

District Magnitude and the Gender Gap in Political Ambition

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Abstract: Can more frequent multi-member districts narrow the gender gap in political ambition? It is theorized that MMDs reduce electoral competition, lifting key constraints on women's access to elected office. Yet, little research explicitly investigates if women are inherently more interested in running for office in MMDs compared to SMDs. In this paper, I use a survey experiment of college students to examine how gender differences in interest in pursuing political office vary across MMD and SMD electoral arrangements. The results demonstrate that the magnitude and significance of the gender gap in political ambition is sensitive to the type of electoral arrangement individuals expect to contest for office. In particular, I find that gender differences in college students' interest in running for office are smaller in magnitude and less significant in MMDs than in SMDs. These findings suggest that electoral arrangements may shape the gender gap in political ambition early in career development, with implications for the future of women's representation in high-ranking elected offices in the U.S.

Introduction

In this paper, the puzzle of women's underrepresentation is less about women's electoral success (and/or retention in office), and more about closing gender gaps in the candidate emergence process. Women in politics research often focuses on primary explanations for gender disparities in the candidate emergence process, such as the recruitment and selection of candidates by party officials and gender differences in individual-level characteristics that contribute to disproportionate interest in pursuing elected office. This paper will focus on the latter, although I do not disregard the role of selection mechanisms in shaping women's access to elected office.

Recent evidence demonstrates that the gender gap in political ambition is the same size as it was two decades ago (Fox and Lawless 2024), suggesting a need for new pathways for closing the gender gap must be considered. In this paper, I look toward more frequent multi-member district elections as a possible pathway for narrowing observed gender differences in one's interest in pursuing elected office. To do so, I use a randomized online survey experiment of college students enrolled in at least one political science course at a large southwest university. Building off previous research, I predict the average interest in running for office among women is greater in multi-member district elections than in single-member district elections. By allowing multiple candidates to win an election, multi-member districts reduce common barriers women face when seeking office (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1985, 1994; Matland and Brown 1992), which can make elected office more accessible to women (Swain and Lien 2017; Sanbonmatsu 2002).

The central hypothesis tested in this paper considers how electoral arrangements condition the magnitude and significance of the gender gap in political ambition. If women are

more interested in pursuing elected office in MMDs than SMDs, then I hypothesize the magnitude and statistical significance of the gender gap in political ambition will be smaller in MMDs relative to SMDs. The analysis demonstrates the size of the gender gap in political ambition varies across electoral arrangements – it is largest and most statistically significant in SMD elections and smallest in MMD elections – providing support for the central hypothesis. Contrary to my expectations, the findings imply it is men’s disproportionate interest in pursuing office in SMD electoral arrangements (as opposed to MMDs) that drives the gender gap in political ambition.

The findings presented in this paper have important implications for the health of U.S. democracy. Given that SMD electoral arrangements are most common, at least for higher-level offices, the results imply men will continue to serve in elected positions of power at disproportionately greater levels than women. Women have been underrepresented in all the diverse types of elected positions across the U.S. since the nation’s birth (Welch 2019), which has implications for the policies passed (Mansbridge 1999) and the type of representation felt by constituents (Stauffer 2021). In recent elections, four state legislatures have reached proportional representation for women (e.g., Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada), but most political institutions in the U.S. remain descriptively dominated by men ([CAWP 2025](#)), and women remain significantly less interested in pursuing careers in politics (Fox and Lawless 2024). The gender gap in political ambition, among other forces, has garnered considerable attention from those interested in seeing greater numbers of women candidates contesting for office, and greater proportional representation for women in more elected bodies. In what follows, I will first discuss the relevant literature and an explanation as to why women are hypothesized to have more interest in running in multi-member district electoral arrangements (MMDs). Then, I

explain the experimental procedures used to test gender differences in interest in running for office across electoral arrangements. Next, I discuss the results and their implications for women's descriptive representation in the future.

Gender Gaps in Multi-Member District Elections

In contemporary elections, evidence suggests women are fair as well as their male counterparts, both in terms of vote totals and funds raised (Sanbonmatsu 2006; Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013). Nevertheless, despite efforts to enhance women's interest in becoming candidates for elected office, significant gender differences persist in interest in pursuing elected office (Fox and Lawless 2024). Decades of evidence from leading scholars Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox suggest women are statistically less likely to show interest in running for office than men (2005, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2024). Women are also less likely to receive encouragement, and feel less qualified to run for office than men, creating a significant gender gap in political ambition that persists today (Fox and Lawless 2024). The gender gap in political ambition is discernable from a young age, demonstrating features of an individual's early stages of life are important in shaping interest in running for office in the future (Fox and Lawless 2014; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 2025).

In this paper, I argue multi-member district electoral arrangements (MMDs) have the potential to mitigate the constraints women face in contemporary politics. More than fifty years ago, Werner (1968) brought scholarly attention to the facilitating nature of multi-member districts (MMDs). Since then, numerous evidence demonstrates women are more likely to run for office in MMD electoral arrangements, and find greater electoral success than in single-member districts, or SMDs (Arceneaux, 2001; Carroll, 1985; Clark et al., 1984; Darcy, et. al., 1985, 1994;

Hogan, 2001; Horan and King 1999; Matland and Brown, 1992; Moncrief and Thompson, 1992; Norrander and Wilcox, 2005; Rule, 1992, 1994; Welch and Studlar, 1990). According to this literature at least three prominent mechanisms help explain the relationship between MMDs and women's descriptive representation – parties are more likely to recruit women to run for office, voters are more likely to elect women candidates, and women may be more interested in running for office in MMDs than SMDs.

First, unlike in traditional SMD elections, party leaders are more likely to recruit prospective women candidates to run for office in MMDs (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994; Carroll 1985; Rule 1981, 1992). Scholars assume it is less risky for party elites to nominate women candidates to run in MMDs compared to SMDs (Rule 1981; Carroll 1985). As a result, the process of recruiting, selecting, and nominating candidates to run for elected office is less selective in MMDs compared to SMDs (Rule 1981). On the other hand, in SMDs, the stakes of losing an election incentivize party leaders to be selective in the nomination of viable candidates capable of securing a seat in the legislature (Diamond 1977). Doubts about the competitiveness and viability of prospective women candidates contribute to the gender disparities in the recruitment of candidates in SMDs (Aldrich and Thomsen 2017; Crowder-Meyer 2013; Diamond 1977; Sanbonmatsu 2006, 2014).

While disproportionate recruitment is a central force contributing to dramatic gender disparities in candidate emergence, a baseline interest in running for office is critical to the candidate emergence process. It is assumed women may be more comfortable running in MMDs compared to SMDs (Darcy et. al., 1994; Matland and Brown 1992; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Two reasons stand out. First, it is argued that perceived competition over seats in MMDs is less fierce than in SMDs because candidates campaigning in MMDs do not necessarily have a designated

opponent like those candidates in SMDs (Darcy, et. al., 1994; Matland and Brown, 1992). In MMD electoral arrangements, candidates campaign for multiple seats, and the top vote-getters win the seats allocated to the district. On the other hand, candidates in SMDs compete in a zero-sum environment where one winner takes all. In such a zero-sum electoral environment, competition over the seat can be intense, and campaigns can become expensive (Squire and Moncrief, 2020).

Fierce competition during elections is cited as one of the primary explanations for women's lack of interest in pursuing political office (Gneezy, Niderle, and Rustichini 2003; Diamond 1977; Fox and Pate 2023). High levels of risk aversion contribute to the suppression of political ambition for a greater proportion of women than men (Kantack and Woon 2015; Kam 2012; Preece and Stoddard 2015). The increased odds of winning an election in MMDs decreases the risk associated with running for elected office (Squire 2000), and increases the accessibility of office to risk-averse individuals (Garfullina 2024).

An alternative explanation focuses on the benefits of running “team-campaigns” in MMDs (Sanbonmatsu 2014; Carroll 1985; Jewell 1982). There is a tendency for candidates from the same party to campaign as a team in MMD elections, and sometimes a slate of candidates will work together in primaries (Jewell 1982; Squire and Moncrief 2020; Grofman and Scarrow, 1982). In team campaigns, candidates from one party pool their resources and host rallies to encourage voters to cast a “straight ticket” (Jewell 1982). A candidate who runs as a part of a team may limit costs associated with running for elected office (Jewell 1982). As a result, blocs of candidates in MMDs can sweep the vote; this ‘sweep effect’ or ‘balloon effect’ dilutes minority group votes because the majority group (party or race) commonly wins all the seats (David and Eisenberg, 1962; Backstrom et. al., 1978; Jewell, 1982). The collaboration and

teamwork in MMD elections may make running for elected office more appealing to women (Swain and Lien 2017), and more comfortable running for elected office (Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2014).

Taken together, this literature suggests that by reducing common barriers women face when seeking elected office, MMDs are thought to enhance women's interest in running for office (Matland and Brown 1992; Darcy et al., 1994). The reasons why women may be more interested in running for office in MMDs often relate to the strategic calculations prospective women candidates conduct when it comes to considering whether to emerge as a candidate or not. In this sense, gender differences in the strategic calculation of candidacy under MMD electoral arrangements may be less pronounced than in SMD elections. Yet, little individual-level evidence can support this argument.

If women are more interested in pursuing elected office under MMD electoral arrangements than SMD electoral arrangements, then I expect the magnitude of gender differences in political ambition to vary by electoral arrangement. Specifically, I hypothesize gender differences in interest in pursuing elected office to be smaller and less significant when students are recruited to run in MMDs compared to SMDs.

Hypothesis: The size and significance of the gender gap in political ambition (i.e., interest in pursuing political office) is smaller and less significant for individuals who are recruited to run in MMD electoral arrangements relative to individuals recruited to run in SMD electoral arrangements.

To test this hypothesis, I conduct an experiment in which respondents are randomized to read a recruitment flyer for an election in a MMD or SMD environment. By doing so, I build off literature investigating the effect of the political opportunity structure on the gender disparities observed at multiple levels of elected office. This literature concludes that although individual-level gender differences in political ambition matter, various institutional and contextual features of the political opportunity structure influence calculations of candidacy, electoral arrangements being one of these features (see Aldrich and Thomsen 2017; Carroll 1985; Crowder-Meyer and Smith 2015; Garfullina 2024; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2006, 2010, 2016; Schwindt-Bayer and Squire 2014; Swain and Lien 2017). In the next section, I describe the experimental design and procedures.

Experimental Design

The experiment was designed to analyze the effect of electoral arrangements on the gender gap in political ambition. As a preliminary test, the experiment was conducted at a large southwestern university on a sample of college students. The experiment was conducted in the experimental lab of the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. A subject pool of over 2,000 eligible undergraduate college students enrolled in at least one political science course received digital invitations to complete the online survey experiment. As a part of an agreement between the experimental lab and faculty of the politics department, students receive course credit for completing research studies.

The survey experiment was conducted during the spring semester, from April 2 - 9, 2024. The final sample is comprised of 169 women and 134 men ($n = 303$). Table 1 reports relevant sample demographics by gender. The sample provides more observations about women than men

(44.2% male respondents, 55.8% women respondents). Regardless, the mean age is 24, and does not differ by gender. Nevertheless, the summary statistics suggest the insights drawn from empirical analyses are not representative of the broader electorate; for example, the student sample is mostly white Democrats who are employed to some capacity. Given discrepancies between demographic summary statistics found in the broader electorate (e.g., ANES, CES, CMPS), I believe the statistical tests presented in this paper offer only a conservative test of the hypothesis and future research is needed. The results presented in this paper are most generalizable to college student samples.

[Table 1]

Variable	% Total	% Men	% Women
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
White	66.3	70.2	63.3
Black	6.6	7.46	5.92
Latino	25.4	20.2	29.6
Asian	12.2	11.2	13
Other	4.95	3.73	5.92
<i>Partisanship</i>			
Democrats	30.7	41	47.3
Independents	44.6	29.9	31.4
Republicans	24.8	29.1	21.3
<i>Other Characteristics</i>			
Employed	70.6	63.4	76.3
Majoring in political science	55.8	57.5	54.4
Mean age	24		
Sample Size	303	134 44.2%	169 55.8%

After providing consent, students answered several questions about themselves before randomization to treatment. With the exception of a control group (n=101), students were randomized to receive a curated recruitment flyer about a fake upcoming MMD election (n=100) or SMD election (n=102). Table 2 shows the gender composition of each treatment condition.

The treatment (recruitment) flyers described Arizona’s state legislature as either a MMD or SMD election. Students in the MMD group read about how two candidates will win in each district election, while students in the SMD group expected only one candidate to win in each district election. All other details of the recruitment flyer were fixed to eliminate potential variation in political attitudes due to factors other than the manipulation of district magnitude (i.e., number of candidates who will win the election in each district).

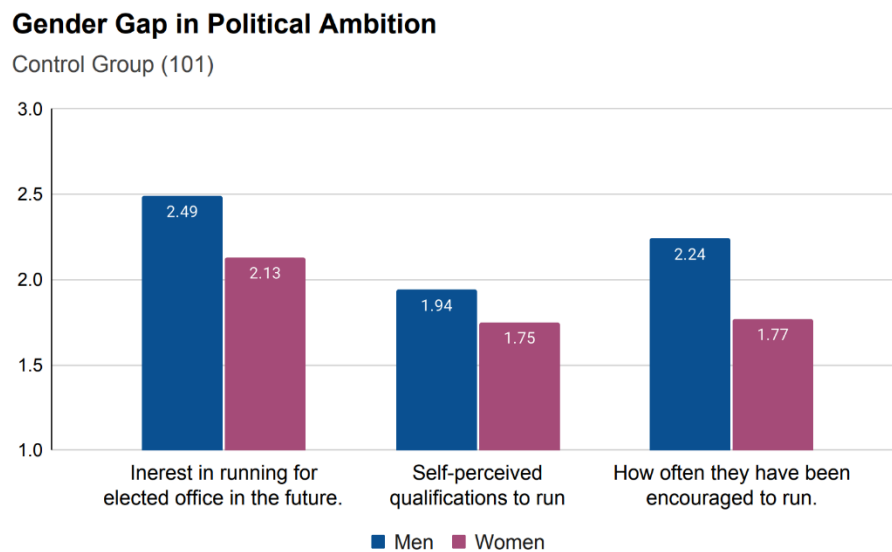
[Table 2]

Treatment Group Assignment by Gender			
Group	Men	Women	Total
MMD	41%	59%	33%
	41	59	100
SMD	43%	57%	33%
	44	58	102
Control	48%	52%	33%
	49	52	101
Sample	44.2%	55.8%	100%
	134	169	303
Pr = 0.542			
Notes: Gender composition of each group represent column percentages, while "total" reports the row percentages. Pr reports the results of a two-tailed t-test of significance.			

After randomization to treatment, respondents were asked to answer popular items used by political scientists studying political ambition, particularly interest in running for office, self-perceived qualifications, and levels of encouragement (see Lawless and Fox 2010). Figure 1 reports the gender differences in the average responses of the control group (which serves as the reference category for future regression analysis). Women in the control group are less interested in running for office compared to their male counterparts, feel less qualified, and have been encouraged less often. The findings from the control group reflect the general trends regarding

gender differences found in other research on political attitudes (see Fox and Lawless 2024). The purpose of this paper is to investigate pathways for narrowing these gender differences in hopes of seeing greater proportions of women in elected office in the future.

[Figure 1]



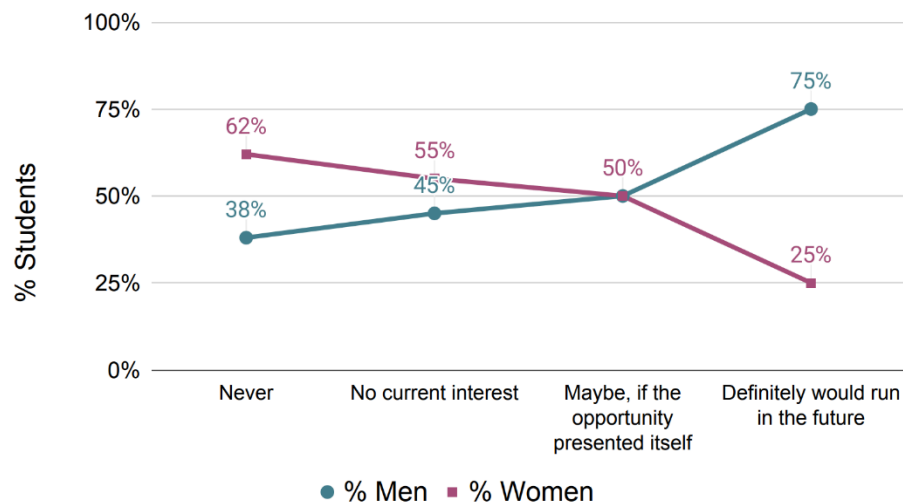
In my analysis, I focus on a single item – interest in pursuing elected office in the future. Respondents were asked to rank their attitudes toward running for office in the future on a 4-point scale. Figure 2 illustrates gender differences among students, again for the control group only. The graph demonstrates that women are more likely to report they will never run for office, while men are more likely to report they will definitely run for office in the future. In the grey areas, although women are more likely to hold “no current interest” relative to their male counterparts, both men and women in the control group report identical attitudes about running for office in the future “if the opportunity presents itself”. Given that parties are more likely to

present the opportunity to run for office to men than women (Sanbonmatsu 2002), this finding is also on par with recent trends found in scholarly work on women in U.S. politics.

[Figure 2]

Interest in Running for Political Office

Gender Differences in Control Group (n=101)



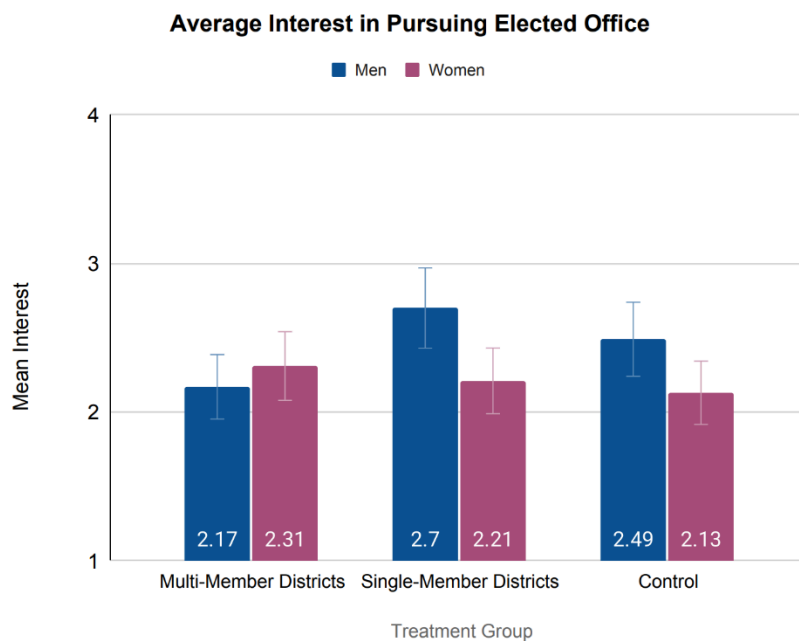
In sum, the experimental design allows for a preliminary test of the degree to which more frequent MMD elections can narrow the observed gender gap in political ambition. Although MMD elections are the exception today, that has not always been the case (Hamilton 1967). Prior to the redistricting revolution of the 1960s, MMDs were the norm at the state-level (Hardy, Heslop and Anderson, 1981). Concerns over racial and partisan gerrymandering saw the decline of MMD electoral arrangements over the past several decades (Dixon 1968; Grofman et al., 1982). Evidence demonstrates the replacement of MMD electoral arrangements with SMD arrangements had negative effects on the growth of women's representation in some state legislatures (Darcy et. al., 1994; King 2002). In a few rare instances, SMDs were replaced with MMDs and the result was significantly positive for enhancing women's presence in those state

legislatures who adopted them (Darcy et. al., 1994). If the experimental results show support for enhanced interest in running for office in MMDs relative to the standard SMDs used today, then there is preliminary evidence at both the aggregate and individual-level that the return of MMD electoral arrangements can have positive effects for the health of U.S. democracy.

Analysis

I begin with a simple comparison of the average interest in pursuing elected office for men and women across each treatment condition. Figure 3 illustrates gender differences in the average mean interest in running for office across the treatment groups using the 4-point scale (seen in Figure 1). At first glance, the gender gap in the average interest in pursuing elected office is largest in the SMD group, and is smallest in the MMD group.

[FIGURE 3]



To investigate more fully how these electoral arrangements shape the gender gap in political ambition, I estimated marginal means using an interaction model. Specifically, I regressed interest in running for office on a 4-point scale across treatment group status (electoral arrangements), the gender of the respondent, and their interaction:

$$\text{Interest in Elected Office} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{group} + \beta_2 \text{gender} + \beta_3 (\text{group} \times \text{gender}) + \epsilon$$

After estimating the linear model using robust standard errors, I explore the size of the gender gap across electoral arrangements using marginal means and pairwise comparisons of adjusted predictions. I used marginal means to calculate predicted average interest in running for office for each combination of treatment group assignment (MMD, SMD, or control group) and gender while holding all other factors constant. These adjusted means account for the interaction effects and provide insight into how gender differences in interest in running for office vary across electoral arrangements.

Table 3 presents the estimated marginal means of interest in pursuing elected office in the future (measured on a 4-point scale) for each combination of treatment group and gender. The results indicate that men and women from the MMD group exhibit the similar interest in running for office, on the other hand, significant gender differences appear in the SMD group. Figure 4 plots these results with confidence intervals to illustrate the direction and magnitude of group-level differences by gender. These estimates adjust for potential variance and provide a clearer interpretation of how men and women differ within and across electoral arrangements.

[TABLE 3]

Adjusted Predictions
Model VCE: Robust
Expression: Linear prediction

Number of obs = 303

Treatment Group	β	Delta Method		t	95% conf. interval	
		se				
MMD - Women	2.31	0.12	19.74	2.08	2.53	
MMD - Men	2.17	0.14	15.62	1.90	2.44	
SMD - Women	2.21	0.12	15.62	1.97	2.45	
SMD - Men	2.70	0.13	20.46	2.44	2.96	
Control - Women	2.13	0.12	17.81	1.90	2.37	
Control - Men	2.49	0.14	17.76	2.21	2.77	

[FIGURE 4]

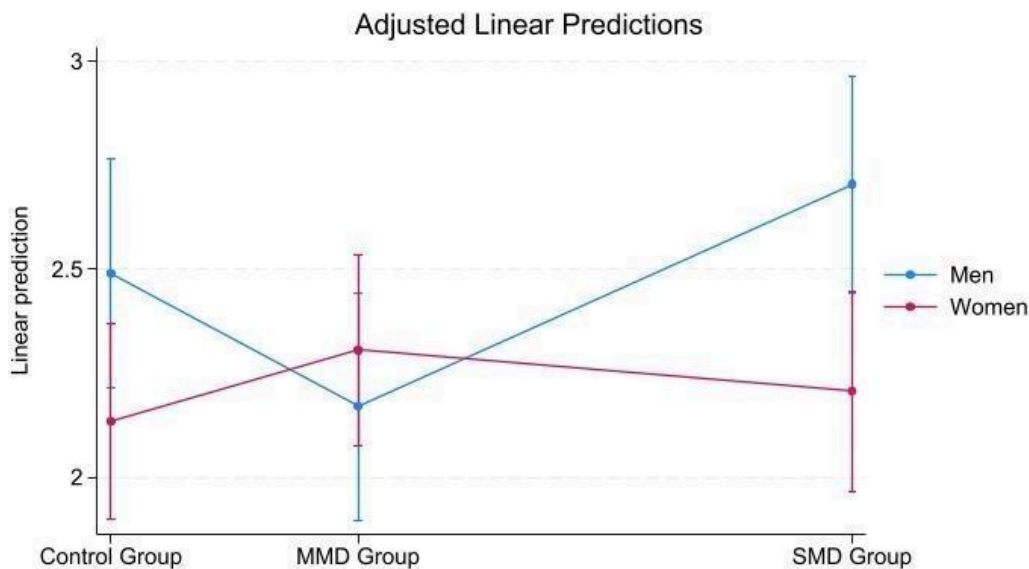


Figure 4 can be thought of as a visual representation of the size and significance of the gender gap across electoral arrangements, with the control group as the reference category. The plotted margins show men and women in the MMD group harbor similar interest in pursuing elected office in the future. Interestingly, women are more interested in running in MMDs than men, although the difference is not large. Women are less interested in running in MMDs than in

SMDs, although this difference is not large either. Gender differences are the largest among students in the SMD group.

The findings provide preliminary support for the central hypothesis – the gender gap in political ambition is less pronounced in the MMD condition compared to the SMD condition. Specifically, while men in the SMD group exhibit greater interest in running for elected office than women, this gap is not present in the MMD condition. The findings show that MMD systems demonstrate a more equitable distribution of interest in pursuing elected office than SMD systems. To formally test the significance of these differences, I conducted pairwise comparisons (see Table 4). Together, these results provide robust evidence that electoral arrangements shape interest in running for office and operate to condition the size and significance of the gender gap.

[TABLE 4]

Pairwise Comparisons of Marginal Linear Predictions				
Comparison	Difference in Predicted Means	Std. Err.	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Within-Groups				
(Control#Women) vs (Control#Men)	-0.3551805	0.1844145	-0.7181053	0.0077442
(MMD#Women) vs (MMD#Men)	0.134353	0.1814746	-0.2227859	0.491492
(SMD#Women) vs (SMD#Men)*	-0.4976489	0.1802519	-0.8523818	-0.1429161
Across-Groups				
(SMD#Men) vs (MMD#Men)*	0.5338137	0.1917709	0.1564118	0.9112157
(SMD#Women) vs (MMD#Men)	0.0361648	0.1852554	-0.3284147	0.4007444
(SMD#Men) vs (MMD#Women)*	0.3994607	0.1763639	0.0523795	0.7465419
(SMD#Women) vs (MMD#Women)	-0.0981882	0.1692563	-0.4312818	0.2349054
Notes: * indicates comparison is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.				

Table 4 reports the difference in predicted means for key comparisons of the respondents' gender and treatment group status. Each comparison reflects the difference in estimated means

between two groups, accounting for the specified model. Positive values indicate that the first group in the comparison has a higher predicted mean score than the second group. Negative values indicate that the first group has a lower predicted mean score than the second group. If the confidence interval includes zero, the difference is not statistically significant, meaning we cannot conclude that the observed difference is meaningful rather than due to chance. A star is placed next to statistically significant comparisons across gender and treatment group status.

Starting with the results of within-group comparisons in Table 4, it is important to notice that the first groups are fixed to start with women's predicted interest in pursuing elected office. Thus, the negative difference in predicted means for the control and SMD group indicate women are predicted to hold lower levels of interest in running for office relative to men under such electoral contexts. In support of my hypothesis, the positive difference in predicted means for the MMD group indicates women are predicted to hold greater levels of interest relative to men. When evaluating the statistical significance of these results, the results show women in the SMD group are significantly less interested in running for elected office than men in the SMD group ($p < 0.05$). Consistent with my expectations, gender differences in the MMD group are not statistically significant, suggesting the gender gap in political ambition is narrower than in the SMD group.

Discussion

Counter to my expectations, women's interest in running for office does not differ significantly based on the electoral contexts. When evaluating the pairwise comparisons across-groups, Table 4 shows there is no combination of electoral arrangement and women's gender identity that results in statistically significant differences in attitudes toward pursuing

elected office in the future. Instead, men's interest in running for office significantly differs based on electoral contexts. Men are more interested in running for elected office in SMDs than MMDs ($p < 0.05$).

There are some reasons to believe this is true. First and foremost, some research suggests being an elected official in a multi-member district is less attractive/satisfying for representatives (Squire and Moncrief 2020; Moncrief, Niemi and Powell, 2004). Unfortunately, the experimental design does not allow a formal test of potential explanations for men's heightened interest in running in zero-sum electoral arrangements. Future research is needed to unpack the ways in which men's political attitudes operate to shape the size and significance of the gender gap.

The results presented in this paper suggest that the gender gap in political ambition is largely driven by men's evaluations of electoral arrangements rather than women's. Yet, the experiment faces several limitations that future research could mitigate. First, as mentioned, the unit of analysis in this paper includes college students with a mean age of 24, thus there is reason to question if these findings are generalizable to the broader electorate. Second, the idea of pursuing a career in elected office may be highly abstract for young college students. As a consequence, the findings could represent short-term attitudes that have little meaningful effect later in life.

A third limitation is that the manipulation of institutional context in a hypothetical experimental setting is appropriate in some cases, but arguably not in cases where the unit of analysis includes college students. This is because college students, who are not set in their career paths yet, are more likely to hold "nascent political ambition" without expecting to take active steps toward candidacy until after graduation (e.g., expressive political ambition) (see Fox and Lawless 2005). Lastly, although the experiment was designed to analyze the size and

significance of the gender gap in political ambition, it cannot test for underlying mechanisms. As a result, I cannot fully explain why the gender gap is smaller in MMD groups than SMD groups. Future experimental approaches should adopt strategies for testing the mechanisms that best explain the persistence of gender gaps in political ambition across electoral contexts.

Despite some limitations of the experiment, the results suggest that MMD electoral arrangements may mitigate gender disparities in the long-run, whereas SMD systems may reinforce them. The overarching purpose of conducting the experiment was to locate pathways for narrowing significant gender disparities in the types of candidates that contest for elected office in the U.S. I find moderate support that more frequent MMD elections have the potential to alter the magnitude and significance of the gender gap in political ambition. This finding underpins existing literature on women's representation in MMDs (see Darch, Welch and Clark 1994), however, prior to this investigation, we lacked clear evidence that women are truly more interested in running for office in MMDs than SMDs. The results presented in this paper empirically show the largest gender gap appears in the SMD group, where men show significantly greater interest in pursuing elected office in the future than women ($p < 0.05$), including women in MMDs.

Conclusion

This study examines the gender gap in political ambition by assessing how different electoral arrangements impact college students' interest in running for office. The analysis shows the gender gap in political ambition is smaller in multi-member district elections (MMDs) compared to single-member district elections (SMDs). Counter to my expectations, I observe that men in the SMD condition express higher levels of interest in running compared to their

counterparts in the control and MMD conditions, whereas women's responses remain relatively stable across conditions. This finding suggests that electoral arrangements may shape men's political ambition more strongly than women's.

These findings contribute to the broader literature on gender and political ambition by demonstrating the nuanced ways in which institutions influence decision-making processes. The comparison of the size and significance of the gender gap in political ambition across MMDs and SMDs can also provide a window into the future. The gender gap is as large as it was twenty years ago (Fox and Lawless 2024), suggesting the prospects for women's enhanced representation are slim without real attempts to improve the quality of electoral contests. Yet, more frequent MMD elections may narrow this gap, and there is growing discussion about returning to the widespread use of MMD elections.

Future research should explore whether these patterns persist across different demographic samples and whether additional factors mediate these effects. Additionally, more research is needed to unpack the mechanisms explaining the size and significance of the gender gap across electoral arrangements. For example, more research is needed to investigate how men's political attitudes operate to shape the size and significance of the gender gap and the dynamics involved in its persistence. To see real change, policymakers and political organizations ought to consider these dynamics when designing interventions aimed at closing the gender gap in political representation.

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