Making Change Where It Counts: Social Work and Elected Office

By

Patrick Meehan

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Ann Lin, Co-Chair
Professor Barry Checkoway, Co-Chair
Professor Vince Hutchings
Associate Professor Katie Richards-Schuster

Patrick J. Meehan

pjmeeh@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0001-6778-8574

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Sonya, who has been the constant companion by my side throughout this journey, filling my life with love, laughter, music, and joy. Thank you. It is also dedicated to my parents, Michael and Kathleen, who gave me the support, encouragement, and inspiration to pursue my dreams.

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PREFACE

This dissertation is in fulfillment of a doctor of philosophy in social work and political science. These represent two distinct areas of research, scholarship, and professional practice. Important to understanding how this dissertation makes a contribution to each field is recognition that politics is not, principally, a profession distinct from social work, law, education, or anything else. Politicians can and do come from a wide variety of professions and backgrounds, including social work, and a social worker has just as much *right* to run for an elected office as anyone else. Situating social workers as potential candidates allows the dissertation to have relevance in both social work and political science research. Each of these fields has approached research on elected office in different ways.

For example, social work research has traditionally concerned itself with understanding how often social workers engage in politics, as well as the effectiveness of particular educational models. Shannon Lane has surveyed social worker candidates nationwide (Lane & Humphreys, 2011). She has made important insights into the issues they run on, and the education they received (Lane & Humphreys, 2015). Jason Ostrander has looked at the growing phenomenon of campaign schools, and the effect these have on the political efficacy and participation of social work students (Ostrander et al., 2017; Ostrander et al, 2018). Suzanne Pritzker has established a legislative internship program in the state of Texas with the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work (Pritzker & Lane, 2014).

Candidate emergence—or the process of becoming a candidate for elected office—is also a growing area of interest in political science. Nick Carnes (2016) considers the role party

officials play in who they recruit to run, and the candidates that emerge from that process. Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless have developed a thorough body of research on the interest individuals have in running for office, as well as gender's role in the development of that interest (Fox & Lawless, 2004; Fox & Lawless, 2005; Fox & Lawless, 2010; Fox & Lawless, 2011).

This dissertation combines these areas of research into one research project. That is, it considers social workers as actors within the candidate emergence process. It does so in three ways. First, it borrows from Fox and Lawless (2005) to consider individual motivations to pursue elected office. It advances theoretical understanding of these motivations through in-depth interviews with politically active individuals in social work and law, respectively, and responses from graduate students to an original survey instrument. Second, consistent with Fox and Lawless (2004), Lane and Humphreys (2015), and others (Fulton et al., 2006), this dissertation considers the influence of gender on individual interest in running for office. Unlike previous research on this topic, this dissertation identifies important within group differences. That is, women's interest in running for office is not monolithic across social work and law, respectively, something Fox and Lawless (2004) do not consider in detail. Third, this dissertation builds off the research on social work education (Pritzker & Burwell, 2016) and campaign schools (Ostrander et al., 2018) to consider how social policy classes can reach a wider audience of students and potentially make them more interested in running for office than they were before. The survey instrument included an experimental component that tested different ways of framing the purpose of holding elected office.

Thus, while this dissertation is in conversation with research in both social work and political science, it represents a unique and original contribution to each field.

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ABSTRACT

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Candidate-centered elections require individual motivation to fill all the available offices in this U.S. Explanations for these motivations have been underdeveloped in the political science literature, which assumes individuals pursue elected office because they are ambitious (Black, 1972; Schlesinger, 1966). Using interviews with 32 individuals on either side of the decision to run for office, this study introduces the concept political primacy to explain motivations for pursuing elected office. The term refers to the value individuals assign to elected office's ability to make positive change, relative to alternative ways of making positive change. This study measures this concept's relationship to interest in running for office on 745 graduate students in the Michigan Law & Social Work Study. Results indicate the more students see serving in local government as a better way of contributing to the community, the more interested they are in running for office. Implications for the candidate eligibility pool are discussed, including recruitment using difference-making appeals.

II.

Women are understood to be less interested in running for office in general (Fox & Lawless, 2005), and to wait later in life to run than men (Fulton et al., 2006). However, treating women as monolithic in relation to elected office ignores important within-group variation. Using data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study, a sample of 745 graduate students in social work and law, respectively, this study considers how women vary in terms of their interest in running for office, and sense of qualifications for doing so. Results suggest MSW women were more

interested in running for local office, while JD women were more interested in higher office. Even so, MSW women saw their qualifications as a significant barrier to running, while JD women did not. Moreover, these doubts acted as a significant drag on their interest in running, controlling for additional factors. This relationship was not observed in JD women. Content analysis revealed that women felt this way because they did not believe they had the knowledge and experience to run for local office. Our understanding of women as political actors should account for such within-group variations. Regarding MSW women, specifically, field placements in political offices might be a way to provide women in MSW programs with knowledge and experience they say they are lacking.

III.

Social workers are enjoying unprecedented political power and influence. Having elected social workers makes it easier for the profession to address the Grand Challenges of the 21st century, such as ending homelessness and building financial capability for all (AASWSW, 2018). Educators have an opportunity to capitalize on this moment to message to students about the virtues of running for and holding elected office as a way of making progress on the Grand Challenges. Using data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study, this study reports the results of an experiment to increase MSW student interest in running for office. Unlike their macro counterparts, micro-practice students are less likely to have pre-existing ideas about elected office's ability to end homelessness, specifically, or make a difference generally. It was hypothesized an instructor's invitation to consider running for office emphasizing the difference-making potential of elected office would increase interest for micro-students specifically. Results suggest the difference-making message did increase interest in running for micro-students. Implications for social work education are discussed.

Introduction

In 2008, I was in my first full year as manager of Youth Engagement Services, a support service program for low income students of a rural school district in upstate New York. Then Senator Barack Obama's Presidential campaign slogan was, "Change we can believe in." That rhetoric was ubiquitous that spring during the primary, and in the fall during the general election. It was unavoidable. Even in upstate New York, there were yard signs everywhere with that phrase, and the familiar O-horizon logo. My best friend at the time had even purchased one of Shepherd Ferrey's original paintings with Obama's stoic face above the word "change."

It all seemed a little too hoary, and had the words come from another politician they might sound cynical, almost laughable. But I had already read Obama's book, *Dreams From My Father*. I understood the emphasis on change was not a gimmick, but a personal credo. Watching him employ it in the campaign, and seeing people respond positively, in massive showings in Berlin, Denver, everywhere, I admit it was inspiring. I was taken, and when Obama won I felt as though I had experienced something historic.

The famous, perhaps apocryphal, Gandhi quote, "be the change you want to see in the world," had floated around my consciousness for many years. It was its own sort of inspiration. I imagined what I was doing in 2008 in this small town was in service to change. The desire to make a difference, whatever that meant, was strong. So strong, in fact, that it moved me to make more of my life than remain in this small town.

Gandhi must lie in the back of the mind of many social workers, for when I got to the University of Michigan School of Social Work I observed the School's slogan was, "Reach out, raise hope, change society." Fine words for MSW students like me at the time.

It was not until I returned as a PhD student in 2012 that I began to take a second look at the School's slogan. Thinking back to the heady days of Obama's 2008 campaign, there was harmonic resonance in his slogan and the School's. They seemed to be playing the same note, but perhaps at different frequencies. Under the right circumstances, I could imagine a candidate using the School's slogan in her campaign. What did this all mean?

Consequently, my dissertation project was inspired by these possibly related understandings of change. When a politician like Barack Obama uses the word change, what is he referring to? How does this compare to the social work understanding of change?

Of course, answering these questions requires unraveling many layers of complexity. The appropriate point of comparison is not between politician and social worker. Anyone can be a politician (Hain & Piereson, 1976), and no one politician is representative of the entire group. So how Barack Obama understands change is not representative of how politicians, as a group, think about change.

The personal example of Barack Obama, though, is useful in identifying the appropriate points of comparison used in this dissertation project. His life story is quite familiar, but it is worth remembering that prior to pursuing law, Obama was a community organizer in Chicago. I like to imagine an alternative universe in which rather than pursuing law, Obama doubled down on his community organizing experience and pursued a Master of Social Work. That he did not, and instead chose to pursue law, and then a career in politics, may have meaning for how similarly situated individuals think about these professions, and the efficacy of the political

system. Perhaps Obama considered social work, and felt law was a better way of making change. Moreover, perhaps he saw elected office as a better way of making change than his legal practice.

Consequently, the key points of comparison are not how individuals understand change, but how individuals see the political system, and elected office in particular, as a way of making change. Social workers as a group may see it one way, while lawyers as a group may see it another way. This was the guiding principle of my dissertation project, a first-of-its kind in social work and political science research.

To be fair, recent scholarship in social work has paid close attention to elected office. For example, Lane and Humphreys (2011) identify 467 social workers across the United States who have either run for or serve in elected office. Their method of identification is given careful consideration in Appendix C, but they should be credited with being the first to link social work practice to the political system. Similarly, Ostrander and colleagues (2017) assess the effect of campaign schools—a growing feature in schools of social work—on the political efficacy of MSW students.

However, social work scholars have thus far neglected to think of elected office in the terms put forth in this introduction. That is, how do social work practitioners gauge the change-making potential of elected office, particularly in relation to other ways of making change? Many ways of helping people are available to social workers that may have greater attraction to them than elected office. Understanding how social workers see elected office sets a floor that future research can build upon.

The attractiveness of elected office is often taken for granted in the political science literature on this subject. Chapter 1 considers this literature in detail, but it largely locates elected

office within an opportunity structure (Black, 1972; Rohde, 1979; Schlesinger, 1966) whose appeal is self-evident, or otherwise unexplored. Acknowledging that elected office has instrumental value, as this dissertation project does, allows future political science research to more thoroughly interrogate how individuals regard this value, and how strong a motivation it serves to run for office.

Given the exploratory nature of this research, this dissertation adopted a mixed methods approach to capture as much nuance as possible in how social workers and lawyers think about elected office. Particulars of these methods are detailed in each paper, but in brief the project consisted of interviews with 32 social workers and lawyers, as well as the development of an original survey instrument which contained an experimental component that was sampled on 545 MSW and 200 JD students across four universities in Michigan. This sample is referred to as the Michigan Law & Social Work Study.

The individuals identified for interviews followed a lengthy process that included aggregating the elections records of the six largest counties in Michigan over a ten-year period, from 2006 to 2016. These records were then matched to lists of licensed social workers in each county, as well as members of the State Bar of Michigan. Significantly, these election records also included individuals who had run for the position of party precinct delegate. As will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 1, these delegates could plausibly run for office in the future, but thus far have not. Consequently, candidacy should be thought of as the dependent variable in these interviews, while perceptions of the change-making potential of elected office should be thought of as an independent variable. Social workers and lawyers might plausibly exhibit variation in these perceptions. Appendix C compares the methods of identification used in this project to those of Lane and Humphreys (2011).

Results of my dissertation research are presented in three chapters. Each makes use of different data to tell a unique story of social work's relationship to elected office.

Chapter 1 uses data from the qualitative interviews and MLSWS to introduce the concept *political primacy*. This term refers to the value individuals assign to elected office's ability to make positive change, relative to alternative ways of making positive change. Results suggests political primacy can be helpful in understanding why certain people are interested in running for office while others are not. This interest has less to do with ambition than with whether individuals feel elected office is a better way of contributing to their community than available alternatives.

Chapter 2 uses data from the MLSWS to consider gender in detail, including how interested males and females are in running for office, how qualified they feel to do so, and whether qualifications have any relationship to their interest in running. Organizing my research around social workers, lawyers, and elected office inevitably made gender a central feature of this research. The political science literature consistently finds women have less interest in running for office (Fox & Lawless, 2005, 2011), and are less represented among our elected officials (Maestas, Maisel, & Stone, 2006). Social work is understood as a female-majority profession. Could social workers' interest in elected office be a stand-in for gender? Clear differences emerged, both within and between MSW and JD students in the Michigan Law & Social Work Study. For example, female MSW students felt their qualifications were their greatest barrier to running while their female JD counterparts did not, nor did their male classmates, who presumably received the same education and training. Moreover, these doubts acted as a significant drag on their interest in running for office, in a way that was not observable in any other group.

Finally, Chapter 3 uses data from the experimental component of the MLSWS to consider whether interest in running for office responds to messaging emphasizing its change-making potential. More social workers in elected office means more social workers in position to shape the legislative and policy agenda at all levels of government. Educators are not powerless. Instructors can use in the classroom to talk about elected office, and the experiment in the MLSWS offers them a way of doing this. The results suggest referring to a seat on city council as a way of making a difference in the community can make certain MSW students more interested in running. This simple bit of rhetoric can be easily deployed in classrooms going forward to hopefully persuade future generations of social workers to take an interest in running for office.

Together, these chapters make a unique contribution to our understanding of elected office in general, but also of social work's relationship to it. As the profession grapples with the Grand Challenges of the 21st century (AASWSW, 2018), such as ending homelessness and ensuring the healthy development of all youth, the political system will need to be part of the conversation. While schools of social work like to think of their students as change-agents, it is less common for them to be thought of as future politicians.

Not everyone is Barack Obama. Not everyone can move millions to agree with their vision for the country. Importantly, not everyone has to. Elected offices big and small exist all over the United States. Any one of these offices can be used to make some kind of change. Of course, not everyone, and certainly not every social worker, is interested in making change through politics, nor persuaded that it is a better way of doing so than alternatives.

I mentioned Gandhi earlier, and his influence on my personal trajectory. It is helpful to consider his example in this discussion. A man who occupied no formal position within the State

of India, nor ever ran for elected office, nevertheless was instrumental in changing the fortunes of millions of people. Social workers, and others, may find greater inspiration in his example than in Obama's. Both men created change. One did so through elected office, while the other did not. How one values elected office as a way of making change matters to her interest in pursuing it. Future research should consider all that this entails, and who is more likely to value elected office highly.

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Chapter 1

Why Would Anyone Run for Office? Political Primacy in the Candidate-Centered American Political System

Introduction

Candidate-centered elections in the United States require that individuals "emerge" to fill all of the more than 500,000 elected offices across the country (Lawless, 2012). The entire political system relies on the motivations of individuals to pursue these offices. This is not imagined to be difficult because people are ambitious, or at least assumed to be. However, there are elections in which no one emerges to run. Often at the federal level, for example, elections clearly favor one party over another; given the likelihood of losing, people often do not emerge to run (Hall, 2019; Jacobson & Kernell, 1981).

Partisan dynamics speak to the complexity of understanding what is referred to as candidate emergence (Maisel & Stone, 1997). Simply having political offices does not ensure individuals will seek them. Many factors influence individual decision-making. In addition to the probability of winning, the support and encouragement of others—in the form of recruitment—can persuade individuals to run for office (Maestas, Maisel, & Stone, 2005).

There are simply too many offices, though, for recruitment to fill all the available seats. Recruitment alone cannot fill the three available seats on the local sewerage district, for example, or the two seats on the local library board when *in the same election* there are seats available on the city council, or in the state legislature. This is unfortunate because simply filling out the required paperwork and appearing on the ballot can often be enough to win election to these offices. Even so, there are elections in which no candidates emerge at all.

Individual motivations for pursuing elected office are thus an important area of inquiry for the health of American representative democracy. Because the entire system is centered on candidates, it matters why individuals choose to run and, equally, why so many choose not to. Individuals may not even be aware of their declination as a conscious choice. It may have never entered their mind in the first place, or was dismissed out of hand. This is not altogether surprising. Most individuals are not interested in politics. There is a non-zero number of individuals, though, who have at least contemplated the notion of running for office and have made the conscious decision not to do so. These individuals never emerge, as it were, to run for office. The political science literature has had difficulty understanding what to make of these individuals both theoretically and methodologically.

With respect to theory, the motivation presumed to explain candidate emergence is ambition (Black, 1972; Fowler & McClure, 1989; Rohde, 1979; Schlesinger, 1966). This term carries a lot of weight in political science, and fits popular perceptions of politicians. Upon close examination, though, this term and its theoretical meaning are rather undefined. Black (1972) argues "a man's political motives and desires are molded by the availability of political 'opportunities,' and that such opportunities are structurally determined" (p. 144). In other words, the individual's motivations for elected office are completely external to the individual herself. However, it is understood that the political system does not conjure candidates into existence out of thin air simply because there are offices to be had. The candidate-centered nature of the political system, in fact, requires that individuals make the decision to run for office on their own.

Accordingly, Bledsoe and Herring (1990) locate ambition within the individual. They imagine ambition is represented in the importance the individual gives to a particular seat's

ability to act "as a stepping stone to higher political office" (p. 214). Thus, variation in the importance of pursuing a political career explains who runs for office and who does not. This thinking presumes every office, no matter how small or insignificant is in service to a higher office. Do candidates for library board, though, see it as a stepping stone to higher office? Perhaps, but when they measure importance, Bledsoe and Herring (1990) find among their sample of city councilors that it is not very predictive of who runs for higher office, especially among women (p. 217).

Consider what variation might be found among those who have not already run for office. Black (1972), Bledsoe and Herring (1990), and other candidate emergence research (Fowler & McClure, 1989; Rohde, 1979) suffer methodologically from looking only at those who have already run for office. Individuals who have never run for office may still have some notion of a political career, but sampling among those who have already run for office eliminates any variation on the dependent variable itself.

This study uses a new method in the study of candidate emergence that leverages similarities on either side of the decision to run for office to advance our understanding of individual motivations. In so doing, this study recognizes elected offices are not just prizes to be won. They serve legitimate purposes. The political system exists to establish and legitimize the laws of the land and to distribute scarce resources. School boards do this for school districts, as city councils do for municipalities, as county commissions do for counties, etc. Because of its ability to make laws and distribute resources elected office is often a venue for making *change*. Individuals might differ, however, in the degree to which they believe the office in question is the best way, or at least a better way, of making change over available alternatives.

This study introduces the concept *political primacy* to understand the thought process of these individuals. The term refers to the value individuals assign to elected office's ability to make positive change, *relative* to alternative ways of making change.

To test for the existence of political primacy, interviews were conducted with 32 individuals on either side of the decision to run for office. Of those interviewed, 19 had run for office before in Michigan, while 13 were similar to candidates in many respects but had not run for office. These similarities will be considered in greater detail, but two are worth considering briefly. The first is the position of party precinct delegate. This is not a public office, but a position with the Democratic and Republican Parties, respectively, that appears on the August primary ballot alongside candidates for real public offices. The second similarity is occupation. Individuals in the same occupation on either side of the decision to run for office represent a convenient within group comparison that has meaning to the existence of political primacy. Of those interviewed, 20 were social workers, while 12 were lawyers.

In the analyses that follow, the relationships between political primacy, candidacy, and occupation are each described in turn. Political primacy's predictive power is then measured using data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study, a sample of 545 MSW and 200 JD students from four universities across Michigan. The results indicate political primacy was significantly related to student interest in running for office, particularly for MSW students. Consequently, the term offers conceptual clarity to individual motivations for candidacy at all levels of government. Moreover, as the dynamics of political primacy come into focus, the concept offers ways of identifying individuals who may have interest in using elected office to make positive change but lack the network and connections to move on their interest. In so doing, greater knowledge of political primacy may help expand the pool of candidates.

Ambition vs Political Primacy

As mentioned, ambition has been a popular explanation for individual motivation to pursue elected office. However, as has been discussed, ambition-as-motivation has not been well-specified, nor shone to have much relationship to actual candidacy. It is worth considering how, and in what ways, political primacy makes a stronger theoretical case for explaining individual motivations in the candidate emergence process.

Herrick and Moore (1993) refer to ambition in the context of the candidate emergence process as a "psychological predisposition" (p. 766). This suggests a kind of character trait that predicts who is likely to run for office. Yet Herrick and Moore (1993) freely admit they lack "psychological profiles of elected officials" (p. 766) to make any such determination, let alone similarly situated individuals who have not run for office.

Browning and Jacob (1964), on the other hand, put forward the *lust for power* as a psychological predisposition that could predict who is more likely to run for office. Lust for power conforms to ambition's traditional meaning in American politics. Federalist 51, for example, argues in favor of a political structure such that "ambition must be made to counteract ambition." Browning and Jacob (1964) compare responses to the Thematic Apperceptions Test from locally elected officials and un-elected businessmen. The TAT captures individual power motivations, but Browning and Jacob (1964) find "politicians have only slightly higher mean power motive scores than the matched nonpoliticians…and are not clearly different in power motivation from nonpoliticians of similar occupation and status" (p. 80).

More recently, Fox and Lawless (2005) include "competitive traits" as possibly linked to an individual's interest in running for office—which they refer to as nascent political ambition (p. 643). They argue "anyone who ultimately decides to seek high-level office is competitive and

driven" (p. 646), and measure this in their sample of potential candidates two ways: the desire to (1) rise to the top of one's profession, and (2) earn a lot of money. However, neither of these characteristics predicts nascent political ambition in their sample, controlling for many other factors.

Nascent political ambition is a concept worth returning to, but consider how ambition as a psychological characteristic has lacked specificity. Fowler and McClure (1989) add to the ambiguity by writing, "ambition for a seat in the House, more than any other factor—more than money, personality, or skill at using television, to name just a few examples—is what finally separates a visible, declared candidate for Congress from an unseen one" (p. 2). In other words, throw out all the psychological characteristics, and focus only on those who have an intense desire for a seat in the House of Representatives. However, this more or less selects on the dependent variable once again—all candidates for the House will have an intense desire for a seat in the House.

Recognizing their use of ambition is tautological, Fowler and McClure (1989), write "intense ambition alone is not sufficient to propel individuals to Washington: equally necessary is a highly focused desire for the distinctive life and institutional perquisites that are available in Congress—and nowhere else" (p. 3). Moreover, with respect to similarly situated individuals who have not run for Congress, they argue "these thoroughly political people quietly consider running for Congress and then say no" (p. 1). What it is these individuals consider is not entirely clear, although they suggest individuals contemplating candidacy, whether they choose to run or not, "are not without ambition and are fully aware of the advantages of service in the world's most powerful legislature" (p. 2).

Nascent political ambition is worth returning to at this point in the discussion. Fox and Lawless (2005) define this concept as "the embryonic or potential interest in office seeking that precedes the actual decision to enter a specific political contest" (p. 643). Defining ambition in this way allows Fox and Lawless to observe it in individuals *before* they run for office. The term adds clarity to the stage of quiet contemplation Fowler and McClure describe. Indeed, Maestas and colleagues (2006) suggest what we observe as nascent political ambition is one stage in the candidate emergence process on the path to eventual candidacy.

Political primacy offers a glimpse at an even earlier stage, before nascent political ambition. The previous discussion hints at this stage, but both Fowler and McClure (1989) and Fox and Lawless (2005) consider the political system in isolation. That is, when individuals contemplate running for office, Fowler and McClure (1989) imagine a purely strategic exercise whereby when the opportunity is right, individuals will run. This thinking is consistent with the rational choice framing much of the ambition literature has employed (Black, 1972; Fishel, 1971; Rohde, 1979; Adams & Squire, 1997). Rohde (1979) goes so far as to say any individual would take a higher office if it were available without cost.

Individuals do not think of political office in isolation, though. Fenno (1973) understands that individuals pursue seats in Congress, in part, to make good policy. Hall and Van Houweling (1995) contend that incumbent members of Congress make judgments about re-election based on the "expected policymaking value of the positions they are likely to hold in the *next* Congress" (p. 121, emphasis in original). The policymaking value increases the higher one goes up the political system. Rohde (1979) quotes a member of the House of Representatives on possibly running for the Senate: "I felt that there was an opportunity to make an impact as an individual in the Senate much more than in the House" (p. 5).

This quote is instructive. It reveals a thought process in which the individual weighs the elected office in question not in strategic terms, but in its potential to make an impact relative to his existing seat. Political primacy parallels this thought process before the individual ever runs for office. That is, can the individual make a greater impact through elected office than by any other means? Where would the individual rank elected office as a way of making an impact against alternatives? It is not clear individuals would always rank elected office higher than alternatives. Consider wealthy donors. These individuals have, or are at least presumed to have, considerable sway over the direction of policy. They might very well lose policymaking influence if they were to hold elected office, relative to the impact they could have outside it. Many individuals will look on the political system, and the prospect of running for office, and feel their time was better spent elsewhere.

This contemplation is itself a stage in the candidate emergence process. Political primacy offers a way of observing this stage that has applicability at all levels of government. Congress takes up so much of the oxygen in the candidate emergence discussion, that it is easy to forget that 96 percent of elected offices in the United States exist at the county level and below (Lawless, 2012). Many studies have used city councils to make predictions about who will seek higher office (Black, 1972; Bledsoe & Herring, 1990) without stopping to consider city council itself as a major decision in an individual's life. Political primacy allows researchers to observe the thought process of individuals at this critical stage of their political careers.

The thought process political primacy captures is not one where partisanship plays an important role. This is not the case elsewhere in the candidate emergence process. The partisanship of the district, for example, matters to the individual's decision to run (Seligman,

1961). Partisanship should not matter, in the abstract, to the individual's evaluation of elected office as a way of making change.

These evaluations should be thought of as existing along a continuum. Given that political primacy represents a value to the individual relative to alternatives, that value can be thought of as high or low. In this way, all individuals possess some degree of political primacy.

Of course, this value will have greater *meaning* the closer the individual is to the political environment. Political primacy is not, by itself, sufficient to propel individuals to run for office. It represents a pre-cursor stage in the candidate emergence process. That is, individuals can intellectually grasp the value of elected office for making positive change without being able to act on it. For example, for most bartenders, their political primacy value is immaterial to their likelihood of running for office. However, for those bartenders like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who are also quite active in politics and well connected, their political primacy value becomes meaningful to their likelihood of running for office. Political primacy's place in the candidate emergence process can be observed in Figure 1.

Figure I-1

Candidate Emergence Model

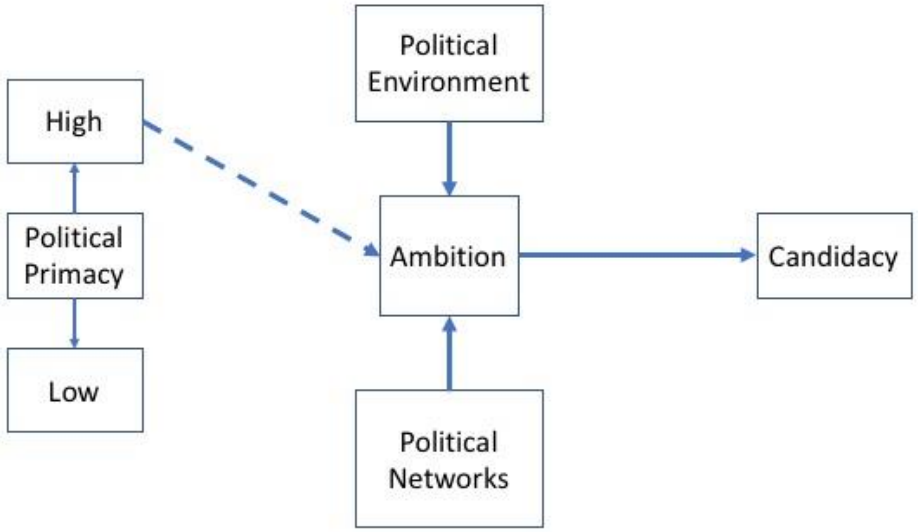

Figure I-1 should be understood as a highly stylized rendering of the candidate emergence process. It is probabilistic, not deterministic. The dashed line between political primacy and ambition represents the relationship being tested in this study. The expectation is that high political primacy predicts ambition for office. Ambition itself better predicts candidacy in Figure 1 when it aligns well with the political environment and a healthy network of contacts.

The temporal ordering of factors in the model may not line up perfectly with individual thinking. It may be that individuals take an interest in running for office, then justify it by saying it is a better way of making positive change in the community. The exact temporal order of relationships is less important so long as the thought process plays out before the decision to run for office.

Occupation and Political Primacy

To study the existence of political primacy, and its potential relationship to candidacy, it was necessary to identify similarly situated individuals on either side of the decision to run for office. Since there are virtually no restrictions, legally, on who can run for office (Hain & Piereson, 1976), simply identifying individuals who have and have not run for office does not make them similarly situated. Occupation offered a valuable heuristic for making comparisons between individuals. For example, it can be assumed that individuals in the same occupation received similar education and training, as well as similar professionalization around norms and ethics. Occupation is also important to professional networks and candidate recruitment (Jacob 1962).

Moreover, the choices of which occupation to pursue and whether to run for office are not necessarily independent of each other. Writing about city council members in the San Francisco Bay Area, Prewitt and Nowlin (1969) suggest "men begin to prepare themselves for their future positions long before they actually fill those positions" (p. 299). In other words, individuals may choose a particular occupation to improve their chances of running for office in the future. This makes it even more valuable to speak with individuals in the same occupation who have not run for office to see if there are differences and similarities in their levels of political primacy.

The occupations included in this study were law and social work, respectively. Law is an established pathway into politics, and has been the subject of numerous studies in the candidate emergence literature (Fox & Lawless, 2005; Hain & Piereson, 1976; Jacob, 1962). It was natural to look for the existence of political primacy in lawyers. Social work, on the other hand, may appear like an unorthodox choice. However, social workers perform a variety of functions that

put them in contact with elected officials and the political system. For example, social workers operate within the many layers of government, in different agencies, such as within human services and the child welfare system. Many social workers work as community organizers or research/policy analysts. Social workers also evaluate programs that receive taxpayer dollars. Thus, social workers can not only have "close contact" with government officials, but can also "learn of the opportunities in political life and to observe how others have succeeded" (Jacob, 1962, 710). Moreover, social work has historically offered opportunities for women to pursue politics (Thomas, 2014). The first woman ever elected to the House of Representatives, Jeanette Rankin, was a social worker. Currently, two U.S. Senators—Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)—have MSW degrees, as does Karen Bass (D-CA), the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Generally speaking, social workers also care about helping others (Rompf & Royce, 1994). This is a meaningful generalization as it concerns political primacy. That is, making positive change may be salient for social workers in a way it is not for lawyers. In other words, political primacy may be more predictive of candidacy for social workers than it is for lawyers. At the same time, social workers, as a group, may feel alternatives ways of making change are more effective than elected office.

Qualitative Sample

This study exploited a feature of Michigan elections to identify individuals on either side of the decision to run for office. The state of Michigan includes individuals running for *party precinct delegate* on the August primary ballot. This is not a public office, but a position within the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively. However, candidates for this position appear alongside the names of candidates for real public offices. Party precinct delegates attend county-level nominating conventions, and have the opportunity to attend state and national conventions. These individuals are, like Fowler and McClure suggest, "thoroughly political people" (p. 2). Furthermore, party work can benefit individuals in the future through relationships and their close proximity to candidates themselves. In this study, they serve as a counterfactual to individuals who have run for office.

Ten years of elections records from the six largest counties in Michigan (Genesee, Kent, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne) were used to identify candidates and delegates. These six counties constitute 53 percent of Michigan's total population (Census Bureau, 2017). Accordingly, through the sheer number of villages, townships, and municipalities, these counties produce a vast quantity of candidates each election cycle. With respect to occupation, there was greater potential for finding social workers and lawyers among the candidates in these counties than there were in less populated counties. Only offices at the county level and below were included. Judicial positions and the office of prosecuting attorney were excluded because only lawyers could hold these offices. A total of 16,255 unique individuals were identified.

These individuals were matched to separate lists of social workers and lawyers in each of the six counties. The list of social workers was purchased from the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, and included all those in possession of the Licensed Master of

Social Work credential as of January 17, 2017. It included the names of 9,141 individuals. The list of lawyers was taken from the directory of the State Bar of Michigan, and included those who were members as of January 17, 2017. It included the names of 25,284 individuals.

Using 2017 lists to identify social workers and lawyers, respectively, as far back as 2006 may be problematic, but was acceptable in this case for at least three reasons. First, it is unlikely that individuals would run for office in 2006 and then obtain their license or bar membership in 2017. Second, even individuals who retire from practice in 2006 have reason to maintain their license or bar membership. Should they face financial hardship and need to return to practice, it is far easier to do so with an up-to-date license or bar membership. Third, deceased individuals prior to 2017 are likely to be equally distributed across social workers and lawyers.

When matched to the list of candidates and delegates, a total of 62 social workers and 885 lawyers were identified. Effort was made to reach out to each social worker identified, including emails, telephone calls, and postcard invitations. Ultimately, fourteen of the identified social workers responded and were interviewed, for a response rate of 22.5 percent.[1] Three additional social workers were interviewed because they were also state bar association members. Of the lawyers, 62 names were drawn at random from the list of 885. Similar effort was made to reach out to these individuals, and a total of twelve lawyers participated, for a response rate of 19.3 percent. In total, 32 individuals were interviewed, including 20 social workers, and 12 lawyers. Of these twelve were candidates, including 9 social workers and 3 lawyers.

[1] Two additional social workers were interviewed who held office at the state level. In each case, though, neither individual had previously run for office. One social worker was interviewed because he was the chair of a municipal board, but had otherwise not run for office.

Interviews followed a standard list of questions concerning their political involvement and socialization, occupational practice and experience, and thought process concerning running for office or precinct delegate. Non-candidates, including delegates, were asked under what circumstances they might run for office. Importantly for political primacy, all subjects were asked for their impressions of elected office as a way of making positive change. The interview protocol is available in Appendix A-1. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and were conducted in person or over the phone. Transcripts underwent multiple rounds of coding to identify common themes and patterns using Atlas.ti version 8.3.1.

Evidence for Political Primacy

Recall, political primacy is the value individuals assign to elected office as a way of making positive change relative to alternative ways of making change. Candidates, unsurprisingly, were far more likely than non-candidates to value elected office over alternative ways of making a difference. This was true regardless of gender or occupation.

For example, Tammy, a state legislator, "realized [having a seat in the state legislature] was an opportunity to make a difference in a bigger way." The "power of the letterhead," she explained, carried greater gravitas in the community that allowed her to advance issues, even while serving in the minority. "Having that extra title or whatever just kind of helps to add to legitimacy to an issue."

Asked to compare serving in government to volunteering one's time, donating money, or speaking at meetings, Pete, also a state legislator, did not hesitate to value serving over the alternatives. "You have more power than any of those other three roles," he argued.

These views aligned well for lawyers as well. Tom, a township board member, alluded to the power differential between holding office and working outside of government:

> There's a huge difference between trying to influence the direction of your government and being in the government and actually helping draft the ordinance, helping persuade your fellow board members to push it through, or finding, you know, the slate on the board that you can live with and vote, and being an activist is great, I've never been an activist, but to actually vote and pass the laws is a hell of a lot better.

By contrast, the power differential did little for non-candidates, again across gender and occupation. "I guess I'm getting too old," John, a precinct delegate, explained when asked to explain his lack of interest in elected office. "The power piece doesn't seem as appealing."

The "power" of elected office was understood differently among non-candidates, but it was generally seen as limited. For example, Polly, also a delegate, argued "people think that politicians have all kinds of power, and I think their power is very limited. It's all about money."

As a precinct delegate, Bill saw constraints on elected office as inherent in the political system. "Although [elected office] is important, it's also dependent on so many other pieces, not just getting elected but once you're in office you've got opposition and you've got to work with it, you know, checks and balances."

Cliff, who was also a precinct delegate, saw constraint on elected officials in public opinion. He explained valuing speaking at meetings over serving in government this way:

I think that, first of all, I think you're not limited by, you know, if you're a candidate, or if you are holding office, you know, you've got to be concerned about constituencies and things like that. And if you're running for office then, you know, you have to be careful because, for the most part you don't want to take unpopular positions. Before you're elected, especially. So, so, you know, you're sort of circumscribed. But as a citizen, you know, who goes to meetings of governmental bodies and can speak out, I just think you're pretty much unlimited in the positions you can take.

Non-candidates, regardless of profession or gender, were more apt to see limits to elected office's ability to shape policy. But some expressed sentiments that suggested that elected office was not only limited, but simply not any better at shaping policy than alternative forms of activism. For example, Irene, neither a candidate nor precinct delegate, argued that private citizens can advance issues as much as elected officials.

The question is what kind of an impact can a private citizen have? Probably a huge impact. You know somebody who really wants to investigate and research and you know present a position to council that can have a huge impact. Rather than leave it all up to council to identify what needs to be improved and how can we do it.

The image of working outside city council to make change contrasted sharply with Rhonda, a school board member. She described her decision to seek a seat on the school board this way:

> The turning point for me was the policy piece. So knowing that I could really be a leader that could influence and shape policies that impacted all of our young people and kind of being that voice for those who don't necessarily come out to the meetings, but their needs still need to be represented nonetheless. So that for me felt like incredibly impactful, to be able to be in a position where I'm in a decision-making role and I can potentially influence the education trajectories of lots and lots of students in our district.

By locating the trajectories of "lots and lots of students" in a seat on the school board, Rhonda is evaluating alternative ways of affecting those trajectories and determining the school board is the best, most effective option. Candidates in the interview sample, regardless of gender or occupation, were more likely to express sentiments similar to Rhonda's than to Irene's.

Analyzing Political Primacy

Irene and Rhonda represent opposite ends of the political primacy continuum. There are those like Rhonda, who see greater value in elected office's ability to make positive change in the lives of children within the school district than simply attending meetings. Then there are those like Irene, who see greater value in alternative ways of making positive change than serving on city council. And then there are sentiments that exist somewhere in between like Al, a lawyer and precinct delegate, who asked rhetorically, "which way can you be more effective? Part of it is you have to identify your goals, what you enjoy doing and the like."

Statements like the above were categorized as exhibiting political primacy if they offered an approximation of the relative value of running or holding elected office versus another form of political participation or community activism. Al's sentiment fits these criteria because it suggests there are times when elected office is more effective than other forms of activism. As mentioned, the transcripts underwent multiple rounds of coding, such that statements coded as political primacy were placed on a scale from low to high. Examples of each are as follows:

Low	**Middle**	**High**
I'm feeling that my efforts are better spent elsewhere. -Hillary, non-candidate	You have to decide…why are you running, what are trying to accomplish, what is your possibility of success, there's an extreme amount of time effort, and money, that goes into running a campaign. And so you have to make a determination if you think it's worth your while, and you can be effective. -Dave, non-candidate	I agreed to run, and we did a lot on that issue, and we got a lot of people to be aware of how many people were elderly and mentally ill and under state law they were supposed to get a break, but this county treasurer was putting their houses up for tax sale without using any of the tools that are provided for an intervention. -Joyce, candidate

With the statements categorized along a continuum, it was possible to identify the distribution of political primacy between candidates and non-candidates. Table I-1 shows the distribution of political primacy statements between candidates and non-candidates. It also shows the distribution of individuals in each group who made statements that fell along this high-middle-low continuum.

Table I-1

Distribution of Political Primacy by Statements and Individuals Among Candidates and Non-Candidates

	Statements		**Individuals**	
	Candidate	Non-Candidate	Candidate	Non-Candidate
High	49	7	11	5
Middle	9	9	5	9
Low	5	20	3	9

The suggestion from Table 1 is that candidates were more likely than non-candidates to offer statements valuing elected office over other ways of making change. Not only were candidates significantly more likely to make statements reflecting high political primacy (χ^2=35.8, *df*=5, *p*<0.000), a significantly greater number of them made such statements (χ^2=6.1, *df*=5, *p*<0.048). This is not altogether surprising, and is consistent with Fowler and McClure's (1989) argument regarding ambition. We should expect candidates to value elected office over alternative ways of making change. However, the distribution of political primacy among non-candidates is also revealing. While they were less likely to express high political primacy, there was a distribution of responses. This variation makes them useful for predicting future candidacy.

Recall, though, that simply running for office does mean individuals are similarly situated. The addition of occupation as a second layer of analysis accounts for important

variation within candidates and within non-candidates. It may be that high political primacy is more common among social workers than lawyers, or vice versa.

Table I-2 shows the distribution of political primacy statements, as well as the individuals making the statements between social workers and lawyers.

Table I-2

Distribution of Political Primacy by Statements and Individuals Among Social Workers and Lawyers

	Statements		**Individuals**	
	Social Workers	Lawyers	Social Workers	Lawyers
High	50	6	14	2
Middle	14	10	7	7
Low	15	14	7	5

The results show social workers as a group were more likely to make statements coded as high political primacy (χ^2=24.6, *df*=5, *p*<0.000). However, among individuals themselves, social workers were not more likely to have high political primacy to a degree that reached statistical significance (χ^2=5.2, *df*=5, *p*<0.072).

Nevertheless, within social workers it is useful to know that individuals possess high political primacy. If political primacy can be used to predict an individual's interest in running for office, then its prevalence amongst social workers suggests they are indeed potential candidates.

Quantitative Application

The qualitative portion of this study established the existence of political primacy in both candidates and non-candidates, and gave the suggestion of variation between individuals in social work and law, respectively. This study included a quantitative application to better understand variation in political primacy among non-candidates in different occupations. The quantitative application also allowed the relationship between political primacy and nascent political ambition to be tested with greater specificity.

Data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study (MLSWS) were used to test this relationship. The MLSWS was a sample of graduate students in law and social work, respectively, across four universities in Michigan: Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Wayne State University, and Western Michigan University. MSW students were invited to participation via email, though the listserv of each university. Invitations were sent between March and April, 2017. The recruitment announcement (available in Appendix I-C) made no mention of the content of the survey instrument. For completing the survey, respondents received a $5 Amazon.com redemption code. A total of 545 usable responses were received out of 2,385 MSW students across all four schools, for a response rate of 22.8 percent.

The law school portion of the MLSWS followed a different recruitment procedure. The invitation was sent to students at the University of Michigan via email. A total of 184 usable responses were received out of 615 law students at the University of Michigan, for a response rate of 29.9 percent. The remaining law students in the MLSWS were recruited through student organizations. Nine members of the Black Law Student Association of Wayne State University completed the survey, as did seven members of the Native American Law Student Association of Michigan State University. The total number of JD respondents in the MLSWS was 200.

The survey instrument for the MLSWS included an item measuring political primacy. The concept refers to the value individuals assign to elected office's ability to make positive change, *relative* to alternative ways of making change. Allowing respondents to weigh elected office against alternative ways of making change was the key to the political primacy item on the MLSWS. For ease of interpretation, the language of the item was "What is the best way of contributing to your community?" Respondents were then invited to rank answer choices from 1 (best) to 5 (worst). The answer choices were:

- Giving money to good causes, such as non-profit, community, or religious organizations.
- Volunteering your time to good causes, such as non-profit, community, or religious organizations.
- Speaking at meetings of local government, include the school board, city council, or other municipal boards.
- Serving in local government, such as on school board, city council, other municipal boards.
- Other (specify).

In the analyses that follow, the political primacy item was reverse coded so that higher values indicated greater political primacy.

This item was tested on two separate samples from Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk platform. A total of 1,285 respondents tested the political primacy item before it was used in the MLSWS. Between the first and second test the list of answer choices was increased from three to five. In both instances, the political primacy item performed as expected, and showed a strong relationship to nascent political ambition.

Nascent political ambition was measured on the MLSWS using a series of items that asked respondents to indicate their interest in running for offices at all levels of government. Respondents could choose from not at all interested (1) all the way to very interested (4). Two additive scales were created to measure their interest in offices at the local level, as well as the state and federal levels. The local office scale included school board, parks commission, city council, and county commission. The range of possible scores was 4-16, and was reliable with a Cronbach α .74. The higher office scale included mayor, state legislature, and U.S. House or Senate. The range of possible values was 3-9, and was reliable with a Cronbach α .89.

Descriptive Statistics

Table I-3 reports the average political primacy and nascent political ambition of MSW and JD students in the MLSWS. On average, JD students in the MLSWS had significantly (p<.000) higher political primacy than MSW students. With respect to nascent political ambition, differences existed between the two groups at different levels of office. That is, MSW students were significantly (p<.002) more interested in running for local office than JD students. On the other hand, JD students were significantly (p<.000) more interested in running for higher office than MSW students.

Table I-3

Average Political Primacy and Nascent Political Ambition in the MLSWS, with Standard Deviations in Parentheses

	MSW (*n*=545)	**JD (*n*=200)**
Political Primacy	3.54 (1.11)	3.89 (1.02)***
Local Office Scale	9.09 (2.83)**	8.37 (2.87)
Higher Office Scale	6.53 (2.77)	7.31 (2.81)***

**p<.01; ***p<.001

Multivariate Statistics

Political primacy's relationship to nascent political ambition was measured using a multivariate regression model. To account for additional factors related to nascent political ambition, the model included measures of competitive traits (Fox & Lawless, 2005), as well as political efficacy, and important demographic characteristics.

Table I-4 displays the results of the regression model for the MSW and JD samples for interest in running at the local level. Controlling for the other factors in the model, political primacy was significantly (p<.009) related to nascent political ambition at the local level for MSW students. The relationship for JD students was not significant (p<.066) at the .05 level.

Table I-4

Regression Results on Interest in Running for Local Office for MSW and JD Students in the MLSWS

Covariates	**MSW (*n*=484)**	**JD (*n*=185)**
Political primacy	.29**	.41°
	(.11)	(.22)
Competitive traits	.03	-.21
	(.10)	(.15)
Sometimes politics is too complicated for people like me to follow	-.39***	-.11
	(.11)	(.20)
Public officials don't care what people like me think	-.07	.04
	(.13)	(.21)
Age	-.03	.13
	(.02)	(.08)
Non-White	-.55°	.69
	(.29)	(.51)
Male	1.11**	.44
	(.38)	(.51)
Mother's education	-.12	.00
	(.10)	(.22)
Married	-.10	.89
	(.38)	(.73)
Children under 6 at home	-.55	-.08
	(.72)	(1.96)
Children over 6 at home	.24	-1.14°
	(.54)	(.65)

Standard errors in parentheses
°p<.1; **p<.01; ***p<.001

To test the robustness of the relationship between political primacy and nascent political ambition, the model was applied to interest in running for state and federal office. While the political primacy item is phrased to refer to respondents' local communities, it is instructive to see if the concept has a relationship to interest at the state and federal levels of office. It may be that respondents feel they can do more for their local communities through these offices than local offices. The results in Table I-5 indicate political primacy was significantly (p<.034)

related to nascent political ambition for higher office in JD students. The relationship for MSW students did not reach statistical significance ($p<.071$).

Table I-5

Regression Results on Interest in Running for Higher Office for MSW and JD Students in the MLSWS.

Covariates	**MSW (*n*=484)**	**JD (*n*=185)**
Political primacy	.19°	.46*
	(.11)	(.21)
Competitive traits	.14	.02
	(.10)	(.15)
Sometimes politics is too complicated for people like me to follow	-.65***	-.13
	(.10)	(.19)
Public officials don't care what people like me think	-.01	.01
	(.13)	(.20)
Age	-.02	.13
	(.02)	(.07)
Non-White	-.45	.27
	(.27)	(.44)
Male	.98**	1.09*
	(.37)	(.45)
Mother's education	-.13	-.17
	(.11)	(.21)
Married	-.14	-.01
	(.36)	(.63)
Children under 6 at home	-.08	-.35
	(.66)	(1.66)
Children over 6 at home	.03	-1.14*
	(.53)	(.58)

Standard errors in parentheses
°$p<.1$; *$p<.05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$

In both Tables I-4 and I-5 gender played an important role in the interest MSW students had in running for office. This relationship was not observed among JD students. Being male increased interest in running for office by almost one point in each model for MSW students. This finding requires additional research to fully explain. Presumably, male and female MSW students receive similar education and training. They evidently have very different levels of

interest in running for office, though. Moreover, the kind of women that pursue social work as opposed to law may be different in ways that matter to their interest in running for office. Consistent with Prewitt and Nowlin (1969), for example, JD students in general may have the foreknowledge that the degree can help them achieve elected office. The results speak again to the notion that interest in running for office does not make individuals similarly situated.

Discussion

The candidate-centered nature of the American political system requires understanding individual motivations for pursuing elected office. As interview subjects reported in this study, part of their motivation to hold elected office was to make a difference in their communities. Many of them spoke to the power elected office gave them to influence policy over and above what they could do as a private citizen. However, not everyone interviewed was persuaded elected office was the best way for them to make a difference. This study introduced the concept political primacy to describe and measure how individuals evaluate the difference-making potential of elected office. The term refers to the value individuals assign to elected office's ability to make positive change, *relative* to alternative ways of making change.

This study found evidence for political primacy not only among elected officials, but among party precinct delegates—political party officials who appear on the ballot but are not themselves candidate for public office. Candidates and delegates were organized by occupation to more fully account for varying levels of education and professionalization. High levels of political primacy were found to be more common among social workers than lawyers, perhaps owing to the profession's interest in directly helping others.

The candidate emergence process unfolds in successive stages. Political primacy represents the thinking of individuals before expressing nascent political ambition, which itself precedes the actual decision to run for office. Political primacy's relationship to nascent political ambition (Fox & Lawless, 2005), was tested using data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study. Law students and social work students receive different training, observe different standards of ethics, and perform different professional practice. Nevertheless, the more students in either program felt serving in local government was a better way of contributing to the

community than alternatives, the more interested they were in running for office, controlling for a variety of factors.

This relationship was robust to offices at different levels of government. Political primacy was more predictive of interest in state and federal office for law students than it was for social work students. This finding could reflect unaccounted for characteristics that relate to law student interest in higher office. Hain and Piereson (1976) acknowledge that lawyers have exclusive access over all other professions to offices like prosecuting attorney. Law students may interpret this exclusivity as greater propriety for higher offices in the political system. That is, individuals who pursue law may be more conscious of it as a pathway to higher office (Prewitt & Nolin, 1969).

Still, political primacy was also predictive of interest in local level offices for social work students. Given that local office is a common pathway to higher office (Fox & Lawless, 2005), the distinctions between social work and law students may not be very meaningful. Moreover, persuading social work students, and individuals similar to social work students, to see local office as a better way of making a difference in their communities may convince a non-zero number of them to run for office in the future. This may in turn help expand the candidate pool.

Interest in running, though, is not the same as actually running. Many factors are involved in moving an interested individual into an actual candidate that were not accounted for in this study. As with nascent political ambition itself, political primacy may be higher or lower within individuals at different points in time (Fox & Lawless, 2011). Interview respondents, for example, gave statements that were coded as high and low political primacy. It is not inconceivable that individuals will evaluate elected office's ability to contribute to the community differently in response to local or national circumstances. This dynamism speaks to

potential endogeneity between political primacy and nascent political ambition. It is difficult to decipher the temporal order between these two concepts.[2]

Interview subjects in this study were not representative of candidates and non-candidates across Michigan, nor of social workers and lawyers in the state. This means their evaluations of elected office may not be generalizable to candidates and precinct delegates in all instances. Moreover, the MLSWS was not a representative sample of MSW and JD students in Michigan, or across the United States. The relationships observed between political primacy and nascent political ambition were specific to the respondents in the MLSWS. Even so, nothing in the invitation would suggest that the respondents were more interested in politics than the students who declined to participate or never received the invitation. Furthermore, the relationships observed were consistent for students at each of the individual universities in the MLSWS. This is significant given that within the MSW sample the universities varied considerably in terms of their prestige and the kinds of students who attend, which may relate to their interest in running for office.

Finally, it remains to be seen if political primacy represents a characteristic that can grow within individuals over time. Fox and Lawless (2011) observe that ambition for office ebbs and flows with individuals in response to the political environment. The same may be true of political primacy. On the other hand, the characteristic may be more similar to ideology, and may respond little to new information. Individuals who have a low regard for elected office's ability make change, for example, may be unwilling to re-evaluate their feelings in response to new

[2] The design of the MLSWS attempted to account for endogeneity between political primacy and nascent political ambition. The sample of graduate students was unlikely to include individuals who had previously run for office. The order of the survey instrument placed political primacy before items measuring nascent political ambition.

information. Similarly, individuals with high political primacy may always see elected office as the best way of making change, regardless of new information. To the extent individuals can develop higher political primacy it may be possible to make more individuals interested in pursuing elected office. This is not only necessary in our candidate-centered political system, but would also provide voters with greater choice in our elections.

Conclusion

Given the candidate-centered nature of the American political system, individual motivation is required to fill the more than 500,000 elected offices in the country. The desire to make positive change can motivate individuals, consistent with the intent and purpose of the political system. Political primacy represents a way of understanding how individuals value the difference-making power of elected office. This study found individuals who see elected office as a better way of contributing to their communities over alternatives were more interested in running for office in the future. Political primacy, thus, represents one way of understanding individual motivations that has applicability for all elected offices in the political system.

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Chapter 2

"I Think I Can . . . Maybe I Can . . . I Can't": Social Work Women and Local Elected Office

Introduction

Following the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, there has been a reported surge on the part of women in running for office (Kamerick, 2017; Landsbaum, 2017; Leventis-Lourgos, 2017; Zillman, 2017). If this is indeed the case, then women are making up for lost time. As Lane and Humphreys (2015) noted, although women are 51 percent of the U.S. population, they are significantly underrepresented among our elected officials at all levels of government. And the absence of women in elected office has consequences for the policies that are debated and adopted (Lane & Humphreys, 2011).

If the surge in interest in running for office among women is genuine, one constituency in which we might expect to see it is social workers, and more specifically social work students. Not only are women overrepresented in MSW programs, but individuals at the beginning of their careers are understandably more idealistic than they are in the middle of them (Hamilton & Fauri 2001). Women in MSW programs have presently seen the nation turn from a progressive president who championed many of the issues important to them to an individual who has not only openly bragged about sexually assaulting women, but also has begun, so far in his term, policies that would harm women's health and reproductive rights.

Leaving aside the present political circumstances, which can oscillate between periods of progressive action and conservative reaction, the idea that women in social work might be interested in running for office should not sound far-fetched. There is a long tradition of women

in social work holding elected office. The very first woman elected to the House of Representatives, Jeanette Rankin, was a social worker. As recently as 2016 two members of the U.S. Senate—Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)—were social workers. Thomas (2014) found that women in elected office are more likely to come from professions like social work and education than from law or business.

Nevertheless, very little is known about whether women in MSW programs are actually interested in running for office. Ezell (1993) argued that it is not uncommon for social workers to see politics as a "dirty business," and consequently avoid it. Furthermore, women more often than men doubt their qualifications for holding elected office (Fox & Lawless, 2004; Fulton, Maestas, Maisel, & Stone, 2006). This trend is particularly relevant following the 2016 presidential election, when the first woman nominee of a major political party, with a long history of public service, lost to a man who had never even been a candidate for elected office before. Rather than feeling a surge of interest in running, it may be that women in social work are experiencing increased skepticism about their own qualifications for holding office.

This study directly measures the interest MSW students have in running for office at all levels of government and their perceived barriers to doing so. In this way, this study can establish whether and to what extent perceptions of barriers are acting as a drag on the interest of women in MSW programs in running for office. Although this study cannot measure whether interest has increased since the 2016 election, it uses a comparison group of law students, allowing for the relative interest of women in MSW programs to be established. Fox and Lawless (2004, 2005) observed that law is among the four most common professional pathways into politics and used a sample of 2,890 individuals in law, business, education, and interest group work to find that women were significantly less likely to consider running for office than men.

Previous research into the political participation of social workers has looked only at social workers themselves (Ezell, 1993; Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Lane & Humphreys 2011; Ostrander, Lane, McClendon, Hayes, & Smith, 2017; Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Rome & Hoechstetter 2010; Wolk, 1981). If women in MSW programs are just as interested in running for office as women in law school, for example, but feel less qualified, then that has broad implications for social work educators, and for our understanding of women in politics in general.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions related to women in social work. Research Question 1: How interested are women and men in MSW programs in running for office, and how does this compare with women and men in JD programs?

The answers to these questions will establish the extent to which women in MSW programs are interested in running for office, relative to their male counterparts and to their contemporaries in JD programs. If they are less interested in running for office than men in social work, but more interested than women in law school, for example, then it is reasonable, given that law is an established pathway to politics, to expect women in social work to run for office, though perhaps less often than men. However, if they are less interested in running than both men in social work and women in law school, then there is little reason to expect women in MSW programs to run for office and little reason to consider social work a pathway to politics for women.

Research Question 2: How do women and men in MSW programs rate their qualifications for running for office, and how does this compare to women and men in JD programs?

Regardless of their interest, women in social work are unlikely to run if they do not feel qualified. Knowing the degree to which women in social work feel qualified has important implications for the social work curriculum and field placement opportunities, particularly if men and women within MSW programs vary in their perceived qualifications to run because they receive the same instruction. Similarly, if perceived qualifications of women in MSW programs vary from those of women in JD programs, then important questions will have to be asked about the nature of MSW and JD programs that women should have different self-assessments.

Research Question 3: What is the nature of the relationship between perceived qualifications and interest in running for local office?

An individual's perceived qualifications to run and her interest in running for office are not independent of each other. Rather, the two are related. This study can establish how strong that relationship is, and how strong it is relative to other factors related to an individual's interest in running for office. If women in MSW programs feel unqualified to run, for example, but that feeling has no statistical relationship to their interest in running, then the focus on qualifications is misplaced and attention can be paid to other factors inhibiting women from running. Similarly, this study can establish whether perceived qualifications matter more to interest in running for women in MSW programs than they do for women in JD programs.

Method

Sample

E-mail invitations were sent to MSW students at four institutions in the state of Michigan throughout the months of February and March 2017. The institutions included Western Michigan University, Wayne State University, Michigan State University, and the University of Michigan. These institutions varied in their *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of MSW programs. This is important if students at more prestigious institutions were also more likely to be interested in running for office. Respondents were offered a $5 incentive for completing the survey. Of the total 612 surveys, 67 had to be discarded, for a total of 545 usable responses, and a response rate of 26.1 percent.

Law students were more difficult to reach. The administrations at law schools throughout the state were unwilling to forward my e-mail invitation to their students. I was able to reach students through student organizations on law school campuses, and obtained 237 responses. Of these, 37 had to be discarded, for a total 200 usable responses from three law schools: University of Michigan (184), Wayne State (9), and Michigan State (7).

The low response rates among MSW and JD students limit the generalizability of the data collected. E-mail invitations did not reach everyone, as students in some programs opted out of the university Listserv. The absence of these students may bias the results if these students were more or less interested in running for office. This is unknowable. The e-mail invitations did not hint at the content of the survey itself, so there is little chance that respondents answered the survey because they were more interested in politics or running for office.

Survey Instrument

Like Lane and Humphreys (2011), the survey instrument used in this study borrowed from Fox and Lawless's (2005) Citizen Political Ambition Study. Items included measures of political efficacy borrowed from the American National Election Study (2010), demographic and partisan information, as well as their interest in running for offices at each level of government. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate their interest in running for city council, school board, parks commission, county commission, mayor, state legislature, and U.S. House or Senate. Response options ranged from 1 = not at all interested to 4 = very interested.

To understand the nature of perceived qualifications, and their relationship to interest in running for office, an item was developed for this instrument that allowed respondents to rank-order a list of potential barriers to running for office.

The item reads as follows:

Which of the following would keep you from running for local office (school board, city council, or another municipal board). Please rank from 1 = most likely to keep me from running to 6 = least likely to keep me from running.

- The time commitment involved in running and serving in local government
- The financial cost of running
- Not feeling qualified to hold office at this level of government
- The loss of privacy
- Campaigning, including asking for donations to my campaign and telling strangers about myself

- Other

Local office, rather than state or federal office, was chosen to keep the idea practical for respondents. The order of answer choices was randomized, with the exception of other, which was always listed last. Respondents were free to move these answer choices into their preferred order. Those who moved qualifications to the top of their order were indicating it as the barrier most likely to keep them from running. If respondents did so, then they were invited to explain why they felt they were not qualified to run for local office in an open-ended follow-up question.

Sample Characteristics

Table II-1 displays the demographic characteristics of the two samples in this study. Some differences are immediately apparent. Women, for example, make up a greater percentage of the MSW sample than the JD sample. Similarly, higher percentages of MSW students are married and have children under six years of age in the household than the JD sample. Finally, respondents report having more educated mothers in the JD sample than in the MSW sample.

Table II-1

Demographic Characteristics of the MLSWS

Characteristic	**MSW (*n*=545) %**	**JD (*n*=200) %**
Age (SD)	28.6 (7.2)	26.4 (2.7)
Non-White	28.6	32
Female	88.9	73
Democrat	76.7	81
Married	21.7	10.4
Children less than six years old in the household	7.2	2.6
Mother's highest degree		
Graduated eighth grade	4.7	1.5
Graduated high school	18.6	8.7
Some college	19.2	11.2
Graduated college	38	40.8
Graduated graduate school	19.6	37.8

Results

Research Question 1: How interested are women and men in MSW programs in running for office, and how does this compare with women and men in JD programs?

Summary scales were made for offices at the local level (city council, school board, parks commission, and county commission) and higher levels (mayor, state legislature, and U.S House or Senate) of government. The local office scale had a possible range of 4–16 and a Cronbach alpha equal to 0.74. The higher office scale had a possible range of 3–12 and a Cronbach alpha equal to 0.89. Table II-2 shows average interest in running for local and higher office for MSW and JD students, by gender. Women in MSW programs were less interested in local and higher office than the male counterparts, but more interested in local office than women in JD programs.

T-tests were performed on these averages to see if (a) women and men within social work were different from each other, and (b) if women in social work and law were different from each other. Within social work, men were significantly more interested in both local ($t = –2.79$, $p < .005$) and higher ($t = –3.12$, $p < .002$) office than women. Among women, MSW students were significantly more interested in local office ($t = 3.26$, $p < .001$) than JD students; but interest in higher office did not achieve significance ($t = –1.84$, $p < .066$). For comparison purposes, within law, men were no more interested in local office than women ($t = –1.34$, $p < .18$) but were significantly more interested in higher office ($t = –3.27$, $p < .001$). Finally, among men, MSW students were significantly more interested in local office ($t = 2.21$, $p < .029$) than JD students, but there were no differences in interest in higher office ($t = –1.39$, $p < .168$).

Table II-2

Average Interest in Running for Local and Higher Office

	MSW				JD			
	Female (*n*=480)		Male (*n*=60)		Female (*n*=143)		Male (*n*=53)	
	M	*(SD)*	*M*	*(SD)*	*M*	*(SD)*	*M*	*(SD)*
Local office	9.0	(2.7)	10.1	(3.0)	8.2	(2.8)	8.8	(3.1)
Higher office	6.4	(2.4)	7.6	(3.0)	6.9	(2.7)	8.3	(2.8)

Taken together, the results present a bifurcated image of interest. MSW students, both men and women, were significantly more interested in running for local office than JD students. However, law students were more interested in running for higher office, but not significantly so. Consequently, it seems reasonable to imagine women in MSW programs running for local office, though perhaps less often than their male counterparts.

Research Question 2: How do women and men in social work rate their qualifications for running for office, and how does this compare with women and men in JD programs?

As mentioned, the survey instrument asked respondents to rank order a list of barriers that would keep them from running for local office. Table II-3 shows how respondents ranked qualifications, on average, among the six possible choices. The closer the average is to 1 the more qualifications were considered a barrier to running. Women in MSW programs had the lowest average rank of all four groups.

T-tests were performed on these averages to see if (a) women and men within social work were different from each other, and (b) if women in social work and law were different from each other. Within social work, women listed their qualifications significantly higher ($t = –3.57$, $p < .000$) than men as a barrier to running. Among women, MSW students similarly listed their qualifications significantly higher ($t = –8.83$, $p < .000$) than JD students as a barrier to running.

Within law, women and men were no different in how they ranked qualifications ($t = .08$, $p < .938$). Among men, differences between MSW students and JD students did not reach significance ($t = –1.66$, $p < .099$).

Table II-3

Average Rank of Qualifications as a Barrier to Running for Local Office

	MSW		**JD**	
	Female (n = 459) *M* (*SD*)	Male (n = 58) *M* (*SD*)	Female (n = 137) *M* (*SD*)	Male (n = 49) *M* (*SD*)
Qualifications rank	2.71 (1.62)	3.57 (1.58)	4.08 (1.46)	4.06 (1.46)

The results indicate that women in MSW programs felt uniquely unqualified to run for local office. This is surprising considering that they receive the same instruction as their male counterparts. Among women, the results are surprising as well, given that women in MSW programs were more interested in running for office at this level than women in JD programs. Why women in JD programs feel more qualified to run than women in MSW programs should be considered in detail. Is there a curricular explanation?

Research Question 3: What is the nature of the relationship between perceived qualifications, and interest in running for local office?

Ordinary least squares regression was used to answer question 3. To understand the nature of the relationship between perceived qualifications and interest in running for office, it was necessary to control for additional factors that may be related to an individual's interest in running for office. These factors are taken from literature on women and running for office. For example, Fulton and colleagues (2006) found that women are typically older than men when they run for office, and that having children in the household decreases their likelihood of running.

Shames (2017) found that women from minority groups perceive the biggest barriers to running for office. Mother's highest degree achieved was included in the regression model to account for the socialization of respondents, the assumption being that respondents with mothers with more education are more likely to be socialized to be interested in politics or to have a mother who had been in elected office herself (Fox & Lawless, 2005).

To borrow from the work of Ostrander and colleagues (2017), which emphasized the importance of political efficacy to the political participation of social workers, the regression model also includes measures such as feeling that politics is too complicated to understand, political officials do not care what individuals like me have to say, and that politics can solve important problems. Last, the model includes partisan identification under the assumption that women who do not identify as Democrats may be less interested in running for office than women who do.

Table II-4 reports the results of the regression model on women and men in MSW and JD programs. For ease of interpretation, the qualifications rank was reverse coded so that higher values corresponded with ranking qualifications higher as a barrier to running. The results indicate that qualifications were uniquely problematic for women in MSW programs. For every one unit increase in qualifications as a barrier to running for local office, interest in running for local office decreased by .23 ($p < .01$), controlling for additional factors related to interest. This relationship was not observed in any other group.

Table II-4

Regression Results on Interest in Running for Local Office

	MSW		JD	
Covariates	Female (*n* = 452)	Male (*n* = 56)	Female (*n* = 135)	Male (*n* = 49)
Qualifications rank	–.23**	.01	–.10	–.10
	(.08)	(.20)	(.18)	(.36)
Age	.02	–.07*	.05	.21
	(.02)	(.03)	(.10)	(.13)
Nonwhite	–.67*	.96	1.17*	–.80
	(.28)	(.70)	(.51)	(1.00)
Mother's highest degree	–.14	–.01	.33	–.76
	(.10)	(.28)	(.24)	(.44)
No children in the household	.66	1.21	–1.97	1.24
	(.68)	(1.00)	(1.63)	(3.52)
Children over six years old in the household	.19	1.74	–2.80†	
	(.81)	(1.19)	(1.46)	
Democrat	1.11**	–1.38	–.39	–.31
	(.34)	(.69)	(.69)	(1.21)
Sometimes politics gets too complicated for people like me to follow	–.24*	–.40	–.14	–.16
	(.11)	(.32)	(.22)	(.37)
Public officials do not care what people like me think	–.09	.13	–.01	–.25
	(.13)	(.43)	(.25)	(.44)
Politics can solve problems I care about	.55***	.53	.72**	.38
	(.13)	(.40)	(.25)	(.45)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
†$p < .1$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Why do women in MSW programs feel this way? This question deserves its own article, but in brief respondents who ranked qualifications as their number one barrier to running for local office were invited to explain why they felt this way. These explanations were coded according to the reason given for feeling unqualified to run. Table II-5 lists these codes along with the number of corresponding explanations in each group.

Table II-5

Counts of Coded Explanations for Feeling Unqualified to Run for Local Office

	MSW		JD	
Explanation	Male (n = 9)	Female (n = 169)	Male (n = 5)	Female (n = 17)
Disillusioned with politics, politicians, process, and so on	1	6	0	0
Lack of experience	3	61	2	5
Lack of interest	0	26	0	1
Insufficient knowledge	3	80	1	8
Lack of political networks necessary to run	0	5	0	0
Practical considerations (for example, time)	0	2	0	2
Electorate would not take candidacy seriously	1	5	0	1
Lack of necessary skills (for example, public speaking)	1	11	0	1
Incorrect training (that is, wrong degree)	0	12	0	1

The two most common explanations women in MSW programs offered concerned their perceived lack of experience, as well as their perceived lack of knowledge. It is important to remember, in light of the 2016 presidential election, these are qualifications for *local* office. The winner of that election was a man with no political experience, and arguably no knowledge of important issues facing the United States. It is difficult to imagine, based on these results, a woman in social work running for school board, let alone the presidency, with a similar résumé.

Discussion

The reported increase in interest in running for office among women following the 2016 election is partially substantiated among women in MSW programs. Based on survey results of 545 MSW students at four institutions in the state of Michigan, they are significantly more interested in running for local office than women in JD programs, which is a more established pathway into politics (Fox & Lawless, 2005). This finding is significant and suggests that women in social work represent a viable pool from which to draw candidates for local office.

These are not trivial offices either. County governments have considerable influence over the administration of mental health services in many states, while school boards set policies that affect the educational experiences of children and families throughout the country. City councils also have considerable sway over how municipalities develop, including whether and where to zone for affordable housing.

Relative to state and federal offices, local offices are not difficult to obtain. That is, the financial cost of running for local office is orders of magnitude lower than state or federal office (Cook 2016; Dogiakos, 2014; Neary, 2014; Nicol, 2015). Elections for local office are often unopposed, requiring minimal campaigning on the part of candidates (Greenblatt, 2016; Lin, 2014).

Yet, despite the relative ease with which these offices are obtained, women in MSW programs doubt their qualifications to run for them, significantly more so than the their male contemporaries and women in JD programs. This was not a question of being misinformed. Respondents had the option of ranking the financial cost of local campaigns ahead of qualifications as a barrier to running. That so many chose qualifications ahead of financial costs

as a barrier to running suggests they understood that the financial costs were low, but seriously doubted their qualifications against other potential barriers to running.

Here, then, is the continuation of a trend in the candidate emergence literature: women doubt their qualifications to run compared with men (Cauterucci, 2017; Fox & Lawless, 2011), and put off doing so until later in life (Fulton et al., 2006). Thus, rather than spurring an interest in running for office, the results of the 2016 election may be draining women in social work of self-confidence. But perhaps only some women. The results of this study suggest that women in MSW programs feel uniquely unqualified to run compared with women in JD programs.

Fortunately, their explanations for feeling unqualified offer a way forward. The most common explanations had to do with knowledge and experience. MSW programs should consider offering field placements in elected offices. Constituent service is an important function elected officials perform. MSW interns would do well in this role for elected officials. In addition, knowledge and experience can be built into the MSW curriculum itself. The work of Ostrander and colleagues (2017) is very promising in this respect. Using an intensive, two-day training on campaigning and campaign messaging, participants felt a greater sense of political efficacy. And given their explanations, it may be reasonable to expect that these opportunities will be of greater value to women than men, in terms of providing knowledge and experience in politics.

This study has a number of limitations. First, the dependent measure—interest in running for office—is an inexact measure of intent to run for office, at best. There is no evidence that interest is related to candidacy. Logically, the two are related, but this has not been established empirically. Second, this study is not representative of all MSW students. Response rates were low at three of the four MSW programs included in this study. Although the e-mail invitation

made no mention of the survey content, there may be important characteristics that disposed respondents to answer the survey while others chose to ignore it. The use of comparison groups mitigates this limitation to some degree.

Indeed, by using a comparison group of law students, this study was able to contextualize the interest in running among women in social work as well as the sense of qualifications more accurately than any previous study on the topic. Because the presence of women in legislative bodies matters to the policies that are passed (Lane & Humphreys, 2011), it is critically important that MSW programs provide women opportunities to learn about and experience politics.

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Chapter 3

Water into Wine: Using Social Policy Courses to Make MSW Students Interested in Running for Office

Introduction

Social workers are making a name for themselves on the national political scene. In the 2018 election, Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) won a hotly contested race for the United States Senate in Arizona, while Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) won re-election in a state that President Trump carried in the 2016 election. In the 116th Congress, Karen Bass (D-CA) was elected chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, while Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi appointed Barbara Lee (D-CA) to be the co-chair of the Steering and Policy Committee (Nilsen, 2018). Not only do these individuals give prominence to the profession nationally, their presence in the halls of Congress, Lane and Humphreys (2011) argue, "affects the policies that are implemented" (p. 225). The more social workers there are in elected office the more likely the Grand Challenges (AASWSW, 2018) of the profession will be met and achieved.

As it happens, most social work students are more interested in using their education and training to work in counseling than they are to change public policies (Aviram & Katon, 1991; Butler, 1990; Carlton & Jung, 1972; Kasper & Wiegand, 1999; Seiz & Schwab, 1992).[3] Is it

[3] Butler (1990), for example, finds 30.4 percent of her sample of MSW students at the University of Buffalo rated community organizing highly as a future professional practice. The figure was 42 percent for program or policy design. By contrast, 69.3 percent rated counseling highly, while another 56.5 percent did so for family or marital therapy.

possible to change this? Can social work education, in particular, make students more interested in running for office?

There is belief in the literature that social work education can make students interested in *policy* (Anderson & Harrison, 2005; Moore & Johnston, 2002; Pritzker & Burwell, 2016; Ritter, 2013; Rocha, 2000; Sather, Weitz, & Carlson, 2007; Weiss & Kaufman 2006; Weiss, Gal, & Katan, 2006; Zubrzycki & McArthur, 2004). Policy is not the same as politics, though. There are many ways in which schools of social work are attempting to make students competent in policy practice, as the Council on Social Work Education requires (CSWE, 2015). It is not clear, though, whether these methods make students interested in the political system, or in running for elected office specifically. If social work is committed to meeting the Grand Challenges of the profession in the 21st century, then finding ways to engage students with the political system will be critical to its success.

Still, there remains the problem of student disinterest in policy, let alone politics. How can schools of social work make students interested in something seemingly Herculean like running for office when they have not been interested before? How can schools of social work, in effect, make water in to wine?

Lessons from high school civics are worthy of consideration. In high school, there is desire to have students interested in, or at the very least knowledgeable of, our democracy and our system of government. It is hoped that taking a high school civics course will increase political participation in adulthood. On this front, the evidence is mixed. There is some evidence that high school civics does very little to change the political behavior of students (Langton & Jennings, 1968; Reichert & Print, 2018), while other evidence suggests that high school civics has a larger effect (Bachner, 2011; Kahn & Sporte, 2009; Pasek, Feldman, Romer, & Hall

Jamieson, 2008). Even the research that shows a relationship between civics and political participation finds that this relationship is stronger for some students than for others (Bachner, 2011), and that the classroom may play only a limited role in adding new information to students (Reichert & Print, 2018).

New information is an important variable in the success of high school civics. Langton and Jennings (1968) hypothesize there is a "saturation" point beyond which information in a civics course becomes redundant because of students' pre-existing knowledge of and socialization to politics. These authors call this sponge theory (p.857), and it may have relevance to social work education's ability to make students more interested in running for office. That is, social work students will have varying amounts of pre-existing knowledge of, and socialization to politics. Specifically, Langton and Jennings (1968) speculate "that children from more culturally deprived families are less likely to be saturated with political knowledge and interest in the family environment; therefore, they are more likely to be affected by the civics curriculum when they enter high school" (p. 857). Similarly, social work education may have a greater effect on students whose family environments contained less political knowledge and interest.

The question then becomes what messaging breaks through and adds new information to these students? This study uses an experiment to test the effect that instructors' messaging has on students' interest in running for office. Specifically, the experiment manipulates the image of elected office as a way of making a difference. Using sponge theory, the expectation is that this messaging adds new, non-redundant information to MSW students from less politically socialized households than their classmates. This messaging then translates into increased interest in running for office for these students. Using data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study, a sample of 545 MSW students across four universities in Michigan, the results

supported this theorized relationship. That is, messaging elected office as a way of making a difference increased the interest in running for office among micro-practice students from less politically socialized households. This has important meaning for the efficacy of social work education, making more students interested in politics, and meeting the Grand Challenges of the 21st century. Implications for social work education and the teaching of social welfare policy are discussed.

Literature Review

Persuading social work students to take an interest in politics is not quite as extreme as turning water into wine. After all, social workers are under an ethical obligation to "engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully" (NASW, 2009). And by all accounts, social workers do participate in politics. Every study that has compared the behavior of social workers to the general public finds that social workers participate in politics more (Ezell, 1993; Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Wolk, 1981).

Of course, running for office is not like other forms of political participation. Milbrath (1965) characterizes running for office as a "gladiatorial" form of participation (p. 21), that only a select view will engage in. And within social work, there are fears about what it means to have and to wield political power (Lane & Humphreys, 2015). Mahaffey (1977) addresses these fears directly. "Our efforts to achieve political power," she writes, "must be for the goal of helping the have nots, those who are hurt and are in pain, rather than for power as an end in itself" (p. 36).

Mahaffey's words of caution are an invitation to social work educators to help students achieve a nuanced view of the political system, and elected office specifically. Pritzker and

Burwell (2016) argue "social work education may be an opportune time to shape future patterns of electoral involvement among social workers" (p. 434). To this point, Lane (2011) surveys 416 elected social workers across the United States. Of these, 63 percent felt their social work education prepared them for politics. Social policy courses are the most likely venue in which to shape a more nuanced understanding of the political system. It is worth considering, then, what works in social policy education to make students more interested and engaged with the political system.

Hull (1986), for example, recounts the experience of actually running for a seat on city council, and having eleven students volunteer on his campaign. Through this direct campaign experience students became more interested in political events and volunteering for campaigns in the future. Extrapolating such an experience to all social work students, though, is challenging given the self-selective nature of campaign volunteering. Little is required as far as policy education is concerned. Social work programs are required only that their students demonstrate competence in policy practice (CSWE, 2015). Consequently, educators may only get one shot to reach *all* students on the topic of policy before students' varying interests take them in different directions. This reality makes policy education *in the classroom specifically* all the more important for making students interested and engaged with the political system.

To that end, Rocha (2000) describes a classroom experience at the University of Tennessee that mimics the political environment to advance policy issues. In this course, students built coalitions, used media, organized letter-writing campaigns on an issue important to them, and prepared testimony to legislative committees. Compared to students who took a similar course but without the political exercises, Rocha (2000) finds students in the experiential course were more likely to be active on a specific change effort, and become members of a

coalition or committee after graduation. However, students self-selected into the experiential course, so there exists the possibility that more politically interested students took the course. There was no pre-test of their political interest to see if this was the case.

Ritter (2013) describes a similar model of classroom instruction. However, in this case, activities and instruction were built around a single piece of legislation championed by the state's NASW legislative committee. Moreover, the classroom activities were in service to preparing students for an advocacy day at the state capitol the following semester. Ritter imagines this course will prepare students to "participate and engage with the political system" (p. 14), but does not test this directly.

Anderson and Harris (2005) compare two different types of experiential policy education. They describe one course in which students aided undocumented Latina victims of domestic violence by helping them understand their rights under the Violence Against Women Act. The following year, students' policy instruction overlapped their field experience. Students were asked to investigate their field agency's policies for fit between mission and actual need. Political outcomes were not a focus of the research, so it is unclear how these models affected student interest and engagement with the political system.

Similarly, Sather, Weitz, and Carlson (2007) describe the rationale for including a service-learning component to policy education as having to do with student "lack of interest in macro practice" (p. 65), not necessarily their interest in the political system. This reasoning contrasts to that of Hoefer (1999), who describe a model of classroom instruction that "provides theoretical understanding and practice skills for the political arena" specifically (p. 75). As with Rocha (2000), activities in Hoefer's course included letters to elected officials and local newspapers, and testifying before a decision-making body, such as the school board or city

council. Unlike Rocha (2000), though, Hoefer (1999) imagines this not as a required course for all students, but as a companion to a legislative internship. Thus, the self-selective nature of the course makes it difficult to say with certainty that it increases student interest and engagement with the political system.

A similar problem plagues the more recent trend of offering campaign schools to social work students. While Lane, Ostrander, and Rhodes-Smith (2018) find that these opportunities increase student interest in politics, working on campaigns, and running for office, they only evaluate students who chose to participate in these programs. Campaigns schools are a supplement to traditional social policy courses, and are likely to appeal to students whose interests already align with politics and the political system.

Consequently, models exist to engage students with the political system in social policy courses, but it has yet to be shown that such models reach all students, and do in fact make them more interested in politics than they were to begin with.

Theoretical Expectations

It may not be necessary to make *all* students more interested in politics for social policy courses to be considered effective. Sponge theory stipulates that students may already be saturated with political knowledge and interest when they start their social work education, based on their family environment (Langton & Jennings, 1968). Social policy courses do not have to make these students more interested and engaged with the political system because they already are. Thus, social policy courses are effective to the extent they make *un*-saturated students more interested in politics.

In this study, saturation is understood in two ways. The first is through the practice interests of students. Specifically, whether the student is micro- or macro-focused. Macro

students can be expected to be more interested in politics. Social policy courses should do little to increase their interest in politics because their pre-existing interest in politics may "have reached a saturation or quota level which is impervious to change" (Langton & Jennings, 1968, p. 860) from social policy courses. These courses may have a greater impact on micro students' interest in politics because their level of knowledge is *not* impervious to change.

The second way that this study understands saturation is through the family environment, which borrows directly from Langton and Jennings (1968). Ideally, the family environment would be measured through items on parents' political participation, interest, etc. However, the survey experiment employed in this study limited the ability to include a broad swath of parental behavior items. Instead, mother's highest degree received, or highest level of education completed if she received no degree, was used to measure the family environment. Mothers were chosen because Jennings and Niemi (1968) find that mothers typically win out over fathers in terms of their children's partisan identification (see also Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009).

While this may seem like a weak proxy for family environment, the literature consistently finds a relationship between education and political participation (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Leighley & Nagler, 2013). It follows that students with more educated mothers also had more politically active mothers. Social policy courses, therefore, can be expected to have a greater impact on students from less politically socialized households. These courses should make students from less politically socialized households have a greater interest in politics. Given that mother's education is a weak proxy, any effect that is observed suggests a potentially stronger relationship between social policy courses and the student's family environment.

These understandings of saturation are not mutually exclusive, and set up overlapping expectations about the effect social policy courses have on MSW students' interest in politics,

and running for office specifically. These expectations can be visualized through a 2x2 table, as seen in Table III-1. One dimension contains the student's practice area of interest, while the other dimension contains their mother's education.

Table III-1

Theoretical Expectations on MSW Student Interest in Running for Office Based on Messaging Received in Social Policy Courses

		MSW Professional Intention	
		Micro	Non-Micro
Mother's Education	High	Social policy courses should have some effect on the interest these students have in running for office because they may not have considered politics as a way of making a difference.	Social policy courses should have very little effect on these students because they likely have a pre-existing appreciation for the role politics plays in making a difference to communities.
	Low	Social policy courses should have a strong effect on the interest these students have in running for office because they may not have a pre-existing appreciation for the role of politics in making a difference.	Social policy courses should have little effect on these students because while they did not come from an educated household, they have a pre-existing interest in policy, and the role politics plays in making a difference.

With an understanding of which students might be most affected by social policy courses, the question becomes what messaging could students receive in social policy courses that would add new information about the political system? This study advances the notion that the political system can be a venue for *change*, or more generically making a difference. Change-making rhetoric is ubiquitous in social work, particularly in social work education (Butler, 1990; Rompf & Royse, 1994). Students are often referred to as change-agents. But students may have never considered the political system as a way of making change (Lane & Humphreys, 2015; Mahaffey, 1987; Rose, 1999). This study theorizes this will be particularly true of micro-practice students from less politically socialized households. Exposing these students to messaging that emphasizes the change-making potential of elected office may make them more interested in running.

This is not to suggest that these students should be the most likely to eventually run for office. Rather, this study concerns only which students social policy courses can increase the interest in doing so. Given that most social work students are believed to be saturated with fixed ideas about the political system, social policy courses may have their greatest effect on micro students from less politically socialized households.

Research Question

Therefore, the research question this study addresses is as follows: Does exposure to messaging emphasizing the difference-making potential of elected office increase interest in running for office among micro-practice students from less politically socialized households?

Evidence in the affirmative would be a positive sign for the efficacy of social work education. It would suggest that how instructors talk about the political system affects students' interest in engaging with it. If all that is required to increase interest in running for office is difference-making rhetoric, then perhaps more involved instruction, such as experiential learning, can have an impact on interest in running for office as well.

Methods

Sample

This study used data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study. This sample was recruited from four universities in the state of Michigan, each with law and social work schools. The schools were the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Wayne State University, and Western Michigan University. Email invitations were sent to students—3,000 in total—through the respective university listservs. The invitations were emailed between February and March 2017, and included a link to the survey instrument. The language of the invitation invited students to participate for their attitudes on several subjects. No mention was made of the specific content of the survey. Students received a $5 Amazon.com redemption code for completing the survey. In this study, only data from the social work portion of the sample was used. A total of 617 surveys were started by social work students. Of these 72 had to be discarded because the respondents did not reach the experimental treatment. This left 545 usable responses, for a response rate of 22.8 percent.[4]

[4] The non-probability nature of the MLSWS is problematic for generalizing to all MSW students. Most the previous research on the political behavior of social workers has used random sampling (Ezell, 1993; Hamilton & Fauri, 2000; Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Ritter, 2007; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Wolk, 1981). A notable exception is Lane and Humphreys (2011), who use Internet searching and the help of the NASW to survey social workers in elected office. Carlton and Jung (1972) employ a non-probability sample of social work students and educators across 51 schools of social work to measure their career preferences. Rubin & Johnson (1984) similarly use a non-probability sample of 257 MSW students across 8 universities to understand their professional interests.

Experimental Treatment

Running for office at all is a high bar that most people, let alone MSW students, will never cross. Thus, even discussing the idea requires careful language. To make the prospect of running more palatable to respondents, this study employed a control condition that included three elements the literature suggests increase the likelihood of candidates emerging in particular elections. The first of these was recruitment (Fox & Lawless, 2010; Lane & Humphreys, 2015; Swank, 2012). All else being equal, being asked to run matters a lot to individuals deciding to run. The second and third elements of the control condition addressed the probability of winning (Adams & Squire, 1997; Bianco, 1984; Jacobson & Kernell, 1983). Once again, all else being equal, individuals are more likely to run when they are more likely to win. Accordingly, the language of the control condition mentioned there were several open seats on the local city council.[5] To drive home the relationship between open seats and the probability of winning, the control condition also included a specific percentage chance of winning election. This percentage was not tethered to actual data, but was meant to tantalize the respondent into believing winning was possible.

On top of the language of the control condition were added two treatment conditions. The first of these treatment conditions was the difference-making messaging mentioned previously. This was referred to as the Social Good treatment. However, this is not the only messaging MSW students could plausibly receive about the nature of elected office. In political science, there is robust literature associating ambition with elected office (Black, 1972; Fishel, 1971; Rohde,

[5] The political science literature consistently finds that individuals are more likely to run for open seats than incumbent seats (Adams & Squire, 1997; Bianco, 1984; Jacobson & Kernell, 1983).

1979; Schlesinger, 1966). Mayhew (1974) understands a seat in Congress, for example, is a considerable status symbol that individuals have a desire to keep. The second treatment, therefore, associated elected office with status and name recognition. This was referred to as the Ambition treatment. It was not expected that the Ambition treatment would make students more interested in running for office. Such an appeal is inconsistent with student motivations for pursuing social work. Including the second treatment condition, though, added robustness to any effect from the Social Good treatment. That is, the results were not simply a comparison between the Social Good treatment and the control, but the Social Good treatment, the Ambition treatment, and the control condition.

The language of each condition is available in Table III-2.

Table III-2

Experimental Conditions in the MLSWS

Control condition	Social good treatment	Ambition treatment
Several members of your local city council are retiring at the end of their current terms.	Several members of your local city council are retiring at the end of their current terms.	Several members of your local city council are retiring at the end of their current terms.
Studies show that candidates for open city council seats are successful more than 60 percent of the time.	Studies show that candidates for open city council seats are successful more than 60 percent of the time.	Studies show that candidates for open city council seats are successful more than 60 percent of the time.
People close to you have suggested you should run for one of the open seats.	People close to you have suggested you should run for one of the open seats.	People close to you have suggested you should run for one of the open seats.
	One of the retiring city council members said, "I'm really glad I ran because I was able to use my seat on city council to make a bigger difference in the community than I would have been able to make as a private citizen."[a]	One of the retiring city council members said, "I'm really glad I ran because having a seat on city council gave me status and name recognition I wouldn't have as a private citizen."

[a] The key phrases in the social good and the ambition treatments were underlined for effect. It was important respondents read the scripts in full, and understood their meanings, so these elements were highlighted.

The survey instrument, including the experimental condition, was designed and administered through Qualtrics. Respondents were randomly assigned to either the control condition, Ambition treatment, or Social Good treatment, respectively. This process ensured that the only difference between the groups was the condition respondents received.[6]

[6] The use of the experiment, therefore, accounted for the selection bias concerns of previous research (see Anderson & Harris, 2005; Rocha, 2000; Sather, Weitz, & Carlson, 2007).

This study argues the social good treatment represents messaging social work students could plausibly receive in a social policy class. It is easy to imagine an instructor making a similar statement, or a guest speaker—perhaps a member of city council—using the same language as in the social good treatment.

Immediately after reading their assigned condition respondents were asked to indicate their interest in running for one of the open seats on city council. They could choose from "not at all interested" (1), "not very interested" (2), "somewhat interested" (3), and "very interested" (4). While a behavioral outcome—such as asking for information on how to file for candidacy—may have been more indicative of a participatory effect of the experiment, interest in running is an accepted outcome in the political science literature (Fox & Lawless, 2004, 2005, 2011).[7]

Survey Instrument

The remainder of the survey instrument developed for the MLSWS was kept brief for the purposes of experimentation. It included 42 items, and took respondents an average of seven minutes to complete. Many of the items measured the demographic characteristics of respondents such as age, race, gender, marital status, and partisan identification.

[7] Before administering the experiment to the MLSWS sample, it was pre-tested on a sample of 624 respondents from Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk Platform. The requirements for inclusion were that the respondents had to be over 18 years old, and be a U.S. citizen. Respondents were paid $0.25 for completing the survey experiment. The characteristics of the MTurk sample, particularly mother's education, mirrored those of the MSW sample. Results from the MTurk sample were largely consistent with the results of the MLSWS sample, although there was nothing analogous to how individuals intended to use their MSW degree.

Additional items included traditional measures of political behavior such as political efficacy. While the full scale used in the American National Election Studies has eight items (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990), the version included in this study used only four.[8]

Fox and Lawless (2005) argue "competitive traits" matter to an individual's interest in running for office. These include the desire to rise to the top of one's profession, as well as the desire to make a lot of money. Respondents' answers to each of these items were combined into an independent measure of ambition, with a reliability of $\alpha = 0.44$.[9]

Important to the identity of social work practice is the divide between micro and macro practice (Abramovitz, 1998; Alexander, 1982). Micro and macro tracks were not called the same across the schools of social work included in the MLSWS, so instead of asking respondents to indicate their track they were asked to indicate how they intended to use their degree. The answer choices to this question were as follows:

- Working with individuals (youth, teens, adults) to address mental health issues affecting individual well-being.
- Working with communities to organize around various social issues.
- Working in a non-profit aimed at providing support and services for individuals and families.

[8] The political efficacy items included in the survey instrument for the MLSWS were as follows: I feel I could do as good a job in public office as most other people; The problems I most care about can be solved through politics; Public officials don't care much what people like me think; Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. Craig, Niemi, and Silver (1990) report a reliability of the political efficacy scale of $\alpha=0.80$. The reliability of the efficacy scale for the MLSW was $\alpha=0.38$.

[9] Fox & Lawless (2005) do not in practice combine the competitive traits items into a measure of ambition. They are combined in this study for ease of interpretation.

- Working for an advocacy organization that addresses policies affecting vulnerable individuals, families, and communities.
- I haven't thought much about what I will use my MSW for.
- Other

The first answer choice was consistent with the career and practice interests researchers have observed in MSW students (Carlton & Jung, 1972; Rubin & Johnson, 1984). Respondents who chose this answer were considered micro practitioners for the purposes of this study.[10] There was no parallel answer choice for macro practice, so comparisons in this study are between micro and non-micro students.

Because the experimental condition could influence how respondents answered the political efficacy and competitive traits items (Gaines, Kuklinski, & Quirk, 2007), these items were asked before respondents reached the experimental treatment on the survey instrument. To keep respondents from anticipating the experiment a series of distractor questions were included on the survey instrument before they reached the experimental treatment (Gaines et al., 2007). These included things such as sorting names of actors, athletes, and musicians into the appropriate group; answering how many hours of television respondents watch each night; and so forth.

Finally, in addition to asking their interest in running for an open seat on city council, respondents were asked to express their interest in running for additional offices. These offices were at all levels of government, including mayor, parks commission, county commission, school board, state legislature, and U.S. House or Senate. These items were aggregated to form a

[10] This is not to say that respondents who chose a different answer might not become micro practitioners in the future, but the first answer choice is the clearest expression of micro practice of the available answer choices.

local office interest scale (with reliability of α .73), and a higher office interest scale (with reliability of α .88).[11]

[11] Offices included in the local office scale were city council, school board, county commission, and parks commission. Offices included in the higher office scale were mayor, state legislature, and U.S. House or Senate.

Results

Table III-3 offers an overview of the characteristics of the MSW students who participated in the MLSWS. The sample was disproportionately female. This was not altogether surprising, but it was more disproportionately female than other studies on the political behavior of social workers (Ezell, 1993; Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Ritter 2007; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010).[12] Given that women are generally less interested in running for office than men (Fox & Lawless, 2005; Fulton et al., 2006; Maestas et al., 2005), the gender distribution of the sample again works against observing an effect of the experiment.

[12] These studies all used random samples of social workers.

Table III-3

Characteristics of the MSW Students in the MLSWS

Characteristics	MSW students (N=545)
Age (SD)	28.6 (7.2)
Competitive traits, 2-8 (SD)	5.4 (1.4)
Efficacy, 4-20 (SD)	12.6 (2.6)
Female	88.9%
Non-White	28.6%
Married	21.7%
Democrat	76.7%
Children	
Children less than 6 years old living at home	7.2%
Children older than 6 living at home	8.9%
Mother's education	
Graduated 8th grade	4.7%
Graduated high school	18.6%
Some college	19.2%
Graduated college	38%
Graduated graduate school	19.6%
How do you intend to use your MSW?	
Micro-practice focus	46.3%
Interest in running for open city council seat	
Not at all interested	20.5%

Characteristics	MSW Students (N=545)
Not very interested	28.6%
Somewhat interested	40.6%
Very interested	10.3%

The sample was bifurcated into high- and low-educated households. The 57 percent of the sample with mothers who had earned at least a Bachelor's degree were included in the highly-educated group, while all other respondents were included in the low-educated group. As Table III-4 demonstrates, mothers' education was evenly distributed across micro and non-micro students.

Table III-4

Proportion of High- and Low-Educated Households Among Micro and Non-Micro Students in the MLSWS

Practice Area	**Mother's Education**	
	Low	High
Micro-practice focus	52.7%	54.4%
Non-Micro-practice focus	47.3%	45.6%

Again, Qualtrics randomly assigned respondents in each of the four groups to either the control, ambition, or social good condition, respectively. Table III-5 shows the distribution of conditions in each group. It should be noted that randomization was not perfect.

Table III-5

Percentage Distribution of Experimental Conditions for Each of the Four Groups

Experimental condition	Low + Micro (*n*=106)	Low + Non-Micro (*n*=117)	High + Micro (*n*=145)	High + Non-Micro (*n*=173)
Control Condition	33.9	42.4	25.5	32.9
Ambition Treatment	30.2	32.2	33.1	37.6
Social Good Treatment	35.8	25.4	41.4	29.5

Ordinary least squares regression was used to measure the effect of the experimental treatments on student interest in running for office.[13] The regression model used in this study controlled for behavioral factors related to political participation generally, and an individual's interest in running for office specifically. These included political efficacy, and Fox and Lawless' (2005) understanding of competitive traits. Demographic variables were also included in the regression model. Age, for example, is understood to matter more for women, as they typically wait later in life to run for office than men (Fulton, Maestas, Maisel, & Stone, 2006). Women also contend with marriage and children differently as it relates to running for office than men do (Fulton et al., 2006; Maestas, Maisel, & Stone, 2005). While this suggests an interaction between these variables, the disproportionate number of women in the sample prevented interactions from inclusion in the regression model. STATA version 14.2 was used to analyze the data (StataCorp, 2015).

[13] While an experiment generally controls for unobserved characteristics, OLS regression accounts for additional factors that may have relationships with a student's interest in running for office, such as political efficacy.

The results of the regression model on respondents' interest in running for an open seat on city council can be seen in Table III-6. Recall, the expectation was that the social good treatment, which emphasized the difference-making potential of a seat on city council, would have a positive effect on micro-practice students from low-educated households. The results supported this expectation. Looking strictly at MSW students in this group, students who received the social good treatment were significantly more interested in running for an open seat on city council than students who received the control condition.[14] Specifically, their interest in running increased 0.44 above that of students in the control condition. The same does not hold for students in the other groups in Table 6. That is, there is no statistically significant difference in the interest in running for an open city council seat between the control condition and the social good treatment for each of the other three groups in Table 6.

[14] The theoretical expectations suggest a three-way interaction between the experimental treatment, mother's education, and micro/macro preference. A regression model using this three-way interaction, as well as the constituent two-way interactions, was applied to the MLSWS data. The results indicated that students who received the social good treatment, had mothers with less than a Bachelor's degree, and were micro-practice oriented significantly ($p<0.03$) increased their interest in running for an open seat on city council.

Table III-6

Regression Results on Interest in Running for an Open Seat on City Council for MSW Students in the MLSWS

Covariates	Low + Micro			Low + Non-Micro			High + Micro			High + Non-Micro		
	β	SE	*p*-value	*β*	SE	*p*-value	*β*	SE	*p*-value	*β*	SE	*p*-value
Ambition treatment	.091	.198	.647	-.197	.153	.202	-.060	.184	.743	-.042	.155	.785
Social Good treatment	.438	.193	.026	-.021	.177	.905	.018	.173	.916	-.174	.188	.357
Competitive traits	-.011	.063	.866	-.014	.058	.810	.005	.054	.917	-.063	.060	.297
Political efficacy	.176	.036	.000	.200	.027	.000	.185	.033	.000	.116	.023	.000
Age	.011	.017	.524	-.007	.010	.462	-.019	.016	.223	-.023	.015	.135
Male	.491	.249	.052	.516	.200	.011	.492	.231	.035	.185	.246	.453
Non-White	-.050	.179	.782	-.075	.155	.631	-.160	.152	.296	.113	.157	.472
Democrat	-.037	.195	.849	.083	.185	.655	.121	.182	.504	.268	.178	.134
High school income	-.015	.060	.799	-.091	.069	.193	-.101	.052	.039	.052	.050	.303
Married	.276	.245	.264	.136	.189	.473	-.116	.184	.530	.033	.200	.867
Children under 6	-.255	.327	.437	-.517	.251	.041	-.236	.418	.573	.018	.339	.959
Children over 6	-.856	.338	.013	.151	.237	.526	-.076	.426	.858	.058	.379	.879
Constant	-.283	.846	.744	.460	.661	.488	.798	.702	.258	1.66	.693	.018
R^2	.333			.442			.302			.177		
N	106			117			141			169		

To test the robustness of the social good treatment to this group of MSW students, the dependent variable was changed to the local office interest scale. The results can be seen in Table III-7.

The effect of the social good treatment on the micro-practice + low education group remained significant at the $p<.1$ level. In other words, messaging elected office as a way of making a difference redounded not just to city council, but to other offices at the local level within this subset of MSW students.

As expected, the ambition treatment showed no effect on MSW student interest in running for office, either in Table III-6 or Table III-7. It was included in the study to account for other plausible messaging on elected office consistent with the political science literature on the subject; other populations than MSW students may find the ambition treatment persuasive.

The results were also largely consistent with the expectations of sponge theory. That is, the social good treatment was ineffective at increasing interest in running for office for all other groups of MSW students in the MLSWS.

Table III-7

Regression Results on Interest in Running for Local Office for MSW Students in the MLSWS

Covariates	Low + Micro			Low + Non-Micro			High + Micro			High + Non-Micro		
	β	SE	*p*-value	*β*	SE	*p*-value	*β*	SE	*p*-value	*β*	SE	*p*-value
Ambition treatment	.077	.609	.899	-.407	.483	.402	-.067	.603	.911	-.082	.454	.856
Social good treatment	1.23	.661	.066	-.274	.527	.604	.187	.572	.744	-.395	.547	.472
Competitive traits	.025	.214	.907	.142	.178	.428	.015	.165	.928	-.055	.152	.718
Political efficacy	.462	.118	.000	.478	.089	.000	.392	.101	.000	.250	.074	.001
Age	.059	.050	.244	-.043	.028	.135	-.011	.038	.760	-.046	.045	.304
Male	1.26	.892	.160	1.04	.740	.161	.974	.785	.217	.625	.501	.215
Non-White	-.450	.579	.440	-.708	.455	.123	-1.00	.515	.054	-.098	.511	.848
Democrat	.997	.682	.147	-.089	.510	.866	.434	.698	.535	.939	.470	.047
High school income	-.217	.193	.265	-.341	.217	.119	-.256	.154	.100	.145	.153	.344
Married	.084	.616	.891	.226	.671	.737	-.023	.740	.975	-.202	.614	.742
Children under 6	-1.38	.850	.107	-2.20	.842	.010	-2.11	1.52	.166	1.78	.881	.045
Children over 6	-1.81	1.01	.077	1.08	.740	.146	-1.00	1.09	.360	1.05	.941	.267
Constant	1.23	2.89	.671	4.78	1.93	.015	4.76	2.08	.024	6.72	2.00	.001
R^2	.317			.380			.193			.147		
N	106			117			141			169		

Discussion

Achieving the Grand Challenges of the profession in the 21st century will require legislation. Having social workers in position to sponsor, shape, and ultimately pass such legislation will expedite this process. The question at the heart of this study was whether social work education can make students more interested in running for office. The tentative answer to this question is yes, it can.

Notice, the question was not whether social work education (and specifically social policy courses) could make *all* students more interested in running. Some students will arrive saturated with political knowledge and interest that makes them impervious to change through classroom instruction (Langton & Jennings, 1968). This study argues that macro-practice students are more likely to be saturated, as are students from politically socialized households. These characteristics overlap, leaving micro-practice students from less politically socialized households as the most likely to be affected by messaging from social policy courses. Using data from 545 MSW students across four universities in Michigan, it was shown that simply suggesting a seat on city council can be used to make a difference in the community makes these students more interested in pursuing it.

This finding is quite meaningful to social work education, not because micro practice students from less politically socialized households will run for office, but because basic messaging can move these students to take a greater interest in doing so. If simply talking about elected office as a way of making a difference can make these students more interested in running, then the sustained messaging over an entire course may have a profound effect on these students.

Moreover, unlike previous research on political outcomes of social policy education (Hoefer, 1999; Rocha, 2000), students in this study did not self-select to receive the Social Good treatment. In other words, the results cannot be attributed to students' potential pre-existing interest in running for office. Social policy educators may only get one chance to work with all students. Emphasizing the difference-making potential of elected office may help them to make the most of it.

Within the field of social work, infrastructure exists to tie the profession more closely to politics. The Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work at the University of Connecticut, for example, runs an annual campaign school in the spring to train social work students on the ins and outs of running for office. The Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP) operates a similar political boot camp, and provides permanent structure for the work of the Congressional Social Work Caucus.

These are self-selective opportunities for students, though. It is possible the students taking advantage of these opportunities are students who are already interested in politics. The results of this study offer ideas to social work educators on how to make connections for all students between practice and the political system.

It is important to consider several limitations to this study. There is no comparison, for example, between the prolonged and sustained messaging of an instructor throughout an entire fifteen-week social policy course, and the fleeting experience of reading a prompt on a survey experiment. For that reason, the effect of the Social Good treatment on students' interest in running for office may be similarly fleeting. Fox and Lawless (2011) acknowledge that an individual's interest in running for office waxes and wanes in response to the political environment. It is reasonable to assume that many of the MSW students who expressed an

interest in running for office on the survey will feel differently when measured at a later date. Moreover, in terms of behavior, most of those who express an interest in running for office will never actually do so.

Mother's education is an admittedly weak proxy for political socialization. The experiment should be replicated with a more robust set of socialization items to see if the relationship holds. That an effect was found through a weak proxy may be an indication that political socialization—combined with their interest in micro practice—plays a role in how MSW students process political information.[15] It could also mean mother's education is standing in for something else that has nothing to do with political socialization but relates to student interest in running for office.

The experiment itself is only generalizable to the students who participated. The MLSWS was a sample of convenience. It was not a random sample of MSW students generally, nor a random sample of the students attending the four universities included. Only students on the university listservs received the email invitation. While the invitation made no reference to the political nature of the survey instrument, it may be that the students who ignored the email, or never received it, differed from the students who did not in ways that relate to their interest in running for office. Future research should replicate the experiment on a random sample of MSW students.

[15] Recall, the MLSWS sample came from fairly well-educated households. Greater than 57 percent of the sample had mothers who had received a Bachelor's degree. This works against the likelihood of observing an effect, as many students exposed to the social good treatment came from similarly well-educated households. In other words, their pre-existing political socialization would make it more difficult for a social policy course to add new, non-redundant information.

These limitations notwithstanding, the results of the experiment were robust not only to city council specifically, but to multiple offices at the local level. This is to say that emphasizing the difference-making potential of elected office increased interest in running in general for micro practice students from less politically socialized households.

As Patti and Dear (1975) observe, "of all available avenues for social change…the legislative process would seem to demand the profession's most urgent and informed action" (p. 113). Thus, the instructor of a social policy course should not have to struggle to find examples of legislation that addressed major social problems.

It is this relationship to the political system that needs to be at the forefront of any inclusion of the political system in social work education. As Mahaffey (1977) cautions, emphasizing the political system should not be an end in itself, but in service to making a difference and addressing the Grand Challenges of the profession.

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Conclusion

The United States is in a different place, politically, than in 2008, when "change we can believe in" moved Americans to elect the first African American President. Thinking back to election night, 2008, and recalling the euphoria in Grant Park, Chicago, I saw in the smiling crowd a sense that the political system could be a force for good. In the intervening years, the thrill of victory may have colored my interpretation of that night, and that election. The American political system is winner-take-all, in which receiving one greater vote entitles the victor to all the spoils available to that office. While this has always been true, its consequences have seemed more acute in the years since 2008.

Well-connected, politically inclined individuals understand the stakes. Jean, a Republican precinct delegate, said, "if your candidate wins, it's very satisfying." Likewise, John, a Democratic precinct delegate, said, "politics can be a real strong stimulant. You know, you got sex, money, politics, religion—that's the big four. And politics can be right up there. Maybe you can have all four in one campaign party."

Perhaps politics is simply a salve to nurture competitive instincts. For example, Jean continues, "if I win as a lawyer, a court case, that's also really satisfying. So, I guess I'm motivated by wins and losses." In other words, change be damned, politics is the playground for winners. This orientation would seem to characterize the administration of President Donald Trump, who promised on the 2016 campaign trail, "we will have so much winning if I get elected that you might get bored with the winning" (Schwartz, 2015).

The force for good I remember politics representing in 2008 has transformed into a force for control over the legislative and policy agenda. Since 2008 legislative norms have been sacrificed in favor of achieving desired policy outcomes.[16] In so doing, the rhetoric surrounding national politics—in particular—has become more antagonistic, if not bellicose.

Still, for all the antipathy our politics has engendered since 2008, the country is not a maelstrom of violence and mayhem. Referring to Ammon Bundy and his followers' armed seizure of an Oregon federal building in 2016, Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) said, "I'm sympathetic to the idea that the large collection of federal lands ought to be turned back to the states and the people, but I think the best way to bring about change is through politics" (Zezima & Weigel, 2016).

Indeed, the political system is *the* recognized venue for making legitimate changes to our laws. President Trump can gloat about winning because victory allows him the authority to shape the nature of those changes, but the political system itself is not fundamentally about wins and losses, despite the satisfaction and heartbreak these bring to partisans.

It is telling that both Jean and John were precinct delegates, not actual candidates for elected office. Those who have greater connection to elected office through candidacy may see the political system differently. In this way, it is telling as well that Senator Paul sees the political system as the *best* way of making change. This dissertation finds that motivations for pursuing elected office were driven not by a desire to win, but rather the perception that the office in question could make more positive change than available alternatives. This notion was referred to as *political primacy*. Interviews with 32 individuals on either side of the decision to

[16] See, for example, the erosion of the filibuster in the Senate, refusing to hold hearings on President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court, Merrick Garland, and President Trump's use of national emergency power to secure funding to construct a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border.

run for office revealed that higher amounts of political primacy—valuing elected office over alternative ways of making change—were concentrated among candidates for elected office. Moreover, using data from the Michigan Law & Social Work Study, political primacy was seen to have a strong relationship to nascent political ambition, or the interest in running for office. The more respondents felt serving in local government was a better way of contributing to the community, the more interested they were in running for office.

Thus, while the national political climate has changed since 2008, the American political system itself represents a steady state that exists for people to use to make positive change in their communities. This will have more appeal to some than to others, and helps explain motivations for pursuing elected office in the first place. Political primacy is worthy of further consideration and study in how we understand our elected representatives, and where they come from.

It is worth pausing here in consideration of how the political climate has changed in specific communities since 2008. Whether it be things like #BlackLivesMatter, or #MeToo, or transgender identification, there is greater attention to identity, and political disenfranchisement, than was the case in 2008. Aside from gender, and grouping individuals into professional categories, this dissertation project was relatively agnostic on identity and its relationship to the political system. Political primacy may vary according to communities that have traditionally held political power. That is, it is relatively easy for someone like Rand Paul to believe that politics is the best way of making change, when it always has been for individuals like him. The same cannot be said for individuals from traditionally under-represented communities. Future research into political primacy should explicitly consider the role an individual's identity plays in how they evaluate elected office's ability to make change in their communities.

Already in this dissertation it was observed that within women there were important variations in political ambition and perceived qualifications. This dissertation also considered variation within MSW students as a group along two dimensions: (1) their professional practice interests, specifically whether these were micro- or non-micro-oriented, and (2) their household political socialization, specifically whether their mother had received a Bachelor's degree. It was theorized these dimensions expose students to different amounts of political information before they ever step foot in a social work classroom. This variation in pre-existing political information would make the least socialized students the most susceptible to messaging that emphasized the difference-making potential of elected office. Results from the MLSWS indicate this was indeed the case, and should inform how social work educators talk about elected office and the political system in the classroom. Simply referring to it as a way of making a difference can increase student interest in running for office.

However, these conclusions need to be treated with caution, as the theoretical underpinning of mother's education on political socialization is doing a lot of work. Future research should replicate the experiment with measurements more specific to political socialization, such as parental political involvement and discussion. This will help clarify the results in Chapter 3, and the role that mother's education is playing, and aid instructors as they consider how to get students engaged with the political system.

In this respect, this dissertation has taken the position that the social work profession can do more to get students engaged. This argument was advanced in comparison to the legal profession. It was observed, for example, that JD students in the MLSWS had significantly higher political primacy, and were more interested in running for higher office. However, comparisons between law and social work are imperfect; they attract different kinds of

individuals who want different things for themselves personally and professionally. This may be especially true for women. In light of the results observed in Chapter 2, it is fair to consider whether female MSW students would be outliers against female students in other female-majority degree fields or professions. Education stands out as a natural point of comparison. Like social work, the profession is female-majority. At the same time, many educators go in to politics, such that it was included in Fox and Lawless' (2004) Citizen Political Ambition Study. Future research on the political behavior and participation of social workers should use educators as a comparison group.

There is a wealth of qualitative data from this dissertation to mine for greater understanding of gender and professionalization. It should be noted that male and female MSW students in the MLSWS reported similar professional interests. In other words, both group were receiving similar education and training. There is need for a paper exploring the professionalization experiences of men and women in social work to help explain some of the results in Chapter 2.

As the profession grapples with the Grand Challenges of the 21st century (AASWSW, 2018), increasing student interest in running for office is not insignificant. As Senator Paul notes, the best way to make change is through politics. Having social workers in position to use the political system to affect the nature of that change will advance progress toward meeting the Grand Challenges.

While the character of American national politics has become more confrontational since 2008, the vastness of the American political system is a reminder that change is possible at almost any level. More than 96 percent of elected offices in the United States exist at the county level and below (Lawless, 2012), and because we elected individual candidates, someone will fill

these offices. If not social workers, then who? By running for, winning, and holding elected office social workers can make change where it counts.

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Appendices

Appendix A-1: Interview Protocol

Social work interest and professionalization
Did you have exposure to or experiences with social workers growing up? And if so, what were those experiences like?

Could you describe for me where you interest in social work came from?

Can you describe social work jobs you've held?

Describe for me your current social work practice.

(Listen for description of work, and whether advocacy is discussed. If not, then probe about what they think it means.)

What form does your advocacy for clients take now?

Has your social work practice put you in contact with elected officials?

If I could ask you questions about your training as an MSW student, to what extent was advocacy discussed in social work classes?

How seriously would you say your MSW program emphasized advocacy as a responsibility of social workers?

I want to ask you about difference-making.
Do you feel like you make a difference as a social worker?

(Is there a part of your life where you do feel like you make a difference?)

How motivated would you say you are, personally, to make a difference?

Gender socialization
I want to ask you questions about your experiences as a [MAN/WOMAN], if you don't mind.

Growing up, how were you taught about differences between men and women?

How have your ideas changed about these differences between men and women?

(Where would you say your ideas of [MALE/FEMALE] roles came from or were reinforced?)

To what extent was your interest in social work consistent with what you thought [MEN/WOMEN] could do?

I want to ask you about ambition. What would you say you're ambitious about?

Do you think your ambitions are similar to what other men's are?

Are there any ambitions that you feel you've had to set aside?

Do you think things would have been different if you were a woman?

How seriously do you think women take you when you speak as a social worker?

How about when you're talking about politics? Do women take you more seriously?

(Does that depend on what issue you're talking about?)

Politics

I want to discuss politics in greater detail if you don't mind.

Do you remember your family talking about politics?

Was your family the kind that argued about politics?

Can you tell me about your political life? When would you say you first got involved in politics, and why did you get involved?

Have you had moments of satisfaction in politics? What would you say those were, and what made them satisfying?

How do moments like those compare to other satisfying moments in your life? Does one stand out more than another?

Let's look at your experience as a precinct delegate. Describe to me your history with the party.

What do you enjoy or find satisfying about serving as a precinct delegate?

What can you do as a precinct delegate that you can't do as someone who just identifies with the Democrats?

Have you given any thought to running for office?

Do you feel as though anything is holding you back from running?

What connections would you say there are between your political ideology—which is your attitudes on political issues—with your experience as a social worker?
Do you feel your social work background makes you an expert in some policies, or gives people the impression that you're an expert on some policies?

Do you feel that being a man makes you an expert in some policies, or gives people the impression that you're an expert on some policies?

I want to focus specifically on local politics for the moment.

I'm going to list for you several activities. I would like you to rank these in terms of which you think is best at contributing to the community.
Serving in local office.
Giving money to what you consider good causes.
Volunteering for what you consider good causes.
Speaking up at meetings of local government.
Or, other.

Can you explain your reasoning?

Thinking about the clients that you serve, what would a local elected official be able to do for your clients that you can't do as a social worker?

Would you have any interest in state or federal office? Why or why not?

Transitioning back to your social work training, were politics discussed much in your social work classes?

Were politics discussed as a form of advocacy or activism?

If they had been, do you think we would see more social workers running for office?

Appendix A-2: Interview Subjects

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Profession	Office	Party
Lauren	Female	White	Law	Delegate	Republican
Jim	Male	White	Law	Delegate	Republican
Hillary	Female	White	Law	Delegate	Democrat
Cliff	Male	African American	Law	Delegate	Democrat
Al	Male	White	Law	Delegate	Republican
Bill	Male	White	Law	Delegate	Democrat
Frances	Female	African American	Law	Delegate	Democrat
Jean	Female	White	Law	Delegate	Republican
Lynn	Female	White	Law	Mayor	Democrat
Meg	Female	White	Law	Candidate	Republican
Dave	Male	White	Law	Delegate	Republican
Tom	Male	White	Law	Township Board	Republican
Barb	Female	White	Law & Social Work	Non-candidate	Democrat
Georgie	Female	White	Law & Social Work	Non-candidate	Democrat
Irene	Female	White	Law & Social Work	Non-candidate	
Bernadette	Female	African American	Social work	Delegate	Democrat
Christina	Female	White	Social work	Mayor	N/A
Gwen	Female	White	Social work	Mayor	Democrat
Helen	Female	Hispanic	Social work	Delegate	Democrat
John	Male	White	Social work	Delegate	Democrat
Joyce	Female	White	Social work	Candidate	Democrat
Lisa	Female	African American	Social work	Delegate	Democrat
Mark	Male	White	Social work	School board	N/A
Pete	Male	White	Social work	State legislature	Democrat
Polly	Female	White	Social work	Delegate	Democrat
Rhonda	Female	African American	Social work	School board	
Rich	Male	White	Social work	Non-candidate	Democrat
Rose	Female	White	Social work	Delegate	Democrat
Sheila	Female	Bi-racial	Social work	Non-candidate	Democrat
Tammy	Female	Asian American	Social work	State legislature	Democrat

Tonya	Female	White	Social work	County commission	Democrat
Yvette	Female	White	Social work	Charter commission	Democrat

Appendix A-3: MLSWS Invitation Email

Greetings!

My name is Patrick Meehan, and I am a PhD student at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. My dissertation project concerns the attitudes and behaviors of MSW students on a variety of topics.

I am inviting you to participate in this study by completing the following 10-minute survey.

https://umich.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_41uVKO3MxcDIaPz

For your participation you will receive a **$5 Amazon.com redemption code**.

If you have questions about the nature of this project, please feel free to contact me at pjmeeh@umich.edu

Thanks so much for your participation!

Patrick Meehan
PhD Candidate
University of Michigan
Department of Political Science
School of Social Work
734-678-4481

Appendix A-4: MLSWS Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics of the MLSWS

Characteristic	**MSW (n=545) %**	**JD (n=200) %**
Age (SD)	28.6 (7.2)	26.4 (2.7)
Non-White	28.6	32
Female	88.9	73
Democrat	76.7	81
Married	21.7	10.4
Children less than six years old in the household	7.2	2.6
Mother's highest degree		
Graduated eighth grade	4.7	1.5
Graduated high school	18.6	8.7
Some college	19.2	11.2
Graduated college	38	40.8
Graduated graduate school	19.6	37.8

Appendix B: MLSWS Survey Instrument

Social Work Student Survey Instrument

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Thank you for your interest in this survey. The purpose of this study is to learn more about how individuals like yourself think.

No identifying information will be asked of you. You can choose to not answer any question. The answers you provide will be used for research purposes, and may be used for future research.

At the conclusion of this survey you may include your email address to receive a redemption code from Amazon.com worth $5.

If you have questions or problems on this survey, please email the researcher at pjmeeh@umich.edu.

Having read the above information, please indicate whether you agree to participate in this study.

- ○ Yes, I agree to participate. (1)
- ○ No, I choose not participate. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Having read the above information, please indicate whether you agree to participate in this study. = No, I choose not participate.

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Primacy Index

What is the best way of contributing to your community? Please rank from 1 (best) to 5 (worst).
_____ Serving in local government, such as on the school board, city council, or other municipal boards. (1)
_____ Giving money to good causes, such as non-profit, community, or religious organizations. (2)
_____ Volunteering your time to good causes, such as non-profit, community, or religious organizations. (3)
_____ Speaking at meetings of local government, including the school board, city council, or other municipal boards. (6)
_____ Other (specify) (4)

End of Block: Primacy Index

Start of Block: Distractor Set 1

Which of the following is your favorite sport to watch on TV?

- ○ Professional football (2)
- ○ College football (3)
- ○ Professional basketball (4)
- ○ College basketball (5)
- ○ Baseball (6)
- ○ Hockey (7)
- ○ Tennis (8)
- ○ Golf (9)
- ○ Other (10) _____

Approximately how many hours each week do you spend watching sports on TV?

- ○ 0-1 hour a week. (1)
- ○ 2-3 hours a week. (2)
- ○ 4-5 hours a week. (3)
- ○ More than five hours a week. (4)

End of Block: Distractor Set 1

Start of Block: Social good

How important are the following goals are to you?

	Not important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	Important (3)	Very Important (4)
I want my job to make a difference and help people. (1)	○	○	○	○
I want to earn a lot of money from my job. (2)	○	○	○	○
I want an important and influential job. (3)	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Social good

Start of Block: Distractor Set 2

What percentage of your discretionary money do you spend on the following items? (Total must equal 100)
Entertainment : _____ (1)
Clothes : _____ (2)
Eating out : _____ (3)
Electronics : _____ (4)
Total : _____

Page Break

Drag the following animals into their respective groups.

Mammals	Reptiles	Amphibians
_____ Dog (1)	_____ Dog (1)	_____ Dog (1)
_____ Lizard (2)	_____ Lizard (2)	_____ Lizard (2)
_____ Frog (3)	_____ Frog (3)	_____ Frog (3)
_____ Platypus (4)	_____ Platypus (4)	_____ Platypus (4)
_____ Salamander (5)	_____ Salamander (5)	_____ Salamander (5)
_____ Snake (6)	_____ Snake (6)	_____ Snake (6)
_____ Aardvark (7)	_____ Aardvark (7)	_____ Aardvark (7)
_____ Whale (8)	_____ Whale (8)	_____ Whale (8)
_____ Turtle (9)	_____ Turtle (9)	_____ Turtle (9)
_____ Newt (10)	_____ Newt (10)	_____ Newt (10)

End of Block: Distractor Set 2

Start of Block: Making A Difference

Which of the following best describes how you intend to use your MSW?

- ○ Working with individuals (youth, teens, adults) to address mental health issues affecting their individual well-being. (1)
- ○ Working with communities to organize around various social issues. (2)
- ○ Working in a non-profit aimed at providing support and services for individuals and families. (6)
- ○ Working for an advocacy organization that addresses policies affecting vulnerable individuals, families, and communities. (3)
- ○ I haven't thought much about what I will use my MSW for. (5)
- ○ Other (10) _____

End of Block: Making A Difference

Start of Block: Distractor Set 3

Please select your favorite entertainment from the following options.
Form of media (1)
Genre (2)
Title (3)

▼ Movies (1) ... Books ~ Documentary/Non-Fiction ~ I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (48)

End of Block: Distractor Set 3

Start of Block: Social Work Knowledge

Which of the following members of the United States Senate has a Master of Social Work degree?

- ○ Tom Cotton (R-AR) (1)
- ○ Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) (2)
- ○ Susan Collins (R-ME) (3)
- ○ Cory Booker (D-NJ) (4)

End of Block: Social Work Knowledge

Start of Block: Distractor Set 4

Drag the following people into their respective groups.

Actor	Singer	Athlete
_____ Babe Didrickson-Zaharias (1)	_____ Babe Didrickson-Zaharias (1)	_____ Babe Didrickson-Zaharias (1)
_____ Paula Abdul (2)	_____ Paula Abdul (2)	_____ Paula Abdul (2)
_____ Michael Jordan (3)	_____ Michael Jordan (3)	_____ Michael Jordan (3)
_____ James Taylor (12)	_____ James Taylor (12)	_____ James Taylor (12)

_____ Tom Hanks (13)	_____ Tom Hanks (13)	_____ Tom Hanks (13)
_____ Jennifer Love Hewitt (14)	_____ Jennifer Love Hewitt (14)	_____ Jennifer Love Hewitt (14)
_____ Carrie Underwood (15)	_____ Carrie Underwood (15)	_____ Carrie Underwood (15)
_____ Simone Biles (16)	_____ Simone Biles (16)	_____ Simone Biles (16)
_____ Laura Linney (17)	_____ Laura Linney (17)	_____ Laura Linney (17)

End of Block: Distractor Set 4

Start of Block: Political Efficacy

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Public officials don't care much what people like me think. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I could do as good a job in public office as most other people. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
The problems I most care about can be solved through politics. (5)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Political Efficacy

Start of Block: Distractor Set 5

Drag the activities in the following list into the appropriate group, based on who you think should be primarily responsible for teaching them to children. There are no right or wrong answers.

Teachers	Parents/Guardians	Coaches
_____ Learning about sex and human reproduction (1)	_____ Learning about sex and human reproduction (1)	_____ Learning about sex and human reproduction (1)
_____ Learning to be gracious in victory and defeat (2)	_____ Learning to be gracious in victory and defeat (2)	_____ Learning to be gracious in victory and defeat (2)
_____ Learning multiplication tables (3)	_____ Learning multiplication tables (3)	_____ Learning multiplication tables (3)
_____ Learning to read and write (4)	_____ Learning to read and write (4)	_____ Learning to read and write (4)
_____ Learning about democracy (5)	_____ Learning about democracy (5)	_____ Learning about democracy (5)
_____ Learning about masculinity and femininity (6)	_____ Learning about masculinity and femininity (6)	_____ Learning about masculinity and femininity (6)
_____ Learning to solve problems (7)	_____ Learning to solve problems (7)	_____ Learning to solve problems (7)
_____ Learning right from wrong (8)	_____ Learning right from wrong (8)	_____ Learning right from wrong (8)
_____ Learning to play well with others (9)	_____ Learning to play well with others (9)	_____ Learning to play well with others (9)

End of Block: Distractor Set 5

Start of Block: Control frame

Several members of your local city council are retiring at the end of their current terms. Studies show that candidates for open city council seats are successful more than 60 percent of the time.
People close to you have suggested you should run for one of the open seats.

End of Block: Control frame

Start of Block: Ambition frame

Several members of your local city council are retiring at the end of their current terms. Studies show that candidates for open city council seats are successful more than

60 percent of the time. People close to you have suggested you should run for one of the open seats. One of the retiring city council members said, "I'm really glad I ran because having a seat on city council gave me status and name recognition I wouldn't have as a private citizen."

End of Block: Ambition frame

Start of Block: Social Good frame

Several members of your local city council are retiring at the end of their current terms. Studies show that candidates for open city council seats are successful more than 60 percent of the time. People close to you have suggested you should run for one of the open seats. One of the retiring city council members said, "I'm really glad I ran because I was able to use my seat on city council to make a bigger difference in the community than I would have been able to make as a private citizen."

End of Block: Social Good frame

Start of Block: Dependent Measure

How interested are you in running for one of the open seats on city council?

	Not at all interested	Not very interested	Somewhat Interested	Very interested
	1	2	3	4
(Move slider) ()				

End of Block: Dependent Measure

Start of Block: Interest in Other Offices

Describe your level of interest in the following offices.

	Not at all interested (1)	Not very interested (2)	Somewhat interested (3)	Very interested (4)
School board (1)	○	○	○	○
Parks commission (4)	○	○	○	○
County commission (2)	○	○	○	○
Mayor or township supervisor (6)	○	○	○	○
State legislature (7)	○	○	○	○
U.S. Congress or Senate (8)	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Interest in Other Offices

Start of Block: Barriers

Which of the following would keep you from running for local office (school board, city council, or another municipal board). Please rank from 1 (most likely to keep me from running) to 6 (least likely to keep me from running).

_____ The financial cost of running. (1)
_____ Campaigning, including asking for donations to my campaign and telling strangers about myself. (11)
_____ The time commitment involved in running and serving in local government. (2)
_____ Not feeling qualified to hold office at this level of government. (3)
_____ The loss of privacy. (6)
_____ Other (10)

Display This Question:

If Which of the following would keep you from running for local office (school board, city council,... [Not feeling qualified to hold office at this level of government.] = 1

Please explain why you do not feel qualified to run for local office.

_____

End of Block: Barriers

Start of Block: Social Work Education

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your social work education, training, and preparation.

	Strongly disagree (8)	Disagree (9)	Neither agree nor disagree (10)	Agree (11)	Strongly agree (12)
In my social work courses, we learn how advocacy work happens in practice. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
In my social work courses, we discuss how practitioners can get involved in the legislative process. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
In my social work courses, running for office has been discussed as a way for practitioners to influence policy. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Field placement opportunities were available with political campaigns, interest groups, or legislative offices. (4)	○	○	○	○	○

My social work school gives attention to political events, and their impact on oppressed groups. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to learn more about political involvement as a social work practitioner than I am currently getting in my social work classes. (6)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Social Work Education

Start of Block: Partisan identification

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?

- ○ Democrat (1)
- ○ Republican (2)
- ○ Independent (3)
- ○ Other party (4) _____

Display This Question:

If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent,... = Democrat

Would you consider yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

- ○ Strong (1)
- ○ Not very strong (2)

Display This Question:

If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent,... = Independent

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?

- ○ Closer to the Republicans (1)
- ○ Closer to the Democrats (2)
- ○ Neither (3)

Display This Question:

If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent,... = Republican

Would you consider yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

- ○ Strong (1)
- ○ Not very strong (2)

End of Block: Partisan identification

Start of Block: Demographics

The next set of questions are about yourself. It is helpful to know demographic characteristics of respondents to see how generalizable the results of this survey are to the broader public.

Page Break

Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Page Break

Please choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be.

- [ ] White (1)
- [ ] Black or African American (2)
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- [ ] Asian (4)
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (7)

Page Break

What is the year of your birth? (For example: 1979)

_____

Page Break

Are you male or female?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)

Page Break

What is the highest level of school your mother has completed or the highest degree your mother has received?

- ○ Graduated 8th grade (1)
- ○ Graduated high school (2)
- ○ Some college (3)
- ○ Graduated college (4)
- ○ Graduated graduate school (5)
- ○ Don't know (6)

Page Break

To the best of your knowledge, what was your annual household income while you were in high school?

- ○ Under $24,999 (1)
- ○ $25-49,999 (2)
- ○ $50-74,999 (3)
- ○ $75-99,999 (4)
- ○ $100-149,999 (5)
- ○ Over $150,000 (6)

Page Break

What other degree fields were you considering before choosing your current one? (Choose the one that most applies.)

- ○ Education (MEd, EdD) (1)
- ○ Psychology (PhD) (2)
- ○ Law (JD) (3)
- ○ Business (MBA) (4)
- ○ Medicine (MD) (5)
- ○ I did not consider another degree field (6)
- ○ Other (7) _____

Page Break

What is your marital status?

- ○ Married (1)
- ○ Widowed (3)
- ○ Divorced (4)
- ○ Separated (2)
- ○ Never married (5)

Page Break

Are there children under the age of six in your household right now?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No, my children are older than six. (3)
- ○ No (4)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Incentive

Thank you for your participation. Your answers have been recorded, and you may exit the survey. If you would like to receive a redemption code from Amazon.com worth $5, please enter your email address below. Your email address will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study.

_____

End of Block: Incentive

Start of Block: Ineligible Message

Display This Question:

If Having read the above information, please indicate whether you agree to participate in this study. = No, I choose not participate.

You are not eligible to continue this survey.

End of Block: Ineligible Message

Appendix C: Using Licensure to Identify Social Workers Running for Office

Introduction

The Grand Challenges (AASWSW, 2018) of the profession will require legislation to address them, and having a seat at the table will allow social workers to do so directly. Consequently, it is worth asking how many social workers are running for elected office? And in what proportion?

Answering these questions with any degree of accuracy is challenging. Surveying social workers on their political participation is common enough in social work research that established methods have been developed and adopted repeatedly. Accordingly, the most common method for observing the political participation of social workers has been to survey a random sample of members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (Ezell, 1993; Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Wolk, 1981). There are several advantages to this method. For one, it is the largest membership organization in social work. It establishes the code of ethics for the profession as a whole. Moreover, it is understood that all members in the organization are social workers. This understanding gets around the otherwise tricky problem of identifying social workers in the general population.

Even so, this popular method is problematic. Social workers in the general population may be very different from NASW members, which matters to our understanding of social workers as political actors. The consensus from this research is that social workers participate in politics more than the general population, but this may not be warranted.

Alternatives to sampling on NASW membership present their own challenges, however. Who counts as a social worker? This is not an esoteric exercise. Does having a BSW make one a social worker? MSW? There is no central repository of individuals with BSW, or MSW degrees.

Each degree-granting institution may possess this information for its graduates, but they may not easily pass this information along to researchers. Furthermore, not every degree-granting institution is the same, nor educates the same cross-section of students. Using degrees to sample social workers would require multiple agreements across a random sample of degree-granting institutions.

In many states social work is a title-protected profession. That is to say, social workers must have a license in that particular state to in order to refer to themselves as social workers. This will mean different things to different people with BSW or MSW degrees, to say nothing of macro-practice social workers. What does it mean to be a licensed community organizer? Thus, using licensure to sample social workers will not reach every individual with a claim to calling herself a social worker.

Nevertheless, licensure is not a prescription for a particular type of social work practice. For professional reasons individuals may prefer to obtain licensure to make themselves eligible for as many opportunities as possible. In other words, licensure confers benefits to the individual beyond simply the title of social worker. It stands to reason, therefore, that licensure captures a much greater percentage of "social workers" than NASW membership does.

Ritter (2007) breaks from tradition and uses licensure to study the political participation of social workers. She understands that licensure will allow for national representativeness to a degree not possible using NASW membership. However, licensure has not been used to identify candidates for elected office. The closest parallel in social work research is Lane and Humphreys' (2011) survey of social worker candidates. It is worth considering their methods of identification in some detail.

Their initial point of reference for finding social worker candidates are "social workers known to NASW's national government relations staff, gathered by them through contacts with NASW chapters throughout the country" (p. 230). They supplement this using "Internet searches combining social work terms such as MSW, Master of Social Work, BSW, Bachelor of Social Work, social work, and social worker with terms such as candidate and names of specific offices (town council, mayor, city council, state legislator, etc.)" (p. 230). Finally, "elected social workers were asked to provide names of any other potential survey participants in their networks" (p. 230).

This method yielded 467 individuals who had run for office at all levels of government, "whether or not their candidacy had been successful" (p. 230). It is to their credit they found this many candidates. In purely scientific terms, though, the method is difficult to replicate and heavily biased in favor of NASW membership, or association with NASW members. Moreover, many elections do not receive the attention or coverage that would make them appear in Internet searches.

Consequently, this study follows in Ritter's (2007) footsteps and uses licensure to identify social worker candidates. The benefits and limitations of using licensure are discussed in comparison to Lane and Humphreys (2011) method of identification. While licensure is an imperfect method, it produced a greater proportion of candidates than Lane and Humphreys' method of using NASW membership. The proportion of licensed social workers running for office also represents a closer approximation of the real proportion of candidates among all social workers than the proportion of candidates among NASW members. Given licensure's commonality across states, this method of candidate identification represents a more systematic and replicable option for researchers in the future.

Candidate Lists

It should be stated again that Lane and Humphreys (2011) advance our collective understanding of social workers running for office. Critiques of their method of candidate identification are not criticisms of the normative value of their research. Their approach is one of casting a wide net, searching for candidates across the entire United States. This is admirable, if a bit overwhelming. At any given time there are more than 500,000 (Lawless, 2012) elected officials across the United States. There is a non-zero number of social workers among the 500,000, but attempting to find them requires an unsystematic array of Internet and keyword searches that will inevitably miss genuine matches for reasons mentioned previously.

It is possible to cast a wide net without searching the entire country. Within every county there are elections at the county level, municipal level, township level, village level, as well as elections for school boards, and various commissions and boards. The number of candidates running each year is potentially quite large, and if the election records were aggregated over time it would not take long before the list of candidates grew almost exponentially. The larger the list of candidates, the greater the potential for finding social workers among them. But by confining that list to a single county, over time, it is possible to match the list of candidates with the list of licensed social workers in that county. Replicating this method across multiple counties creates an even larger list, and even greater potential for finding social worker candidates.

In this study, elections records from the six most populous counties in Michigan were aggregated from 2006 to 2016. Given the time-consuming nature of cataloguing the list of candidates in each county over a ten-year period, the most populous counties were chosen for their potential to produce the largest number of candidates. The counties included—Genesee,

Kent, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne—represent 53 percent of the Michigan population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). It was believed these counties would be home to a similar percentage of the state's licensed social workers. The goal of this method, then, was not representativeness in the strictest sense, but to increase the probability of finding social workers among candidates for public office.

This study employed only a few exclusion criteria as the candidate lists were compiled. Judicial offices and the office of Prosecuting Attorney were excluded because social workers were not eligible to run for these positions. State and federal offices were also excluded.

One position was included in the candidate lists that was not a public office. The Michigan Democratic and Republican Parties each elect precinct delegates in the state's August primary election. The position entitles delegates to attend county nominating conventions, and serve other functions within the party. Candidates for precinct delegate appear on the ballot alongside candidates for public offices. The public nature of running for precinct delegate warranted their inclusion in the candidate lists. It also, again, increased the likelihood of finding matches among licensed social workers.

Licensed Social Workers

The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs provides lists of all licensed social workers in a specific county for a fee. Lists were obtained for each of the counties included in this study. The lists include all individuals with a Licensed Master of Social Work credential, as of January 13, 2017 for Genesee, Kent, Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne, and January 7, 2016 for Washtenaw County. This study did not include those with a Licensed

Bachelor of Social Work credential, nor the limited license credential, although this information was available for purchase from LARA.

Using licensure from 2016 and 2017 to identify candidates as far back as 2006 may be problematic for at least two reasons. First, there is the possibility that individuals ran for office prior to 2016, and then either retired or let their license lapse by 2016 or 2017. These individuals would not be identified in this study. This is certainly a possibility, and a limitation of this method of candidate identification. There are practical reasons for holding on to one's licensure, though, even in retirement, or change of occupation. Maintaining licensure allows the individual to return to work again if the need arises. Furthermore, should the need arise, re-instating a lapsed licensed is a cumbersome, time-consuming process. Second, licensed individuals may have moved out of the counties included in this study prior to 2016 or 2017. This method would not identify these individuals. Presumably candidates for local offices have firm roots in these counties, but the possibility exists that they may have left prior to 2016 or 2017.

It is important to note that the Licensed Master of Social Work credential in Michigan includes macro-practice individuals. While there is a separate exam for macro-practice licensure, they are included among those with the LMSW credential, and are thus indistinguishable from micro-practice individuals. There are different market incentives for obtaining macro-practice licensure, so it is unclear what proportion of macro-practice practitioners in Michigan actually obtain it. Still, their inclusion means macro-practice social workers were not totally excluded from this study.

Matching

Licensed social workers were matched one-to-one to candidates using their combined first and last names. The middle name was not available for all individuals to match on.

Additional limitations accompany this matching technique. It requires identical spelling and record-keeping across both lists. Individuals who use their middle name as their first name, for example, may appear as such on the candidate list, but appear differently on the license list. The same holds for individuals who use their first two initials in public, but use their full names on their license. Similarly, women may adopt their spouse's last name on either of the two lists, and thus not be identified.

Results

Table C-1 reports the years of election records for each county, the number of unique candidates during that time, the number of licensed social workers, and the number of social worker candidates identified.

Table C-1

Years of Election Records, Unique Candidates, LMSW-holders, and Matched LMSW Candidates

County	Years Collected	Unique Candidates	LMSWs	LMSW Candidates
Genesee	2008-2016	2095	515	5
Kent	2006-2016	1081	1488	4
Macomb	2006-2015	3133	867	9
Oakland	2006-2016	3316	2895	12
Washtenaw	2005-2015	1493	1409	10
Wayne	2007-2016	5137	1956	22

A total of 62 social workers were identified as candidates in these counties during this time.

Licensure vs NASW Membership

Starting from NASW membership, Lane and Humphreys (2011) identify 467 social worker candidates across the United States. In this study, 62 social worker candidates were identified in six counties of the same state over a ten-year period. If these results are representative of licensed social workers generally, it suggests there are far more social worker candidates out there than has previously been reported. Of course, representativeness was not the aim of this study, so it is very possible social workers' engagement with the political system in these Michigan counties is an anomaly.

Nevertheless, licensure may offer a more efficient way of identifying social worker candidates than NASW membership. For the sake of argument, let us assume the candidates Lane and Humphreys (2011) identify are all NASW members. According to NASW, there are approximately 120,000 members across the United States. This translates to a candidate proportion of 0.39 percent of NASW members. By comparison, the 62 candidates identified in this study translate to a candidate proportion of 0.67 percent of licensed social workers in these six counties. Granted, these are miniscule proportions, but by looking at only six counties over a ten-year period, the proportion of social worker candidates nearly doubled.

The Michigan NASW chapter indicates there are roughly 6,000 members in the state. This figure alone is smaller than the number of licensed social workers in the counties included in this study. If the proportion of candidates among members in the state were congruent with the proportion Lane and Humphreys find, this would translate to roughly 23 candidates. Licensure identified nearly three times that number in only six counties.

It is worth remembering, the number of social worker candidates identified in this study likely undercounts the actual number in these counties. Unlicensed social worker candidates could not be identified using the methods employed in this study. There was likely a non-zero number of these candidate in these counties.

What To Make of It All

Writing in the Social Work Forum in 1953, Charles Schottland argues, "the great battles of social work today are being fought in the political arena" (p. 19). Everything old is new again. With the adoption of the Grand Challenges for the 21st century, the profession has staked its fortunes to success in the political arena. The more social workers there are in elected office, the more likely it will be that the Grand Challenges are directly addressed and met.

Figuring out how many social workers there are in elected office is more complicated than it seems. There is no central repository of all elected officials in the United States, nor a repository of all social workers. Consequently, finding the social workers among the candidates for elected office requires an identification strategy.

In the first attempt at doing so, Lane and Humphreys (2011) follow in the tradition of research on social work political participation and use NASW membership. However, in order to reach candidates across the United States, they supplement NASW membership with Internet searches and snowball sampling.

This study used licensure to match social workers to lists of candidates. Licensure captured all social workers, strictly speaking, in the Michigan counties included in this study. Thus, the method was more efficient, and yielded a greater proportion of social worker candidates than the method of using NASW membership.

Researchers can replicate this method across more counties, as well as any state that requires licensure, to identify a more accurate figure of social workers running for and holding elected office. Moreover, the method can be replicated on any profession that requires licensure. Comparisons could be made between social workers and educators, for example, or social workers and doctors, lawyers, business owners, etc. In this way, researchers would have a better sense if the proportion of social workers running for office is comparable to the proportions of individuals running from other licensed professions. This information can inform educators of the relative urgency of motivating social workers to take an interest in the political system for achieving the Grand Challenges of the 21st century.

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