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## **Women in Politics: An Examination of Hispanic Undergraduate Students' Perspectives and Attitudes**

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WOMEN IN POLITICS: AN EXAMINATION OF HISPANIC UNDERGRADUATE  
STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVES AND ATTITUDES

A Thesis

by

SALIHA GARCIA

Submitted to Texas A&M International University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2022

Major Subject: Political Science

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Approved as to style and content by:

Chair of Committee,	Simon Zschirnt
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## ABSTRACT

Women in Politics: An Examination of Hispanic Undergraduate Students' Perspectives and Attitudes (December 2022).

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The lack of female representation in politics has long been established, as over the years there has been a rise in political participation that still fails to be representative of the general population. Women that seek positions in office often fail to garner the support that many male candidates quickly get, as women face gender stereotypes and sexism at almost every turn. Many studies have failed to look at how the Hispanic population evaluate women seeking political leadership and how engrained gender roles and stereotypes are when it comes to the evaluation of female and male candidates. This thesis examines not only the prevalence of gender stereotypes and roles that Hispanics within the border region might have, but also considers the importance that acculturation might have upon the evaluation of women candidates. The goal this thesis aims to accomplish is to test the prevalence of these variables and the effect these have upon evaluation of candidates based on gender and to compare the results to other studies that have used predominantly White populations in order to further examine whether a difference exists based on race/ethnicity. Data was gathered through the distribution of an online survey to undergraduate students at Texas A&M International University and the total sample size was 522 participants. The findings indicated that Hispanics within this sample had more egalitarian

attitudes towards women seeking office, and in comparison, to other studies there were less gender stereotypes held about the competence that women office seekers had on different issues such as healthcare and education. Moreover, it was also seen how acculturation played a substantial role in whether individuals would vote for a male candidate or remain neutral. These findings serve to complement and further fill the contrasting literature gap that exists when it comes to Hispanic gender role attitudes and evaluation of women candidates, as scholars have failed to reach a consensus regarding how egalitarian Hispanics might be.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my family, as they have always pushed me to continue pursuing my dream and encouraged me to never give up. To my mother and father as they have both never doubted my dedication, drive, and always nurtured my never-ending curiosity.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
Gender Stereotypes .....	5
Hispanic Population .....	9
Voting and Support.....	15
METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN .....	19
Data.....	19
RESULTS .....	28
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	37
LIMITATIONS .....	46
REFERENCES.....	48
APPENDIX A: Survey .....	53
APPENDIX B: Recruitment Material.....	62
VITA.....	63



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.....	30
Table 2.....	35

## INTRODUCTION

Data from February 2020 showed that “at least 9 in 10 Americans in all major demographic groups” saw the possibility of a women being the leader of the country within the next year (Reinhart 2021). The Center for American Women and Politics indicates that currently there are 9 governors, 24 senators, 1748 state representatives, and 121 U.S. representatives that are women, which reflects the increased acceptance and support of women in the political arena. Bauer (2020) indicates that the “presence of women in local government has tremendous implications because female leaders substantively represent women and other marginalized groups” (p. 98). Furthermore, research has also showcased how female political participation increases when women are present in leadership positions within local politics (Bauer 2020). Despite the increases that women’s participation and representation has seen within the last few years, there remains a considerable lack of women in the field of politics.

A reason that many scholars argue contributes to the “scarcity of women candidates” is that overqualified and highly educated women tend to not consider themselves to form part of the candidate pool, and the probability that these women will be approached by others for either the consideration of a bid or to receive encouragement to run is usually low (Jalalzai 2015). This lack of support with the addition of a series of obstacles oftentimes translates to women candidates feeling pressured into having higher qualifications and showcasing better capabilities to succeed within the political realm (Black & Erickson 2003).

Since the political arena is typically evaluated through the lens of masculine behaviors, messages, and experiences, then the idea that a politician must fit a masculine stereotype creates

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This thesis follows the model of *Urban Affairs Review*.

a greater disconnection with what women's role in political office could be (Meeks 2012).

Stereotyping is not exclusive to a particular gender as research shows that women are equally as likely as men to disparage women that have been able to succeed in typically male-dominated field such as business and politics to name a few (Mendoza & DiMaria 2019). Dolan (2010) points out that policy stereotypes are significantly important in understanding whether a voter will be inclined to vote for a female politician, as it was seen that individuals that view women to hold equal or greater competence with issues surrounding the economy or terrorism are more likely to not only support them when they are running for office, but that these individuals also openly express a desire for the presence of a gender balance when it comes to government. Most scholarly work focusing on gender stereotypes tends to focus more attention on "identifying the different kinds of stereotypes people hold about women and men in politics" but this leaves a knowledge gap regarding how these stereotypes might influence political attitudes or behaviors" (Dolan 2010, p.70).

Stauffer & Fisk (2021) find that when analyzing same-party match ups only, Republican men are more likely to vote for the male candidate and Democratic men and women along with Republican women were less likely to vote for the male candidate. Same party match ups show that examining how much influence gender has in voting decisions is worth further examining. Even more, studies such as the one previously described illustrate that gender can benefit women candidates in certain contexts and with certain kinds of voters. For example, when looking at how political socialization occurs, the presence of women candidates pushes young women to become more actively involved and informed in politics (Wolak & McDevitt 2011). This illustrates that age and how young adolescents were politically socialized and the political environment that they were exposed to can possibly lead for them to feel more inclined or

express more support for women candidates in comparison to those that did not experience this exposure. Lastly, Falk & Kenski's (2006) study illustrates that the attitudes regarding a women president are influenced by not only personal experiences and party identification, but also by one's demographic status (more importantly the variables of gender and culture) as these work with one another and create and enable certain ideas of what qualities a competent president should have and whether a women would be able to fulfill the role.

This thesis uses quantitative data to look at the main aim of this thesis project, which is to examine gendered stereotypes amongst undergraduate Hispanic students and the impact that these have on how students evaluate and perceive female politicians and candidates. One of the key goals of this study is to understand whether gendered stereotypes are present and to what degree they can be seen within Hispanic undergraduate students. In addition, two different factors that will also be analyzed within this thesis will be acculturation, as research has shown that this has an impact not only on voting behavior but also the prevalence of gendered stereotypes within individuals. The other variable that will be further examined will be gendered stereotypes. By using a scale that examines sexist attitudes in different socio-cultural contexts, the study aims to examine how prevalent gendered stereotypes might be amongst Hispanic college undergraduate students. Both acculturation and gender stereotypes will be measured individually to get a general sense of how acculturated the participants are and what degree of gender stereotypes these individuals hold and then these will be integrated onto the analysis of support for female candidates.

The study looks to fill a gap within the literature by specifically looking at Hispanic undergraduate college students that reside within the southern border region and how race, ethnicity, and age all play pivotal roles in how these undergraduate students might evaluate and

perceive female politicians and candidates and in addition also examine how prevalent gendered stereotypes are when it comes to political decision making for this population. The study will therefore analyze and study the varying attitudes that current undergraduate students in Texas A&M International University hold. Some requisites for participation include being between 18-25 years old, currently enrolled as a full-time university student, able to vote, and identifying as Hispanic/Latino.

Hypothesis 1: Participants that demonstrate higher inclinations towards more traditional gender norms will be less likely to showcase strong support for female candidates and politicians.

Hypothesis 2: Participants that showcase higher levels of acculturation will demonstrate more support for female candidates and politicians.

Participants that showcase higher levels of acculturation will demonstrate more support for female candidates and politicians.

Hypothesis 3: Female participants will demonstrate higher levels of support for female candidates and politicians.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Gender Stereotypes

Dolan (2014) highlights that various research demonstrates that the American public usually engages in stereotyped thinking about both men and women when it comes to political life, which often ends up hurting women candidates due to the negative assumptions that are usually held regarding a woman's capacity and traits. Due to the usage of "certain stereotyped policy competencies and personality characteristics" by voters, female candidates are typically viewed be more honest, more compassionate when it comes to policies, and showcase higher devotion to issues such as poverty, education, and healthcare to name a few (Dolan & Lynch 2014, p. 657). Sanbonmatsu (2002) denotes that individuals tend to evaluate the same candidate differently due to the candidate's gender, as "female candidates are perceived as possessing more feminine traits and fewer masculine traits than male candidates." Moreover, female candidates are also "rated to as more likely to be liberal, Democratic, and feminist" (p. 21). Gender stereotypes do not only limit voters to view female candidates as being more competent and interested in what are deemed as "compassion issues" such as poverty, education, and health policy-issues, but these also end up influencing how a voter will perceive the female candidate's demeanor to be (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993, p. 120). These gender stereotypes are seen to be dangerous as female candidates are constrained into a general profile that defines who they are, what they care about, what issues are important to them, and most likely inaccurately represents them. Evidence from other studies affirms the fear that women politicians and candidates have regarding being punished by voters when these women are evaluated as not having the masculine traits, moreover this affects women that seek office at the higher national levels as well as executive office the most (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993). Yet there lies a division within scholarly

literature, as many researchers argue that these gender stereotypes can aid female candidates and politicians. This can be seen with Huddy & Terkildsen (1993) as it is described how understanding women's political success can be more complex than what meets the eye, as the authors explain that oftentimes women candidates' success at the polls derives from their ability to convince the voters that they too possess the desired masculine traits that are valued within the political world. Another reason as to why voters could be more easily inclined to penalize women seeking to be elected to office is due to the lack of evidence that these voters might have about them and the different policies and ideas that these candidates are advocating for; therefore, voters are more likely to stereotype them as everyday women. Moreover it has also been seen how gender stereotypes also heavily impact how much effort a women candidate will have to make to convince male voters that look for dominant male traits and have stereotyped these female candidates in the stereotypical role of being warm and compassionate, that these women do in fact possess all the skills, knowledge, and issue competency to represent these voters as equally or even better than a man candidate can (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993).

Despite there being numerous studies focusing on understanding gender stereotypes and the gender gap in politics, there is little known "about the relationship between voting behavior and gender stereotypes" which calls into question how significant gender stereotypes can be when it comes to voting and whether there are other factors present such as age, race, or gender that can impact or further influence these perceptions (Sanbonmatsu 2002, p. 21). Bauer (2015) explains that feminine stereotypes "reflect the beliefs about the characteristics women are expected to embody." Moreover, she also discusses how the lack of unity in the research community about whether feminine stereotypes hinder or help female politicians calls for greater attention to understanding the impact these can have when it comes to voting or support of

female politicians (p. 692). Gender roles have been seen to have “pervasive effects” and stereotypes “about women and men are easily and automatically activated” (Eagly & Karau 2002, p. 574).

In fact, it is important to further highlight Bauer’s concerns regarding the lack of understanding as to how gender stereotypes play a role within candidate and politician evaluation and perceptions. Since women are expected to be more communal, compassionate, and warm then expectations that these female candidates demonstrate calm and contained demeanors has been seen to increase male voter support (Everitt, Best & Gaudet 2016). Everitt, Best & Gaudet further denote that because lack of abiding by stereotypical gender roles leads to negative evaluations, the counterargument that encourages female political candidates to embody more characteristics that are depicted to be more masculine could be more harmful when attempting to garner support and votes. This then indicates that gender stereotypes could possibly be beneficial for women candidates, as the rejection of these is instead met with pushback rather than increased inclination to support them. Another area in which gender stereotypes could pose a beneficial role would be amongst female voters, as it has been seen that both White and non-White female voters have expressed higher support for women candidates in comparison to men due to the generalized belief that women will be more inclined to represent the policy issues of interest that matter to them (Cargile & Pringle 2020).

Something that cannot be denied is the pivotal role that sex plays when it comes to vote choice, as research has demonstrated how female candidates receive much higher support from women voters in comparison to male ones. This kind of solidarity that women display for other women seeking office is termed as the gender affinity effect (Cargile & Pringle 2020). Same-sex representation is seen as a powerful tool amongst females, as not only will the issues that these



women care about be better represented but also there will be more representation being given to women organizations and interest groups which can be seen as empowering for other women (Cargile & Pringle 2020). However, just how much support women candidates can garner from female voters has been disputed as well, as sources also argue that both men and women showcased a seemingly equal likelihood is disparaging women that have been able to gain success in traditionally male-dominated fields (Mendoza & DiMaria 2019).

This literature therefore demonstrates not only how multi-complex gender stereotypes can be, but also how these both serve as tools and as obstacles for women that wish to either pursue an elected position or garner positive evaluations while holding an elected position. There remain contradicting views as to how abiding gender stereotypes can benefit female politicians by allowing them to gather support from male voters, while other researchers argue that these gender stereotypes push male voters further away from considering female politicians and candidates as competent and qualified for the position at hand. This push and pull relationship that researchers demonstrate regarding gender stereotypes make it complicated to come to an affirmative conclusion as to what role these play when aiming to garner support for female candidates and politicians and whether abiding by these stereotypes proves to be a more beneficial or hurtful position. Furthermore, it is also of importance to understand that it is not only men voters that see female politicians as having to abide certain gender roles, but as female voters also hold divided views regarding issue competency, position efficiency, and successful representation that female candidates and politicians can bring on. This study aims to therefore answer and provide more information regarding this literature gap, using the Gender Role Attitudes Scale which measures various gender role attitudes in various socio-cultural contexts such as family life, work, and work. By understanding more in depth how Hispanic

undergraduate students lean when it comes to gender role attitudes using the scale then the ability to understand a little bit better the inclination that this demographic might have towards leaning to more traditional or egalitarian attitudes can be better understood. Given that this scale has been previously used in various Latin American populations and amongst Spanish participants there are specific accommodations present that take into account how gender roles traditionally work within these regions and the successful measurement of gender stereotypes can be achieved as these factors have been taken into account within the creation of the scale (Sánchez, B. P., Concha-Salgado, A., Fernández-Suárez, A., Juarros-Basterretxea, J., & Rodríguez-Díaz, F. J. 2021). In turn, the study will aim to not only provide some clarity as to whether gender stereotypes play a possible positive or negative role when evaluating female candidates, but also further contribute to the field by providing a more thorough understanding as to how younger generations evaluate female candidates and politicians.

### **Hispanic Population**

To begin it is important to acknowledge that when it comes to understanding the Hispanic population, there exists much division as the terms Hispanic and Latino have been used to compile subgroups together and therefore attitudes that the group might present do not always reflect the individual attitudes that different subgroups might have. Given that both terms have been used throughout time to classify together most natives or immigrants from Latino countries, it has become hard to be able to decipher and deeply understand how different individuals from various regions might view, perceive, or feel about distinct issues such as gender roles. As it is, literature remains limited when it comes to understanding Hispanics or Latinos which leads to the understanding that subgroups face even less representation in the field, as much of the concentration still aims to understand the group as whole rather than for the individuality within.

Bedolla (2000) argues that even though Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S., there has been little focus on the “cultural, socioeconomic, and political characteristics of this growing sector” (p.106). Research has shown that “immigration is a gendered phenomenon” given that “half of all Latino immigrants” in the United States are women, and these Latina immigrants have been seen to become naturalized citizens at “higher rates” in comparison to Latino men (Bejarano, Manzano & Montoya 2011, p. 525).

This therefore pushes interest into the idea of acculturation and how this can not only create a division within immigrant minority groups, but how different rates of acculturation can lead to there being a divide with regard to the ideals, beliefs, and values that a culture can have as there is a varying degree of assimilation into the host country. It is important to denote that “currently there is no universally accepted definition of acculturation in the literature, nor are there agreed upon methods in which to measure acculturation” which complicates being able to better understand this phenomenon and what influence it might have when it comes to gender roles and gender stereotypes (Ellison, Jandorf, Duhamel 2011, p. 480).

However, Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal & Perez- Stable (1987) emphasize the importance of understanding acculturation within academia, as it has been linked to play a pivotal role in not only the individual’s mental health, suicide, deviancy, and drug use, but also political and social attitudes. The way that acculturation will be measured and understood in the context of this study will be as the adjustment of “ethnic group attitudes and behaviors” in order for them to reflect more closely the host country’s “preferences and norms” which is the way it has been explained by traditional assimilation theory (Ulloa, Jaycox, Marshall & Collins 2004, p. 284).

Moreover, modernization theories add on to this by further illustrating how changes in economic standing “over generational cohorts” will push for immigrants to modernize their attitudes regarding cultural issues, more specifically in those that focus on gender equality (Inglehart & Norris 2000; Bejarano, Manzano & Montoya 2011). These theories therefore suggest that Latinos that have recently immigrated to the United States should initially hold more “conservative” ideals and attitudes towards gender equality, but that each subsequent generation will be seen to adopt more “liberal” stances (Bejarano et al. 2011, p. 525). Evidence has shown that the attitudes that Mexican Americans have in regard to sex roles move towards those of the host country, and more specifically those that the majority of the United States have (Valentine & Mosley 2000).

Lee (2002) describes that acculturation occurs when an “individual comes into contact with another culture and has to learn the language and the norms of that new society” (p. 5). This process is seen to be multi-complex and complicated for many immigrants as Mexicans seek to both maintain their “cultural identity” while also assimilating into the United States culture, as this leads for many to become bilingual and adopt the different ideas and socio-cultural norms that are practiced within the United States to navigate through both cultures in a seemingly balanced manner (Lee 2002).

The process of acculturation is seen to affect the ideas in regards to gender roles that Hispanics, more specifically Mexican Americans, have given that in Mexico family dynamics are characterized to as “patriarchal-authoritarian” in which the importance of family is highly emphasized and the father of the family plays a central role in the different decisions that will be made and what the expectations are in regards to how the family will function (Gowan & Trevino 1998, p. 1081). Kranua et al. (1982) adds on how Mexican American culture is generally

restrictive and conservative of what behaviors women and men should engage in. Yet, comparative studies have come to find that family relations of African Americans and Hispanics display greater egalitarian dynamics when compared to those of Whites. However, it is important to account those limitations to this exist as these studies do not fully represent all Hispanic subgroups for the most part and there is problematic framing of White individuals (Kane 2002; Staples & Mirande 1980; Harris & Firestone 1998). In addition to this, Welch & Siegelman (1992) explain how evidence demonstrates how “Hispanic women do not really fit their traditional stereotype” given that just as many form part of the workforce as Anglo women (p. 183). Valentine & Mosley (2000) also find that the traditional attitudes regarding sex roles Mexican Americans have might not be as prevalent as previous research has argued, it was seen how changes from this traditional standpoint could stem from increases in education and more opportunities for employment.

Therefore, different factors such as economic, educational, employment, and family composition all possibly play pivotal roles into not only how acculturated an individual might be to the host country, but also therefore influence the perception of gender roles and gender stereotypes as socio-cultural contexts and factors change.

Previous research has illuminated how gender and education both play pivotal roles regarding acculturation, as it has been seen that Mexican American woman that were either single or divorced, young, and educated showed higher likelihood of being more acculturated into Anglo society (Kranau, Green & Valencia-Weber 1982). An intersection lies within how acculturated an individual might be, as the authors were able to see how Mexican American women that showed these higher degrees of acculturation were engaged in less “feminine-role typed behaviors,” showing that there is an important separation that these women partake in

regarding the gender roles that Latino culture expects (Kranau et al 1982). The traditional gender-specific roles in Mexican American families come into question when families move into host countries that are more egalitarian and there is very little constraint regarding sex role behavior. Gowan & Trevino (1998) explain how research in this area suggests that the gender roles that Mexican Americans engage in should reflect those of Mexican nationals, as most results showcase this trend.

The influence of acculturation can have on the evaluation of female candidates and support for them can further be seen, as Bracic et al. (2019) describes how previous literature argues that “white[s] are more likely than people of color to employ sexism to inform their political decision making, as they have been routinely incentivized to maintain society’s dominant power structures,” which makes the analysis and further study of how race differences when it comes to gender stereotypes in Hispanics worth exploring further (p. 287). Another interesting point that research demonstrates is that “Hispanic women vote [at] as high a rate as male Hispanics,” which illuminates how political participation in the form of voting can be inferred to be equally divided amongst both genders (Welch & Siegelman 1992, p. 184). In addition, there appears to be little difference when it comes to the “direction of political attitudes” between Latina women and men (Lien 1998, p. 885). Furthermore, Vazquez-Nuttall, Romero-Garcia & Leon (1987) find that Mexican American wives that showed higher levels of acculturation engaged in a shift from traditional marital roles towards a more egalitarian ones compared to wives that were seen to be less acculturated.

Many scholars dispute that gender and sex role attitudes that Mexican Americans hold have been inaccurately portrayed, as research findings have sparked questioning of how prevalent male dominance amongst Hispanics might be (Cromwell and Ruiz 1979). The lack of

an accurate understanding of how Hispanics view gender roles and stereotypes leads for there to be a wide literature gap regarding the true portrayal of these attitudes and perspectives.

Moreover, it is also worth noting that a gender gap within Hispanics exists, as research has shown that women and men have differing views regarding issues such as military spending, welfare spending, and gun control. When it comes to gender roles a similar gap can be found, as research focusing on Latino youth has found that young Latinos are more inclined to follow the more conservative and traditional gender roles that have been taught within Mexican culture in comparison to young Latinas (Ulloa, Jaycox, Marshall & Collins 2004).

Stanciu, Vauclair & Rodda (2019) provide more evidence as to how immigrants go through a unique process called stereotype accommodation through which new information regarding a certain stereotype is incorporated into the preexisting stereotypes these individuals already have once these newly immigrated individuals become more socialized with the host country. The authors further explain how stereotype accommodation involves the integration of not only this new information into the preexisting stereotypes the origin culture taught, but it also marks how malleable ideas and beliefs can become as acculturation takes place within the individual's life. Using the Marin Short Scale, which was specifically designed for Hispanics then the study aims to answer more thoroughly the question of what role acculturation seemingly plays when it comes to gender stereotypes, as it has been seen that division within the field exists. Moreover, it is also of importance to acknowledge that gender roles and stereotypes amongst Mexican Americans have widely gone misunderstood due to the grouping of various ethnicities together when it comes to the classification of Hispanics, so this study specifically will help close the literature gap present when it comes to Mexican American individuals as this

encompasses most of the Laredo population and will most likely embody a large majority of the respondents that take part in the survey.

### **Voting and Support**

When examining voting choice, Dolan & Lynch (2014) explain that gender stereotypes do not seem to play such a significant role. Contrary to what most literature demonstrates, these stereotypes are seen to be “context-bound and episodic” and the importance that they carry varies with race (Dolan & Lynch 2014, p. 672). Additionally, Plutzer & Zipp (1996) found that the gender differences found within the voting of female candidates can showcase one of two things: the first one being that the female candidate could be earning additional votes from female voters and the second one being understood as the female candidate losing votes from male voters. In turn, it becomes evident that the prevalence and influence that political stereotypes have not only end up influencing the perception a voter has for a female candidate, but these will also play a crucial role in either pushing or swaying the voter to vote for the candidate. Ono & Burden (2019) also find that the sex of a candidate affects the decision of the voter regardless of whether other information cues are provided by the candidate, which further displays how much worth is placed on the gender of the candidate rather than other attributes such as partisanship or policy stances. However, it is also important to denote that there are varying degrees of scrutiny that female candidates will face depending on whether they are running at the congressional level or the presidential one, as the latter is filled with much more challenges than the former one (Ono & Burden 2019). The use of gender stereotypes as cues “or shortcuts when evaluating candidates’ traits or competence” within different policy areas is something that many scholars have seen to be more prevalent within “low-information elections” (Gershon & Monforti 2019, p. 441).



Eagly & Karau (2002) explain how women's pursuit and success in becoming leaders is filled with much more difficulty than a men's because the gender traits that women are assigned are not seen to be congruent to the traits that are equated to being a good leader.

Moreover, Gershon & Monforti (2019) discuss how Scheider and Bos's study finds that "female politicians seemed to be more defined more by the feminine and masculine traits that they lack" rather than the traits that "truly characterize them" which further showcases how an individual's perception of a female candidate can be heavily based on personal views and biases (p. 442).

When looking at how sexism plays a role within how much support female politicians can gather, there lies an important foundational obstacle that makes it harder to address that there even lies a gender gap within the political realm in the first place. Cassese, Barnes & Branton (2015) explain how "modern sexism provides a rationale against government intervention into social problems by normalizing" the inequality that holds to be present between women and men (p. 7). This leaves the system in a complicated position in which modern sexism enables and allows for these unequal representations and depictions of women and men to become accepted not only by the public, but also by the system itself.

Even though research has made it evident that there exists a gender gap within politics, studies have been unable to understand just how much women candidates and politicians can be affected by a voter's use of gendered stereotypes as it has been seen throughout this document how there lies a divided perception as to whether these can serve as benefits or hindrances for female candidates and politicians (Anzia & Bernhard 2019). When examining candidate quality, it has been seen how "if the average woman candidate is of higher quality than the average man candidate and receives the same vote share" then this illustrates how discrimination might be present in the evaluation of female candidates (Anzia & Bernhard 2019, p.5).

Okimoto & Brescoll (2010) also distinguish the impact that gendered stereotypes have on voting preferences for female and male candidates, as many voters are pushed to assume and mistakenly perceive “that women lack effectiveness in male sex-typed political issues such as military and economic policy” and on the other hand end up seeing male candidates as lacking effectivity when it comes to issues that require compassion such as those that concern family and children (p. 924). Another factor that can affect voting behavior amongst individuals is whether a female candidate is evaluated as possessing “power seeking intentions,” which is seen to portray women candidates as not abiding to the traditional gender roles such as being sensitive, warm, and caring, and in fact people are quicker to perceive a woman candidate to be power-seeking in comparison of a man candidate (Okimoto & Brescoll 2010, p. 932).

Vote choice and support is highly influenced by the background of the candidate, characteristics such as gender, occupation, and income of the political candidate have been seen to have a great effect on the “electoral popularity of candidates,” and this leaves women candidates at a possibly disadvantage (Pedersen, Dahlgard & Citi 2019). The authors argue that recent studies have affirmed that current trends demonstrate an increasing growth in voter preference for female candidates than male candidates, yet this remains disputed as researchers argue that this is only evident within certain kinds of elections such as those at the local level rather than presidential ones (Pedersen, Dahlgard & Citi 2019).

However, the differences that voters demonstrate in regards to female and male candidates does not just end in the evaluation of candidate characteristics, it can also be seen in issues of misconduct as studies have showcased that “voters are more aware of misconduct by female politicians” and the possibility that voters “perceive similar behavior by men and women differently” raises concern as to whether women seeking office or in office will be penalized

much more for wrongdoings or what voters might perceive character flaws for one gender and attributes for another (Eggers, Vivyan & Wagner 2018, p. 325). Brooks (2011) adds on to this issue as her study found that “angry behavior [was] perceived to be less appropriate than angry behavior by male candidates, and women candidates that got angry or cried were more likely to be labeled as emotional in comparison to male candidates,” yet the study did not demonstrate that these female candidates were penalized too disproportionately in comparison to male candidates (p. 609).

## METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### Data

This thesis used data that was collected at Texas A&M International University, which is a Hispanic-Serving institution located on the border between the United States and Mexico. Given that the Hispanic population of the region in which the study took place is more than 95% then the location proved to be the best place to gather a more in-depth picture of the attitudes of the target demographic. An online survey using Qualtrics was designed and distributed to through an online email server, and it was also independently distributed in various undergraduate classrooms. The criteria needed to take part in the study included: being over 18 years old, being enrolled in at least one university course, identify as Hispanic or Latino, and be an undergraduate student. The distribution process took place from July 2022 until September 2022 and a total of 566 respondents completed the survey. The survey was approved by the university IRB (Protocol #2022-04-14).

The construction of the survey entailed the integration of various scales to ensure that reliability and validity could be kept regarding the questions that were being asked. The first portion of the survey asks three screen questions that ensure that the participants that are answering the survey fulfill all the requisites needed to partake in the study. The first question asks whether the individual is 18 years or older, the second question asks whether the individual is taking at least one university course at Texas A&M International University and are currently pursuing undergraduate studies, and the third and last screen question asks whether the individual identifies as Hispanic or Latino. If the possible participants answer yes to all these three screens questions, then the individual is able to continue on to the first section of the survey.

The first section of the survey incorporates the Gender Role Attitudes Scale (GRAS), which is composed of 20 questions that have 5 answer choices that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree for each item (García-Cueto, Rodríguez-Díaz, Bringas-Molleda, López-Cepero, Paino-Quesada & Rodríguez-Franco 2015). The scale was designed to examine gender role attitudes while taking into consideration different socialization aspects that can have an impact upon these attitudes such as family, social interactions, and employment (García-Cueto et al. 2015). Moreover, this scale allows for the researcher to be able to examine not only whether the individual holds more egalitarian gender role attitudes or more sexist ones, but also whether the attitudes possibly change in different contexts such as employment place, social gatherings, or family settings. In addition to this, the scale has been used in other populations of similar characteristics as its reliability was first tested on Spanish university students that ranged from 15-26 years old, making the use of this scale an appropriate instrument in terms of this study. Regarding the interpretation of the answers, it is understood that “the highest scores indicate stereotyped attitudes” while the lower scores “indicate transcendent attitudes,” which is also synonymous with more egalitarian views (Sánchez, Concha-Salgado, Fernández-Suárez, Juarros-Basterretxea & Rodríguez-Díaz 2021, p. 569).

The second section of the survey then examines acculturation using the Marin Short Scale. This scale is a shorter version composed of 12 questions that looks at three dimensions: language use, media preferences, and social activities. Moreover, the scale is specifically designed to target Hispanics, and has demonstrated “levels of reliability and validity comparable” to those that have been registered by other longer published scales (Marin et al. 1987, p. 196). In addition to this, one of the main emphases that the scale examines is language usage as other acculturation scales have affirmed that this proves to be a “significant variable in

the acculturation process of Hispanics” (Marin et al. 1987, p. 196). Another reason that this scale was chosen for the study includes the success that it has been seen to produce in evaluating acculturation rates amongst Mexican American populations. Given that many studies focus on Hispanics rather than specific subgroups, that this scale has targeted a similar demographic indicates great promise and more reliability in measuring the target demographic (Coronado, Thompson, McLerran, Schwartz & Koepsell 2005).

The third section incorporated various questions that have been used in other studies to measure support and attitudes about female candidates and politicians. The baseline gender preference question is of utmost importance, as many other studies that look at gender gaps in politics and gender stereotypes incorporate this (Dolan 2009, Kukołowicz 2013). Then questions on issue competency stereotypes were also added through which respondents were given three different questions in regards what gender the individual believes would better handle issues regarding these three different areas: social security, foreign affairs, and crime issues. The questions used follow Huddy and Terkildsen’s “reliable scales of stereotypical female traits and stereotypical male traits and several scales of issue domains” (Sanbonmatsu 2002, p. 24). Lastly, the third question was composed of three sub-questions that look at belief stereotypes. Sanbonmatsu (2002) affirms that past research focusing on gender stereotypes has all adopted a similar approach to the one taken within this study, by “including survey questions similar” to the ones that were used (p. 24). Finally, the last 8 questions of this section follow Dolan’s study on the impact that gender stereotyped evaluations have regarding how much support women candidates will receive. Only the portion that examines the “frequencies on political gender stereotypes” were included within this survey (Dolan 2009, p. 77). The first four questions were issue competency oriented, as these asked whether the participant “thought women or men in

elected office were better at handling education, terrorism, health care, and the economy” or if they saw no differences between genders (p. 74). The other four questions were trait measures that “asked whether women or men candidates and officeholders tended to either be” more assertive, ambitious, compassionate, or if they saw no difference between them (Dolan 2009, p. 74). The integration of two scales used in different studies was to have ample material through which support and the impact of gendered stereotypes based on the gender of the candidate or politician can be examined more thoroughly.

The last portion of the survey focuses on demographic information of the participant and is made up of 8 questions. The sociodemographic information of interests that this survey looks at would include age, gender, race, religious affiliation, the current level of education of the participant, political views, and what party the individual identifies with.

#### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable being examined in this study will be the baseline gender preference of a political candidate. This question looks at the voter’s baseline gender preference by asking the participant if two equally qualified candidates were to run for office which gender the individual would be more inclined to vote for. The question is as follows: If two equally qualified candidates were running for office, one a man and the other a woman, do you think you would be more likely to vote for the man or the woman? The responses were coded from 1 to 3 (1= man, 2= no difference, 3=woman)

#### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables for this study include acculturation, gender roles, race, political views, political affiliation, gender, and age, education, issue competency, and belief. To measure some of these variables then various questions were needed to be asked.

Acculturation was measured through 12 questions that is divided into 3 latent scales that capture the areas of: language use, media preferences, and social life. Language use consists of five questions: 1) In general, what language (s) do you read and speak? 2) What was the language (s) you used as a child? 3) What language (s) do you usually speak at home? 4) In which language (s) do you usually think? 5) What language (s) do you usually speak with your friends?'. Responses were coded from 1 to 5 and the choices were 1= Only Spanish, 2= Spanish better than English, 3= Both Equally, 4 = English better than Spanish, and 5 = Only English. This latent scale had an alpha coefficient of ( $\alpha = .858$ ).

The latent scale measuring media preference encompassed the following three questions: 1) In what language (s) are the T.V. programs you usually watch? 2) In what language (s) are the radio programs you usually listen to? 3) In general, in what language (s) are the movies, T.V., and radio programs you prefer to watch and listen to? The responses were coded from 1 to 5 and the choices were 1= Only Spanish, 2= Spanish better than English, 3= Both Equally, 4 = English better than Spanish, and 5 = Only English. The alpha coefficient score this scale received was ( $\alpha = .794$ ).

Lastly the 4 questions used to measure social aspects of acculturation included the following 1) Your close friends are 2) You prefer going to social gatherings/parties at which the people are 3) The persons you visit or who visit you are 4) If you could choose your children's friends, you would want them to be. The responses were coded from 1 to 5 and the choices were 1= All Spanish/Hispanics, 2= More Hispanics than non-Hispanics, 3 = About Half & Half, 4 = More Non- Hispanics than Hispanics, 5 = All Non-Hispanics. The latent scale for the social aspects of acculturation was ( $\alpha = .725$ )



Gender Roles had 5 subsections that were broken down into Family Function Transcendent (FFT); Social Function Transcendent (SFT); Family Function Sexism (FFS); Social Function Sexism (SFS); Employment Function Sexism (EFS).

4 questions were used to measure SFT: 1) People can be aggressive and understanding, regardless of their sex 2) Children should be given freedom depending on their age and how mature they are, not depending on their sex 3) People should be treated equally, regardless of their sex 4) We should stop thinking about whether people are men or women and focus on other characteristics". All the responses were coded with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest (1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5=Strongly agree). This latent scale was measured to have an alpha coefficient of .597.

SFS was measured using the following questions: "A woman must contradict her partner" "I think it is worse to see a man cry than a woman" "Girls should be more clean and tidy than boys" "I think it is right that in my circles of friends, my future domestic activity is considered more important than my professional activity". All these questions were measured with the lowest being 1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and the highest was 5=Strongly agree. Moreover, this latent scale received an overall alpha coefficient of .641 indicating its high reliability.

For FFT only one question was integrated into the analysis which was "Boys have the same obligations to help with household chores as girls". Responses were reverse coded and 1 remained being the lowest and 5 being the highest (1=Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Agree and 1=Strongly agree).

FFS was measured using 4 different questions, the first one being 1)My partner thinking that I am responsible for doing the household chores would cause me stress". This first question

was recoded with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest (1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5=Strongly agree). The rest of the questions were as follows: 2) The husband is responsible for the family so that the wife must obey him 3) think boys should be brought up differently than girls 4) Mothers should make most of the decisions on how to bring up their children". These answer choices given were 1) Strongly disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Neutral, 4) Agree and 5) Strongly agree and they were coded as listed. The alpha coefficient this latent scale scored was a total of .456.

EFT was measured using the questions: 1) Men should occupy posts of responsibility 2) A father's main responsibility is to help his children financially 3) Some jobs are not appropriate for women 4) accept that in my circle of friends, my partner's future job is considered more important than mine 5) Only some kinds of job are equally appropriate for men and women and 6) In many important jobs it is better to contract men than women. All the responses were coded as (1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5=Strongly agree). The latent scale's alpha coefficient was .752.

Respondents were asked to select the answer choice that best represented their race and the answer choices given included: 1) African American/Black, 2) Asian, 3) American Indian/ Alaska Native 4) Native Hawaiian/Other, and 5) White. Given that the response rate in all the categories was too small the responses were therefore coded dichotomously as follows: (1= Black/ African American, 1= Asian, 1 = American Indian/ Alaska Native, 1= Native Hawaiian/ Other, 2= White/ Caucasian).

For party affiliation respondents were given the answer choices of: 1) Republican, 2) Independent, 3) Democrat, and 4) Other and the responses were recoded into (1= Other, 2= Independent, 3= Democrat, and 4= Republican).

Gender was measured by a single question: “Which best describes your gender” and the responses were coded with (1= Male and 2 =Female).

Age was measured using the following responses and the manner in which these were coded follows the same order (1= 18-21, 2= 21-24, 3= 25-34, 4= 35-49, 5= 50-64, 6= 65+).

Education was measured by asking participants to identify their status based on college credits, and the following 4 answer choices were given: 1) Freshman (less than 30 semester hours of credit, 2) Sophomore (30-59 semester hours of credit), 3) Junior (60-89 semester hours of credit), and 4) Senior (90 or more semester hours of credit). The choices were coded the way they’ve been ordered.

Political views were measured by asking “How would you describe your political views?” and was measured by coding the answer choices as follows: (1= Extremely liberal, 2= Somewhat liberal, 3= Lean liberal, 4= In the middle, 5= Lean Conservative, 6= Somewhat Conservative, and 7= Extremely Conservative).

Male Traits was analyzed by using two different questions separately, the first one being “When thinking about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women tend to be more ambitious” and the second one being “When thinking about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women tend to be more assertive”. Both responses’ answer choices were coded as (1= Man, 2= No Difference and 3= Woman).

Female Trait was measured by asking participations ““When thinking about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women tend to be more compassionate” and answer choices were coded as (1= Man, 2= No Difference, and 3= Woman).

Female Policy was measured using two separate questions which were: “Do you think men or women in elected office are better at education” and “Do you think men or women in

elected office are better at healthcare” and the responses were coded as (1= Men, 2= No Difference, and 3= Woman).

Male Policy was measured with only one question asking “Do you think men or women in elected office were better at economy?” with responses being categorized as follows: (1= Man, 2= Neutral, and 3= Woman).

Issue competence was measured using one question “Select who you think would probably do a better job of handling the following issues listed below: Handling foreign affairs” and the responses were coded (1= Man, 2= Neutral, and 3= Woman).

Belief stereotypes were measured by asking “Select who you think would be more likely to take these positions if they were in office: Change politics” and the answer choices were coded as (1= Man, 2= Neutral, and 3= Woman).

## RESULTS

In table 1 the descriptive statistics showcase some interesting detail in the sample of the study, as for example regarding gender participation there was a much higher female percentage as it composed more than half of the total participants (68.2 %). Moreover, for party affiliation it was seen that Democrat respondents also made up a large portion of the sample as it was a total of 47.5%. The age range that had the highest levels of participation consisted of 18- to 20-year-old, as these made up 43.4% of the sample size. However, for classification it was seen how seniors, or those that were classified as having more than 90 semester credit hours, that were the group that had the highest participation rates (45.8%).

When looking at the three different sections regarding candidate traits for the Male Trait Assertive there was a large portion of individuals that remained neutral (68.5%), but more participants viewed female candidates as assertive than male candidates with a total of 16.5%. The trait of ambition similarly showcased that almost all participants saw no difference between men and women (60.3%), but when just comparing between men and women there was an opposite response as more individuals indicated seeing men political leaders as being more ambitious than women (27.1%). The Female Trait of compassion was where individuals swayed from taking a neutral stance and most respondents indicated seeing women leaders as being more compassionate than men (53.4%). Healthcare and Education policy issues indicated a majority of neutral responses from participants, as a 80.7% saw no difference between men or women being better at handling issues surrounding education and similarly for healthcare (71.4%). Yet, for economic policy issues even though the dominant response was seeing no difference between men and women, seeing men as more equipped came in second with only 2.4% seeing women as being better at handling these kinds of issues.

When examining issue competence regarding foreign affairs, a neutral position was taken by most respondents (70.1%), yet when making a dichotomous comparison between men and women it was seen that individuals recorded women as being much more competent (16.9%). Lastly for the belief stereotype involving which gender would be more likely to take the position of changing politics if elected to office, it was seen that no difference was seen between both genders (61%). Making an examination that excluded the neutral stance and just focused on male and female highlighted that respondents believed that women were more likely to take this role if elected into office (29.1%).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N=522)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Dependent variable</b>				
Baseline Preference	2.146	.5549	1	3
Man	9.1%			
Neutral	67.1%			
Woman	23.8%			
<b>Independent/Control Variables</b>				
Age	1.8336	.90586	1	5
Political Views	3.2505	1.41318	1	7
Gender	1.6822	.46604	1	2
Male	31.8%			
Female	68.2%			
Race	1.9680	.17621	1	2
Education	2.9645	1.15820	1	4
Freshman	19.4%			
Sophomore	10.5%			
Junior	24.3%			
Senior	45.8%			
Party Affiliation	2.6486	.94407	1	4
Independent	19.4%			
Democrat	47.5%			
Republican	16.8%			
Other	16.3%			
Social Function Transcendent	4.2884	.61107	1	5

**Continued from Table 1.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Social Function Sexism	2.0129	.71598	1	4.5
Family Function Transcendent	4.3345	1.09206	1	5
Employment Function Sexism	2.4204	.76571	1	4.5
Family Function Sexism	2.2628	.59657	1.06	4.19
Acculturation Language	3.3365	.85066	1	5
Acculturation Media	3.9078	.81855	1	5
Acculturation Social	2.2636	.52587	1	4.25
Issue Competence Foreign Affairs	2.1468	.55498	1	3
Men	13%			
No Difference	70.1%			
Women	16.9%			
Male Trait Assertive	2.0148	.56193	1	3
Men	15%			
No Difference	68.5%			
Women	16.5%			
Male Trait Ambitious	1.8553	.61383	1	3
Men	27.1%			
No Difference	60.3%			



**Continued from Table 1.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Women	12.6%			
Female Trait Compassionate	2.5065	55334	1	3
Men	2.8%			
No Difference	43.8%			
Women	53.4%			
Education Policy	2.1636	.40849	1	3
Men	1.5%			
No Difference	80.7%			
Women	17.8%			
Healthcare Policy	2.2454	.47589	1	3
Men	2.0%			
No Difference	71.4%			
Women	26.6%			
Economic Policy	1.8603	.41096	1	3
Men	16.4%			
No Difference	81.2%			
Women	2.4%			
Belief Stereotype Change Politics	2.1929	.59417	1	3
Men	9.8%			
No Difference	61%			
Women	29.1%			

Table 2. showcases the results that were found when doing a multimodal regression of the variables and considered are both the responses for choosing man and remaining neutral both of which are in reference to woman. The table showcases the multimodal regression of men in comparison to women and it also examines the differences between the neutral position in comparison to women and each section is explained separately.

First, the section comparing women and male baseline preferences will be further broken down. In the comparison section that examines men in comparison to women there are some key findings to be discussed. Respondents that identified as being more conservative were more likely to vote for man ( $B = .874^{***}$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Participants that identified as being males were more likely to have a baseline gender preference for men ( $B = 1.705^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). For the Social Function Transcendent variable had an inverse relationship showcasing that those that were less transcendent or held more sexist attitudes were more likely to vote for men ( $B = -1.203^*$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Individuals that showcased higher levels of acculturation regarding language were more likely to prefer men ( $B = 1.084^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). When participants did not see a difference regarding compassion between men and women office holders and candidates, then there was a higher inclination to prefer men candidates ( $B = 1.364^*$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Those that viewed men as being better equipped to handle economic policy were also seen to prefer men seeking office ( $B = 38.674^{***}$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Those that saw men as taking the position to change politics were seen to prefer men candidates ( $B = 2.607^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Participants that saw no difference between men or women taking the position to change politics when elected into office were seen to prefer men candidates ( $B = 2.327^{***}$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

For the neutral position it is seen that participants that identified as being conservative were more likely to take a neutral position than to prefer a woman candidate ( $B = .271^*$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Participants that identified as being males were more likely to take a neutral stance ( $B = 1.569^{***}$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Those that demonstrated more sexist views regarding Employment Function Sexism were more likely to have a neutral preference ( $B = .498^+$ ,  $p < .1$ ). Participants were more likely to have a neutral stance if they showcased higher levels of social acculturation ( $B = 1.222^{***}$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The respondents that saw men as doing a better job when it came to handling foreign affair issues took a neutral stance ( $B = 1.037^+$ ,  $p < .1$ ). A neutral position was more likely to be taken when participants did not perceive a difference in compassion between men and women office holders and candidates ( $B = .890^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). When no difference in competence was selected regarding the handling of healthcare then a position of neutral was taken ( $B = 14.745^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A neutral stance was more likely to be taken when participants viewed men as taking on the role of changing politics ( $B = .929^+$ ,  $p < .1$ ). Participants that saw no difference in what gender would be more likely to take the position of changing politics then a neutral position was more likely to be taken ( $B = .768^*$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 2. Multinomial Logistics Regression**

Variables	Man		Neutral	
	B	SE	B	SE
Age	-.362	.314	-.300	.189
Political Views	.874***	.243	.271*	.127
Gender	1.705**	.625	1.569***	.439
Race	-1.989	1.619	-.777	.859
Education	-.155	.251	.029	.140
Political affiliation				
Other	-.739	.910	-.559	.670
Independent	-1.233	.919	-.628	.649
Democrat	-1.048	.829	-.690	.589
Social Function Transcendent	-1.203*	.478	-.382	.307
Social Function Sexism	-.567	.503	-.346	.285
Family Function Transcendent	.206	.238	.197	.125
Employment Function Sexism	.641	.471	.498+	.268
Family Function Sexism	-.014	.588	-.120	.356
Acculturation Language	1.084**	.372	.440*	.199
Acculturation Media	-.462	.376	-.099	.623
Acculturation Social	.810	.521	1.222***	.312
Issue Competence Foreign Affairs				
Men	1.623	.848	1.037+	.569
No Difference	-.575	.789	.655+	.376
Male Trait Assertive				
Men	.153	1.010	-.029	.491
No Difference	1.081	.845	-.156	.382
Male Ambitious				
Men	-.902	.862	.091	.461
No Difference	.383	.822	.266	.355
Female Trait Compassionate				
Men	24.279	352.788	23.888	352.785

**Continued from Table 2.**

No Difference	-1.364*	.670	.890**	.343
Education Policy				
Men	14.880	107.325	2.465	124.380
No Difference	-.114	.649	.387	.363
Healthcare Policy				
Men	19.915	6109.55	17.016	6109.55
No Difference	.784	.610	.682*	.334
Economic Policy				
Men	38.674***	.691	14.602	150.605
No Difference	38.749	.000	14.745	150.606
Belief Stereotype Change Politics				
Men	2.607**	.911	.929 <sup>+</sup>	.559
No Difference	2.327***	.730	.768*	.321
R <sup>2</sup>	.570		.570	

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## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the goals of this study was to compare and examine the different populations that other studies have examined regarding gendered stereotypes and how they play a role in the support or lack of support that an individual might initially have when two equally qualified male and female and politician or candidates were present. First it is indicative to highlight the high coefficient of determination the model yielded (.570) which showcases the high strength the model holds, and overall showcases the high level of correlation the study had.

Moreover, the results showcase interesting findings that will aid and supplement future research concentrating in the Hispanic populations attitudes and perspectives regarding women seeking leadership positions in office. The hypothesis of individuals with more traditional gender roles demonstrating less support for female candidates and politicians proved to be supported, as in the latent scales that measured transcendentalism in the social aspect showcased that those that held more sexist views were more likely to elect men rather than women. A similar case was seen for those that held more sexist views regarding the workplace, as participants that scored higher in this variable were more inclined to take a neutral stance rather than vote for women. The second hypothesis detailing that those that were more acculturated were more likely to showcase greater support for female candidates was rejected given that an opposite relationship was seen. Those that were more acculturated in the areas of language and social life were less likely to vote for women or have a preference to vote for them.

Lastly, the third hypothesis that predicted that women will be more inclined to showcase greater support for women candidates was also supported. It was seen that those that identified under the male gender were either more likely to take a neutral stance or be more inclined to vote for men. This follows what literature has previously argued regarding women voting for women

at essentially all levels of office as female participants were seen to not only have a baseline preference for women when given the option between a man candidate and a woman candidate, but the rejection of a neutral stance was also seen (Brians 2005).

In the Dolan (2010) study from which many of the questions were gathered to gain a better understanding of gender stereotypes and gender roles when it comes to the political realm some key similarities were found as well as some notable differences. To begin, in the study being compared there was no choice for a neutral position, so participants had to choose between man or woman, but in this study that choice was given and it was found that a large portion of participants selected to remain neutral, but when omitting this and just comparing men and women it was found that baseline preference for women was much higher than for men. On the other hand, Dolan (2010) finds that baseline preference for men is much higher as 60% of respondents showcase a higher preference for men when two equally qualified candidates are available. Another key difference falls upon issue competence as respondents were given the three same choices, as the ones represented in this study and the majority selected women as being able to “handle education and healthcare”, and in this study the majority saw no difference in issue competence between gender (Dolan 2010, p. 77).

Data from the Dolan (2010) study affirmed that Democrats also showcased higher support for women in comparison to Republicans, yet this study did not find party affiliation to be a statistically significant variable. In fact, political ideologies or views in which respondents indicated on what side of the spectrum between being conservative and liberal the individuals fell in proved to be more statistically significant pushing forward the idea that partisanship might not be as much of an indicator of support for women in comparison to political ideologies. This proves to be one of the most significant findings as literature argues the importance of party

affiliation upon support for women as many argue that partisanship proves to be much more important than the gender of the candidate (Dolan 2006; Stauffer & Fisk 2022). This study aids in the argument that literature has failed to develop regarding “the relationship between liberalism and willingness to support female candidates” in which it has been emphasized that “difference in support for females” stems more from liberalism rather than party identification (Ekstrand & Ekert 1981, p. 80). Differences in population samples must be addressed to gain a more comprehensive view since the Dolan study was administered on the general population and was not a student sample, but the sample size was predominantly White and had minimal minority representation. Also, given that this sample took course over a decade ago, it is also of importance to highlight that the more egalitarian responses in this thesis could be attributed to this, as gender roles and stereotypes have slowly declined throughout time.

Furthermore, it is seen in this population that gender might not play such a significant role when it comes to the perception and attitudes surrounding competence of a female candidate. Research has also determined that the gender of a candidate might be more significant for some populations, but not so much for others (Ekstrand & Ekert 1981). Moreover, some reasoning behind why one’s position in the political ideology spectrum is important is due to the data that has showcased how voters that identify to be on the more liberal side of the spectrum tend to also have more liberal attitudes about a female candidate in comparison to those that identify to be more conservative (Ekstrand & Ekert 1981).

One of the first studies focusing on gender stereotypes and from which some questions in the Dolan study derived from was done by Huddy & Terkildsen (1993) in which undergraduate students were given a survey that looked at the different perspectives held when comparing issue competence, trait stereotypes, and policy emphasis between male and female candidates. This



study by Huddy & Terkildsen (1993) takes place in 1990 and uses 297 undergraduate students from the State University of New York located in Stony Brook. Similar age ranges can be examined for both this thesis and the study, but the study's demographic is primarily composed of White participants (77%). Given that the same questions were used for both studies it serves beneficial to compare these similar educational statuses both studies look at to gain a comparative perspective of how differences in race and ethnicity might be present. In contrast to this study, it was seen that "manipulated gender and traits" were seen to not influence the competence in economic issues that a candidate had (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993, p. 137). The authors argue that trait stereotypes tend to be more influential when it comes to judging a candidate's policy emphasis which can be inferred from the results this thesis gathered. When considering the exclusion of the no difference answer choice when comparing male and female candidates many participants still believed that women would focus more on female stereotypical issues such as healthcare and education and males to economic issues and policies.

Schneider & Bos (2013) examine gender stereotypes by seeing whether college students stereotype female candidates the same way that women in general are stereotyped by being seen as more compassionate, affectionate, and gentle. The study's sample size is made up of 88% white undergraduate students, and it finds that female politicians "are not stereotyped as women" and that participants associated women candidates and politicians more with negative traits such as uptight and dictatorial rather than sensitive or compassionate (Schneider & Bos 2013, p. 260). Differences in stereotyping were seen when comparing to the Schneider & Bo (2013) study, as male politicians were evaluated as being more ambitious, driven, and assertive than female politicians. Although results cannot be directly compared as a no difference option was given to participants in this thesis, when disregarding that option and focusing on the male and female

categories similarly participant evaluated males as being more ambitious, but in contrast females were perceived to be more assertive. This further highlight how gender stereotypes might work differently when comparing ethnicity and race.

The finding that men had a baseline preference for men, can also be associated with the fact that “men are much more likely to be conservative than liberal” which points to more constrained ideas of gender roles that might be held (Cassino 2018, p. 52). As it has been established, the gender of a candidate or political leader can affect the perception voters might have upon the competence the candidate has with certain issues with women often being perceived to handle issues surrounding education and health (Bracic et al. 2019). Yet, the findings show that Hispanics do not view neither women or men as being more inclined to address these kinds of issues nor more competent.

Banwart (2010) also test the trait and belief stereotypes with undergraduate students located in a mid-size Midwestern university in order to examine whether the prevalence of evaluating female and male candidates by both trait and belief stereotypes still exists. It is found that trait stereotypes continue to prevail, as “female candidates were rated higher than male candidates on the Warmth/Expressiveness scale” (Banwart 2010, p. 277). When examining belief stereotypes, the results showcase similar results to the ones gathered, as male candidates were seen to be more competent in handling economic issues but only when the no difference option is excluded. Therefore, it can only be assumed that small portion of Hispanic undergraduate students within this university still integrate belief stereotypes when evaluating female and male candidates, but the majority have more egalitarian and neutral assessments of both genders.

Despite there being an important number of differences, some similarities between the Dolan study and this one was found. On economic issue competence “which is generally

considered a male area of expertise” the contrasting study showcased a similarity in which most respondents also saw no difference between men and women with only “28% [holding] the predicted stereotype” almost proportionate to the one in this study of 16.4% (Dolan 2010, p. 77). The strong bias that men would be better at handling issues surrounding the economy could be understood and explained by considering the possible role that machismo might have played, as many Hispanic households still share the idea that men are to be both the protectors and providers of the family (Roehling, Jarvis, Swope 2005). Moreover, Mexican culture has also been seen to place much value not only on family but also the roles that each member contributes with mothers and women taking the role of caregiver, nurturer, and wives while men are the decision makers and breadwinner of the family (Garcia, Angel, Angel, Chiu & Melvin 2015). These traditional gender roles have led for many Mexican Americans to view women to showcase more “competence in [the performance of tasks] such as cooking or shopping, and men to be better at things such as “driving or handling money” (Garcia et al. 2015, p. 1249).

Moreover, in the traits that were measured between being assertive, ambitious, and compassionate the only trait in which participants held the expected stereotype was the one measuring compassion, as 53.4% selected women and therefore held the expected stereotype. Similarly, this is seen in the Dolan study, as it was found that 71% of participants held the expected stereotype (Dolan 2010, p.77). Although many articles argue that issue competence is an area in which gender stereotypes prevail the most, seeing how the gender stereotype of viewing female candidates and office holders as being much more compassionate than men proves that trait stereotypes still play an important role in candidate evaluation. Dolan (2018) argues that a clearer distinction between issue competence than trait stereotypes can be found would possibly be due to the changes in gender roles that have gained traction over the last

decade along with the possibility that issue competence stereotypes are held more often than stereotypes regarding demeanor and personalities.

Studies focusing on gender gaps that have compared various racial groups have found that the belief that men are much better suited for politics continues to prevail except for Latinos (Bracic et al. 2019). Len-Ríos (2017) showcases how individuals that consume more Spanish media and also identify as Latinos are more likely to hold more liberal stances on immigration and view discrimination as a big issue but are less likely to support social issues. This is not as solidly confirmed with the findings as more acculturated Hispanics in the aspect of language were more likely to have a baseline preference for men, but those more acculturated in social and language areas were instead more likely to hold a neutral position. This highlights the complex nature that acculturation might have when it comes to evaluating women candidates and women seeking positions in office. However, Len-Ríos (2017) indicates how a strong shift has been seen within the last two decades in regard to women in politics as “perceived gender differences between Latinos” and non- Latinos might be closing (p. 251). As time has passed there has been greater adoption of liberal stances for social issues that have gone resemble the trends seen in the American population (Len-Ríos 2017). This study aids the literature gap there exists surrounding different levels of egalitarian ideals there exist between different Hispanic groups, as it has been argued that Mexican Americans tend to be more egalitarian in comparison to other subgroups (Roehling, Jarvis, Swope 2005).

These findings can further aid in understanding what effect gender stereotypes have on women candidates at different office levels, as studies focusing on White college students showcase that “typical male qualities are considered crucial for higher office” (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993, p. 518). Although this does not indicate that women are unable to reach high

level office positions, it does however highlight that a bias remains for candidates that are deemed to not showcase masculine traits such as being assertive, self-confident, and rational (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993).

As Frasure-Yokley (2018) notes, research studies have failed to gather sufficient “samples of women of color” to be able to look at the differences between how different women vote and, in the study, it is confirmed that White women’s political behavior differs substantially from that of a woman of color (p. 6). This study proves to be one of many that affirm that a substantial quantity of data that represents White people as studies focus on this subpopulation more attention should be paid to the intersectional relationship of race and gender and how it can affect support for women in the political sphere. Understanding the complex relationship of how gendered stereotypes are not only formed but the socialization behind them as well requires for research to focus on how ethnicity and race play a role, for it has been seen that Latina girls tend to experience more traditional gender-typing pressures in comparison to White girls (Leaper & Brown 2008). This research therefore extends on previous findings regarding egalitarian attitudes and the gender role stereotypes apply when evaluating women candidates and it also challenges other findings by showcasing the unique views that Hispanics in the border region have upon women in leadership.

Some policy implications suggested for more equitable ideas of women’s place in various aspects of life to be achieved along with greater support when these women run into office is include an increased focus within the educational system about women’s abilities and capacities. By directing more attention and integrating further emphasis on the positive impact that more egalitarian ideals towards students, then gender role stereotypes can be easier to break down when it comes to political life. As it can be seen in this population there exist more egalitarian

attitudes of what a woman can and should do, yet there remain some sexist ideals that can be further dispelled. In the instance of perception of candidate's demeanor, participants tended to view women as showing much more compassion than men when being elected to office. Although this might not seem to particularly have a negative impact when it comes to the way women are viewed within leadership, it can have negative connotations in the capability a women might have when making decision regarding other areas that were not explored within this study such as terrorism.

To add on, the future implementation of programs that focus less possible on having individuals fully immerse into the new host country and instead encourage and actively provide opportunities for different cultural and social aspects of their second home to occur should also be considered. Given that the data gathered showcases that acculturating to the host country does not equate to the adoption of more egalitarian ideals.

The last policy implication suggested would be those educational institutions of all levels from grade school all the way to the collegiate level should endorse and make active efforts to introduce and expose students to women that already have or had positions in office. As research demonstrates, exposure to women that have held or currently hold these positions proves to be beneficial for young girls as an increased in interest in politics, political participation, and yearn to run for office in the future can be seen. This pushes for young women to feel encouraged and supported in taking more active roles when it comes to political life which ultimately leads to greater and more equitable representation in government and social life.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Lastly it is important to denote some limits that this study faces. One of these being the initial attempt to separate different subgroups of Hispanics to gain a more comprehensive understanding at the differences between each of these. By adding a question that asked respondents to indicate which answer choice best aligned with the Hispanic or Latino origin the individuals identified with; however, it was seen that the responses gathered were too small for an analysis of the different subgroups to be integrated as only 20 respondents did not identify as Mexican Americans. Therefore, it was decided to stick the focus upon Hispanics as a whole. Moreover, another limitation that this study faced was that some of the scales that were initially integrated showcased very low reliability scores and many of the questions that were needed to either be separated and some of the subsections within the scales were needed to be omitted.

Another important limitation would be that this sample only examined Texas A&M International students and therefore only the perspectives of these Hispanic undergraduates were recorded, so future studies should focus to compose a wider range of participants by integrating different universities to see whether region could possibly play a significant factor regarding stances and attitudes had. It would be prudent in future studies to extend participation to other border cities such as those located within California, New Mexico, and Arizona in order to gain a more comprehensive view. Lastly, convenience sampling was present within this study as all the target demographic for this study was undergraduate college students. In Huddy & Terkildsen's (1993) study a concern brought up centers around how generalizable the results regarding the use of stereotypes when it comes to women politicians and candidates might be from a sample that uses only college students. The authors note that although college students are less likely to demonstrate higher levels of gender stereotypes due to higher education not endorsing the use of these, data has shown that despite this it has been seen throughout multiple other studies that the

presence of gender stereotypes amongst college students is not as low as one would think (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993).

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## Appendix A. Survey

Please circle your response to each of the following questions:

1. **Screen Question:** Are you 18 or older?

Yes → continue to the second screen question.

No → Thank you for your participation in this survey. End.

2. **Screen Question:** Are you currently enrolled in at least one university course at Texas A&M International University and are currently an undergraduate student?

Yes → Continue to the third screen question.

No → Thank you for participating in this survey. End.

3. **Screen Question:** Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino?

Yes → Continue to the 1st question below

No → Thank you for participating in this survey. End.

### Section 1.

1. People can be aggressive and understanding, regardless of their sex
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
  
2. People should be treated equally, regardless of their sex
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
  
3. Children should be given freedom depending on their age and how mature they are, not depending on their sex
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
  
4. Boys have the same obligations to help with household chores as girls
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral

4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
5. Household chores should not be allocated by sex
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree
6. We should stop thinking about whether people are men or women and focus on other characteristics
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree
7. My partner thinking that I am responsible for doing the household chores would cause me stress
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree
8. The husband is responsible for the family so the wife must obey him
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree
9. A woman must not contradict her partner
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree
10. I think it is worse to see a man cry than a woman
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree

11. Girls should be cleaner and tidier than boys

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

12. Men should occupy posts of responsibility

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

13. I think boys should be brought up differently than girls

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

14. I think it is right that in my circles of friends, my future domestic activity is considered more important than my professional activity

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

15. A father's main responsibility is to help his children financially

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

16. Some jobs are not appropriate for women

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

17. I accept that in my circle of friends, my partner's future job is considered more important than mine



1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

18. Mothers should make most of the decisions on how to bring up their children

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

19. Only some kinds of job are equally appropriate for men and women

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

20. In many important jobs it is better to contract men than women

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

## **Section 2:**

1. In general, what language (s) do you read and speak?

1. Only Spanish
2. Spanish better than English
3. Both Equally
4. English better than Spanish
5. Only English

2. What was the language (s) you used as a child?

1. Only Spanish
2. Spanish better than English
3. Both Equally
4. English better than Spanish
5. Only English

3. What language (s) do you usually speak at home?

1. Only Spanish
2. Spanish better than English
3. Both Equally
4. English better than Spanish

5. Only English
4. In which language (s) do you usually think?
  1. Only Spanish
  2. Spanish better than English
  3. Both Equally
  4. English better than Spanish
  5. Only English
5. What language (s) do you usually speak with your friends?
  1. Only Spanish
  2. Spanish better than English
  3. Both Equally
  4. English better than Spanish
  5. Only English
6. In what language (s) are the T.V. programs you usually watch?
  1. Only Spanish
  2. Spanish better than English
  3. Both Equally
  4. English better than Spanish
  5. Only English
7. In what language (s) are the radio programs you usually listen to?
  1. Only Spanish
  2. Spanish better than English
  3. Both Equally
  4. English better than Spanish
  5. Only English
8. In general, in what language (s) are the movies, T.V., and radio programs you prefer to watch and listen to?
  1. Only Spanish
  2. Spanish better than English
  3. Both Equally
  4. English better than Spanish
  5. Only English
9. Your close friends are:
  1. All Spanish/Hispanics
  2. More Hispanics than non-Hispanics
  3. About Half & Half
  4. More Non-Hispanics than Hispanics
  5. All Non-Hispanics
10. You prefer going to social gatherings/parties at which the people are:
  1. All Spanish/Hispanics
  2. More Hispanics than non-Hispanics
  3. About Half & Half
  4. More Non-Hispanics than Hispanics
  5. All Non-Hispanics

11. The persons you visit or who visit you are:
  1. All Spanish/Hispanics
  2. More Hispanics than non-Hispanics
  3. About Half & Half
  4. More Non-Hispanics than Hispanics
  5. All Non-Hispanics
12. If you could choose your children's friends, you would want them to be:
  1. All Spanish/Hispanics
  2. More Hispanics than non-Hispanics
  3. About Half & Half
  4. More Non-Hispanics than Hispanics
  5. All Non-Hispanics
  6. No Preference

**Section 3:**

13. If two equally qualified candidates were running for office, one a man and the other a woman, do you think you would be more likely to vote for the man or the woman?
  1. Man
  2. Neutral
  3. Woman
14. Circle who you think would probably do a better job of handling the following the following issues listed below:
  1. Protecting Social Security
    - a. Man
    - b. Neutral
    - c. Woman
  2. Handling foreign affairs
    - a. Man
    - b. Neutral
    - c. Woman
  - iii. Dealing with the crime problem
    - a. Man
    - b. Neutral

c. Woman

15. Circle who you think would be more likely to take these positions if they were in office:

1. Change politics

a. Man

b. Neutral

c. Woman

2. Take your position on government spending

a. Man

b. Neutral

c. Woman

3. Take your position on abortion

a. Man

b. Neutral

c. Woman

16. Do you think men or women in elected office are better at education?

1. Men

2. No difference

3. Women

17. Do you think men or women in elected office are better at terrorism?

1. Men

2. No difference

3. Women

18. Do you think men or women in elected office are better at healthcare?

1. Men

2. No difference

3. Women

19. Do you think men or women in elected office are better at economy?

1. Men

2. No difference

3. Women

20. When thinking about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women tend to be more assertive?
1. Men
  2. No difference
  3. Women
21. When thinking about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women tend to be more compassionate?
1. Men
  2. No difference
  3. Women
22. When thinking about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women tend to be more ambitious?
1. Men
  2. No difference
  3. Women

**Section 4:**

1. How old are you
  1. 18-20
  2. 21-24
  3. 25-34
  4. 35-49
  5. 50-64
  6. 65+
2. Which best describes your gender
  1. Male
  2. Female
3. How would you describe your race?
  1. White/Caucasian
  2. Black/African American
  3. Asian
  4. American Indian/Alaska native
  5. Native Hawaiian/Other pacific islander
4. How would you describe your Hispanic/ Latino origin?
  1. Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
  2. Puerto Rican
  3. Cuban
  4. Colombian
  5. Argentinean
  6. Cuban
  7. Dominican
  8. Nicaraguan

9. Salvadoran

10. Other

1. Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your present religion, if any?

a. Protestant

b. Roman Catholic

c. Jewish

d. Muslim

e. Mormon

f. Buddhist

g. Atheist

h. Other

1. Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which best describes your current level of education

1. Freshman (Less than 30 semester hours of credit)

2. Sophomore (30-59 semester hours of credit)

3. Junior (60-89 semester hours of credit)

4. Senior (90 or more semester hours of credit)

7. How would you describe your political views?

1. Extremely liberal

2. Somewhat liberal

3. Lean liberal

4. In the middle

5. Lean conservative

6. Somewhat conservative

7. Extremely conservative

8. Which of these parties do you identify with the most?

1. Republican

2. Independent

3. Democrat

4. Other

**Appendix B. Recruitment Material**



**Women in Politics**

JOIN OUR RESEARCH STUDY

**Women in Politics**

CONTACT SALIHA GARCIA AT: [SALIHAGARCIA@DUSTY.TAMU.EDU](mailto:SALIHAGARCIA@DUSTY.TAMU.EDU)  
OR DR. SIMON ZSCHIRNT AT: [SIMON.ZSCHIRNT@TAMU.EDU](mailto:SIMON.ZSCHIRNT@TAMU.EDU)  
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN OUR SURVEY

## VITA

Student Name: Saliha Garcia

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Educational: B.A., Psychology with a Minor in Sociology,  
Texas A&M International University at Laredo, 2021

In Progress: Master of Arts, History and Political Thought  
Major Specialization: Political Science

Honors: University's Honors Program

Awards: Graduate Assistantship 2021-2022