Gender and media representation: politics and the 'double bind'.

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"Damned if I do, damned if I don't": Gendered mediation, politics and the "double bind"

Keywords

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Introduction

In recent decades, more women have been elected into office, showing the gains which have been made as more take a seat at the political table. In 2008, women occupied 18.3 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide, growing to 24.3 per cent in 2019 (IPU 2019). While some affix a positive slant to this upward-moving trajectory, others see this slow tread onwards as overwhelmingly unsatisfactory. According to the World Economic Forum, if the same rate of change were to continue as it has done, the global gender gap in politics would take 107 years to close (World Economic Forum, 2018). Women's low numbers in parliaments across the world highlight that, as a category, they are still an underrepresented group, showing this to be a globally systemic issue. In terms of representative democracies, these low figures are significant, as they arguably have implications for both the descriptive and substantive representation of women (Celis and Childs 2008) and also send important signals about who is elected to stand for the "public" in positions of power and included/excluded in political decision-making. This chapter focuses on the gendered mediation – the gendered discursive practices embedded in social norms (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003) – of female politicians and how this may perpetuate

entrenched attitudes around gender norms, thus contributing to women's mis- and underrepresentation in global politics.

Shifts in academic inquiry attributed to 20th century feminist movements have sought to interrogate the ways the past exclusion of women from the public realm still feature in areas of public life. A core focus of the research agenda of gender and politics, therefore, has been to critically appraise how gender operates in political structures, where "constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture or 'logic' of day-to-day workings" (Kenny 2013, p.37). On discussing the 2016 US presidential campaign, Yates (2019, p.34) observes how the American presidency is inherently gendered, "meaning that since it's been occupied only by men, masculinity defines the institution". Political institutions, then, which have traditionally privileged discourses of masculinity, have gendered terms of interaction that become embedded as normative. The same can be said of the mass media, which has historically been shaped by a masculinised culture and largely defined in male terms (Chambers et al. 2004). Dahlerup and Leyenaar (2013) highlight the important role mediated representations play in contributing to male dominance in politics, with the media(ted) constructed of female politicians acting as a form of symbolic representation where, in a normative sense, the presence of the women in power demonstrates the extent to which they are fully included in the democratic process. Of course, the gains made by women in these institutions mean that, as attitudes shift, traditional gender relations can be and are subject to contestation; however these are also limited and constrained by the embedded masculinised context in the diffusion of power which may still privilege particular articulations of gender over others.

This chapter takes up the argument that the gendered mediation (Gidengil and Everitt 2003) of female politicians sends important signals about their democratic inclusion. It will do so by examining two female political figures: Theresa May (UK) and Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand). Analysis of female politicians often pivots on the incompatibility of the expectations of gender performance and political performance. It is here that the influential conceptual framework of the "double bind" (Jamieson, 1995) is a useful tool in showing the specific challenges women may face in the political sphere. May and Ardern have been selected for this analysis because

both have been figures in similar leadership positions in two Western democracies where the demands of both gender and political performance are highly visible. Though neither is the "first" woman to have been elected to lead their country, both have reached this position at a time when it is still relatively novel for women to hold such roles. In this way, they present interesting comparative case studies to show how gender can be articulated in different ways in varying cultural and political contexts. Discussing key points during their roles as prime minister, however, can show that, though these two women are markedly distinct and hold different political allegiances, their representation in media-political discourse can still be seen to fit within overall trends which gender female politicians in specific ways that highlight their differences to a male norm.

The Double Bind

The term "double bind" was popularised by Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) to articulate the particular challenges faced by women in leadership. Also known colloquially as "no-win", "lose-lose" (Murray 2010) or "Catch-22" situations, these terms describe paradoxical scenarios where different – at times oppositional – behaviours produce mutually negative results. As the theoretical advances of feminist movements have sought to unpick the dichotomous nature of gender, which can instead be seen as socially constituted and therefore culturally and historically variable (Richardson 2015), these binds are shown to be informed by wider gender-based assumptions about women and men and the private and public realms, which have been constructed through a number of complex configurations "derived from theology, biology, and the law, and rhetoric's fashioning of each" (Jamieson 1995, p.14). In the case of politics specifically, underpinning gendered assumptions tend to construct the male political ideal as assertive, tough and rational, while female politicians are expected to be warm, caring, and emotional and subsequently irrational (Lovenduski 2005). Women, therefore, are stereotyped or assigned characteristics often seen at odds with the natural expectations of political leadership. Though admittedly double binds also occur for men regarding constructions of masculinity – or masculinities – in the political context, arguably, men do not experience the same issues as women insofar as they are already associated with the baseline masculine norm. This concept therefore may go some way to explaining the domination of men in politics:

indeed, the double bind of gendered assumptions may act as a barrier for women entering politics, but also impact on how they are mediated when they have been elected to or taken office.

Jamieson (1995) highlights five binds, alongside a discussion of their origins, which all correspond to different assumptions as to how women *should* be. The first, the "womb/brain" double bind relates to the tension in expectations for women to perform their function as caregivers – often through their role as a mother - and as a political figure at the same time. The second, the "silence/shame" double bind, relates to the tension between women using their voice and being labelled transgressive or aggressive when speaking out – a "nag" or a "bitch" – as opposed to the alternative of silence and submission. The sameness/difference or "equality/difference" double bind echoes enduring feminist concerns as to whether women should be considered the same or different to men, with tensions inherent in each of these positions. The "femininity/competency" double bind is particular significant in regard to the political public sphere, where women are required to both conform to the feminine expectations of their gender role while simultaneously adopting more masculine qualities associated with political leadership (or de-emphasising their feminine ones, which are established as dichotomous and incompatible). Lastly, with the "ageing/invisibility" double bind, younger women may be seen as lacking in authority or competency compared to their male peers, while older women may be seen as irrelevant or aberrant (particularly if childless) (ibid).

While these frameworks at first may seem hyperbolic, it is their "vestiges" which can still be considered as shaping contemporary culture (ibid, p.15). Modern binds for women in politics and public life mean they are scrutinised differently to men under these conditions, with appraisals of prominent women showing how the double bind may occur in different political contexts (for more in depth analyses of these, see also Murray 2010; Campus 2013). A pervasive strand to this research often finds a disproportionate focus on women's relationship status, often in regard to whether she can juggle the her "wifely" duties and those required of her public role - leading to a double bind which mostly leaves one role unfulfilled at the expense of the other (Jamieson 1995). Discourses of women's partnerships are also interlinked with connotations of fertility and the role of motherhood (can she be a politician *and* a mother?), as

well as heteronormative sexual expectations which can relate to both age (whether she is still able to fulfil her sexual and child-bearing role) and orientation (whether she performs a heteronormative sexual function). The deviation from traditional gender roles in the marriage structure can at points contribute to an emasculation of male partners (Stevenson 2013; Fountaine and Comrie 2016) or reify ideological standards for good motherhood (Paré and Dillaway 2013). Furthermore, these may triangulate around depictions of physical appearance, whereby older women may be constructed as "unattractive, menopausal, weak and past their prime" (Murray 2010, p.17-18), or younger women increasingly sexualised or objectified, such as being constructed as a "dominatrix" (Fountaine and Comrie 2016; Higgins and McKay 2016) or through a focus on their sexual orientation (Stevenson 2013; Ross 2017; Trimble and Treiberg 2010). As Jamieson highlights, the way in which these multiple binds may interact is "prismatic" (Jamieson 1995, p.17), which shows the dialogical nature of these discourses and points to the complex ways they may become embedded in social norms.

Schnurr and Wharton (2017) suggest that often media constructions can lead back to tired, over-arching stereotypes, arguing that these often take the form of three prevalent figures – the butch, the bitch and the mummy – which have echoes of recurring, paradigmatic gendered myths of femininity (Macdonald 1995; Kroon Lundell and Ekström 2008). As they highlight, these representations may be context-dependent and shifting, but they nonetheless still arguably fit into overall broader cross-cultural trends and confines of specific attitudes to gender (for a comparative example, see Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012), relating back to the same double binds of femininity/competency. For example, the mediation of former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, is significantly different to that of Margaret Thatcher, even though they both pivot on maternal discourses, with Johnson-Sirleaf depicted in a more grandmaternal role (Thomas and Adams 2010), which may be reflective of the values of the West African country, compared to Thatcher who was instead portrayed as a nanny, schoolmistress (Webster 1990) or at times a "witch" (O'Carroll 2013) - the archetypal aberrant older woman.

The comparison between Johnson-Sirleaf and Thatcher is useful in showing that constructions may also be engaged with, or contested, in different ways by women themselves to adapt to the

competing demands of politics and media. These may also be seen to work to varying degrees of "success" amid shifting cultural expectations and how gendered expectations can be continually renegotiated. Elmelund-Præstekær et al. (2011) posit that politicians negotiate their image and performance to meet the demands of the media, however it is also important to consider how gender may also inform these processes (Higgins and McKay 2016). At times, women have used a "differentialist" approach – accentuating their gender difference – as a strategic way to show it as politically advantageous for them to be included in the political process (Perry 2005). This can be seen ranging from the Scottish suffragettes who deliberately courted media coverage to accentuate their own femininity (Pedersen 2018) to Margaret Thatcher drawing upon her gender as a way of legitimising her ability to govern (Pilcher 1995). Women may therefore accentuate certain feminine qualities to present a persona in accord with acceptable normative requirements of their gender, which may be done consciously or unconsciously, while also meeting the demands of political leadership. Indeed, Campus (2013) argues that some women have learned to traverse this tightrope with a kind of "bi-lingualism", a modal shift to a form of "middle way" leadership which negotiates the demands of feminine womanhood and masculine politics.

Recent shifts in the developing relationship between the media and political realm have undoubtedly also had an impact on how these dynamics operate. The overall informalisation of social interactions in public life (Misztal 2005) and a greater "personalisation" in politics (Langer 2011; Stanyer 2013), fuelled by and reflected in the merging of the public and private domains, represent a shift towards a feminisation of both the media (Carter et al. 2019) and politics (Lovenduski 2005). This may also indicate a cultural shift, with increased associations between political authenticity, emotionality and sincerity (Richards 2007). However, as Yates (2019) argues, women are also constrained by prescriptive gendered stereotypes around emotions, which present their own form of double bind. In this case, women may be judged more harshly for emotional displays which are treated as incompatible with roles in politics. As van Zoonen (2006, p.299) suggests, a convergence of personal and political life into a hybrid political persona tends to favour men more than women because of the "inbuilt and extreme polarization of femininity and politics", with these developments favouring men who may find it easier to take on feminised characteristics than women who are seen to be doing the reverse (Smith 2008). These illustrations highlight the tensions women must negotiate when traversing

the expectations of the political – and wider public – sphere while also adhering to the competing demands of gender performance.

Iron Lady in Waiting

When Theresa May was elected, ultimately unopposed, as leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party in July 2016, she became the UK's second female Prime Minister; the only woman to enter Downing Street as PM since her fellow Conservative, Margaret Thatcher, who was Prime Minister in the UK from 1979 to 1990. Though Thatcher has become synonymous with the (in)famous "Iron Lady" moniker, the use of the term Iron Lady has arguably come to take on an "interdiscursive" or "constitutive intertextual" form (Fairclough 1992) and can now be considered "preconstructed" in the political lexicon. This has also been developed into a broadly applicable metaphor which asserts a certain "type" of politician through which female political leadership is defined in relation to men (Pullen and Taksa 2016). The nature of the term hints at the inherent double bind of gender and politics, whereby the ideals and tension of a female leadership are met through the combination of leadership strength and soft femininity. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that parallels were made between the two women, with the UK media initially reviving this long-standing cliché to pre-define May. This can be seen in May's previous role in the Cabinet, aligning it with her aspirations for political leadership, as an "Iron Lady in waiting" in her role as Home Secretary (McSmith and Morris 2013), a role she served for six years, until 2016. While these might be partially justified on the basis of obvious similarities, given their roles, shared party allegiance and similar socioeconomic backgrounds (both are/were the daughters of self-made men-cum-preachers, were non-private school educated but also ended up at Oxford), nonetheless it is difficult to divorce this from wider trends whereby the media have been shown to fall back on comparisons of widely different women or a tendency group women as a homogeneous group (Adcock 2010; Meeks 2013).

After the UK's vote to leave the EU and the resignation of former Prime Minister David Cameron, May rapidly emerged as the frontrunner to replace him and served as the UK's first

Prime Minister, post-Brexit, in 2016. On her ascendancy to the role, the term Iron Lady was also rehearsed as dominant frame until her resignation in June, 2019. This, however, was often in reference to her failings to live up to the expectations of her predecessor, and perceptions of a lack of forcefulness (Hughes 2017). In this case, even though she is defined as a negation of the expected Iron Lady, the term itself has a specific definitional power, whereas an identification with the phrase presupposes its meaning (Fairclough 1992), thus again reestablishing the expectations of female leadership. In this following extract, written on May's resignation in 2019, the author makes the explicit link between her and Thatcher:

1	… unlike Margaret Thatcher - who loved being the only woman in the room, played up
2	her housewife credentials and boasted of giving the men a handbagging - Mrs May
3	never turned her femininity into an asset. Although her aides tried to play up the
4	comparison with the Iron Lady, the differences were far starker than the similarities.
5	Mrs Thatcher loved conflict. Mrs May shrank from it. Mrs Thatcher had a clear vision of
6	where she was going. Mrs May seemed content merely to stagger from day to day.
7	Above all, Mrs Thatcher was a ruthlessly instinctive politician, a calculating opportunist
8	who played Westminster's game of thrones to perfection. By contrast, Mrs May,
9	inflexible to the last, seemed entirely bereft of political cunning (Sandbrook, 2019).

The author hints to the ongoing framing of May as inflexible and emotionless, which had seen her in the years of her premiership given the nickname of "Maybot" (Crace 2016), with her "strong and stable" leadership slogan ridiculed and given internet meme status (Poole, 2017). She was also heavily criticised for her lack of emotional response to the Grenfell Tower disaster alongside her lack of efficacy (O'Grady 2017). As the extract above alleges, May "never turned her femininity into an asset" like Thatcher, who managed to negotiate this bind through both at once a knowing use ("played up", "calculating") of her femininity and innate instinctive political "instinct". This bind was also borne out in May's own resignation, where a dominant focus on

her “emotional” display outside Downing Street demonstrates the double bind of expectations of emotive performance. One commentator simultaneously writes: “NO, no, please don't cry. Not now. Anything but that” while also declaring “Sometimes big girls do cry, and it is not always a weakness” (Moir 2019). In what was echoed in other texts, the expressed desire for an affective display was seen alongside terms of ridicule and a desire for composure (for another example, see Letts 2019). Similar to the findings of Curnalia and Mermer (2014) in their analysis of Hillary Clinton’s “emotional moment” in the 2008 US primaries, this shows evidence of the silence/shame double bind in both adhering to the gendered expectations of an emotional display at odds with the expectations of staid and composed political performance.

Mavin, Bryans and Cunningham (2010) argue that prior to her role as PM, May had already experienced a number of double binds in the media relating to her appearance which “re-attached” representations of gender and femininity to enhance her news value. Her preference for kitten heels, in particular, has consistently been used to frame May over the years, particularly before she was PM, which was oft rehearsed in media coverage as her “trademark” (Shakespeare 2019). Research into the mediation of female politicians has shown that there is a greater propensity for media texts to focus on their appearance in comparison to male politics figures (Ross 2002; Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Campus 2013; O'Neill and Savigny 2014; Walsh 2015). Though this may not always be a definitive feature of gendered coverage, as according to the findings of Norris (1997), it is nonetheless one of the more readily associated areas of concern in academic and wider societal discussion around the sexist (re)presentation of female politicians, particularly in Western contexts. In the case of female politicians, where articulations of gender can intersect often take on a metonymic form, signifying women as both “credible leaders and as respectable women” (Mavin and Grandy 2016) with May’s appearance and stylistic choices also framed as sending political messages (Leaper 2019). As Mavin, Bryans and Cunningham (2010) point out, this presented a double bind around May, and cite an example of her simultaneously rendered “indecisive” for wearing different clothes in the same day, while being criticised for wearing the same jacket on more than one occasion. Gender markers, then, can be seen to be constructed as intersecting with considerations of how effective they may be as political leaders.

A prevalent articulation of this is the discursive representation of the incompatibility of politics and motherhood, often found in the mediated construction of politicians (see for example: Brown and Gardetto 2000; Falk 2010; Loke et al. 2011), which represents another form of double bind for women. Motherhood was something to which May had only reluctantly referred to in the media earlier in her career, only expressing her desire to have children but that it had not been possible for her and her husband, Philip (Prince 2017). As one commentator stated in the *Guardian*: "The couple are childless. All she will say publicly is that she wanted children but it didn't happen" (Hinsliff 2013, p.10). This focus was amplified during the Conservative Party leadership bid in 2016, when one of her initial rivals for the position, Andrea Leadsom, asserted that she would make a better leader than May because she was a mother (Coates 2016). In political discourse, the role of family and children often takes on a symbolic role equated with good leadership, political responsibility and the ability to empathise with ordinary voters/families. This has been echoed in other contemporaneous situations, where challenges to political competency are equated with lack of parental experience (Fountaine and Comrie 2016; Stevens 2014). That Leadsom soon after apologised and pulled out of the running amid claims of sexism (Pearson 2016) shows that these specific discourses of maternal values and leadership were contested in more progressive articulations, indicating some shifts in the perception of these responses. Nonetheless, questions around May's childlessness were still evident in other areas of mediated discussion: celebrity cook Thomasina Miers later alleged that May would not have dropped part of the government's child obesity strategy if she's had children of her own (Payne 2017), while various media outlets still questioned and sought explanations *for* her lack of children. In an interview with LBC radio in which she was asked about how she may have been a "different women had she had children," by host Nick Ferrari, she replied, "It's been very sad … It just turned out not to be possible for us. We're not the only couple who find themselves in that situation. When you do, I suppose you just get on with life. We have nephews and nieces" (*LBC*, 12 May 2017). In what was classed as an unusual display of sharing of personal information from May, this can be seen as an example of the increasing pressure for politicians to fall in line with the obligations of a more "intimate" or personalised politics (Stanyer 2013). While some male politicians have also been reluctant to reveal personal information about their private live, such as Gordon Brown (Smith 2008), May's case shows the double bind for women inherent in this phenomenon where the revelation of personal information may also reify traditional gendered expectations. With the line of questioning pretending to the intrinsic and transformative capacity of motherhood, there is

again an implicit link to the bearing having children has on leadership. May's assurances that she wanted children, but was unable to have them, also suggest a form of constraint of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" forms of childlessness (she is still confirming to natural gendered expectations to *want* to have children and be a mother), similar to other situations where female politicians without children have claimed, making reference to other familial attachments (nieces and nephews) as substitutes. Though of course the sentiments expressed by May, or indeed other female politicians, are not in dispute, they still nonetheless point to the obligations women may feel in having to reveal this specific kind of gendered performance, which may or may not work in favour of perceptions of their political competency.

During the same period in 2017, in a personal interview on BBC One's *The One Show* with her husband, May asserted that she and her husband split "boy jobs" and "girl jobs" (Agerholm 2017) in the home. May's comments were branded as "sexist" stereotyping in areas of the media, including from fellow politicians such as Nicola Sturgeon and Kezia Dugdale (Agerholm 2017; Osborne 2017). Nonetheless, their utterance shows the impetus she felt to legitimise and associate herself with the prevailing hierarchy of acceptable household chores and domestic order in the private relationship of the couple. Mediated representations in this vein can be seen in other discussions focusing on "who wears the trousers" in relationships (Jamieson, 1995): a reaffirming of traditional gendered relations in the private sphere, with intimate depictions which confirm cultural expectations around home and appearance (Higgins and McKay 2016). In this case May's own self-gendering was met with rapid counter-discursive claims. What this shows is that these "differentialist" strategies are perilous and may backfire, depending on context and shifting expectations. Moreover, what may work successfully for one woman may fail for another, depending on individual contexts and discursive associations. The constructions of May presented here resultantly speak to the hegemonic way patriarchal power operates in sustaining the dominant male-oriented order of politics, with the gendering of May establishing her as an outsider to the masculinised norm.

Jacindamania

As the 40th prime minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern is the third woman to hold this office, following on from Jenny Shipley, who served from 1997 to 1999, and Helen Clark, who served from 1999 to 2008. On taking on the role of Labour leader at the age of 37, some two months before Election Day, she also became the youngest premier to be elected in New Zealand. Ardern drew great media attention in New Zealand when she first became a prime ministerial candidate, and then subsequently announced she was pregnant – making her only the second women in history to give birth to a child in office. However, although Ardern's case has so far presented evidence of a number of double binds, notable counter-discourses have emerged to contest sexist suggestions that she is in any way unfit to govern. Nonetheless, there is also evidence of constructions of the New Zealand politician which still conform to a number of widely prevalent gendered discourses discussed in this chapter.

During the 2017 New Zealand campaign, Ardern's predecessor as Labour leader, Andrew Little, stood down after slumping in the polls. The party's recovery and steep climb back up was attributed to Ardern's succession (O'Brien and Huntington 2018): a phenomenon dubbed "Jacindamania" or the "Jacinda Effect" in the New Zealand media (Dominion Post 2017). Ardern had been elevated to deputy leader in March earlier the same year, with the media observing that the Labour Party was keen to capitalise on her youth and popularity (Trevitt 2017), as well as her social media presence (Wanganui Chronicle 2017). Though still seen as a relative newcomer, Ardern had already worked as a staffer for Helen Clark, had been a former policy adviser of Tony Blair's Cabinet Office, and had served three terms in New Zealand. However, she was still constructed by some outlets as "inexperienced", despite having a similar track record to other male candidates who had not been scrutinised in the same way (Timperley 2018). Media commentary instead focused on her likeability at the expense of her competence (Fountaine 2017). Murray (2010, p.17) argues that younger, female candidates are often assumed to be "inexperienced, unviable, and are expected to be at home raising children". This was borne out in comments from the incumbent Bill English, who said she was "untested" on her role as deputy leader (Jones 2017) and later attributing her popularity to the "stardust" around her and that she didn't have "enough to say" (Sunday News 2017).

On taking the role of party leader and prime ministerial candidate, Ardern was immediately questioned about children on current affairs TV programme, *The Project*. Host Jesse Mulligan asked whether she felt pressure between making the choice between having children and having a career, to which she answered: "I have been really open about that dilemma because I think probably lots of women face it. And for me, my position is no different the woman who works three jobs, or who might be in a position where they're juggling lots of responsibilities" (*The Project*, 1 August 2017). The following morning Ardern was then asked by former cricketer and presenter, Mark Richardson, whether it was "okay for a PM to take maternity leave while in office?", saying, "I think is a legitimate question for New Zealand because she could be the prime minister running this country… if you are the employer of a company you need to know that type of thing from the woman you are employing because legally you have to give them maternity leave" (*The AM Show*, 2 August 2017). Asked if this was an inappropriate question, she replied, "For me? No, because I opened myself up to it," before adding: "for other women, it is totally unacceptable in 2017 to say that women should have to answer that question in the workplace" (ibid). Though these were met with counter-discursive opposition from some commentators (Beckman 2017), the implication of the question is underpinned by the inherent incompatibility of the role of prime minister and motherhood.

Interestingly, in both of these extracts, Ardern firstly establishes a division between acceptable boundaries for herself and other women – by explicitly saying that, because she has addressed her own desire for children previously, journalists were entitled to subject her to this scrutiny, even though it would be inappropriate for other women to share this information. In this way, Ardern's interactions are similar to May's in that they illustrate the increasing pressure and demands of a more personalised politics (Stanyer 2013). Again, however, it is worth noting van Zoonen's (2006) claims that these requirements have different and often greater implications for women. In Ardern's case, it illustrates a double bind through discussion of her plans for children. Firstly, there is an implied responsibility in sharing this knowledge as being a representative of other women in her position ("I have been really open about that dilemma because I think probably lots of women face it"), yet acknowledgment of the protections women should generally hold from being expected to share their own plans for children ("it is totally unacceptable in 2017 to say that women should have to answer that question in the

workplace"). It is here that the bind holds discursive power: by arguing that women can and do combine motherhood and leadership, this still rehearses and implicitly acknowledges that for a (prospective) female Prime Minister, there is still a legitimate question or concern around a woman's ability to do the job fully if combined with motherhood.

As Walsh (2001, 1025) outlines, gender markers relating to female politicians mark them out from masculine norms, whereby the "the news value of 'unexpectedness' affords women in prominent leadership roles relatively high media capital". As such, Ardern's pregnancy generated intense media coverage domestically and globally through her being only the second woman in history to give birth during office, following on from Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan. Traditionally, due to practical and cultural obstacles, female leaders have tended to take on positions of power either as non-mothers or later in life, when their children have grown up (van Zoonen 2006). A common construction which has replaced and circumvented the problematic double bind of leaders without children has been to attach maternal values in a metaphorical way, extending the all-encompassing "mother of the nation", seen in the likes of "Mutti" Angela Merkel or even the grandmother "Ma" Ellen, for Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Thomas and Adams, 2010). This kind of "symbolic motherhood" thus becomes a culturally approved model of female leadership (van Zoonen 2006). Interestingly, on the announcement of her pregnancy, Ardern referenced a connection to the nation of New Zealand, saying: "New Zealand will help us raise our first child" (Roy 2018a). The ambiguity of her use of the symbolic "our" in this statement hints at the genesis of the child being that of her parents, but also of the country of New Zealand itself - echoing Ardern's statement on Facebook that her child "will be a wee one that a village will raise" (Ardern 2018). By emphasising this and sharing the news on social media, her pregnancy and motherhood also takes on a symbolic dimension, heightening the intimacy with an invested electorate. The establishment of her partner, Clarke Gayford, as primary caregiver shows a deviation from the normative familial caregiving structure, yet Ardern was also keen to emphasise maternal support from their wider network and "wonderful mothers" (Kahn 2018). The fostering of the more intimate relationship of her motherhood with the nation, placing her in a more symbolic maternal role herself, therefore still establishes a normative, cultural appropriate form of gender performance and leadership. As Teele et al (2018, p.537) find, voters "reserve their highest reward for women who can both do the job of a politician and that of a wife and mother", showing the value placed on female leaders who can traverse and

successfully negotiate the demands of both gender performance and politics. Nonetheless, this also means that those who still have generally traditional family structures bear the burden of convincing the public they can do both jobs well, something all too well demonstrated by the short six-week maternity leave Ardern took after giving birth to her daughter. Later, after cutting a trip short and taking an extra flight due to her daughter being unable to travel, Ardern explicitly acknowledged the bind around her actions, saying she was "damned if [she] did and damned if [she] didn't" (Perry 2018). This highlights the precariousness of the position women hold in politics with particular regard to the blurring of private and public sphere which could, in turn, reify particular gender expectations, particularly around aspirations to motherhood and how "well" they may perform each duty subsequently.

Conclusion

As can be seen, though markedly distinct political leaders who hold different political allegiances, at certain points both May and Ardern's gendered mediation displays a number of double binds which fit into the overall broad trend of gendering female politicians. The double bind, therefore, can be seen as an enduring conceit in the representation of female politicians, going well beyond its earlier conceptualisations (Jamieson, 1995). The construction of May's political persona and mediated representation shows some of the specific challenges that women elected for office face, including a focus on appearance, emotional displays and children, which are often connected to perceptions of competency as a leader. Though harshly criticised for her political failings, May's short leadership position may also represent a form of "glass cliff" (as opposed to the "glass ceiling") (Ryan and Haslam, 2005) where she took on an already poisoned chalice of leadership amid UK Brexit negotiations. This may have also been compounded by the disproportionately high expectations for a more transformative leadership style expected of female leaders (Norris 1997), and points to need for further and more in-depth scrutiny to tease out the problematic aspects of the intersection of political and gendered coverage.

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Ardern, on the other, hand, may represent a promising shift in terms of a desire for a more feminised politics and arguably displaying the kind of bilingualism posited by Campus (2013) necessary for this kind of leadership. Claims that she is "flint […] not far below the surface" (Roy 2018b) echo the similar hard and soft combination of qualities expected of this style; an Iron Lady of another form. Indeed, Ardern was lauded for her emotionally intelligent handling of the Christchurch killings (Howie and Bayer 2019), which again represents a shift towards a politics more in tune with political authenticity, emotionality and sincerity, echoing the calls for this kind of emotional display in May. Nonetheless, this may also indicate similar patterns with regard to expectations and constructions of women offering a transformative style of politics (Norris 1997), which may be confined to times of crisis and not for the day-to-day workings of politics (Ryan and Haslam, 2005). Indeed the pressure to live up to already high expectations points to the danger when some of the stardust may already be wearing off, particularly in some areas of the New Zealand media who claim her popularity on the global stage is not reflected in the country itself (Cooke 2019).

What this analysis ultimately suggests, then, is that while female politicians may be constructed to perform or "do" various kinds of femininities, these are still confined within a specific framework, hinting to the still dichotomous nature of gendered constructions. Though in certain circumstances there may be contestation, showing a desire for a more feminised political public sphere and style of leadership – this may still only be confined to specific displays of "desirable" aspects of femininity – which may be represented in some women and not others. Therefore while there may be some hope and perceived progress for female leaders in certain circumstances – where bilingualism works – this may not always be the case and the media may fall back into problematic double binds and gender assumptions which establishes them at odds with the dominant male political narrative. While these case studies are indeed interpretive, and open to challenge, they show how dominant readings may inform our understanding of the role women play in politics and wider public life, allowing gendered narratives to be critiqued and challenged.

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