weekly	20 *	16	13	10	27 *	20
Visits political websites rarely or never	44 **	53	62 **	69	28 **	40
Visits political websites every day	11 *	7	5	5	17 **	9
Competitive Experiences Explanation						
Never played a sport	14 **	28	14 **	26	14 **	29
"Very competitive" when playing sports	41 **	32	37	33	44 **	32
Self-Confidence Explanation						
Will not be qualified to run for office in future	30 **	43	29	34	31 **	51
Will be qualified to run for office in future	19 **	13	14	15	23 **	11
N	1,923	2,012	903	915	1,020	1,097

*Notes: Number of cases varies slightly, as some respondents omitted answers to some questions. Levels of significance: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.*

Once we account for gender differences in these factors, male and female respondents are not equally likely to express interest in running for office. More specifically, when we generate a baseline predicted probability for the "average" high school boy (based on the regression equation in Table 1, column 3), the typical respondent has a 0.25 predicted probability of being open to running for office later in life. We calculated the probability by setting all explanatory and control variables to the means and modes for the male high school sub-sample. High school girls, on average, have a 0.22 predicted probability of expressing interest in running for office in the future. The small, but significant gender gap between high school boys and girls, therefore, is an artifact of male and female respondents not being similarly situated on key factors associated with political ambition.

Gender differences are more striking when we turn to the college students in the sample. Again, even though the coefficient on sex is statistically insignificant, embedded within the probabilities are gender differences in respondents' family socialization, political environments, competitive experiences, and self-confidence. Setting these values to their sub-sample means and modes results in an average female college student with a 0.21 predicted probability of being open to running for office in the future. College men, with an average predicted probability of being open to running for office of 0.36, are approximately 70% more likely than college women to express political ambition (we analyze and discuss these differences in the next section).

Young women and men arrive at their ambition similarly, and they rely on the same factors when considering a future in politics. But women are not as likely as men to possess the ingredients associated with interest in running for office.

Identifying When the Gender Gap in Political Ambition Materializes

Our analysis allows us to assert with some degree of specificity when the gender gap in ambition materializes. The baseline probabilities described above highlight that gender differences in

interest in running for office are more substantial among college than high school students. The data presented in Table 2 (columns 3 – 6) shed more specific light on the underlying reasons for this finding; the gender differences in the central factors associated with interest in running for office are also more pronounced among college than high school students. High school girls, for example, are only about half as likely as boys to play a sport, and they are 10% more likely than boys to visit political websites only rarely. While we do not want to minimize these differences, it is important to assess them relative to those we find among the college sample. College women are less likely than college men to benefit from the full range of experiences that correlate with political ambition. Compared to women, men in college are roughly one-third more likely to receive encouragement from their parents to run for office, discuss politics regularly with their friends, and consider themselves very competitive. They are almost twice as likely as college women to visit political websites on a regular basis. And more than twice as many men as women are confident that they will be qualified to run for office in the future.

When a college woman possesses the ingredients that contribute to political ambition, however, she is just as likely as her male counterpart to articulate interest in running for office. Consider a female college student who has received encouragement to run for office from her parents, discusses politics regularly with her friends, is competitive when playing sports, visits political websites often, and believes that she will be qualified to run for office in the future. Our models indicate that such a woman has more than a 0.90 predicted probability of being open to running for office in the future, and a 0.65 predicted probability of definitely planning to run for office. A college man with comparable experiences has roughly the same likelihood of being politically ambitious (0.92 probability of being open to running for office, and 0.64 probability of expressing definite interest). Female college respondents, however, are significantly less likely than men to have these backgrounds.

Without panel data, we are limited in the extent to which we can explain the reason that the gender gap in political ambition is so much larger among college than high school students. We do know, however, that the family circumstances in which both sub-samples were raised are comparable, and that the college students report levels of political activity in their homes growing up that match those reported by the respondents still in high school. Thus, the explanation likely lies, at least in part, in the personal and academic freedom that college students enjoy compared to their high school counterparts. A majority of college students move out of their parents' homes to attend college (Sallie Mae 2012), and even when they don't, their home circumstances often give them more independence. Further, whereas high school curricula generally offer little choice, college provides students with a wide array of academic options and electives. Essentially, when students get to college and "the shackles come off," young women and men have much greater control over how they spend their time and to what interests they devote themselves.

When this happens, women and men's interests diverge. Recent analyses of gender differences in the selection of college majors reveal that women are more likely than men to major in the humanities and some of the social sciences (psychology and sociology), whereas men are more likely to major in business, engineering, and science (Dickson 2010). Our data indicate that men are also more likely than women to immerse themselves in a political context, from course work, to extra-curricular activities, to discussions with friends, to media habits. Male respondents were 10% more likely than female respondents to have taken at least one political science or government class, and they were almost twice as likely to join either the College Democrats or College Republicans (gender differences significant at $p < .05$). Further, they navigate toward experiences that foster competition; men were more likely than women to play varsity sports (38% of men, compared to 26% of women), as well as intramural sports (37% of men, versus 15% of women) in college (gender differences significant at $p < .05$). These differences can then fuel men's greater confidence

to participate in electoral politics at some point in the future. Given that female respondents' political ambition is roughly the same in high school as it is in college, the widening of the gender gap appears to be driven by college men coming to embrace politics and the prospects of entering public life. Even if many of the seeds of these gender differences are planted in high school, the college atmosphere allows them to flourish.

Beyond having greater autonomy over their interests and activities, college students experience a winnowing of career interests, which coincides with a divergence in women and men's attitudes toward running for office. In an open-ended survey question that asked respondents to identify a specific career interest, twice as many high school students as college students left the question blank. When presented a list of more than 20 jobs to consider as possibilities for the future, college students were roughly 15% more likely than high school students to express interest in only one job. As they narrow their career interests, occupational gender segregation grows. The gender gap in interest in pursuing a career in historically male fields, like science and law enforcement, for instance, is much larger among college than high school students. Similarly, female college students are more likely than female high school students to indicate that they might become teachers and secretaries. The pattern for political positions is consistent with other historically male professions; college men are 50% more likely than college women to be interested in serving as mayor, more than twice as likely to be open to serving in Congress, and three times more likely to be willing to serve as president (gender differences significant at $p < .01$). No statistically significant differences emerge among high school students' willingness to occupy these political positions.

Although we face data constraints in explaining fully what forces contribute to the differences between high school and college students' political ambition, the central finding is vitally important in that we pinpoint the phase of life at which gender differences in interest in running for office materialize.

Conclusion

Determining the origins of the gender gap in political ambition is, perhaps, one of the last critical pieces of the puzzle to understanding gender differences in candidate emergence. This paper goes a long way toward shedding light on that puzzle by offering the first in-depth examination of how political socialization, and gendered patterns therein, influence young citizens' ambition to run for office in the future. We uncover powerful effects of early life experiences; the primary agents of political socialization – family, school, peers, and media – play an integral part in fostering and reinforcing future interest in running for office. In this regard, ambition to run for office is shaped in much the same way by the forces of political socialization as are political interest, activism, ideology, and party affiliation. But beyond these traditional agents of socialization, participation in competitive activities and a general sense of self-confidence correlate with an openness to running for office. The combined power of these socializing forces is of the utmost importance because they explain the gender gap in ambition. Women and men rely on the same factors when arriving at their sense of political ambition, but young women are less likely than young men to have these experiences on which to rely. This is especially true among college students, for whom the gender gap in political ambition is at least as large as that among professionals in the candidate eligibility pool (Lawless and Fox 2012; 2010). Our findings, therefore, speak to the origins of the gender gap and identify the point in the life cycle when it begins to materialize fully.

Our results suggest that the gender gap in political ambition, as well as the consequences for women's numeric representation, will likely persist into the foreseeable future. It is critical to note, however, that this is not because young women have less of a sense of civic duty or different aspirations for the future than do men. In fact, when we asked the respondents about their priorities and life goals, we found few gender differences; young women and men were equally likely to want to get married, have children, earn a lot of money, and achieve career success. Male and female

respondents were also equally to aspire to improve their communities.

Yet despite their similar life goals, women and men reported very different views when asked about the most effective way to bring about societal change. Thirty-five percent of female respondents, compared to 25% of male respondents, viewed working for a charity as the best way to bring about change. On the other hand, 26% of men, but only 17% of women, saw running for elective office as the best way to ameliorate the society in which they live ($p < .01$).[18] Women and men both aspire to work to improve the world around them, but women are less likely than men to see political leadership as a means to that end. Our findings, in essence, highlight the importance of deepening our understanding of the manner in which young women and men in contemporary society are still socialized about politics, from where they receive messages about the acquisition of political power, and the characteristics that qualify individuals to seek it.

This study of political ambition among young citizens makes clear that we still have a long way to go before women and men express equal interest in and comfort with the idea of running for office. But our results suggest that focusing on the premier agents of political socialization – family, peers, school, and media – and being attentive to the manner in which they facilitate men's interest in a future candidacy, but detract from women's, can help narrow the gender gap in political ambition. Homing in on the college experience and the manner in which newfound independence exacerbates the gender disparity in political ambition will also pay dividends. Only by continuing to examine these gender differences in real time, as opposed to relying on retrospective assessments of events that occurred decades earlier, can we get at the source of the gender gap – a gender gap that carries important implications for democratic legitimacy and political representation.

[18] We uncovered no statistically significant gender differences in the other options we presented to respondents: 16% of women and men contended that getting involved with their church, synagogue, or mosque was the most effective way to make society a better place, and 16% of men and 18% of women reported that becoming a teaching was the most effective route. Fourteen percent of women and 17% of men indicated that they would not engage in any of the four options we presented if they wanted to bring about positive societal change.

Appendix A – Sample Demographics

	Women	*Men*
Party Affiliation		
Democrat	40 %	38 %
Independent	9	10
Republican	23 *	26
Other or No political party affiliation	27	25
Race		
White	62	62
Black	12	11
Latino / Hispanic	15	17
Other	11	11
Region		
Northeast	17	20
Midwest	25	25
South	36 *	31
West	22	24
Estimated Household Income		
Less than $50,000	52 *	46
$50,000 - $99,999	31 *	35
$100,00 - $149,000	11	13
At least $150,000	5	7
Religion		
Protestant	37	34
Catholic	25	27
Jewish	2	3
Muslim	1	1
Mormon	2	2
Other	11	10
Not part of any religion	22	24
Education		
Currently in high school	46	47
Currently in college	55	53
Mean Age (Years)	18 yrs.	18 yrs.
N	2,012	1,923

*Notes: Number of cases varies slightly, as some respondents omitted answers to some questions. Independents include partisan leaners. Levels of significance: * indicates that the gender gap is statistically significant at $p < .05$.*

Appendix B – Variable Description

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
DEPENDENT VARIABLES				
4-Point Ambition Scale	1 – 4	2.22	.93	Indicates extent to which the respondent is interest in running for political office in the future. Scale ranges from would "never run for office" (1) to would "definitely like to run for office" (4).
At Least Open to Running for Office	0, 1	.42	.49	Indicates whether the respondent would "definitely run for office" or is at least "open to the possibility" of running for office in the future (1) or not (0).
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Family Socialization Expectation				
Parents encouraged a candidacy	0, 1	.32	.47	Indicates whether at least one of the respondent's parents ever suggested that he/she run for office in the future (1) or not (0).
Other family member encouraged it	0, 1	.18	.38	Indicates whether a family member (not including a parent) ever suggested that the respondent run for office in the future (1) or not (0).
Politicized household growing up	0 – 4	1.10	1.08	Indicates number of the following descriptions that characterize the respondent's household while he/she was growing up: the news is often on; parents sometimes yell at the television because they are so angry about politics; often talk about politics at meal times; parent often talk about politics with friends and family.
Political activities with parents	0 – 6	1.88	1.52	Indicates number of the following political activities in which the respondent engaged with parents: watched election coverage, discussed 2012 presidential election, discussed same-sex marriage debate, discussed global warming / environment, discussed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, shared a political story via email or through social media.
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Political Context Expectation				
Political discussion in classes	2 – 8	5.53	1.57	Indicates how interested the respondents' peers at school are in politics and current events and the extent to which these discussions occur in the classroom. Higher numbers indicate greater levels of political interest and discussion at school.
Political discussion with friends	2 – 8	5.26	1.82	Indicates how frequently the respondent discusses politics and current events with his/her friends. Higher numbers indicate more political discussion.
Leadership activities / roles at school	0 – 15	.90	1.90	Indicates total number of leadership activities the respondents holds (from a list of 15 activities).
Teacher encouraged a candidacy	0, 1	.13	.33	Indicates whether a teacher or professor ever suggested that the respondent run for office in the future (1) or not (0).
Political activities in high school	0 – 8	2.10	1.75	Indicates number of the following activities in which the respondent engaged while in high school: voted in a mock election, registered to vote, worked on a voter registration drive, attended an assembly with a politician as a speaker, contacted a political leader as a class assignment, volunteered in the community as part of a class assignment, participated in a mock debate, took a government class.

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Political Context Expectation (continued)				
Time spent on political websites	1 – 4	1.89	1.02	Indicates the frequency with which the respondent visits politics websites. Scale ranges from "rarely or never" (1) to "every day" (4).
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Competitive Experiences Expectation				
Ever ran for student government	0, 1	.22	.41	Indicates whether the respondent ever ran for a student government position (1) or not (0).
Competitiveness playing sports	1 – 4	2.75	1.09	Indicates the respondent's level of competitiveness associated with sports. Scale ranges from never played a sport (1) to "very competitive and winning is very important" (4).
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Self-Confidence Expectation				
Self-assessment of qualifications to run	1 – 3	1.79	.69	Indicates whether the respondent believes that when he/she has finished school and has been working for a while, he/she will be prepared and know enough to run for office. Higher numbers indicate a greater sense that respondent will be qualified to run for office.
Political traits index	0 – 4	1.83	1.18	Indicates the number of the following traits the respondent self-assesses as: confident, assertive, popular, smart.
Political skills index	0 – 5	2.14	1.33	Indicates the number of the following skills and qualifications the respondent contends he/she possesses: good writer, good at public speaking, knows a lot about politics, usually good most things, willing to try new things.
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Gender Roles & Identity Expectation				
Women's Roles Index	3 – 12	6.30	1.66	Indicates the extent to which respondent agrees that "It's best when a mother stays home and takes care of the children rather than works;" "When a husband and wife disagree, it is best if the wife lets the husband decide;" and "It's fine for girls to make the first move and ask someone they like out on a date." Index was created so that higher scores indicate more traditional gender roles and attitudes.
Political Jobs Stereotypes Index	0 – 2	.39	.67	Indicates whether the respondent believes that men would make better senators and presidents than women. The respondent could stereotype on neither position (0), one political position (1), or both positions (2).
Number of Female Role Models	0 – 8	1.60	1.45	Indicates how many of the following role models respondent relies on for inspiration about what to do in the future: mother, other female family member, female friend, female teacher, female professor, female coach, female boss, female religious figure.
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Controls				
Sex (Female)	0, 1	.51	.50	Indicates whether the respondent is female (1) or male (0).
Black	0, 1	.11	.32	Indicates whether the respondent is Black (1) or not (0).
Latino	0, 1	.16	.37	Indicates whether the respondent is Latino/a (1) or not (0).

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – Controls (continued)				
Democrat	0, 1	.39	.49	Indicates whether the respondent identifies as a Democrat (1) or not (0). This includes leaners.
Republican	0, 1	.24	.43	Indicates whether the respondent identifies as a Republican (1) or not (0). This includes leaners.
Income	1 – 19	10.87	4.78	Indicates the respondent's household income, ranging from less than $5,000 (1) to at least $175,000 (13).
Age	13 – 25	18.17	3.52	Indicates the respondent's age.
South	0, 1	.34	.47	Indicates whether the respondent lives in the South (1) or not.
Sample	1, 2	1.54	.99	Indicates whether the respondent is a high school (1) or college (2) student.
Political Activity Index	0 – 8	2.02	1.77	Indicates the number of the following 8 political activities in which the respondent engaged: voted in a student election, attended a rally or protest, helped raise money for a cause of campaign, blogged or emailed about a political issue, posted something about politics suing social media, volunteered in the community, followed a political figure on a social media site, volunteered on a political campaign.

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