

UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF HISPANIC AMERICAN WOMEN:  
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF  
AN EMERGING ELITE

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BY

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DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST, 2002

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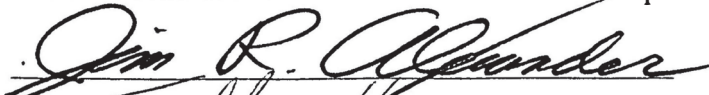
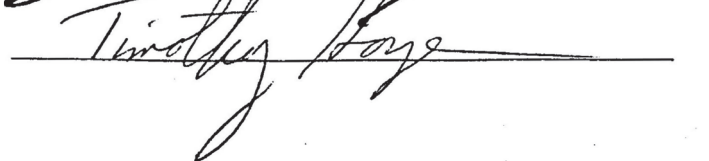
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To the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research:


I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Elmyra R. Willis entitled "Understanding The Politics of Hispanic American Women: Attitudes and Behaviors of an Emerging Elite." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Government.

  
Dr. Barbara Presnall, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted:

  
Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

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Understanding The Politics of Hispanic American Women:  
Attitudes and Behaviors of an Emerging Elite

Elmyra R. Willis

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Abstract

It is the purpose of this study to learn more about the political attitudes and behaviors of Hispanic women in the United States. A survey with questions taken from the National Election Study was completed by 101 Hispanic women and 106 Anglo women at Texas Woman's University. The questionnaire examined demographics, political activity, voting behavior, political beliefs, and political knowledge.

When matched for age and education, the degree of political activity among Hispanic women was not significantly different from Anglo women. Both groups reported similar amounts of discussing politics with others, listening to political talk radio programs, visiting political interest sites, and being active in community organizations. The majority of both Hispanics and Anglos in this study were registered to vote; Hispanics identified themselves more often as Democrats and Anglos more often as Republicans. However, approximately one-third of the Hispanic sample was Protestant and these women were more likely to be Republicans.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Hispanic population in the United States has become one of the largest and fastest growing ethnic groups in America. Hispanics have experienced phenomenal growth, due partly to high birth rates and immigration, and are currently the largest minority group in the United States. Hispanic Americans have surged past other minorities including African Americans, who were previously the largest minority group. The Census Bureau in 2000 reports that the number of Hispanics increased from 22 million people to 35 million people within a ten year period, from 1990 to 2000 (U.S. Census 2000; Kent, Pollard, Haaga, and Mather 2001, 15-26).

Hispanics over the past several decades have become a political force within U.S. politics (Michelson 2000). Most literature that has been written on the political development or the political participation of Hispanics has focused solely on the Hispanic community as a whole and has tended to neglect or disregard the role of Hispanic women in the political arena (Garcia and Arce 1988; Hero 1992; Jennings and Rivera 1984; Villarreal, Hernandez, and Neighbor 1988). The stereotype of a Hispanic woman being docile, uninterested, and not active in politics needs to be reconsidered and researched, considering that they are a part of the largest minority group in the United States and considering the importance of understanding gender and ethnic politics as a whole.

A moderate amount of literature has focused on the political participation of Hispanic women, but little research has been focused exclusively on their political attitudes and beliefs, their political activity, and their voting behavior. Literature that has been written on the political participation of Hispanic women has discussed the history of Hispanic women during the 1960s and 1970s in organizations such as the Chicana Welfare Rights Organization, the Mexican American Political Association, and the National Network of Hispanic women. Mexican women in these organizations were among the most active and militant groups advocating women's rights, equality, and local involvement (Quinones 1990). Other literature has examined the public opinion of Hispanic women and men and has found that Hispanic women slightly favor more increased government spending on childcare than do Hispanic men. Authors have also found that Hispanic women are more supportive of women being involved in modern and political roles than Hispanic men (Montoya 1996). Authors writing on Mexican women in the Chicana movement comment on their stance and roles in promoting community responsibility, education among Hispanic women, social mobility through employment, and the need for more childcare within the Hispanic community (Nieto Gomez 1997; Chavez 1997). Authors such as Mary Pardo (1998) and Carol Hardy-Fanta (1993) have done case studies on the community activism of Hispanic women in Los Angeles and Boston. Mary Pardo (1998) found that Hispanic women are politically active in the neighborhoods and communities around where they live. Pardo (1998) discovered that Hispanic women are involved in community organizing and community volunteering and are engaged in working in churches, local schools, and youth organizations such as

recreation centers that cater to their children. She found that Hispanic women often use local churches as meeting centers to inform the community about the ways to improve local parishes and about the needs for safety conditions in their neighborhoods. Carol Hardy-Fanta (1993) found that in Boston Hispanic women are the key actors that encourage the Hispanic community to register and vote and to take up leadership roles in the community. She also found that Hispanic women are the mobilizers that go throughout the community campaigning for Hispanic candidates running for office in Boston and are active in motivating members of the Hispanic community to become involved in bettering the community. Pardo (1998) and Fanta (1993) have shown through case studies that the stereotype of Hispanic women as politically inactive is inaccurate and misleading and showed multiple examples of how female activism is present at the local level within the Hispanic community.

Other authors such as Bezdek, Billeaux, and Huerto (2000), Shaw, De La Garza, and Lee (2000), and Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet (1989) have studied the voting behavior of Hispanics and have found that Hispanics vote at lower levels than other groups, such as Anglos and African Americans. Much of this literature has pointed to Hispanic's different socio-economic and demographic factors, such as income, education, age, and political attentiveness. These authors did not specifically discuss Hispanic women, their research focused on the Hispanic community as a whole, but the census bureau reports that Hispanics, including Hispanic women, have a lower voter participation status compared to other groups such as Asians, African Americans, and Anglos (U.S. Census 2000). In recent years successful voter registration drives across the country have

registered over a million Hispanic men and women (Valdivieso and Davis 1988; Acosta 2001). Whether these efforts have a significant impact is yet to be seen

Literature that has been written on the political participation of Hispanic women has discussed a number of viewpoints and angles, and has especially focused on Hispanic women's community activism, but has not focused in-depth on their political behavior or their political beliefs and attitudes toward politics. Literature on the voting behavior of Hispanics has examined the Hispanic community as a whole, but has not observed Hispanic women exclusively. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the literature on the political involvement of Hispanics by focusing on Hispanic women. Hispanics are an increasing percentage of the American population and are becoming more politically active. It is apparent that to understand the politics of the United States in the next century, it will be imperative to understand the politics of Hispanics. Until recently there has been little academic attention paid to the political behavior of Hispanics and even now most of the little that is written is on Hispanics in general, not on Hispanic women in particular. The Fanta and Pardo case studies hint at a Hispanic female activism, but they are observing community leaders, not the community at large. The question remains, are the stereotypes based on current reality? Are Hispanic women really more uninterested and more uninvolved in politics than others in the community?

### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to address three factors concerning the political participation of Hispanic women in the United States: they include the political attitudes and beliefs of Hispanic women, the voting behavior of Hispanic women, and the political activity of Hispanic women. Hispanic women are defined as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and women who are from or who are descendants of people from Latin America. For the purposes of this study, Latin America consists of Mexico, Central America, South America, and the islands of the West Indies (Haverstock 1993; Galvan 1993). The political participation of Hispanic women is compared to Anglo women with the same age and educational status.

### Research Questions

There are several research questions framing this study. They include the following.

1. What are the beliefs of U.S. Hispanic women toward voting?
2. How involved are U.S. Hispanic women in the voting process?
3. What type of political activity are Hispanic women involved in?
4. How knowledgeable are Hispanic women about politics?
5. What are the attitudes of Hispanic women toward American government?

### Null Hypotheses

1. Hispanic women are as likely as Anglo women to be involved in political activities.
2. Hispanic women are as knowledgeable about politics and American government as Anglo women.



3. Hispanic women are as likely to have positive attitudes toward American government as Anglo women.
4. Hispanic women are as likely to be involved in the voting process as Anglo women.
5. Hispanic women are as likely to have positive attitudes toward voting as Anglo women.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past few decades there has been various facets of literature published pertaining to Hispanic women. These facets include Hispanic women's fertility rates and family life, their earnings and roles in the labor force, their reasons for immigrating to the U.S., their political struggles in Latin American countries, and their political participation in the U.S.

#### Fertility Rates and Family Life

In recent years considerable literature has been written in reference to Hispanic women's fertility rates. Hispanic women by far have the highest birthrates in comparison to women of other ethnicities and account for 14 percent of all births in the United States, while only comprising 9 percent of the population of women (Reichman and Kenney 1998, 182; Unger and Molina 1997). There are several explanations for the high fertility rates among Hispanic women. Authors have found from comparable surveys undertaken in Latin America and the United States that a pattern of relatively early marriage exists for women in Latin American countries and that marriage and childbearing are extremely valued within the context of family culture. Authors have found that because many U.S. Hispanic women are relatively new immigrants from their native settings, that they are expected to marry and to begin childbearing at an early age, which is identical to that of their homeland (Landale 1994, 135; Fennelly, Kandiah, and Oritz 1989, 96-99). Some

authors suggest that Hispanic women traditionally desire large families and feel that motherhood is of great cultural importance. According to authors, many Hispanic women believe that having many children will satisfy their female role in the family and will give them the security that someone will care for them and financially support them in their old age (Unger and Molina 1997, 284; Burr and Mutchler 1992). Literature proposes that the prestige and security associated with motherhood could overshadow the potential financial hardships included in raising a large family (Unger and Molina 1997).

Authors Unger and Molina (1997) conducted a study in Southern California to investigate the desired family size and son preference among low-income Hispanic women. The study took place in an obstetrician and gynecologist clinic within a public hospital. The authors surveyed and interviewed 568 female patients who appeared to be adults of childbearing age. The women's marital status, size of family origin, the number of children desired, and the desired number of sons and daughters was inquired on the surveys. Twenty-four percent of the women had graduated from high school, fifty-four percent had never been married, eighty-one percent were not employed, and those who were employed reported an annual income of about \$8,000. The participants held jobs as factory workers, seamstress, machine operators, housekeepers, restaurant employees, babysitters, and teachers. More than half of the respondents had been born in Mexico and a small percentage born in the U.S. (285). The authors found that overall the women desired more sons than daughters. They found that older Hispanic women and those with little education desired a greater number of sons and wanted fewer daughters. Women who were separated, divorced, or widowed desired more sons than women who had never

been married (285). The authors found that women who preferred to speak Spanish strongly desired more sons than those who preferred to speak English. The women, according to the authors, stated that boys are more valued in Hispanic families and that needs and opinions of boys are placed above those of female family members. The authors concluded that births among Hispanic women in the U.S. may be larger than other groups because Hispanic couples may continue to bear children until they have had a son or a desired amount of sons (Unger and Molina 1997, 284-286).

Some authors have suggested that Hispanic women have higher fertility rates because of a lack of knowledge and access to contraceptives. Authors found from the National Survey of Family Growth that Hispanic women in certain cases may have a difficult time getting access to contraceptives because their partners might not allow contraceptives to be used. They also found that in certain circumstances contraceptives have failed (Fu, Darroch, Haas, and Ranjit 1999; Riechman, Sly, Soler, Eberstein, Quadagno, and Harrison 1998). Others have found from various reports and surveys that high fertility rates exist among Hispanic women because of unintended or unplanned pregnancies among unmarried Hispanic women (Henshaw 1998; Brown 2000). They also suggest that poverty, male-dominated cultures, and little education about family planning may be causes of high birth rates (Swicegood, Bean, Stephen, and Opitz 1988; Unger and Molina 1997; and Persson and Sabagh 1983).

Swicegood, Bean, Stephen, and Opitz (1988) conducted a study across the U.S. using the 1980 U.S. Census data to determine if there was a difference in the amount of children birthed by Mexican American women who have high levels of English

proficiency and those who do not (21). The authors discovered that Mexican women who speak no English have about 60 percent more children under age 3 than do women speaking only English (22). The authors found that women who speak only English have two children on average as compared to women who speak no English at all who have more than three children (21). Authors believe that Mexican women who are native-born or who have resided in the U.S. longer are more likely to have higher levels of education and greater access to economic resources and social networks than do Mexican-born women who speak predominantly Spanish. They propose that Mexican women who are native-born are less culturally attached to Mexico, where birthrates are high, and have become accustomed to American culture and norms, where birthrates are lower (27-30). Other authors suggest that Hispanic women have higher fertility rates because of a lack of access to and control over their financial resources. Authors propose that Hispanic women with greater access to their own earnings might have less children (Williams, Abma, and Piccinino 1999, 221; and Luttrell 1989, 34). Authors suggest that raising a woman's financial and educational status could add to her self-esteem and self confidence, and as a result may increase her decision making power, including those decisions that affect contraception and fertility (Williams, Abma, and Piccinino 1999).

Other authors who have studied the Hispanic population and their fertility rates have noted that the high fertility rates among Hispanic women has caused a tremendous increase in the Hispanic population and has aided in Hispanics becoming the largest minority group (Kent, Pollard, Haaga, and Mather 2001; Rodriguez 1984). Authors have found that because Hispanics have such high fertility rates, they have become the fastest

growing ethnic group in the U.S. and have gained political significance in states such as California, Texas, Florida, New Mexico, New York, and Illinois (Galvan 1993; Kent Pollard, Haaga, and Mather 2001; Rodriguez 1984). Population reports have found that the young age and high fertility rates of Hispanics guarantee that over the next several decades Hispanics will grow faster than other ethnic groups. Studies have shown that the Hispanic population from 1990 to 2000 increased from 22 million people to 35 million people. Authors have noted that immigration has played a role in the increase, but fertility even more so (Kent, Pollard, Haaga, and Mather 2001; Rodriguez 1984). Authors suggest that the increase in the Hispanic population has made some Hispanic women and men conscious of their political roles, particularly their roles in registering to vote, turning out to vote, and being active in various political activities in the U.S. (Rodriguez 1998).

#### Earnings and Role of Hispanic Women in the Labor Force

Much of the literature that has been written on Hispanic women has focused on Hispanic women in the labor force and on their wages and their rates of employment. Hispanic women over the past few years have come to represent a growing portion of the U.S. work force. Sixty-four percent of women of Mexican decent, the largest group among Hispanics, are in the labor force and earn an average of \$7.32 per hour. Puerto Rican women, another large group within the Hispanic population, have a 62 percent employment rate and earnings of an average of about \$9.29 per hour (Corcoran, Heflin, and Reyes 1999, 111-117). Authors have found that Mexican women tend to earn less than Anglo women and earn less than their Puerto Rican counterparts. Authors have

found that in certain occupations, Hispanic women do earn as much as Anglo women when they perform similar tasks and their jobs require the same duties, such as jobs in agriculture, heavy production, and the industrial fields (Tienda, Ortiz, and Smith 1987, 202). Authors found that a large percentage of Hispanic women in 1990 worked in the service industry, particularly doing private household domestic work. Private household domestic work declined in 1980, but sharply increased in the 1990s when one in twenty Mexican-born women in the urban Southwest worked as a domestic in a private home (Baker 1999, 249). Studies have shown that Hispanic women in the New York area, Los Angeles, and in Miami are employed in the manufacturing industry. Fifty-one percent of Hispanic women in Southern California are identified as operators, fabricators, laborers, and garment workers. A large number of Hispanic women are in the garment industry and are employed in California, and an even larger number of women, particularly Cuban women, are employed in the multi-billion dollar garment industry in Florida (Kelly and Garcia 1997, 216-217). Cubans in general have occupations, family income, and self-employment rates that come close to U.S. averages (Portes and Truelove 1987, 364). As a whole Hispanic women have lower family incomes compared to other groups, particularly in those families where females are the head of the households. Authors propose that many Hispanic women experience a lower socioeconomic status because they receive lower wage rates and in certain occupations work less hours per week (Reimers 1984, 896-901).

Others suggest that Hispanic women have smaller wages than other groups partly because of lower educational attainment by immigrants. Authors suggest that more

programs are needed to promote education, job training, and school to work initiatives in order to increase the levels of earnings by Hispanic women and minority women in general, which will enhance their labor market skills (Misra 1999, 418-419; and Corcoran, Heflin, and Reyes 1999, 111-121).

England, Christopher, and Reid (1999) have studied ethnicity and wage gaps through the means of survey data and suggest that more public policy be created to bring young Hispanic women and men up to national standards on cognitive skills, so they will be well trained to get better paying jobs (171-172). They advocate stronger public policies and governmental legislation, such as antidiscrimination legislation would help reduce the pay gaps between Hispanics, African Americans, and Anglos and would challenge the overall level of income inequality that is present in certain occupations held by blacks and Hispanics (171-172).

### Hispanic Immigrant Women

Some of the literature pertaining to Hispanic women has addressed Hispanic immigrant women and the causes and reasons for Hispanic women migrating to the U.S. in record numbers. Literature reveals that Hispanic immigrant women are among one of the largest immigrant populations in the U.S. (Sotelo 1997, 119). Authors Clark and Kossoudji (2000) have explored the nature and the extent of Latin American immigration and have found that Latin American women tend to immigrate to the U.S. so they can gain a strong attachment to U.S. employment and integrate themselves into the U.S. labor force (311-323). Other authors such as those who have studied the patterns of job markets in the U.S. have suggested that Mexican immigrant women come to the U.S. to



fill labor demands in the informal sector such as those in the domestic service industries (Sotelo 1997, 121-122; and Romero 1997). Pedraza (1991) argues that Hispanic female immigrants settle in the U.S. in order to contribute to their husband's income or to the family income because of their husband's lack of income (307-317). Literature suggest that undocumented women have been migrating to the U.S. in record numbers along with undocumented men to participate in seasonal work in large cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Washington D.C, and Miami (Sotelo 1997, 119; and Zavella 1997, 189). Hispanic immigrants in some cases immigrate to the U.S. to join relatives already in the U.S. or to relocate their families to the U.S. (Massey and Espinosa 1997, 989-990). Hispanic immigrant women and men migrate to the U.S. because they are influenced by family in their native countries to immigrate in order to gain economic mobility and to provide economic relief, which in many cases out weighs the cost of being separated from family members while in America (Kandel and Kao 2000; Clark and Kossoudji 2000; Philips and Massey 2000, 33-63). Literature indicates that Hispanic immigrant women and men and Hispanics immigrants in general come predominately because they desire better education for themselves and their children, higher standards of living, and ownership of a business or home (Durand, Kandel, Parrado, and Massey 1996).

#### The Struggles of Women in Latin American Countries

In addition to the literature that has been written on Hispanic women's fertility rates, their roles in the labor force, and Hispanic immigrant women, a modest amount of literature has been written on the political struggles of women in Latin American countries. Much of Latin American literature focuses on women who are fighting for

economic freedom, equal opportunities, and political involvement. Different authors who have studied Hispanic women in Latin America have found that women in such countries as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Venezuela are for the first time becoming active in developing organizations that battle to raise the consciousness of their governments about the “wretchedly” poor conditions women and children live in, and about the great need for women in Latin America to be able to read and write (Schirmer 1993, 30-54; and Guadilla 1993, 65-74). Women in countries like Chile are demanding a more active role in their government and a solidarity and equality between men and women in leadership roles (Boyle 1993, 162-170; and Chuchryk 1994). Sonia Alvarez (1994) found that women in Brazil do enjoy a level of political freedom, but are combating a need for the removal of patriarchal barricades in the realms of political parties and in Brazilian government (13-23). Authors discovered that over the years a limited number of women in Latin America slip into politics. Latin American women who have not been educated on a college level have a small chance of participating in politics. Latin American women in general who are in political leadership are elite women who come from middle and upper class families and not ordinary women from the general public. While this is the case for men and women in other countries, including the U.S., but even more so true in Latin America where few women get into politics (Camp 1979, 417-440; and Escandon 1994). Literature proposes that Mexican women and Latin American women have a better chance in working for a government agency or working for a government organization that promotes political causes than they do at being elected to a political position (Escandon 1994, 199-215). Despite the low numbers, some Latin American

women are active in politics. N.S. Chincilla (1994) has observed that a great number of Nicaraguan women are engaged in a feminist movement, seeking to heighten the consciousness of people around the world about the struggles and individual needs of Nicaraguan woman and about the deteriorating economic conditions the Nicaraguan people are facing (188-195).

Literature pertaining to the struggles of women in Latin American countries has demonstrated a great need for more Latin American women to gain an active role in politics. Women in leadership roles would help their nations better understand how to help provide for women socially, culturally, and most importantly economically.

#### The Political Participation of Hispanic Women

Another segment of literature that has been written on Hispanic women has been literature focused on the political participation of Hispanic women in the United States. The history of Mexican women's involvement in organizations such as the Mexican American Political Association, the Chicana Welfare Rights Organization, and the National Network of Hispanic women is one of the angles concerning the political involvement of Hispanic women. Mexican American women during the 1960s and 1970s were among the most visible and militant groups advocating women's rights, equality, and local involvement (Quinones 1990). Other authors have explored public opinion data and have discovered that Hispanic women are slightly more likely to support more increased government spending on childcare and women in modern and political roles than do Hispanic men (Montoya 1996). NietoGomez (1997) and others have written on how Mexican women in the Chicana movement are taking up roles in

promoting and advocating education among Hispanic women, employment equality, welfare rights, and community responsibility (NietoGomez 1997, 52-57; Chavez 1997, 78).

Mary Pardo (1998) and Carol Hardy-Fanta (1993) have done political fieldwork on Hispanic women's political involvement and have found that Hispanic women in Boston and Los Angeles are predominantly active in community and grassroots organizations. Carol Hardy- Fanta (1993) found from her fieldwork and observations in Boston that older Hispanic women in various Hispanic communities are active in grassroots organizations that encourage the Hispanic community to become politically involved and are active in neighborhood events that better the community. Fanta found that many Hispanic women are the support system that motivates Hispanics to support an increasing number of Hispanic candidates running for office and are the driving force behind voter registration drives in Boston (15-33). Mary Pardo, another author who has extensively observed and studied the lives of Mexican American women and their community activism, has found that Hispanic women in Los Angeles are active in the neighborhoods in which they live and are key players in community involvement that includes community organizing and community volunteering. She discovered that Hispanic women are active in local schools, churches, recreation centers that cater to children, and are active in assisting new immigrants. In her study, Hispanic women tended to enjoy their efforts in bettering the community, even though it may be time consuming (Pardo 1998, 275-296; Pardo 1990, 1-7). Mary Pardo (1998) also observed in 1986 and 1987 how Hispanic women in Los Angeles powerfully united to protect their

communities from an unwanted prison that was to be placed in their neighborhoods by the state of California. The Hispanic community, particularly Hispanic women, stopped the prison from being built by their demonstrations and marches. Pardo strongly suggests that grassroots activism among Hispanic women is a vital tool, because it helps them promote positive changes in their community (105-119).

Another group of authors such as Bezdek, Billeaux, and Huerto (2000), Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet (1989), Shaw, De La Garza, and Lee (2000), and DeSipio (1996) have explored the voting behavior of Hispanics and found that Hispanics have a lower voter participation than other groups. Bezdek, Billeaux, and Huerto (2000) conducted a study using precinct and contextual-level data from city council elections in Corpus Christi and found that in cities like Corpus Christi, where Hispanics have the largest ethnic and racial composition and are 50 percent or more of the population, their turnout is lower in citywide elections than other groups like Anglos. As a result, when Hispanic candidates run for public office in such cities even with Hispanics in the majority, in order for Hispanic candidates to be successful, they must have the support of non-Hispanic citizens as well as Hispanics (207-224). Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet (1989) and DeSipio (1996) have also studied the electoral participation of Hispanics and found that Hispanics have lower levels of participation because of different socio-economic and demographic factors, such as income, age, marital status, and location of residence. Shaw, De La Garza, and Lee (2000) conducted a survey of Hispanic citizens in California, Florida, and Texas and examined the turnout of Hispanics in the 1996 presidential election. They established that these three states contained 59 percent of Hispanics in the United States,

in which Mexican Americans were the majority of Hispanics in California and Texas, and Cuban Americans in Florida. Authors found that 46 percent of Hispanics within the three states were registered to vote and 31 percent of those registered actually voted in the 1996 presidential election, with 36 percent in California, 29 percent in Florida, and 29 percent in Texas. Authors found that 54 percent of Hispanics were unregistered and a considerable number of registered Hispanics failed to vote. Authors recommended that improved registration and mobilization efforts are needed to increase the turnout of Hispanics. Authors established that important factors like income, age, home ownership, and political attentiveness are important components for getting Hispanics registered and to the polls (338-346).

Bezdek, Billeaux, and Huerto (2000), Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet (1989), Shaw De La Garza, and Lee (2000), and DeSipio (1996) did not do specific research on Hispanic women, their research focused on the Hispanic community as a whole, but the census bureau has reported that Hispanic women have a lower voter turnout than that of women from Asian, African American, and White ethnic groups. Literature does suggest that the percentages of voter registration has been increasing in recent years among Hispanic women (McClain and Stewart 1998, 83). Authors Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001) have studied electoral activity through survey data and suggest that education among Hispanics, particularly Hispanic females, could be a factor that determines whether Hispanic women are likely to be involved in voting and politics. Others who have studied the voting patterns of Hispanics have found that the voting behavior of Hispanics in general is lower than other groups because much of the



population is foreign born and have non-citizenship status (Michelson 2000, 137-147; Bedolla 2000, 106-108). Many Hispanics have not been educated in the United States, but have received their formal schooling outside the U.S., including a considerable proportion of naturalized citizens. Schools in the United States do impart some forms of “political connectedness” and makes students familiar with the ways of American democratic politics, which in some ways is different in how schools outside the U.S., particularly schools in Latin America, educate students. Even students who have been educated in the U.S. and are members of different racial and ethnic groups may be less familiar with voting and politics, but are not as unfamiliar as those citizens who have been educated outside the U.S. (Jackson 2002). The number of Hispanics registered to vote is estimated between 6 and 7 million which is modest compared to other national ethnic groups or to the Hispanic population of thirty million people. Only 46 percent of the Hispanics of voting age are registered to vote, while about 65 percent of black and white Americans are registered to vote (Shaw, De La Garza, and Lee 2000; Kent, Pollard, Haaga, and Mather 2001). Successful voter registration drives, such as the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, which has registered over 1 million voters, has narrowed the gap somewhat between Hispanics and other Americans (Acosta 2001; Valdivieso and Davis 1988).

Overall the authors who have studied and explored the political participation of Hispanic women have written on a number of viewpoints, including particular focus of community involvement, but have not examined their political behavior in-depth or their political beliefs and attitudes toward politics. They have briefly mentioned it while

discussing Hispanics in general, but have not gone into detail concerning Hispanic women. Authors who have discussed the voting behavior of Hispanics have not focused exclusively on Hispanic women. The census bureau has reported that turnout among Hispanic women is lower than other groups, but authors have not discussed extensively why or which elections Hispanic women are likely to turn out for. The purpose of this research study is to contribute to the literature on the political participation of Hispanic women, particularly the political participation of young educated Hispanic women.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

Participants in this research were 101 Hispanic women and 106 Anglo women at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas in the Spring of 2002. Participant's ages ranged from 18 to 59. For the purposes of this study, those women who identified their race as Hispanic or their ethnicity as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South American, Central American, Spanish, and Caribbean were designated as Hispanic. Those women who identified their race or ethnicity as non-Hispanic White were designated Anglo. One hundred and ninety-six Hispanic and Anglo women enrolled in selected bilingual classes, Spanish classes, sociology classes, and history and government classes were a part of this study. Eleven Hispanic women who were members of the campus organization called the Bilingual Education Student Organization were also used in this study. The Hispanic and Anglo women were essentially similar in age, education, citizenship, and marital status.

#### Instrumentation

The instrument used in this research was a three part political participation survey that included questions about participant's political activity, voting behavior, and political beliefs and attitudes. Demographic data was also included in the survey, which consisted of participant's sex, age, race, ethnicity, citizenship, political party affiliation, college status, marital status, religion, major, and occupation (See Appendix A).

Survey questions were taken from the National Election Study, a survey that is used in pre and post presidential elections by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. "The National Election Study is designed to produce high quality questions on voting, public opinion, and political participation that serves the research needs of social scientists, teachers, students, policy makers and journalists concerned with the theoretical and empirical foundations of mass politics in a democratic society" (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/studyres/nes2000/nes2000.htm>). Permission to use these questions was not necessary because the questions were posted on the website of the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, which is designed for researchers and public use. Forty-four questions out of the hundreds of questions in the National Election Study survey were used in this study. The Human Subjects Review Committee of Texas Woman's University approved the survey instrument used in this research in December 2001.

Prior to surveying Hispanic women in classes, the researcher sought permission from the professors teaching these classes in order to come in their classes and survey their students. The researcher explained to the professors the purpose of the study and the amount of time needed for the students to fill the surveys out in classes. After receiving permission from the professors, a time and date was agreed upon and set.

In each class an oral description of the study was given to the students by the researcher, along with a cover sheet that explained the purpose of the study and information about the researcher (See Appendix A). The researcher was in attendance in the majority of classes, except for two history classes, in which the professor of both

classes preferred that the students take the surveys home and return them at the next class period. In classes, all students present were surveyed, but only those students who were Hispanic or Anglo women were used in this study. All other surveys were set aside.

Hispanic female members of the Bilingual Education Student Organization were also surveyed for this study. Members were surveyed at two campus meetings held in January and March 2002. The researcher obtained permission to survey the members by contacting the student president on the phone and explaining to her the purpose of the study and the amount of time needed to complete the surveys. Those members who agreed to participate, completed the surveys at the conclusion of the meetings where they were being held. None were participants from the class surveys. Student participation in this study was completely voluntary and there were no risks or discomforts for those students who participated. All surveys remained anonymous and participant names were not included on the surveys. The surveys took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

### Survey Coding

The survey instrument was coded by the author and entered into SPSS. There were three categories of questions including demographics, political activity questions, voting behavior questions, and political beliefs and attitude questions. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and means, and tested for significance by chi square analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Demographics

Hispanic and Anglo participants in this study were between the ages of 18 and 59. As evident in Table 1, the majority of Hispanic women (84.2%) and the majority of Anglo women (88.7%) were in the age range of 18-29.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristic of Age

Participants	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>					
Frequency	85	6	7	3	101
Percent (%)	84.2	5.9	6.9	3.0	100%
<b>Anglos</b>					
Frequency	94	7	5	0	106
Percent (%)	88.7	6.6	4.7	0	100%

$$\chi^2 = .290$$

$$p < .05$$

Most Hispanic women were of Mexican heritage (58.4%), 20.8% were Central American, 5.9% were South American, 2.0% were Puerto Rican, 2.0% were Cuban, and 9.9% identified themselves as Spanish or Hispanic, but did not check any of the ethnicities included on the survey. All Anglo respondents identified their race or ethnicity as White and as non-Hispanic. There was not a statistically significant difference among Hispanic and Anglo women concerning their college status. Among Hispanic women 30.7% were

freshmen, 25.7% were sophomores, 21.8% were juniors, and 17.8% were seniors. Between Anglo respondents 43.4% were freshmen, 20.8% were sophomores, 27.4% were juniors, and 8.5% were seniors. The marital status of Hispanic and Anglo women was very similar. Among Hispanic women, 76.2% were single, 21.8% were married, 0% were separated, and 2% were divorced. Among Anglo women, 84.0% were single, 11.3% were married, .9% were separated, and 3.8% were divorced. The majority of both groups of women were single. In reference to citizenship status, there was also not a statistically significant difference between Hispanic women and Anglo women, but there were more Anglo women who were citizens than Hispanic women. Out of the 106 Anglo respondents, 86.6% were native-born, 5.7% were naturalized citizens, and 5.7% were legal residents or international students. Out of the 101 Hispanic respondents, 74.3% were native-born, 14.9% were naturalized citizens, and 9.9% were legal residents or international students.

There was a statistically significant difference in political party affiliation between Hispanics and Anglos. As shown in Table 2, 48.5% of Hispanics and only 14.2% of Anglos are Democrats. At the same time, 46.2% of Anglos and only 16.8% of Hispanics are Republicans.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristic of Political Party Affiliation

Participants	Repub.	Demo.	Reform	Green	Independ.	Other	Non-Response	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>								
Frequency	17	49	0	1	22	6	6	101
Percent (%)	16.8	48.5	0	1.0	21.8	5.9	5.9	100%
<b>Anglos</b>								
Frequency	49	15	1	1	29	7	4	106
Percent (%)	46.2	14.2	.9	.9	27.4	6.6	3.8	100%

$$\chi^2 = .000$$

$$p < .05$$

The last demographic characteristic that was statistically significant among Hispanic and Anglo women was religion. Table 3 reveals that 59.4% of Anglo women are Protestant and 17.9% are Catholic, while 50.5% of Hispanic women are Catholic and 32.7% are Protestant. Authors have discovered that the stereotype about the preponderance of Hispanics being Catholic is inaccurate and misleading. Authors have found from recent estimates that one-third of Hispanics in the U.S. are Protestant, a statistic reflected in this study with findings showing that 33 out of 101 Hispanic women are Protestant (Kelly 2002, 6-7).

Table 3  
Demographic Characteristic of Religion

Participants	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Other	Non-Response	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>						
Frequency	33	51	0	17	0	101
Percent (%)	32.7	50.5	0	16.8	0	100%
<b>Anglos</b>						
Frequency	63	19	2	20	2	106
Percent (%)	59.4	17.9	1.9	18.9	1.9	100%

$\chi^2 = .000$   
 $p < .05$

Political Activity

Neither Hispanic women nor Anglo women in this study were very involved in political activities. Most respondents, both Hispanic and Anglo, indicated that when they did discuss government, elections, and politics it was with their family (Hispanics 89.1%, Anglos 82.1%), friends (Hispanics 76.2%, Anglos 77.4%), and fellow students (Hispanics 47.5%, 48.1%). As shown in Table 4 only fourteen out of 101 Hispanic women (13.9%) indicated that they often discuss political matters with others, 52.5% said they sometimes discuss political matters with others, and 33.7% said they rarely discuss political matters with others. Among Anglo women 13.2% indicated that they often discuss political matters with others, 36.8% said they sometimes discuss political matters with others, and 45.3% said they rarely discuss political matters with others.



Table 4

The Amount of Time Spent Discussing Political Matters with Others

Participants	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I Don't Know	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>						
Frequency	14	53	34	0	0	101
Percent (%)	13.9	52.5	33.7	0	0	100%
<b>Anglos</b>						
Frequency	14	39	48	2	3	106
Percent (%)	13.2	36.8	45.3	1.9	2.8	100%

$$\chi^2 = .052$$

$$p < .05$$

From the data shown in Table 4 there was not a statistically significant difference between Hispanic and Anglo women in the amount of time they spent discussing political matters, but slightly more Hispanics seemed to be engaged in discussing political matters than Anglos. It was obvious that many Hispanic women and many Anglo women were somewhat engaged in discussing politics and government with their family, friends, and fellow students because of the impact of September 11, which had the entire country conversing. Some Hispanic and Anglo women made known on the survey through comments that they currently had been paying attention to politics or events in government more than they had in the past. Both Hispanic women (83.2%) and Anglo women (76.2%) had similar responses by saying that they watched network news programs such as "World News Tonight" on ABC, "Nightly News on NBC," "The CBS Evening News" or CNN, or other network news programs, which consistently broadcast news on events surrounding terror attacks on September 11, 2001. When participants



were asked if they follow what's going in government and public affairs, there was not a statistically significant difference, both groups of women admit spending little time keeping up with public affairs. Table 5 reveals that among Hispanic women, 17.8% said that most of time they follow what's going on in government and public affairs, 33.7% indicated that they follow what's going on some of the time, 36.6% said only now and then do they follow what's going on, and 10.9% said they hardly at all follow what's going on in government and public affairs. With Anglo women, 16.0% said that most of the time they follow what's going on in government and public affairs, 34.9% indicated that they follow what's going on some of the time, 30.2% said only now and then do they follow what's going on, and 17.0% said they hardly at all follow what's going on in government and public affairs.

Table 5  
The Amount of Time Spent Following What's Going on in Government and Public Affairs

Participants	Most of the time	Some of the time	Only now and then	Hardly at all	I don't know	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>						
Frequency	18	34	37	11	1	101
Percent (%)	17.8	33.7	36.6	10.9	1.0	100%
<b>Anglos</b>						
Frequency	17	37	32	18	2	106
Percent (%)	16.0	34.9	30.2	17.0	1.9	100%

$\chi^2 = .659$   
 $p < .05$

Data from Table 5 indicates that both groups of women seem to somewhat follow what's going on in government and public affairs. But nearly as many Hispanics and Anglos

followed what was going on “only now and then” or “hardly at all” as those who followed the news “most of the time” or “some of the time.” Both groups also indicated (Hispanics 85.1%, Anglos 85.8%) that they had recently watched President Bush on television addressing the country.

When Hispanic and Anglo participants were asked if they had ever worn a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on their car, or placed a sign in their window or in front of their home, a few more Hispanics (35.6%) than Anglos (24.5%) reported that they had, but there was not a statistical significant difference. There was also not a statistical significant difference in whether participants had ever given money to an individual candidate running for public office or to a political party. Both groups of women, Hispanics 93.1% and Anglos 95.3% disclosed that they had not given money to an individual candidate running for public office or to a political party. When participants were asked if they had ever done any work for a political party or candidate 88.1% of Hispanics and 90.6% of Anglos revealed that they had not done any work for a political party or candidate, a statistic which was not statistically significant. The majority of Hispanics (81.2%) and the majority of Anglos (82.1%) also revealed that they had never attended any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate, which was also not statistically significant. Both groups of women were equally uninvolved.

Thirty-two out of 101 Hispanic women compared to 26 out of 106 Anglo women indicated that they listened to political talk radio programs that included people calling in voicing their opinions about politics. A larger number of Anglos (50.9%) in comparison

to 41.6% of Hispanics reported that they had visited certain sites on the internet in reference to politics, but there was no statistical significant difference. When participants were asked if they were a part of any organizations, such as the PTA, student government, organizations in their community, Hispanic political organizations, or other specific organizations, the majority of Hispanic and Anglo women indicated that they were not involved in any PTA organizations (Hispanics 91.1%, Anglos 97.2%), no student government organizations (Hispanics 95.0%, Anglos 96.2%), and no Hispanic political organizations (Hispanics 94.1%, Anglos 100%). Hispanic and Anglo women did indicate that they were a part of organizations in their communities and other specific organizations, but there was not a statistical significant difference. Twenty-six out of 101 Hispanic women (25.7%) compared to 20 out of 106 Anglo women (18.9%) said they were in organizations in their community and 26.7% of Hispanic women compared to 24.6% of Anglo women said they were in other specific organizations, such as health organizations, churches, women's groups, and volunteer organizations. There was not a statistically significant difference among Hispanic and Anglo women, but slightly more Hispanic women were active in organizations than Anglo women.

Literature proposes that Hispanic women are most politically active in community organizations in or around the neighborhoods in which they live (Pardo 1998; Fanta 1993). Other studies that have used survey data have found that Anglos tended to be more involved or affiliated with political organizations than Hispanics (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, 278-279). In this particular study, perhaps because there were no differences in educational attainment with Hispanics being as educated as

Anglos, and were in the same age range, Hispanics tended to be just as involved.

Authors who have interviewed and observed Hispanic women in Los Angeles have found that Hispanic women are involved in political activity or community activism that serves and better the needs of their communities, such as working in neighborhood churches, schools, or in community coalitions (Pardo 1990; Pardo 1998). Pardo (1998) observed that Hispanic women often use local churches as meeting centers to inform the community about safety conditions in their neighborhoods, needs for better education for their children, and ways to improve their local parishes. She found that Hispanic women are the driving force in community organizations persistently seeking and often receiving funding from public officials for community recreation centers for their children (Pardo 1998).

Carol Hardy-Fanta (1993) has also interviewed and observed Hispanic women in Boston and has found that Hispanic women's political activity is centered in grassroots organizations that are in Hispanic neighborhoods. Fanta (1993) found that Hispanic women in grassroots organizations are the key players that encourage the Hispanic community to become active politically by campaigning for Hispanic candidates running for public office. According to Fanta, Hispanic women are active in mobilizing Hispanics to register and vote and to take up leadership roles in the community. She observed that Hispanic women are the connectors between City Hall and the community. She also found that city officials often contact certain Hispanic women to communicate and discuss the needs and issues of the Hispanic community.



Pardo (1998) and Fanta (1993) researched and studied Hispanic women through interviews and observations. In this current study Hispanic women were researched and studied by the means of survey questions taken from the National Election Study. From these three studies done, it was found that the political activity of Hispanic women was in various organizations in their communities such as churches, schools, community coalitions, and as Carol-Hardy Fanta (1993) found grassroots organizations. In this study 25.7% of Hispanic women reported being active in community organizations and 26.7% reported being active in specific organizations such as health organizations, volunteer organizations, and women's groups. A good number of Hispanic women (35.6%) reported placing signs in their windows or in front of their homes, and campaign stickers on their cars. It appeared from this study and other studies that Hispanic women are in political organizations in their communities and activities in their communities or neighborhoods at least as often as comparable to Anglo women (Pardo 1998; Fanta 1993).

#### Voting Behavior

In reference to the voting behavior of Hispanic women, 81 out of 101 (80.2%) were registered to vote with Anglo women, 81 out of 106 (76.4%) were also registered to vote. Hispanic and Anglo women who were registered to vote in this study were U.S. citizens and naturalized citizens, and those participants who were not citizens were not included in the tally. Literature does confirm that in recent years the percentages of voter registration has been increasing among Hispanic women and the Hispanic community as a whole through successful voter registration drives, such as the Southwest Voter

Registration Education Project (McClain and Stewart 1998, 83; Valdivieso and Davis 1988). The majority of Hispanic women (84.2%) reported that someone had talked to them about registering to vote or getting out to vote. Three Hispanic participants were registered to vote in both the U.S. and in other countries, with one each in Mexico, Columbia, and Australia. One Hispanic participant who was not registered to vote in the U.S. was registered to vote in Spain. There were also two Anglo respondents who were not registered to vote in the U.S., but were registered to vote abroad, with one each in England and Uzbekistan. During the November 2000 presidential election, a few more Anglo women reported voting than did Hispanic women, but there was not a statistically significant difference. Thirty-four out of 106 (32.1%) Anglo respondents reported voting compared 26 out of 101 (25.7%) Hispanic respondents. Authors have found that in other studies Hispanics vote at a lower rate than do Anglos (Bedolla 2000, 106-108; Michelson 2000, 137-147). Some Hispanic women (18.8%) who were registered to vote in 2000 said they thought about voting this time, but didn't. Most Hispanic women disagreed strongly with the statement "So many other people vote in the national election that it doesn't matter much to me whether I vote or not." When Hispanic and Anglo women were asked if clergy or teachers at their school or place of worship had at a some time or another encouraged them to vote for a particular candidate or party, 31.7% of Hispanics said yes compared to 20.8% of Anglos who said yes, but there was no statistical significant difference. Some authors propose that race and ethnicity may be a factor regarding voter turnout, because there are racial differences in education, income, language, and other social factors between Hispanic and other groups (Miller and Shanks

1996, 254-256; Michelson 2000). Others suggest that because the Hispanic population nationwide in the United States is relatively young with low levels of income and low levels of education, their turnout is lower than that of non-Hispanics (Michelson 2000, 137). Literature suggests that in some elections, people may not participate in voting because they don't share the same ideals or opinions of the candidates running for office or they think that voting won't bring any benefits (Michelson 2000; Miller and Shanks 1996; Miller and Levitin 1976). Studies have shown that Anglos tended to somewhat be more educated than other groups and more familiar with politics, but in this particular study, all the Hispanic women were well educated, and were just slightly less familiar with politics than Anglos (De La Garza et al. 1992; Burns, Scholzman, and Verba 2001). Results from this study show that 15.8% of Hispanic women thought that most elections in the U.S. were conducted very fairly, 56.4% thought they were conducted somewhat fairly, 7.9% thought they were conducted neither fairly nor unfairly, 12.9% thought they were conducted somewhat unfairly, and 4.0% of Hispanic women thought that most elections were conducted very unfairly. Among Anglo women 24.5% thought that most elections in the U.S. were conducted very fairly, 51.9% thought they were conducted somewhat fairly, 8.5% thought they were neither fairly nor unfairly, 6.6% thought they were conducted somewhat unfairly, and 2.8% of Anglo women thought that most elections were conducted very unfairly. There was not a statistical significant difference between Hispanic and Anglo women, the majority of both groups of women thought that most elections were conducted somewhat fair. When both Hispanic and Anglo participants were asked how much they felt that having elections makes the government

pay attention to what people think, there was also not a statistical significant difference. Between Hispanic participants, 24.8% said having elections makes a good deal in whether or not the government pays to what people think, 48.5% said having elections makes some difference, and 24.8% said having elections does not make much difference. Among Anglo participants, 25.5% said having elections makes a good deal in whether or not the government pays attention to what people think, 50.0% said having elections makes some difference, and 21.7% said having elections does not make much difference.

Most Hispanic women (48.5%) reported that they are Democrats, while many Anglo women (46.2%) reported that they are Republicans. Hispanic women (11.9%) revealed that they vote for Democratic candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives compared to 11.3% of Anglo women who said they vote for Republican candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives. In reference to U.S. Senate elections, Hispanic and Anglo women had statistically significant different responses. Among Hispanic women, 13.9% said they vote for Democratic candidates running for the U.S. Senate while Anglo women (12.3%) said they vote for Republican candidates running for the U.S. Senate (See Table 6). Many participants indicated that they had not voted in U.S. Senate or U.S. House of Representative elections because they had just recently become registered to vote and prior to that they were too young, but those Hispanic and Anglo women who were eligible to vote and who did vote in these state elections voted for different candidates, which is shown in Table 6 for U.S. Senate elections.



Table 6  
Candidates Voted for in U.S. Senate Elections

Participants	Democratic Candidates	Republican Candidates	Some Rep., Some Demo.	Don't know	Non-Response	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>						
Frequency	14	3	5	6	73	101
Percent (%)	13.9	3.0	5.0	5.9	72.3	100%
<b>Anglos</b>						
Frequency	7	13	3	1	82	106
Percent (%)	6.6	12.3	2.8	.9	77.4	100%

$\chi^2 = .011$   
 $p < .05$

Authors who have studied party identification have found that some citizens align themselves to candidates or political parties, such as Democrats or Republicans, because they have been predisposed to identifying with a certain party or have an individual commitment and feel they have an enduring loyalty to a party (Miller and Levitin 1976; Miller 1991; Miller and Shanks 1996, 151-520). Data from the 1988 and 1992 National Election Study and other studies show that most Hispanics, especially Mexican Americans, have provided strong support for the Democratic Party (see Table 2). Most Hispanic women in this study consider themselves Democrats, which may be because they feel that Democratic candidates are more familiar with them socially and economically, which has activated them to vote for Democrats (Miller and Shanks 1996; De La Garza et al. 1992). Literature advocates that party identification does form perceptions that lead to attitudes and beliefs that can direct an individual's vote choice (Miller and Shanks 1996). Authors have found that Hispanics who are Catholics and

who identify as Democrats are likely to vote for Democrats because they have attitudes about certain issues such as favoring increased government services, increased social security spending, and increased environmental spending, which are issues that Democrats support (Kelly 2002, 12-13). Literature even proposes that Hispanic evangelical Protestants, seculars, and those with other religious traditions are less Democratic than Catholics, but still make up a majority of Democratic partisans. Authors have found that Hispanics from all religious traditions mainly support Democrats, except for mainline Protestants, which make up 7% of the Hispanic population (Kelly 2002, 7-14). In this particular study it was found that among the 51 Hispanic women who are Catholic, 56.8% (29) of them are Democrats, 9.8% (5) are Republicans, and 19.6% (10) are Independent voters. Among the 33 Hispanic women who are Protestant, 42.4% (14) of them are Democrats, 24.2% (8) are Republicans, and 27.3% (9) are Independent voters. Overall, Hispanic women have shown that they favor Democrats in some elections and it appears that some may think that Democratic candidates are better able to represent them if they are elected.

#### Political Beliefs and Attitudes

The beliefs and attitudes of Hispanic women toward government were somewhat different from Anglo women. As evident in Table 7, there was a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of Hispanic and Anglo women concerning the government's power. Sixty-four out of 106 Anglo women (60.4%) thought the government's power was about right, while Hispanic women had mixed responses. Forty

out of 101 Hispanic women (39.6%) thought the government was getting too powerful and another 38.6% of Hispanic women thought the government's power was about right.

Table 7  
Participant's Attitudes on the Government's Power

Participants	The Government Is getting too Powerful	The Government's Power is about right	The Government doesn't have enough power	I don't know	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>					
Frequency	40	39	6	16	101
Percent (%)	39.6	38.6	5.9	15.8	100%
<b>Anglos</b>					
Frequency	19	64	5	18	106
Percent (%)	17.9	60.4	4.7	17.0	100%

$\chi^2 = .003$   
 $p < .05$

Authors have found that some citizens may have certain attitudes about the government because of such reasons as the government abusing political power and the people in government not being honest or not doing what they say they are going to do (Strama and Strouder 1998). The Hispanic women who did think the government was getting too powerful may have thought this way because of their experiences or the experiences of friends and family with the government. Authors have found that some Hispanics in cities like Los Angeles and in other cities where Hispanics have a growing population may have experienced negative backlashes that include the government eliminating bilingual education, the passage of Proposition 187, which denied illegal immigrants the right to receive public social services, health care, and education, the increasing militarization on the United States-Mexico border, and the dismantling of affirmative action programs (Ochoa 2000, 88-90).

When participants were asked whether people in government waste a lot of money, there was also a statistically significant difference between Hispanic and Anglo women, but it was a difference of measure in their responses. Both groups of women felt that the government wastes money, they only differed in the degree in which the government wastes money. The majority of Hispanic women (58.4%) thought the government wastes a lot of money and some Anglo women (45.3%) thought the government wastes some money (See Table 8).

Table 8  
Participant's Attitudes on Whether the People in Government Waste A Lot of Money

Participants	The Government wastes a lot of money	The Government wastes some money	The Government does not waste any money	The Government does not waste very much money	I don't know	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>						
Frequency	59	34	0	0	8	100
Percent (%)	58.4	33.7	0	0	7.9	100%
<b>Anglos</b>						
Frequency	42	48	1	5	10	106
Percent (%)	39.6	45.3	.9	4.7	9.4	100%

$$\chi^2 = .023$$

$$p < .05$$

Hispanics and Anglo women's attitudes in reference to which political party was more likely to favor a powerful government in Washington was also statistically significant. Almost half of Hispanic participants (48.5%) thought the Republicans would be more likely to favor a powerful government, while Anglo participants, as shown in Table 9, had split responses. Thirty-one out of 106 Anglo women (29.2%) thought that Democrats would be more likely to favor a powerful government and another 24.5%



thought that Republicans would be more likely to favor a powerful government. It appeared that Hispanics and Anglos may have thought that the Democrats or Republicans would favor a more powerful government because they thought these parties would favor more power over social control, government programs and the power to regulate business.

Table 9  
Participant's Attitudes on Which Political Party is more likely to Favor a Powerful Government

Participants	Democrats	Republicans	No Difference	I don't know	Non-Response	Total
<b>Hispanics</b>						
Frequency	10	49	22	19	1	101
Percent (%)	9.9	48.5	21.8	18.8	1.0	100%
<b>Anglos</b>						
Frequency	31	26	20	29	0	106
Percent (%)	29.2	24.5	18.9	27.4	0	100%

$$\chi^2 = .000$$

$$p < .05$$

Authors suggest that preferences for political parties could be a result of the positions that political parties stand for, such as policy related issues, and also the atmosphere of people in society (Miller and Shanks 1996). In this study many Hispanic women identified themselves as Democrats and Anglo women as Republicans, and showed that they have certain attitudes about each political party. Authors of the National Election Study have found that people have attitudes toward political parties because political parties may appear to be conservative or liberal on certain issues, such as government spending, education, health care, affirmative action, issues on the environment, and problems such

as unemployment. Authors found that these issues and political parties' attitudes toward them could determine how people look at certain parties, which may lead to positive or negative attitudes toward political parties (Miller and Shanks 1996). Literature suggest that nationally, Hispanics have tended to support the Democratic Party and many non-Hispanic Anglos have supported the Republican Party (Miller and Shanks 1996; De La Garza et al. 1992; Miller and Levitin 1976). Literature also suggest that Democrats have tended to support legislation in the past that has aided minorities, women, immigration, and government spending on social programs and Republicans have supported national programs such as increased defense spending, less immigration, and less aid on government social programs, such as welfare and Medicaid (Miller and Levitin 1976; Miller and Shanks 1996; Martin 2001, 897-901). Overall, both groups of women seem to be satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States. Among Hispanic women, 21.8% said they were satisfied, 50.5% said they were fairly satisfied, 12.9% they were not very satisfied, and 4.0% said they were not at all satisfied. One third of Anglo women (33.0%) said they were satisfied with the way democracy works, 43.4% said they were fairly satisfied, 14.2% said they were not very satisfied, 0% of Anglo women were not at all satisfied.

### Political Knowledge

At the end of the survey instrument a list of public figures were included and Hispanic and Anglo participants were asked to correctly identify the public figures by writing in what job or political office they held. The public figures consisted of Trent Lott, Tom Daschle, William Rehnquist, Vicente Fox, Tony Blair, and John Ashcroft (see

Table 10). Among Hispanic women 4% correctly identified Trent Lott, 14.9% Tom Daschle, 8.9% William Rehnquist, 52.5% Vicente Fox, 12.9% Tony Blair, and 9.9% John Ashcroft. Among Anglo women 8.5% correctly identified Trent Lott, 19.8% Tom Daschle, 22.6% William Rehnquist, 15.1% Vicente Fox, 28.3% Tony Blair, and 23.6% John Ashcroft.

Results from the survey showed that Hispanic women were less familiar with U.S. office holders, such as Trent Lott, William Rehnquist, and John Ashcroft. Results also showed that they were less familiar with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, but were very familiar with the foreign political leader Vicente Fox, Mexico's president. Over fifty percent of Hispanic women correctly identified Vicente Fox. Anglo women were much less familiar with Vicente Fox, with only 15% correctly identifying who he was. More Anglo participants were familiar with U.S. office holders and Tony Blair. It appears that many of the Hispanic women were familiar with Vicente Fox because over 50% of the Hispanic women in this study were of Mexican heritage. Some of the Hispanic women may have also been familiar with Vicente Fox, because they are international students and legal residents whose native homeland is Mexico. Anglo women in this study may have been more familiar with Tony Blair than Vicente Fox, because of their racial and ethnic background which may be closer to Europe than Latin America, and Hispanic women may have been more familiar with Vicente Fox than Tony Blair because their racial and ethnic background may be closer to Latin America than Europe. Hispanic women were more knowledgeable about Fox than any domestic politician named. Anglo women were more knowledgeable about others listed. Other

than about half of Hispanics knowing Vicente Fox, both groups were greatly unaware of political figures.

Table 10  
Political Identification of Public Figures- Percentages and Frequencies of Hispanic and Anglo women who correctly identified public figures.

Public Figures	Hispanics (Total 101)	Anglos (Total 106)
Trent Lott	4% (4)	8.5% (9)
Tom Daschle	14.9% (15)	19.8% (21)
William Rehnquist	8.9% (9)	22.6% (24)
Vicente Fox	52.5% (53)	15.1% (16)
Tony Blair	12.9% (13)	28.3% (30)
John Ashcroft	9.9% (10)	23.6% (25)



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This study has examined the political participation of Hispanic women in the United States. It has compared Hispanic women's political activity, voting behavior, and political beliefs and attitudes to Anglo women of the same age range and with same educational status. Findings from this study show that when Hispanic women are as educated as Anglo women, there are no significant differences regarding their political activity, such as discussing government, elections, and politics with their family, friends, and fellow students, wearing campaign buttons and placing campaign stickers or signs on their cars or in front of their homes or even working in political activities in their individual communities. Both groups of women indicated that they watched network news programs and the President addressing the country. Hispanic and Anglo women were only slightly involved in political activity. Beyond sometimes talking about politics and watching news and sometimes listening to talk radio, they were equally uninvolved in politics. Most Hispanic and Anglo participants had never worked for a political candidate, attended a political meeting, or given money to support a particular candidate. A substantial number were not knowledgeable or familiar with political figures (see Table 10). One half of Hispanic women were familiar with Mexican President Vicente Fox, but the majority were not able to recognize political leaders such as John Ashcroft and William Rehnquist. Anglo women were more familiar with U.S. political leaders

than Hispanic women, but both groups of women were woefully unaware. What might be of concern for democracy is that neither group was very active.

Eighty percent of Hispanic women in this study were registered to vote, which was an equal percentage to Anglo women. Literature provides that voter registration drives, such as the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project in the Hispanic community have been increasing in recent years in order to activate Hispanics to vote, which provides explanations why voter registration among Hispanic women is high (McClain and Stewart 1998; Valdivieso and Davis 1988). Hispanic women's voter participation status was lower than Anglo women. Electoral participation literature suggest that the general population of Hispanics have a lower socio-economic status and have different social demographic variables like language and income and are not as socially connected to politics or voting as Anglos, which largely accounts for their lower levels of turnout (Jackson 2002; Michelson 2000; Shaw, De La Garza, and Lee 2000). Hispanics were more associated with Democrats and Anglos were more associated with Republicans (see Table 2). Fifty percent of Hispanic women were Catholic and one-third were Protestant. Protestant Hispanics were less Democratic than Catholics, which may be a matter of great interest to political recruiters from both parties.

In this research study, it was found that Hispanic women's attitudes and beliefs about political parties were different from Anglo women. Hispanic women tended to support the Democratic party and Democratic candidates and Anglo women tended to support the Republican party and Republican candidates. Authors have found that certain citizens align themselves to candidates or political parties because they are predisposed to

identifying with a certain candidate or party, or even have become accustomed to voting a certain way (Miller and Shanks 1996). Hispanic women were also found to have somewhat dissimilar attitudes from Anglos about the government's spending and the government's power. Both Hispanic women and Anglo women felt that the government wastes money, but they differed in the degree in which they felt the government wastes money. Most Hispanic women thought the government wastes a lot of money, while some Anglo women thought the government wastes some money. In reference to the government's power, Hispanics felt that the government was getting too powerful and thought the Republicans would be more likely to favor a powerful government. Anglos thought the government's power was about right, and some were evenly divided as to whether Republicans or Democrats would be more likely to favor a powerful government (see Tables 8-9). Hispanic and Anglo women thought that Democrats and Republicans wanted a powerful government perhaps because Hispanics thought the Republicans would favor more law and order and Anglos thought Democrats would favor business regulation and social services. Authors have found that some citizens may have certain attitudes about the government because of their experiences with the government. Authors have found that some Hispanics have had negative experiences such as the dismantling of affirmative action programs, the government cutting bilingual education for their children, racial profiling by city police, and the increasing militarization of the Mexico-U.S. border (Strama and Strouder 1998; Ochoa 2000; Callahan and Anderson 2001). Others suggest that Hispanics have different levels of trust concerning the

government, which may be because of cultural differences which are different from other groups (Michelson 2001).

This study has provided an examination of the political participation of Hispanic women and has identified significant differences in the voting behavior and the political beliefs and attitudes between Hispanic women and Anglo women. The Hispanic participants in this study were an elite group of educated women, most of whom were relatively recent high school graduates and all of whom were women pursuing a college education. The young Hispanic women who were participants in this study could stand to be more active in politics, taking note of the fact that they are an emerging elite group of women who are the next generation of the electorate. This study has provided more inquiry into the political involvement and the political thoughts of Hispanic women. The Hispanic women in this study were mostly single women with low levels of fertility rates and were native-born and naturalized citizens who had resided in the U.S. sometime, and appeared to have time, and soon the money, and education for political action. Overall this study has given an analysis about Hispanic women and has contributed to a growing body of literature. This study and other studies on Hispanic women are of great importance, considering the fact that Hispanic women are a part of America's largest minority group and are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States.

Five null hypotheses were tested in this study to determine if there was any significant differences between Hispanic and Anglo women concerning their political activity, voting behavior, political knowledge, and political attitudes and beliefs.

Findings show that Hispanic women were as likely as Anglo women to be involved in

political activities. Hispanic women were not as knowledgeable about politics and American government as Anglo women. Hispanic women were not as likely to have positive attitudes toward American government as Anglo women. Hispanic women were not as likely to be involved in the voting process as Anglo women. Hispanic women were as likely to have positive attitudes toward voting as Anglo women.

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## APPENDIX A

### Cover Sheet and Survey

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Research Advisor: Barbara Presnall, Ph.D., Committee Chair  
Department of History and Government  
Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX 76204 – 5889  
940-898-2142

I am currently a graduate student at Texas Woman's University conducting research for my thesis on the political participation of Hispanic women. The purpose of my research is to address three factors: Hispanic women's political attitudes and beliefs, their voting behavior, and their political activity. Hispanic women are a part of the largest minority group in the United States, but insufficiently researched by social scientists and under - appreciated by the general public.

I am asking you to help me in this research study by completing the attached questionnaire as best as you can. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to those who participate. Your name is not required on this survey and all surveys will remain anonymous. If you choose to participate in this research, it will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes of your time. You may withdraw from this study at any time and if you refuse to participate in this study, there will be no penalties held against you and no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- ### Benefits

## Questions?

**Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated.**

*The return of your completed questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act a participant in this research.*

# Political Participation Survey

////////////////////////////////////

- Your name is not required on this questionnaire.
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- There are no foreseeable risks, benefits, or discomforts to you from completing this questionnaire.

## PART I. Demographic Data

1. Sex: ☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age: ☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60 and over

- 3A. Race:      White                      Black/African American                      American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Pacific Islander                      Asian                      Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

- 3B. Ethnicity: ☐ Mexican ☐ Puerto Rican ☐ Cuban  
☐ Central American ☐ South American ☐ Caribbean  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

4. Citizenship: ☐ Native-born ☐ Naturalized citizen ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

5. Which of the following political parties do you associate yourself with?
- ☐ Republican Party    ☐ Reform Party    ☐ I am an independent voter
- ☐ Democratic Party    ☐ Green Party    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

6. College Status: ☐ Freshmen ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior  
☐ Senior ☐ Graduate Student ☐ Faculty ☐ Staff

7. Marital Status:
- ☐ Single    ☐ Married    ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced    ☐ Widowed    ☐ Other

8. Religion:
- ☐ Protestant    ☐ Catholic    ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

9. Major: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_



## PART II. Political Activity

Please check the line that corresponds to your answer.

1. From time to time, people discuss government, elections, and politics with other people. I'd like to ask you about the people with whom you discuss these matters. Choose from the following. You may choose more than one.

☐ Family  
☐ Friends  
☐ People from work  
☐ Teachers  
☐ Fellow Students

2. How often do you discuss political matters with others?

☐ Often  
☐ Sometimes  
☐ Rarely  
☐ Never  
☐ I don't know

3. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?

☐ Most of the time  
☐ Some of the time  
☐ Only now and then  
☐ Hardly at all  
☐ I don't know

4. During an election year people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Have you ever given money to an individual candidate running for public office or to a political party?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

5. Have you ever done any work for a political party or candidate?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

6. Have you ever attended any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

7. Have you ever worn a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or in front of your house?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

8. If you were selected to serve on a jury, would you be happy to do it or would you rather not serve?

☐ Happy to do it  
☐ Rather not serve  
☐ I don't know



9. Do you watch network news programs such as "World News Tonight" on ABC, "Nightly News on NBC, "The CBS Evening News," or CNN, or other network news programs?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know
10. There are a number of programs on radio in which people call in to voice their opinions about politics. Do you ever listen to political talk radio programs of this type?  
☐ Yes, I listen  
☐ No, I don't listen  
☐ I don't know
11. Do you have access to the Internet?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ I don't know
- 11a. If so, have you ever visited certain sites on the internet in reference to politics?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ I don't know
12. Many people say they have less time these days to do volunteer work. Are you currently involved in any volunteer work?  
 ( Volunteer work is work that you do for other people or groups that you don't expect to get paid for.)  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ I don't know
13. There are a number of organizations people can belong to. There are political groups, community groups, school groups, and a lot of other types of groups. Are you a part of any of the following organizations? You may check more than one.  
☐ The PTA  
☐ Student government  
☐ Organizations in your community  
☐ Hispanic Political Organization  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)  
☐ I don't know
14. Have you ever telephoned, written a letter to or visited a government official to express your views on a public issue?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know
15. In the past few years have you taken part in a strike against your employer, a protest, a march, or any demonstrations on some national or local issue?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

---

### PART III. Voting Behavior

1. Are you one of the following?  
☐ A registered voter ☐ Not a registered voter

2. Are you registered to vote in another country besides the U.S.?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ I don't know
- 2a. If so, which country are you registered to vote in? \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)
3. Has anyone ever talked to you about registering to vote or getting out to vote?  
☐ Yes, Someone did  
☐ No, No one ever has  
☐ I don't know
4. Has clergy or teachers at your school or place of worship at some time or another encouraged you to vote for a particular candidate or party?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ I don't know
5. In talking to people about elections, I often find a lot of people who are not able to vote because they aren't registered, they were sick at the time of elections, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you during the November 2000 presidential election?  
☐ I did not vote because I was not registered  
☐ I thought about voting this time, but I didn't  
☐ I usually vote, but didn't this time  
☐ I 'm not a citizen  
☐ I voted for sure  
☐ I don't know
6. Do you vote in person, by absentee ballot, or early voting?  
☐ In Person  
☐ Absentee Ballot  
☐ Early Voting  
☐ I don't vote  
☐ I don't know
7. Do you usually participate in voting for candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ I don't know
- 7a. If you answered yes, are they Democratic candidates or Republican candidates?  
☐ Democrats  
☐ Republicans  
☐ Some Republicans, Some Democrats  
☐ They were from other political parties  
☐ I don't know
8. Do you usually participate in voting for candidates running for the U.S. Senate?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ I don't know

- 8a. If you answered yes, are they Democratic candidates or Republican candidates?
- ☐ Democrats  
☐ Republicans  
☐ Some Republicans, Some Democrats  
☐ They were from other political parties  
☐ I don't know
9. In some countries, people believe their elections are conducted fairly. In other countries, people believe that their elections are conducted unfairly. Thinking about the election process in America, do you think that most elections held in the United States are:
- ☐ Very Fair    ☐ Somewhat Fair    ☐ Neither fair nor unfair
- ☐ Very Unfair    ☐ Somewhat Unfair    ☐ I don't know
10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement. "So many other people vote in the national election that it doesn't matter much to me whether I vote or not."
- ☐ Agree Strongly    ☐ Disagree Strongly    ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree  
☐ Agree Somewhat    ☐ Disagree Somewhat    ☐ I don't know

#### PART IV. Political Beliefs and Attitudes

1. I'd like to ask you about your feelings toward the federal government. Some people are afraid the government in Washington is getting too powerful for the good of the country and the individual person. Others feel that the government in Washington is not getting too strong.
- What is your feeling, do you think the government is getting too powerful or do you think the government is not getting too strong?
- ☐ The government is getting too powerful  
☐ The government 's power is about right  
☐ The government doesn't have enough power  
☐ I don't know
2. Which party do you think is more likely to favor a powerful government in Washington – the Democrats, the Republicans, or wouldn't there be much difference between them on this?
- ☐ Democrats    ☐ No Difference  
☐ Republicans    ☐ I don't know
3. The following are a few statements about public life. Read them one at a time and please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each of them.
- 3a. "I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country."
- ☐ Agree Strongly    ☐ Disagree Strongly    ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree  
☐ Agree Somewhat    ☐ Disagree Somewhat    ☐ I don't know
- 3b. "I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics?"
- ☐ Agree Strongly    ☐ Disagree Strongly    ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree  
☐ Agree Somewhat    ☐ Disagree Somewhat    ☐ I don't know

4. Do you think that people in government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much?
- ☐ The government waste a lot of money  
☐ The government waste some money  
☐ The government does **not** waste any money  
☐ The government does **not** waste very much money  
☐ I don't know
5. Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are crooked?
- ☐ Quite a few are crooked  
☐ Not very many are crooked  
☐ Hardly any are crooked  
☐ I don't know
6. How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what people think?
- ☐ A good deal    ☐ Some    ☐ Not much    ☐ I don't know
7. Have you recently watched President Bush on television addressing the country?
- ☐ Yes, I have watched    ☐ No, I have not watched    ☐ I don't know
8. On the whole, are you satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States?
- ☐ Satisfied    ☐ Not very Satisfied    ☐ I don't know  
☐ Fairly Satisfied    ☐ Not at all Satisfied
9. The following are a set of questions concerning public figures. I want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers, radio, or the internet? (Please write in your answer)
- a. What job or political office does Trent Lott hold? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What job or political office does Tom Daschle hold? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. What job or political office does William Rehnquist hold? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. What job or political office does Vicente Fox hold? \_\_\_\_\_
- e. What job or political office does Tony Blair hold? \_\_\_\_\_
- f. What job or political office does John Ashcroft hold? \_\_\_\_\_

### COMMENTS:

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