

NÚRIA FERNANDEZ-GARCIA

nurfergar@gmail.com

AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA, SPAIN

FRAMING GENDER AND WOMEN POLITICIANS REPRESENTATION: PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF SPANISH WOMEN MINISTERS

ABSTRACT

This article explores the media treatment of cabinet members in Spain. Women politicians have become increasingly visible in Spanish public life and in the media. In 2004 a gender-balanced cabinet was formed for the first time, and women have been appointed to cabinet positions in areas that had traditionally been restricted to men, such as Defense and Economy. Based on a sample of news articles (1,969) from the four main Spanish newspapers (*El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*) this article examines the media treatment of the first government of Conservative José Maria Aznar (1996), Socialist José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004), and the first cabinet of Mariano Rajoy (2011). The analysis compares the firsts days of the coverage of male and female members in quantitative and qualitative terms, focusing on 1) the visibility and prominence of each cabinet member; 2) mentions of their personal traits, appearance, and private life; and 3) the general tone of the report. The study analyzes the coverage of members of the different cabinets trying to understand the differences between Conservative and Socialist governments, the differences in the coverage by gender of the minister and by the type of portfolios women and men receive. The study reveals that media coverage of women ministers is still different to men's despite the fact that the presence of women increased in 2004 to achieve for the first time a gender-balanced government. But gender is not the only explanation to this different coverage. Different distribution of ministries between women and men seems also relevant.

KEYWORDS

Gender; leadership; politics; print media; Spain

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2007, Spain enacted the so-called Law of Equality (*Organic Law 3/2007, March 22nd, for Effective Equality between Women and Men*). One provision of the bill says women must make up at least 40 percent of the lists of candidates that parties field in elections, with the aim of ensuring women's presence in the political sphere. Before the entry into force of the law, after the Spring 2004 election, Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero formed the first Spanish government to have the same number of female as male cabinet ministers (eight of each).

In fact, women political participation in Spain has increased substantially in the last 30 years. Only 6 percent of the members of the Parliament elected in the low chamber following the 1979 general elections were women; in 1982 and 1986, they accounted for 5 and 6 percent, respectively. Yet women representation gradually increased since the late 1980s. As of today, women hold 36 percent of the seats in Parliament and according to the Gender Gap Index Spain ranks 17th in percentage of women elected to parliament (World Economic Forum, 2013). A similar trend is visible at other levels, too. In relation to the executive office, in 1936, during the Second Spanish Republic, Federica Montseny became the first woman to hold a ministerial office in Spain and one of the first in Europe. After the Franco dictatorship and the restoration of Spanish democracy, the government of Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo (*Unión de Centro Democrático*, UCD) appointed Soledad Becerril minister of Culture in 1981. It was not until 1988 that a woman would access to a ministerial position again. It was during the presidency of Felipe González (*Partido Socialista*, PSOE) when Matilde Fernández (Social Affairs) and Rosa Conde (Speaker of the Government) became ministers. The presence of women in subsequent González cabinets varied from 11 percent (1989 - 1993) to 16 percent (1993–1996). The figure rose to 26 percent in 1996 with the first cabinet formed by the Conservative José María Aznar (*Partido Popular*, PP), but dropped to 16 percent in the next term (2000–2004). The Socialist victory in the 2004 general election led to the first gender-balanced government in Spain's history, as exactly eight out of the sixteen members of the government were women. Presence of women in the government of Rodríguez Zapatero rose to 53 percent (2008) but subsequent cabinets dropped to 44%. After the November 2011 election, the first cabinet headed by Conservative Mariano Rajoy (PP) will have only four female ministers out of thirteen ministerial portfolios. On April 2014 Rajoy reshuffled his cabinet for the first time and women presence increased to 39%.

This increase in the access of women to political office should arguably result in a normalization of the representation of women politicians in the press coverage (Bystrom, Robertson, & Banwart 2001; Jalalzai, 2006). If women and men have *comparable* access to positions of power, if women access the highest offices, should not this mean the disappearance of existing stereotyping gender roles? As van Acker (2003) argues, when the number of women increases, particularly in the higher ranks, they would start to generate less curiosity for the media, which translates into a more gender-neutral/blind coverage. Unfortunately, different studies point out that while entrance of female politicians into the political sphere is increasing, gender biases disseminated by the media are still significant (Falk, 2008; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). Because the media have become the public sphere in which the identity of the politician is constructed, those gender biases can have electoral consequences. Gender differences in media coverage may influence women's participation in public life, voters' evaluations of male and female candidates, candidates' choice of campaign strategies, and people's view regarding women's roles in the political arena (Falk, 2008; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; Norris, 1997).

2. MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN POLITICIANS

How are women politicians represented in the media? A significant amount of research suggests that the press covers men and women politicians differently. There is a host of evidence suggesting that women politicians are framed in certain ways that differ from their male counterparts, and that those frames often put them at disadvantage. Women receive lower, less prominent and less substantive coverage than do men (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Braden, 1996; Heldman, Carroll & Olson, 2000; Kahn, 1992, 1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

A number of studies have found that men politicians usually receive more press attention than women (Kahn, 1992, 1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Serini, Powers & Johnson, 1998). However, more recent work shows that, as women have attained higher levels of representation over time, the amount of coverage has balanced (Atkeson & Krebs, 2007; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008) or even reversed to women's advantage (Trimble, 2007). Another measure of visibility is defined as the amount of statements made by a given politician that are reproduced in the news. According to Falk (2008), quotations are a vehicle by which the press can give voters direct information about politicians and politicians are eager to get direct access to

citizens. There is some evidence that women politicians are less likely to be quoted in the media (Aday & Devitt, 2001; see also Comas d'Argemir, 2009). Research has also found that media tend to use more highly charged language to report the speech of female politicians (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003).

Quantity is important, for if women receive less coverage they may enjoy less name recognition (Jalalzai, 2006; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991), and may be less likely to get support in the polls (Kahn, 1996). But even if women do not receive less coverage than men, quality of coverage may differ. A number of studies have found that women politicians are more likely to be identified in spousal or parental roles than men (Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson, 2003; Falk, 2008; Jamieson, 1995). Press coverage is also more likely to focus on how politicians look and what they wear when they are women (Falk, 2008; Fernandez-Garcia, 2008). Age, too, is more often highlighted when the news deal with women (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Devitt, 2002). Falk (2008) also suggests that women are more likely to have their professional background dropped in news stories, so they are shown with less experience. And media refer to women more informally than men (Uscinski & Goren, 2011). Women are more likely to have their titles (such as Senator or Representative) dropped in news stories, and they are more often referred to by their first names or as 'Ms.' or 'Mrs.' than are men (Falk, 2008).

With regard to the politician's gender, different studies show that the gender of the women politicians is more likely mentioned than male politician's gender (Bystrom, Robertson & Banwart, 2001; Falk, 2008; Norris, 1997). As Falk points out, this mention to women politicians' gender may reinforce the idea that "women are acting in an unnatural sphere or that men are more appropriate in these positions (...)" and emphasizes that sex is important and relevant to politics" (2008, p. 94).

On the other hand, studies analyzing the representation of women candidates have shown that women leadership is often coupled with their supportive role beside men, and are often defined by their relationship with a man (Harp, Loke & Bachmann, 2010). For example, Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile from 2006 to 2010, was referred to as the daughter of Alberto Bachelet, assassinated during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet; Ségolène Royal, the Socialist candidate in the 2007 French presidential election, was often referred to as the wife of a politician and daughter of a soldier; and the current German chancellor, Angela Merkel, was referred to as the 'spiritual daughter' of Helmut Kohl (Baider, 2008).

Earlier studies define traits as stereotypically masculine and stereotypically feminine traits (traits associated with leadership would be

stereotypically masculine and traits associated with expressive personality traits would be stereotypically feminine) (see Carroll & Fox, 2006; Kahn, 1994, 1996; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008).¹ It is suggested that male traits dominate coverage of male candidates, whereas male traits are discussed less often for female politicians. As ‘male’ traits are associated with ‘leadership’ traits, linked to stereotypically ‘female’ traits, women politicians miss the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership, strength, and knowledge” (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008, p. 386; see also Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Alternatively, later studies quantify and compare personal trait references with regard to their content, context and tone, classifying traits as “positive” or “negative” (see Miller, Peake & Boulton, 2009). Findings of studies using this methodology suggest that men are more likely to be associated to positive traits, while women are more likely to be associated to negative traits (Fernandez-Garcia, 2010; Miller, Peake & Boulton, 2009).

Finally, studies on gender stereotypes and female politicians have shown that, when women overstep traditional boundaries, the media tend to react by covering them more negatively (Fernandez-Garcia, 2010; Kahn 1994; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Scharrer, 2002), and women’s viability as election contenders is often framed more negatively than men’s (Falk, 2008; Fernandez-Garcia, 2010; Kahn, 1994, 1996; Lawrence & Ross, 2010).

3. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

The present research analyzes if the increase in women’s presence in the government has an influence on the media’s treatment of cabinet ministers. Specifically, did the press coverage become more gender neutral following the formation of the first gender-balanced government? In order to answer this question, this research content-analyzes the coverage of the ministerial appointments after 2004 general election (Socialist government), and compare it with coverage of the female and male appointments after the 1996 general election (Conservative government) and the coverage of the female and male appointments after the 2011 general election (Conservative government). But as the prestige of the portfolio is also relevant this paper analyzes and compares the coverage looking at the type of portfolio female and male ministers are holding. As Krook and O’Brien

¹ In this dichotomy, “male traits” include hardworking, strong leader, competitive, effective, though, intelligent, aggressive, independent, ambitious; and “female traits” include gentle, weak, attractive, passive, dependent, emotional, unintelligent, compassionate, noncompetitive (see Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008).

(2012) point out, women have traditionally been underrepresented among government ministers and when they have been appointed they have been relegated to low-prestige policy areas, the least powerful positions (2012, p. 840). Women and men cabinet members who are appointed to low-prestige policy areas receive less media attention than female and male cabinet members nominated to higher prestige policy areas. Therefore, this paper hypothesizes that female members of the cabinet who are positioned in higher prestige portfolios are more likely to be covered in the news media than their counterparts at lower prestige ministries. This research divides the portfolios in high-prestige, medium-prestige and low-prestige. High-prestige positions are “distinguished in terms of their visibility and significant control over policy”. Medium-prestige positions control “significant financial resources but had lesser status and visibility”, and low-prestige positions are “characterized by lack of resources for patronage” (see Krook and O’Brien, 2012, p. 845). In this study we place as high-prestige positions ministries as Defense, Finance/Economy, Foreign affairs, Home/Internal Affairs, and Vice Presidency. Agriculture, Energy, Construction and Public Works, Health, Industry, Justice, Employment, Planning and Development are coded as medium-prestige positions. Education, Culture, Science and Technology, Environment, Housing, Tourism, and Women’s Affairs are referred as low-prestige positions².

		High-Prestige Ministries	Medium-Pres- tige Ministries	Low-Prestige Ministries	(N)
1996	Male ministers	5	5	-	14
	Female ministers	-	2	2	
2004	Male ministers	4	4	-	16
	Female ministers	1	3	4	

² Education, Environment and Housing Ministries are considered by Krook and O’Brien to be medium-prestige. In the Spanish context and for the purpose of this study those portfolios will be considered low-prestige positions because their lack of resources and/or because they have been linked to other portfolios (eg. Education, Science & Sports, Education and Culture, Education and Social Welfare, Agriculture, Food and Environment). Vice Presidency does not exist in Krook and O’Brien’s study but in this research this position is coded as high-prestige because its high visibility and significant control over policy.

2011	Male ministers	5	3	1	13
	Female ministers	1	3	-	
		16	20	7	43

Table 1: Portfolio distribution by prestige
 Note: Column with number of cabinet members

Table 1 shows the distribution of portfolios in the three cabinets analyzed. As we can see, men mainly occupy high-prestige positions. In contrast, women hold portfolios in areas more closely associated to low-prestige positions. By cabinet, Conservative government of José María Aznar (1996) is formed by fourteen portfolios: ten men and four women. No woman holds a high-prestige portfolio while two women receive a medium-prestige portfolio (Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and Justice) and two women are nominated to a low-prestige portfolio (Education and Culture, and Environment). Instead, there are five male ministers occupying a high-prestige portfolio and five men are appointed to a medium-prestige portfolio. First Socialist cabinet of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004) is the first gender-balanced government in the history of Spain with eight male and eight female ministers. However, only one woman is appointed to a high-prestige portfolio (Vice presidency), three women are nominated to a medium-prestige portfolio (Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Public Works, Health and Consumer Affairs), and four women receive a low-prestige position (Education and Science, Culture, Environment, Housing). Meanwhile, four of the male ministers hold high-prestige portfolios and four occupy medium-prestige policy areas. Finally, Rajoy's first cabinet (2011) is formed by thirteen ministers: nine men and four women. One woman holds a high-prestige portfolio (Vice Presidency), while the other three women hold medium-prestige portfolios (Health, Social Service and Equality, Employment and Social Security, Public Works). No woman holds a low-prestige portfolio. Five male ministers occupy high-prestige portfolios, three men hold a medium-prestige positions and one man occupy the unique low-prestige portfolio.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The results reported here come from data collected from four Spanish newspapers, *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo*, and *ABC*. The selection was informed by two criteria. First, these are the daily newspapers with the

largest circulation in Spain. Second, there exist substantial ideological differences between the four publications. While *El País* is seen as a liberal newspaper, generally supportive of the Socialist party (PSOE), *El Mundo* and *ABC* has increasingly become close to the Conservative party (PP), and *La Vanguardia*, a Barcelona based newspaper, is seen with a center-right perspective (Reig, 1998). Thus, we can assume that the newspapers analyzed are those with the greatest potential to impact audiences and to set the agenda of the rest of news media (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

The time frame chosen for the sample is May 5th, 1996 through May 11th, 1996 (first government of Conservative Aznar), and April 18th through April 23rd, 2004 (first government of Socialist Rodríguez Zapatero), and December 21st through December 28th, 2011 (first government of Conservative Rajoy)³. This covers the period between the day before and the fifth day after the members of the government are appointed. As Norris observes, the coverage during this time frame “may be particularly important since it helps shape initial perceptions of a leader’s character, experience, and background for readers with little prior background information” (1997, p.157).

The unit of analysis is the news article. Articles were searched for and retrieved from the *Lexis Nexis* and *Factiva* databases. The search terms used were the names of the government’s members (14 members from the Aznar government, 16 members from the Rodríguez Zapatero government, and 13 members from the Rajoy cabinet). Search results were compared to eliminate any duplicated cases. The total number of articles included in the sample is 1,969, 684 about the 1996 government, 586 about 2004 government, and 699 articles about the 2011 government.

The coding followed previous research on differences in the media coverage of men and women politicians (see Aday & Devitt, 2001; Falk, 2008; Kahn, 1996; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; Miller, Peake & Boulton, 2009; Scharrer, 2002; Trimble, 2007). This research identified every news story that mentioned at least one of the ministers. Straight news reports, news analysis, editorials, and op-ed columns were included in the sample. Letters to the editor were not included. Articles were coded for a series of variables, encompassing some of the more prevalent sources of gender bias noted in the literature – such as visibility, mentions to gender, link to a masculine figure, mentions to personal characteristics, valence of mentions to personal traits, and the overall tone of coverage. All stories were analyzed using a detailed coded system, a set of instructions on how to systematically observe and record content from a text.

³ Analysis of the first Rajoy’s cabinet coincides with Christmas season. On December 25 there are no newspapers circulation in Spain, therefore one day is added to the analysis.

Visibility is measured in two ways: the amount of articles that mention a cabinet member in the story and the amount of direct quotations of men and women politicians to test if women are less likely to be quoted by the press. All mentions to the gender of a politician are coded. This research also codes mentions to a male or female mentor to test if women are more likely referred to a masculine figure. As mentions to personal characteristics any mention to the marital status, age, family, and appearance of each individual minister are coded. Traits are divided between positive and negative traits in order to test if women are more likely related to negative traits⁴. Finally, stories are classified as positive, negative, mix, or neutral to the minister referred to⁵.

An intercoder reliability test including two coders was conducted on 100 stories of the sample, using the Cohen's kappa test. Calculated using the SPSS program, the kappa ranged from .79 to 1.00. According to criteria laid down by Landis and Koch (1977) this data signify an excellent agreement.

5. RESULTS

5.1. VISIBILITY

Table 2 shows the total amount of coverage each government received from the four newspapers analyzed. Breaking data by minister's gender, women have less coverage than men⁶. In 1996 male ministers obtain 76.9 percent of the coverage, while women cabinet ministers have 23.1 percent, although 28.6 percent of the members of the cabinet are women. When the Socialist government of Rodríguez Zapatero, the first parity government in Spain, is analyzed, differences are higher: male politicians obtain 64.8 percent of the coverage and female politicians have 35.2 percent of the total amount of the coverage, despite being the 50 percent of the members of the

⁴ Following to Miller, Peake & Boulton (2009), traits are coded 'positive' or 'negative' based on their context in each article. Therefore, the same trait may be coded as positive in the context of one article and negative in the context of another.

⁵ In order to assess tone, this study has followed the methodology elaborated by Scharrer (2002, p. 405) that determines that "the article is coded as 'positive' if there are clear words used to connote praise, approval, or any angle that portrayed the subject in a good light throughout. The article is rated as 'neutral' if there is no indication of either a positive or negative tone. The article is rated as 'mix' if there are isolated examples of negativity and positively. The article is rated as 'negative' if the politician is portrayed in a bad light throughout".

⁶ It should be noted that the story could include just a passing reference to the politicians or it could involve an extended treatment of their character.

cabinet. Not only is the presence of women substantially lower than that of men in absolute terms – which in the first case is understandable on the basis of their lower presence in government - it is also significantly below their actual representation in government. As a matter of fact, the difference between coverage and actual representation is larger in 2004 than it is in 1996. Women ministers appear to have received more attention when their presence in the cabinet was a relative exception. Normalization, through the achievement of a balanced government, might have accentuated the bias in coverage. Only in the Rajoy's government women ministers receive more coverage (34.5%) than their actual presence in the government (30.8%).-

Considering each government separately, the first woman of the 1996 Conservative government is in 5th place on the coverage ranking (Esperanza Aguirre, minister of Education), followed by the minister of Environment (6th), and Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (12th), and Justice (13th). Figures for coverage of the Socialist cabinet show that the three ministers with higher coverage are all men. The first female on the list is the first woman Vice President in Spanish history, Maria Teresa Fernández de la Vega, ranked 4th with 7.8 percent of the total coverage of the cabinet members. This is an interesting finding because of earlier studies point out female politicians may gain visibility because their very presence on the male terrain of politics “accords them the news value of unusualness” (Trimble, 2007, p.990). Since Fernández de la Vega was the first female to be appointed Vice President, it was expected that the media emphasized the novelty of having a female Vice President by having a large amount of coverage but she only received 7.8 percent of the total coverage of the cabinet members. Meanwhile, the four cabinet members who have less coverage by the press are all women. Only in Rajoy's government a woman ranks first in visibility (15.3%): Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría appointed to the Vice Presidency position.

Presidency	Coverage	Cabinet composition	Difference	(N)
1996	23.1	28.6 (4)	-5.5***	(684)
2004	35.2	50.0 (8)	-14.8***	(586)
2011	34.5	30.8 (4)	3.7	(699)
Total 1996-2011				(1,969)

Table 2: Visibility of female cabinet Ministers by presidency (%)
 Note: Column percentages with number of mentions in parenthesis.
 Percentages may add to more than 100% due to rounding.
 Significance levels indicate whether proportions differ from the actual gender composition of the cabinet. *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01

To sum up, ministers who obtain higher coverage are those holding high-prestige policy areas (eg. Vice Presidency, Economy, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs). Presence of women is lower in this kind of portfolios (only 2 of the 16 women analyzed). As a matter of fact and as table 3 shows, women occupying high-prestige portfolios obtain even greater visibility than their actual presence in the cabinet, pattern that is not showed in medium and low-prestige policy areas. Therefore, prestige of the policy area occupied by female ministers may explain the different coverage levels between male and female ministers.

	Male Ministers	Female Ministers	Female Presence	Difference	(N)
High-Prestige	84.6	15.4	12.5 (2)	2.9	(994)
Medium-Prestige	64.2	35.8	40.0 (8)	-4.2	(754)
Low-Prestige	17.6	82.3	85.7 (6)	-3.4	(221)

Table 3: Visibility of female cabinet Ministers by prestige (%)
 Note: Column percentages with number of mentions in parenthesis
 Percentages may add to more than 100% due to rounding
 Significance levels indicate whether proportions differ from the actual gender composition of the cabinet. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Visibility may be also examined by looking at the number of statements reproduced in the news. Male ministers are more likely than female's to have their speeches represented in the news in the Aznar (1996) and Rodríguez Zapatero (2004) cabinets. There is a statistically significant difference between men and women members of the 1996 cabinet: men ministers are quoted in 25 percent of the articles where they appear, while women politicians are only quoted in 12.7 percent. Quotes frequency is slightly less biased in coverage of the gender-balanced government of Rodríguez Zapatero. Men politicians are quoted in 28.4 percent of their articles, whereas women politicians are quoted in nearly a fourth (23.8 percent) of the articles about them. Again, only in the coverage of the first Rajoy's cabinet female ministers are quoted in a slightly higher percentage of articles than male ministers (15.3 vs. 14.6%). This is the only government where female ministers receive high-prestige and medium-prestige portfolios. Women in Aznar and Rodríguez Zapatero government are also occupying low-prestige portfolios.

As table 4 shows, ministers appointed to high-prestige portfolios are more likely to have their speech represented in the news. But differences between male and female ministers nominated to high-prestige and

medium-prestige portfolios are small and not significant. Meanwhile, differences between male and female ministers who receive low-prestige policy areas are statistically significant. Again, prestige of the ministry may explain the difference in the quotation amount.

	Male Ministers	Female Ministers	Difference	(N)
High-Prestige	24.3	22.2	2.1	(994)
Medium-Prestige	18.8	15.6	3.2	(754)
Low-Prestige	28.2	16.5	11.7*	(221)

Table 4: Quotations by male and female cabinet Ministers by prestige (%)

Note: Column percentages

Percentages may add to more than 100% due to rounding.

Significance levels indicate whether proportions differ from the actual gender composition of the cabinet. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

5.2. PERSONAL COVERAGE

Newspapers are indeed more likely to mention the gender of women ministers (see table 5). Spanish female politicians are rather often distinguished as “women” in press accounts, while their male counterparts are hardly ever distinguished as being “men”. This is a relevant finding, as it shows how women’s gender is still highlighted by the media. Mentions to women’s gender in coverage of the 2004 cabinet are lower the amount registered in 1996 and in 2011. Apparently, women’s sex is less newsworthy as cabinets become more balanced.

Data also show that women are more often related to a wise mentor or father figure than men. Not only are mentions to a male mentor higher in stories about women, but also mentions to a male mentor figure are more prominent in the coverage of the Conservative governments than in the coverage of the Socialist government. However, it only exists a statistically significant difference between female and male ministers in the Socialist cabinet.

	Male ministers	Female ministers	Difference	(N)
1996	1.3	17.1	-15.8***	(684)
2004	0.8	12.6	-11.8***	(586)
2011	2.2	14.9	-12.7***	(699)

Total 1996-2011	1.5	14.7	-13.2***	(1,969)
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Table 5: Mentions to gender by cabinet (%)

Note: Column percentages

Percentages may add to more than 100% due to rounding.

Significance levels indicate whether proportions differ from the actual gender composition of the cabinet. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Female ministers nominated to high-prestige and medium-prestige portfolios are more associated to a masculine figure than their male colleagues, a difference that is statistically significant between men and women holding high-prestige portfolios (see table 6). It is interesting to highlight that women appointed to high-prestige and medium-prestige positions are more associated to a masculine figure than women nominated to low-prestige portfolios.

Women are more likely to have their marital status, age, family, and appearance highlighted in the news. However, in the three cabinets analyzed male and female ministers appointed to high-prestige portfolios obtain fewer mentions to their personal life than male and female cabinet members nominated to medium and low-prestige policy areas.

	Male Ministers	Female Ministers	Difference	(N)
High-Prestige	3.0	7.2	-4.2***	(994)
Medium-Prestige	5.0	7.0	-2.0	(754)
Low-Prestige	10.3	4.9	5.4	(221)

Table 6: Link to a male figure by prestige (%)

Note: Column percentages

Percentages may add to more than 100% due to rounding.

Significance levels indicate whether proportions differ from the actual gender composition of the cabinet. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

On the other hand, data also reveal a higher percentage of mentions of the professional background, qualifications or experience of male members, although the situation is more balanced in 2004 and 1996 cabinet. In fact, there is a statistically significant difference between men and women cabinet members of the 2011 Conservative government: experience of male cabinet members is highlighted in four out of ten stories about them meanwhile experience of female cabinet members is only highlighted in two out of ten stories about them. Beyond the prestige of the portfolio female ministers receive lower mentions to their experience than male ministers.

And this difference is statistically significant in the three types of portfolio. Consequently, it does seem that experience is an important descriptor in the media coverage of men ministers but not in the coverage of women ministers. However, a relationship between the prestige of the portfolio and mentions to previous experience is observed. In all the cabinets analyzed ministers who receive low-prestige portfolios obtain more mentions to their previous experience. Data also reveals a smaller difference between female and male ministers holding a high-prestige portfolio in mentions to experience. That is, mentions of experience between men and women cabinet members are more balanced at higher prestige policy areas positions.

5.3. EVALUATION

In the three cabinets analyzed all the ministers are mainly associated with positive traits. In fact, there are not significant differences in the association with positive traits between male and female cabinet members. The bigger difference is found in Rajoy's cabinet (women's positive trait references were slightly higher than men's: 14.2 vs. 16.2%) although difference is small and non-significant. Male ministers of the first cabinet of Conservative Aznar are associated with positive traits slightly higher than female ministers, but in the first cabinets of Rodríguez Zapatero and Rajoy this pattern is reversed and female ministers are more associated with positive traits than male members.

It does exist a difference in the association of male and female ministers with negative traits. As table 7 shows, female ministers are more associated with negative traits than male ministers in the three cabinets analyzed. And this difference is statistically significant in the media coverage of the Aznar and Rodríguez Zapatero cabinets. Results, though, show a slightly improvement in the coverage of the 2004 and 2011 cabinets.

	Male Ministers	Female Ministers	Difference	(N)
1996	1.3	5.7	-4.4***	(684)
2004	1.8	5.8	-4.0***	(586)
2011	1.5	2.5	-1.0	(699)
Total 1996-2011	1.5	4.5	-3.0***	(1969)

Table 7: Negative traits by cabinet (%)

Note: Column percentages

Percentages may add to more than 100% due to rounding.

Significance levels indicate whether proportions differ from the actual gender composition of the cabinet. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

However, data also show some differences by the prestige of the portfolio. Female ministers who receive high-prestige portfolios are more associated with positive traits than their male colleagues (19.6 vs. 11.5%), a pattern that is not observed in lower prestige portfolios. That is, female ministers are more associated with positive traits when they occupy a substantial ministry. And it also exists a relationship between the prestige of the portfolio and the association with negative traits: high-prestige ministries are more associated with negative traits than low-prestige ministries. However, despite the prestige of the ministry, female ministers are always more associated with negative traits than their male colleagues.

In addition, the type of positive traits that male ministers are associated refers to job-related characteristics (e.g., experienced, qualified, competent), character traits (e.g., honest, strong, fighter), and charisma traits (e.g., agent of change, inspirational). Female cabinet members are only associated to job-related traits and character traits. It does not exist a female minister associated to charisma traits.

Finally, the tone of the coverage is analyzed. The tone of the coverage is mainly neutral for both male and female ministers, although differences are observed in positive and negative tone. Male ministers get more positive tone in Aznar (28.7 vs. 17.1%) and Rodríguez Zapatero (38.9 vs. 21.4%) cabinets, a difference that is statistically significant. Again, only in Rajoy's cabinet female ministers are more associated with a positive tone than male ministers, although difference is small and non-significant (15.8 vs. 14.8%).

On the other hand, Rodríguez Zapatero's cabinet is the only one where female ministers obtain a lower percentage of stories with a negative tone than their male counterparts. Women and men ministers of Rajoy's cabinet get virtually the same percentage of articles with a negative tone, and Aznar's cabinet female ministers get a more negative tone than their male colleagues: they exceed four percentage points in negative tone to male ministers. However, differences between female and male ministers in the three cabinets are small and do not attain conventional levels of statistical significance.

Despite the prestige of their portfolio, male ministers always get a more positive tone than female ministers. Therefore, tone is always more favorable for men than for women ministers. Instead, prestige seems relevant in the negative tone female ministers obtain: female ministers nominated to a high-prestige portfolio get a lower negative tone than female ministers who receive medium and low-prestige portfolios.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In analyzing and comparing newspaper coverage of members of the Spanish cabinets in 1996, 2004 and 2011, the main conclusion is that coverage of women ministers is still different to men's despite the fact that the presence of women increased in 2004 to achieve for the first time a gender-balanced government. But gender is not the only explanation to this different coverage. Different distribution of ministries between women and men seems also relevant.

This research suggests that cabinet members who gain more visibility are those nominated to high-prestige portfolios (e.g., Vice Presidency, Economy, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs), policy areas where the presence of women is small. Gender is also relevant in the type of coverage received. Although female and male ministers holding a high-prestige portfolio get fewer mentions to their personal life than female and male ministers occupying medium and low-prestige policy areas, women always have more mentions to their personal life. And men ministers obtain more mentions to their previous experience than women cabinet members, especially in the coverage of the first cabinet of Conservative Rajoy. Similarly, women ministers' gender is still more newsworthy than men's. Gender continues being a tag in the representation of women politicians, especially female ministers nominated to high-prestige and medium-prestige portfolios. This finding suggests the use of the "first woman" news frame, a common device that especially notes the gender of the female ministers who occupy a policy area for the first time (see Norris 1997, p. 164). In addition, references to masculine figures are also a remarkable feature in the news' presentation of female ministers, thus sending the subtle message that women are not in the office by their own, but by a wise mentor.

Both female and male cabinet ministers are associated with positive traits. Instead, it exists a difference in the association with negative traits: female ministers are more associated with negative traits than their male counterparts and this is observed in the three cabinets analyzed. Again, the prestige of the portfolio occupied seems relevant: female ministers nominated to a high-prestige portfolio are more associated with positive and negative traits. Similarly, findings reveal that male ministers are related to charisma traits. Those traits are not observed in the coverage of female cabinet members.

Neutral tone predominates in coverage of female and male ministers, although the tone of reporting news about ministers proves to be consistently more favorable to men: male ministers have a more positive tone

of coverage than female ministers. Similarly, it does not exist a difference in the negative tone obtained by female and male ministers, although female ministers holding high-prestige portfolios obtain a lower negative tone than female ministers occupying medium-prestige and low-prestige portfolios.

The analysis of the three cabinets provides us information about the changes in the representation of Spanish female ministers over time. First, female cabinet members of the Rajoy cabinet get more coverage than their real presence in the cabinet, a pattern that does not repeat in Aznar and Rodríguez Zapatero cabinets. Second, women members of the Aznar and Rodríguez Zapatero cabinets are less likely to be quoted in the press. However, differences in quote frequency were slightly reduced in coverage of the gender-balanced government of Rodríguez Zapatero, and the last cabinet analyzed is also the only one where women members are more quoted than their male counterparts. Third, female ministers of the last cabinets obtain a lower percentage of stories with negative traits. But beyond these three variables, female ministers of the Rajoy's cabinet get more mentions to their gender, more mentions to their personal life, and they are more linked to a masculine figure, a pattern already observed in previous cabinets and that have not changed over time.

Current findings indicate that women continue to receive differential coverage. Media needs create a dialogue among professionals about current differences in media coverage and encourage editors and reporters to alter their news reporting routines. And communication scholars have a responsibility to introduce and promote gender mainstreaming in the curriculum of communication studies and make students aware of the gendered media representation of politicians and politics. It should be noted that gender still has a strong impact on media representation of female cabinet members but the fact that women are relegated to low-prestige policy areas have also a substantial impact. Therefore, increasing the number of women in cabinet posts does not result in a non-gendered media representation. The appointment of women to prominent roles as ministers of high-prestige policy areas reveals itself as an important tool to achieve a more balanced representation of female politicians in the media.

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