

Stereotypes and biases in the treatment of female and male candidates on television shows in the 2017 legislative elections in Argentina

Estereotipos y sesgos en el tratamiento de candidatas y candidatos en programas televisivos en las elecciones legislativas de Argentina en 2017

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The article is included in the framework of empirical research on news coverage in the electoral campaign, with the novelty of examining gender stereotypes and biases in information and political infotainment shows in the legislative elections in Argentina in 2017. **Methodology:** Content analysis is carried out of the most popular information and *politainment* shows. The sample is made up of 132 broadcasts. **Results:** It is observed how the presence of male candidates tripled the

presence of female candidates in all the examined shows, besides receiving a greater number of mentions. In the case of women, the comments and questions made to them correspond mostly to soft news, while men are related to hard news. **Conclusions:** Male candidates receive more mentions and invitations in newscasts and talk shows and dominate the hard news. In female candidates, gender stereotypes related to their physical appearance or domestic role are still present.

KEYWORDS: soft news; hard news; infotainment; electoral campaign; Argentina; gender stereotypes.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El artículo se incluye en el marco de las investigaciones empíricas sobre la cobertura noticiosa en campaña electoral, con la novedad de examinar los estereotipos de género y sesgos en programas informativos y de infoentretenimiento político en las elecciones legislativas de Argentina en 2017. **Metodología:** Se realiza un análisis de contenido de los programas informativos y de *politainment* de mayor audiencia. La muestra está formada por 132 emisiones. **Resultados:** Se observa como los candidatos triplican en presencia a las candidatas en el conjunto de los programas examinados, además de recibir mayor número de menciones. En el caso de las mujeres los comentarios y preguntas que se les formulan se corresponden mayoritariamente con *soft news* mientras que a los hombres se les relacionan con *hard news*. **Conclusiones:** Los candidatos reciben más menciones e invitaciones en informativos y programas de entrevistas y predominan en las *hard news*. En las candidatas siguen presentes estereotipos de género relacionados con su apariencia física o rol doméstico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *soft news*; *hard news*; infoentretenimiento; campaña electoral; Argentina; estereotipos de género.

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Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction

The relevance of the informational function of the media and, in particular, of television in the political sphere is an issue accepted by the scientific community since the end of the 20th century (Blumler, 1992; Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994). From the communicative activity, the thesis agreed on as well, that broadcasted news affects the perception that voters have of politics, which includes political leaders, parties, and topics (Mazzoleni & Shulz, 1999; Norris, 2004). Besides, in recent years, various studies indicate that the presence of male and female candidates in political infotainment shows may influence citizens' political positions and vote (Baum, 2005; Brewer and Cao, 2006; Baumgartner and Morris, 2006; Baum and Jamison, 2006).

A similar situation is observed regarding the consequences of gender stereotypes on the perception that voters form of female candidates and the intention to vote for them. Research shows that when the media uses sexist rhetoric and gender stereotypes to refer to female candidates, they detract them from the competition with the electorate and damage voters' perception of them in the following dimensions: reliability, effectiveness, strength, experience, and qualification. Likewise, coverage with stereotypes influences the decrease in the assessment of the female candidates in the surveys and in the intention to vote for them (Lake *et al.*, 2010, 2013).

This double situation linked to the television medium regarding its influence on politics and the impact of gender stereotypes marks this analysis, which focuses on studying the electoral campaign of the legislative elections in Argentina in 2017, to examine the television coverage that male and female candidates received both in the informative shows and in those that carry out political infotainment or *politainment* (Nieland, 2008; Sayre & King, 2010; Schultz, 2012; Berrocal, 2017).

The research questions posed by the study are the following: are there differences according to the gender of the people who apply for a popularly elected position in the number of mentions and invitations they receive? Are there differences in the amount of soft news and hard news that are communicated according to whether they are men or women? Do television news about female candidates show gender biases and stereotypes? If so, what are those stereotypes and how often do they recur?

These questions come from three hypotheses to which this work answers. The first hypothesis indicates that male candidates receive more invitations than female candidates to participate in interviews, both in informative and infotainment shows. The second indicates that hard news predominates in the television coverage of the male candidates' campaigns, while soft news predominates in that of the female candidates. The third affirms that in the television coverage of female candidates there are gender stereotypes that, besides being recurring, are typifiable.

As mentioned, one of the research questions focuses on the quantitative analysis of hard and soft news on the television coverage of female and male candidates during the electoral campaign. Soft news appears related to the birth of infotainment (García Avilés, 2007) and alludes to the increase in the news that is easy for the listener, reader, or viewer to understand, fleeing from the difficulties that the consumption of news constructed with numerous sources and data can present, this includes sensational stories, news of human interest, or those in which the focus is on entertainment rather than on the serious content of the news (Thussu, 2007; Jebriil *et al.*, 2013). Although in the scientific literature on communication it is common to find works that refer to the notions of soft and hard news, there is no consensus or an unambiguous definition in the way that researchers and academics define these terms, both in their conceptual aspects and in the operational ones. Tuchman (1972, 1973), a classic reference in the issue, alludes to this problem from a journalistic perspective. The variable on which the distinction between both news categories is originally based is the "substance", understanding that hard news needs comments and analysis; while the soft ones involve scandals, gossip, entertainment, and human-interest stories, with few ramifications beyond what is immediate. For his part, Patterson (2000) affirms that soft news contains sensational elements related to famous personalities, or refer to specific events disconnected from other stories or social trends. Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky (2010, 48) claim the need to include a third intermediate category of classification -which they propose to call "general news"-, define soft news as "light" or "spicy" information such as gossip referring to celebrities or the so-called "human interest stories"; and hard news as a novelty, findings, or discoveries in the field of politics, economy, society, the environment, or public health with ramifications and impact -both immediate and long-term- in the public, national, or international sphere. Curran *et al.*, (2010) delimit hard news as those informing on politics, public administration, economy, science, technology, and related topics; while the soft ones are those that do it about celebrities, human interest issues, sports, and entertainment-focused stories.

Reinemann *et al.* (2011, p. 5), after carrying out a meta-analysis of the literature on the subject, identify five dimensions that, combined or isolated, are used to define soft and hard news: 1. themes/events; 2. news production; 3. frame; 4. news style; 5. Reception of the news. According to these researchers, 83% of studies use the themes dimension to identify and differentiate between soft and hard news and propose the following definition:

The more a news item is politically relevant, the more it is thematically reported, it focuses on the social consequences of events, is impersonal and not emotional in style; the more it could be considered as hard news. The more a news item is not politically relevant, the more it is reported in an episodic way, is focused on the individual consequences of events, is personal and emotional in style; the more it could be considered soft news. (Reinemann *et al.*, 2011, p. 13)

The definition by Reinemann *et al.* (2011) is based on three dimensions: the first is called the “thematic dimension”, and with it, they intend to distinguish different types of political relevance. Bruns and Marcinowski (1997) understand the degree of political relevance as an indicator of the extent to which the content of a news item refers to norms, objectives, interests, and activities related to the preparation, affirmation and implementation of binding political decisions related to social conflicts. In turn, the extent of the political relevance of a news item can be made through four empirical indicators: the mention of social actors, of authorities linked to decision-making processes, of a proposed plan or program, and of the people concerned about that decision (Reinemann *et al.*, 2011). The meaning of the stipulated relationship is: the more indicators present, the higher the degree of the political relevance of a news item. The authors understand that in this first dimension or “thematic dimension”, the softening of news could mean the reduction of its degree of political relevance.

A second dimension is the “dimension of the frame”, the authors believe that a distinction should be made between information that emphasizes the relevance or public consequence of an event, and news that is framed in personal or private aspects or consequences. In this second dimension, the softening of the news would be indicated by a frame that focuses on private or personal issues or isolated or exemplary events.

Finally, the third dimension on which the definition is based on is the “style dimension”, which allows differentiating between news that include explicit statements of the journalist's interpretations, opinions, and impressions, and those that do not include those personal perspectives. Additionally, in this dimension, it is necessary to distinguish if the informative coverage includes verbal or visual elements that appeal to emotions or, on the contrary, it does not. The softening of news in this dimension would be indicative of a more personal or emotional style.

Regarding the growth of soft news over hard news in the television medium, the studies draw various conclusions. Scott and Gobetz (1992) in their analysis of three national television networks in the United States in the period 1972-1987 concluded that the amount of soft news is small compared to the broadcast of hard news. Waldahl *et al.* (2009) analyzed news shows on the two main Norwegian television channels in 1998, 2000, and 2007, and found that most of the content responded to the category of hard news, without the result changing over time. In the same line, comparative research of a transnational nature is shown, Curran *et al.* (2009) conclude that there is a greater presence of hard news than soft news in all the countries included in the study. Other research, on the other hand, indicates that the news is becoming mostly soft over time.

Patterson's (2000) research, which analyzes a sample of more than five thousand news broadcasted by two different television networks in the United States, projects a greater presence of sensational news, more focused on human interest, self-referential, and with a lack of collectivist or political approaches. Specifically on the topic of observing hard and soft news broadcasted on television in an

electoral context, Donsbach and Bütner (2005), when examining the news from the four main German television networks, during the four weeks before the national elections in 1983, 1999, and 1998, conclude that political issues were reduced from election to election in three of the four newscasts, at the same time as issues such as stories and dramatic narratives and anecdotal issues surged, and an increase in images with strong emotional content was registered.

The approach faced in this research is novel since no scientific antecedents have been found that have evaluated the presence and proportion of hard and soft news in an electoral context and concerning a variable such as gender, as the present study does.

The analysis that has been found but that differs from the object of this research has to do with the relationship of the “gender” variable and the type of sections and news topics that are assigned within the journalistic practice to reporters, depending on whether they are men or women. Thus, Cann and Mohr (2001) argue that women are asked to write more soft news compared to their male peers, and they are asked to write more hard news than women are.

This research, therefore, proposes to examine a little explored area: soft and hard news in the field of politics, in the specific context of an electoral campaign, and concerning an area of human activity also defined: men and women who are professionally dedicated to political activity or aspire to be.

The interest in including the category of gender stereotypes has to do with its importance, as numerous works on television coverage of electoral female candidates point out. Gender stereotypes have been recognized as one of the main causes for women to face more obstacles than men when it comes to reaching leadership positions in general (Molero, 2004) and politics are no exception.

In the political sphere, there is a marked inequality unfavorable to women in the occupation of leadership positions. According to the data presented in the “Map of Women in Politics 2017”, prepared by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, only 17 women were heads of State or government; 23% held seats in the world's parliaments; 19% were parliamentary spokespersons; in only 6 of 186 countries did they have the same number of female and male ministers, and only 18% of the world's government ministers were women.

The tendency to associate leadership with the stereotype of masculinity learned in early socialization has real consequences that negatively affect the possibilities of women to occupy spaces of power, leadership, and political and economic influence. Hence the importance of the media in the creation, reproduction, and maintenance of gender stereotypes in general, and those referring to female politicians and candidates in particular (García Beaudoux, 2017, 2018; García Beaudoux, D´Adamo, and Gavensky, 2018).

The results of the empirical work aimed at establishing gender biases and stereotypes in the informative and infotainment television coverage of the electoral female and male candidates in the campaign of the 2017 legislative elections in Argentina are presented below.

2. Method

2.1. Methodological strategy

The selected method is content analysis to examine the hard news and soft news located in the television shows that make up the sample of this work. Given that the scope of the study is descriptive and doing a systematic and quantitative description is proposed, content analysis is

presented as the most appropriate method for exploring the information units that make up the sample.

The content analysis method involves applying a standardized procedure. That is, it has to be subject to certain rules, employ procedures that can be used in other investigations, and that the results obtained can be corroborated (Krippendorff, 1990, 1997). The study, according to Abela's (2008) definition, uses content analysis as a set of techniques aimed at explaining and systematizing the content of communicative messages, whether they are texts, sounds, or images, with the help of quantifiable indications or not. All this to make logical deductions concerning the source, the issuer, and its context, or eventually its effects. In short, it is about researching the manifest and latent messages of a body of communications (Krippendorff, 2013; McQuail, 2013).

For the recording and measurement, a coding protocol was designed that was subjected to a pilot test in which the three coders who carried out the final measurement participated. Concerning the reliability of the analysis, the model of Lemish and Tidhar (1999) was followed, a formula based on consensus among coders to choose a single entry or category for each variable. In situations where coders were unable to reach an absolute agreement, the Garramone, Steele, and Pinkleton (1991) procedure was followed and the disagreement was resolved by choosing the coding selected by two of the three.

The research examines both the presence of “gender biases” and “gender stereotypes” in the coverage of male and female candidates on informative and infotainment television shows. The concept of “gender bias” is used in the sense proposed by Moss and Brown (1979) to designate the behavior of journalists and communication professionals when emphasizing the gender attributes of female and male electoral candidates, despite this emphasis being unnecessary and unjustified. The notion of “gender stereotype”, on the other hand, refers to the inclusion and reinforcement in the journalistic coverage of socially shared beliefs that describe and prescribe how men and women should be and act, the traits and behaviors expected from each of them (García Beaudoux, 2017).

The examined categories were as follows: attendance of female and male candidates to informative and *politainment* shows; mentions in said shows to male and female political leaders; quantitative establishment of hard news and soft news; differentiation in mentions, comments, or questions to male and female candidates, framing said allusions in the "soft or hard" frame; as well as the establishment of gender stereotypes when referring to women politicians.

Besides, to detect and classify gender stereotypes, a proven classification has been used, consisting of operationally defining gender stereotypes as any bias in journalistic coverage that when referring to the female candidates does not mention their political proposals, political parties, ideological position, political career, professional career, previous experience, public activity, or any other "political factor" and, instead, emphasize aspects of their private and domestic lives, daily routines, their families, children, couples, sentimental situation, personalities, emotional states, tastes, personal relationships, physical appearance, or any other “extra-political factor” (García Beaudoux, D'Adamo, and Gavensky, 2018). This definition of gender stereotype points to a sense of “soft news” coinciding with the qualification of Reinemann *et al.* (2011) which refers to it as a politically irrelevant news item, reported in an episodic way, with an individual frame and emotional style.

2.2. Sample

The sample collection period is 31 days and corresponds to the time period established between September 19th and October 19th, 2017, the last month of the electoral campaign, given that the voting date was October 22nd and that the ban on campaigning begins at zero hours on October 20th.

The criteria taken into account to select the sample, both of the informative shows and the television infotainment shows, is their audience level. Thus, 6 infotainment shows and 4 informative shows were selected. This distribution was decided because while some infotainment shows are broadcasted only on Saturdays or Sundays, most informative shows are broadcasted four or five times a week. The total sample is made up of 132 broadcasts, 61 of them correspond to infotainment shows, which represents 46% of the analyzed shows; while 71 to informative television, which represents 54% of the analyzed shows. The television infotainment shows that make up the sample are the following. On *Canal 13*, “*El diario de Mariana*” (each broadcast lasts 2 hours), “*La noche de Mirtha*” (each broadcast lasts 2 hours), and “*Almorzando con Mirtha*” (each broadcast lasts 2 hours). On *Telefe*, “*Podemos Hablar*” (3 hours long) and on *América*, “*Polémica en el Bar*” (1 hour long). The informative shows are distributed as follows: “*Telenueve Central*” (one hour long) which is the newscast of *Canal Nueve*, and “*Intratables*” (2 hours long) and “*Animales Sueltos*” of the *América* channel (2 hours long). The show “*Periodismo para Todos*” (two hours long), broadcasted on *Canal 13*, was analyzed for both categories, differentiated according to the following classification criteria: the monologue with which its host starts the show every Sunday and the humorous parody of the Argentine national politics called “House of Grieta” (half an hour-long between both segments), which is broadcasted after the monologue, were categorized as infotainment; while the journalistic research reports of the political reality that are issued in the rest of the show, were classified as an informative political show (one and a half hours long). Each of the 132 broadcasts that make up the sample was considered an analysis unit.

Regarding the sample of female and male candidates on which the received television coverage was analyzed, it is made up of the national deputies and senators for the October 2017 election, who occupied the first two places in the three electoral lists that were voted the most in the two analyzed electoral districts (CABA -Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires- and Provincia de Buenos Aires, two of the main electoral districts of Argentina) in the PASO (Simultaneous and Compulsory Open Primaries) on August 13th, 2017. The total sample is 18 candidates, and the subsample by gender is 10 female candidates and 8 male candidates. Four women headed the lists, while five men were heads of the lists.

From the political force *Cambiamos*, the coverage received by Esteban Bullrich and Gladys González as candidates for the senate for the Province of Buenos Aires, Graciela Ocaña and Héctor Toty Flores for the Chamber of Deputies for the Province of Buenos Aires, and Elisa Carrió and Carmen Polledo as candidates for national deputies for CABA was analyzed. From the political force *Unidad Ciudadana*, the coverage of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Héctor Taiana as candidates for national senators for the Province of Buenos Aires, Fernanda Vallejos and Roberto Salvarezza as candidates for national deputies for that same district, and Daniel Filmus and Gabriela Cerrutti as candidates for national deputies for CABA was analyzed. From the political force *1 País*, the coverage of Sergio Massa and Margarita Stolbizer, candidates for national senators for the Province of Buenos Aires, and Felipe Solá and Mirta Tundis, candidates for deputies for that same district, was analyzed. In CABA, the third force resulting from the PASO was not *1 País* but *Evolución Ciudadana*, and the coverage received by its candidates for national deputies, Martín Lousteau and Carla Carrizo, was analyzed.

3. Results

The results obtained are presented below, differentiated according to the categories "television political infotainment shows" and "television informative shows". The first category refers to television shows that combine information with entertainment; and most of them respond to three possible formats: 1) spectacular information shows; 2) magazines or “container shows” that include

politics in their broadcasts, either in talk-shows, in interviews, or in the information that is frivolous or superficial; 3) informative/political parody shows or info-show (Berrocal and Campos, 2012).

Regarding the appearance frequency, the total presence of the male candidates in the broadcasts of the television shows analyzed as a whole tripled that of the female candidates (table 1). Female and male candidates were personally present in 36 of the total of 132 television shows analyzed during the selected period, which constitutes 27% of the sample. 25% of those times they attended, they did it to television infotainment shows and 75% to informative shows. Considering both types of shows together, the female candidates represented 30% and the male candidates 70% of the interviewees who were seen on television during the campaign. If the shows are considered by type, the women's presence was concentrated 10% of the time (a single opportunity) in infotainment shows and 90% in informative shows, while in the case of male candidates it was 32% in the first type of shows and 68% in the second.

Table 1. Attendance of male and female candidates to informative and infotainment shows.

Female and male candidates attended 36 TV shows, which represents 27% of the analyzed sample	Female candidates	Male candidates
Attendance to infotainment shows	1 show, which represents 10% of the total presence of female candidates in TV shows	10 shows, which represent 32% of the total presence of male candidates in TV shows
Attendance to informative shows	8 shows, which represent 90% of the total presence of female candidates in TV shows	17 shows, which represent 68% of the total presence of male candidates in TV shows

Source: self-made.

Regardless of the attendance or physical presence of female and male candidates in the informative and infotainment shows, detailed in Table 1, female candidates and male candidates were mentioned a total of 430 times during the selected period (table 2). The mentions were identified in all of the 132 broadcasts analyzed.

Regarding the total mentions, 32% happened in television infotainment shows and 68% in informative shows. It should be noted that a single candidate, former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, concentrated more than 79% of the mentions of female candidates that were made in all the television shows analyzed. If the shows are considered by type, mentions to the women occurred 38% of the times in infotainment shows and 62% in informative shows, while male candidates obtained 19% of the mentions in the first type of shows and 81% in the second.

Table 2. Mentions of female and male candidates in informative and infotainment shows.

	Mentions in infotainment shows	Mentions in informative shows
Female candidates	111 mentions, which represent 38% of the mentions of the total sample	185 mentions, which represent 62% of the mentions of the total sample

	In 102 of them, the mentioned candidate was Cristina Fernández Kirchner and only 9 times other candidates	In 133, of them the mentioned candidate was Cristina Fernández Kirchner and 52 times other candidates
Male candidates	26 mentions, which represent 19% of the mentions of the total sample	10 mentions, which represent 81% of the mentions of the total sample

Source: self-made.

To research whether there are statistically significant differences in the average number of mentions in the infotainment and informative shows according to the gender of the candidate, a student t-test was performed, showing differences in favor of women (infotainment $t=1.34$; $p=.00$, informative $t=2.61$; $p=.00$). In other words, the female candidates were mentioned more in both kinds of shows, which is mainly explained by the fact that one of them, Cristina Fernández, due to her being a recent ex-president of the nation, concentrated the media attention. However, when comparing according to the type of show, the statistically significant differences are in favor of the infotainment shows for the female candidates ($t=1.39$; $p=.00$) and the informative shows for the male candidates ($t=1.03$; $p=.00$).

Of the mentions, comments, and questions that female and male candidates received on television infotainment shows, 53% was soft news and 47% hard news (table 3). In the case of women, the mentions, comments, and questions that were asked were 68% of the time soft and only 32% hard. When analyzing the situation of men in the same dimension, the perspective is reversed: 42% were mentions, comments, and questions of a soft nature, while 58% were of a hard nature. Furthermore, in the cases in which hard news was communicated, the male candidates' proposals were discussed 19% of the time, while in the case of the female candidates this only happened 9% of the time.

The content categories detailed in tables 3, 4, and 5 were established through an inductive process, that is, they were created as they manifested themselves in the analyzed corpus. Said methodological strategy is legitimized in that content analysis is

the set of communication analysis techniques aimed at obtaining indicators (quantitative or not) by systematic and objective procedures for the description of the messages' content, allowing the inference knowledge regarding the conditions of production/reception (social context) of these messages. (Bardin, 1996, p. 32)

Table 3. *Soft news and hard news in mentions, comments, and questions to male and female candidates in infotainment shows.*

Type of information	Specific content	Female candidates	Male candidates
Soft news	Total	68%	42%
	Aspects of their private lives	17%	31%
	Clothing or physical appearance	16%	7%
	Anecdotes (personal or of the campaign)	23%	32%
	Personal feelings	16%	17%

	Ridiculing, funny items	16%	10%
	Sports	0%	3%
	Others	12%	0%
Hard news	Total	32%	58%
	Presentation of proposals	9%	19%
	Data presentation/ discussion	0%	17%
	Debate of their positions	0%	20%
	Allegations of corruption	49%	9%
	Electoral polls situation	21%	12%
	Conducting an electoral debate	13%	8%
	Others	Political alliances between candidates 8%	Candidate's career path 7% Money spent on electoral campaigns 5% Criticism of government policies 3%

Source: self-made.

To research whether there are statistically significant differences in the type of information (soft or hard) according to the gender of the candidates, in the infotainment shows, a student t-test was carried out that showed differences in favor of the female candidates ($t=3.28$; $p=.05$) for soft news, and in the case of male candidates for hard news ($t=2.80$; $p=.05$). In other words, female candidates have significantly more soft news content; and male candidates, also significantly, have harder news content.

Regarding mentions, comments, and questions on television informative shows, in the case of the female candidates 30% of the time they were soft and 70% hard, while in the case of the male candidates 21% were soft and 79% hard (Table 4). 22% of the hard news related to the male candidates was concentrated in their campaign proposals, while that only happened 6% of the time with the female candidates.

Table 4. *Soft news and hard news in mentions, comments, and questions in informative shows.*

Type of information	Specific content	Female candidates	Male candidates
Soft news	Total	30%	21%
	Aspects of their private lives	12%	28%
	Clothing or physical appearance	17%	---

	Anecdotes (personal or of the campaign)	35%	45%
	Personal feelings	20%	14%
	Funny items	3%	9%
	Hobbies	---	2%
	Others	13%	2%
Hard news	Total	70%	79%
	Proposal presentation	6%	22%
	Data discussion	1%	3%
	Ideological debate	9%	14%
	Electoral polls situation	25%	14%
	Complaints against former President Cristina Fernández	19%	17%
	Conducting an electoral debate	15%	10%
	Campaign events	14%	8%
	Launching television electoral spots	11%	7%
	Others		Public works 5%

Source: self-made.

To research whether there are statistically significant differences in the type of information (soft or hard) according to the gender of the candidates in the informative shows, a student t-test was carried out, which disclosed, as in the case of the infotainment shows, differences in favor of the female candidates ($t=6.46$; $p=.00$) for soft news, and in the case of male candidates for hard news ($t=8.04$; $p=.00$). This means that the coverage and treatment of female candidates in the media includes significantly softer news content, and in male candidates, also significantly, harder news content.

Finally, regarding the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, the percentage presence is low, the typifications show little dispersion, and are concentrated on a few biases and stereotypes (table 5). In both types of shows, the highest frequency of biases is concentrated around the physical appearance of the candidates. In the case of infotainment shows, there are also comments about the care roles and tasks that the female candidates perform in the sphere of their domestic and private lives.

Table 5. *Gender stereotypes in the mentions of female candidates in informative and infotainment shows.*

	Infotainment shows	Informative shows
Gender stereotypes		
Roles of mothers/ grandmothers/ wives/ girlfriends/ caretakers of others	11%	2%
Domestic life compatibility with political function	1%	0%
Authoritarian or bossy temperament	3%	0%
Clothing and physical appearance	12%	11%
Emotional instability	5%	3%
Emotional coldness/ absence of manifestation of emotions	7%	2%

Source: self-made.

4. Conclusions

The proposed research addresses three research presumptions that have been corroborated. The first hypothesis is validated since the male candidates receive significantly more invitations than the female candidates to participate in interviews, both in informative and in infotainment shows. The women received three times fewer invitations than the men did. Both male and female candidates received more mentions in the informative shows, although it should be noted that the women received much more mentions than the men in television infotainment shows: allusions to the women represent 38%, while to the men 19%.

The second hypothesis is partially verified. The initial assumption hoped to find a predominance of hard news in the coverage of the male candidates, whereas soft news in that of the female candidates, and this statement is only partially correct. The findings indicate that, regarding the men, hard news predominates in both infotainment shows (58% hard vs. 42% soft) and informative shows (79% hard news vs. 21% soft news). While, when it comes to the female candidates, infotainment shows are dominated by soft news (68% soft vs. 32% hard) but in informative shows, as with men, there is more hard news associated with their names (70% hard vs. 30% soft), although it is worth noting that in a lower proportion than that of men (70% of hard news for the women, 79% for the men).

Regarding the third hypothesis, that is, that in the television coverage of the female candidates there would be gender stereotypes that, besides being recurring, would be typifiable; the results indicate that stereotypes exist and that they are concentrated on stable types, with biased comments towards the female candidates' physical appearance and comments about their domestic roles related to care tasks prevailing in the specific case of this campaign.

The greater presence of women in television infotainment shows explains, in part, why they are also the subject of more soft news, given the characteristics of these shows. Likewise, the greater presence in these types of shows explains why within the spectrum of topics offered by soft news, the issues that have stood out the most from the female candidates are those related to their physical appearance and household chores. The psychosocial dynamics established between stereotypes and

gender biases indicate that the former activates the latter. In other words, the prevailing socially shared stereotypes facilitate the appearance of gender biases at the time of journalistic interviews, which would be even more pronounced when they take place in infotainment shows. The risk of reproducing biases and naturalizing stereotypes in the journalistic coverage of electoral campaigns is, following the line of thought of Kahneman (2012), that they function as shortcuts or cognitive heuristics both when processing information, and when judging the female candidates, as well as when making the electoral decision to vote for them or not.

The trend towards inequality and gender-biased coverage in the media continues (Trappel, 2019). In the case of Argentina, Mitchelstein, Andelman, and Boczkowski, (2019), after analyzing more than three thousand newspaper articles from the main digital media in that country, find that men are twice as likely compared to women to be cited as sources of information or news; especially in articles referring to politics, economics, public affairs, science, and technology. The problem is not limited to the absence of women as sources, but, in coincidence with the findings of this research, other female and male authors detect that the frames used by the media in the news coverage of women politicians reinforce gender stereotypes (Fernández, 2014; Baxter, 2017). In the 2008 election race in the United States, both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin received questions about their abilities as mothers and comments about the selfish use they had made of their children to promote their political ambitions (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009). According to Quevedo and Berrocal (2018), as the political scenarios become more equal, it is expected that the media will add new interpretative frames and stereotypes. The longitudinal study carried out by Wagner, Trimble, and Sampert (2019) on the coverage received in the media by 10 women and 17 men aspiring to lead political parties in Canada from 1975 to the present day, points in this same direction: women candidates received gender-biased coverage, and the gender-biased discourse on political leadership has changed little over time. Waters and colleagues (2019), based on their study of women candidates during an electoral campaign in the State of Texas, point out that coverage of women politicians reinforces gender stereotypes of what is considered “feminine”, and that this poses a danger to them: candidates who are not perceived as feminine -for example, because they tend to speak openly about what they think, or because they publicly express their ambition- run the risk of being severely criticized, given that they defy prescription of the gender role. The presented results point in the same direction as the findings from the research carried out by Winfrey and Schnoebelen (2019), which shows that gender stereotypes still prevail in the coverage of electoral campaigns.

The work carried out points to the need to expand the research considering other media and communication platforms, to continue observing and systematically recording the type of dominant information, gender biases, and the presence of stereotypes of the female candidates during the electoral campaigns.

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