

Tulane professors receive prize for gender gap research

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Tulane University political science associate professors Mirya Holman and J. Celeste Lay are among a group of authors who recently received the 2018 Elsie Hillman Prize from the Pennsylvania Center for Women & Politics at Chatham University. Their winning project was titled "Political Socialization and Early Gender Gaps in Images of Political Leaders, Political Knowledge, and Interest in Politics." (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

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“For that study, we examined how political leadership was portrayed in a common resource used in U.S. schools to teach kids about politics,” said Lay, speaking to *TIME for Kids*.

With help from a Tulane undergraduate student, Allison Buffett, they looked at articles with political themes between 2011 and 2017.

“We find that two-thirds of the people mentioned are men and that the majority of the articles attribute at least one stereotypically masculine trait to the individuals they mention. When women were portrayed, they were often covered in the context of being the first women to hold a particular role.”

“Such portrayals help perpetuate the notion that politics is primarily a masculine career and that women who pursue this path are out of the ordinary,” added Lay, who is also the associate chairperson of the political science department.

“Research in political socialization demonstrates that media have a significant influence on young people’s attitudes about politics, and that attitudes developed at young ages are foundational for future beliefs and behaviors.”

The group is also working on a project, started in Ohio, to examine how elementary school students “draw a political leader,” similar to the famous “draw a scientist” tests.

“We are examining how kids envision political leaders,” Lay said. “We don’t yet have findings on this. But we do have some great drawings.”

Other researchers in Lay’s and Holman’s group include Zoe Oxley at Union College, Angie Bos at College of Wooster and Jill Greenlee at Brandeis University.

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J. Celeste Lay