Gender and LGBTQ Issues in Election Processes
Global and Local Contexts

Edited by
Paulina Barczyszyn-Madziarz
and Przemysław Żukiewicz

Chapter 5

Beyond dichotomous gender stereotyping: An analysis of global news coverage of Jacinda Ardern's leadership

Przemysław Żukiewicz and Laura Piel Martín

5 Beyond dichotomous gender stereotyping: An analysis of global news coverage of Jacinda Ardern's leadership[1]

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Introduction

In October 2017, Jacinda Ardern became the third female Prime Minister of New Zealand. Ardern outmatched leader of the winning National Party Bill English at the negotiating table and reached an agreement with the "king maker" party, New Zealand First, securing so the title of Prime Minister in spite of her party, the Labour Party, coming in second in the general election (Church, 2018; Levine, 2018; Vowles, 2020). Three years and several crises later, Ardern led her party to victory once more, when Labour won an absolute majority of seats necessary for one-party governance, during the general election of 2020. Even with the unprecedented ability to govern sans coalition, Ardern signed a cooperation agreement with the Green Party (Cox, 2020) and championed anew the value of collaboration in politics.

The self-proclaimed feminist is reported to have refreshed New Zealand's political landscape and has created such momentum that experts have dubbed her rise to power "Jacindamania." They highlight her rhetorical skills, her uplifting social media presence, and her willingness to engage directly with voters (Cardo, 2021; Curtin & Greaves, 2020; Timperley, 2018) as the elements that have turned Ardern from a widely unknown party activist into New Zealand's most popular politician.

Ardern also quickly gained worldwide exposure. Her global prominence is both a result of her progressive political agenda and the media's interest in her private life. In 2018, Ardern announced that she was pregnant, and was on maternity leave for six weeks after giving birth. This triggered a wave of comments around the world, with authors pointing out that, after Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto, Ardern is only the second politician ever to give birth while serving as head of government (Galy-Badenas & Sommier, 2021).

The crisis events that Jacinda Ardern faced (including the Christchurch shooting, the White Island volcanic eruption, and the COVID-19 pandemic) shifted global media attention from her private life to her ability to deal with extraordinary situations. It seems that Jacinda Ardern's

empathetic and effective communication in the face of crises is the reason that the media stopped reporting of tabloid titbits about the New Zealand Prime Minister, and started framing her as the "real" leader of the country (McGuire et al., 2020).

As the first head of government to attend a UN summit with their infant, and only the second world leader to give birth while in office, Ardern is a rare sight in global politics. However, it is her outward rejection of traditional notions of leadership and advocacy for a compassionate (i.e., feminine) way to govern which makes Ardern a particularly interesting case in the study of women in politics.

In this chapter we aim to uncover how the media presents Jacinda Ardern as a political leader and identify her response to said conceptualisation of her leadership. We approach these questions with a gender lens, seeking to illuminate the ways in which gendered biases continue to inform female political leadership. To achieve this, we qualitatively analysed 256 English-language texts posted on the websites of both global and New Zealand publishers. We selected texts representing the news genre and relating to five key events in Jacinda Ardern's career: New Zealand's 2017 general election and Ardern's inauguration as Prime Minister, Ardern's pregnancy announcement, the UN's 2018 Peace Summit, the Christchurch Mosque shootings, and Labour's landslide victory and Ardern's re-election in 2020. We use our findings to offer some insight into the ways in which women's political ability is questioned and undermined, and to identify the rhetorical strategies used to counter gender bias faced by those at the highest level of government.

In the following sections, we present the theoretical foundations of the research on women's political leadership and media framing of female leaders, the methodological assumptions of our analyses, as well as the results of our research and the discussion.

Theoretical framework

Political leadership is understood in different ways, but in general we distinguish between three main approaches: trait-oriented, relational, and contextual.

The proponents of the trait-oriented leadership assumed that leadership is determined by a set of qualities enabling a selected person to act as a group leader (Foley, 2013, pp. 36–38; Zaccaro, 2007). These assumptions were related to such political concepts as Plato's idea of the king philosopher, Machiavelli's archetype of the prince, Nietzsche's concept of the beyond-man, or Carlyle's vision of heroes (Keohane, 2014, pp. 26–31). In all these "great man theories," the definition of what it means to be a good leader overlaps with the definition of what it means to be a good man (Sjoberg, 2014, p. 74). Where the idea of what it means to be a good man differs from what it means to be a good woman, the ability to be a

good leader is reserved uniquely to men. Without disrupting this patriarchal system, women and non-binary individuals may only be considered good leaders if they behave like "good men" and, granted the social capital necessary, are recognised as honorary men (Heilbrun, 1988). Alternatively, trait-oriented leadership may apply to women and non-binary individuals if it challenges the gendered assumptions that have determined which qualities enable good leadership.

Attribute-based theories were replaced by a relational understanding of leadership, given the assumption that both leaders and followers are responsible for leadership effectiveness, and that the quality of leadership is determined by the emotional relationship between the leaders and their followers (Brower et al., 2000). Yet, this approach is not free of stereotypical perceptions of gender either. In recent years, it has been pointed out that relational approaches to leadership also include gender and race differences in leadership (Hurwitz, 2019, p. 157) and that the social mobilisation of supporters is more challenging for women than men (Eagly, 2005, p. 459).

Currently, scholars are placing the greatest emphasis on the development of the contextual leadership approach. In line with constructivism, the proponents of this approach perceive leadership as a contextual phenomenon – dependent on many psychological, economic, cultural, and even environmental, determinants – and largely constructed by both leaders and followers in an original and unique way (Yammarino et al., 2001). An important milestone in the development of the concept of contextual leadership was to shift focus from the influence the leaders have on their followers, to the support that leaders gain for their ideas and visions. It is this support, they argue, that should be treated as the key element of effective leadership (Suganuma & Ura, 2001).

In this study, we also perceive Jacinda Ardern's leadership as a multi-level and contextually embedded political process in which the leader is the axis and agent of change. The media, however, appears to favour a trait-oriented approach; oversimplifying reality and reducing questions about the effectiveness of her leadership to a predetermined set of qualities.

It has long been known that the media portray female politicians differently from their male counterparts (Bystrom, 1999; Murray, 2010; Ross, 2010). They mainly do this through "agenda-framing" and through "image-framing." As Entman noted, "Framing entails selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman, 2003, p. 417).

As a result of "agenda-framing," female politicians are presented (especially in electoral campaigns) as experts in fields closely related to their stereotypical social roles, such as social policy, health care, or education. Men's images, on the other hand, are more frequently presented in relation to strategic and power-related issues such as economics, international

politics, or security services (Beail & Longworth, 2012; Winter, 2005). Through "image-framing," female politicians are generally presented in the media as fulfilling stereotypical *family roles* – as mothers, wives, and carers, whereas men fulfil stereotypical *professional roles* – as experienced experts, specialists, or simply job holders (Bruckmüller et al., 2012; Devitt, 2002).

This twofold media framing leads to two contradictory strategies of explaining the electoral success of women in politics. On the one hand, if the female leader wants to succeed, she must fit culturally into the stereo-typical woman's role assigned to her by the community. This is exemplified by female leaders who came to power in times of crisis in order to "clean up" after their male predecessors (Camp, 1979). Female leaders who are "conciliatory," "smiling," and "nice" are also seen through this prism. On the other hand, if a female leader wants to succeed, she needs to recognise that the role of a leader is archetypically masculine, and thus get as close as possible to the male leadership model. This is how "strong female leaders" or "iron ladies" are perceived (Jalalzai & Krook, 2010, p. 17; Stead & Elliott, 2009, p. 47; Steinberg, 2008). One of the studies devoted to Helen Clark – the New Zealand Labour leader in the late 90s – found that her leadership persona was mediated by the norm of "aggressively masterful" and adversarial political leadership. She was "quite literally represented as a man in news discourses about her campaign performances" (Trimble & Treiberg, 2010, p. 117).

Both these strategies make women visible but non-agential: the potential electoral success of the female leader is often seen by the media through the prism of her adaptation to specific stereotypical roles, but not through the prism of her experiences, achievements, and political agenda.

Using Jacinda Arden's example, we seek to find out whether success-ful female leaders are presented as ideal leaders who are stereotypically perceived through the prism of "masculine" or "feminine" traits. We also sought to answer the question of what strategies towards this patriarchal framing the New Zealand Prime Minister has adopted.

Method

In order to answer the question about Jacinda Ardern's leadership media framing, and her response to the masculine frame, we examined English-language websites content. Then the basic research method was an interpre-tive content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p. 57). This qualitative type of study enables us to reconstruct "the structure of the text and its verbal repertoires (sometimes referred to as frames or discourses)" (Wester et al., 2004, p. 496). We follow the basic assumptions of this method pointed out by Krippendorff (2004, p. 17): (1) close reading of a relatively small amount of textual matter; (2) involving the interpretation of given texts into new

(especially deconstructive and critical) narratives; (3) working within hermeneutic circles.

Dataset

We chose the news genre for the study. We were interested in news about the most important events in the 6th Labour Government, led by Jacinda Ardern between the 2017 and 2020 elections (26.X.2017–31.X.2020). We identified the importance of the events by using the Google Trends tool and checking when internet users most frequently searched for the phrase "Jacinda Ardern" (see Figure 5.1). As we can see most often, the phrase "Jacinda Ardern" was searched for in the week that a right-wing gunman attacked mosques in Christchurch (15.03.2019).

Events description

We analyse the discourse surrounding five notable events in Ardern's career as New Zealand's Prime Minister. We begin with the study of media coverage of the country's general election on September 23, 2017, and Ardern's appointment in October of the same year, when she became New Zealand's third female Prime Minister and the youngest world leader at the time (29.X.2017 – initial mini-peak in Figure 5.1).
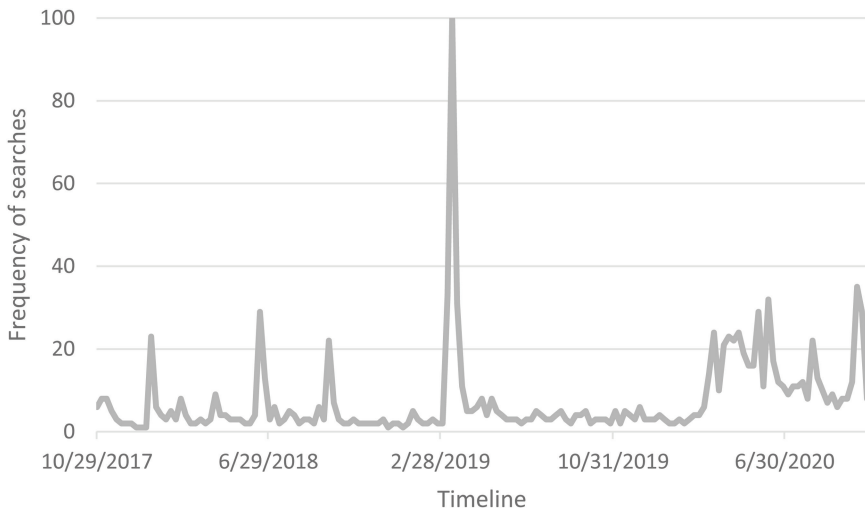

Figure 5.1 Google Trends – term "Jacinda Ardern" worldwide

Source: Authors' own study based on Google Trends open tool.

We follow with texts reporting Ardern's pregnancy announcement (18.I.2018 – first peak in Figure 5.1), which would lead to her being the first western world leader to give birth while in office. Only months after becoming the country's Prime Minister, on January 18, 2018, Ardern shared the news of her pregnancy on her social media (Ardern, 2018). In her tweet, she informed her constituents that there was a "plan all ready to go" for the upcoming task of being both Prime Minister and a mother, and revealed that her partner Clarke Gayford would be the primary caregiver for the child. Following Benazir Bhutto, who gave birth in 1990 during her first and only term as Pakistan's Prime Minister, Ardern became the second female world leader to become a parent while holding office.

We continue by analysing the response to Ardern's appearance at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit in September 2018 (24.IX.2018 – third peak in Figure 5.1), where she made headlines for being accompanied by her infant daughter Neve Te Aroha while on UN premises. Then, we turn to reports on the Christchurch Mosque shootings from March 2019, and Ardern's response to this act of terror (15.III.2019 – fourth peak in Figure 5.1). Finally, we close our analysis with coverage of Ardern's re-election in October 2020, when she secured the highest outcome for any party in New Zealand's history under a proportional representation system (17.X.2020 – last peak in Figure 5.1).

Research procedure

We divided the text database into five parts corresponding to the following events: ELECT17 – general election and inauguration in 2017, PREGN – announcement of pregnancy, UN – speech at the UN forum, CHRIST – Christchurch Mosque shootings, ELECT20 – general election in 2020.

We have included in the database all the articles with the unique URL that the Google search engine searched for in response to the query "Jacinda Ardern" limited to within seven days after the event (news life cycle). We used different IPs in two different countries in our search to reduce the risk of selecting content by the Google algorithm in accordance with the user's preferences. Despite these actions, the samples of the texts should be classified as purposively selected, but its representativeness is limited by the search engine algorithms.

Of all the generated search results, we have excluded: (1) anonymised texts without authors and titles; (2) texts based on the news agency content (posted on websites as original, but signed as Reuters/AFP/Ass.Press etc.) because of its repeatability; (3) videos; (4) social media profiles; (5) NGO's news; (6) official government or parliament materials; (7) multiple articles with a different URL; and (8) paid content.

All other research materials from websites, we saved as pdf and then we have converted them into a .txt file using ABBYY FineReader 14 software (it is a tool dedicated for the OCR process – optical character recognition).

Table 5.1 Number of items analysed

News category	No. of items (news genre)
ELECT17	32
PREGN	41
UN	53
CHRIST	68
ELECT20	62
Summary	**256**

Source: Authors' own study.

We annotated URLs in a separate .txt file. Finally, we excerpted and analysed 256 news items (see Table 5.1). We marked the consecutive units of analysis with a news symbol and a reference number, e.g., ELECT17_15; PREGN_1; UN_5; CHRIST_56; ELECT20_60.

We established the preliminary codes for interpretive content analysis even before we started reading, but we created the final list only after reading the collected material for the first time (see Table 5.2). We also tried not to formulate any preconceived hypotheses, but to only look for answers to research questions. These two assumptions placed our research in the tradition of grounded theory (Herring, 2010, p. 236). Before we completed the coding stage, we read the analysed material several times. We assigned codes to each text manually. We worked separately; only in the last stage did we check the consistency of the results. We achieved it at a level of approximately 85%, which allows us to conclude that the interpretation of the codes did not cause significant controversy or differences.

Table 5.2 Coding scheme

	Code	Abbreviation	Operationalisation/definition
1	Ardern's leadership	LEAD	Adjectives which are descriptors of leader's traits or leadership style
2	Ardern's responses to masculine frame	RESP-MASC	Ardern's answers to the questions on her ability to lead and govern the country as a woman and/or a mother
3	Ardern's uniqueness	UNIQ	Sentences in which Ardern was framed as "the first/second/most + noun"
4	Ardern's biography	BIO	Information about her career, professional experience, and sociodemographic features

Source: Authors' own study.

Results

Ardern's leadership

We focused on the mediatic response to these five events in an effort to further study the public conceptualisation of female political leaders. Throughout our reading, we identified descriptors used in reference to Ardern and her leadership style. In our analysis, we identified and categorised 91 terms based, in part, on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). We recognised 37 attributes, labelled Feminine Traits, as descriptors traditionally used to describe femininity and feminine individuals; and 18 terms, labelled Masculine Traits, as descriptors traditionally used to describe masculinity and masculine individuals. We labelled 14 adjectives that were neither traditionally feminine nor traditionally masculine descriptors and, at the same time, evoked youthfulness, and a sense of renewal, as Youthful Traits. Likewise, 6 descriptors that did not fit the traditionally feminine or traditionally masculine code but highlighted Ardern as outside of the norm were categorised as Markers of Difference. Adjectives that did not match any of these categories were labelled as Other (see Table 5.3).

We find that Ardern is most frequently described as compassionate (27), empathetic (26), and strong (24). Further, in the texts we analysed, Ardern and her leadership is generally described emphasising feminine traits (130), followed by masculine traits (66), youthful traits (41), and markers of difference (8). She is described in ways that do not fall into our determined categories 34 times (see Table 5.3). This trend is sustained across events, showing no clear difference between the coverage of elections and the coverage of events throughout her mandate (see Table 5.4).

Both the quantity of news articles published online and the prevalence of descriptors of Ardern's leadership increase throughout time, being higher in the most recent publications. Nonetheless, it reaches peak in the second most recent event (the Christchurch massacre) instead of the most recent event (the 2020 General Election). Additionally, the ratio of descriptors to the number of news articles is notably higher in the coverage of the Christchurch shooting (0.84) versus the 2017 election (0.34), the pregnancy announcement (0.22), the UN summit (0.34), and the 2020 election (0.58) (see Table 5.5). Generally, we observe an increase in attention towards Jacinda Ardern the longer she is in power, a heightened focus on her actions in the face of crisis, and increased reporting on the quality of her leadership, given a higher prevalence of descriptors, as time goes by. At the same time, we observe a decrease in the ratio of descriptors of leadership to the number of articles in reports of Ardern's pregnancy announcement.

While we cannot determine whether the rise in articles and descriptors regarding the Christchurch shooting is due to the uniqueness of the event itself or due to Ardern's reportedly unusual actions, it is worth pointing out that this is the only event in which her performance is presented as outside

Table 5.3 Descriptors of Ardern's style of leadership

Feminine traits (n=)	Masculine traits (n=)	Youthful traits (n=)	Different (n=)	Other (n=)
Approachable (1)	Brave/ Courageous (7)	Agile (1)	Brilliant (1)	Authentic (4)
Caring (1)	Competent (3)	Cool (1)	Exceptional (1)	Calm (5)
Charming (2)	Consistent (3)	Defiant (1)	Extraordinary (2)	Charismatic (6)
Classy (1)	Decisive (7)	Determined (2)	Notable (1)	Clear (5)
Collaborative (2)	Definitive (1)	Fierce (2)	Outstanding (1)	Clueless (1)
Communicative (1)	Direct (1)	Forward-thinking (3)	Remarkable (2)	Compelling (1)
Community-focused (1)	Effective (3)	Fresh/ refreshing (7)	TOTAL (8)	Deluded (1)
Compassionate (27)	Firm (3)	Idealistic (1)		Frugal (1)
Considerate (2)	Impactful (1)	In-touch (1)		Hardworking (1)
Down-to-earth (3)	Intelligent (1)	Modern (2)		Hilarious (1)
Empathetic (26)	Powerful (3)	Open-minded (1)		Incompetent (1)
Graceful (3)	Pragmatic (3)	Optimistic (5)		Inspiring/ inspirational (3)
Honest (2)	Professional (1)	Positive (1)		Parsimonious (1)
Humble (1)	Resolved (1)	Progressive (13)		Popular (1)
Kind (16)	Steady (2)	TOTAL (41)		Prepared (1)
Likeable (2)	Stoic (1)			Wise (1)
Loving (6)	Strong/"of or with steel"/tough (24)			TOTAL (34)
Modest (1)	Unafraid (1)			
Moral (1)	TOTAL (66)			
Naïve (1)				
Nice (1)				
People-oriented (1)				
Personable (1)				
Poised (2)				
Principled (1)				
Respectful (3)				
Sensitive (4)				
Servant (1)				
Sincere (2)				
Soft (3)				
Telegenic (1)				
Tender (1)				
Thoughtful (1)				
Understanding (1)				
Warm (3)				
Weak (2)				
With integrity (2)				
TOTAL (130)				

Source: Authors' own study.

Table 5.4 Frequency of the descriptors

Event/Traits	Feminine	Masculine	Youthful	Different	Other	Total
ELECT17	4	1	1	0	5	11
PREGN	2	1	4	0	4	9
UN	10	2	4	0	4	18
CHRIST	22	14	9	6	6	57
ELECT20	14	8	7	0	7	36

Source: Authors' own study.

of the norm. Consequently, even though Ardern is reported to be making history as the first western world leader to give birth while in office, and the first leader to attend a UN summit with their infant, there was no reference to markers of difference regarding her leadership in either of these instances. Thus, we find that descriptors such as exceptional and extraordinary are reserved for reports on Ardern's response to the Christchurch massacre and are notably absent in articles reporting on "historic" (UN_3) events that emphasise her role as a mother. This, tied to a surge in descriptors understood as traditionally masculine in the coverage of the Christchurch shooting, suggests that reporting of the attack represented a point of validation for Ardern's viability as a leader where coverage of her pregnancy announcement and the UN summit did not. By labelling Ardern's behaviour as exemplary of certain qualities, such as steadiness, decisiveness, and compassion, and emphasising her success by calling her performance outstanding and exceptional, the media presents Ardern as a valid and effective leader. Hence, we find evidence of a media-sponsored shift in the perception of world leaders from a male/female dichotomous framework to one that includes dimensions beyond those viewed as traditionally masculine or traditionally feminine, such as youthfulness, and markers of difference. Nonetheless, media coverage of Jacinda Ardern still includes ample references to gender bias. In the following sections we analyse these situations and identify Ardern's main rhetorical strategies in defence of her position as a worthy world leader.

Table 5.5 Ratio of descriptors to articles

Event	Articles	Descriptors	Ratio
ELECT17	32	11	0.34
PREGN	41	9	0.22
UN	53	18	0.34
CHRIST	68	57	0.84
ELECT20	62	36	0.58

Source: Authors' own study.

Ardern's response to a "masculine frame"

In this part of our analysis, we highlighted instances in which Ardern was reported responding to a "masculine frame" and identified strategies employed by the Prime Minister in her position as a young and female world leader. We considered Ardern's reaction to situations in which she faced or pre-empted being faced with questions rooted in traditional gender roles; from broad concerns about a women's ability and right to lead, to the scrutiny of Ardern's physical appearance, pregnancy, and motherhood. Through this analysis, we uncovered three main strategies: Normalisation, Words of Reassurance, and Rejection of Premise. We further categorise these into Normalisation of Actions and Normalisation of Pregnancy and Motherhood, Words of Reassurance about the Past and Words of Reassurance about the Future, and Rejection of Premise regarding Leadership and Rejection of Premise regarding Work and Parenting. We offer a breakdown of these strategies in the following sections.

Normalisation

In the articles we analysed, Ardern's most common response to questions rooted in gendered biases included what we have labelled Normalisation. These are statements that highlight the commonality of occurrences discussed, presenting them as *normal*, in spite of the fact that they are generally viewed as *extraordinary*. Ardern employs this strategy in two ways: she minimises her actions regarding pregnancy and motherhood, so that they may not be seen as a unique or rare; and she frames childbirth and parenting as a longstanding, integral part of life, giving visibility to the experiences of parents in general and mothers in particular (see Table 5.6). While addressing the same phenomenon, working mothers, Ardern uses both approaches to normalisation. She equates her actions with the average woman by saying that she is not "some kind of superwoman" (ELECT20_49) and that she "has a lot of help," (UN_42) and gives the reminder that "women have been having babies for a long time" (PREGN_39) and she is "just pregnant, not incapacitated." (UN_5). By normalising her own actions as ordinary and turning to the shared experience of women, she successfully avoids perpetuating the idea that her achievements as the second head of state to give birth while holding office are the result of her unique abilities. Therefore, in both cases, Ardern defends that meshing parenting and work is not only possible but also common for all women.

Words of reassurance

Words of Reassurance constitute the second most common strategy we observed in Ardern's responses (see Table 5.7). In this case, she addresses the audience in an effort to calm concerns over her ability to successfully carry out her responsibilities as Prime Minister. She does so by referring to past accomplishments, letting them serve as evidence of her competence,

Table 5.6 Ardern's responses to masculine frame – *Normalisation* strategies

Strategy	Citations	Source
Own Actions	"As many couples do in the early stages, we kept it [the pregnancy] to ourselves."	PREGN_47
	"I am not the first woman to work and have a baby. I know these are special circumstances but there are many women who have done it well before I have."	PREGN_30
	"I am by no means the first woman to multitask, and in terms of being a woman in politics, there are plenty who have carved a path."	PREGN_23
	She said that she's taking every day as it comes and "not predetermining any of that, just like most of the women out there who just make their lives work."	PREGN_33
	"What I consistently acknowledge is that I'm not doing anything special in the sense that actually I have a lot of... help."	UN_42
	"I have the ability to take my child to work, there's not many places you can do that. I am not the gold standard for bringing up a child in this current environment because there are things about my circumstances that are not the same."	UN_13
	"I don't want to ever give the impression that I'm some kind of wonder woman," Ardern said, adding: "Or that women should be expected to do everything because I am. I'm not doing everything."	CHRIST_4
Pregnancy and Motherhood	When asked by how she had dealt with morning sickness while pulling together a government, she replied, "it's just what ladies do."	PREGN_3
	"I am human. Whose mind wouldn't it [being pregnant] play on?"	PREGN_1
	She acknowledged it would be "difficult" to be a parent as well, but said: "I don't think they are mutually exclusive" and "if we want parliament to reflect New Zealand as a society, then we should be able to accommodate both."	PREGN_1
	"We'll be joining the many parents out there who wear two hats. I'll be Prime Minister AND a mum, and Clarke will be 'first man of fishing' and stay at home dad."	PREGN_37
	"In terms of being a woman in politics, there are plenty of women who carved a path and incrementally led the way to be able to make it possible for people to look upon my time in leadership and think, yes, I can do the job and be a mother."	PREGN_16
	"Women have been having babies for a long time."	PREGN_7
	She hoped that while she was at the vanguard of leaders having children while ruling, she predicts that "one day it will be normal."	UN_3

(Continued)

Table 5.6 Ardern's responses to masculine frame – *Normalisation* strategies (Continued)

Strategy	Citations	Source
	"I'm just pregnant, not incapacitated," Ardern said earlier this year. "Like everyone else who has found themselves pregnant before, I'm just keeping on going."	UN_5
	"I want to normalise it," Ardern said. "And I do think that if we want to make our workplaces more permissive... more open then we need to acknowledge that there are logistical challenges that come with that..."	UN_45
	"I hope that, in part, just by being a bit more open, which I accept brings vulnerability... it might create a path for other women."	UN_45
	"I don't want to appear to be superwoman because we should not expect women to be superwomen."	ELECT20_49

Source: Authors' own study.

Table 5.7 Ardern's responses to masculine frame – *Words of Reassurance* strategies

Strategy	Citation	Source
Future	She said although there would be "lots of questions" she and her partner had a plan all ready to go.	PREGN_7
	She also said she would be "fully contactable" during her leave, and that she intended to resume "all prime ministerial duties" afterwards	PREGN_24
	Ardern said while she didn't underestimate the challenge of raising a child and running a country, she had a "lot of support" around her.	PREGN_4
	"We are going to make this work, and New Zealand is going to help us raise our first child."	PREGN_37
	"The best way I can rebel against those notions is just by being a competent leader and good at my job."	UN_45
	"All I can do, really, is give people reassurance that it won't [affect the job] … But I know I'm going to have to prove it."	UN_55
	"From a personal perspective, I am so looking forward to my new role as a parent. But I am equally focused on my job and responsibilities as Prime Minister."	PREGN_13
Past	"And I would say to those people, none of them detected I had pretty bad morning sickness for three months of establishing the government."	PREGN_37
	Ardern said that juggling parenthood and her role as prime minister had "met my expectations."	UN_6
	"But we kept that [I wasn't feeling well] to ourselves, we didn't share that with anyone around the negotiating table."	PREGN_12

Source: Authors' own study.

and by addressing possible concerns about the future, signalling awareness and preparedness.

We identified Ardern's use of this strategy as a pre-emptive measure, rather than a direct response to biased questioning. For example, Ardern's pregnancy announcement included an acknowledgement of the "lots of questions" people may have and a reference to the plan that she had "all ready to go." (PREGN_23; PREGN_47). As she presented New Zealand with irrefutable change, she offered reassurance through past accomplishments, having successfully governed for three months while pregnant, and by showing confidence in her ability to manage the future. This strategy is also seen as Ardern's approach when approaching uncharted territory, where, as she says, "all I can do, really, is give people reassurance that it won't [affect the job]." (UN_55).

Rejection of the premise

The third strategy we identified involves Ardern's explicit Rejection of the Premise presented to her (see Table 5.8). In this case, the focus is placed

Table 5.8 Ardern's responses to masculine-frame – *Rejection of the Premise* strategies

Strategy	Citation	Source
Leadership	"You can be pragmatic and grow an economy and improve well-being and do all of the things you have an expectation governments do, but do it with a bit of heart."	UN_2
	While some may call it a "weak" route, according to Jacinda, "it takes strength to be an empathetic leader."	CHRIST_23
	"I really rebel against this idea that politics has to be a place full of ego."	UN_35
Work and Parenting	"For other women, it is totally unacceptable in 2017 to say that women should have to answer that question in the workplace. That is unacceptable in 2017."	PREGN_16
	"It is a woman's decision about when they choose to have children. It should not predetermine whether or not they should be given a job or have job opportunities."	PREGN_35
	"When you ask that question, when you're making a decision about her employment, you're implying that will have an impact as to whether you choose to employ that person or not, and that is what I have a problem with."	
	When faced with a particularly creepy question about whether her pregnancy had been conceived during her election campaign, Ardern made sure her response said it all. "The election was done," she replied firmly after a perfectly timed eye roll. "It was over. Not that we need to get into those details."	ELECT20_33

Source: Authors' own study.

on the inaccuracy or inappropriateness of the issue at hand, rather than on conciliatory language. Though she often includes alternative beliefs to those she is challenging, this strategy shows little to no room for discussion. Ardern's response to the premise that female leaders ought to share with their constituents whether they plan on having children while in office, exemplifies this approach. She calls the question "unacceptable" (PREGN_1) and fully rejects the idea that women should be subjected to such interrogations in the workplace. This approach allows Ardern to set boundaries around the topics and ideas she wishes to discuss, differentiating between those she presents as inalienable truths and those that are open to debate. We observed Ardern employ the strategy of Rejection of the Premise to respond to specific biased positions that have been raised repeatedly, like the objections to her right to privacy regarding family planning and her defence of empathic leadership as a strong, valid, and effective way to govern. While we identified responses to beliefs about leadership and responses to beliefs about work and parenting as subcategories of this strategy, Rejection of the Premise may easily be employed beyond these two topics.

Conclusions

While more and more women have been elected to parliaments all around the democratic world, only few hold the highest office of their states. Consequently, the effective political leadership of women at all levels of government is viewed as an exception, generally interpreted as the emulation of so-called male characteristics of leadership, and often openly questioned in contemporary media publications. In our analysis, we sought to uncover how a contemporary powerful woman is conceptualised within the male dominated sphere of politics and the rhetorical strategies that she may employ in response.

In line with existing literature, we found that the media employs a predominantly trait-oriented conceptualisation of leadership; where effective leaders are those who possess a set of predetermined qualities. However, we observe a value shift, where effectiveness is no longer correlated to the presence of traditionally masculine traits only. Instead, it accommodates traditionally feminine traits such as empathy and compassion and expands to include new categories such as youthfulness and distinct difference. Thus, contemporary effective leaders may be seen as those who possess a mix of traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine characteristics and raise in contrast to existing, old, leaders by exemplifying the renewal of a new generation and the difference of defying existing norms. While worth exploring, the gendered biases that may lead to the use of descriptors of youthfulness or distinct difference when referring to some leaders and not others is beyond the scope of our study.

Additionally, we theorise that world leaders who are faced with gender-based discrimination may find themselves responding in three distinct ways: through normalisation, by offering reassurance, and by rejecting the premise presented to them. In Ardern's case, we observed how she sought to normalise both her actions as a female Prime Minister and the concept of pregnancy and motherhood as part of public life. We also noted how she offered reassurance by referencing past behaviour as evidence of her competence and by communicating confidence and preparedness about her plans for the future. In instances she portrayed as uniquely unacceptable, she refused to engage with the subject and categorically rejected some patriarchal conceptions about work and parenting.

In our work we uncovered various areas in need of further research, both on the prevalence of new sets of traits and on the impact of rhetorical strategies employed to counter bias. For instance, it is yet to be determined whether youthful qualities and descriptors related to differences are indeed gender-neutral.

Note

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