

## Web Appendix A - Quotes from candidates during the 2019/2020 Democratic debates

### DEBATE 1A

July 26, 2019

Miami, FL

- Julián Castro* “You know, I grew up with a mother who raised my brother Joaquin and me as a single parent, and I know what it’s like to struggle. I know what it’s like to rent a home and to worry about whether you’re going to be able to pay the rent at the first of the month and to see a mom work very, very hard...”
- John Delaney* “I actually grew up in a working-class family”
- Elizabeth Warren* “I was born and raised in Oklahoma. I have three older brothers, they all joined the military. I had a dream growing up and my dream was to be a public school teacher. By the time I graduated from high school my family...didn’t have money for a college application much less the chance for me to go to college...”

### DEBATE 1B

June 27, 2019

Miami, FL

- Tulsi Gabbard* “Maybe many people in this country can related to the fact that I grew up in a socially conservative home, held views when I was very young that I no longer hold today.”
- Kamala Harris* “Growing up my sister and I had to deal with the neighbor who told us her parents said couldn’t play with us because we were black.”

### DEBATE 2A

July 30, 2019

Detroit, MI

- Steve Bullock* “I was raised in a single parent household, at times paycheck to paycheck. Only knew there was a governor’s house in town because I delivered newspapers to it.”

*Bernie Sanders* “As somebody who grew up in a family that lived in a rent controlled apartment in Brooklyn, New York and lived paycheck to paycheck, I’m running for president...”

**DEBATE 2B**

July 31, 2019

Detroit, MI

*Cory Booker* “And so I was raised by two Civil Rights parents who told me to always keep your eyes on the prize...”

*Julián Castro* “I grew up with a single mom in a poor neighborhood.”

“I grew up with a grandmother that had diabetes, and I watched as her condition got worse and worse.”

*Tulsi Gabbard* “You can imagine, I grew up in Hawaii, which is the most remote island chain in the world. So for us growing up there, protecting the environment was not a political issue, it’s a way of life. It’s part of our culture. It’s part of who we are.”

*Kamala Harris* “My sister Maya and I joke, we grew up surrounded by a bunch of adults, who spent full time marching and shouting about this thing called justice.”

**DEBATE 3**

September 12, 2019

Houston, TX

*Joe Biden* “So, I was raised to believe that that was the center of everything, family, and could be judged on based how you treat your family and how you went from there.”

“Because when you get hit badly, whether you’re losing a job or you’re raising a family, like my dad, where you have to make that longest walk up the stairs to tell your kid, ‘You can’t live here anymore.’ Dad lost his job. You know, we’ve all been through that some form or another.”

*Cory Booker* “Look, I grew up in the suburbs. It was about 20 years ago that I came out of my home when I moved to inner city New Jersey, and witnessed the aftermath of a shooting.”

- Julián Castro* “I grew up in a single parent household on the West side of San Antonio going to the public schools. Eventually my brother, Joaquín, and I became the first in our family to become professionals.”
- “I grew up with a grandmother who had Type II diabetes and I watched her condition get worse and worse, that that whole time she had Medicare.”
- “But I grew up in one of those neighborhoods that folks have talked about. In a neighborhood that was grappling with the legacy of segregation.”
- Kamala Harris* “A part of it probably comes from the fact that I was raised by a mother who said many things that were life lessons for me, including, ‘Don’t you ever let anybody tell you who you are. You tell them who you are.’”
- Amy Klobuchar* “I grew up with a dad who struggled with alcoholism his whole life. After his third DWI, he had a choice between jail and treatment. He chose treatment with his faith, with his friends, with our family.”
- Bernie Sanders* “I’d say that resilience to me means growing up in a rent controlled apartment in Brooklyn, New York, the son of an immigrant who came to this country without a nickel in his pocket.”
- Elizabeth Warren* “I was born and raised in Oklahoma, but I’m sure glad to be in Texas tonight. All three of my brothers served in military bases here in Texas. That was their ticket to the middle class. Me, I got my big opportunity about half a mile down the road from here, at the University of Houston, back when it cost \$50 a semester.”
- “I mentioned earlier, I’ve known what I wanted to be since second grade. I wanted to be a public school teacher, and I invested early. I used to line my dollies up and teach school. I had a reputation for being tough but fair. By the time I graduated from high school, my family didn’t have money for a college application, much less to send me off to four years at a university.”

#### DEBATE 4

October 15, 2019

Westerville, OH

*Kamala Harris* “When I was growing up, my mother raised my sister and me. We would often come home from school before she came home from work. She’s come home, she’d cook dinner, and at some point we’d go to bed, and she’d sit up at the kitchen table trying to figure out how to make it all work.”

*Julián Castro* “I grew up like I bet a lot of folks in this room grew up and folks that are watching on TV. I grew up with my twin brother, Joaquin, in a single-parent household where my mom was working hard to support us and also her mom, my grandmother. And we knew what it was like to wonder whether we were going to be able to pay the rent at the first of the month or sometimes have the electricity turned off. And when I was a kid, to look at the grocery list that seemed to get shorter and shorter, and that’s what’s happening to a lot of families these days.”

#### DEBATE 5

November 20, 2019

Atlanta, GA

*Corey Booker* “I am literally here on this stage right now because 50 years ago there was a lawyer on a couch who changed his life, changed his mind to get up and start representing families, one of them mine, who were discriminated against. The house I grew up in is because of that lawyer’s activity.”

*Elizabeth Warren* “I remember what it was like when I was a little girl. My brother, my oldest brother, who served five-and-a-half years off and on in combat in Vietnam, what it was like for my mother every day to check the mailbox, had we heard from Don Reed? How is he doing? And if there was a letter, she was brighter than the day. And if there wasn’t, she would say, well, maybe tomorrow.”

“They’re not building the little two bedroom, one bath house that I grew up in, garage converted to a bedroom for my three brothers.”

**DEBATE 6**  
December 19, 2019  
Los Angeles, CA

- Pete Buttigieg* “It begins with the fact that my household, my family came from abroad. My father immigrated to this country and became a US Citizen.”
- Amy Klobuchar* “My Grandpa, he was an iron ore miner, a union member who worked 1500 feet underground, and he saved money in a coffee can in the basement to send my Dad to a community college. That’s my family trust.”
- “I just want to make very clear, Mayor, that the freedom of the press is deep in my heart. My dad was a newspaper man.”
- Elizabeth Warren* “All three of my brothers served and we have people on this stage who have served and I’m deeply grateful for that.”
- Andrew Yang* “I grew up the son of immigrants and I had many racial epithets used against me as a kid, but black and Latinos have something more powerful working against them than words.”

**DEBATE 7**  
January 14, 2020  
Des Moines, IA

- Amy Klobuchar* “My dad. I know when his long-term care insurance ends, and then we have some savings for him. He’s in assisted living. He got married three times, whole ‘nother story.”
- “And what I’m going to say is this, my grandpa worked 1500 feet underground in the iron ore mines, saved money in a coffee can in the basement to send my dad to a two-year community college. That’s my family trust. And when you have been given an opportunity like that, you go into the world, not with the sense of entitlement, Donald Trump, but with a sense of obligation.”
- Elizabeth Warren* “So I was born and raised in Oklahoma. I have three older brothers who are all retired, who are all back there still.”

## DEBATE 8

February 7, 2020

Manchester, New Hampshire

*Joe Biden*

“I come from a family where our dad walked in one day and said, ‘We’ve got to move. Don’t have a job. We’ve got to move to a different city.’ I watched my dad and I met many people here in this state and others, who go through the same thing where the fathers made that longest walk or the mothers made that longest walk.”

“Everyone, everyone, everyone, as my father would say, is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and we’re not doing it.”

*Amy Klobuchar*

“I didn’t come from money, and I just simply think people don’t look at the guy in the White House and say ‘Can we get someone richer?’ I don’t think that. hey want to have someone that they can understand. And you know my background. My grandpa was an iron ore miner, he worked 1500 feet underground in the mines his whole life. He couldn’t even graduate from high school because he had to raise his nine brothers and sisters. My grandpa saved money in a coffee can to send my dad to a two-year community college. That was my family’s trust, and you can’t send, like Donald Trump got from his family, you can’t fit \$413 million in a coffee can”

“My mom grew up and wanted to be a teacher in Wisconsin. She moved to Minnesota, she taught second grade until she was 70 years old. And no, I am not a billionaire, but I stand before you as a granddaughter of an iron ore miner, the daughter of a teacher and a newspaperman, the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from the state of Minnesota, someone who has passed over 100 bills as a lead Democrat in that gridlock in Washington, D.C., and that is because we live in a country of shared dreams. And that means no matter where you come from, no matter where you come from, you should be able to make it.”

*Tom Steyer*

“So, I did start the Need to Impeach movement in October of 2017. And my father was one of the people who prosecuted the Nazi war criminals after World War II. And that is part of the reason I started it.”

## DEBATE 9

February 19, 2020

Las Vegas, NV

*Joe Biden*

“People I grew up with in Scranton, when my dad lost his job, lost his house, had to move. We moved to Claymont, we found ourselves in a position where we had little ability to get anything done. And my dad worked like hell.”

“Number two, we have to have somebody who understands what it’s like for ordinary people. Ordinary people come up. They have to understand, like my dad made that longest walk up a short flight of stairs and said, ‘I don’t have a job, honey, we have to move. You’ve got to move with Grandpa.’ How long it took to buy a house, how long it took to get back in the game again.”

*Elizabeth Warren*

“I grew up fighting. I grew up out in Oklahoma, and I learned it probably from my mother. I watched when my daddy had a heart attack and didn’t have money coming in, when our car was lost and when we were on the edge of losing our home. I watched my mother fight to save our family. And I grew up fighting to save our family, my family.”

## DEBATE 10

February 25, 2020

Charleston, SC

*Joe Biden*

“And my mother’s motto was—she said, “You know, you’re defined by your courage, you’re redeemed by your loyalty.” I am loyal. I do what I say.

*Amy Klobuchar*

“And that’s been my life, from when my grandpa was an iron ore miner in the unions. Politics made those mines safer. And when my dad needed treatment, it was there for him, and, in his words, he was ‘pursued by grace.’ And when my mom got divorced and she didn’t have a job and she went back to teaching and that gift of public service got her through.”

*Elizabeth Warren*

“All three of my brothers served in the military, and I understand how much the militaries sacrifices, how much their families sacrifice, and how much they are willing to put on the line.”

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## Web Appendix B – Supplementary Data

**Table WAB1.** List of Candidates Participating in the Democratic Primary Debates

Candidate	1A	1B	2A	2B	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Joe Biden		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Pete Buttiegieg		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Amy Klobuchar	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Bernie Sanders		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Elizabeth Warren	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Andrew Yang		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			7
Tom Steyer						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
Corey Booker	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓						5
Kamala Harris		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						5
Julián Castro	✓			✓	✓	✓							4
Tulsi Gabbard	✓			✓		✓	✓						4
Beto O'Rourke	✓		✓	✓	✓								4
Michael Bennet		✓		✓									2
Michael Bloomberg											✓	✓	2
Bill de Blasio	✓			✓									2
John Delaney	✓		✓										2
Kirsten Gillibrand		✓		✓									2
John Hickenlooper		✓	✓										2
Jay Inslee	✓			✓									2
Tim Ryan	✓		✓										2
Marianne Williamson		✓	✓										2
Steve Bullock			✓										1
Eric Swalwell		✓											1
Total	10	10	10	11	10	11	10	7	6	7	6	7	105
% discussing upbringing	30	20	20	40	70	18	20	43	33	43	33	43	34

NOTE: Table is ordered by number of debates the candidate appeared in. Where appearances are equal, candidates are ordered alphabetically.



**Table WAB2.** Demographic Data from Studies 2-4 and the National Averages

Category	Items	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	National
Sample Size		180	300	138	
Age (Years)	Median	36.50	33.00	22.00	37.90 <sup>a</sup>
Gender (%)	Male	42.20	59.30	68.80	49.20 <sup>b</sup>
	Female	56.10	40.30	31.20	50.80
	Other	1.70	0.30	--	--
Political Orientation (%)	Far Right/Extremely Conservative	--	5.70	--	3.00 <sup>c</sup>
	Right/Conservative	--	23.70	--	29.00
	Center/Moderate	--	21.30	--	24.00
	Left/Liberal	--	32.70	--	23.00
	Far Left/Extremely Liberal	--	16.70	--	3.00
	No Political View	--	--	--	--
	Other Political View	--	--	--	--
	Unknown/Haven't Thought	--	--	--	18.00
Education (%)	Less than High School	0.00	1.00	0.00	11.04 <sup>d</sup>
	High School/Equivalent	11.10	7.30	4.30	28.89
	Some College, No Degree	22.20	19.00	54.30	18.86
	Associates	6.70	11.30	30.40	9.77
	Bachelors	42.80	51.30	10.90	20.04
	Grad Degree or Higher	17.30	10.00	0.00	11.40
Marital Status (%)	Single, Never Married	--	47.70	--	27.00 <sup>e</sup>
	Married	--	44.30	--	56.60
	Separated	--	1.70	--	2.40
	Widowed	--	1.00	--	6.20
	Divorced	--	5.30	--	10.40
Household Income (%)	<\$25k	--	16.00	--	20.23 <sup>f</sup>
	\$25k-\$34,999	--	19.00	--	9.23
	\$35k-\$49,999	--	16.30	--	12.33
	\$50k-\$74,999	--	24.30	--	16.45
	\$75k-\$99,999	--	11.00	--	12.52
	\$100k-\$149,999	--	8.70	--	14.49
	≥\$150k	--	4.70	--	14.76

Ethnicity (%)	White/Caucasian	80.60	72.00	89.10	76.60 <sup>b</sup>
	Black/African American	7.20	10.30	0.70	13.40
	Asian	6.70	8.00	4.30	5.80
	Hispanic/Latino	--	7.70	--	18.10
	Pacific Islander	0.60	0.30	0.70	0.20
	Other	5.00	1.70	4.30	

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*Source of National Data:* <sup>a</sup>USCB (2017c); <sup>b</sup>USCB (2018b); <sup>c</sup>ANES (2016); <sup>d</sup>USCB (2017a); <sup>e</sup>USCB (2018a); <sup>f</sup>USCB (2017b).

**Table WAB3.** Definitions, Operationalizations, and Measurement Items for Constructs

Construct	Definition	Operationalization	Measurement Items
<i>Similar Upbringing</i>	Perceiving another person as having an upbringing, in relation to their childhood, that is similar to one's own.	<p>S2: A similar upbringing was manipulated by exposing participants to a letter from a political candidate containing information about their upbringing. After, participants were asked questions about their upbringing to determine if they had a similar, partially similar, or dissimilar upbringing to the candidate.</p> <p>S3: A similar upbringing was measured by asking participants to indicate how similar the candidate's upbringing was to their own.</p> <p>S4: A similar upbringing was manipulated by first asking participants several questions about their upbringing. After, participants were exposed to a letter from a political candidate that revealed an upbringing that was either completely similar or dissimilar to their own.</p>	S3: How similar is this candidate's upbringing to your upbringing?
<i>Self-Perceived Political Skills</i>	When an individual believes that they have the requisite skills to be a politician, such as public speaking and managing large teams.	S4: Participants were asked to indicate how competent they view themselves based on several different types of political skills.	S4: They often make decisions under pressure; they have to deal with many constituents; they must make many public speeches; they often have to manage a significant number of people; they attend various council meetings; they routinely give interviews to the media; they're required to campaign for themselves and their party
<i>Perceived Competence</i>	Perceiving another person has the ability to do things effectively.	<p>S2: Participants were asked to evaluate the candidate on how competent they would be in their position.</p> <p>S3 &amp; S4: Participants were asked to evaluate the candidate on how effective they would be in their position.</p>	<p>S2: If elected, how competent do you think this candidate would be in their position?</p> <p>S3 &amp; S4: If elected, how effective do you think this candidate would be in their position?</p>
<i>Likeability</i>	Perceiving another person as likeable	S2, S3 & S4: Participants were asked to evaluate how much they liked the candidate.	S2, S3 & S4: How much would you say you like this candidate?

**Table WAB4.** Percentage of Responses for Upbringing Questions in Study 4

Question	Response Options	Study 4
What best describes the size of the town/city where you were raised? (%)	Large city	39.10
	Small town	60.90
How would you describe your upbringing? (%)	Relatively easy	86.20
	Relatively hard	13.80
Have you always lived in this state, or did you move there from somewhere else? (%)	Have always lived here	50.00
	Moved from somewhere else	50.00
Were you raised in a single or two-parent household?	Single-parent	7.20
	Two-parent	92.80

**Table WAB5.** Correlation Table for Upbringing Questions in Study 4

Question	1	2	3
1. What best describes the size of the town/city where you were raised?			
2. How would you describe your upbringing?	.02		
3. Have you always lived in this state, or did you move there from somewhere else?	-.09	.06	
4. Were you raised in a single or two-parent household?	.06	-.21 *	-.05

\* $p < .05$

## References

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## Web Appendix C – Experimental Stimuli

### WAC1 – Political Letter for Study 2

“New political candidates will be running for office in every state of the country. We are interested to know how you feel about candidates from your home state. Please enter the state that you live in so we can find information about a political candidate from your state.”

Dear Friends,

I'm writing this letter to you today because I would like to introduce myself. My name is [Candidate's name has been obscured] and I am running for office in the great state of [State name]. I decided to seek this office because I realized that as a state, we have grown considerably these past years, and we have now reached a point where it is time for us to decide what we want to become, where we want to go, and how we want to get there.

Growing up in a small town in [State name] I have fond memories of playing outside and being carefree. Almost every day, my parents would let me run around the neighborhood and it was often without much supervision. I believe that their laid-back attitude was a big part of my upbringing and positively helped me transform into the type of politician I am today.

I would like to be your voice for the state of [State name] and I hope I can count on your vote in the next election. Thank you for the opportunity to briefly introduce myself to you.

Kind regards,

[Candidate's name has been obscured]

## **WAC2 – Political Letter for Study 4**

“A new political candidate is running for office in an upcoming election. We are interested to know how you feel about the candidate. On the next page you will see a letter from the candidate. The candidate's name and identity have been obscured. We would like you to make your judgments based on the type of person they are.”

Dear Voter,

I will be running for office in the great state of [State name]. Although I [have always lived here vs. moved here from somewhere else] I feel I have a unique understanding of a broad cross section of people. To give you an idea of the type of person I am, I was raised in a [large city vs. small town] and although my upbringing was [relatively easy vs. relatively tough] in a [single-parent vs. two-parent] household, I learned the importance of being strong from an early age. I feel this quality translates well to the role of a leader.

I am writing to you in the hopes that you can see me as a viable candidate. Although this is my first election, I hope that you can see that I am worthy of the position.

Thank you for your time. I hope that I can count on your vote.

Kind regards,

[Candidate's name has been obscured]



### **WAC3 – Political Skills for Study 4**

[1 = Extremely incompetent, 7 = Extremely competent]

- They often make decisions under pressure
- They have to deal with many constituents
- They must make many public speeches
- They often have to manage a significant number of people
- They attend various council meetings
- They routinely give interviews to the media
- They're required to campaign for themselves and their party