

Unconfident and Underrepresented:
Gendered Differences in Levels of Political Ambition among Students

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American University 2010

Abstract:

In light of women's underrepresentation in American University student government, this research investigates to what extent levels of political ambition differ between male and female students and why. Current literature regarding women's underrepresentation in elected office suggests that gender differences in levels of political ambition in political pipeline careers to elective office explain much of women's lower likelihood to run for and serve in elective office. This body of scholarship finds that women's political ambition is significantly diminished by traditional sex-role socialization and traditional views of the political realm. Because research shows that participation in student government and political activities in adolescence and young adulthood significantly increases high-level civic participation later in life, this study fills a gap in current research by analyzing the impact of socialization and traditional views on levels of students' political ambition at American University.

Introduction:

According to the American University website, the Princeton Review named American University the nation's second most politically active campus in 2009; 72 percent of students report that "keeping up-to-date with political affairs" is important to them. The university boasts impressive reputations for its School of International Service and School of Public Affairs. It also reports that women make up roughly 62 percent of the student body. Yet female students occupy only 11 out of 36 elected student government positions in the 2009-2010 academic year, and only 26 of the 79 candidates running for office in 2009 were women. These numbers are strikingly similar to the 17 percent of women in the U.S. Congress and the 12 percent of female governors (CAWP 2009).

The dearth of female students in student government at American University, despite their over-representation in the overall population, suggests significant gender differences in political ambition. Based on the results of a new survey of AU students, this research provides empirical evidence of the gender gap in political ambition and sheds light on the reasons for it. I find that while sex does not always directly predict political ambition among students, significantly gendered differences exist within other factors that predict ambition. Women's political ambition is substantially depressed by lowered self-assessments of their qualifications to serve in office, and a less politicized upbringing.

Determining the factors at work in hindering female students' levels of political ambition at American University is important for several reasons. First, the fact that women are much less likely to run for office even at the college level indicates that a number of factors political scientists often point out to explain women's underrepresentation in elective office are insufficient. Because issues like fund-raising capabilities, sexist media coverage, and family

responsibilities are not applicable in studies of student government, the persistent dearth of women running for and serving in student government suggests that other factors are at work.

The underrepresentation of women in student government and political office may indicate that women, in general, perceive leadership as either unappealing or unattainable for them. In light of the fact that the extent to which citizens feel they could make a successful run for elective office is an indicator of a democracy's political legitimacy, gender differences in levels of political ambition are a significant problem. By translating Lawless and Fox's (2005) work to the college level, this study seeks to add to the pool of scholarship dedicated to levels of political ambition among men and women by reaching respondents while they're in early phases of formulating ambition and views of elected office.

Conceptual Framework

Political ambition is central to the study of political science because of its relationship to democratic governance and political legitimacy. Fox and Lawless (2005) maintain that a key measure in assessing the legitimacy of democracy in the United States is the degree to which citizens are willing to participate in the political system and run for public office. Further, as Thomas (1998, 1) argues, "A government that is democratically organized cannot be truly legitimate if all its citizens . . . do not have a potential interest in and opportunity for serving their community and nation" (see also Mansbridge 1999; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). If interest in seeking office is restricted to citizens with certain demographic profiles, then serious questions emerge regarding both descriptive and substantive representation (Lawless and Fox 2005).

In this study, I seek to develop and examine early political ambition, or potential interest in office seeking, a type of ambition that precedes the actual decision to enter a specific political contest. Research finds that political ambition as students and participation in activities like student government greatly increase an individual's likelihood of running for office later in life (Glanville 1999). For this reason, this study is tailored to analyze political ambition with regard to both public office and student government.

Literature Review

Existing Explanations : Discrimination, the Pipeline, the Institution, and Family

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, most political scientists explained the lack of women in political office as a result of gender-based discrimination. In other words, the American electorate did not support women candidates (Boxer 1994; Kirkpatrick 1974). Survey data from those decades reveal that, indeed, the vast majority of the American electorate believed men to be better suited emotionally for politics (Lawless and Fox 2004, Fig. 2.2). In 1992, however, the so-called "Year of the Woman," the substantial increase in the number of women running for and elected to political office significantly discredited the "discrimination explanation" (Dolan 1998). The fact that a number of studies show that women's electoral success rates are comparable to men's (Dolan 1998) and recent polls find that 90 percent of Americans would be willing to vote for a female presidential candidate (Frankovic 2008) elicits further skepticism over the extent the underrepresentation of women in elected office can be attributed to discrimination in the electorate.

While scholars in the field have, by and large, rejected the "discrimination explanation," they have turned to a number of institutional explanations in its place. One such explanation

contends that women are underrepresented in elective office because they are underrepresented in the careers that typically lead to running for office – law, business, and education. Darcy, Welch and Clark (1994) contend that women are typically relegated to “pink ghetto” occupations, such as clerical work, nursing, and teaching at the elementary school level – occupations that do not generally lead to running for office. This explanation implies that as women become more numerous in so-called pipeline careers, their numbers will also increase in elective office. Women have made significant progress in the workforce in recent decades. Despite this progress, however, women are still significantly underrepresented in the top tier of law, academic and business careers (Lawless and Fox 2005, 26-27). The incumbency advantage also puts women at a significant disadvantage in terms of their representation (Darcy, Welch and Clark, 1994). The vast majority of incumbents seek reelection. Among those who do seek reelection, success rates top 90 percent. Because men make up the majority of incumbents, this incumbency advantage makes it difficult for women to get elected (Lawless and Fox 2005, 25).

In addition to these institutional barriers to entry, social scientists also point a number of social barriers to explain women’s underrepresentation in elected office. One of such explanation posits that because women are still primarily responsible for the bulk of household and child care tasks, they find the prospect of running for and serving in political office less feasible than do men, who are typically unencumbered by such obligations (Lawless and Fox 2005). Despite the increase in two-income households in recent decades and the lessening of rigid sex roles, a number of surveys continue to find that women spend twice as many hours as men on household and child care tasks (Lawless and Fox 2005). While this explanation likely plays some role in women’s desire and ability to run for and serve in political office, the extent to which the correlation exists is unclear (Lawless and Fox 2005, 59). Lawless and Fox (2005, 73) found

considerable qualitative evidence to support the notion that women's duties as primary caretakers of the household significantly constrict their capacity to seriously consider running for office, pointing out that women continue to be "forced to reconcile their careers and families" in a way that men are not. However, that qualitative evidence is complicated by the fact that their quantitative analysis finds that family roles and responsibilities do not significantly predict whether an individual considers running for office (Lawless and Fox 2005, 67).

A New Take: Exploring Gender Differences in Political Ambition

Finding these explanations insufficient to stand alone in light of the growing evidence against them, Lawless and Fox (2005) develop the "political ambition" explanation, which argues that women's underrepresentation in politics persists because they do not run for office as often as men. Taking into consideration Darcy, Welch and Clark's eligibility pool explanation, Lawless and Fox sample men and women from the eligibility pool – lawyers, business executives, educators, and political activists – and find that women are less likely than similarly situated men to consider running for office. They attribute the gender gap in political ambition to three manifestations of traditional gender socialization.

First, notions of traditional family roles impress upon both women and men the expectation that women should bear the responsibility for a majority of household and child-raising tasks. Myriad empirical studies continue to find that married women in two-career households continue to perform 60-70 percent of household tasks (Achen and Stafford 2005; Bittman and Wacjman 2000). Because women have an additional expectation to fulfill family responsibilities, many women find balancing careers with home life challenging, and perceive the idea of running for office an unappealing "third job" (Lawless and Fox 2005). Because men

do not have this family responsibility expectation to the same extent women do, entering politics does not impose on their capacity to fulfill their personal and professional obligations.

Second, because existing governmental institutions were created by men and are controlled by men, they embody and perpetuate an “ethos of masculinity” that rewards and admires displays of masculinity, stymieing the integration of women into politics (Lawless and Fox 2005, 9). For example, Lawless and Fox (2005, 9) point out that when individuals consider the prospect of running for office, “they must rely on the support of numerous political institutions” – most which are dominated by men. Lawless and Fox (2005) find receiving encouragement to run from actors within these institutions is the most significant predictor of seriously considering running for office. They determine that while both men and women are much more likely to run for office when they are recruited, in reality, women are much less likely to be recruited.

Third, a “gendered psyche” where women overlook their marginalization in the public sphere in favor of a patriarchal system that makes many women feel protected and valued in their traditional roles makes politics a suitable career for men, but one that “does not even appear on the radar screen for many women” (Lawless and Fox 2005, 10-11). Gendered socialization leads men and women to gravitate toward traditionally male and female occupations. A number of studies on gender socialization find that women tend not to be socialized to develop many of the traits that are admired and rewarded in the political realm such as confidence, assertiveness, and self-promotion. Lawless and Fox’s (2005) study finds that women are much more likely to doubt and understate their qualifications to serve in elected office, providing compelling empirical evidence of these tendencies.

Although Lawless and Fox provide an excellent investigation into early political ambition and the early political socialization factors that contribute to ambition, because their study focuses on men and women who are already established in careers within the political pipeline, they are not able to examine the gender dynamics of political ambition among adolescents and young adults. In their concluding chapter, Lawless and Fox (2005, 154) reiterate the importance of political socialization in the development of political ambition, remarking, “For most people, choosing to run for office is not a spontaneous decision; rather, it is the culmination of a long, personal evolution that often stretches back into early family life.” They point out that “Women’s greater sense of self-doubt pertaining to their abilities to enter the political arena is one of the most complex barriers to their emergence as candidates,” and calls for researchers to “explore the origins of these doubts...that affect whether and how women and men come to view themselves as candidates” (Lawless and Fox 2005, 154).

Very few studies have attempted to answer that call. In one such study, Smith (2007) finds a number of similarities among men’s and women’s concerns regarding running for political office: she finds that a greater concern for self-presentational issues (which she defines as their level of comfort in subjecting themselves to public scrutiny) relative to logistical issues (those concerning the actual act of running a campaign) makes women and men less likely to be ambitious and that women and men benefit from encouragement to consider running for office. Smith concludes, however, that self-presentation/impression management issues rank higher as obstacles for young women than for young men and that men and women differ in what they see as impression management obstacles to running for office. While this study provides useful insight into young women’s concerns about running for office, Smith does not include a student government component. Because, for most young women, the potential decision to run for

office is years and likely decades down the road, it is important to include an element of closer temporal proximity.

Miller and Kraus (2004) provide one of the few existing studies of gender division in student government participation. They find that although women hold nearly half (48 percent on average) of student government positions, the majority of student government leaders (71 percent of the student government presidents and vice presidents) are male. But this study does not adequately address the reasons behind this underrepresentation. In addition, there are serious flaws with this study, the most predominant being its lack of scholarly foundation and its failure to offer compelling justification for their research in the first place.

A growing body of research finds that, indeed, there is justification in studying political participation and participation in activities like student government at a young age. A number of studies show that participating in certain activities during adolescence and early adulthood leads to increased levels political participation. Glanville (1999) finds, for example, that, even controlling for personality traits and political attitudes, participation in extra curricular activities plays a role in developing political engagement. In particular, participation in student government correlates to increased civic participation. Although this study does not attempt to find a direct correlation between participation in extra-curricular activities and running for office, it stands to reason that the increased civic engagement due to involvement in student government is conducive to political ambition and the decision to run for office in adulthood.

Hypotheses

Current research on gender dynamics of political ambition indicates that sex-role socialization and gender discrepancies in self-evaluation significantly influence levels of political

ambition among men and women (Glanville 1999; Lawless and Fox 2005; Smith 2007).

Research finds that individuals who ascribe to traditional sex-role orientations are more likely to perceive politics as a realm inappropriate for women, and to find women less emotionally suitable to serve in political office (Lawless and Fox 2005). Research also shows that women tend to be more critical of their qualifications than similarly situated men in considering running for office (Lawless and Fox 2005; Smith 2007). Based on these findings, I expect to find that:

- 1) Men have higher levels of political ambition than women with regard to both running for student government and running for political office in the future;
- 2) Self-assessment of qualifications and adherence to traditional gender roles are factors at work in explaining male and female students' levels of political ambition.

Study Design

Drawing inspiration from Lawless and Fox's (2005) Citizen Political Ambition Study, I created a survey (see Appendix A) consisting of 35 questions designed to shed light upon the nature of political ambition among students at American University as well as the influences that impact their level of ambition. The survey was designed and administered through the online survey tool, Survey Monkey.

The data collection period spanned for approximately one month. The survey was advertised via the social networking tool, Facebook, Today@AU (an online university newsletter delivered to all American University students), and posters throughout campus. A random sample of AU students was invited through Facebook to participate in the survey. The Today@AU advertisement was distributed to the entire AU community, and contained the disclaimer that survey participants must be undergraduate students at AU. Finally, posters were

hung on bulletin boards throughout in the Ward building, the Hurst Hall, the School of International Service building, Battelle, McKinley, and the Kogod building, advertising the study, emphasizing that only undergraduate students may participate. As a device to attract student participation in my survey, all advertisements emphasized that students participating in the study would be entered into a drawing to win one of several prizes. After the month-long data collection process, I compiled survey answers from Survey Monkey and transformed responses into a workable data set, coded numerically to facilitate the application of statistical analysis.

Studying political ambition at a young age provides a unique look at political ambition because many of the traditionally accepted barriers to entry inhibiting the number of women in elected office do not apply. Social barriers like family obligations and household duties should not be much of a concern, nor should institutional barriers like incumbency or a lower capacity to fundraise because students must run every year, are rarely allowed to run more than four years and campaigns generally last only one to three weeks long and are capped at a modest budget. Concern over gender bias in the media is also eliminated as student candidates are not likely to receive much coverage, even from their university media. Studying political ambition among college students, I am able to control for many of the traditionally cited reasons preventing women from reaching gender parity in elected office

This methodological approach has a few potential problems to address, the first of which are selection and response bias. Because this survey is entirely voluntary, respondents who completed the survey may have agreed to participate because of a vested interest in politics and women's political leadership, resulting in an understatement of any gendered findings that emerge. In addition, students may not have accurately conceptualized the prospect of a run for

political office, since any potential run would likely take place well into the future. This study is geared to address ambition to run for both public office and student government in an attempt to account for this possibility. It is worthwhile, nevertheless, to analyze students' perceptions of their access to public office as an indicator of the status women in American politics and of democracy in the U.S.

Results

Gender, Political Ambition and Student Government

The data supports both of my hypotheses - however, in a more nuanced way than I anticipated. In a number of the regression tests, sex itself as a variable is not a significant predictor of political ambition. Looking further into the data, however, I find that many significant predictors of ambition are in fact gendered. Bivariate analysis of these variables reveal that while women may not necessarily be more likely to be less ambitious to begin with, they are often substantially disadvantaged in the significant predictors of ambition. Consistent with previous research and as I predicted in Hypothesis 2, both self-assessments of qualifications to serve in office and traditional views of gender roles emerge as factors depressing women's political ambition – although self-assessments of qualifications have a far greater impact on ambition than view of gender roles as most women do reject traditional conceptions of gender roles. Early political socialization also proves a significant and powerful influencing factor leading to lowered levels of political ambition among women.

My multiple regression and bivariate analysis results are organized into four sections. The first two sections pertain to ambition to run for student government, while the last two explore ambition to serve in political office in the future. Section 1 predicts interest in running

for student government while Section 2 explores the factors that predict a respondent's self assessments of the qualifications to serve in student government. Like Section 1, Section 3 investigates the factors that predict interest in running for political office in the future, and like Section 2, Section 4 predicts respondents' self-assessments of a potential future candidacy.

1. Considering Running for Student Government.

Table 1.1

	High Interest in Running for Student Government		No Interest in Running for Student Government	
	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)
Baseline Indicators				
Sex	0.255 (.714)	-	-1.29** (.325)	24.6
School of Public Affairs	-2.538* (1.045)	2.7	0.453 (.403)	-
School of International Service	-1.549 (1.020)	-	0.404 (.381)	-
Kogod School of Business	0.082 (1.041)	-	-0.136 (.443)	-
College of Arts and Sciences	-0.87 (.957)	-	0.429 (.354)	-
School of Communication	-0.427 (1.276)	-	0.351 (.439)	-
Political interest	0.838 * (.391)	19.1	-0.447 (.239)	-
Political participation	0.415 (.222)	-	-0.191 (.102)	-
Political Socialization				
Frequency political discussions with parents	0.265 (.434)	-	-0.12 (.156)	-
Encouragement to run for office growing up	-0.061 (.405)	-	-0.132 (.170)	-
Having parents who ran for political office	-0.6 (.957)	-	-0.336 (.425)	-
Views of Traditional Gender Roles				
Household composition growing up	-0.079 (.183)	-	0.028 (.068)	-
Self-identify as a feminist	0.657(.724)	-	0.302 (.276)	-
Believing men and women are equally suitable for politics	0.142 (.641)	-	-0.65 * (.289)	23.1
Believing that men and women should have equal roles in society	-0.103 (.498)	-	0.319 (.213)	-
Self-Assessments				
Self-assessment of qualifications to serve in student government	2.173 ** (.581)	45.9	-0.265 (.159)	-
Confidence of winning one's first campaign for student government	-0.731 (.501)	-	-0.207 (.195)	-
Encouragement				

Received encouragement to run for student government	0.495 (1.502)	-	-0.52 (.657)	-
Received encouragement to run from a personal source	0.401 (1.265)	-	-0.433 (.603)	-
Received encouragement to run from a professional source	0.187 (.753)	-	-0.204 (.345)	-
Political Efficacy and Legitimacy				
Belief that student government officials are qualified for their positions	0.563 (.630)	-	-1.116 ** (.254)	20.4
Perceptions of the Playing Field				
Expectations of sexism in running for student government	-0.907 (.559)	-	-0.08 (.213)	-
	-9.074 *		4.926 **	
Constant	(3.559)		(1.374)	
Pseudo-R squared	0.193		0.227	
N	369		369	

Notes: Maximum changes in probabilities are based on the logistic regression results. Probabilities were calculated by setting all continuous independent variables to their means and all dummy variables to their modes. The change in probability reflects the independent effect a statistically significant variable exerts as I vary its value from its minimum to its maximum. Significance levels: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

In order to assess the impact of sex, political socialization, views of gender roles, and self-assessment of qualifications to serve in student government on the likelihood of a student considering running for student government, I performed two regression analyses. The first model presented in Table 1.1 predicts whether the respondent indicated that running for student government is “something [he/she] would definitely like to undertake in the future.” The second logistic regression equation predicts whether the respondent reported that running for student government is “something [he/she] would absolutely never do.” The models control for school affiliation within American University, interest in student government, and attitudes toward the legitimacy and efficacy of student government.

Overall, these models have moderate explanatory value, explaining 19 percent and 23 percent of the dependent variable. As anticipated, self-assessments of qualifications to serve in student government significantly increase the likelihood of having high levels of ambition to run for student government. Students who self-assess as very qualified to serve in student government are 45 percent more likely than those who do not to have high levels of student

government ambition. Somewhat surprisingly, however, these same self-assessments of qualifications do not significantly depress political ambition.

Also as expected, adherence to traditional conceptions of gender roles increases the likelihood of having low levels of political ambition for both men and women. Respondents who agree with the statement that “Men are better suited emotionally for politics” are 23 percent more likely to have low levels of interest in running for student government ambition. Contrary to expectations, though, respondents who eschew traditional conceptions of gender roles are not significantly more likely to exhibit ambition to run for student government. Bivariate analysis of the relationship between sex and the belief that men and women are equally suitable for politics further demonstrates that women are significantly more likely than men to reject traditional notions of gender roles (81 percent of women compared to 70 percent of men; difference significant at $p < .05$). But these attitudes do not trigger ambition.

Table 1.2

	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
Question: To what extent do you agree with the statement, "men are better suited emotionally for politics than most women"?		
Strongly	1.4% *	3.90%
Somewhat	17.8 *	26.2
Not at All	80.8 *	69.9
N	286	103

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Perhaps the most important finding to emerge from the regression analysis, however, is that, although sex is significant, it operates in an opposite direction than expected. More specifically, men are 26 percent more likely than women to report no interest in running for student government. However, when we turn to whether respondents have taken any concrete steps toward launching a campaign, female students less likely than male students to have

investigated how to get their name on the ballot (11 percent of women and 26 percent of men), or discussed running with student government officials (12 percent of women and 18 percent of men), friends and family (25 and 32 percent), or other members of the university community (17 and 20 percent).

Table 1.3

	Percent of Students who Have Taken the Following Steps Toward Running for Student Government	
	Women	Men
Discussed running with SG officials	12.20%	18.30%
Discussed running with family members	24.5	31.7
Discussed running with other members of the school community	16.8	20.2
Investigated how to get their name on the ballot	10.5 **	26
Attended Campaign College	3.1	2.9
N	286	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

These findings beg a broader question: if women are as ambitious as men when it comes to student government, and if women are actually more likely to consider the option of running for student government, then why are they consistently underrepresented? What factors hinder women from acting on their ambition, and why do these factors not inhibit men the same way? As the data presented in Table 1.4 suggest, most men and women feel that they would be more likely to run if they had more free time and if there were issues they felt passionately about. But women would also be significantly more likely to run if a friend encouraged them to do so, or if they had previous campaign experience.

Table 1.4

	Percent of Students who Report that the Following would make them More Likely to Run for Student Government	
	Women	Men
A professor or advisor suggested you run	33.60%	38.50%
A member of SG suggested you run	28.3	33.7
A friend suggested you run	21.2*	11.2 *
You had more free time	50	48.1
There were issues you felt passionate about	61.5	64.4
You knew there was support for your candidacy	46.9	50
You had previous campaign experience	22.4 *	11.5
N	286	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

2. Self-Assessments of Qualifications to Serve in Student Government

Students who self-assess as highly qualified to serve in student government are significantly more likely to report high levels of ambition to run for student government. To explain why female students are continually underrepresented in student government, despite being equally likely as male students to have high student government ambition and more likely than men to consider the option of running for student government, I explore the relationship between self-assessments of qualifications and sex. A statistically significant difference can be observed in the crosstabulation of this survey question, as displayed in Table 2.1. While 11 percent of women reported believing themselves to be highly qualified 34 percent of men believed themselves highly qualified. This gap only widens looking at whether respondents believe themselves to be qualified at all to serve in student government. While nearly 40 percent

of women believe themselves to be highly qualified or qualified to serve, a full 70 percent of men believe themselves highly qualified or qualified.

Table 2.1

Question: How qualified do you feel you are to hold office in student government	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
Not qualified	20.7% **	10.60%
Somewhat qualified	39.6 **	20.2
Qualified	28.6 **	35.6
Very Qualified	11.1 **	33.7
N	280	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

I performed two regression tests to explore factors impacting how students self-assess their qualifications to serve in student government. The first model (Table 2.2) predicts whether the respondent indicated that, in assessing their qualifications to serve in student government, they believe themselves to be “very qualified.” The second model predicts whether the respondent indicated that they believe themselves to be “not qualified” to serve in student government. Again, these models control for school affiliation within American University, interest in student government, and attitudes toward the legitimacy and efficacy of student government.

These models fare somewhat better than those in the previous section, explaining 26 percent of the dependent variable. The first regression equation reveals that sex is a statistically significant factor in predicting the likelihood of a respondent self-assessing their qualifications for serving in student government to be “very high.” All else, equal, women are 7 percent less likely than men to believe that they are highly qualified. The second model, however, reveals that sex does not predict self-assessments of “not qualified.”

Table 2.2

	Self-Assesses as Highly Qualified		Self-Assesses as Unqualified	
	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)
Baseline Indicators				
Sex	-1.111** (.387)	7.0	0.464 (.446)	-
School of Public Affairs	1.82** (.499)	15.9	-1.906* (.799)	1.7
School of International Service	4.6 (.511)	-	-0.913 (.637)	-
Kogod School of Business	-0.061 (.675)	-	-1.468 (.762)	-
College of Arts and Sciences	-0.188 (.473)	-	-0.221 (.587)	-
School of Communication	-2.143 (1.164)	-	-0.304 (.634)	-
Political interest	-0.152 (.266)	-	-0.031 (.439)	-
Political participation	0.319* (.132)	15.4	-0.292 (.172)	-
Political Socialization				
Frequency political discussions with parents	0.187 (.230)	-	-0.16 (.215)	-
Encouragement to run for office growing up	0.081 (.221)	-	-0.748** (.286)	12.7
Having parents who ran for political office	-0.568 (.668)	-	0.112 (.611)	-
Views of Traditional Gender Roles				
Household composition growing up	-0.134 (.095)	-	-0.015 (.099)	-
Self-identify as a feminist	-0.043 (.40)	-	-0.732 (.397)	-
Believing men and women are equally suitable for politics	0.09 (.383)	-	-0.37 (.390)	-
Believing that men and women should have equal roles in society	0.473 (.296)	-	-0.008 (.302)	-
Self-Assessments				
Confidence of winning one's first campaign for student government	1.247** (.293)	7.3	-1.281** (.292)	34.9
Encouragement				
Received encouragement to run for student government	0.121 (.846)	-	0.513 (1.04)	-
Received encouragement to run from a personal source	-0.481 (.729)	-	-0.659 (.964)	-
Received encouragement to run from a professional source	0.602 (.453)	-	-0.491 (.599)	-
Political Efficacy and Legitimacy				
Belief that student government officials are qualified for their positions	0.245 (.355)	-	-0.152 (.337)	-
Perceptions of the Playing Field				
Expectations of sexism in running for student government	0.194 (.302)	-	0.067 (.307)	-

Constant	-7.307** (2.03)	5.236** (1.81)
Pseudo-R squared	0.26	0.256
N	369	369

Notes: Maximum changes in probabilities are based on the logistic regression results. Probabilities were calculated by setting all continuous independent variables to their means and all dummy variables to their modes. The change in probability reflects the independent effect a statistically significant variable exerts as I vary its value from its minimum to its maximum. Significance levels: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Contrary to expectations, though, adherence to traditional conceptions of gender roles does not predict self-assessments. Political socialization, levels of political activity, and confidence in winning a campaign are significant factors. More specifically, respondents who received high levels of parental encouragement to run for office someday are 13 percent less likely to assess themselves as unqualified to serve in student government. Looking again to a cross tabulation looking at levels of parental encouragement growing up across gender Table 2.3, the relationship between sex and levels of parental encouragement growing up is statistically significant. While 21 percent of women reported receiving “frequent” encouragement from their parents, 34 percent of men reported “frequent encouragement.” Women reported receiving no encouragement at all much more frequently than men, with 47 percent of women reporting no encouragement, compared to 37 percent of men. Because lack of parental encouragement is a significant factor in depressing levels of self-assessment, this gender difference provides important insight into factors holding women back from believing themselves qualified.

Table 2.3

Question: When you were growing up, how frequently did your parents suggest that, someday, you should run for public office?	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
Never	47.2% *	36.50%
Occasionally	31.5 *	29.8
Frequently	21.3 *	33.7
N	286	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The number of activities respondents participate in is a significant predictor of perceiving one's qualifications to serve in student government as very high. As demonstrated in Table 2.2 each increase in the number of activities a respondent participates in results in an averaged 2.2 percent increase in the likelihood that they self-assess as highly qualified. As the crosstabs assessment in Table 2.4 shows, women are significantly less likely to participate in higher numbers of student government activities. While 14 percent of men report participating in between 5 and 7 activities, only 5 percent of women do, and whereas 48 percent of men report participating in 0 or 1 activity, 56 percent do. A crosstabulation of which activities students participate in reveals that not only is sex significant in determining how many activities a respondent participates in, but also what kind of activities. As Table 2.5 shows, while women participate in few activities across the board, they especially avoid contacting student government officials and attending student government meetings – activities that would likely best prepare them for serving in student government and would provide them with the contacts within student government. Indeed, 22 percent of men reported contact with a student government official in the past year; only 11 percent of women reported the same. Likewise, while 20 percent of men attended a student government meeting over the course of the last year, only 9 percent of women did.

Table 2.4

	Percent of Students who Participated in the Following Number of Student Government Activities over the Past Year	
	Women	Men
0	26.6% *	19.20%
1	29.4 *	28.8
2	21.7 *	15.4
3	13.3 *	17.3
4	4.2 *	5.8

	5	1.7 *	5.8
	6	2.8 *	4.8
	7	0.3 *	2.9
N		286	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Table 2.5

	Percent of Students who Participated in the Following Number of Student Government Activities over the Past Year	
	Women	Men
Voted in 2009 student government elections	45.50%	52.90%
Wrote an editorial for the eagle	2.4	4.8
Joined or participated in a club on campus	54.3	63.5
Contacted a student government official	11.2 **	22.1
Volunteered for a student government campaign	7.3	13.5
Attended a student government campaign	8.7 **	20.2
Joined a student government candidate's group on Facebook	28	35.6
N	286	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

3. Considering Running for Public Office Later in Life

Multiple and bivariate regression analyses find that the gendered differences in levels of political ambition Lawless and Fox (2005) find among men and women in the eligibility pool persist among male and female students when they considered running for student government. To explore to what extent these results apply to how students consider running for public office in the future, this study also examines students' ambition to run for public office in the future and the factors that contribute to it.

Similarly to Section 1, I performed two regression analyses in order to assess the impact of sex, political socialization, views of gender roles, and self-assessment of qualifications to

serve in student government on political ambition; these models, however, predict whether the respondent indicated that running for political office is “something [he/she] would definitely like to undertake in the future” and whether the respondent reported that running for political is “something [he/she] would absolutely never do.” Consistent with previous sections, these models control for school affiliation within American University, interest in politics, and attitudes toward the legitimacy and efficacy of American politics and elected officials.

These models perform very well and provide interesting insight into the role sex plays in influencing political ambition. Notably, sex – itself – is not statistically significant in predicting whether a respondent reports high levels of interest in running for political office, nor no interest in running for office. Closer examinations of indicators that are statistically significant in predicting political ambition, however, indicate that gender does play a significant role.

Table 3.1

	High Interest in Running for Office in the Future		No Interest in Running for Office in the Future	
	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)
Baseline Indicators				
Sex	0.866 (.878)	-	0.286 (.513)	-
School of Public Affairs	-1.085 (.913)	-	0.524 (.548)	-
School of International Service	-1.695 (.974)	-	0.598 (.495)	-
Kogod School of Business	-1.671 (1.317)	-	-0.02 (.629)	-
College of Arts and Sciences	-1.17 (.826)	-	1.236** (.464)	8.1
School of Communication	-0.725 (1.106)	-	0.536 (.582)	-
Political interest	0.915* (.426)	7.7	-0.352 (.242)	-
Political participation	0.162 (.1380)	-	-0.212 (.117)	-
Political Socialization				
Frequency political discussions with parents	-0.227 (.325)	-	0.412 (.218)	-
Encouragement to run for office growing up	0.533 (.347)	-	-0.696** (.243)	4.6
Having parents who ran for political office	1.94* (.871)	12.7	-0.53 (.643)	-

Views of Traditional Gender Roles

Household composition growing up	-0.043 (.133)	-	-0.139 (.097)	-
Self-identify as a feminist	0.09 (.614)	-	0.375 (.364)	-
Believing men and women are equally suitable for politics	0.048 (.597)	-	-0.978** (.372)	14.8
Believing that men and women should have equal roles in society	-0.335 (.400)	-	0.145 (.298)	-

Self-Assessments

Self-assessment of potential future candidacy	3.4** (.927)	41.7	-1.493** (.283)	14.2
Belief that one has the thick skin and confidence to run	0.479 (.586)	-	-0.033 (.387)	-

Encouragement

Received encouragement to run for student government	1.874 (1.39)	-	1.28 (.910)	-
Received encouragement to run from a personal source	-1.311 (1.146)	-	-1.676* (.844)	2.6
Received encouragement to run from a professional source	-0.822 (.624)	-	-0.285 (.513)	-

Political Efficacy and Legitimacy

Belief that politicians are qualified for their positions	0.804 (.642)	-	-0.392 (.373)	-
Belief that most people who run for office are well-intentioned	-1.549** (.575)	8.3	-0.816* (.355)	4.4

Perceptions of the Playing Field

Expectations of sexism in running for political office	-0.899 (.637)	-	0.602* (.301)	4.7
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Feelings About Campaign Activities

Attending fundraising events	-0.566 (.39)	-	-0.032 (.246)	-
Public speaking and debate	0.839 (.587)	-	0.024 (.235)	-
Going door to door to speak to constituents	0.655 (.413)	-	-0.022 (.205)	-
Public criticism and scrutiny	-0.246 (.449)	-	-0.189 (.251)	-
The amount of time required	0.766 (.447)	-	0.197 (.235)	-

Constant	-16.59** (5.12)		4.396* (1.85)	
Pseudo-R squared	0.304		0.34	
N	358		358	

Notes: Maximum changes in probabilities are based on the logistic regression results. Probabilities were calculated by setting all continuous independent variables to their means and all dummy variables to their modes. The change in probability reflects the independent effect a statistically significant variable exerts as I vary its value from its minimum to its maximum. Significance levels: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Bivariate analysis of significant predictors of political ambition in the regression equations across sex reveal significantly gendered findings. Turning first to measures of political

socialization, we see that having parents who ran for office and having received parental encouragement to run growing up exert a significant impact on political ambition. Those with parents who ran for political office are 13 percent more likely to indicate high levels of interest in running for political office in the future. And those who received “frequent” parental encouragement to run for political office growing up are 18 percent less likely to report no interest in running for political office in the future. Referencing again Table 2.3, it is important to recognize women’s lower levels of parental encouragement.

Adhering to traditional conceptions of gender roles is also significant in predicting whether a respondent has low political ambition. Both men and women who reject the idea that politics is a male field are more likely to have high levels of political ambition. This bodes well for future generations, since women are increasingly likely to reject traditional gender roles

As it stands, though, this study shows that the anticipation of sex-discrimination in running for office significantly depresses political ambition. The second model shows that those who would anticipate sex-based discrimination if they ran for political office are 5 percent more likely to report no interest in running for political office. Looking at Table 3.2’s cross tabulation of expectations of sex-based discrimination and sex, we see that 94 percent of women anticipate experiencing at least some degree of sex-based discrimination if they were to run for political office than do men.

Table 3.2

Question: If you were to run for elected office, to what extent would you expect to experience sex-based discrimination?	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
Not at all	6.5% **	75.70%
Somewhat	71.6 **	20.2
A great deal	21.9 **	3.9
N	281	103

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** p < .01; * p < .05

Political interest also significantly affects political ambition. Following national politics “very closely” increases the likelihood of having high political ambition by 8 percent (Table 3.1). As Table 3.3 shows, however, there is a significant gender disparity in how closely students follow national politics. While nearly half (43 percent) of men follow national politics, only 13 percent of women report following national politics “very closely.” Looking at the number of political activities respondents report having participated in during the past year, a gender discrepancy also emerges. Table 3.4 shows that women participate in fewer political activities than men. Only 3 percent of women participated in 7-10 political activities during the past year, compared to 10 percent of men. Further, 62 percent of women participated in between 0 and 2 activities, compared to only 42 percent of men.

Table 3.3

Question: How closely do you follow national politics?	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
Not closely	14.3% **	6.70%
Somewhat closely	37.8 **	21.2
Closely	35.3 **	28.8
Very closely	12.6 **	43.3
N	286	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Table 3.4

	Percent of Students who Participated in the Following Number of Political Activities over the Past Year	
	Women	Men
0	10.8% **	9.60%
1	28.3 **	17.3
2	23.1 **	15.4
3	14.3 **	17.3
4	10.1 **	12.5
5	6.6 **	9.6
6	3.8 **	8.7
7	1.7 **	3.8

	8	1 **	1.9
	9	0 **	1.9
	10	0 **	1.9
N		286	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** p < .01; * p < .05

4. Self-Assessments of a Potential Future Candidacy

As revealed in the bivariate analysis of self-assessments of qualifications to serve in student government and sex reveal, a crosstabulation and chi square test of self-assessments of a potential future candidacy for elected office and sex find that women indicate believing they would make good future candidates far less frequently than men did. Table 4.1 reveals that while nearly 55 percent of men report confidence in a potential future candidacy, only 25 percent of women do. Those who believe they would make good future candidates for political office are over 40 percent more likely to have high levels of political ambition (Table 3.1). Since confidence in a future potential candidacy is the single most significant predictor of high levels of political ambition, this section further explores the role of sex in predicting a respondent's self-assessments of a potential future candidacy.

Table 4.1

Question: Do you believe you would be a good candidate to run for political office someday?	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
No	34.5% **	16.30%
Yes	23.5 **	53.8
Unsure	42 **	29.8
N	281	104

Note: Significance levels of Chi-square test comparing women and men: ** p < .01; * p < .05

Similarly to Section 2, this section assesses the impact of sex, political socialization, and views of gender roles on the self-assessment of qualifications to run for political office in the future. I performed two regression analyses; the first model presented in Table 4.2 predicts

whether the respondent believes that he/she would make a make a good candidate for office someday. The second logistic regression equation predicts whether the respondent reports that he/she would not make a good candidate for political office someday.

Table 4.2

	High Self-Assessment of Potential Future Candidacy		Low Self-Assessment of Potential Future Candidacy	
	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)	Coefficient (and standard error)	Maximum Change in Probability (Percentage Points)
Baseline Indicators				
Sex	-0.438 (.433)	-	0.742 (.434)	-
School of Public Affairs	0.719* (.484)	13.4	-0.975* (.492)	20.8
School of International Service	1.046 (.470)	-	-0.547 (.428)	-
Kogod School of Business	0.434 (.519)	-	0.222 (.495)	-
College of Arts and Sciences	-0.388 (.439)	-	0.098 (.409)	-
School of Communication	-0.457 (.588)	-	0.381 (.491)	-
Political interest	0.483* (.217)	12.2	0.11 (.209)	-
Political participation	0.075 (.088)	-	-0.151 (.098)	-
Political Socialization				
Frequency political discussions with parents	-0.174 (.20)	-	-0.2 (.184)	-
Encouragement to run for office growing up	0.427 (.203)	-	-0.119 (.197)	-
Having parents who ran for political office	0.427* (.547)	7.9	-0.373 (.522)	-
Views of Traditional Gender Roles				
Household composition growing up	-0.116 (.087)	-	0.058 (.084)	-
Self-identify as a feminist	-0.043 (.547)	-	0.204 (.317)	-
Believing men and women are equally suitable for politics	-0.041 (.337)	-	-0.508 (.319)	-
Believing that men and women should have equal roles in society	-0.32 (.262)	-	0.171 (.251)	-
Self-Assessments				
Belief that one has the thick skin and confidence to run	1.347** (.326)	19.1	-1.173** (.326)	24.0
Encouragement				
Received encouragement to run for student government	0.56 (.752)	-	-0.008 (.754)	-
Received encouragement to run from a personal source	-0.068 (.666)	-	-0.391 (.698)	-
Received encouragement to run from a professional source	-0.017 (.398)	-	-0.216 (.429)	-

Political Efficacy and Legitimacy

Belief that politicians are qualified for their positions	0.685 (.358)	-	0.096 (.312)	-
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Belief that most people who run for office are well-intentioned	0.077 (.314)	-	-0.539 (.297)	-
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Perceptions of the Playing Field

Expectations of sexism in running for political office	-0.52 (.298)	-	-0.131 (.275)	-
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Feelings About Campaign Activities

Attending fundraising events	0.171 (.226)	-	-0.253 (.208)	-
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Public speaking and debate	0.34 (.262)	-	-0.249 (.205)	-
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Going door to door to speak to constituents	0.542** (.209)	11.5	-0.103 (.179)	-
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Public criticism and scrutiny	-0.045 (.242)	-	-0.054 (.211)	-
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The amount of time required	0.331 (.227)	-	-0.334 (.207)	-
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Constant	-5.59** (1.99)		3.991* (1.66)	
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Pseudo-R squared	0.366		0.247	
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N	359		359	
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Notes: Maximum changes in probabilities are based on the logistic regression results. Probabilities were calculated by setting all continuous independent variables to their means and all dummy variables to their modes. The change in probability reflects the independent effect a statistically significant variable exerts as I vary its value from its minimum to its maximum. Significance levels: ** p < .01; * p < .05.

Consistent with previous sections, both models control for school affiliation within American University, interest in national politics, and attitudes toward the legitimacy and efficacy of politics and politicians. While again, sex is not a significant predictor of self-assessment, looking at bivariate analyses of significant predictors across sex, significantly gendered findings emerge. Respondents who reported following national politics “very closely” were 12 percent more likely to believe themselves to be good future candidates than those who reported following national politics “not closely.” This could prove damaging to the chances of women identifying themselves as good future candidates, as only 13 percent of women report following national politics “very closely” (Table 3.3). Once again, early parental encouragement to run for political office is a significant factor in predicting whether a respondent believes he or she would make a good future candidate. Those who received parental encouragement to run for office growing up are 8 percent more likely to self-assess high than those who received none.

Those who feel “very positive” about their abilities to deal with “public criticism and the high levels of public scrutiny involved in running for office” are 12 percent more likely to assess themselves as good future candidates than those who feel “very negative” about it. But as the crosstabs in Table 4.2 shows, substantially fewer women than men report high levels of comfort with public scrutiny (9 percent of women compared to 21 percent of men). In fact, far fewer women than men reported having any level of positive feelings toward their capacity to deal with high levels of public scrutiny and criticism. Only 36 percent of women reported feeling “positive” or “very positive” about it, while 63 percent of men did.

Table 4.2

Question: If you were to become a candidate for public office, how would you feel about dealing with the public criticism and high level of public scrutiny involved in running for office?	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
Very Negative	10.7% **	3.90%
Negative	43.6 **	33.3
Positive	36.4 **	42.2
Very Positive	9.3 **	20.6
N	280	102

Along the same lines, whether the respondent believes he or she has “the thick skin and high levels of self confidence” to enter the political arena is also a significant predictor for attitudes toward a potential future candidacy. Those who believe they possess those qualities are 19 percent more likely to identify themselves as a good future candidate than those who do not. This factor proves a significant indicator in predicting the likelihood of self-identifying as not a good future candidate for political office, as shown in Table 4.1. Those who believe they are thick skinned enough to run for office are 24 percent less likely to believe that would not make a good future candidate for political office. The bivariate results reveal that women are significantly more often the ones who believe they are not cut out for politics (Table 4.3). That

is, while only 36 percent of women think they have the crucial thick skin and self confidence to enter politics, a full 60 percent of men reported believing they possess these qualities.

Table 4.3

Question: Do you believe you have the thick skin and high levels of self-confidence needed to enter the political arena?	Percent of Students	
	Women	Men
No	64.2% **	39.80%
Very closely	35.8 **	60.2
N	285	103

Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, some of these findings are encouraging for the future of gender parity in elected office. Sex, itself, is not a significant predictor of low political ambition among students with regard to student government or political office. Moreover, rejecting traditional notions of gender roles significantly reduced both men's and women's likelihood of expressing no interest in running for student government or political office. Since more women than men reject the confinements of traditional gender roles, this finding appears even more encouraging to prospects of gender parity in elected office in the future. It seems that the progress women have achieved in the political realm in recent years has made an impact on young women's perceptions of gender and politics. Young women have a growing pool of prominent female politicians to look up to as role models and have seen the first female Speaker of the House take office and the first female contender compete for a major party presidential primary ticket. Young women have received the message that a career in politics is open to them and have thus begun at least to leave the option open for the future.

Although sex does not always predict political ambition, it operates significantly in many of the factors that do predict ambition. While it appears that young women believe that politics

is an acceptable career path for women, they tend not to apply that belief to their own lives. Women are significantly less likely to believe themselves highly qualified to serve in office. Since self-assessments of qualifications are the most significant predictors of ambition in the regression equations, women's lowered self-assessments significantly hinder them from running for student government and seriously considering running for office in the future.

Women are also disadvantaged by gendered differences in political socialization, encouragement to run, and perceptions of the political playing field. While both men and women's political ambition benefit from having experienced a highly politicized upbringing and having received parental encouragement to run growing up, far fewer women than men actually had that experience. Similarly, although women and men are more likely to be politically ambitious when they receive encouragement from family and friends to run for office, women are less likely than men actually to receive that encouragement (although the impact of this encouragement on political ambition in this study is less dramatic than found in previous research). Women are also more likely than men to perceive the political playing field as unequal. Significantly more women than men also anticipate high levels of sex-based discrimination in running for both student government and political office, which proves a significant deterrent from running.

While none of these findings bode well for the prospect of gender parity in elected office, perhaps the most discouraging finding to emerge from this research is that overall, women exhibit less interest in student government and politics. Women indicate following student government and national political far less frequently than men and report participating in fewer student government and political activities than men. Since the regression equations find political interest and participation to be significant predictors of political ambition and self-

assessments of qualifications, this research begs further investigation into why women, while rejecting the idea that men are better suited for politics, express less interest in politics than men.

That these conclusions are largely consistent with those Lawless and Fox (2005) found among men and women in the eligibility pool suggests that the gender differences in political ambition that pervade the eligibility pool persist among college students. This suggests that the origin of the gendered differences between men and women in terms of political ambition begin much earlier in life. These findings have practical implications for reaching gender parity in elected office. These results show that efforts to instill confidence and encourage young women to run for office must take place at an early age, as gendered effects are already apparent and at work by the time young women reach college. That this study finds gender differences in political ambition already present among undergraduate college students suggests that socialization is among the most important and earliest influences on the development of political ambition

This research opens the doors for further study of gendered differences in levels of political ambition among students. While this study provides a number of intriguing results, several improvements could be made. While I made an effort to identify and control for an extensive list of independent variables while running my regression tests (see Appendix B), further study could improve upon this list by adding several important variables. Race and political ideology should be accounted for as factors known to have important influence on political participation. Further study should also take into account respondents' year in school. Since students learn more about student government and politics in general as they progress in their undergraduate years, it is likely that older students express higher levels of ambition on the whole than younger students and future study should also control for this factor.

This research would also be improved by collecting qualitative data along with the quantitative data from the survey. Conducting more extensive interview with a random subset of the sample would provide a richer and more detailed insight into why so few women run for student government as well as young women's perceptions of running for political office.

This study's generalizability would greatly improve from a larger sample size and expanding the study to other universities across the country. While a sample of 398 students out of American University's approximate undergraduate population of 6,000 students provides a degree of confidence, the study would benefit from a larger sample size. Expanding this study nationally would allow the researcher to control for variables like region and ideological bent and particular characteristics of a particular university.

That said however, conducting this study at American University set the bar high for finding gender differences in political ambition. With its exceptionally politically active students, its predominantly female student population, and its location in Washington DC, not to mention the fact that it is home to the Women & Politics Institute – one of the premier academic organizations for women and politics in the country – American University seems like it should be a place where women stand out in their political ambition. This is not the case. Despite the advantages American University provides to develop and express political ambition, women exhibit lower levels of political ambition than men, driven most substantially by lowered self-assessments of their qualifications to serve in office, and a less politicized upbringing.

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Appendix A

Instructions:

Thank you for participating in this survey. The survey is 35 questions and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation serves as consent to the usage of your responses for the purposes of this study. All of your answers are confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. You may skip questions and opt out of the survey at any time. You may also choose to provide your name and email address at the end of this survey to be entered into a raffle for a chance to win 1 of 6 assorted gift certificates; however your personal information **will not** be linked with your survey responses.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or the nature of this research, please feel free to contact me at ad0949a@student.american.edu. Thank you for your time and your help in this endeavor.

Part1 – First we would like to ask you some questions regarding your background.

1. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

2. To which school to you belong at American University?

- School of Public Affairs
- School of International Service
- Kogod School of Business
- College of Arts and Sciences
- School of Communication

3. Growing up, how frequently did your parents discuss politics with you?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Seldom
- Never

4. Growing up, was your mother or father more likely to discuss politics with you?

- Mother
- Father
- Both spoke equally
- Neither

5. When you were growing up, how frequently did your parents suggest that, someday, you should run for public office?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Seldom

- Never

6. When you were growing up, what description best characterizes the arrangements in your household

- I grew up in a one-career household where my father was the primary breadwinner and my mother was the primary caretaker of the household.
- I grew up in a one-career household where my mother was the primary breadwinner and my father was the primary caretaker
- I grew up in a two-career household where my parents shared household duties evenly
- I grew up in a two-career household where my mother was responsible for most household duties
- I grew up in a two-career household where my father was responsible for most household duties
- I grew up in a single parent household with my mother
- I grew up in a single parent household with my father
- Other

7. Did either of your parents ever run for elective office?

- Yes, both parents
- Yes, my father
- Yes, my mother
- No

Part 2 – We would like to ask you about your political attitudes and the ways you participate politically

1. How closely do you follow national politics?

- Very closely
- Closely
- Somewhat closely
- Not closely

2. How closely do you follow AU student government politics?

- Very closely
- Closely
- Somewhat closely
- Not closely

3. In which, if any, of the following activities have you engaged during the past year?

- Voted
- Wrote a letter to a newspaper
- Joined or paid dues to a political interest group
- Contacted an elected official (by phone, email, letter, etc)

- Contributed money to a campaign
 - Volunteered or worked for a political candidate
 - Joined a group in the community to address a local issue
 - Attended a city council, school board, or town hall meeting
 - Contributed to a political blog
 - Joined a political group on Facebook
4. In which, if any, of the following activities have you engaged at AU during the past year?
- Voted in 2009 student government election
 - Wrote an editorial for the *Eagle*
 - Joined or participated in a club or student organization on campus
 - Contacted a student government official
(by phone, email, letter, etc)
 - Volunteered for a student government campaign
 - Attended a student government meeting
 - Joined a student government candidate's group on Facebook
5. Do you consider yourself a feminist?
- Yes
 - No
6. To what degree do you agree with the statement, "Men and women should have equal roles in society"?
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
7. Which statement best describes how you feel about people who run for political office?
- Most people who run for office are very well intentioned and genuinely hope to improve society.
 - Most people who run for office are generally interested in their own fame and power.
8. If you felt strongly about a government action or policy, how likely would you be to engage in each of the following political activities?
- Give money to a political candidate who favors your position
 - Very unlikely
 - Unlikely
 - Likely
 - Very Likely
 - Volunteer for a candidate or group that favors your position
 - Very unlikely
 - Unlikely
 - Likely
 - Very Likely
 - Organize people in the community to work on the issue

- Very unlikely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Very Likely
- Directly lobby or contact government officials
 - Very unlikely
 - Unlikely
 - Likely
 - Very Likely

9. To what extent do you agree with the statement “men are better suited emotionally for politics than most women”?

- Strongly
- Somewhat
- Not at all

10. People often say that, to enter the political arena, you need to have a thick skin and high levels of self-confidence. To what extent do you agree with this assessment?

- Strongly
- Somewhat
- Not at all

11. Do you believe that you possess those qualities?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Part 3 – The next series of questions deal with your attitudes toward running for office. We realize that most students have never considered running, but your answers are still very important.

1. Which of the following options do you think is the most effective way for you to get American University to address a certain issue?

- Run for student government
- Form or join a club or student organization to lobby the student body and AU leadership
- Support a student government candidate who shares your views
- Write an editorial for a school publication
- Contact a student government official directly (by phone, email, letter, etc)
- Participate in student government meetings

2. Generally speaking, do you think most AU student government officials are qualified for the positions they hold?

- Yes

- No

3. Generally speaking, do you think most local, state, and national elected officials are qualified for the positions they hold?

- Yes
- No

4. Do you believe you would be a good candidate to run for political office someday?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

5. If you were to become a candidate for public office, how would you feel about engaging in the following aspects of a campaign?

- Attending fundraising function
 - Very positive
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Very negative
- Delivering speeches and participating in debates in front of large groups of people and/or on television
 - Very positive
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Very negative
- Going door to door to meet constituents
 - Very positive
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Very negative
- Dealing with public criticism and high level of public scrutiny involved in running for office
 - Very positive
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Very negative
- The amount of time it takes to run for office
 - Very positive
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Very negative

6. Which best characterizes your attitudes toward running for public office in the future?

- It is something I definitely would like to undertake in the future
- It is something I might undertake if the opportunity presented itself but I currently have no interest

- It is something I would absolutely never do
7. What offices might you ever be interested in running for?
- School board
 - Mayor
 - State legislator
 - Member of the U.S. House of Representatives
 - U.S. Senator
 - President
 - City, County, or Town Council
 - Governor
 - Statewide Office (i.e., Attorney General)
 - I would never run for any office
8. If you were to run for public office, to what extent would you expect to experience sex-based discrimination?
- A great deal
 - Somewhat
 - Not at all
9. Which best characterizes your attitudes toward running for student government in the future?
- It is something I definitely would like to undertake in the future
 - It is something I might undertake if the opportunity presented itself but I currently have no interest
 - It is something I would absolutely never do
10. Have you ever held office within student government (at AU or otherwise)?
- Yes
 - No
11. If no, have you ever run for student government office (at AU or otherwise)?
- Yes
 - No
12. If you have ever thought about running for student government, have you ever taken any of the following steps?
- Discussed running with student government officials
 - Discussed running with friends and family
 - Discussed running with other members of the school community
 - Investigated how to place your name on the ballot
 - Attended Campaign College
13. Regardless of your interest in running for student government, have any of the following individuals ever suggested that you run for student government?
- A student government official
 - A professor or academic advisor

- A classmate
- A friend
- A family member
- A leader of a club or activity in which you participate

14. Would you be more likely to run for student government if:

- A professor or advisor suggested you run?
- A member of student government suggested you run?
- A friend suggested you run?
- You had more free time?
- There were issues you felt passionate about?
- You knew there was support for your candidacy?
- You had previous experience campaigning?

15. How qualified do you feel you are to hold office in student government?

- Very qualified
- Qualified
- Somewhat qualified
- Not qualified

16. If you were to run for student government, to what extent would you expect to experience sex-based discrimination?

- A great deal
- Somewhat
- Not at All

17. If were to become a candidate for student government, how likely do you think it is that you would win your first campaign?

- Very Likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

* If you would like to be entered to win a prize for completing this survey, please enter your name and email address below. Your personal information will remain confidential and will not be linked to your survey responses.

Appendix B:

Dependent Variables:

Student Government

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
Definitely would consider running for student government	0,1	0.06	0.24	Indicates whether respondent would definitely consider running for student government. Ranges from definitely would (1) to might or would not (0)
Definitely would not consider running for student government	0,1	0.51	0.501	Indicates whether respondent would never consider running for student government. Ranges from definitely would never (1) to might or definitely would (0).
Having run or served in student government	0,1	0.238	0.427	Indicates whether respondent has ever run for or served in student government. Ranges from has done either (1) to has done neither (0).
Self-assessment as very qualified to serve in student government	0,1	0.171	0.377	Indicates whether respondent perceives him or herself as very qualified to serve in student government (1) or not (0).
Self-assessment as not qualified to serve in student government	0,1	0.181	0.386	Indicates whether respondent perceives him or herself as not qualified to serve in student government (1) or not (0).

Future Political Offices

Definitely would consider running for public office later in life	0,1	0.11	0.31	Indicates whether respondent would definitely consider running for public office in the future. Ranges from definitely would (1) to might or would not (0)
Definitely would not consider running for public office later in life	0,1	0.26	0.441	Indicates whether respondent would never consider running for public office in the future. Ranges from definitely would never (1) to might or definitely would (0).
Would be interested in running for School Board	0,1	0.39	0.488	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for School Board in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would Be interested in running for Mayor	0,1	0.24	0.425	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for Mayor in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).

Would be interested in running for State Legislature	0,1	0.32	0.469	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for State Legislature in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would be interested in running for the U.S. House of Representatives	0,1	0.32	0.468	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for U.S. House of Representatives in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would be interested in running for the U.S. Senate	0,1	0.3	0.457	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for U.S. Senate in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would be interested in running for President	0,1	0.14	0.343	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for President in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would be interested in running for City, County, or Town Council	0,1	0.39	0.487	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for City, County, or Town Council in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would be interested in running for Governor	0,1	0.21	0.411	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for Governor in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would be interested in running for Statewide Office (i.e. Attorney General)	0,1	0.29	0.455	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for Statewide Office in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would not be interested in running for any office	0,1	0.25	0.431	Indicates whether respondent would not consider running for any of the mentioned offices. Ranges from would never run for any (1) to would run for at least one (0).
Would be interested in running for local office (school board, mayor, or city/town council)	0,1	0.59	0.493	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for a local-level office (school board, mayor, and/or city, county or town council) in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Would be interested in running for State-level office (state legislature, statewide office, or governor)	0,1	0.47	0.5	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for a state-level office (state legislature, statewide office, and/or governor) in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).

Would be interested in running for Federal Office (Congress or the Presidency)	0,1	0.37	0.484	Indicates whether respondent would be interested in running for a federal-level office (U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, and/or President) in the future. Ranges from would be interested (1) to would not be interested (0).
Believing oneself to be a good future candidate for political office	0,1	0.32	0.466	Indicates whether respondent believes he or she would be a good candidate to run for political office in the future (1) or not (0).
Believing oneself to be a good future candidate for political office	0,1	0.298	0.458	Indicates whether respondent believes he or she would not be a good candidate to run for political office in the future (1) or not (0).

Independent Variables:

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
Sex	0,1	0.73	0.433	Indicates whether respondent is female (1) or male (0)

School Affiliation within the University

School of Public Affairs	0,1	0.24	0.428	Indicates whether respondent is enrolled in the School of Public Affairs at American University. Ranges from yes (1) to no (0).
School of International Service	0,1	0.34	0.473	Indicates whether respondent is enrolled in the School International Service at American University. Ranges from yes (1) to no (0).
Kogod School of Business	0,1	0.11	0.316	Indicates whether respondent is enrolled in the Kogod School of Business at American University. Ranges from yes (1) to no (0).
College of Arts and Sciences	0,1	0.39	0.488	Indicates whether respondent is enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences at American University. Ranges from yes (1) to no (0).
School of Communication	0,1	0.12	0.488	Indicates whether respondent is enrolled in the School of Communication at American University. Ranges from yes (1) to no (0).

Political Socialization

Frequency of political discussions with parents	1-4	2.88	0.847	Indicates how frequently respondent discussed politics with parents growing up. Ranges from frequently (4) to never (1).
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Encouragement to run for office growing up	1-3	1.8	0.807	Indicates how frequently respondent was encouraged by parents to run for public office growing up. Ranges from frequently (4) to never (1).
Having Parents who ran for elected office	0,1	0.09	0.282	Indicates whether either of respondent's parents ran for office (1) or not (0).

Views of Traditional Gender Roles

Household composition growing up	1-8	6.31	1.77	Indicates the composition of the household in which the respondent was raised. Responses descend from most traditional to least traditional: (8) grew up in a one-income household where the father is the primary breadwinner and the mother is the primary caretaker of the home; (7) grew up in a two-career household where their mother was responsible for most household duties; (6) grew up in a two-career household where their mother was responsible for most household duties; (5) grew up in a two-career Household where their parents shared household duties evenly; (4) grew up in a one-career household where their mother was the primary breadwinner and their father was the primary caretaker; (3) grew up in a single parent household with their mother; (2) grew up in a single parent household with their father; (1) grew up in a household that does not fit any of these descriptions.
Self-Identifying as a feminist	0,1	0.4	0.49	Indicates whether respondent self-identifies as a feminist (1) or not (0)
Believing men and women are equally suitable for politics	1-3	2.76	0.474	Indicates the extent to which respondent agrees with the statement "men are better suited emotionally for politics." Ranges from strongly (3) to not at all (1)
Believing that men and women should have equal roles in society	1-4	3.49	0.628	Indicates the extent to which respondent believes that men and women should have equal roles in society. Ranges from strongly agrees (4) to strongly disagrees (1)

Interest in Politics

How closely one follows student government politics	1-4	1.38	0.751	Indicates how closely respondent follows student government politics at American University. Ranges from very closely (4) to not closely (1).
How closely one follows national politics	1-4	2.63	0.949	Indicates how closely respondent follows national politics. Ranges from very closely (4) to not closely (1).

Level of participation in student government activities	0-7	1.716	1.606	Indicates level of respondent's participation in university-level political activities over the course of the last year based on the following activities: voted in the 2009 student government election; wrote an editorial for the Eagle; joined or participated in a club or student organization on campus; contacted a student government official; volunteered for a student government campaign; attended a student government meeting; joined a student government candidate's group on Facebook. Lower numbers indicate lower levels of engagement.
Level of participation in political activities	0-10	2.593	2.005	Indicates level of respondent's participation in political activities over the course of the last year based on the following activities: voted; wrote a letter to a newspaper; joined or paid dues to a political interest group; contacted a n elected official; contributed money to a campaign; volunteered or worked for a political candidate; joined a group in the community to address a local issue; attended a city council, school board, or town hall meeting; contributed to a political blog; joined a political group on Facebook. Lower numbers indicate lower levels of engagement.

Self-assessment of Qualifications

Self-assessment of qualifications to serve in student government	1-4	2.46	0.979	Indicates respondent's level of self-perceived qualifications for serving in student government. Ranges from very qualified (4) to not qualified (1).
Confidence of winning one's first campaign for student government	1-4	2.37	0.757	Indicates how likely respondent feels he or she would win a campaign for student government. Ranges from very likely (4) to very unlikely (1).
Believing oneself to be a good future candidate for political office	1-3	2.02	0.784	Indicates whether respondent believes he or she would be a good candidate to run for political office in the future. Ranges from yes (3) to no (1).
Believing oneself to have the thick skin and high levels of self-confidence to run for office	0,1	0.42	0.494	Indicates whether respondent believes he or she has the thick skin and high levels of self-confidence needed to run for office (1) or not (0).

Encouragement

Received encouragement to run for student government	0,1	0.56	0.497	Indicates whether respondent has received any encouragement to run for student government (1) or not (0).
Received encouragement to run for student government from a personal source	0,1	0.522	0.5	Indicates whether respondent has received encouragement from a family member, friend, or classmate to run for student government (1) or not (0).
Received encouragement to run for student government from a source of higher authority (a professor, student government official or a club leader)	0,1	0.263	0.441	Indicates whether respondent has received encouragement from a professor or advisor, student government official, or club leader to run for student government (1) or not (0).

Political Efficacy and Legitimacy

Belief that student government officials are qualified for their positions	0,1	0.54	0.499	Indicates whether respondent believes that, in general, most student government officials are qualified for the positions they hold (1) or not (0).
Belief that elected government officials are qualified for their positions	0,1	0.69	0.464	Indicates whether respondent believes that, in general, most elected government officials are qualified for the positions they hold (1) or not (0).
Belief that elected government officials are well-intentioned public servants	0,1	0.53	0.5	indicates whether respondent believes that most people who run for office are well-intentioned and genuinely hope to improve society (1) or that most people who run for office are generally interested in their own fame and power (0).

Expectations of Sex-Based Discrimination

Expectations of the presence of sex-based discrimination when running for student government	1-3	1.44	0.594	Indicates the amount of sex-based discrimination respondent would expect to encounter in running for student government. Ranges from a great deal (3) to none (1).
Expectations of the presence of sex-based discrimination when running for public office later in life	1-3	1.92	0.645	Indicates the amount of sex-based discrimination respondent would expect to encounter in running for public office in the future. Ranges from a great deal (3) to none (1).

Feelings about Campaign Activities

Feelings about attending fundraising functions	1-4	3.13	0.772	Indicates respondent's feelings about attending fundraising functions for a campaign. Ranges from very positive (4) to very negative (3).
Feelings about delivering speeches and participating in debates in public	1-4	3.26	0.791	Indicates respondent's feelings about delivering speeches and participating in debates in public. Ranges from very positive (4) to very negative (3).
Feelings about going door to door to meet constituents	1-4	3.04	0.88	Indicates respondent's feelings about going door to door to meet constituents. Ranges from very positive (4) to very negative (3).
Feelings about dealing with public criticism and scrutiny	1-4	2.54	0.824	Indicates respondent's feelings about dealing with the public criticism and scrutiny involved in running for office. Ranges from very positive (4) to very negative (3).
Feelings about with the amount of time it takes to run for office	1-4	2.58	0.806	Indicates respondent's feelings about the amount of time it takes to run for office. Ranges from very positive (4) to very negative (3).