

From First Lady to presidential candidate: masculinization in news coverage of female politicians

De primera dama a candidata presidencial: masculinización en la cobertura periodística de mujeres políticas

De primeira-dama à candidata presidencial: masculinização na cobertura jornalística de mulheres políticas

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ABSTRACT | The study presents cases of presidential candidates who were previously first ladies: Cristina Fernández (Argentina), Hillary Clinton (USA) and Margarita Zavala (Mexico). The objective was to register, in national newspapers (*La Nación*, *Página/12*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Reforma* and *La Jornada*) which were the attributes of personality, thematic agenda and tone in the news emerged during both periods. Feminine (empathy, honesty, celebrity) and masculine (leadership, intelligence, toughness) personality traits were deductively established, as well as soft or feminine topics (culture, health, education) and hard or masculine topics (economy, security and corruption, foreign policy). We found a masculinization of the political personality and thematic agenda during the candidacy, not found significantly during their status as First Ladies. We detected that the tone of the news was negative when the female candidates were presented from a female personality and masculine topics. Among the conclusions we can highlight that women who run for presidential positions are forced to be more strategic in their political actions to be seen by citizens as capable of solving problems that are not culturally associated with femininity. The investigation concludes that the press placed the political woman in a paradox between being covered journalistically as women or as politicians, making them both eligible and ineligible for the presidency.

KEYWORDS: political personality; agenda; presidential campaigns; first ladies; news framing; political communication; gender studies.

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RESUMEN | El estudio presenta casos de candidatas presidenciales que anteriormente fueron primeras damas: Cristina Fernández (Argentina), Hillary Clinton (Estados Unidos) y Margarita Zavala (México). El objetivo fue registrar, en diarios nacionales (*La Nación*, *Página/12*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Reforma* y *La Jornada*) cuáles fueron los atributos de personalidad, agenda temática y tonalidad presentados en las noticias surgidas durante ambos periodos políticos. Para su estudio, se establecieron de forma deductiva rasgos de personalidad femeninos (empatía, honestidad, celebridad) y masculinos (liderazgo, inteligencia, dureza), así como tópicos de corte suave o femenino (cultura, salud, educación) y duro o masculino (economía, seguridad y corrupción, política exterior). Entre los hallazgos se encontró una masculinización de la personalidad política y agenda temática durante las candidaturas presidenciales, la cual no se registró de manera significativa durante los periodos de primera dama. Se detectó que el tono de las noticias era negativo cuando las candidatas fueron presentadas desde una personalidad femenina y tópicos de corte masculino. Entre las conclusiones se señala que las mujeres que se candidatean para puestos presidenciales se ven obligadas a ser más estratégicas en su actuar político para ser vistas por la ciudadanía como capaces de resolver problemáticas que culturalmente no se asocian con la feminidad. Además, se concluye que la prensa las ubicó en una paradoja entre ser cubiertas periodísticamente como mujeres o como políticas, al mismo tiempo elegibles e inelegibles para la presidencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: personalidad política; agenda; campañas presidenciales; primeras damas; encuadres; comunicación política; estudios de género.

RESUMO | O estudo apresenta casos de mulheres candidatas à presidência que foram as primeiras damas de seu país: Cristina Fernández (Argentina), Hillary Clinton (EUA) e Margarita Zavala (México). O objetivo era registrar, em jornais nacionais (*La Nación*, *Página/12*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Reforma* e *La Jornada*) quais foram os atributos de personalidade, agenda temática e tonalidade nas notícias que surgiram nos dois períodos. Traços de personalidade femininos (empatia, honestidade, celebridade) e masculinos (liderança, inteligência, dureza) foram estabelecidos dedutivamente, bem como temas suaves ou femininos (cultura, saúde, educação) e temas duros ou masculinos (economia, segurança e corrupção, política externa). Esta pesquisa acadêmica encontrou uma masculinização da personalidade política e agenda temática durante a candidatura presidencial, o que não foi encontrado significativamente durante seu status de primeira-dama. O tom da notícia foi negativo quando as candidatas foram apresentadas a partir de uma personalidade feminina e temas masculinos. Uma das conclusões é que as mulheres que disputam cargos presidenciais são obrigadas a ser mais estratégicas em suas ações políticas para serem vistas pelos cidadãos como capazes de resolver problemas que não estão culturalmente associados à feminilidade. Além disso, a pesquisa conclui que a imprensa colocou as mulheres políticas em um paradoxo entre ser cobertas jornalisticamente como mulheres ou como políticas, tornando-as tanto elegíveis quanto inelegíveis para a presidência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: personalidade política; agenda; campanhas presidenciais; primeiras-damas; quadros de notícias; comunicação política; estudos de gênero.

INTRODUCTION

According to research on the role of the media in the coverage of women's presidential candidacies (Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2005; Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011; Fernández García & Tous Roviroso, 2012) and first ladies (Winfield, 1997; Burns, 2004; Zeldes, 2009; Widlak, 2016), there is a specific way of journalistically approaching women in politics. They are covered from traditional feminine values, such as a compassionate personality and a caring-themed agenda. However, once women reach a leadership position, such as the Executive branch, the journalistic treatment of the personality and themes that concern them becomes less feminine, to legitimize a role that has historically been destined for men (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; Meeks, 2013; Lünenborg & Maier, 2014).

In this context, several women were found in high-hierarchy positions in the American continent, such as former presidents Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010 and 2014-2018) from Chile, Laura Chinchilla (2010-2014) from Costa Rica, and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) from Brazil. Thus, the study on the media treatment of political women gains relevance due to its current timeliness.

This study aims to specifically analyze the news generated around presidential candidates who previously served as first ladies. The women who have been in both scenarios in the American continent are: Janet Jagan (1997) in Guyana, Mireya Moscoso (1999) in Panama, Cristina Fernández (2007 and 2011) in Argentina, Nora Gúnera (1997) and Xiomara Castro (2013) in Honduras, Keiko Fujimori (2011 and 2016) in Peru, Hillary Clinton (2016) in the United States, Margarita Zavala (2018) in Mexico, and Guatemalans Patricia de Arzú (2011) and Sandra Torres (2015 and 2019).

Thus, the proposal of this work is to analyze three political figures with different electoral results. The first case is that of the Argentine Cristina Fernández, affiliated with the Justicialista Party, whose ideology is centered on Peronism. Fernández contended for and won the presidency of her country twice (2007 and 2011), in addition to being twice a senator (1995 and 2001) and a deputy for Santa Cruz (1989 and 1997), as well as twice a senator for Buenos Aires (2005 and 2017). In 2019, she was elected as vice president of the nation for the presidency of Alberto Fernández. She was first lady during the mandate of Néstor Kirchner that lasted from 2003 to 2007.

The second case is that of the former senator for New York on two occasions (2001 and 2007) and former Secretary of State (2009) Hillary Rodham Clinton. She ran in the primary elections for the Democratic Party in 2008 and later as the party's official presidential candidate in the 2016 elections, won by Republican Donald Trump. She served as the first lady of the United States in the two terms

of Bill Clinton, from 1993 to 2001, during which she is remembered for proposing a reform to the health system before Congress.

Finally, the Mexican Margarita Zavala Gómez del Campo served as a national deputy for the National Action Party from 2003 to 2006. Later, she held the leadership of the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF), a position awarded for being the first lady during the presidency of Felipe Calderón (2006-2012), period in which the war against drug trafficking was declared. She ran for the presidency of Mexico independently in March 2018, from which she withdrew on May 17, weeks before the elections won by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of the Morena party.

The relevance of this work is that it explores the type of journalistic coverage received by three presidential candidates based on themes and attributes associated with being a woman. In addition, we will contrast these results with an analysis of the period in which they were first ladies, to reveal similarities and differences between both lapses, i.e., to compare the journalistic coverage of the same woman between two political intervals. This comparison is based on the consideration of both periods as two different spheres: a private or intimate when being first ladies, and another public or political when being candidates for the Executive branch.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Journalistic coverage of the political personality

The literature refers that personality traits are one of the points in which the media focus to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of politicians (Crisóstomo Flores, 2019). However, there is evidence that when a woman politician becomes involved in an electoral campaign, the amount of news coverage towards personality traits tends to rise (Heldman et al., 2005; Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, & Weber, 2013) .

One of the explanations is that, as pointed out by VanHorn (2010), male candidates show their human credentials through *surrogates* such as their wife or children, so they are not the ones in charge of exposing themselves in this area, while female candidates are approached by the media from themselves and without the help of substitutes, in a more individualized, sensational and trivialized way (Trimble, Wagner, Sampert, Raphael, & Gerrits, 2013).

Different works have found that the media produce meanings of character according to gender (Kahn, 1994; van Acker, 2003; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; López-Hermida, 2009; Lünenborg & Maier, 2014). Thus, a political woman is presented from traits such as being warm, compassionate, honest, volatile, attractive, peaceful, dependent, a celebrity, among other traits that relate to *existing*

for others. On the other hand, a political man tends to be presented as a leader, experienced, intelligent, competitive, commanding, thinker, statesman, strong, vital, tough, and aggressive, attributes that are learned in the public arena.

To assign a gender to the political personality produces an advantage for the male candidates over the female candidates, since masculine characteristics seem to be the most appropriate to the profile of an exemplary politician (Aalberg & Jenssen, 2007). Considering this, a tendency has been found for political women to hide their feminine personality to reveal themselves as competitive in an electoral contest (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; Meeks, 2013). Political men, on the other hand, do not have the need to overshadow their masculine features to be more empathetic in politics, since these are culturally appropriate for the position they apply for (Lünenborg & Maier, 2014).

This is part of Butler's (2007) concept of performance, who states that gender is produced in time and space through a stylized reiteration of acts and personality traits that place a person, regardless of whether it is a man or woman, in masculinity or femininity. Jones (2016) points out that even a political speech can be feminine when there are emotional words, or masculine when aggressive adjectives are included. In that regard, she concluded that Hillary Clinton, from her period as first lady in 1993 to her presidential candidature in 2016, has tended to masculinize her speech, since she has been forced to be more strategic with the selection of her words in a political environment dominated by men.

However, Carlin and Winfrey (2009) claim that masculinizing the personality of women puts them at risk of being represented as ambitious, calculating, cold and intimidating, which can make them see as insufficiently feminine and not very charismatic. Thus, the press generates a contradictory situation between covering the feminine or masculine personality of a political woman (Fernandez García, 2010).

Jamieson (1995) uses the concept of double bind to refer to the double message that female leaders receive. On the one hand, they are invited to follow certain behaviors that they must culturally maintain regarding their gender. On the other, and when seeking to enter a high-hierarchy position, they are required to have a personality more adjusted to masculine traits. Thus, the structure created, resulting from previous customs (Hall, 1974), falls on the action of the political woman, who finds herself in a dilemma between acting in a feminine or masculine way to fit into politics.

The work of Bean (2019) on the presidential primaries of the United States in 2016 is an example of the above. It concludes that the coverage in the press showed Hillary Clinton in double binds: from the same fact she was shown as arrogant

or confident, professional or irritable, and experienced or corrupt, while in the Republican Party, Donald Trump could address more outrageous topics while still looking like a clear contender for the presidency. Therefore, the first research question to answer is:

Q1. What were the prominent personality traits of Fernández, Zavala, and Clinton as first ladies and as presidential candidates?

Once these have been recognized, the hypothesis to be tested regarding the information coverage of women's political personality is:

H1. Political women are covered from their feminine personality in their first ladies' period, while they are framed from a masculine personality during a political campaign.

Construction of a gender-based thematic agenda

Just as there are behavioral traits related to their gender, there are also subjects in which, presumably, women are more capable. For Finamore and Coin de Carvalho (2006), there are two thematic fields that, according to society and the media, a woman in politics must meet. First, those related to the feminist agenda, such as the eradication of violence against women and the defense of reproductive rights. Although they are topics of great social importance, it is established as a stereotype since any politician, regardless of their gender, should follow these actions.

Second, a culturally feminine political agenda that, as they are considered as more honest and sensitive to the suffering of society, they are better able to attend. Topics such as education, health, childcare, social justice, transportation, culture, sports and science are on this agenda (Morales Quiroga, 2008; López-Hermida, 2009; Bertrand Pearce, 2016; Humprecht & Esser, 2017; Vidal Correa, 2020a; 2020b). Fernández Poncela (2008) explained that these tasks belong to the so-called *second category portfolios* because, although they are relevant in a nation, they are inserted in a circle with less prominence in the defense of sovereignty. On the other hand, the male portfolio includes economy, defense, business, crime and agriculture, topics that are more important in electoral terms (Gómez-Escalonilla, García, Santín, Rodríguez, & Torregrosa, 2008; Fernández García & Tous Roviroso, 2012).

For example, in the 2012 Mexican presidential elections Josefina Vázquez Mota registered fewer issues of a tough or masculine nature (economy, international treaties and security) than the male candidates, while the issues of women's rights, health, education and the environment, i.e, soft or feminine, had greater relevance in the journalistic coverage of that candidate (Vidal Correa, 2020a).

The same happened during the Chilean presidential elections of 2013, where both Michelle Bachelet and Evelyn Matthei were framed from issues such as education, human rights, and health, to the detriment of the economy and security (Crisóstomo Flores, 2019).

Wasburn and Wasburn (2011) problematized the above by stating that, although a female candidate expresses herself on issues that are not compassionate, the press prefers to cover her –and ask her about– issues in which she should have a stand for being a woman. This type of journalistic coverage of topics according to gender is presented as a disadvantage for the female candidates, since they are precisely the topics that register the least media visibility (Meeks, 2013; Vos, 2013; Martínez Garza & Maltos, 2019).

This apparently dead-end set of actions, where women appropriate and relegates the issues culturally assigned to their gender, can be considered within the *glass ceiling*, because it hinders women's access to address all political issues, both soft and hard (Valcárcel, 1997). Thus, the second research question is:

Q2. Which topics shaped the agenda of each of the three political women according to the news that emerged in both periods?

As in the personality traits, once the types of topics covered in the news have been counted, we propose to validate the following hypothesis:

H2. Political women are covered from an agenda of feminine issues in the first lady period, while they are framed from a male thematic agenda during a political campaign.

News tone

When women are approached journalistically from a masculine personality or agenda, the tone of the note is usually negative, because politics is involved in areas to which it does not belong socially. In this regard, Wachai (2005) showed that the media tend to generate a greater amount of negative news when a first lady interferes significantly in politics, through positions on high importance issues and representing her husband in official duties.

The works of Fernández García (2010), Miller and Peake (2013) and Bijker (2015) highlighted that the media coverage of female candidates tends to be negative, to the detriment of the news where male candidates are presented. According to Rheault, Rayment and Musula (2019), women politicians who achieve high office are more likely to receive negative comments in the media than men who achieve the same rank.

Anderson (2017a) explains that it is a paradox in the presidential candidacy of women, where they are eligible and ineligible at the same time. They are eligible because the access to women's candidacies is open, but ineligible inasmuch as there will always be a structural problem that makes them see as inefficient to govern. An example of the above is Hillary Clinton, whose political experience and trajectory in the Democratic Party was greater than that of her opponents Barack Obama, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump, but still they were seen as better competitors and as closer to *change* than Clinton (Anderson, 2017b).

The works of Dan and Iorgoveanu (2013) and Quevedo Redondo and Suárez-Romero (2017) concluded that the tone of the news for female candidates can favor them as long as they are presented to a greater extent through images that highlight their femininity; otherwise, they could create a negative tone. Thus, political women have less opportunity to make their political claims known, because the media reiterate, through tone, that the public space is preferably masculine (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019).

According to Vidal Correa (2020b), the negative tone is accentuated more in the candidacies of women than of men, mainly in presidential elections. This may occur due to what Lizotte and Meggers-Wright (2018) call role congruence theory, which indicates that, by not registering an appropriate behavior within the culturally assigned role, the candidate is punished with a negative tone, either in media coverage or in the reception of information. In this regard, the Mexican candidate Vázquez Mota was favored with up to three times less negative campaign than her male candidate counterparts, since she was covered to a lesser extent from male issues (Vidal Correa, 2020a) Thus, the last research question is:

Q3. What was the tone of the news according to the personality types and thematic agenda?

Once this result is obtained, it will be crossed with the data on personality traits and type of topics, to validate the following hypothesis:

H3. News coverage tends to be negative when women politicians are framed by personality traits and masculine topics.

METHODOLOGY

The study contemplated recording the trends in journalistic coverage of women politicians in the print media. To do so, we decided to use the content analysis technique in its quantitative mode. The choice is sustained insofar as the technique allows investigating reproducible and systematic results, and evidences trends in media coverage (Krippendorff, 1990; Díaz & Navarro, 1998;

Piñeiro-Naval & Mangana, 2018). In addition, this same technique has been used to recognize the type of information coverage that the press made about high-hierarchy female politicians in Europe (Widlak, 2016; Humprecht & Esser, 2017), North America (Bertrand Pearce, 2016; Wagner, Trimble, Sampert, & Gerrits, 2017; Bean, 2019) and Latin America (Valenzuela & Correa, 2006; Rodelo, 2016; Crisóstomo Flores, 2019).

Likewise, we used the news framing model, whose proposal is based on the selection of aspects of a perceived reality to reproduce a communicative message in order to promote a specific treatment, definition, evaluation or interpretation (Piñeiro-Naval & Mangana, 2018 ; Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Entman, 1993). This model has also been used by previous research regarding news coverage of women in politics (Burns, 2004; Kalyango & Winfield, 2009; Zeldes, 2009; Vidal Correa, 2020a; 2020b).

The unit of analysis was the news piece, so information related to interviews, reports or opinion genres such as editorials and columns was not included; nor are the galleries of photos, videos or infographics in which there is no textual description.

Two newspapers were selected for each country: *La Nación* and *Página/12* for Argentina; *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* for the United States, and *Reforma* and *La Jornada* for Mexico. These newspapers covered both political periods and are among the four most read newspapers in each country, according to the Argentine Circulation Verification Institute (IVC, 2019), the US agency Cision Media Research (2019) and the Mexican media catalog of the National Electoral Institute (INE, 2019).

In addition, their choice is justified by their different political ideology. In this regard, according to the study by Brussino, García, Rabbia and Imhoff (2011), Argentine newspaper readers consider *La Nación* a right-wing newspaper, while *Página/12* was mentioned as left-wing. Likewise, there is a discursive formation in both in their anti-Kirchner and pro-Kirchner contents, respectively (Ponza, 2018). Ho and Quinn (2008) showed that the editorials of *The Wall Street Journal* are conservative, which is highlighted by having a niche audience of businesspeople and economists, while those of *The New York Times* are liberal. In Mexico, Durán Gracia (2009) and Rodelo and Muñiz (2017) agree that the founding reason and agenda place *Reforma* in a right-wing spectrum, a newspaper that emerged from an American journalistic market model, while *La Jornada* is located in the left, founded by critics of the 1968 student massacre.

To choose the news items that would be part of the sample, we used different keywords that included all the possibilities in which a media can refer to the

political women in the study, such as name, maiden or married surnames and positions they have held (first lady, deputy, senator, DIF director). These words had to appear in the title or lead, so it is understood that the relevant part of the text was the information about the presidential candidates, as stated by Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar and Abdelhamid (2015), and Catalán-Matamoros and Peñafiel-Saiz (2019) in their studies.

We decided to use a probability sampling of compound weeks in this work, which consists of constructing a random week in which seven weeks are represented, each with a different day (a Monday, a Tuesday, a Wednesday, etc.) (Soengas Pérez, 2013). In the case of the term of first lady, a week was selected composed by a year of the candidate's husband's mandate, i.e.: Bill Clinton, from January 20, 1993 to January 20, 2001; Néstor Kirchner, from May 25, 2003 to December 10, 2007, and Felipe Calderón, from December 2006 to November 2012. The gathering technique also included a systematic jump, i.e., if the Monday chosen at random did not contain news information, the following immediate Monday was chosen in which there was journalistic coverage (Lozano, 1994). This is due to the fact that the flow of information to a first lady is not constant, as the research background in the field had already stated (Kalyango & Winfield, 2009; Harmer, 2016; Widlak, 2016).

For the cases of the presidential candidacy, we used two weeks composed within the official campaign period, i.e., from July 19 to October 28, 2007 for Cristina; from July 28 to November 8, 2016 for Hillary, and from March 29 to May 17, 2018 for Margarita. Exceptionally, we decided that in the case of the latter it should be a census of all the news, due to her prompt withdrawal from the campaign. The total amount for both periods was N=385 news, distributed in n=82 for Fernández, n=145 for Clinton and n=158 news for Zavala.

According to Aruguete (2011), the present or absent attributes in the formation of the news, which participate in the production of a specific meaning, must be identified in the framing model. To establish these attributes or frames, we used Igartua and Humanes' (2004) deductive approach. In this regard, the coding manual was developed from the personality traits found in the research background (Van Acker, 2003; Valenzuela & Correa, 2006; Aalberg & Jenssen, 2007; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; López-Hermida, 2009; Lemarier-Saulnier & Lalancette, 2012; Lünenborg & Maier, 2014). They were grouped into a total of 12, divided into *female* or *depoliticized* and *masculine* or *politicized* (table 1). To make the categories more systematic, the different synonyms for each personality trait were specified in the code manual. The existence or not of each trait was codified, which had to be evident in the actions that Cristina, Hillary, and Margarita conducted during the news.

Typology	Personality frames	Thematic agenda
Feminine (depoliticized)	Empathic Low profile Honest Emotional Celebrity Ambitious	Science and culture Health Family and society Feminist agenda Education Urbanism and environment Personal topics
Masculine (politicized)	Leader Politically strong Controversial Tough personality Smart Dishonest	Economy Security and corruption Foreign policy Domestic policy

Table 1. Personality traits and analyzed topics agenda

Source: Own elaboration.

In the case of the topics agenda, we followed a procedure similar to that of personality traits; however, during the analysis, the female and male topics in the research background (Finamore & Coin de Carvalho, 2006; García Jiménez, Gómez-Escalonilla Moreno, Torregrosa Carmona, Rodríguez Díaz, & Santín Durán 2008; Gómez-Escalonilla et al., 2008; Morales Quiroga, 2008; López-Hermida, 2009; Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011; Fernández García & Tous Roviroso, 2012; Vos, 2013; Bertrand Pearce, 2016; Humprecht & Esser, 2017) were recategorized into 10 topics. It is noteworthy to mention that more than one personality trait or topic could be coded for each news item in the sample.

Finally, the news items that linked women politicians in any of the following cases were coded negatively: a) acts of corruption, b) conflicts of interest, c) protests against them, and d) obtaining the candidacy through unclear procedures.

The analyzes were retrieved in a spreadsheet, from which crossovers of variables were made with the SPSS program. For H1 and H2, the variables of political period (first lady or presidential candidate) were crossed with personality type or agenda (female or masculine). In the case of H3, the crossing consisted of the personality type or agenda according to a negative or neutral tone. In all cases, the 2 statistical test was applied to assess whether the relationship between the variables was significant.

RESULTS

Political women personality

To solve the first research question regarding which were the outstanding personality traits in each of the periods, we present tables 2 and 3. In the first instance, it is possible to note which were the most repeated specific traits. Cristina Fernández was covered mainly from two frames during both periods. First, as *politically strong*, which indicates that the media represented her as a politician that had significant political-electoral traction; second, as a *celebrity*, framing focused on trivial issues such as wardrobe, hairstyle and makeup, and news where she appeared surrounded by famous personalities (Sullivan, 2018; Taglianetti, 2019). The difference in the frames from one period to another in Argentine politics was presented in going from being framed as a *controversial* figure to a political *leader*, i.e., from facing or defending herself from her adversaries, to becoming a leader with proposals.

In the cases of Hillary Clinton and Margarita Zavala, the *leader* attribute remained in both periods. However, it is important to note that when they were presidential spouses the aspects most associated with femininity, such as celebrity and empathy, were significantly highlighted, while in the presidential campaigns of both they were portrayed as *controversial* (17%) and *politically strong* (15%), traits perceived as masculine.

To test the first research hypothesis (*Political women are covered from their feminine personality in their first ladies' period, while they are framed from a masculine personality during a political campaign*), table 3 includes the traits previously presented as masculine and feminine. In this regard, it is important to note that, in two of the three cases, the hypothesis is validated inasmuch as the journalistic coverage was feminized during the first lady period, while it was masculinized when they disputed the executive position of their country. Thus, the media that covered Hillary Clinton presented her from masculine features by 9% during the first period, which increased to 32% in the electoral campaign. This occurred while the female personality also decreased, from 43% to 11%. The χ^2 test ($p=0.000$ and C. Contingency=0.366), applied to the US candidate data, shows that the relationship between variables is strong.

In the information gathered on the Mexican, the same behavior was found, but in a more marked way, going from 9% to 46% of masculine traits during the second period. A reduction of female traits from 51% to 8% is also evident when applying as a candidate. The data are significant according to the χ^2 test ($p=0.000$ and C. of Contingency=0.471).

	First lady	Presidential candidate
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	Politically strong (17%) Celebrity (13%) Controversial (13%)	Celebrity (24%) Politically strong (16%) Leader (12%)
Hillary Rodham Clinton	Celebrity (17%) Leader (14%) Empathic (12%)	Controversial (17%) Politically strong (15%) Leader (14%)
Margarita Zavala Gómez del Campo	Empathic (22%) Celebrity (20%) Leader (15%)	Leader (19%) Controversial (17%) Politically strong (14%)

Table 2. Main personality frames during two political periods of female politicians

Source: Own elaboration.

Personality type	First lady	Presidential candidate	Total
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner			
Masculine personality	12	9	11
Feminine personality	23	31	27
Both personalities	65	60	62
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=40)	(n=42)	(n=82)
Hillary Rodham Clinton*			
Masculine personality	9	32	18
Feminine personality	43	11	30
Both personalities	48	57	52
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=89)	(n=56)	(n=145)
Margarita Zavala Gómez del Campo*			
Masculine personality	9	46	29
Feminine personality	51	8	28
Both personalities	40	46	43
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=68)	(n=85)	(n=153)

* $p < 0,05$

Table 3. Journalistic coverage of the personality of political women in two political periods

Source: Own elaboration.

In the case of Argentina's candidate, the only election winner of the three, the behavior was similar between both periods: masculine attributes in one of every 10 news items, while feminine in almost three of every 10. The rest of the news presented information which contained both types of personality. The test applied to the Fernández data set, χ^2 ($p=0.667$), showed that, in her case, there was no relationship between the personality type and the political period analyzed.

The conclusion of these results is that a feminine or depoliticized personality is not what the media expects during a candidacy, while a politicized personality or with aggressive or confrontational features is not what is expected in the news coverage of a first lady.

Topics agenda

Academic research has shown that journalistic coverage of women in politics occurs from topics that are considered specific to their gender (López-Hermida, 2009; Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011; Fernández García & Tous Roviroso, 2012; Vos, 2013; Bertrand Pearce, 2016; Humprecht & Esser, 2017). This fact would put them at a disadvantage in the campaign since, although these are topics of national importance, they do not have the same weight when the electorate decides their vote.

Table 4 presents the results on the second research question. In Argentina, the issues that caused the greatest resonance were domestic and foreign politics. In this regard, the issues concerning the decision of who would be the candidates for popularly elected positions, as well as relations with other states, were the most encountered during both Fernández terms. The difference was that, when she served as first lady, Cristina was presented to a greater extent from science and culture issues (16%), while, when she aspired to the presidency, it was from economics (25%).

Security and corruption were the most common themes in both Hillary Clinton terms. Themes of conflict of interest and use of the army were important in the news that addressed the former senator. The discrepancy between the two periods was that, in Bill Clinton's presidential term, she was associated with health issues (12%) and the economy (12%), which is consistent with the social assistance program that she sought to lobby during this period. When she was elected as a candidate of the Democratic Party, the media included her in topics of domestic (19%) and foreign (18%) politics.

In the Mexican case, the news about Margarita Zavala were focused on security and corruption, which was an important issue due to the war against drug trafficking declared by Felipe Calderón during his presidency, and which continued during the presidential candidacy of the former deputy.

	First lady	Presidential candidate
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	Domestic politics (elections and democracy) (27%)	Economy (25%)
	Science and culture (16%)	Domestic politics (elections and democracy) (24%)
	Foreign policy (15%)	Foreign policy (17%)
	Security and corruption (15%)	
Hillary Rodham Clinton	Security and corruption (19%)	Security and corruption (21%)
	Health (12%)	Domestic politics (elections and democracy) (19%)
	Economy (12%)	Foreign policy (18%)
Margarita Zavala Gómez del Campo	Security and corruption (17%)	Domestic politics (elections and democracy) (34%)
	Health (15%)	Security and corruption (22%)
	Family and society (14%)	Economy (13%)

Table 4. Main topics covered by the media during two political periods of women politicians

Source: Own elaboration.

Personality type	First lady	Presidential candidate	Total
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner*			
Masculine personality	61	69	65
Feminine personality	5	0	2
Both personalities	34	31	33
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=38)	(n=42)	(n=80)
Hillary Rodham Clinton*			
Masculine personality	38	50	43
Feminine personality	17	4	12
Both personalities	45	46	45
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=89)	(n=56)	(n=145)
Margarita Zavala Gómez del Campo*			
Masculine personality	27	68	50
Feminine personality	41	3	20
Both personalities	32	29	30
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=68)	(n=87)	(n=155)

* p < 0,05

Table 5. Journalistic coverage of the thematic agenda of women politicians in two periods

Source: Own elaboration.

It is important to note that during the Calderón period, issues related to health (14%) and family and society (14%) were relevant, since she obtained the honorary position of director of the National System for Integral Development of the Family (DIF). Upon registering as a non-party candidate, these two issues, more limited to care policies, received less media attention to the benefit of domestic politics (34%) and the economy (13%).

Regarding the second hypothesis (*H2: Political women are covered from an agenda of feminine issues in the first lady period, while they are framed from a male thematic agenda during a political campaign*) table 5 shows that the number of topics associated with masculine traits increased in all three cases, while feminine topics were almost totally eradicated. The most significant case was the Mexican, going from 27% to 68% of masculine topics. In each of the cases, the χ^2 test ($p=0.000$ and C. of Contingency=0.455) showed that there is a significant correlation between the type of topics and the political period in which they were published. In this regard, the second research hypothesis is validated due to the fact that there is a masculinization in the media agenda of the newspapers when presenting the same political woman during two different periods.

News tone

For the last question concerning news tone according to the type of personality and thematic agenda, we present table. In general terms, at least a third of the analyzed news had a negative tone based on the criteria previously described.

As for the third hypothesis (*News coverage tends to be negative when women politicians are framed by personality traits and masculine topics*), it is relevant to note that, in the case of the personality of political women, the negative *value* was presented mainly in the female type (49%), which seems to indicate that the media consider that a personality culturally associated with women does not belong to the public-political sphere. In this regard, the data were significant according to the χ^2 test ($p=0.003$), although with a not so strong contingency coefficient (0.174) since the specific results of Margarita Zavala were discordant to those of her counterparts.

On the other hand, in the thematic agenda, the negative tone prevailed in the masculine topics in more than half of the cases, while the issues that have to do with care presented, for the most part, neutrality. Thus, the results according to the tonality are *gendered* since a political woman will receive less negative news if she behaves with a male personality and with an agenda related to female topics. These data are supported by the χ^2 test ($p=0.000$ and C. of Contingency=0.351).

Personality				
	Masculine	Feminine	Both	Total
Negative tone	37	49	29	36
Neutral news pieces	63	51	71	64
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(n=80)	(n=108)	(n=192)	(n=380)
Topics				
	Masculine	Feminine	Both	Total
Negative tone	54	6	24	36
Neutral news pieces	46	94	76	64
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(n=191)	(n=50)	(n=139)	(n=380)

* $p < 0,05$

Table 6. Tone of the journalistic coverage of political women according to the type of personality and thematic agenda during two political periods

Source: Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This work presented an empirical investigation of the way in which the media covered Cristina Fernández, Margarita Zavala and Hillary Clinton in personality and thematic agenda. In the first instance, the research used the different proposals of authors that show personality frames according to gender (van Acker, 2003; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; López-Hermida, 2009; Lünenborg & Maier, 2014), which were functional to warn the presence and absence of a feminine or masculine personality.

The results indicate that the media representation of a female personality that *exists for others* will depend on the period in which the political woman in question is. If she does so from her role as first lady, the news coverage will be focused on a female personality where, being a presidential companion, she is expected to conduct actions with an empathetic and compassionate behavior, complementary to the hard and cold character that a President adopts. It is therefore congruent that the news talked about an empathic Margarita Zavala within security and corruption issues because she was the other face of the news coverage about the war on drug trafficking. The same happened with Hillary Clinton, who showed empathy and leadership to carry out a health campaign, while her husband devoted himself to foreign policy issues in Kosovo, Bosnia and the Middle East. In this regard, Clinton and Zavala functioned as surrogates for their husbands, as indicated by VanHorn (2010).

On the other hand, the female personality of Clinton and Zavala was hidden by the media when they became presidential candidates. These results are in line with what was found by Kittilson and Fridkin (2008), Meeks (2013), and Lünenborg and Maier (2014), who demonstrated that the media does not show a female personality during electoral times. The conclusion, therefore, was a political masculinization of the personality of women in the news of the press, since their feminine traits do not match the political attitudes expected in a campaign.

Carlin and Winfrey (2009), and Fernández García (2010) concluded that the masculine personality is the one considered optimal during a campaign. Thus, the general results of the research pointed out that when one of the women behaved in a feminine way, the tone became negative, which showed that the media does not consider that the traits historically associated with women are the ideal ones for political personalities.

Women, therefore, are forced to avoid their feminine traits and resort to a strategic media and discursive campaign where citizens are shown that they can play a masculine role (Butler, 2007; Jones, 2016). This role is culturally assigned in a preferential way to their male counterparts, who do not need to masculinize their traits. This is a disadvantage for the female candidates, since they must invest time and budget in the eradication of feminine stereotypes embedded in the social structure, in addition to raising their political proposals.

The only one who remained with a similar personality in both periods was Cristina Fernández, who had a previous political career, during her period as first lady, as a local and national deputy, and as senator. The fact that her personality has not been masculinized may be due to what Crisóstomo Flores (2019) found in Michelle Bachelet when running for a second presidential term, where her experience in previous political positions took her away from a constant masculinization in the news information, because her work in hard politics has already been proven.

The second way in which the presidential candidates sought to give legitimacy to their campaign was by addressing high-relevance political issues, mostly referring to the masculine. Unlike what was found in the research background where it was observed that the media prefer to cover the candidates on issues of compassionate or feminine nature (Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011; Crisóstomo Flores, 2019; Vidal Correa, 2020a; 2020b), the coverage of Fernández, Clinton and Zavala as candidates revolved around problems that can be considered masculine, such as domestic politics, security, corruption, and the economy.

The masculinization of the thematic agenda can be explained by the research of Vos (2013), Meeks (2013), and Martínez Garza and Maltos (2019), who concluded that compassionate issues are not very visible in the media, which is why there is less chance that the electorate will use them as sustenance to decide their vote. Thus, there was a minimal journalistic coverage of stories with only care issues that managed to expose the three candidates on issues of media and electoral interest.

However, the negative tone was likely to occur when the news piece dealt with these types of masculine topics. This occurred because women politicians moved in an environment that does not belong to them, as evidenced by the research background (Wachai, 2005; Fernández García, 2010; Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013; Miller & Peake, 2013; Bijker, 2015; Quevedo Redondo & Suárez-Romero, 2017; Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019). In this regard, the presidential candidates failed to comply with the theory of role congruence (Lizotte & Meggers-Wright, 2018), since the type of masculine issues they turn to for greater visibility and authority is not the one culturally assigned to being a woman, which is punished with a negative tone, in this case, in news coverage, but it is not ruled out that it also occurs in the media audiences (Rheault et al., 2019).

Thus, political women are subjected to the double bind described by Jamieson (2005), where there are two contradictory and mutually exclusive ideas: on the one hand, the tone of the sample media is negative when they cover the candidates journalistically through feminine traits, since it is considered that these are not suitable for the political field; on the other hand, they are invited to propose and present themselves on topics of a tough or masculine nature, but this will bring negative points to their image for meddling in topics unrelated to women. All of this places them in a *liminal* position between being represented as women or as politicians, which encourages the continuous reproduction of double binds (Bean, 2019).

Therefore, the media seem to reinforce the idea that the conditions for women's access to the political sphere are available, but that they *do not want* to access it, as Valcárcel (1997) stated. However, what happens is that female presidential candidates find themselves in a paradox where they are both eligible and ineligible (Anderson, 2017a). Therefore, although they are nominated by a political platform that stands by them, with the support of certain sectors of society, and they have political experience, this does not seem to be enough, since there are still different barriers at a systemic level that seem to be subtle, but that entail and reproduce, even organically, the idea that the political sphere is not a space for women.

As possible lines of research, we propose to extrapolate the study to new contexts, so that the systemic problem that has been inferred can be concluded

in a more evident way. Due to the scope of the study, the results can only be applied to these three cases and the limited number of newspapers studied, but they indicate a research path. Likewise, an analysis of the discourse is recommended to recognize if the association of the candidates towards these issues may be part of a complex electoral strategy or they obey the ideology of the party they represent, as hypothesized by Jones (2016).

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