# Chapter V

# Discussion

The present study sought to investigate the influence of gender schemas on how women candidates are evaluated in terms of competence, desirability, and likeability, and how their political messages and personal qualifications are received in comparison to male candidates. This chapter will discuss the major findings in light of previous literature and present limitations and recommendations for further research.

## Major Findings

### Hypotheses. Below are the hypotheses and results followed by interpretation and implications.

### *Hypothesis 1A.* Overall, participants will accurately retrieve a higher number of

items delivered by the male candidate than by the female. This hypothesis was not supported. However, a significant interaction between gender of participant and gender of candidate was found: Male participants recalled more of the male candidate’s platform than of the female candidate’s platform, although female participants recalled the male and female candidates’ platforms equally.

***Hypothesis 1B****.* Participants will attribute more male stereotypic items (“hard issues”) to the male candidate and more female stereotypic items (“soft issue”) to the female candidate. This hypothesis was supported. Participants, both male and female, attributed more male stereotypic items (“hard issues”) to the male candidate and more female stereotypic items (“soft issue”) to the female candidate.

***Hypothesis 1C.*** Participants will recall a higher number of items pertaining to professional qualifications to the male candidate and a higher number of items pertaining to personal information to the female candidate. There were no differences in the recall of political qualifications or personal information to the male versus the female candidate. However, an interaction between gender of the participant and candidate occurred: Male participants recalled significantly fewer professional qualifications about the female candidate than about the male candidate, whereas female participants recalled their qualifications equivalently.

***Hypothesis 2A.*** Overall, the male candidate will receive higher evaluations and be rated as more competent, likeable, and desirable for the office than the female candidate. In contrast to the predictions, all participants rated the female candidate as morecompetent, likeable, and desirable than the male candidate.

***Hypothesis 2B.***  For likeability, there will be an interaction between gender and information about family, such that the female candidate who explicitly mentions her family (a spouse and three children) will be rated as more likeable than the female candidate without an explicit description, whereas for male candidates the explicit description of family will not affect likeability ratings. This hypothesis was not confirmed. However, an interaction was found for candidate gender by video order on likeability ratings. When the female candidate’s video was presented first, likeability ratings of the two candidates did not differ, whereas participants rated the male candidate less likeable than the female candidate when his video was presented first.

***Hypothesis 3A.***  Accuracy of retrieval and evaluations of candidates will be moderated by participants’ attitudes toward women such that higher scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Scale will be related to greater accuracy in retrieval of information for male candidates, more gender schematic retrieval of information, and higher evaluations of male candidates. No differences were found for accurate retrieval of candidate platforms or for greater schematic attribution of information for male or female candidates as a result of scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Scale. However, two interactions were found:

1. Participants scoring low on the Total Sexism scale rated the female candidate higher than the male candidate on likeability, with no differences in likeability ratings found for participants with high scores on the Total Sexism Scale.
2. For participants scoring low on the Hostile Sexism scale, the female candidate was rated as more desirable for the position than was the male candidate. For participants with high Hostile Sexism scores, the candidates received similar ratings of desirability.

### Research Questions. A significantly larger proportion of participants reported that they would vote for the female candidate than the male candidate. Furthermore, participants who reported they would vote for the female had significantly lower Hostile Sexism scores than those who reported they would vote for the male candidate. Those who stated they would vote for the female candidate also rated her higher than the male on desirability, likeability, and competency.

### Recall of candidate’s political positions and qualifications. Although, the first

hypothesis, that the political platforms of the male candidate would be recalled more accurately by all participants than the platforms of the female candidate, was not supported, a significant interaction between gender of participant and gender of candidate was found. The male participants recalled the male candidate’s platform more accurately than they recalled the female candidate’s platform with no gender differences found for the female participants.

The hypothesis was predicated on gender schema theory: participants would attend to and recall more information consonant with their stereotypic views about gender (Cherney, 2005; Pittinsky, Shih, and Trahan, 2006). Given the large discrepancies related to men and women holding national political office (Center for American Women in Politics, 2011), political candidacy is more associated with male gender behavior and roles. Because the male candidate’s presence is more consonant with gender descriptions and prescriptions pertaining to leadership (Heilman, 2001), he would be paid attention to and more of his message would be retained. Gender schema theory would predict that both male and female participants would attend to and retain more of what the male candidate said (Cherney, 2005; Fiske and Taylor, 1991), because both genders are socialized with the same gender specific messages (Brescoll, Dawson, & Uhlmann, 2010; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Pittinsky, Shih, and Trahan, 2006). In contrast, the results suggest that male participants responded in a gender schematic manner, but the female participants attended to the platforms of both the male and female candidates equally.

The finding that women are less likely and men more likely to adhere to gender schemas and stereotyping has been found in other research as well. For example, researchers have found that men in comparison to women tend to view mothers who decide to go back to college as less nurturing and feminine than women without children who attend college (Mottarella, Fritzsche, Whitten, & Bedsole, 2009). In another study, when participants were provided resumes of male and female job applicants described with agentic (male stereotypical) and communal (female stereotypical) traits, the male participants rated the female applicants as significantly “less likable, less competent, less socially skilled, and as less likely to secure an interview or be offered the job” (Tyler & McCullough, 2009, p. 279). The female participants did not differentiate between the applicants based on gender.

As women occupy more roles in the workplace, bias toward women in leadership positions appear to be changing with women’s attitudes changing more rapidly than their male colleagues (Brenner, et. al. 1989; Duehr & Bono, 2006; Schein & Mueller, 1992). Women have been found to be more likely to rate women as having the qualities of successful managers (Brenner, et. al, 1989) and less likely to maintain rigid stereotypes about women managers (Schein, 2001). In one study that considered 30 years of management and gender stereotyping, women’s views toward women managers were found to have changed markedly, whereas changes in men’s views were mixed (Duehr & Bono). College-aged males were found to hold views similar to those held 15 years ago, but experienced male managers had reduced their stereotyping of women significantly. Nonetheless, men, in comparison to women, still considered female managers to possess fewer traits indicative of successful leaders. Women were found to have moved from negative to positive evaluations of women and even providing them stronger evaluations than men on contemporary measures of leadership, such as transformational leadership qualities. These researchers emphasize the importance of using implicit measurement to determine stereotypes of women rather than relying solely on explicit methods, because of the increasing lack of correspondence between explicit and implicit measures of bias (Duehr & Bono, 2006).

Social distance theory may provide an ancillary explanation to gender schema theory. Used to explain inter-group prejudice and to understand the grouping of diverse populations (Borgardus, 1925; Shechory & Idisis, 2006), studies pertaining to social distance theory have shown that “raters generally give more favorable ratings to people of their own race” (Baltes, Bauer, & Frensch, 2007, p. 151, 2007) and that people prefer to interact with their own racial group rather than groups of other racial backgrounds (Smith, Bowman, & Hsu, 2007). Members of groups do not intermingle because of rigid generalizations and prejudice toward the “other” group and distance themselves from one another (Borgardus, 1925). Fiske and Stevens (1993) underscored the idea that men and women would not tend to behave in a manner similar to ethnic groups in terms of social distancing; however with regard to work and leisure, it is clear that males and females tend to unite based on gender, creating a clear dichotomy within society. Throughout school, boys and girls are segregated by sports teams (softball vs. baseball, cheerleading vs. football, etc) or social clubs (girl scouts vs. boy scouts, service clubs, fraternities and sororities). This gender dichotomy highlights how we may be socialized to perceive our and the other gender in a particular manner. This theory offers a possible explanation of why men, when compared to women, are likely to perceive female candidates as having fewer political attributes. As the group who have occupied the leadership roles in management and political spheres, they may have remained segregated from women as they move up in these roles and be less aware of women’s competence than are working women who are aware of the attributes of their own group as well as those of the men who have traditionally been in power. This hypothesis is somewhat supported by the work of Duehr and Bono (2006) who found that men were less inclined to see women as possessing all of the qualities of a successful leader. They also found that men who had experience in the workplace were less inclined to hold these stereotypes than were college aged males. Having been the recipient of sexist attitudes, women may be more inclined than men to challenge current gender stereotypes, which allows for more opportunities to accept or filter out their current gender specific schemas.

### Gender stereotyped ascription of candidate’s political positions. As

Hypothesized and in keeping with gender schema theory, participants attributed more male stereotypic items (“hard issues”) to the male candidate and more female stereotypic items (“soft issue”) to the female candidate. Across the two video conditions, in which the hard and soft issues were counterbalanced so that each candidate presented the same content, participants attributed more masculine issues (i.e. international policy, war, crime, and drug issues) to the male candidate and more of the feminine issues (i.e. education and environment) to the female candidate. These results are consonant with a large body of research on gender stereotyping and retention rates. These confirmation biases and selective processes of encoding and retrieval have been found across a number of studies ranging from gendered toy recall (Cherney, 2005) to recall of SAT scores (Pittinsky, Shih, and Trahan, 2006) to ascribing stereotypic activities to the “appropriate” gender (Halpern, 1985). Recall has also been found to be affected by words that are sex congruent with people who are deemed as highly sex typed (Mills, 1983). Similarly, Banaji and Greenwald (1995) found that when attempting to recall famous names, men remembered more names of males and women remembered more famous names of females.

In this study, by creating a stimulus, such as watching a video with a female political candidate, people’s gender stereotypes were triggered in subtle ways that essentially affected their recall. The categorizations of hard or masculine-typed issues and “soft” or more feminine-based political platform topics are congruent with gender prescriptions—who women ‘are’ and ‘should be’ in society. In this study, when a proscription occurred (e.g., the female candidate speaking about hard issues), participants did not recall this information. When people filter out gender incongruent information, schemas become fixed descriptions or prescriptions for gender-roles. Such proscriptions essentially eliminate women from political roles in society (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Frabel & Bem, 1985). Women who defy their prescribed role will often find that such barriers are created when they attempt to rise into leadership positions that require them to take on proscribed masculine characteristics.

### Gender ascription of candidate’s political and personal qualifications.

Contrary to the predictions, there were no overall differences in the recall of professional qualifications or personal information to the male versus the female candidate. However, an interaction between gender of the participant and candidate occurred. Male participants recalled significantly fewer professional qualifications about the female candidate than did the female participants, whereas both male and female participants attributed an equivalent number of political qualifications to the male candidate.

The intent of these variables was to provide another measure of gender schema theory, in that it was anticipated that the agentic qualities (professional qualifications and experience) would be recalled more often for the male candidate and the communal qualities (family) would be recalled more often for the female candidate. The interaction effect was strikingly similar to that found in Hypothesis 1. Just as the male participants recalled less about the female candidate’s platform, they also recalled fewer of their professional qualifications. Potential explanations for this finding are the same as discussed for Hypothesis 1. Simply put, the male participants did not recall as much about what the women said or about what they had accomplished, suggesting that they had greater difficulty in taking them seriously as political candidates.

Personal qualifications were recalled about equally. Gender schema theory would predict that mention of a family would be more likely to be recalled about the woman candidate. However, there were so few personal items in the script that it most likely was not a good measure of retention.

### Evaluation of candidates. The female candidate was rated as more competent,

likeable, and desirable than the male candidate by all participants. This finding was in contrast to the predictions. No interaction between likeability and mentioning family was found for the woman candidate.

Interaction effects with scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) showed that participants who were low on total sexism liked the female candidate more than the male candidate, while participants high in total sexism liked them equally. Participants with low hostile sexism desired the female candidate more than the male candidate but participants with high hostile sexism (endorsing a confrontational view that women are seeking power over men), desired both candidates similarly. This indicates that for candidates with low hostile sexism, the female candidate was considered more desirable than the male candidate for the position. For candidates with high hostile sexism, they were desired similarly.

Overall these findings provide an interesting counterpoint to those utilizing more unobtrusive measures. A clear discrepancy exists between the more overt measures of rating the candidate versus the covert retention variables. Three potential explanations stand out: (a) What we do or think, consciously and explicitly, may not align with our “nonconscious” or implicit attitudes; (b) social desirability may influence our overt behaviors such as ratings but not impact those measured unobtrusively; and (c) the specific stimulus conditions of this study may have swayed the outcome of the explicit variables (ratings). Perhaps the female actor was more attractive and credible than the male actor, and this discrepancy impacted the explicit variables but not the implicit ones (retention).

### Cognitive dual processing: Explicit versus implicit behaviors. Interestingly,

despite participants liking the female candidate, desiring her in the role, and perceiving her as more competent than the male, male participants still recalled more about the political platforms and professional qualifications of the men. In attempting to understand the discrepancy between explicit measures, such as the evaluation, and the more subtle, implicit, retention measures, one must consider the context of modern society. In the work force, there are trainings on diversity and equity as a way to promote equality, which have proven to weaken both explicit and implicit types of stereotypes (Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001). Furthermore, as women enter the workforce, less gender segregation exists (Borgardus, 1925). Nonetheless, implicit messages about which roles are appropriate for women continue to influence people’s thoughts and hinder women’s chances of obtaining executive office. Retention measures are used in order to better understand the many layers in which gender plays a significant role in our thoughts and perceptions.

Most recently, stereotyping has been seen as a dual process, where two distinct but interrelated systems in human cognition are thought to independently affect the way an individual takes in information (Paivio, 1971). Paivio introduced dual coding theory (DCT) to explain how verbal information (known as logogens) and nonverbal information (known as imagens), which includes visual information and utilizes imagery, are integrated in different ways. Societal messages or training can change logogens; however, it takes a prolonged duration of time to alter schemas created by imagens, because this information is the byproduct of an implicit, unconscious, system. The implicit process is gradual and requires more investment, such as incorporating new long-term routines, in order to create and sustain change (Paivio, & Sadoski, 2011; Sadoski, 2005; ter Doest., & Semin, 2005). As seen in this study, gender stereotyped implicit and explicit messages have a varied impact on recall and memory versus evaluation. Gender stereotyped messages are heavily resistant to change because we have learned them in an implicit manner. These findings highlight the importance of both testing implicitly and explicitly.

Although we have changed our explicit messaging, our implicit messaging remains pertinent and salient in contemporary society. Implicit attitudes or nonconscious stereotypes (Butler & Geis, 1990) are created and influenced by society and serve to perpetuate prejudice against women, keeping them out of executive office, a role that is incongruent with traditional female stereotypes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). This is done out of our conscious awareness and guided by implicit rather than explicit stereotypes (Porter & Geis, 1981 Geis, 1993). Since men are visibly serving in high leadership occupations, such as the military, police force, or politics (Eagly & Wood, 1991) it makes sense that stereotypes would influence us to attribute to male candidates more political information than to female candidates, and for male participants especially to retain more of the male’s message. This phenomenon is more accurately coined the implicit social cognition, which is when one’s own personal “past experiences affect social judgment or behavior, but the nature of this influence is introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) by the actor” (Banji & Greenwald, p. 181, 1995). Because people often rely on their past experiences and form heuristics based off of these, whether accurate or not, it makes sense that recall would reflect this. In reflecting on social distance theory, the more opportunities we have previously had in interacting with people of the other sex, the more these experiences will affect our gender related beliefs, implicitly, about the roles of men and women.

### Retention vs. favorability. Social desirability may provide the second potential

explanation for the finding that menretained more of the male candidate’s message but preferred the female candidate. In this study, when participants were asked to answer directly, “Who would you vote for,” participants voted for the female. People may have answered in a socially desirable way, so that they would not be perceived by the researchers as being prejudiced against the female (McCauley & Stitt, 1978; Duehr & Bono, 2006).

The retention variables were designed as unobtrusive measures of candidate preference in order to understand how they might differ from variables more likely to be influenced by social desirability. Social desirability has long been considered a factor influencing the responses of participants to surveys and studies when asked to state their preferences for male or female political candidates or leaders in other realms (Dolan, 2004; Duehr & Bono, 2006; Hill, 1981; Lawless, 2004; Streb et. al. 2008). One cannot ignore that likelihood that participants tend to respond in a socially desirable fashion when asked about gender bias (Duehr & Bono). Participants may be unaware of their biases and stereotypes, which can only be captured using more implicit measures (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996; Greenwald, et. al. 1998). Streb et. al. (2008) demonstrated the power of an unobtrusive measure in discerning the public’s attitudes toward female presidential candidates. The researchers estimated that 25% of their participants expressed anger over a woman running for president when measured using an unobtrusive measure called the “list experiment” compared to the smaller figure of 5-15% of participants in national surveys who respond in a similar fashion when asked directly.

It was hypothesized that for likeability, there would be an interaction between gender and mentioning family ties; such that the female candidate who explicitly mentions her family (a spouse and three children) would be rated as more likeable than the female candidate without an explicit description. For the male candidates, the explicit description of family was not anticipated to effect likeability ratings. Women who fit traditional stereotypes (being mothers) are often liked more than women who do not possess stereotypical female traits, especially when they are in roles that require agentic traits (Schein, 2001). Women in managerial positions, typically positions associated with men, are perceived as bitter, quarrelsome, and selfish (Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989) in comparison to their male counterparts. However, when women in managerial positions are presented with more feminine or communal qualities, such as having children, they are viewed more favorably than women without these associations (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). Women who do not possess feminine or communal attributes are evaluated as more psychologically unhealthy than those who do (Heilman, 2001). In this study when the male candidate mentions his family, participants liked both candidates similarly. When the female candidate is the one who mentions her family and the male candidate does not, she is liked more than he is, suggesting that family ties were important for evaluations of both candidates.

An important implication of these findings is the question, which behavior is more important? Do voters vote for the one they like or the one whose issues they take more seriously? If they do vote for someone because of their conscious decision-making, is that person more or less vulnerable to criticism once in office? Also, will they be able to lead as effectively or will they be compromised by the more implicit attitudes about them?

### The broader picture: implications. Differences between male and female

participants were found in this study, consistent with much other research (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women recalled the platforms equally regardless of candidate gender, whereas men recalled fewer platform issues or professional qualifications of the female candidate. If both men and women are raised in the same gender schematic world, then what can explain for the mixed gender responses?

Gender schema theory may adequately explain how men stereotype, but for women it seems more complicated. Although women go through the same socialization process as men in forming implicit beliefs about gender roles, they have more opportunities than men to challenge their gender specific information, which may result in less gender schematic behavior. Nonetheless, women are still provided with continuous gender-scripted messages so seemingly discrepant findings are not surprising. For example, in this study, women showed less gender schematic behavior than men in their retention of political platforms and professional qualifications, but still continued to categorize the platform messages into gender specific domains (e.g. hard and soft issues).

The present study also found that the female was seen as more likeable, desirable, and competent in comparison to her male counterpart. Although these evaluations are important, if not essential, when being voted into office, they may not offset an obstacle for women in achieving political office that was found in this study. Participants, regardless of gender, recalled information that was congruent with gender stereotypes. This is likely because the field of politics is not considered a feminine domain (Eagly & Wood, 1991).

The finding that men remember more political information when men are speaking might shed light on the injustices towards women in the political arena today. In the *United States Senate Judiciary Committee*, it has been observed that women are often given less time than men to discuss their issues (Mattei, 1998). This may be because men are filtering out information because it does not fit with their gender schematic views about women. At high levels of government, however, one would expect political candidates to model equality and treat each person with respect. In contrast, this research depicts how inequality still exists at the macro level in today’s modern society. This study proves that being a woman on the campaign trail brings about many more obstacles than for a man and, that *gender stereotypes* are a relevant and salient issue for female political candidates.

## Limitations

The present study was limited to those who had access to a computer and the Internet. Participants were recruited via the Internet, requiring that they have the skills and resources necessary to respond to the survey. Participants were also recruited though Old Dominion University as an opportunity to gain extra credit in participating psychology courses. It was expected that a demographically diverse sample would be achieved; however, a disproportionate number of women completed the study. Since a majority of the participants were from Old Dominion University, there was a greater chance that women would participate. Further, psychology being a highly concentrated female major, would lend to a greater probability of females taking the survey. This study was also limited in that the actors in the video stimulus were similar but not equal in attractiveness.

One potential limitation of the study was that the stimulus actors were not counterbalanced. Ideally the study would have involved two male and two female actors counterbalanced through the various conditions. The decision was made not to do so because of the substantial increase in participants that would have been necessary, given the number of conditions and variables in the design. The methodology developed involved using only one male and one female actor. The specific pair of actors was selected because they seemed most equivalent in attractiveness and equally plausible for the role of political candidate for the House of Representatives. The completed videos were reviewed by the research group who evaluated the two actors. They gave the female actor a slightly higher rating, but upon debriefing they articulated that they saw the two as fundamentally similar in acting abilities and attractiveness. After completion of the study and the analyses, when the evaluations of the political candidates on competence, likeability, and desirability, did not match the retention findings, I reviewed the videos again. My impression was that the female actor displayed a better mastery of the material, although the research group did not necessarily agree with this opinion. Since we did not counterbalance the actor condition, we have to consider that the results could partially be a function of the actors used, and this possibility has to be considered as a limitation in this study.

## Suggestions for Future Research

There are several suggestions for future research that present themselves as a result of the limitations in this study. One consideration would be to allow for the opportunity for people to take this study in a controlled setting. When participants are able to access the survey from their own home, it allows for possible distractions (e.g., television, radio). On the other hand, the more naturalistic settings probably replicates the conditions under which most voters listen to political debates and ads in their homes. Future studies should be conducted with a broader representation of all age groups and regions of the country. Specifically, a study exploring the differences of participant responses on retention and explicit measures with states that have a history of females in political office (one or two female senators or governor) versus states that have a history of all males in political office might reveal more about how gender schemas affect men and women when considering female candidates. As implicit memory processes take a substantial amount of time to alter, a longitudinal study may offer a more accurate understanding of current stereotypes and provide a larger perspective on what obstacles women face when seeking and holding political office.

Findings in this study showed the importance of using both implicit and explicit instruments to study the ways stereotypes influence us. By being aware of how the implicit and explicit cognitive processes work, we can develop more sensitive research tools and research and remedy research measures that may confound implicit and explicit stereotypes. Future studies should create trainings to target implicit biases rather than explicit biases so that gender biases can be eliminated in leadership positions, including politics.

Potential studies could also include multiple videos with different actors in order to help control for the individual characteristics of any particular stimulus. Future gender studies should include retention measures because in today’s society explicit measures might yield very different results; people are socialized not to respond in a “sexist” way. Lastly, when considering social distance theory, it might be interesting to determine if there is a relationship with sexist attitudes of participants and gender specific versus co-ed group experiences. Conducting similar studies based on ethnicity and gender would be important as well.

## Summary

There remains significant inequality in the U.S. as reflected by women’s leadership roles in political, corporate, and higher education institutions. This gender disparity needs to be further evaluated in order to ensure that future generations of women have a more equal chance of obtaining higher leadership positions. The political disparities require more direct investigation as most of the research has occurred in the corporate sector with findings generalized across societal environments.

Conventional wisdom would suggest that because women have advanced to a few high leadership roles that they have shattered the “glass ceiling” and have achieved gender equality. In reality, there is still a dearth of women in leadership positions, including political office. Eagly and Carli (2007) coined the phrase “the labyrinth” to replace the concept of the glass ceiling to reflect that, although a few women have “made it,” the path remains complex and circuitous. The labyrinth is a metaphor for the obstacles (stereotypes, sexism, not being heard, etc.) woman must navigate in order to achieve leadership positions. The path remains arduous, but, it is possible for some to find their way through this labyrinth.

In the present study, several corners of the labyrinth were explored in order to understand some of what a woman must face when she defies her traditional gender stereotype in pursuit of gaining a high political position. This study found that there are serious struggles that women in the political arena face: (a) If a female candidate is speaking about her political platform and men do not retain what she is saying, then how could they possibly vote for her based on an informed decision? (b) If men and women remember information about a candidate that coincides with gender schematic views (i.e. hard and soft issues) then how accurate is one’s real understanding of the political candidate’s views? What does this mean for women on the campaign trail if her views are not in line with her gender stereotypes of being communal rather than agentic? (c) If in this study, the female is more liked, desired, and perceived as competent, then what does it mean that equal amounts of political information were not attributed to her by men and that men and women recalled information about her in line with her gender stereotypes? The current study provides a new and varied investigation into women’s political voice in contemporary society. For one, if a woman achieves political office it is likely her efficacy in communicating “hard issues” would be negatively impacted. Hilary Clinton understood this point and focused much of her early campaign on her ability to be strong on national defense. Ironically, because of the concerns about the Iraq War, this backfired as it categorized her as a hawk when progressives wanted an alternative. However, her failure to do so would have been seen as a negative as well.

In measuring the subtleties of gender schemas through the use of retention, a greater picture of the ways in which gender stereotyping occurs came to light. People in American society have learned to speak in politically correct ways; most of us do not recognize our underlying socialized gender or racial biases. As a result, we as researchers may not be fully capturing the effects of how people view women when we use measures that rely solely on explicit (evaluation measure) rather than implicit (retention) evaluations. In this study, people scored the female high in likability, desirability, and competency when compared to her male counterpart, but they did not retain her messages accurately. Although this is a profound finding and clearly problematic for a career in politics, the more crucial piece is that men filtered out or discounted what the female candidate said, which is lethal for women seeking high political office. This phenomenon, in conjunction with the association of hard and soft issues in gender schematic ways, is additionally troublesome for a career in politics for women.

In spite of the significant and formative advances made toward gender equality in the last century, the disparity between women’s leadership roles in political, corporate, and higher education institutions in the U.S. is pervasive. In order to ensure that future generations of women have a more equal chance of obtaining higher leadership positions, the complexity of political and social disparities women still face require more in-depth and direct investigation. Overall, this study sought to further feminist research and investigate concerns faced by women by investigating how women–as women–are viewed when they seek and obtain leadership roles. In summary, although women’s voices are no longer silent, they are still muffled in the political arena.