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„40 Years of Female Political Leaders in Europe: Media
Coverage of Female Political Leaders from Margaret
Thatcher to Angela Merkel up to Ursula von der Leyen“

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I. Affidavit / Declaration

I hereby declare in lieu of oath that I have produced the present work independently and without the use of any aids other than those indicated. Thoughts taken directly or indirectly from external sources are marked as such. The paper has not yet been submitted to any other examination board in the same or similar form and has not yet been published.

Vienna, April 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'K. Mirbach', written over a horizontal line.

Karolina Mirbach, BA

II. Acknowledgements

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IV. List of Abbreviations

CDU - Christian Democratic Union of Germany

EU - European Union

FAZ - Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

FDJ - Free German Youth

FT - Financial Times

NYT - New York Times

SZ - Süddeutsche Zeitung

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1. INTRODUCTION

The 16th July 2019 witnessed yet another time that history was made in the area of female political leaders. The German politician and previous German defence minister, Ursula von der Leyen was elected as the first ever female President of the European Commission by a very close vote of 383 votes in favour and 327 votes against her becoming the new President (Fried & Mühlauer 2019). Therefore, after twelve men in this top position, only in 2019, a woman has managed to secure this top job as quasi head of the European Union. Even in the year 2019, the election of a woman into a top political position is rather an exception to the rule than being the norm as women in politics still remain a rather “unimportant subgroup in positions of political leadership” as men take up the large majority on the floor in public contexts (Dicu 2018, 158).

Therefore, despite a lot of efforts in female advancement within the last years and even decades, women are still not equal to men, not only in politics but basically in all walks of life. However, while not completely equal, one does have to recognise that more and more women are indeed starting to “occupy traditional masculine roles” including positions of CEOs, board positions, IT sector jobs, pilots, and, as this paper deals with political positions, including the top political position of head of government, head of state or head of an (EU) institution like in Ursula von der Leyen’s case (Hall & Donaghue 2013, 642). Regarding the top political position, however, women were non-existent until the 1960s and then, it was not Europe who managed to break the ‘glass ceiling’, but instead it was Asia, which in some cases is criticised for its lack of women’s rights mostly by European countries today (Benrath & Bartsch 2018). So the first ever female politician to become a head of government, excluding monarchs who do not count as elected political leaders, was Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who became the prime minister of Sri Lanka in 1960, followed by Indira Gandhi, elected as prime minister in India in 1966 and Golda Meir as prime minister in Israel in 1969 (Jalalzai 2013, 32). In Europe, a female leader was to be long in coming, and only after almost decades following the election of Bandaranaike, Europe found its first female head of government in form of Margaret Thatcher, who became the prime minister of the United Kingdom in 1979 (Jalalzai 2013, 37-8). From that point, once the glass ceiling was broken for the first time in Europe, the continent witnessed a slow but continuous increase in female political leaders, especially from the 1990s and the 2000s, which goes hand in hand with an increase of women in general political positions and intensive measures of female advancement and gender

equality and today, Europe counts more female heads of government or heads of state than any other continent.

While female leaders remain a rarity, the few women that do make it, tend to show similarities looking at the way they got elected and the different media coverage they do receive compared to men what is of particular interest for this paper. First, women politicians tend to rather “gain appointment than election”, and, resulting from that serve in dual-executive systems, meaning parliamentary systems rather than in a strongly presidential system (Jalalzai 2013, 40). In a parliamentary system, it is up to the party to elect the individual leading the state, in this way the candidate does not have to be elected by the potentially sexist public, which potentially can be regarded as the main obstacle to a woman becoming a female head of state. To date, there has yet to be a female political leader elected in a country with a strong presidential system like in the United States or France (Jalalzai 2014, 590). While two women, namely Ségolène Royale and Hillary Clinton came incredibly close, but ultimately lost to their male contestants, it does highlight and underline that gender stereotypes are “nowhere as high as for the office of president”, which does maintain a true glass ceiling for female politicians (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 431).

This paper, however, deals with female political leaders who did manage to break the glass ceiling and more in-depth, about their specific media coverage. While the specific media portrayal of female politicians will be explained in detail in chapter two, one can already disclose that the portrayal of men and women in politics is far from being impartial and is subject to a media bias and gender stereotyping which is visible in the amount of media portrayal which differs for women and men, the focus on physical appearance for women, the focus on the image of motherhood or women being held to different standards than men.

As already previously indicated, female political leaders solely derive from parliamentary systems, which are to be found in the United Kingdom or in Germany for example. While further research on that topic suggests that female political leaders mainly come from countries that are not very influential in the world, in this case there are indeed a few well-known exceptions (Jalalzai 2011, 428). One of the potentially best-known examples are the cases of the two parliamentary-system countries, the United Kingdom and Germany, who did in fact have or even still have a female political leader. Therefore, this paper will examine Margaret Thatcher, being the first female UK prime minister and at the same

time the first ever female European political leader, and Angela Merkel the first female German chancellor who has been serving in that position for fourteen years (status 2020). Thirdly, due to the actuality of the topic, and the so to say 40th anniversary of female political leaders in Europe, this paper will also include the current President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. In this respect, however, one should not forget that Ursula von der Leyen does not directly govern a state like the other two did or do, so the way in which they were elected, the duties they have or the power they hold might differ in some ways. However, the media coverage those three female politicians receive, in terms of being a woman holding a top political position can be directly compared. For this purpose, it does not matter what country or what EU institution they govern exactly, as the main focus lies on the media coverage of a female political leaders in general. Therefore, according to this criterion those three political leaders are very well qualified for a deeper analysis and comparison.

Furthermore, the following three major similarities perfectly equip these three female leaders for a comparison based on their media coverage:

First, very one of the three is the first woman to govern their respective nation or the EU Commission as in von der Leyen's case. Margaret Thatcher became the first UK prime minister in 1979, Angela Merkel became the first ever female German chancellor in 2005 and is still serving in that position, 14 years after being elected for the first time, and Ursula von der Leyen became the first female President of the European Commission in 2019 (Holl 2019).

Second, all three women derive from conservative parties that are traditionally believed to aggravate the ascension of a female political leader compared to rather leftist parties, nevertheless they did manage to make a name for themselves even within a more conservative party structure. Margaret Thatcher joined the Conservative Party during her student time at Oxford University and even served as its leader for 15 years from 1975 until 1990 (Moore 2013, 56). Both Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen are members of the German *CDU*, short for *the Christian Democratic Union* of Germany (german: *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*), a centre-right party in Germany, of which Angela Merkel has even served as its leader for a time span of more than 18 years from 2000 to 2018 (Baumann 2019).

As a third similarity, it is important to note that in general, “despite being often expected to act as a role model, most conservative female politicians have neither explicitly advocated feminism nor encouraged specific strategies for equal opportunities for women” (Lüneborg & Maier 2015,181). This is particularly true for Margaret Thatcher, who is “said to be anti-feminist who prided herself on offering no special favours to other women” (Walsh 2015, 1026). Angela Merkel is likewise known for a rather “pragmatic approach to the advancement of women”, likewise meaning no particular favours for women (Gammelin 2017). Ursula von der Leyen’s opportunities created for women are yet to be determined during her upcoming term in office, however she has vowed emphasis on female advancement in most of her speeches and has already accumulated special attention when she set her sights on composing the European Commission with 50% men and 50% women, which she is said to have almost succeeded in, as the EU Commission currently consists of 12 women but still 15 men, and while men still are the clear majority within the Commission, this is, nevertheless, the commission with the highest share of women so far (“EU-Parlament bestätigt Kommission von Ursula von der Leyen” 2019). While, in general, there is no doubt that a female leader provides *transformative leadership*, simply due to the fact of being a woman in a male-dominated environment, not many women do also provide a proven *feminist leadership*, which is most commonly assumed within the society as it is expected that a woman automatically advocates for other women (Lüneborg & Maier 2015,181).

Likewise, all of the three women have served or are serving a country, or an EU institution that is very important and influential on the world stage, which means that not only does it guarantee a lot of national news coverage about a leader, but due to the fact of the UK and Germany being one of the most powerful countries in Europe respectively in the world, and the EU Commission being one the most powerful EU institutions that is meant to represent more than 500 million people living in the EU, it does also guarantee a lot of news coverage from foreign and international newspapers, which does in fact enable an analysis of their media coverage in the first place.

While their political background can be regarded as quite similar, their private and domestic lives differ in many ways, most notably in terms of motherhood, which traditionally takes up an immense place in terms of the media coverage of female politicians, as will be outlined in detail in chapter two. Margaret Thatcher has been married once and is a mother of twins, while Ursula von der Leyen is likewise still married

in her first marriage, but even has seven children (Meinholz 2019). Angela Merkel, in contrast, is married in a second marriage and has no children (Kornelius et al. 2014, 76). While motherhood is one of the topics with a lot of emphasis in regard to the media coverage of female politicians, it will be further analysed if and what consequences Merkel's childlessness has in terms of her media coverage concerning the traditional female image of motherhood in particular.

Margaret Thatcher was elected on the 3rd May 1979, in a time where close to no measures for female advancement were taken and women were far from regarded as equal to their male counterparts, much less women acting as a head of government or being a CEO in any company or business. Rather, women were being held in the private sphere and bound to their domestic roles as a mother and wife. Shortly, the struggle for the rights of women was just at its start. Exactly, 40 years later, in 2019, coinciding with Ursula von der Leyen's election, we are in the middle of a gender equality debate. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that a lot has improved, such as the participation of women in politics as regular parliamentarians as well as women's general employment, while at the same time the gender pay gap has decreased (EU Commission 2019). However, despite some success, even in the year 2019, the whole procedure still finds itself in the starting blocks and women and men still do not occupy the same positions nor get paid the same amount of money. On a world scale, women still earn a third less than men, only 32% are in leadership roles, only around 20% act as board members and only 5% are the CEO of a company (OECD 2018). In the field of politics, the situation is equally disappointing, as on average only 28% of parliamentarians are women, and only 21% of all ministers are women, likewise in total only 47% of all states have even had a female head of state, while only 8% of all current head of states are women (OECD 2018). So all in all, this shows that the general situation of women in official and executive positions is constantly improving. However, it still has not become the norm that a woman holds the top position whether it may be as CEO of a company or as head of government or head of state in politics.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND THE REVIEW OF WORLD LITERATURE

2.1. Prelude

Despite numerous attempts of Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming or Women Advancement, women are still underrepresented in all fields, which is quite obvious by looking at criteria such as “pay gap, lifetime earnings, seats on corporate boards, appointments to CEOs”, that clearly place women at a disadvantage (Hall & Donaghue 2013, 642). Politics, in particular, is a sphere where this is especially evident. This is deep-rooted in history as traditionally “the servitude has excluded them from education, from reading, writing and speaking the public tongue of politics” (Trimble 2017, 188). Historically, “womanly speech was thought to be personal, excessive, disorganised, and unduly ornamental”, while “the manly style” was considered to be led by reason, thus “factual, analytic, organised, and impersonal” (Jamieson 1995, 91-91). This still shows its effect today, as in the political sphere, women are surpassingly underrepresented, and on average 77% of all politicians are male, despite the norm of gender equality being widely supported in western countries (Aaldering & Van der Pas 2018, 1). However, regular female parliamentarians are “less of a rarity than female party leaders” (Aaldering & Van der Pas 2018, 15). Therefore, the situation is even worse when it comes to top positions as the concept of a woman as a head of state or head of government is still a quite new phenomenon in particular in Europe. In Europe, there was no woman in the top political position until Margaret Thatcher became the UK prime minister in 1979. Before that it had only known men as their respective head of government or head of state excluding monarchs acting as head of state (Jalalzai 2013, 37-8). Therefore, until today, the attributes that are associated with a political leader tend to correspond to attributes that rather match with the qualities that the society typically describes as masculine rather than feminine (Aaldering & Van der Pas 2018, 5). This means that traits such as “competitive, aggressive, strong, assertive knowledgeable”, that are also traditionally ascribed to a good leader, are stereotypically credited to the male population, while “passive, dependent, gentle, weak, emotional, compassionate, kind, honest” are stereotypically considered female (Aaldering & Van der Pas 2018, 5). Whereas compassionate and honest do not necessarily conflict with the attributes accredited to a good leader, the majority of women’s attributes do not coincide with the ones of a

traditional leader. However, as mentioned above, leaders' attributes still largely correlate with masculine attributes like aggressive or strong. Therefore, until today, the deep-rooted thinking prevails "that men are assumed to be the rightful players of the political game", equipped with the essential attributes for a successful leadership (Trimble 2017, 214). It is often argued that, to challenge this male-led leadership, particularly during political campaigning, female politicians tend "to stress agentic traits like leadership more to counteract existing gender associations" (Aaldering & Van der Pas 2018, 7).

2.2. Feminist Media Portrayal Background

Even today, stereotypical gender attributes are so deeply enshrined into our society, that in general, a "norm of masculinist mediated politics" still prevails today that is particularly evident in the media coverage of female political leaders (Walsh 2015, 1027). This is manifested in different ways such as less media coverage of female politicians compared to male politicians (with some exceptions), an over-emphasis on personal attributes and characteristics instead of their policy positions, such as their domestic roles in terms of their marital status and motherhood, a foregrounding of their physical appearance and look, women being held to different standards than men, the likeability trap, referring to them with nicknames such as *Iron Lady* and lastly, by constantly adding the prefix 'woman' or 'female' in front of their roles and ultimately highlighting their biological difference to the male mainstream politician. All of those points are part of a theoretical framework called *gendered mediation*, which can be shortly explained as the "the way in which politics is reported is significantly determined by a male-oriented agenda that privileges the practice of politics as an essentially male pursuit" (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 430).

The following section explains all mentioned points in detail in order to highlight the different dimensions showing how *gendered mediation* is manifesting itself.

2.2.1. Amount of Media Coverage

Numerous studies on media coverage of women has pointed out, that in summary, the media coverage of female politicians is "scarce, stereotypical and biased" (Jung Yun et al. 2007, 930). The two latter ones originate from the scarcity as a female politician still has not become a normality due to the enshrined norms stated above. In numerous earlier studies Melissa Miller and others have proven and outlined that it is indeed a fact that

women politicians do receive less coverage in total, and the attention they do receive in their coverage tends to outstandingly focus on appearance and personal traits, as will be explained later (Miller et al. 2010, 169).

However, there are a few exceptions to the scarce coverage of female politicians or female candidates competing for the top post of head of government or head of state, which shows in fact more attention of female candidates, particularly resulting from the fact of them challenging traditionally male-occupied positions in politics. Ultimately, this creates more coverage for female politicians than it used to do, resulting from their unusualness in the sphere of competing for the top political post as head of government or head of state which in this respect enhances their visibility (Trimble 2007, 973). Female politicians, and in particular women competing for the top post still can be regarded as a “novelty” in the political arena, and by contesting traditional gender roles and competing in a traditional male-dominated area, this also means *more* media attention for female politicians (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 430). This media attention can also be seen as an opportunity to draw attention to “women’s political underrepresentation” and “exposing gendered power hierarchies” which would otherwise not come to the spotlight (Trimble 2007, 972). The most recent example for this is Hillary Clinton, who received disproportionately more media coverage than all her male contestants in the primaries of the Democratic Party in 2008. Melissa Miller’s study pointed out that 59.3% of all examined articles mentioned Clinton, while Obama only came second with 52.4%, the third candidate Edwards lagged far behind with only 34.4% (Miller et al. 2010, 177). Admittedly, this goes hand in hand with the fact that Clinton’s marital status and gender were mentioned 24.9% and 13.4% of the time, while for Obama the numbers were 4.2% and 1.5% respectively (Miller et al. 2010, 178). Another study by Ross and Comrie suggests that it is in fact easier for female politicians “to grab a headline” than it is for men, by wearing something bright red, or acting in a non-usual aggressive behaviour, not adjusted to the traditional gender norms, however, this short demeanour could “easily undermine five years of dull but important policy work” (Ross & Comrie 2012, 970). A very recent example for this is American Congresswoman Katie Hill, where pictures of naked Hill were leaked, in which she was smoking a bong and kissing a female staffer. Just a few days later, she was forced to resign from her political office, despite having been considered a “rising star in the caucus” prior to that (Cochrane 2019). This shows that women politicians, especially these days, do not necessarily lack the media attention or media coverage in quantity, but in fact the content and quality of the coverage differs

a lot and is judged to different standards than for their male colleagues. In these cases, they admittedly do receive more coverage, however, this additional coverage overall tends to be more negative.

2.2.2. Over-Emphasis on Personal Attributes and Characteristics

As briefly touched, female politicians receive more media attention and coverage on their personal traits than male politicians do. This also results from the deep-rooted traditional gender roles in the media and society, as Trimble said “the media often situate female politicians as women first, politicians second, by highlighting their marital status, sexuality, appearance and domestic roles” (Trimble 2007, 973). This emphasis, or even over-emphasis, on the specific personal attributes is particularly dangerous as it detracts attention from what is actually important in politics, namely the policy positions and political agenda (Ross & Comrie 2012, 971). However, it has to be added, that in general, media coverage on politicians has changed over time and, even in regards to male politicians, more emphasis is put on “non-political characteristics and the private lives of politicians”, however, the attention is still higher for female politicians (Aaldering & Vliegenhart 2016, 1872).

2.2.3. Marital Status

As highlighted earlier, especially the marital status is highlighted surpassingly often for female politicians. Once again, this can be traced back to women’s historical rooting in “the private sphere of muted domesticity”, where a woman used to only be the ‘wife of’ (Jamieson 1995, 91-91). The remains of that are that a woman still ‘cannot stand for herself’ and must be connected to a male partner or husband. Going back to the example of Hillary Clinton in the 2008 primaries, despite having made a name for herself in politics, at that time as US Senator from New York, her coverage is disproportionally often mentioned in connection to her husband, former US President Bill Clinton, in Miller’s study even a quarter of Hillary Clinton’s news coverage involved Bill Clinton. (Miller et al. 2010, 178). Even in the most recent coverage about Clinton, her marital status to Bill Clinton is put before her positions as US presidential candidate or Secretary of State, as in a recent article of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, it was written:

„Clinton kündigte in dem Interview an, weiter ihre politische Meinung zu sagen. ‚Was in unserem Land auf dem Spiel steht, die Dinge, die gerade passieren, sind für mich zutiefst beunruhigend‘, sagte die Frau des früheren Präsidenten Bill Clinton.“ (“Hillary Clinton schließt Kandidatur aus”, 5th March 2019)

By mainly referring to her as the wife of former US President Bill Clinton, it basically discredits all the achievements she can register for her as a high-level politician.

Despite Hillary Clinton being quite an extreme example of the reference to the marital status, due to the fact of Bill Clinton once serving as the President of the most powerful country in the world, it does highlight quite well that no matter how much a woman does make a name for herself, she will still be connected to her partner or husband.

2.2.4. Motherhood

Strongly connected to the point of mentioning the marital status, is the emphasis on motherhood, again, linked to a woman's historically traditional role in the private and domestic sphere of mainly being a wife and mother. As the media situates "female politicians as women first, politicians second", motherhood, as the historically main task of a woman, is therefore of particular focus (Trimble 2007, 973). This can be understood as, not only does a woman have to do her professional job as a politician, but, as a woman, she also has to fulfil her biological duty of being a mother. Therefore, in most media coverage, in some way the image of motherhood is created. For example this can be the case by pointing out how many children the female politician has by adding "mother of four" or by combining the picture of motherhood and politics and calling her "mother of the nation" (Krogstad & Storvik 2012, 136). In comparison, the role of fatherhood mentioned in relation to male politicians is almost non-existent, as phrases like "father of the nation" are unknown or mentioning the number of children of a male politician simply is not very common (Krogstad & Storvik 2012, 136). While overall, the emphasis on motherhood rather tends to undermine the role of a woman, because it is placing her back into the private and domestic sphere, Krogstad and Storvik can also find positive outcomes by that. In general, women in the political arena are stereotypically seen as "more liberal, gentler, and more compassionate" than their male counterparts and "[...] through their emphasis on motherhood, a new element into politics is introduced: caring" (Krogstad & Storvik 2012, 144). Meaning if a female politician is able to use the motherhood cliché in terms of selling herself as 'caring', she can also use this card to her advantage, instead of it undermining her political ambition.

2.2.5. Foregrounding of their Physical Appearance and Look

The biggest difference in the media coverage of female and male politicians, arguably, can be found in the portrayal of the physical appearance of them, which by far is more important and more deeply discussed in the media portrayal of female politicians than it is relevant in the media portrayal of male politicians. In this respect, it does not even matter if the coverage on physical appearance is positive or negative, as even positive comments about the look “can detract attention from what they actually have to say”, and therefore undermine their political presence (Walsh 2015, 1030). A perfect example for this scenario is Theresa May, who is known for her outstanding footwear, and while usually being praised for them, it does detract attention from her political tasks and speeches (Walsh 2015, 1030). In general, it is not enough for a woman to be ‘just’ a politician, in terms of physical appearance, there is a socially embedded expectance that their bodies have to exemplify the “hegemonic femininity”, meaning “well-coiffed, styled, and made up, and physically attractive”, while men do not face such expectations (Trimble 2017, 122). As a result, “the media places more attention on female politicians’ hair, clothing and make-up” in order to check if the aspired hegemonic femininity is achieved or not (Trimble 2017, 123). Therefore, the challenge for a woman is to build a bridge between being a serious politician and achieving the desired hegemonic femininity. Nevertheless, the suit remains the “globalized dress code and symbol for politics and masculinity”, which once again proves the connectedness of masculinity with leadership abilities resulting from the *gendered mediation* (Flicker 2013, 210). However, a woman in a suit is not very popular as seen by the numerous negative comments of Hillary Clinton and Angela Merkel wearing suits (Flicker 2013, 211). The other way round, however, a female politician, in low-cut dress does lose her integrity as the example of Brazilian politician Ana Paula da Silva shows. She wore a red jumpsuit showing a deep cleavage, which was considered inappropriate for her inauguration ceremony, which received worldwide news coverage (Torres 2019). Thus, the difficult task for a female politician is to balance the challenge of not being too manly, but also not too feminine.

2.2.6. Different Standards to Men

This point has already been touched by most of the previous points above, but one of the major challenges women face in terms of media portrayal is that they are held to different standards than their male counterparts, which are set by a male-oriented agenda. Many things that are desired in a male leader are considered inappropriate or unfeminine for a

female leader. An example Trimble makes is the attribute ‘ambitious’, while a stereotypical male is praised for being ambitious and fighting for his goal, ‘ambitious’ in relation to women is seen rather negatively. Former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard had to experience this first-hand as she was often called “too ambitious” and also a “maneater” in that context (Trimble 2017, 124). In general, ambition is considered quite problematic for women due to its “incompatibility with the expectation of more stereotypically feminine communal behaviour” (Hall & Donaghue 2013, 643). Furthermore, research indicates that other traits expected in a leader, such as “assertiveness” and “strength” are perceived as inappropriate for a woman (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 430). This means that from the beginning it is made nearly impossible for a woman to portray leadership traits and at the same time being praised for them. Also going back to the point of physical appearance and being ‘sexy’: while it is commonly perceived that a *powerful man* is considered *sexy*, a *powerful woman* however, is rather perceived as intimidating and scary (Krogstad & Storvik 2012,131). In addition to that, “negative stereotyping” is very common, in which a woman is either “too sexy” or “not sexy enough”, therefore, never meeting the high expectations of the media (Krogstad & Storvik 2012,131). A recent study by Dicu pointed out the main obstacle is, that is holding women back to compete for high political offices. Most respondents, namely 40% said it was due to “women being held to higher standards [than men]” (Dicu 2018, 160). This indicates that the different judgment of male and female politicians might indeed be one of the biggest if not the biggest reason for the yet persisting inequality regarding the top political office. What is quite shocking though, is that almost half of the respondents recognize the different treatment of male and female politicians, nevertheless, it still persists.

2.2.7. Likeability Trap

Closely related to the idea that women in politics are held to different standards than men, is the so-called likeability trap. However, this is a relatively new idea that is just at the beginning of research. It has recently been brought up by Erin Loos, who is working to encourage more women to run for political office (Gupta 2019). She supports the assumption that for a woman it is not simply enough to be highly qualified, a woman running for public office rather has to be “qualified *and* likeable”, while such dual expectations for men do not exist as simply being a strong man qualifies them as electable (Gupta 2019). As the United States has still not had a female president, there have been

numerous studies looking at the reasons behind that with some findings clearly supporting the likeability trap. As an example around 40% of Americans agree with the statement that “women who are running for president just aren’t that likable” (Gupta 2019). This theory suggests that women in high political offices are “violators of traditional gender stereotypes”, meaning if they are fighting for those male-dominated jobs, they are very likely to be perceived negatively (Blight et al. 2012, 565). Thus, it argues that women cannot ever be both *competent and likeable* in terms of warm and cordial. Hillary Clinton, for example, who was overall considered very competent and qualified for the job of president, was therefore conceived as cold and calculating, while Sarah Palin, who was regarded as warm and likable was said to be incompetent to be in a leadership position (Blight et al. 2012, 580).

2.2.8. Use of Nickname

Another habit that is more commonly used in relation to female politicians than it is for male politicians, is the use of nicknames. This does not necessarily have to sound negative at first sight, but rather in the deeper meaning. Women tend to be called by just their last name to a lesser extent than male politicians in terms of *Prime Minister Thatcher* or *Chancellor Merkel* for example, rather they are given other names or nicknames to refer to them (Ross & Comrie 2012, 972). One of the most prominent nicknames for a female political leader to date is the *Iron Lady*, by which basically everyone knows who is meant by that. At first sight, this nickname does not sound negative as it does assert a certain level of power to Margaret Thatcher. However, the deeper meaning is obscured in traditional gender role expectations, that assign a ‘softer leadership style’ to women. Therefore, if a women, in this case Thatcher, is considered as tough as a man, the label ‘iron’ is attached, whereas even among men some have stronger and some have weaker leadership styles, nevertheless, a male leader having added the prefix ‘iron’ is pretty unlikely as he is already expected to have a stronger leadership style (Jalalzai 2004, 4-5). The same holds true for labels like “the only man in the cabinet”, “perfumed bulldozer” or “female gladiator” to name some examples. They all presume that a woman as political leader is meant to have a softer leadership style and toughness is usually only associated with male politicians (Trimble 2017, 213).

2.2.9. Gender Markers

Lastly, women disproportionately often experience gender markers in front of their official title or name. Due to the fact that a female head of state or female head of government is still not the norm in today's society, those female politicians, who do achieve this position, are often given the prefix 'woman' or 'female'. The reason is to point out that they are "different to the traditional (male) politician [and] are still undermined by a continuing fascination with their coiffure" (Ross & Comrie 2012, 971). Another common thing is the usage of *Miss* or *Mrs.* in front of their last name to underline that they are women, in contrast, the usage of *Mr.* for male politician is not common at all. Once again, this proves the point of *gendered mediation* that politics is dominated by a male-oriented agenda (Ross & Comrie 2012, 971). By saying "first woman prime minister", "female chancellor" or "Mrs." a particular emphasis is put on the gender, which is meant to highlight the unusualness of this particular gender (a woman) occupying a top level position, that is normally occupied by men. By including the gender, they likewise, suggest that gender matters for the accomplishment of this particular job (Ross & Comrie 2012, 971).

2.3. Communication Theory

A communication theory delivers methods and principles on how to better understand how information is conveyed. The four main communication theories used in this paper to study media portrayal of female politicians are *agenda setting*, *framing*, *priming* and *media bias*. Therefore, they will be explained in detail in the following section.

2.3.1. Agenda Setting

The first theory, *agenda setting*, has been largely shaped by McCombs and Shaw. In short, *agenda setting* can be summed up as an idea that there is a "strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues", in this case in particular the amount of media coverage one gets, "and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, by giving some candidates more media attention than others, the media is already *setting* the *agenda*, because by that we are more familiar with one candidate than with the other which is influencing the knowledge we have about them. This means that the media does not have an influence over what the recipients think or do but it exerts influence over what the audience starts to think about in the first place. In short, agenda setting describes the ability to determine the issues that

are present in the public debate in the first place, as the information the reader or viewer gets confronted with the most, does ultimately also seem most important to them.

2.3.2. *Framing*

A second communication theory that deals with the media coverage of politicians is called *framing* and can be regarded as the broadest theory of the four which is also omnipresent across many other different study disciplines. *Framing* is also said to often overlap with the theory of *agenda setting*. For this reason *framing* is sometimes even called *second-level agenda setting*, however, several important aspects do indeed differ (Cacciatore et al. 2015, 11). According to the framing theory, the news media presents its information in so-called frames. Those frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might eventually lead audiences to have different reactions. This theory exists across many different sciences, such as psychology and law to name two examples. However, in communication theory it can be summed up that the news media is framing by stressing certain “values, facts or specific traits” more often than others, or by making them more “accessible, visible or salient”, thereby assuming that in this particular context this trait or attribute matters for making related judgements in order to facilitate the information for the reader (Cacciatore et al 2015, 128).

As a prominent example for this, in the case of political campaigning, frames of a race or battle are used in order to better underline the competition character of the elections (Kenski 1995, 75).

2.3.3. *Priming*

A third communication theory is called *priming*, which is based on the standards and principles that the reader or viewer makes use of in order to form an opinion (Kenski 1995, 72). This is being done by bringing forward some matters or traits, while not mentioning others or not according them the same relevance. In this way the media can be said to *prime* its audience in order to influence their opinion and judgements towards political leaders. An example includes placing a particular focus on specific character traits instead of political policies to undermine one’s political abilities (Kenski 1995, 72). Therefore, in contrast to *framing*, *priming* focuses on *what* information is presented while *framing* focuses on *how* this information is presented.

2.3.4. Media Bias and Systemic Use of Stereotypes

The fourth communication theory concerning the media coverage of female politicians focuses on the media bias and systemic use of stereotypes, that deals with the bias or perceived bias of journalists within the mass media. Media bias can take place in all sorts of areas such as gatekeeping bias, mainstream bias or sensationalism, however, for the purpose of this master thesis the gender bias of the political news coverage is of particular interest. This argues that female politicians receive different treatment from the media due to their gender. As mentioned before the novelty of a female politician leads to a different reporting about them in terms of the “news value of rarity”, “networks” and especially interesting the use of “stereotypes” (Van der Pas & Aaldering 2020, 5). As previously mentioned, men are associated with the stereotypical attributes of a leader, which belong to the public life, while women are rather associated with stereotypical attributes such as emotional and warm which are typically related to the private sphere. As a result, women are seen as violators of the traditional norms and consequently those women competing for a leadership position either violate the stereotype of the leader or that of a woman meaning they can never fulfil both. Consequently, this can lead to a negative portrayal of them by the media. In general, this is manifesting itself by four main aspects. First, the media often points out an aggressive or combative behavior of the female politician. Secondly, a woman is seen as less viable than a man. This manifests itself by questioning whether the female politician is suitable for the leadership position and can stay in the race for that. This means the suitability of the female candidate is tested a lot more thoroughly than the suitability of a male candidate for the top position. Thirdly, the media dissociates women from public life and politics as it focuses on their personal attributes, physical appearance or their marital status and their children, ultimately bringing back women to the private sphere of life where they stereotypically were linked to in the past. Lastly, it focuses on pointing out direct stereotypes in form of female stereotypes and attributes that are applied on the female politicians by linking them to attributes such as sensitive, gentle or compassionate (Van der Pas & Aaldering 2020, 6-9).

For the purpose of this master thesis, the theory of media bias is chosen because all three chosen political leaders are the first woman to govern their country or the EU institution meaning their position has previously only been occupied by men and therefore the media bias is the most prominent communication theory when analyzing the media coverage of the three political leaders. It will also help to find out whether within 40 years the media

bias in form of *gender stereotyping* has decreased within that time frame or if it remains even after 40 years.

2.4. Theorizing the Framework

For the case of female politicians, the media coverage is “scarce, stereotypical and biased” (Jung Yun et al. 2007, 930), whether it might be passive or quite outright. By constantly focusing on their appearance or personal traits and not mentioning leadership skills, this automatically detracts leadership abilities from female politicians or even female head of governments. Further on, by constantly mentioning stereotypes of men and women, the media continuously strengthens the already existing gender stereotypes in the heads of the recipients. By expecting a female politician to have a perfectly groomed look every time during a public appearance, and highlighting the fact in case she is not, does not only detract from the political statement of the female politician at that moment, but also it reinforces the stereotype that all women are expected to be in their best shape and beauty at all times.

In general, the above points have outlined what female politicians are confronted with in terms of their media coverage. Further, it was pointed out that female and male politicians are far from being measured according to the same or even similar standards, nor are they receiving the same amount of media coverage. Despite the common assumption of journalistic impartiality, this shows that reporting about female and male leaders still reveal a clear bias to the disadvantage of female politicians (Ross & Comrie 2012, 969). Next to that, and even more importantly, the differences in media coverage of female and male politicians disadvantage *all* women as it deepens the already deep-rooted gender bias in our society (Ross & Comrie 2012, 981). By continuously repeating the gender bias on women and men, whether it might be overt or concealed, this gender bias is becoming even more enshrined in our society, and thus, it makes it even harder to break through and overcome this gender stereotypical thinking.

3. HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Hypotheses

As highlighted earlier, women in a top political position remain almost as much of a rarity as they used to be in 1979 and the few women that do make it tend to all experience the same gender-biased portrayal within the news media. Arising thereby the first hypothesis is:

H1: Despite 40 years of female political leaders in Europe, a woman in the top position is still subject to media bias in form of gender stereotyping and tends to be portrayed in a different manner to their male counterparts with a particular focus on their appearance, style and the image of motherhood.

Next to this, a study already conducted by Cantrell and Bachmann in 2008 was the first one to examine the media coverage of certain female political leaders in a cross-border perspective. They found out that there are indeed certain differences in media coverage of female political leaders concerning their coverage in national and international news outlets. In general, their study discovered that national newspapers had the tendency to be more critical of their political leaders than foreign (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 440). National newspapers showed the tendency to focus on “the female firsts’ performance and record in office” while international newspapers “concentrated on the lady (but not the land) and in the international context she performed in” (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 440). In addition, international newspapers are said to be more “allowing and forgiving” towards the respective female political leaders, while on the national level, the media is said to “call them out” (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 441). This is based on the fact that international newspapers have a distance to the female political leaders and do not know every single detail of their lives or every critical comment they might have said, therefore the leadership of the female head of governments, in general, was evaluated in a more positive way in the international than national news coverage. National news coverage, therefore, tends to be more critical of their own nationals (Cantrell & Bachmann 2008, 440). As I expect similar results the second hypothesis reads as follows:

H2: International newspapers tend to be less critical of female political leaders than national newspapers.

The third hypothesis is related to the second one. In the sample of national newspapers chosen for this research, there will be one right-wing newspaper as well as one left-wing newspaper. In this respect it is important to note that all three female political leaders analysed in this paper derive from right-wing conservative parties in their respective home countries. As noted earlier, Thatcher was a member, and even the leader, of the *Conservative Party* in the United Kingdom, while Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen are both members of the *Christian Democratic Union of Germany*, a party that is well known for its right-wing Christian conservative. Therefore, I expect the political orientation of the national newspapers to have an influence in terms of endorsing or critical content regarding the conservative female political leaders:

H3: The right-wing national newspapers are less critical of the female political leaders, who all derive from conservative right-wing parties, than the left-wing national newspaper are.

At last, coming back to the point of motherhood. As stressed earlier, female politicians are portrayed in a different manner to men in many ways. One of them is the reference to motherhood, which is often applied for female politicians tracing back to a woman's traditional role in the private sphere of life and their responsibility of being a good wife and mother. Of the three examined women, only two are also mothers in real life. Margaret Thatcher is a mother of twins, while Ursula von der Leyen is even a mother to seven children. Angela Merkel, in contrast, does not have any children of her own. However, her 'childlessness' does actually not matter looking at her media coverage reflecting motherhood quite often. As research shows, all women, more or less, tend to receive the same gender-based stereotyping no matter what their actual private lives look like (Jalalzai 2010, 141). Therefore, even women who do not have children in real life experience the application of the motherhood image in their political life and work. Consequential the fourth and last hypothesis is:

H4: Gender stereotyping, such as the image of motherhood in particular, affects all female politicians as all of them are forced into the same stereotyping no matter if it does actually reflect their private lives, such as the fact of being mothers in real life or not.

3.2. Aim of Research

To answer those hypotheses, this thesis includes two different pillars. The first pillar represents the feminist theory of *gendered mediation*, explaining how female politician are portrayed in a different way to their male colleagues. The second pillar will consist of the communication theory of *media bias* in form of *gender stereotyping* aimed at explicating why the different portrayal of female politicians' matter as it does in fact influence the decision-making of the public.

In order to answer the four hypotheses, a qualitative content analysis will be conducted, in which the aim is to put the three female political leaders in a historical perspective, while a cross-border and cross-level analysis will be undertaken. In order to offer a comprehensive comparison of the three female political leaders, this master thesis will examine the same time frames and roughly the same conditions in form of the electoral campaign period as well as during a political crisis while in office. To do this, two national, one European, and one global newspaper will be examined for each of the female political leader. With the help of those, the media coverage of each of those three will be analysed one month prior to the election until the day of their election and at one point when a political crisis occurred, which attracts special media attention to their respective political leaders.

3.3. Sample of Women

The three female political leaders chosen for this research are Margaret Thatcher, Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen. Those three women work well for a comparison as they were all the first woman to govern their nation or institution. Further, they all derive from conservative parties, and they all governed or still govern a nation or an EU institution that has a worldwide relevance, therefore it guarantees ample news coverage not only from their national newspapers, but also from international news outlets.

A major distinguishing factor among them is their private life mostly in terms of motherhood. As a reminder, Margaret Thatcher was married and a mother of twins, while Ursula von der Leyen is married too, but even has seven children. Angela Merkel is a little different in this case. She is married in a second marriage, but more determining, she does not have any children. Therefore, a particular emphasis within this qualitative content analysis will be directed at the media portrayal of the image of motherhood and how much this is connected to motherhood in their private lives.

3.4. Sample of Newspapers

For the purpose of a cross-border and cross-level qualitative content analysis, there will be one European, one global and two national newspapers each taken into account to analyse the media coverage of the three female leaders. All of the chosen newspapers are considered quality newspapers, which typically suggests an accurate and serious news coverage and is not aimed at entertaining the audience or known for producing *fake news* to boost their sales like it is the case for some tabloid newspapers.

In order to have the same basis for a comparison in regard to national newspapers, for each candidate, there will be one left-wing quality newspapers and one right-wing quality newspaper analysed. Since all of the three political leaders were or are part of rather right-wing parties, a balanced coverage from both left-wing and right-wing coverage suggests a balanced coverage from both political ideologies. As suggested by the hypothesis, the right-wing newspaper is expected to be less critical of the female political leaders.

In the case of Margaret Thatcher, who used to be a UK national and its prime minister, the two daily British newspapers *The Times* and *The Guardian* will be used for the analysis. *The Times* is a daily newspaper that was founded in 1785 and has been aligned to the *Conservative Party* since 1945 (McCallum & Alison Readman 1947, 181). Today its circulation roughly counts around 420,000 printed and around 220,000 digital copies (Statista 2019). At the beginning of the 1980s, during Margaret Thatcher's term in office, *The Times* had a daily circulation of around 280,000 copies (Sweeney 2009). The second British daily newspaper, *The Guardian*, founded in 1821, is aligned to the left-wing *Labour Party*, following its roots of establishment as "an organ for the middle class" (Engels 2001, 109). Today its printed circulation amounts to around 130,000 copies per day, whereas in the 1980s it had circulation of over 300,000, at that time beating *The Times* in terms of the number of newspapers sold (Sweeney 2009).

Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen are both German nationals, Merkel even holding the position of the current German chancellor. Therefore, for both of them, the two main German daily quality newspapers, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, will be used as the national newspaper source. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is a daily newspaper that was founded in 1949 and has had a right-wing conservative political alignment from its start, openly claiming to support the *Christian Democrats* during national elections (Artero 2015). Its current circulation is

around 230,000 for the printed version and around 50,000 for the digital version (Statista 2019). At the time of Merkel's election in the mid-2000s the newspaper used to have a circulation of around 380,000 (Statista 2019). The *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, also a daily newspaper, was founded in 1945 with a liberal left-wing alignment right from the beginning (Koopmans & Pfetsch 2007, 70). Today its circulation equates to around 350,000 printed and almost 50,000 digital copies. During the time of Merkel's election the circulation even counted more than 440,00 printed daily copies, therefore making it the highest circulated newspaper within the sample of national newspapers (Statista 2019).

On a European level, one daily quality newspaper will be used to investigate the media coverage of all three female political leaders from a European perspective. The European-level newspaper chosen for the purpose of this thesis is the *Financial Times (FT)*. This newspaper is known to have a strong focus on European affairs and issues, in particular in terms of business and economics, rather than national politics being the priority. Therefore, the FT constitutes the best source to function as the European-level analysis of the three political leaders ("Financial Times sold to Nikkei by Pearson for £844m" 2015). The *FT* was founded in 1888 and can be understood to have an economic liberalist alignment as it mostly advocates for free markets ("Too big to fail undermines the free market faith" 2018). Currently, this newspaper has a daily circulation of around 170,000 printed copies, while almost 750,000 subscribers read the *FT* digitally each day, making this newspaper one of the pioneers in terms of digital subscriptions in Europe (Eriksson 2019). In the 1980s, during Thatcher's term in office, the *FT* had a similar circulation as the printed circulation today of around 150,000 daily copies sold (Statista 2019).

Finally, the media coverage of the three women will also be examined from a global perspective. The daily quality newspaper chosen for this global-level analysis, is the *New York Times (NYT)*, one of the most famous and most circulated newspapers in the whole world, having won more prizes for quality journalism than any other newspaper (Victor 2018). Therefore, in terms of awards, there could not be a better sample for a quality global newspaper. This American newspaper was founded in 1851 and is commonly perceived as liberal, whereas itself it claims to be impartial (Spayd 2016). Its global outreach is manifested in its daily circulation of more than 570,000 printed copies and its almost 3.000.000 daily digital subscribers, making the *NYT* one of the pioneers in digital subscriptions worldwide (Tracy 2019). In the 1980s, the newspaper used to even have a daily circulation of just under 1.000.000 (Perez-Pena 2009).

4. MARGARET THATCHER

4.1. Biography

Margaret Thatcher was born on the 13th October 1925 as Margaret Hilda Roberts. She was the younger one of two daughters and her parents belonged to the lower middle class, while her father used to be involved in politics as well being the mayor of Grantham (Beckett 2013, 1). Thatcher was often said to idealize her father and stated him as her early role model and inspiration, while she was said to have a constraint relationship with both her mother and her sister (Beckett 2013, 1).

In 1943, due to a scholarship, she was able to study chemistry at the prestigious Oxford University, where she was not much involved in social activities, however joining the *Oxford University Conservative Association*, which can be considered as the starting point of her political activism (Beckett 2013, 2). After graduating in 1946, she decided to pursue a political career and ran for a seat in the lower house in the 1950 election but lost to a candidate from the *Labour Party* in a traditionally *Labour*-dominated district. (Beckett 2013, 4). A year later, she married the wealthy divorcee Denis Thatcher and pursued a graduate degree in law in London (Beckett 2013, 4). Later on she momentarily worked as lawyer and gave birth to twins in 1953, before directing her attention back to politics and being elected into the lower house for the first time in 1959 (Vinen 2013, 24). She received greater attention when Edward Heath made her a part of his shadow cabinet in 1967 and later even appointed her as his Minister of Education in 1970 (Vinen 2013, 43). The growing dissatisfaction among *Conservatives*, due to the *Labour Party* being in government, led to the election of a new party leader in 1975. Margaret Thatcher was then able to decide for herself and from that point onwards acting as opposition leader (Vinen 2013, 66). During the 1979 elections, with Thatcher at its head, the *Conservative Party* was able to win back the majority in the lower house making Thatcher the first woman to become the British UK prime minister (Campbell 2011, 1).

Right from the start of her premiership Thatcher was bound and determined to pursue a different style of government than her predecessors. She initiated a vast number of domestic reforms such as the community charge as well as large-scale privatisation and deregulation of the financial markets which later became known as *Thatcherism* (Campbell 2011, 3). This especially brought her troubles with several trade unions and mine workers who initiated numerous strikes in the mid-1980s (Campbell 2011, 357).

Despite being a woman herself, she has not initiated any particular rights or reforms for other women and is “said to be anti-feminist who prided herself on offering no special favours to other women” (Walsh 2015, 1026). Related to Britain’s political troubles with Ireland, the IRA mounted a bombing attack against Thatcher with the aim of killing her in 1984. Nevertheless, Thatcher survived the attack and delivered her speech at the party congress of the *Conservatives* the following day, strengthening the ‘tough’ image Thatcher had also transmitted beforehand which ultimately resulted in her nickname *Iron Lady* (Campbell 2011, 362).

In terms of foreign policy, Thatcher is particularly remembered for the *special friendship* with the USA and her outstanding friendship with US President Ronald Reagan, who were most of all connected due to their mutual hate and distrust of communism (Campbell 2011, 57). In regards to European affairs, and especially the European Union, Thatcher very much favoured the idea of Britain being a member of the Union as much as European cooperation. However she has always highlighted her fear of too much European integration, especially fiscal cooperation, and opposed ideas of a European super state. Towards the end of her premiership her attitude towards the European Union became more and more adverse, which further diminished her support within her own party (Vinen 2013, 239).

Since the start of her third term in office, Thatcher increasingly lost touch with the basis of her party and refused to answer to their concerns which largely decreased her popularity within her party. This was deepened by Thatcher’s refusal to join the European monetary system (Campbell 2011, 454). As her support within the society was as low as never before some members of the *Conservative Party* initiated a resistance against Thatcher with Michael Heseltine planning to challenge Thatcher for the party leadership (Vinen 2013, 270). When Thatcher realised, she did not have enough support within the party to succeed against him she was ultimately forced to resign in order to get away from a huge defeat.

Margaret Thatcher hugely polarised regarding her politics as well as a person, while there are many people who believe that her reforms were necessary and beneficial. As there are still many advocates for Thatcherism today, many have blamed her ever since for the large privatization that took place during her term as prime minister (Cannadine 2017, 125). Likewise, she is criticised for her autocratic leadership style by many, however others praise her for being able to assert all of her reforms and changes particularly in an

even more male-dominated environment back then (Cannadine 2017, 127). She has remained such a polarizing figure up until her death in 2013 and even beyond until today (Cannadine 2017, 144).

4.2. Media Coverage

4.2.1. Sampling

In total, a sample of 100 newspaper articles was used to analyse the media coverage of Margaret Thatcher. More in depth, 48 articles, twelve for each newspaper, were used to get information of her media coverage from the time *before* being elected, while 52 newspapers, 13 for each chosen newspaper, were used to find out more about Thatcher's media coverage *during* a political crisis. The included newspapers were filtered regarding their title. All the chosen newspapers had either "Thatcher", "Margaret" "Margaret Thatcher", "PM" or "Prime Minister" in their title. During the pre-election period also the phrases "elections", "campaign" or "race" were included, while for the time during the political crisis the terms "miners' strike", "crisis", "Iron Lady" and "miners" were included to filter out suitable articles. The length of the articles varied and ranges from just a short ten-line comment to a half-page long detailed article.

4.2.2. During the Political Campaigning *Before* Being Elected

Margaret Thatcher became the prime minister of the United Kingdom for the first time on the 4th May 1979. Therefore, the examined newspaper articles about her *before* being elected, span a time frame of one month and were published between the 5th April 1979 and will also include the day after election on 5th May 1979.

To begin with, those 48 articles come from a time before Thatcher had made a name for herself, in terms of her tough political style, and therefore also before being nicknamed the *Iron Lady*. A common thing across all newspapers from this time, however, is that they are all disproportionally referring to Margaret Thatcher as *Mrs* Thatcher, therefore *gendered mediation* applies due to the common use of gender markers, which was used in 37 articles of that time. Not only does it highlight her sex, but also, by using the married form of *Mrs*. One is always mentioning her marital status and therefore indirectly referring to the marital status of a married woman. Examples for this include:

“MRS THATCHER insisted last night that the Conservatives’ proposals for trade union reform were ‘modest’, and that the vast majority of union members would support them.” (The Times, 1st May 1979)

“In a society that still takes ascents as talisims of class Mrs. Thatcher’s prompts some people to accuse her of attempting to be something she is not” (New York Times, 29th April 1979)

“Mrs. Thatcher’s no-confidence motion did more than just bring down the Government (The Financial Times, 30th April 1979)

“Mrs Thatcher is aware that President Ford nearly lost his voice in the 1976 campaign, and that Ted Heath has had similar trouble (The Guardian, 25th April 1979)

The last quote also shows that while Margaret Thatcher has *Mrs.* added in front of her last name, the two other men that are mentioned besides her, are referred to by their official title or their full name. This highlights that there has been the common tradition to add the prefix *Mrs.* in front of Thatcher, whereas her male colleagues were simply referred to with their last name most of the time. Before Thatcher there had not been any single female head of state or head of government in the whole of Europe and therefore a woman even competing for this job was a novelty. Consequentially the news media were only used to the male-oriented agenda and used the prefix *Mrs.* to point out that Thatcher was different to the other almost entirely male politicians. This highlights the fact of *gender stereotyping* as by calling her *Mrs.* one dissociated Thatcher from the public life and likewise brings her back to the private sphere. The fact that she is called *Mrs.* aims to show the reader that she is a married woman, therefore suggesting that her marital status matters. It is important to mention, however, that among the *Times* and *Guardian*, *Mrs.* Thatcher was the usual way to call her, while within the *Financial Times* and *New York Times*, she was also commonly referred to by her full name *Margaret Thatcher* or just *Thatcher*.

Another example, by the national daily newspaper *The Times*, is fulfilling the criteria for both *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* even more and a lot more obvious, as it writes:

“Dressed in a pale beige check suit and blouse with bow tie, Mrs Thatcher boarded her BAC I-II jet at 2.30 p.m. for the flight from London to Newcastle. Travelling at 500mph at a height of 26.000ft she worked diligently on her speech in first class, while some of her entourage enjoyed petits fours.” (Times, 24th April 1979)

Most evidently this quote proves the focus on the physical appearance of female politicians thereby once again meaning that the media is dissociating them from public life. Before even coming to the point of what this article is about, it first of all describes what she is wearing. In terms of the likeability trap, by mentioning that she is flying first class or her entourage having petits fours, this reduces her potential likeability due to her portrayal as sort of 'lifted'. This is also stressed by pointing out that they are 26.000ft high. By underlining the fact that she is flying first class, instead of giving information what event she is attending or what she is writing about, the reader only receives information about what she is wearing and that she seems 'lifted'.

Granted the likeability trap has only recently begun to be examined in communication theory, however, it has always existed. It claims that because women are contenders of stereotypically male-dominated jobs, they are likely to be perceived negatively in terms of warmth and their likability, therefore women cannot be both, competent and likable (Blight et al. 2012, 565).

"One Labour voter said she had deliberately avoided the supermarket when she found that Mrs. Thatcher was visiting it. 'I cannot stand her', she said. 'Good God, the country is in enough trouble with a man running it. A woman's place is in the home.'" (Guardian, 26th April 1979)

While the newspaper only quotes a regular citizen, who also appears to be a woman, it does highlight the likeability trap. The woman does not give any clear explanation on why she does not like Thatcher, however by saying that she would be even worse than a man ruling the country, it does indicate that it does have a lot to do with her being a woman, who she does not regard as qualified for this job. This also underlines *gender stereotyping* as Thatcher is portrayed as less viable than a man and her suitability for the job of prime minister is directly questioned. The likability trap suggests if a woman is seen as competent, she lacks warmth and likability and vice versa (Blight et al. 2012, 580). For Thatcher, this means while she is regarded as competent and qualified, she is consequently regarded to be lacking warmth and likability.

Concerning the focus on physical appearance, in an article by *The Times*, which essentially talks about a disagreement of Margaret Thatcher and Denis Healey, it reads:

"It was a powerful performance by the Chancellor, who spoke for two hours and a quarter. Mrs Thatcher, wearing black, made the traditional instant rebuttal of the Budget statement, and cut to the absolute minimum the usual congratulations to the Chancellor for his fortitude." (Times, 16th April 1979)

The rest of the article deals with the disagreement and debate the two have, therefore why does it matter that Margaret Thatcher is wearing a black dress? Neither was it mentioned before what Denis Healy was wearing, nor was there a reference or allusion to her black dress at a later point in that article. This illustrates that even within a heated debate, the view is directed to the physical appearance of the woman, whereas this fact is not even mentioned when talking about her male colleague. Even by adding just such a small detail about her clothing one detracts attention from what actually matters, namely the content of the debate. While in this case, there were no pictures, the situation would be even worse if there had been, because potentially people would then start looking at the dress and focus on that instead of the actual topic - the debate with Denis Healy. In total, Thatcher's physical appearance is discussed in 13 out of the 48 articles during the election period.

The *New York Times* admittedly focuses less on Thatcher's physical appearance in general, however it is not completely exempt from that practice. An article that is meant to describe what she is standing for politically, in fact begins with a detailed description of her outward appearance and look.

"[Thatcher] is a small fine-boned woman, with pale blue eyes, the kind of complexion the English always liken to a rose and hair that she readily admits to dyeing blond. (New York Times, 29th April 1979)

The *Guardian* likewise thinks that discussing Thatcher's new hair style is of utmost importance and discovers that she has "cunningly changed her hairdresser" (*Guardian*, 25th April 1979). They even go into a deeper analysis by pointing out that,

"For years she has been dogged with problems with her difficult, baby-fine hair which never held a set. Now she has changed to Nanette Newman's hairdresser[...] She has a new style, with herbal conditioner, and looks 'younger, softer and prettier.' This is pretty important. [...] 'If your hair looks right, everything looks right, and you feel good'" (Guardian, 25th April 1979).

This citation from the *Guardian* fulfils numerous points for *gendered mediation*. First of all, it clearly focuses on her physical appearance, as her hair is everything that this article deals with, no mention of any other topic, let alone her policy agenda. Secondly, a little less overt, one can read that female politicians are being held to other standards than men. It is not enough for a woman to just be known for her policy, but she also has to fulfil the expectation of being *pretty* and *well-groomed*. While she had been criticised for her old hair style, she is now being praised for looking *younger* or *prettier*, clearly proving the fact that women have to be both *qualified* and *having to fulfil stereotypically female*

attributes such as being well-groomed at the same time, which is underlined by saying that a good hair style is *important*, while no article is talking about the importance of a good hairstyle for male politicians. In terms of *gender stereotyping*, this once again shows that women are dissociated from public life as the main focus of the article is on Thatcher's physical appearance rather than her political content.

In regard to women being held to different standards than men, the example of former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard illustrates that 'ambitious' for example, which is regarded as aspiring in a man is considered inappropriate for a woman. Margaret Thatcher in her days had to experience a similar story. In her case it is the phrase *strident female* that she is confronted with numerous times. While *strident* in the sense of having a *strident voice* (strong voice) or combative can be positive, the combination of *strident female* has a negative connotation, which implies that a woman exerts an aggressive or battlesome behaviour, which does not match with the traditionally stereotypical female attributes of compassionate and calm. While being confronted with the term *strident female*, Thatcher tries to disengage from that phrasing and across all different newspapers repeats her dislike of *strident females* as the following examples across all newspapers illustrate. This also highlights another aspect of *gender stereotyping* namely pointing out an aggressive and combative behaviour in a female politician, which in this case is the usage of the term *strident*.

„[Thatcher] has a voice that has occasionally proved a political liability. It tends at moments of stress to rise to an unpleasant stridency. (New York Times, 29th April 1979)

“[...]Mrs. Thatcher is likely to turn the voter off by strident behaviour in front of the cameras” (Guardian, 3rd April 1979)

“On the sensitive question of women's role, Mrs Thatcher said that people like her had got where they were long before there was a Women's Lib movement. It was in the bloodstream. 'I did not get here by being some strident female. I do not like strident females. I like people who have ability, who do not run the feminist card too hard', she said” (Guardian, 27th April 1979)

“[Being] asked what it would feel like to be a woman prime minister [...] she answered 'I didn't get here by being a strident female[...] I don't like strident females. [...] You get somewhere because of ability and not sex” (Times, 27th April 1979)

“The Opposition Leader's wooing of the women voters came in Glasgow when, for the first time in the election campaign, she really let her hair down on the delicate subject of motherhood, career girls, and 'strident females' The

latter she was against, though she acknowledged that she carried 'a very great sense of responsibility for all women trying to get to the top.' Motherhood, on the other hand, was one of the important jobs in the world' and Mrs. Thatcher would not tolerate housewives feeling 'guilty' about not working." (Guardian, 27th April 1979)

The latter citation is particularly interesting as, in addition to the *strident female* theme, it also touches the image of motherhood, which is a really ambiguous theme concerning Margaret Thatcher. While, at this point, she was about to become the first female European head of government, she was not particularly advocating for the rights of women or mothers at that time. Indeed Thatcher did not try to present herself as the caring mother in her first election campaign in 1979, however she cannot entirely escape from *gendered mediation* in the form using the image of motherhood or in her case more importantly a *woman presumably doing a male job*, as her job had previously only been occupied by men. The following quote from the *Guardian* perfectly describes the prejudices that persist against the idea of a female prime minister and her allegedly trying to act like a mother to everyone.

"One a pensioner, did not believe that it was a woman's place to be doing what she called a man's job. 'I don't think Mother Thatcher will be able to fight like man'. Asked why she persistently referred to 'Mother Thatcher, the woman said: 'Because she's trying to be a mother to everyone'. A girl of 18, voting for the first time was a member of the Nowt Party: 'I don't understand owt about politics' But she added that Mrs Thather should gain power 'to see if she can make a better job of it than the blokes have done.' A third woman for whom Mrs Thatcher loomed large was also a bit dubious about her doing 'a man's job'. (Guardian, 23rd April 1979)

Admittedly, this article is quoting the opinion of some citizens and this is not what the publisher is claiming as his own opinion, however by even choosing to publish such sexist and traditionalist ideas and values, the publisher is placing and strengthening those arguments in the heads of the readers. This is again where gender stereotyping takes place. By reminding the readers that a woman is not usually taking up this position, and is traditionally assigned other jobs than being prime minister, the reader is thinking about it and potentially rethinks Thatcher's suitability as prime minister simply due to the fact that she is a woman and women do not typically serve in the position of prime minister.

A very interesting and differing article worth mentioning is published in the *New York Times* on the occasion of the election of Margaret Thatcher, which is shown below.

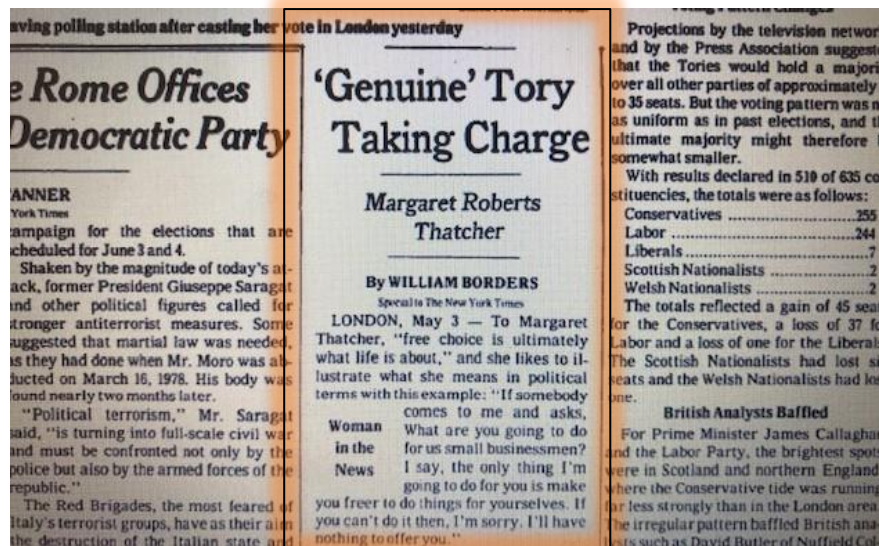


FIGURE 1: "‘GENUINE’ TORY TAKING CHANGE" (NEW YORK TIMES, 4TH MAY 1979).

This article is quite antithetical in its statements, as in some ways it shows clear evidence for *gendered mediation*, while some phrases seem to show the opposite. A very unusual aspect is the little box in the bottom left corner which says "Woman in the News" (*New York Times*, 4th May 1979). This indicates that news about women, in particular when it comes to high offices like a prime minister, are far from being the norm at that time if one has to specially point that out. Secondly, Margaret Thatcher is being called a *genuine* Tory, representing an over-emphasis on personal attributes, whereas further on there is no mention of why this specific attribute was chosen in reference to her. In terms of *gendered mediation*, this proves that women are expected to always adhere to stereotypically female attributes, no matter if those attributes actually fit to describe them or not. While men are stereotypically supposed to be strong and assertive, a stereotypical woman is said to be honest and compassionate. Therefore, in this case, simply by being a woman, one expects Thatcher to be *genuine*, an attribute that is stereotypically accredited to women. The third aspect is rather unusual compared to other articles referring to Margaret Thatcher. In the vast majority of articles, she is referred to as *Mrs.* Thatcher, leaving out her first name and indirectly always referring to her marital status of being a wife. In this case however, she is referred to as *Margaret Roberts Thatcher*, meaning not only is her first name mentioned, but also her birth name Roberts, which is not mentioned in any other article of that time. By doing that, the article highlights her full identity and her life before being the wife of someone, however, this remains an exception within the sample of articles.

Above the word *genuine* is used to describe Thatcher, just because she is a woman. A different article from the *Guardian* also describes her as compassionate also just simply related to her being a woman.

“Mrs Thatcher had ‘more compassion, warmth in the tip of her little finger than the whole bloody lot put together’”(Guardian, 30th April 1979)

While the ‘bloody lot’ refers to her male colleagues, she is said to be more compassionate than male politicians. Once again, no explanation is given as to why she is supposed to be more compassionate than them. Therefore, this assumption derives from the stereotypical attributes that are traditionally ascribed to women. So just like the *New York Times* calls her genuine, the *Guardian* calls her compassionate mainly due to the fact of her being a woman, who is expected to fulfil the female stereotypes.

However, one has to acknowledge that the two previous examples of *genuine* and *compassionate* rather aim to portray Thatcher’s presumably female attributes in a positive way rather than it does undermine her political abilities. The next example, by the left-wing *Guardian*, uses the stereotypical assumption of women being too emotional as a negative attribute *not* qualifying her for the prime minister job.

“A woman prime minister would be a mistake, said one woman, because women responded too often through their emotions.”(Guardian, 26th April 1979)

This example, despite only being a quote from the public, aims to undermine Thatcher’s political qualifications because she is a woman and women are traditionally believed to be more emotional than men. It does not give an example of her ever being emotional, but it relies solely on stereotypical assumptions. Therefore, this quote not only frames the people to believe that Thatcher is emotional, despite the lack of facts, but it also deepens the existing gender stereotypes and the common belief of women being more emotional than men.

Throughout the used articles, in general, the *Guardian*, has been most critical of Thatcher and has been faster at pointing out her flaws, in particularly the ones being related to her gender. This is visible by the majority of *Guardian* articles that use her sex in order to portray that as a weakness rather than a strength. While the *Guardian* critically scrutinised her gender, *The Times* is celebrating the first female British prime minister, who happens to derive from the *Conservative Party*, which is supported by *The Times*. One of the

articles where *The Times*' general support of the *Tories* is most overt, is the following one:

"SO SHE HAS DONE IT, our first woman Prime Minister! The Tories have made it, as on the whole they deserve to do. [...] All these bêtises pale into insignificance beside Labour's disgraceful tenure of office and its disgraceful attempts to justify and extend it." (*Times*, 4th May 1979)

By far, the least number of articles where clear *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* is identifiable, are from the *Financial Times*. On average, Margaret Thatcher is mostly treated like all other male candidates. In the articles that match that time frame she was neither being described using the mother image nor was there a huge focus on her physical appearance or look. Instead she is praised for her political style and leadership rather than for being the first woman prime minister as the following example shows:

"For Mrs. Thatcher's sense of political purpose extends far beyond a mere symbolic change of sex in the country's leadership." (*Financial Times*, 31st March 1979)

4.2.3. During a Political Crisis

Margaret Thatcher has been through numerous political crises during her long time as prime minister of the United Kingdom. The crisis chosen for the purpose of this paper is the miners' strike that occurred from April 1984 until April 1985. The crisis evolved when Thatcher fought against trade unions and wanted to decrease their power and even abolish them. The strongest resistance during this period came from mine workers and was therefore called the miners' strike (Campbell 2011, 357). This crisis is chosen because it shows similar patterns as the crises chosen for the other two upcoming female leaders, in the sense that the female leader was following her own way throughout the crisis despite a lot of the public and even a lot of her own party members being against her policy.

Despite already serving in her second term as prime minister in the United Kingdom, the prefix *Mrs* in front of Thatcher remains the most common way to call her (31 out of 52 times), despite a growing number of articles starting to also call her *PM* or *Prime Minister* Thatcher. The most striking example in this respect was published by the *Financial Times*, which does usually show a huge gender bias in most of its articles regarding Thatcher. During the time of the miners' strike Thatcher's policies are compared to those of President Mitterrand from France and Chancellor Kohl from West Germany. In this

article, Margaret Thatcher keeps being referred to as *Mrs. Thatcher*, while both Mitterrand and Kohl are being referred to with their official titles of *president* or *chancellor*.



FIGURE 2: MRS. THATCHER, PRESIDENT MITTERRAND AND CHANCELLOR KOHL (FINANCIAL TIMES, 9TH MAY 1984)

"Mrs Thatcher has about six weeks to decide whether she wishes to have a European policy. At the moment, she appears to feel no such need [...] Who knows, perhaps it will be done today, or tomorrow, or the next time Mrs Thatcher meets President Mitterrand." (Financial Times, 9th May 1984)

The same thing, likewise, by the *Financial Times*, is applied when talking about Thatcher and the Indonesian President Suharto, who visited Thatcher during the miners' strike.

"President Suharto has warned Mrs Margaret Thatcher that trade restrictions which discriminate against the developing countries could ultimately cause political unrest and international tension." (Financial Times, 11th April 1985)

The British right-wing newspaper *The Times* makes use of the exact same thing when talking about Thatcher and the US President Reagan.

"Mrs Thatcher and President Reagan yesterday agreed they would not permit the Soviet Union to hold up progress in the forthcoming Geneva arms reduction talks[...]" (Times, 21st February 1985)

Once again this proves that, despite having the title of prime minister, a woman is still subject to *gendered mediation* and is referred to with gender markers using the prefix *Mrs.*, rather than being referred to by her title, therefore again linking her to her marital

status and being a wife of someone. In terms of *gender stereotyping* this is so important because by calling Thatcher *Mrs.* and at the same time calling all of the male heads of government by their official title, one dissociates Thatcher from the public life and the media likewise highlights that Thatcher is different to the other politicians most of all by one particular thing- her sex.

Another aspect of *gendered mediation* is the use of nicknames. During the time of the miners' strike, another nickname for Margaret Thatcher has occurred that prevails until today, namely the *Iron Lady*. Over the years the nickname evolved due to her tough political style, but also from an incident where she survived an assassination but continued with business as usual shortly after as if nothing had happened (Campbell 2011, 362). Ever since the nickname *Iron Lady* is inseparably connected to Margaret Thatcher, which is also quite regularly used to describe her tough and firm attitude during the miners' strike:

"How men fall for the Iron Lady" (Guardian, 26th January 1985)

"After years of revelling in her role as the 'Iron Lady', Mrs Margaret Thatcher yesterday showed the first clear signs of bowing to mounting pressure from party supporters to soften her image. During Prime Minister's question time in the Commons, which was strikingly unusual in tone, she struck Conservative MPs with her new, softer, warmer, almost, placatory style. Gone was the stridency and hectoring which some Conservative MPs say is not only deeply troubling party workers but was mainly responsible for the bad party performance in recent county elections" (Times, 10th May 1985)

The second example also explains where that nickname is coming from, namely her toughness, which is not the most typical attribute for a woman. Likewise, it brings back the term of stridency, which she was confronted with numerous times in particular during the campaigning of her first elections. However, now the article praises her for portraying a new style and being 'softer' and 'warmer', which are also attributes that are commonly assigned to women. Again, calling her an *Iron Lady* is not solely to be understood with a positive connotation because it implies that usually a lady or a woman is not supposed to be 'tough' and the fact that she is acting like this has to be highlighted by giving her the prefix *iron*.

During her terms as prime minister the image of motherhood, another aspect of *gendered mediation*, has also become a lot more prominent than it was during her election campaign where it just surfaced a little. While Thatcher preferred to be called the *mother of the nation* rather than *Iron Lady*, she added that being referred to as the *grandmother of the*

nation would be the ultimate goal of hers as being the *grandmother of the nation* would imply a long term as prime minister and an even greater seniority:

“Mrs Thatcher wants to soldier on into a third term as prime minister, bombs or no bombs. She not only enjoys the idea of being mother of the nation- she would like to be the grandmother” [...] Miss Nevill then asked whether Mrs Thatcher preferred to be described as mother of the nation than as the iron lady. Mrs Thatcher thought ‘mother of the nation’ was lovely phrase but added that she had greatly admired Mrs Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister, who had been regarded as grandmother of her nation. ‘If I go on until I can be called that, it will be marvellous.’ (Guardian, 16th October 1984)

“All of a sudden, ‘caring’ has become the theme of ministerial speeches. Even the Iron Lady herself has been constrained to plead on television that she would like to be known as the Mother, or even the Grandmother, of the Nation. It is an improbable image. But scarcely more improbable than her grotesque. (Guardian, 19th October 1984)

The last citation also introduces the motherly characteristic of *caring*. While usually Thatcher prefers to be known for her tough style, this article claims to identify a *caring* part like that from *a mother*. Ultimately this proves that no matter how tough a female political leader seems to be, she cannot escape from the motherhood image and the notion of *caring* that is related to it. In terms of *gender stereotyping* this means that Thatcher is dissociated from public life as the private sphere role of a mother is drowning out the rest. By calling her a *mother* we always see the image of a (caring) woman first and her actual role as a politician second, whereas in her position as UK Prime Minister her role as a prime minister is more important than the fact that she is a woman.

Not only is she called *Iron Lady*, *mother* or even *grandmother of the nation*, but during the miners’ strike the image of the *nanny* arose, which is very much linked to the image of *motherhood* and *caring*. The image of the nanny, however, is only used by the left-wing UK newspaper the *Guardian*. In the context of the miners’ strike this image is used to better illustrate that Thatcher is in command over the rest of her cabinet and has the final say while basically ‘treating the other politicians like children’ if they openly have a different standpoint to hers. The best example for that, including a matching caricature is illustrated below.

Mrs Thatcher has borrowed the nanny image and used it for her own end throughout her tenure in No. 10. [...] Like besotted and preoccupied parents we have smiled indulgently as the Cabinet acted like her charges, sure that nanny know best, while the naughty little boys who answered back were sent swiftly out of the room[...] She’s always right. All nannies are: it’s an

occupational prerogative. [...] Now Mrs. Thatcher, who taken on herself the role of the national nanny, has been found wanting in just the same way. (Guardian, 3rd April 1984)

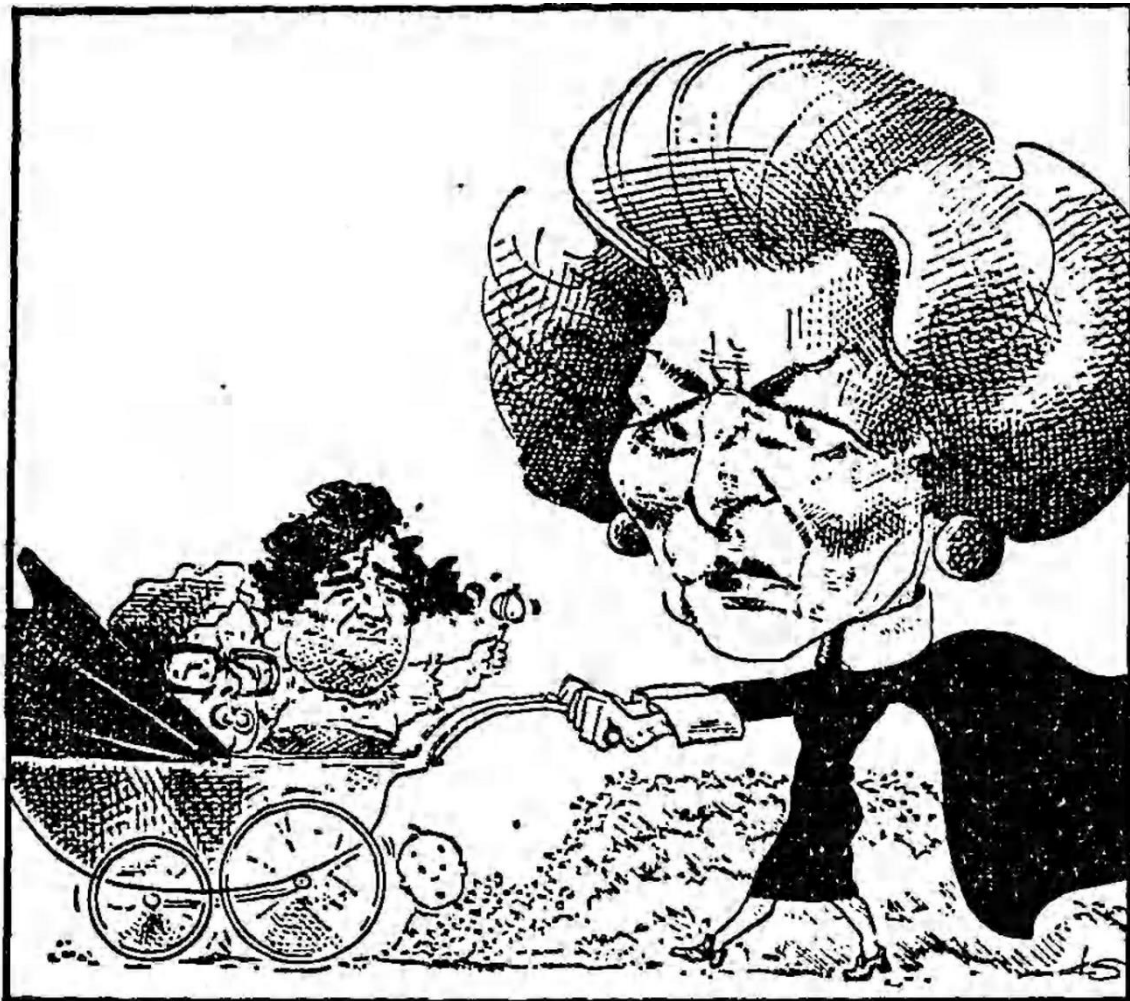


FIGURE 3: THATCHER IN THE ROLE OF THE 'NATIONAL NANNY' (GUARDIAN, 3RD APRIL 1984)

Just like the motherhood image the nanny image brings Thatcher back to the private sphere pointing out that a woman's traditional role used to be in domestic sphere with the main task of bearing and taking care of children as the job of a nanny is stereotypically only assigned to women. This image leads to that we see Thatcher as a woman first and a politician second in terms of *gender stereotyping*.

The following example is an ideal cross-over from adding the prefix *Mrs.* and the image of motherhood to the focus on the physical appearance of female politicians as it incorporates all of those aspects.

"[Margaret Thatcher] wore grey, which was no more than a reflection of the dark mood of Mrs. Thatcher (or 'Mother' [...] as she is affectionately known by backbenchers)." (Guardian, 22nd May 1984)

While enough has been said concerning *Mrs. and Mother*, even during an important political crisis, attention is placed on what and what colour clothes she is wearing, which is mentioned in ten out of the 52 articles altogether. While this example can be regarded as minor attention to her clothing, as the mention of the colour *grey* later implies her bad mood. Other descriptions of her physical appearance are taken out of the blue and have nothing to do with the rest of the content of the article. Another example of the *Guardian* focuses the attention on the physical appearance specifically on Thatcher's new glasses, which seem to be more important than the actual headlines concerning the trade unions.

“PREMIER SPECTACLE: Mrs. Thatcher, wearing new glasses, watches her Chancellor, Mr Nigel Lawson blame ‘monopolistic’ trade unions for pricing people out of work” (Guardian, 11th October 1984)

This article even includes a picture of her new glasses rather than any picture connected to the miners' strike.



PREMIER SPECTACLE: Mrs Thatcher, wearing new glasses, watches her Chancellor, Mr Nigel Lawson, blame "monopolistic" trade unions for pricing people out of work.

FIGURE 4: THE TIMES DISCUSSING THATCHER'S NEW GLASSES (TIMES, 11TH OCTOBER 1984)

The Times likewise puts forward the physical appearance of Thatcher by referring to her shoes. The entire article deals with how high a heel should be for a woman of her rank and in summary it concludes that Thatcher 'passes the style check' and wears shoes with just the right height of heel.

How high should a well-heeled woman go?

The Princess of
Wales and the
Prime Minister
are leading
the footwear revival

The barometer of fashion and finance, magazine editors are wont to say, is the hemline. When skirt-lengths drop, so the legend goes, so do the *Financial Times* Index, the economy, and the chaps standing on window-ledge in Wall Street. When hemlines rise, the reverse occurs – usually too late to prevent the thud of falling bodies, but then money can't do everything.

Recently, however, haruspices of the social and political scenes have noticed a new erroneous zone: the heel. Why,



The Princess of Wales in 1981 and more recently; Mrs Thatcher in 1975 and 1984

Mrs Thatcher, as was proper Books such as Adam Nichol- confided she had started to fe

FIGURE 5: ANALYSIS OF THATCHER'S FOOTWEAR (TIMES, 1ST APRIL 1985)

"The Princess of Wales and the Prime Minister are leading the footwear revival. [...] The decline of the high heel it must be remembered, started in 1979, the year Mrs. Thatcher came to office. [...] If heels represented anything it was class: the higher the heel, the lower the level of society to which the wearer belonged[...] Mrs. Thatcher, as was proper for a Tory matron, would be seen wearing heels of a modest height- sometimes regrettably, with a hand of shiny metal at the top. (Times, 1st April 1985)

By referring to her clothing, her glasses or her heels, one is detracting attention to what actually matters, which in this case are the news on the miners' strike and the trade unions related to that. While Thatcher is a recognised high-level politician, she is still being judged about what she is wearing and what kind of style her glasses have even though those do not have anything to do with the topic. This highlights *gender stereotyping* as despite being prime minister she is still dissociated from public life as a major focus is still being placed on her physical appearance.

While in particular the two British daily newspapers apply *gendered mediation* in their articles, the *New York Times* seems to be particularly positive in its attitude to Thatcher and openly portrays its favourable opinion of her in most of its articles, in which her sex does not seem to matter at all as the following examples show:

"Thatcherism: Popular Abroad, Not at Home. [...]Margaret Thatcher is having more success persuading the international financial markets than the average Briton that she has Britain on the right track economically." (New York Times, 6th April 1985)

„Thatcher 1, Miners 0. [...] Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher prevailed over Britain's striking coal miners because it was unthinkable for her to suffer a defeat as it was for her to surrender the Falkland Islands to Argentine aggression. (New York Times, 18th March 1985)

“[Thatcher] is a centralizer, a Prime Minister who not only dominates her cabinet like no other prime minister in the century but also is attempting to exert control over traditionally independent local government. (New York Times, 24th February 1985)

All those articles underline that Thatcher, and her policies, are way more popular in the United States than in her own home country. Even during her campaigning in 1979 the *New York Times* showed few indications for a gender bias, and five respectively six years later, the sex seems to matter even less. The only article from the *NYT* that shows a little sign of *gender stereotyping* is the following one:

“A country, [Thatcher] often says, can no more live beyond its means than could her family in the days when she sliced bacon and weighed beans in the shop. With evident pride she once told a national television audience that her father, Alfred Roberts, earned only 12 shillings a week when he came to Grantham, of which he spent 10 shillings on food and housing, putting aside a shilling as ‘spending money’ and saving a shilling” (New York Times, 25th July 1984)

This article, to some extent, aims to portray Thatcher as a family person back in the day, who used to do kitchen work, which is typical for a woman, when she was just a little girl and who shows a huge admiration for her father, which can also be regarded as a hugely admirable attribute for a little girl in particular. While in this article, she is admired for being a nice girl back in the days, the rest of the articles from the *New York Times* admire Thatcher for her mainly (neo-)liberal policies, while her sex is not mentioned or does not play a role.

4.3. Overall Findings

As a whole, 100 articles were used to analyse the media coverage of Margaret Thatcher before being elected and during the time of a political crisis namely the miners' strike. Within this sample Margaret Thatcher's news media portrayal fulfils numerous aspects for *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping*: In 68 of those 100 articles, she is commonly referred to as *Mrs. Thatcher*, while her male colleagues are referred to by their full name or title, thereby constantly referring to her marital status. She is regularly called the *Iron Lady*, which derives from her tough and firm leadership style, however, the term

is to be treated with caution as it implies that usually women are not tough and should adhere to stereotypical female attributes such as compassionate and calm. However, this nickname is only used during her premiership, therefore 'only' 18 out of the 52 articles call her *Iron Lady*. This derives from her most used attributes of *tough*, *robust* and *firm*, which are mentioned 47 times altogether in the sample of 100 articles about her. She was quite regularly, most of all by the left-wing *Guardian*, confronted with the term *strident female*, which she consistently defends herself against, which is used in 18 articles. Thatcher likewise is not exempt from the motherhood and *caring* image, and despite her usually tough leadership style, she is still called the *mother of the nation* or even *grandmother of the nation*. Interestingly, the phrases *caring*, *mother* or *grandmother* are used in 24 of the articles, namely a fourth, despite her general image of being a *tough* and *firm* leader, which does not usually match with the typical attributes of a mother. The *Guardian* even uses the *nanny* image to underline that she is the one in control of her cabinet and is taking care of her cabinet members like a nanny would take care of children. This image is used in four of the 13 articles by the *Guardian* during the miners' strike. A lot of articles also focus on her hair style, glasses and clothing instead of her policies and political activities such as during the miners' strike, in total 23 articles, therefore almost a fourth of the examined articles focus on her style.

In general, *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* in regard to Margaret Thatcher is present across all different examined newspapers, however the manifestation varies. The two international newspapers, the *Financial Times* and the *New York Times* apply a lot less *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* and generally seem to have a very positive attitude towards Thatcher by praising her policies and leadership style. This presumably derives from the distance the newspapers have to the daily domestic politics of the United Kingdom and from the focus on financial issues, which particularly applies to the *Financial Times*.

The two national newspapers the *Guardian* and *The Times* show a lot more examples where a gender bias manifests itself. Nevertheless, even between those two British newspapers this manifestation varies as the left-wing *Guardian* shows the most characteristics for *gendered mediation and stereotyping* of all and is generally the most critical in its attitude towards Thatcher, which can be explained by the left-wing political orientation of the *Guardian*, which naturally opposes conservative neoliberal policies.

5. ANGELA MERKEL

5.1. Biography

Angela Merkel was born on the 17th July 1954 as Angela Dorothea Kasner in Hamburg (West Germany) and is the oldest of three children (Langguth 2007, 10). Her father was a Lutheran pastor, which was also the main reason for the Kasner family's migration to East Germany in 1954, where her father was called to a pastorate in Brandenburg when Angela Kasner was just three months old (Langguth 2007, 20).

In 1968, Angela Kasner made her entry into politics by joining the *Free German Youth (FDJ)*, the youth organisation of the ruling Socialist Party in East Germany (Vasagar 2013). Later, Kasner studied physics at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig from 1973 to 1978, during this time she married fellow physics student, Ulrich Merkel, taking his last name and keeping that name even after the divorce in 1982 (Langguth 2007, 63). After working and researching in the field of physics for the following years, she was then awarded a doctorate for her findings in 1986 (Langguth 2007, 109).

The starting point of Merkel's professional political career is to be found with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, where she joined the *Democratic Awakening*, which later became the *East German Christian Democratic Union* and then merged with its Western counterpart, the *Christian Democratic Union of Germany* as we know it today (Huggler, 2015). During reunified Germany's first federal elections in 1990, Merkel participated for a seat in the Bundestag, the German parliament, for the first time and successfully won her direct mandate in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. She was appointed Minister for Women and Youth shortly after the election by then Chancellor Kohl, before she got promoted to Minister of Environment and Nuclear Safety in 1994, again under Chancellor Kohl, which promptly gave her the nickname "Kohl's Mädchen" (engl.= Kohl's girl) (Weiland 2005). Following the defeat of the Kohl government in 1998, Merkel got appointed Secretary General of the *Christian Democrats*, and in that same year, Merkel got married to her second husband, Joachim Sauer. This marriage also has remained without children just like her first one (Langguth 2007, 221-243). In 2000, her party was struck by a funding scandal involving many key figures such as Kohl and Schäuble, in which Merkel openly criticised her colleagues. This also included her former mentor Kohl and advocated for a fresh start which ultimately led to her being elected the first female leader of any German party (Langguth 2007, 254-273). In the following 2002

federal election, Merkel was not fielded as the main candidate for the chancellorship and was instead replaced by the Bavarian politician Edmund Stoiber, who eventually lost to the Social Democrat's candidate Schröder ("Schroeder wins second term", 2002). Following Germany's disagreements with numerous of Schröder's foreign and domestic policies, it came to early elections in 2005, which Merkel was then able to decide for herself in an historically close win for the *Christian Democrats* ("German election ends in stalemate", 2005). The following three elections in 2009, 2013 and 2017 were likewise won by Merkel's *Christian Democrats*, which has resulted in Merkel serving as the Chancellor of Germany for a total amount of 15 years (status 2020). This makes her the longest acting female head of government of all times. However, Merkel has already declared to not run again during the next federal elections in 2021 (Le Blonde, 2018).

During her long time as German chancellor, she has faced numerous domestic and international crises, however the two most decisive ones during her terms are the *financial crisis* (2007-2008), which passed into the *eurozone crisis*, and the *European migrant crisis* (2015-2017). The *eurozone crisis* resulted in austerity measures in the affected states, particularly Greece. This was mainly initiated by Germany, that acted as the main financier, and in particular the *European migrant crisis* was coined by Merkel's term "Wir schaffen das" (engl. "We can manage this"). However, this 'open-door' policy resulted in millions of immigrants entering Germany, and while some people praised her for her humanity, others made her the main responsible person for the crisis, ultimately leading to diametrically opposed views on Merkel (Delcker, 2016). In terms of women's rights, despite being a woman herself and having served as the Minister of Women and Youth, Merkel has not initiated any particular rights or reforms in favour of women and is said to have a rather "pragmatic approach to the advancement of women" (Gammelin, 2017). Her overall leadership style is described as "situational and assessing", which ultimately leads to a decision, meaning that she is also willing to make many compromises if eventually a decision is in sight (Ulrich, 2017).

Angela Merkel hugely polarised in particular during the two main she has faced to date. While there are many people who believe that her reforms were humane and beneficial, as her approval ratings worldwide are still higher than of any other German politician, many have blamed her ever since for the large-scale immigration and the massive austerity measures that took place (Bershidsky, 2020).

5.2. Media Coverage

5.2.1. Sampling

In total, a sample of 100 newspaper articles was used to analyse the media coverage of Angela Merkel, the same amount that was used for the analysis of Thatcher. More in depth, 48 articles, twelve for each newspaper, were used to get information of her media coverage from the month *before* being elected, while 52 newspaper articles, 13 for each chosen newspaper, were used to analyse Merkel's media coverage *during* a political crisis. The included newspapers were filtered in regard to their title. All the chosen newspapers had either "Merkel", "Angela", "Angela Merkel", "chancellor" (German: "Kanzlerin") or "chancellorship" (German: "Kanzlerschaft") in their title. During the campaigning period also the phrases "election" (German: Wahl(kampf)), "campaign" (German: Kampagne) or "battle" (German: "Kampf"), while for the time during the political crisis the terms "Migrant Crisis" (German: "Flüchtlingskrise", "crisis" (German: "Krise"), "We can manage this" (German: "Wir schaffen das") or "wave of refugees" (German: "Flüchtlingswelle") were included to filter out suitable articles. The length of the articles varied and ranges from just a short 10-line comment to a half-page long detailed article.

5.2.2. During the Political Campaigning *Before* Being Elected

Angela Merkel officially became the chancellor of Germany for the first time on the 22nd November 2005 after a two-month coalition building process, while the German federal elections already took place on the 18th September 2005. Therefore, the examined newspaper articles about her *before* being elected, span a time frame of one month and were published from the 19th August 2005 and will also include the day after election on 19th September 2005.

To begin with, just like Margaret Thatcher, Angela Merkel is frequently referred to as *Mrs.*, therefore again a *gendered mediation* applies. In regard to *gender stereotyping* theory this is important because when calling her *Mrs.*, the audience sees a wife first, and politician second meaning she is dissociated from public life by the media. This usage is common among both German newspapers and the *New York Times* as the following examples illustrate:

„Frau Merkel ist zu jeder Intrige bereit. Aber nicht zu jeder fähig“ [engl.: Mrs. Merkel is ready for any intrigue. But not capable of every intrigue] (Süddeutsche, 15th September 2005)

“Mrs. Merkel, 51, would replace Schröder, 61, as chancellor, becoming the first woman and the first eastern German to head the government.” (New York Times, 5th September 2005)

The *Financial Times* is a bit different in this respect, as instead of the married form of *Mrs.*, this newspaper constantly uses the prefix *Ms.*, which does not outrightly tell whether a woman is married or not:

“The latest results have Ms. Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union 35.2% of the votes” (Financial Times, 19th September 2005)

The tradition to call Angela Merkel with the prefix *Ms.* is kept throughout all articles and not in a single newspaper is she being referred to as *Mrs. Merkel*, at least within the *Financial Times*. Admittedly she is still pointed out to be a woman, however she is not linked to her marital status or her husband.

In general, the common tradition of calling the female politician *Ms.* or *Mrs.* has decreased altogether, as Merkel is also often referred to by her official title and position from that time. Back then she was chairwoman of her party as well as candidate for the chancellorship, which she is also often referred to as.

„Die CDU-Vorsitzende offenbarte damit wieder den Mut zu großen Schritten, die nicht ohne Risiken sind.“ [engl.: „The CDU chairwoman thus again revealed the courage to take big steps, which are not without risks”] (FAZ, 6th September 2005)

„Both chancellor and challenger claim victory” (Financial Times, 19th September 2005)

“Germany’s conservative leader, Angela Merkel, on Sunday accused Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of saddling the country with record high unemployment.” (New York Times, 5th September 2005)

In comparison to Thatcher who was surpassingly often called *Mrs. Thatcher*, Merkel is more rarely called *Mrs.* and in this way the sex of Angela Merkel is not put forward, however her role as chairwoman and chancellor candidate is highlighted, which is the more important fact in the race for the chancellorship.

Nevertheless, Merkel cannot entirely escape from the common use of nicknames, an additional aspect of *gendered mediation*, which suggests that by using nicknames for someone, the newspapers are downplaying one’s achievements which results in dissociating her from public life but can also be seen as portraying women as less viable, therefore also fulfilling two aspects of *gender stereotyping*. Instead of calling a woman

by her official title, which would result in taking them more seriously, one is calling them with nicknames to trivialise them. However, one nickname that Merkel even seemed to like herself, as she used the term on her election posters, is the nickname *Angie*.

*„Lothar klatscht für, Angie““ [engl.: *Lothar is clapping for Angie*] (FAZ, 2nd September 2005)*

“Mrs. Merkel is not a feel-good politician. Her stump speeches are lengthy, serious and larded with details. She rarely smiles, and responds to hecklers with a curt tone. She does not look like an Angie.” (New York Times, 16th September 2005)

While the nickname does not seem negative at first sight, people have certain expectations with than name, which the NYT does not see as fulfilled in the person of Merkel. The *New York Times* later states that the nickname *Angie* is strongly associated with the song *Angie* by the *Rolling Stones*, that portrays a beautiful girl and therefore fulfils numerous female stereotypes associated with women. By stating that Merkel does not look like an *Angie*, it basically discredits Merkel by claiming she is not as beautiful or female as a stereotypical *Angie* should be.

Another nickname Angela Merkel is strongly connected with is the phrase *Kohl's Mädchen* (engl.: *Kohl's girl*) that resulted from her close relationship with former Chancellor Kohl, who is said to have acted as her mentor. The former close connection ended in a dispute, however the nickname remained even years after:

„Frau Merkel wird vielleicht in der Lage sein, uns zu verkohlen. Aber sie selbst hat sich nicht verkohlen lassen. Das so genannte Mädel von Helmut Kohl hat zu viel von seinen Unarten gelernt.“ [engl.: „Mrs. Merkel may be able to fool us around. But she didn't let herself get tricked. The so-called girl of Helmut Kohl has learned too much from his bad habits.”] (Süddeutsche, 15th September 2005)

„Aus dem lange unterschätzten ‚Mädchen Kohls‘ wurde alsbald das ‚Eiserne Mädchen‘, die ‚Physikerin der Macht‘, ‚die eiskalte, berechnende Lady‘. [engl.: „The long underestimated ‘Kohl's girl’ soon became the ‘Iron Girl’, the ‘Physicist of Power’, ‘the ice-cold, calculating lady’”] (Süddeutsche, 12th September 2005)

This phrase can be said to downplay Merkel's achievements. At that time Merkel is already the chairwoman of her party and is competing for the chancellorship, meaning she has made a name for herself. By calling her *Kohl's girl* one automatically regards her as a little girl, who owes her achievements to her mentor Kohl. And more importantly, in terms of *gender stereotyping*, when calling her a girl, the audience of course pictures a

little girl who is potentially not ready for the big position of chancellor. This means she is portrayed as less viable and thereby questioned for her suitability for the position. This is particularly unfavourable during the election period as the audience might rethink whether they want a little girl to be trusted with the chancellorship of their country. In this respect it is also important to mention that the phrase *Kohl's girl* is only used among the two German newspapers, in fact 6 out of 24 times, but is not mentioned once in either the *Financial Times* or *New York Times*.

However, what has been frequently used among all examined newspapers and already surfaced within the last quote, by also calling her *Iron Girl*, is the reference to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who was the first female political leader in the whole of Europe. Above average is Merkel in some way compared to her:

*„Sie ist eine Frau der Mitte, eine moderate Politikerin und ganz sicher keine Margaret Thatcher“ [engl.: *She is a woman of the middle, a moderate politician and certainly not a Margaret Thatcher.*] (Süddeutsche, 12th September 2005)*

*„Die deutsche Furcht vor ‚Angela Thatcher‘: “ [engl.: *„The German fear of ‘Angela Thatcher’”*] (FAZ, 19th September 2005)“*

“In essence, Mrs. Merkel, who has often been linked to Margaret Thatcher, campaigned for deep free-market reforms and reductions in social welfare” (New York Times, 19th September 2005)

“Not so easy to follow where Thatcher led: The fate of Angela Merkel's predecessors shows breaking the gender barrier does not ensure political equality” (Financial Times, 13th September 2005)

In most of these articles Merkel is said to be quite different to Thatcher, nevertheless, she is constantly being compared to her, rather than to any other, potentially male, leader, whose policies might be more like Merkel's. This is since Merkel might potentially be the first female leader of her country just as Thatcher was the first female leader of hers. However, this puts most of the attention to the gender of the two politicians. The articles keep highlighting the similarities between Merkel and Thatcher, however, apart from a few exceptions, there are not that many. The main similarity is the gender and by constantly stressing this similarity, one establishes the similarity solely based on the gender.

One major difference between the two includes the topic of motherhood, a form of *gendered mediation*. Therefore, the audience does not judge the female politician solely according to her political leadership abilities but according to her (potential) motherhood

abilities. While Thatcher was a mother of twins but being on ambiguous terms with the image of motherhood, Merkel does not have children of her own, which was widely mentioned in the news, in particular within the two German newspapers, the left-wing *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the right-wing *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Those two German newspapers try to depict her childlessness in a way that could potentially undermine her chancellor abilities, which underlines the fact that female politicians are portrayed as less viable than men and their suitability for the position is questioned. In this case, Merkel's childlessness is used to question her suitability:

*„Als könne man es immer noch nicht fassen, dass die ostdeutsche promovierte Physikerin aus einem protestantischen Pfarrhaus, obendrein schon einmal geschieden und kinderlos, dabei ist, Kanzlerin zu werden.“ [engl.: „As if one still cannot believe that the East German doctor of physics from a protestant parsonage, on top of which she is already divorced and childless, is about to become chancellor.“] (*Süddeutsche*, 12th September 2005)*

*„Angela Merkel, selbst kinderlos, äußerte sich erstmals auch zum Thema Familienpolitik“ [engl.: „Angela Merkel, herself childless, spoke on the subject of family policy for the first time“] (*FAZ*, 6th September 2005)*

Again, this is very overt *gender stereotyping*. It derives from a woman's role in the private sphere and her main task of being a wife and mother. Merkel did not bear any children, therefore one could say that she has not fulfilled her main duty as a woman, and further developed this could lead to the thinking 'How can a woman, who has not given birth to a child, rule a whole country?'. While this is a really exaggerated phrasing, the constant repetition of her childlessness leads to the audience's contestation with Merkel's role as a woman in her private life rather than with her public life as a politician and chancellor candidate. By mentioning her childlessness so often and placing such a huge amount of attention to this particular fact, the readers might think that this is indeed important in the race for the chancellorship. While 11 out of 24 German articles, nearly half, mention her childlessness, none of the articles within the *New York Times* mention her childlessness even once. Further, only one article within the *Financial Times* touches this point, however it also includes a criticism of another German politician, who claimed that Merkel not having children mattered in terms of her policies:

*“Doris Schröder-Köpf claimed last month that because Ms Merkel was an academic without children, she did not represent the challenges many women faced [...] today.” (*Financial Times*, 13th September 2005)*

The topic of children and motherhood derives from stereotypical attributes that are associated with women, such as calm, passionate or caring. Women are stereotypically only described with the above-named attributes. Therefore, the audience automatically expects a woman to behave like that. However, while a leader is described with stereotypical attributes such as aggressive and assertive, it is nearly impossible for a woman to fulfil both criteria, those that are expected of a stereotypical woman, and those that are expected of a stereotypical leader. What is very interesting in regard to Angela Merkel, is that she is not described with any of such stereotypical female attributes. Rather Merkel is usually described with attributes that are stereotypically ascribed to men. Examples include:

“She drank her Goldbrand, the abrasive east German schnapps, without a blink.” (Financial Times, 10th September 2005)

“Her rare capacity for listening, her mathematical mind and intellectual curiosity –but also her determination, stubbornness and burning ambition – have served Merkel well” (Financial Times, 10th September 2005)

“Yet Ms. Merkel’s bold approach began to crumble when in mid-August she appointed Paul Kirchhof” (Financial Times, 17th September 2005)

The attributes most commonly used to describe her are *ambitious, bold, intellectual, mathematical* or *determined*. All of those correspond with the desired abilities of a political leader, which are stereotypically male attributes. Also, the ability to drink schnapps without even blinking is rather associated with a tough man than with a woman. All of those phrases aim to underline that, despite being a woman, Merkel is still *tough enough* for the job of chancellor, a job that was previously only occupied by men. However, while on the one hand it is a compliment that Merkel is being assigned leadership qualities, on the other hand, however, the mentioned leadership qualities suggest that typically only men match the criteria for the position of chancellor. Only because Merkel can adapt to the male-dominated arena and portrays stereotypically male attributes such as being mathematical or determined, is she considered a possibly suitable candidate.

Despite mainly being described with male attributes, even Angela Merkel cannot entirely be exempt from the attention to the physical appearance, however the attention to her physical appearance is a lot less than what is used to be in regard to Thatcher. By placing so much attention on a female politician’s physical appearance one suggests that it does actually matter for them. Therefore, it is not enough for a woman to be competent in terms

of her policies, but in addition she also must pay attention on her look and to what she is wearing. While there are ‘only’ 9 out of 48 articles that mention her physical appearance or look in a way, none of them mention the physical appearance of her candidate Schröder in the same article.

„Und da wollen wir [Schröder] doch mal beim Wort nehmen“, sagt Frau Merkel dann. Fröhlichkeit in der Menge. Ihr schmaler Mund bleibt gerade.“ [engl.: „And we want to take him [Schröder] at his word,‘ says Ms. Merkel. Happiness in the crowd. Her narrow mouth remains straight.”] (FAZ, 14th September 2005)

Mentioning her “narrow lips” has nothing to do with the rest of this article, nevertheless this unimportant fact is mentioned, which detracts attention from what Merkel has to say about Schröder, the important part of the article. Here again, *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* takes places as her physical appearance is of utmost importance, which dissociates her from public life and the content of her policies.

The other two articles include the underlying theme that the physical appearance very much matters in regard to female politicians. However, it credits Merkel that she is very much aware of this fact and is even using this to her advantage by wearing bright colours to stand out or by changing her look in order to appeal to the people.



FIGURE 6: “SIGNALORANGE BESTIMMT DIE SZENE” [ENGL.: „SIGNAL ORANGE DETERMINES THE SCENE”] FAZ, 28TH AUGUST 2005)



FIGURE 7: "MERKEL SOFTENED HER LOOK TO WIN VOTERS" (FINANCIAL TIMES, 19TH SEPTEMBER 2005)

This underlines that, despite Merkel not being known for her feminine style and looks, she still knows that it matters and that it is expected of her to look appropriate and feminine, therefore she adapts to the expectation of a well-groomed female politician. And by pointing out Merkel's transformation, the newspapers indeed highlight that female politicians do have to be good-looking and well-groomed, therefore activating the existing gender stereotypes in the heads of the people.

In total, the German left-wing newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is most critical of Merkel, gives the least arguments in favour of Merkel, while openly showing its sympathies for the *Social Democrats'* candidate Gerhard Schröder. The most evident example for this reads as follows:

„Kompetenter, sympathischer, glaubwürdiger: Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder hat das mit Spannung erwartete TV-Duell mit Unions-Kandidatin Angela Merkel nach ersten Umfragen für sich entschieden“ [engl.: „More competent, more likeable, more credible: Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has won the eagerly awaited TV duel with CDU/CSU candidate Angela Merkel according to initial polls.“] (Süddeutsche, 4th September 2005)

Interestingly, in regard to the TV debate mentioned above, this newspaper states that it was won by the *Social Democrats'* candidate Gerhard Schröder. Meanwhile no other newspaper, neither the other German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* nor the foreign ones *Financial Times* and *New York Times*, seem to confirm Schröder's win. All the others simply state there has been a TV debate, but none of them is claiming that there has been a clear winner. Therefore, this quote clearly underlines its attitude against Merkel which derives from its left-wing orientation naturally favouring the *Social Democrats*. The *Süddeutsche* is also the one newspaper that is mostly trying to undermine Merkel's abilities as chancellor, most evidently in form of mentioning her childlessness, which is pointed out seven times within its twelve analysed articles for the pre-election period.

Likewise, the quote above is also connected with the likability theory resulting from the fact that if women are regarded as contenders of stereotypically male-dominated jobs, they are much more likely to be negatively perceived (Blight et al. 2012, 565). This is exactly what happens here with Angela Merkel, who is competing for the job of chancellor which can be regarded as the top of male-dominated jobs. Likewise, the likability theory suggests that a woman, who is regarded as competent is consequently lacking warmth and likability (Blight et al. 2012, 580). This holds true for this example as well. While Merkel is in fact regarded as very competent for the job, and is even called *intellectual* and *mathematical*, this is at the expense of her being regarded as warm and likable, which in this article is attributed to incumbent chancellor Schröder.

While the conservative right-wing *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* rather subtly shows its support for the right-wing conservative candidate Merkel, in form of praising her boldness or proposed economic policies, the two other international newspapers, and in particular the *Financial Times*, show its support in a very open manner:

"Why Europe needs a Merkel victory" (Financial Times, 5th September 2005)

5.2.3. During a Political Crisis

Just like Margaret Thatcher, Angela Merkel, too, has been through numerous political crises during her long time as Germany's Chancellor. The chosen crisis for this paper is the *European refugee crisis* or also called the *European migrant crisis* that occurred particularly throughout the year 2015. The peak of the crisis was between June and October, therefore, newspaper articles from June 2015 until October 2015 are considered

for this paper. The crisis emerged when millions of uncontrollable refugees from Syria, Africa, Afghanistan and many more entered the European Union via the Mediterranean Sea or overland through Southeast Europe following Turkey's migrant crisis (Delcker, 2016). While many countries decided to strictly close their borders to prevent this uncontrolled immigration, Merkel decided that Germany would welcome all the refugees that were stranded in Hungary at that time. This decision has brought her some praise for her humanity, but mostly it brought her criticism, from Germany and from foreign countries as the amount of people that were about to enter Germany was uncontrollable (Delcker, 2016). Therefore, Merkel's refugee crisis is similar to Thatcher's miners' strike as both politicians were following their own way throughout their respective crises despite an immense amount of criticism and opposition they encountered.

In terms of Merkel's media coverage in 2015, in the midst of the refugee crisis, a lot of aspects have changed drastically especially compared to ten years before during her first election campaign. The first major change concerns the use of *Mrs.* Merkel, which is non-existent in 2015. The two foreign newspapers, the European *Financial Times* and the international *New York Times*, switched to the female form *Ms.*, which can be used for both unmarried and married women, and referred to her as *Ms. Merkel*, when she was not called just Merkel or Chancellor, which in fact becomes the most common way to call her.

"Ms. Merkel's stance on refugees has scrambled German politics." (New York Times, 28th July 2015)

13 out of 26 articles within the two foreign newspapers use *Ms. Merkel*, as shown in the example above. The others mainly refer to her as Chancellor Merkel, Angela Merkel or only by her surname Merkel.

Interestingly enough, not a single article within the two German newspapers refer to Angela Merkel as *Frau Merkel*. Instead she is referred to only by *Merkel*, *Kanzlerin* (engl.: *chancellor*) or sometimes *CDU-Vorsitzende* (engl.: *CDU-chairwoman*).

"Es wird erwartet, dass Kanzlerin Angela Merkel [...] Details bekanntgibt. Zuvor hatte Merkel erklärt [...]" [engl.: „It is expected that Chancellor Angela Merkel [...] will publish details. Previously Merkel had declared [...]" (Süddeutsche, 30th August 2015)

„Merkel bekräftigt: ‚Wir schaffen das!‘“ [engl.: Merkel confirms: ‚We will manage!’]" (FAZ, 21st October 2015)

This is a major change to ten years before, where she was more often referred to as *Mrs.* or *Frau Merkel* across all newspapers and an even greater change compared to Thatcher, who was most commonly referred to as *Mrs. Thatcher* even during her term as prime minister. This leads to the change that Merkel, having served as Germany's chancellor for ten years at that time, is depicted as chancellor first and her private life as a married woman seems to have taken a back seat in this regard.

Likewise decreased has the comparison with former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. While Merkel was compared to her eight times during her election campaign, she is only mentioned two times in reference to Thatcher during the refugee crisis in 2015.

„Keine Handtasche in den Zeiten, als die CDU sich im neoliberalen Reform-Rauschzustand ihres Leipziger Parteitags befand und die Gefahr zu groß war, mit Margaret Thatcher verglichen zu werden.“ [engl.: „No handbag in the times when the CDU was in the neoliberal reform frenzy of its Leipzig party congress and the danger was too great to be compared with Margaret Thatcher”] (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 13th June 2015)

This example also includes the notion that Merkel does not even want to be compared to Thatcher as she did everything possible, such as not carrying handbags with her like Thatcher always did, in order not to be compared to her. This can also be related to Merkel's ten years in office, during those she has been able to make a name for herself as chancellor of Germany in terms of her policies and not due to being a woman, therefore also comparisons to other female politicians have decreased.

Speaking about handbags, despite the lack of pointing out her sex directly, by calling her *Mrs.* or making reference to another female politician namely Thatcher, there are two aspects concerning the media coverage of female politicians that even Merkel is not exempt from. The first concerns the focus on the physical appearance, which is mentioned in eight out of 52 articles. In particular the two issues of her hair style and her bright-coloured blazers are brought to attention multiple times. The *Süddeutsche*, who is usually more critically opposed towards Merkel, claims:

„Seitdem sie Kanzlerin ist, hat die Frisur-Debatte aufgehört. Das immerhin.“ [engl.: „Since she has become chancellor, the hairstyle debate has stopped. At least that.”] (Süddeutsche, 13th June 2015)

However, just a few weeks later that exact same hairstyle debate is brought up again by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, who published the following rather unfavourable picture of Merkel:



FIGURE 8: MERKEL'S HAIR NOT SITTING RIGHT (FAZ, 28TH JULY 2015)

„Wenn die Haare mal nicht so sitzen: Angela Merkel zu Gast auf der Fregatte ‚Sachsen!‘“ [engl.: „If the hair doesn't sit right: Angela Merkel as guest on the frigate, Sachsen!“] (FAZ, 28th July 2015)

While the *FAZ* does not criticise Merkel in that article, it does, nevertheless, highlight her hair style, therefore placing more emphasis on her hair style than on the actual reason for Merkel's visit. In terms of *gendered mediation and gender stereotyping*, the reader gets reminded of Merkel's previous 'hair issues' and once again the assumption is brought forward that a female politician is brought back to the private sphere of life.

Merkel's bright-coloured blazers likewise receive attention on a regular basis, despite being in the middle of a political crisis. Throughout the year 2015, Merkel has worn red blazers in all variations rather often, which has not escaped the notice of the news media.



FIGURE 9: "MERKEL'S MOST GLARING WEAPON" (FAZ, 8TH JUNE 2015)

„Merkels grellste Waffe: Unter Politikerinnen hat sich in dieser Hinsicht im Jahr 2015 eine neue optische Waffe etabliert. Die Waffe roter Blazer.“ [engl.: “Merkel's most glaring weapon: Among women politicians, a new optical weapon has established itself in 2015. The weapon of the red blazer.”] (FAZ, 8th June 2015)

This whole article talks about how particularly female politicians have discovered the red blazer for themselves. This suggests that female politicians are still judged according to their choice of clothes and it likewise suggests that all female politicians need a bright colour in order to stand out. Once again, *gender stereotyping* takes place as Merkel is dissociated from public life. Merkel is put in that same box as other female politicians, and instead of talking about her discussion with Obama, for example, one is focusing on what she and other female politicians are wearing, therefore mainly focusing on the gender of the politicians rather than their policies etc.

The second constant aspect within the media coverage of Angela Merkel affects the image of motherhood. As a reminder, ten years before in 2005, Merkel was often confronted with her childlessness and some newspapers also used this fact to potentially undermine her leadership abilities. In 2015, the situation is completely different. Her childlessness is not a topic of concern, as in questioning her suitability for the position, at all anymore. It is only briefly mentioned once across all 52 examined newspapers for this period. Interestingly, despite her not being a mother in her private life, Merkel is surpassingly often referred to as “*Mutti*” (Engl.: “mummy” as the twee expression for mother) across all the different newspapers, which appears to be her new major nickname, replacing the previous ones of “*Kohl's Mädchen*“ & “*Angie*“ as the following examples of *gendered mediation* show:

„Die Frau an der Macht: Vom Mädchen zur Mutti“ [engl.: The woman in power: from girl to a mummy“ (FAZ, 28th July 2015)

“She had gone from “Heartless Merkel” to “Mother Merkel” in the blink of an eye.” (New York Times, 13th October 2015)

“It is all such a contrast with the calm and control that Ms Merkel used to radiate, captured by her nickname Mutti (or “mum”) [...] Some voters seem to have concluded that Mutti has gone mad — flinging open Germany’s borders to the wretched of the earth” (Financial Times, 27th October 2015)

„Und dieses furchtbare Wort “Mutti” sagt dann vor allem Trauriges über diejenigen, die es benutzen, weil sie eine Frau an der Macht offenbar als dermaßen bedrohlich wahrnehmen, dass sie sich selbst wieder zu Kleinkindern machen.“ [engl.: “And this terrible word “mummy” says more about those who use it, because they obviously perceive a woman in power as so threatening that they turn themselves into little children again”] (Süddeutsche, 13th June 2015)

This mother image is omnipresent across all four different newspapers and the wording mother, “*Mutti*” respectively “*Mummy*” is used 42 times within the 52 examined articles, making it the most striking aspect within the news coverage about Angela Merkel. Even though Merkel does not have children in real life, a woman is still linked to the motherhood image. Therefore, as the *gender stereotyping* theory suggests, we still see Merkel as a woman first, by linking her to a potential motherhood, and a politician second, therefore dissociating her from public life. The latter citation even tries to make out an explanation for the frequent use of the motherhood image. It concludes that Merkel is so powerful in her position that every man seems like a child compared to her. By calling Merkel “*Mutti*” respectively “*Mummy*”, the media stresses at first read that Merkel is indeed different to the people that held her position before, namely all men. In this respect it does not even matter at all that Merkel does not have children of her own, which had been a frequently discussed topic during her first election campaign. However, ten years later she has proved to be a qualified leader, who appears to *take care* of her country just like a mother takes care of her children. Therefore, Merkel is even allegedly attributed motherly feelings for other, younger, politicians as the next example shows.

„Merkel ist sechzig, Tsipras zwanzig Jahre jünger. Hat er ihren Mutterinstinkt geweckt? Gut möglich.“ [engl.: „Merkel is sixty, Tsipras twenty years younger. Has he aroused her maternal instinct? Quite possibly.” (FAZ, 7th June 2015)

It is interesting to note how much the motherhood image has converted in the case of Angela Merkel within ten years: From being concerned whether a childless woman can

rule a country to the image of the *mother of the nation*. While motherhood can be regarded as the overall peak of femininity, it is equally interesting to note that otherwise Merkel is associated with attributes that are far from stereotypically female ones. When Merkel's attributes or qualities are described they usually fit with the attributes that are stereotypically ascribed to men, like her passion for beer and sausages for example or not being controlled by her emotions like a stereotypical woman is assumed to be.

“President Obama sought to smooth over tensions with a crucial ally, bonding on Sunday with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany over beer, sausages and their shared determination to confront Russia over its aggression in Ukraine” (New York Times, 7th June 2015)

“Often accused by critics of preferring tactics over strategy, or a cool approach over emotional commitment to Europe, Ms. Merkel is trying to bolster European unity in each case.” (New York Times, 24th June 2015)

In general, the *Süddeutsche* is not as openly critical of Merkel as it used to be during the pre-election, despite being in the middle of a crisis. Only one of the articles examined for this research openly displays a negative attitude towards Merkel's policies.

„Mutti, wir schaffen das nicht!“ [engl.: Mummy, we will not manage!]” (Süddeutsche, 22th October 2015)

This quote alludes to Merkel's famous quote “We can manage this!” by claiming towards Merkel that this crisis is not manageable. The right-wing conservative German newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, on the contrary does not openly contest her promises. However, the *FAZ* is not free from a media bias in its news coverage about Merkel. Both her physical appearance in form of her hair style and choice of blazer and her motherhood image is frequently mentioned.

The same holds true for the European level newspaper, the *Financial Times*, as well as the global level newspaper, the *New York Times*, yet they put less focus on Merkel's physical appearance and the nickname “Mummy” is only used to outline the German nickname of hers. As a whole, even within the refugee crisis in Germany, which admittedly mostly affects the Germans directly, both the *Financial Times* and the *New York Times* keep their overall very praising and admirable picture of the German leader, which even the German *FAZ* has not missed out on:

„Why Mutti matters: Warum wenigstens die Amerikaner zu würdigen wissen, welchen Fang wir mit Merkel gemacht haben.“ [engl.: “Why Mutti matters: Why at least the Americans appreciate the catch we made with Merkel”] (FAZ, 11th October 2015)

5.3. Overall Findings

As a whole, 100 articles were used to analyse the media coverage of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. 48 articles were examined during her first pre-election period and 52 were included in the analysis of the media coverage during the refugee crisis in 2015. Within this sample Angela Merkel's news media portrayal fulfilled numerous aspects for *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping*: In 27 of those articles (only during the pre-election period), she is occasionally referred to as *Mrs. Merkel* or *Frau Merkel*. The use of *Ms. Merkel* occurred during the overall news coverage of the *Financial Times* and during the 2015 media coverage of the *New York Times* is used 23 times. It is, therefore, the most frequent word used for Angela Merkel. During the pre-election period, Merkel is often referred to by the two nicknames *Kohl's girl* and *Angie*, which are used 14 times altogether. Likewise, a comparison to Margaret Thatcher occurs within ten articles, of which eight happened to be within the pre-election period in 2005. In addition, Merkel's physical appearance seems to attract a high media interest as well, which is mentioned within 17 articles altogether. Despite being a woman, Merkel is most commonly associated with stereotypically male attributes such as mathematical, analytical or being a good drinker. These attributes are mentioned in 17 out of 100 examined articles about Angela Merkel. However, the most interesting aspect in terms of *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* concerns Merkel's connection to the image of motherhood. During the pre-election period, it is mostly her childlessness that occupies the newspapers by questioning her suitability, which is mentioned in twelve articles, of which eleven articles are within the German newspaper sample. Only one newspaper briefly mentions this fact during the political crisis. At this stage, her childlessness does not seem to matter anymore, rather Angela Merkel is more associated with being the "*Mutti*" respectively "*Mummy*" of her country. This reference to Angela Merkel as a mother is mentioned in 42 of the 52 articles during the refugee crisis analysed for this paper.

In general, a media bias in regard to Angela Merkel is to be found within all the four examined newspapers, once again with different levels concerning its manifestation. The two international newspapers, the *Financial Times* and the *New York Times* apply a lot less *gendered mediation and stereotyping* and generally seem to have a way more positive attitude towards Merkel, in particular praising her self-assertion in a male-dominated arena as well as her humane approach within the refugee crisis. Presumably it is easier

for the two foreign newspapers to praise her humanity than it is for the two German newspapers as Germany is directly affected by the refugees entering the country.

The two national newspapers the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* show a lot more examples of *gendered mediation and gender stereotyping*. While the left-wing *Süddeutsche* is especially critical of Merkel during the pre-election period, due to the support for the candidate of the *Social Democrats*, the tone has softened in 2015, when Merkel had already been chancellor for ten years. During the period of the crisis, the two German newspapers seem to be similar in their attitude of Merkel, while they are sceptical in Merkel's approach during the crisis. One can here an underlying tone of respect towards Merkel, which can be assumed to derive from Merkel's ten years in office and her acquired experience.

6. URSULA VON DER LEYEN

6.1. Biography

Ursula von der Leyen was born on the 8th October 1958 as Ursula Gertrud Albrecht in Brussels, Belgium, where her father worked as one of the first EU civil servants for the European Commission. The family lived in Brussels until Ursula Albrecht was 13 years old and then moved back to Hanover in Germany, where her father later served as the minister president of Lower Saxony (Barker 2019).

In 1977, Ursula Albrecht started studying economics at the University of Göttingen. However during her studies, she was forced to flee to London due to ongoing communist terrorism in Germany, as she was seen as very endangered considering her politically engaged ancestry (Mendick 2019). In London she lived under protection and even under a false name. She temporarily studied economics at the prestigious London School of Economics (Mendick 2019). In 1980, however she returned to Hanover and studied Medicine, acquiring her medical license in 1987 and briefly worked as a doctor after her studies while obtaining the Doctor of Medicine title ("Who is Ursula von der Leyen, the New EU Commission President?", 2019). In 1986 she married fellow medicine student Heiko von der Leyen, with whom she has a total of seven children today ("Who is Ursula von der Leyen, the New EU Commission President?", 2019). The family later lived in Stanford, USA from 1992 until 1996, where her husband was a faculty member, while Ursula von der Leyen was a housewife and looked after the children ("Who is Ursula von der Leyen, the New EU Commission President?", 2019).

Ursula von der Leyen can be considered a late entrant into politics having only joined the German *Christian Democratic Union* in 1990. However, she only became politically active after the family returned to Hanover in 1996 where she was involved in local politics at first. In 2003 she was elected into the parliament of Lower Saxony for the first time and directly became the Minister for Social Affairs ("Who is Ursula von der Leyen, the New EU Commission President?", 2019). In that same year she joined Angela Merkel, who was opposition leader at that time, to draft a social welfare reform, and ever since the two are said to have a close link (Tempest 2005). Following Merkel's election in 2005, Merkel made von der Leyen her Minister of Family Affairs. Later during Merkel's second term von der Leyen served as Minister of Labour (Fullerton, 2009). After Merkel's third election, von der Leyen was appointed as the Minister of Defence, serving as the first

woman in that position (Oltermann, 2013). However, her term as Defence Minister was marked by many scandals. One was the inoperative equipment of the German armed forces that became public. Another scandal was the existence of extreme right-wingers among German soldiers and also the *advisor scandal* marked her term, in which the ministry of defence allegedly unnecessarily spent millions of dollars on external advisors (Shalal 2018). Nevertheless, Merkel again appointed her as the Minister of Defence in 2018, making her the only person who has served as a minister in all of Merkel's four terms as chancellor. Von der Leyen served until her resignation in 2019 resulting from her being proposed as the President of the European Commission (Barigazzi 2019). Von der Leyen did not initially run for this position during the 2019 European elections in May 2019. However, following the difficulty among the European parties to find a suitable candidate for that position, von der Leyen was surprisingly nominated by French President Macron on 2nd July 2019 (Barigazzi 2019). This was followed by a few weeks of uncertainty if she would get elected during the vote at the European Parliament due to some party's anger that none of the previous lead candidates were then to become the President of the Commission. Nevertheless, eventually von der Leyen was elected the first female President of the European Commission in a very close vote on the 16th July 2019 (EU-Parlament stimmt für von der Leyen als neue EU-Kommissionspräsidentin, 2019).

During her time as President-elect she promised to constitute the first ever gender neutral board of commissioners with an equal amount of women and men, which was almost achieved as the Commission is currently composed of 12 women and 15 men, the highest share of women so far (EU Commission, 2019). Due to the comparatively short time von der Leyen being in office, her biggest political crisis so far can also be assigned to her time as President-elect. The scandal affected the hearings of the new potential commissioners, of which three nominees of hers had initially been denied by the European Parliament due to previous corruption scandals. This also resulted in a later start of her term as President. During this crisis von der Leyen was accused not to have checked the candidates thoroughly (Eck, 2019). Therefore, only on the 1st December 2019 von der Leyen then officially became the President of the European Commission.

During her inauguration she vowed to put particular attention to the topics of female advancement in all areas as well as climate change, for which she established the so called

New Green Deal. She promised to invest more than one trillion Euros to tackle the pressing issues created by climate change. (Rios, 2019)

6.2. Media Coverage

6.2.1. Sampling

In total, a sample of 100 newspaper articles was used to analyse the media coverage of Ursula von der Leyen, the same amount that was used for Thatcher and Merkel. Consequently also 48 articles, 12 for each newspaper, were used to get information of her media coverage from the time *before* being elected, while 52 newspapers, 13 for each chosen newspaper, were used to find out more about von der Leyen's media coverage *during* a political crisis. The included articles were filtered in regard to their title, too. All the chosen newspapers had either "von der Leyen", "Ursula von der Leyen", "Europe" (German: "Europa") or just the abbreviation "EU", "President of the Commission" (German: "Kommissionspräsidentin") or "(EU) Commission" (German: "(EU) Kommission" in their title. During the pre-election period also the phrases "elections" (German: Wahlen) and "campaign" (German: "Kampagne") were included, while for the time during the political crisis the terms "Commissioner" (German: "Kommissar", "crisis"(German: "Krise), "rejected" (German: "abgelehnt" and "nominated" (German: "nominiert") were included to filter out suitable articles. The length of the articles varied and ranges from just a short ten-line comment to a half-page long detailed article.

6.2.2. During the Political Campaigning *Before* Being Elected

Ursula von der Leyen officially became the president of the European Commission on the 1st December 2019, more than 40 years after Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of the UK for the first time. The election of Ursula von der Leyen as president of the commission in the EU parliament took place on the 16th July 2019. However, her nomination for this position only became public on the 2nd July 2019. Therefore, the examined newspaper articles about her *before* being elected, were published between the 2nd July 2019 and also include the day after election on the 17th July 2019. Her analysed time frame is a bit shorter than for the others, due to her late nomination. However, the examined newspaper articles also amount to 48, the same amount that was used for the analysis of Thatcher and Merkel. Although the time frame is shorter, nevertheless, it was no problem at all to amount to twelve articles per newspaper. The reason is that Ursula

von der Leyen's surprising nomination for the position of president of the commission attracted higher-than-average media attention in Europe and even worldwide as witnessed within the *New York Times*.

To begin with, *gendered mediation* in form of the gender markers *Mrs.* and *Ms.* remain a topic of interest especially within the two foreign newspapers, the *Financial Times* and *New York Times*, even in the case of von der Leyen. However, in the case of von der Leyen, entirely *Ms.* is used when referring to her in the pre-election period, meaning that she is not seen as a married woman first, however she is still directly pointed out to be a woman.

„Ms. von der Leyen struck a triumphant and conciliatory tone in her acceptance speech.“ (New York Times, 16th July 2019)

Across the two foreign newspapers 14 out of 24 newspapers use *Ms. von der Leyen* as the most used term when referring to von der Leyen.

The two German newspapers, in contrast, do not refer to von der Leyen as *Frau* (English: *Mrs.*) at all, instead she is most commonly referred to by her full name Ursula von der Leyen or just von der Leyen most of the time.

“Für Ursula von der Leyen war der Freitag ein Tag des Durchatmens – zumindest im Vergleich zu den vorherigen Tagen“ [engl.: “For Ursula von der Leyen, Friday was a day to take a deep breath - at least in comparison to the previous days.”] (FAZ, 12th July 2019)

However, a new recurrent factor of *gendered mediation*, which appears within the media coverage of von der Leyen, is the reference to her father Ernst Albrecht. He was one of the first EU civil servants and former prime minister of Lower Saxony. Instead of her own achievements being outlined, von der Leyen is mentioned in line with her father Ernst Albrecht, who is mentioned in 9 out of 48 examined newspaper articles during that pre-election period.



FIGURE 10: VON DER LEYEN AND HER FATHER ERNST ALBRECHT (SÜDDEUTSCHE, 16TH JULY 2019)

„Bereits ihr Vater Ernst Albrecht, später Ministerpräsident von Niedersachsen, war in der europäischen Diplomatie tätig“ [engl.: „Her father Ernst Albrecht, later prime minister of Lower Saxony, was already active in European diplomacy“] (Süddeutsche, 16th July 2019)

„Germany’s center-right defense minister, Ursula von der Leyen, will be returning to the city of her birth, Brussels, once she’s confirmed to lead the European Union’s most important institution and her father’s former workplace: the European Commission.“] (New York Times, 2nd July 2019)

In her case it is particularly interesting to note that she is rather often referred to as daughter of Ernst Albrecht, who admittedly used to be a EU civil servant and prime minister of Lower Saxony. Nevertheless, the position that Ursula von der Leyen is competing for, namely the president of the EU Commission is a lot higher than the positions her father ever held, not to mention her previous positions of German federal family, labour or defence minister. Yet she is still referred to as the daughter rather than being referred to by her current or previously held positions. This also underlines a *gendered stereotyping* because von der Leyen’s life as daughter of someone is placed before her public role as a politician, meaning she is dissociated from public life.

While she is mentioned in line with her father nine times, a comparison to another politician is even more prominent, that politician being German chancellor Angela Merkel. While Merkel herself has been compared to her UK female equivalent, von der Leyen is compared to her, allegedly fellow German ally and confidante. This comparison

is likewise made on the basis of two female politicians making it to the top of a country or an EU institution respectively. However, while Merkel and Thatcher have had less things in common, Merkel and von der Leyen share more similar features, such as coming from the same country, being members of the same party, advocating for similar policies, both being in the centre moderate part of their party, etc. However, most of all the comparisons between the two are made because of their gender and because two German women are potentially about to govern the allegedly most powerful country in the EU and the most powerful EU institution. In this case the media bias assumes that women always cohere, in private life and in public life. Merkel and von der Leyen's allegedly close relationship is omnipresent across all the different newspapers equally and Merkel is mentioned 25 times within the 48 examined articles about von der Leyen.



FIGURE 11: URSULA VON DER LEYEN AND HER "ALLY" ANGELA MERKEL (SÜDDEUTSCHE, 16TH JULY 2019)

„Von der Leyen ist eine enge Vertraute von Merkel und galt lange Zeit als potenzielle Nachfolgerin von Kanzlerin Merkel.“ [engl.: „Von der Leyen is a close confidante of Merkel and was long considered a potential successor to Chancellor Merkel”] (Süddeutsche, 16th July 2019)

“The ally of Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, is trying to drum up support from the parliament before it votes on her candidacy next week.” (Financial Times, 11th July 2019)

“That woman is Ursula von der Leyen, Germany’s defense minister and a longtime ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel” (New York Times, 5th July 2019)

„Während sich die Kanzlerin über eine "neue Partnerin in Brüssel" freut, gibt es von der SPD vor allem Erwartungen an Ursula von der Leyen.“ [engl.: "While the Chancellor is pleased about a "new partner in Brussels", the SPD has high expectations of Ursula von der Leyen."](Süddeutsche, 17th July 2019)

Another topic of *gendered mediation*, that is not as coherent across the four analysed newspapers, is the topic of motherhood applied to Ursula von der Leyen. Once again by mentioning the topic of motherhood, *gender stereotyping* takes place as her private role as before her official role meaning she is dissociated from public life. Therefore, when the motherhood image is applied to female politicians, one always sees the private person of mother and wife first, and their official role as politician second. As seen before, this motherhood image can manifest itself in different variations by for example mentioning the number of children someone has or does not have or by giving them the nickname ‘mummy’ in the sense of being the mother of a nation. In reference to von der Leyen, motherhood is also a particular interesting topic because von der Leyen has seven children of her own, which is rather untypical in the modern times. In addition, she also prides herself with this fact by calling herself “*Mother of Seven*”, which she even describes herself as on her Instagram profile (Von der Leyen, 2020)

Therefore, in regards to the two German national newspapers, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, it is very interesting to note that her being a mother of seven does not seem to matter much in the news reporting as only three out of 24 German articles mention the topic of motherhood in reference to her. More so, two of them only mention the fact in order to explain why Hungarian President Orbán is allegedly in favour of von der Leyen.

„In Polen und Ungarn wird Ursula von der Leyen vor allem als siebenfache Mutter gefeiert.“ [engl.: „In Poland and Hungary Ursula von der Leyen is celebrated above all as a mother of seven."] (Süddeutsche, 14th July 2019)

„Im ungarischen Fernsehen stellte [Viktor Orbán] .. [von der Leyen] so dar: „Wir haben eine deutsche Familienmutter, die Mutter von sieben Kindern an die Spitze der Kommission gewählt.““ [engl.: „On Hungarian television, [Viktor Orbán] said about [von der Leyen]: "We have a German family mother, the mother of seven children, elected to lead the commission."] (FAZ, 16th July 2019)

Other than that, the image of motherhood does not matter much in German media nor is she being referred to as the mother of the nation or the mother of Europe for example.

The case looks entirely different when looking at the two international newspapers, above all within the American *New York Times*, in which her being a mother of seven children

is a topic of high interest. Eleven out of 24 articles from foreign newspapers mention that von der Leyen is a mother to seven children, of which eight articles are from the *New York Times*. In the photo below the *New York Times* even publishes a photo from older archives that pictures von der Leyen, her husband and her seven children. This picture was published in an article that is dealing with von der Leyen's nomination for the presidency of the Commission. While this photo has nothing to do with the rest of the article, it is based on the fact that von der Leyen has seven children and shows her private life as mother and wife, the historically traditional role of women.



FIGURE 12: URSULA VON DER LEYEN SURROUNDED BY HER HUSBAND AND HER SEVEN CHILDREN (NEW YORK TIMES, 5TH JULY 2019)

“Ms. von der Leyen, then Social Affairs Minister of Lower Saxony, with her seven children and her husband, Heiko von der Leyen, in Hanover in 2003” (New York Times, 5th July 2019)

Most other *NYT* articles mention von der Leyen's motherhood as a side note, but nevertheless this information is put forward in more than a third of its examined articles. While this fact is repeated so often, more than any other fact about her such as her holding several ministry positions in Germany, the fact that she is a mother of seven is most likely to be remembered by the audience. Therefore, this likely results in particularly in Americans remembering her being a mother first rather than her actions and life as a politician.

“Her bumpy road to the office means that Ms. von der Leyen, who raised seven children and worked as a medical doctor before becoming a full-time politician{...} (New York Times, 16th July 2019)

In addition to mentioning her children, the last quote also mentions her previous job of being a doctor, which likewise detracts attention from what the article mainly deals with - her political ambition to win the vote in the European parliament to become the president of the European Commission.

Another aspect of *gendered mediation*, namely the focus on the physical appearance of female politicians is apparent for Ursula von der Leyen as well. However not as strong as for Merkel and Thatcher, as only five out of 48 articles mention this. In addition, all of the five articles are within the German newspaper sample, therefore, just like the image of motherhood, this topic affects national and international newspapers differently. The two ‚female‘ items of clothing that are mentioned in line with Ursula von der Leyen are her blazer and handbag as shown by the quotes below.

„Lächelnd, sichtlich angespannt, im zartrosa Blazer schreitet Ursula von der Leyen die Stufen hinab ins Rund des Europaparlaments.“ [engl.: „Smiling, visibly tense, wearing a soft pink blazer, Ursula von der Leyen walks down the steps into the round of the European Parliament”] (Süddeutsche, 16th July 2019)

„Sie wirkt beherrscht und konzentriert [...] aber sie wirkt auch einsam. Die anderen Sessel sind leer, auf einem steht ihre Handtasche. Da sitzt eine Frau, die sich behaupten will – und behaupten muss.“ [engl.: She seems controlled and concentrated [...] but also lonely. The other chairs are empty, on one of them is her handbag. There sits a woman who wants to assert herself - and must assert herself.”] (FAZ, 14th July 2019)

Instead of her speech, the first quote focuses on her soft pink blazer, therefore once again it detracts attention from what is actually important. By repeating or mentioning certain aspects, values or attributes more often than others one is also giving them more importance. For example, mentioning the colour of her blazer before anything else, suggests that her wearing a pink blazer in this scenario matters.

The second quote talks about von der Leyen’s handbag. While it mainly talks about von der Leyen being concentrated and controlled, it also mentions, on a side note, that von der Leyen’s handbag is next to her. This aims to mainly underline that von der Leyen is a woman. While it is stereotypically primarily women who wear handbags, this article is therefore underlining von der Leyen’s gender and is activating traditional gender stereotypes.

Speaking about stereotypically female items of clothing, also stereotypically female attributes play a huge part in von der Leyen's media portrayal during the pre-election period. Above average von der Leyen is described with attributes that are stereotypically ascribed to women and are connected with *emotions*. Those attributes include her being described as *passionate*, launching a *charm offensive* or her having *verve*. Across all different newspapers, the vast majority of articles, in sum 32 out of 48 articles mention such attributes when reporting about von der Leyen. Just a few examples are illustrated below:

„Sie gilt als leidenschaftliche Europäerin, die mit Verve für mehr Zusammenhalt und mehr Selbstbewusstsein der EU eintritt.“ [engl.: „She is regarded as a passionate European, who stands up for more cohesion and more self-confidence of the EU.“] (Süddeutsche, 3rd July 2019)

„Weil die Kandidatin sich um die nötige Mehrheit von 376 Stimmen sorgt, nutzt sie die Zeit bis zur Wahl für eine Charmeoffensive.“ [engl.: „Because the candidate is worried about the necessary majority of 376 votes, she uses the time until the election for a charm offensive.“] (Süddeutsche, 9th July 2019)

„Mit Verve und in drei Sprachen wirbt Ursula von der Leyen vor dem EU-Parlament für sich“ [engl.: „Ursula von der Leyen promotes herself with verve and in three languages before the EU Parliament.“] (FAZ, 16th July 2019)

„Ms. von der Leyen came across as passionately globalist“ (New York Times, 16th July 2019)

By constantly describing von der Leyen with emotional attributes, which are stereotypically linked to women, the newspapers are activating the traditional gender attributes in the minds of the readers. People automatically believe that because von der Leyen is a woman, she has to be more emotional than a man would be in that situation. In this case it does not matter if those emotional attributes are meant in a positive or negative way, as *passionate* is meant with a good connotation in this example, nevertheless, it does activate traditional gender norms.

Also, the aspect that women have to fulfil double standards was touched within the media portrayal of von der Leyen which highlights that is impossible for a woman to satisfy all the different factions:

“E.U.’s Top Pick: Too Pious for Feminists, Too Feminist for Conservatives: Some feminists are annoyed by her piety. Most conservatives are annoyed by her feminism. “That woman,” they sigh.” (New York Times, 5th July 2019)

By highlighting the critique and scepticism from different factions, one implies that by bringing this to the attention to the people, they might become sceptical as well if even among the established parties Ursula von der Leyen is unable to acquire substantial support. However, within the articles of the *New York Times*, it is important to underline that the journalist is only depicting the political mood in Europe and is not criticising or scrutinising Ursula von der Leyen of their own volition. This negative attitude towards von der Leyen is most visible when examining the newspaper articles of the left-wing *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Foremost it criticises von der Leyen's nomination for the position of president of the Commission despite having allegedly done a bad job as federal minister in Germany, which is outlined by the quote below.

“Weil von der Leyen als Verteidigungsministerin immer wieder in der Kritik stand, ist vom einstigen Ruhm immer weniger übrig. In den Wettbewerb um den CDU-Vorsitz war sie nicht mehr eingetreten“ [engl.: „Because von der Leyen was repeatedly criticised as defense minister, less and less of her former fame is left. She has therefore not entered the competition for the CDU presidency.“] (Süddeutsche, 16th July 2019)

6.2.3. During a Political Crisis

Unlike Merkel and Thatcher, Ursula von der Leyen is just at the beginning of her term as president of the European Commission and one cannot look back at a decade of service in this position. However, starting from her very surprising nomination for that position, her candidacy included much criticism, scepticism and already some crises. One crisis being her allegedly deleting emails relevant to the consultant affair from when she was still German federal defence minister. However, her biggest political crisis yet, while being president respectively president-elect of the European Commission, includes the rejection of three of her 26 proposed commissioners by the European Parliament. They have been rejected due to alleged financial conflicts of interest and fraud investigations, which eventually resulted in a delayed accession to office, which was postponed until the 1st December, a month later than it was initially meant to take place. While some other politicians urged her to rethink her callings for the potential commissioners, she followed her own way, just like Thatcher and Merkel did during their respective crises. This crisis was also strengthened by Ursula von der Leyen renaming some of the commissioners' positions as well as reallocating the importance of certain commissions, which brought her loads of criticism in the first place. Therefore, the time span for this crisis starts from 1st September 2019, when criticism regarding the new commissions came up for the first

time until the 27th November 2019 when the European Parliament officially accepted the new, previously contested, college of commissioners.

Regarding von der Leyen's media coverage, even within such a short period of time, numerous aspects have changed in comparison to her media portrayal during her political campaigning. Within the two international newspapers, the *Financial Times* and *New York Times*, calling her *Ms. von der Leyen* remains a common way to call it, but has decreased compared to the pre-election period as it used in seven out of 26 articles.

"The outrage has only grown, with pressure mounting on Ms. von der Leyen to scrap the title altogether" (New York Times, 12th September 2019)

However, in total there are two additional exceptions within the *Financial Times*, where von der Leyen is referred to as *Mrs. von der Leyen*, the form that is only used to refer to a married woman. So, despite being the president-elect of the European Commission, she is still being referred to as the wife of someone. An example is shown below.

"[...] a Dutch MEP with the Liberal group that helped deliver Mrs von der Leyen's narrow majority when confirmed as the next commission president in July, called on her to think again" (Financial Times, 12th September 2019)

As mentioned earlier, her being called *Mrs.* is rather an exception to the rule than being the norm, nevertheless in those two cases she is still depicted as the wife of someone, which, in terms of *gender stereotyping*, results in the audience seeing her as wife first rather than as president or president-elect of the European Commission.

The two German newspapers keep referring to von der Leyen by her full name Ursula von der Leyen or simply by her last name von der Leyen as the two following examples vicariously illustrate:

"Für viele Kritiker klingt dies so, als sei nach Meinung von der Leyens eine härtere Einwanderungspolitik nötig, um Europas Werte zu bewahren" [engl.: „For many critics, this sounds as if von der Leyen believes that a tougher immigration policy is needed to preserve Europe's values“] (Süddeutsche, 12th September 2019)

„Vor allem in den Zukunftsfeldern hat Ursula von der Leyen vernünftige Prioritäten gesetzt“ [engl.: Ursula von der Leyen has set reasonable priorities especially in the future fields] (FAZ, 10th September 2019)

In this way, the person von der Leyen, and not the wife or daughter of someone nor her gender, is in the centre of attention.

What also remains similar, is von der Leyen's comparison to her German colleague and alleged ally Angela Merkel. However, now that Ursula von der Leyen has been elected to become president of the European Commission, the coverage has changed. Now the two are mainly portrayed at eye level, and not in the sense that Ursula von der Leyen is dependent or minor to Merkel:

"If the commission, soon to be led by Merkel's compatriot Ursula von der Leyen, failed to push through reforms that prevented such a scenario from recurring, it would amount to "nothing but a costly bureaucracy", he warned. (Financial Times, 11th November 2019)

"Mit ihrer ehemaligen Chefin [Angela Merkel] spricht sie [Ursula von der Leyen] jetzt auf Augenhöhe." [engl.: „[Ursula von der Leyen] is now talking to her former boss [Angela Merkel] at eye level"] (Süddeutsche, 8th November 2019)

"Mr. Macron fathered a deal that gave the position to the French-speaking former German defense minister in Merkel's cabinet, Ursula von der Leyen, who had never even been considered as a candidate." (New York Times, 1st November 2019)

However, in total, a comparison of the two female politicians, during von der Leyen's media coverage within a political crisis, has decreased in comparison to the pre-election period (25 of 48 examined articles) as now only 14 out of 52 articles mention the two women together. By mentioning the two female politicians in reference to one another, one implied that the two are ultimately linked together due to their gender. While the comparisons between the two have indeed decreased, yet every fourth article mentions the two female politicians in line with another, but at this stage mostly implies a friendship at eye level from now on.

The most striking changes arguably affect the image of motherhood and mentioning the fact of von der Leyen's seven children. In German news reporting that fact is not much mentioned neither during the pre-election nor during the news coverage of the political crisis. This research showed that this fact is only mentioned once within the two German newspapers during the period of the political crisis:

„[...] aber auch Ungarns rechtspopulistischer Ministerpräsident Viktor Orban war begeistert von der siebenfachen Mutter, ebenso der rechtsnationale polnische Regierungschef Mateusz Morawiecki." [engl.: „but also Hungary's right-wing populist Prime Minister Viktor Orban was enthusiastic about the mother of seven, as was the right-wing national Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki"] (Süddeutsche, 27th November 2019)

However, even the two international newspapers, in particular the *New York Times*, which has frequently mentioned this fact during the pre-election period, does not mention it often anymore during the news coverage of the political crisis. Only three articles in total (two within the *Financial Times*) mention this fact:

“This situation may seem surprising for a country that is led by the world’s most influential female political leader, chancellor Angela Merkel, and which next month installs Ursula von der Leyen, a mother of seven, in the top EU job as European Commission president.” (Financial Times, 17th October, 2019)

While von der Leyen was mainly introduced as a private person during the pre-election period, which free of doubt includes her having many children, she is now introduced as a politician focusing on what she plans to do for the European Union in the future. Coming back to *gendered mediation* in the earlier news coverage it is constantly mentioned that von der Leyen has seven children, therefore she is depicted mainly as a person in the private sphere, as a wife and mother. Therefore, the private Ursula von der Leyen is at the centre of attention. In this period of news coverage, mainly her policies and plans of action are mentioned. Thus, in contrast not the private person Ursula von der Leyen matters most but the politician, or even more importantly the president-elect of the European Commission. This is what the reader regards her as in the first place now. This is also valid for the next aspect regarding the focus on physical appearance, which has decreased even further. There are three out of 52 articles that focus on von der Leyen’s look, once again the colour of von der Leyen’s blazer catches the attention of the journalists.

„Es ist kurz vor neun, als Ursula von der Leyen ins noch spärlich besetzte Halbrund des Straßburger Europaparlaments tritt, die Farbe des Blazers ein kräftiges Pink, die Züge merklich angespannt.“ [engl.: „It is shortly before nine when Ursula von der Leyen steps into the still sparsely occupied semicircle of the Strasbourg European Parliament, the colour of the blazer a bright pink, the trains noticeably tense.”] (Süddeutsche, 27th November 2019)

By focusing the attention on her clothing and look, *gender stereotyping* means that she is dissociated from public life as her personal attributes receive most attention, which detracts attention from the speech she gave at the parliament.

Another article compares the physical appearance of Ursula von der Leyen to the one of Frans Timmermans:

“Zuständig für das Megathema ist ihr Vize Timmermans, der sich am Mittwoch im Plenum neben von der Leyen mit grauem Wallebart und offenem

Kragen präsentiert und irgendwie doppelt so groß und breit wirkt wie die zarte Präsidentin.“ [engl.: „Responsible for this mega-topic is her Vice-President Timmermans, who appeared in the plenary on Wednesday next to von der Leyen with a grey wall-beard and open collar and somehow appears twice as tall and wide as the delicate President”] (Süddeutsche, 27th November 2019)

If this is to be seen as a competition, von der Leyen has lost that battle, as she is described as *tiny* and *delicate*, while Timmermans is described as *big* and *strong*. The stereotypical attributes that people associate with a good leader coincide with the one of Frans Timmermans, namely big and strong, while no good leader would be described as being *delicate*. This is where very overt *gender stereotyping* takes place: By implying that Timmermans is big and strong, while von der Leyen is tiny and delicate, the newspaper is saying that Timmermans represents a better leader than von der Leyen without directly having to say so. Therefore, depicting von der Leyen as more viable and ultimately questioning her leadership abilities, which is one aspect of *gender stereotyping*. It is no surprise that this statement comes from the left-wing *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which is known to rather support social democratic views, and Frans Timmermans happens to be a member of the Dutch *Social Democrats*.

A new aspect that is introduced in this section within Ursula von der Leyen's media coverage concerns the emphasis on personal attributes. One aspect is particular striking in this respect, namely the recurring mentioning of Ursula von der Leyen's age, which has not at all been apparent in the pre-election period. However, during the crisis this is evident across all the different newspapers. The analysis is not even taking into account when Ursula von der Leyen's age is mentioned in brackets, but only considers articles where her age is made a topic of interest or rather a topic of concern and this is put forward 13 times:

“Die 61-Jährige hat schon viel für die ersten 100 Tage Großes versprochen“ [engl.: „The 61-year-old has already promised a lot for the first 100 days.”] (Süddeutsche, 27th November 2019)

„Vestager wird dann 56 Jahre alt sein [...] und von der Leyen 66 Jahre.“ [engl.: „ Vestager will then be 56 years old [...] and von der Leyen 66 years”](FAZ, 28th November 2019)

„Das Europäische Parlament stimmte mit großer Mehrheit für die 61-jährige Deutsche, die damit die erste Frau an der Spitze der mächtigen Brüsseler Behörde wird“ [engl.: „The European Parliament voted by a large majority for the 61-year-old German, making her the first woman to head the powerful Brussels authority”] (FAZ, 27th November 2019)

“Beware older women. Three American women aged 55 to 70 are leading presidential candidates. Christine Lagarde, aged 63, is president of the European Central Bank; the new European Commission president is Ursula von der Leyen, aged 61. US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is 79.” (Financial Times, 8th November 2019)

In this example, von der Leyen’s age is used to portray her as less viable and to question her suitability for the position as she might be too old already.

In terms of the focus on personal attributes also a reference to her father should be mentioned. Admittedly he is mentioned less than during von der Leyen’s pre-election news coverage, nevertheless, he is still mentioned four out of 52 times, of which all were within the two German newspapers:

„Als Tochter des damaligen EU-Beamten Ernst Albrecht selbst in Brüssel geboren, fühlt sie sich als Vollbluteuropäerin und wirft sich mit einer Mischung aus Enthusiasmus, Pathos und praktischer Vernunft in die neue Aufgabe.“ [engl.: „Born in Brussels herself as the daughter of the then EU official Ernst Albrecht, she feels like a full-blooded European and throws herself into the new task with a mixture of enthusiasm, pathos and practical reason.”] (FAZ, 27th November 2019)

By mentioning her father in reference to von der Leyen, one detracts attention from Ursula von der Leyen’s achievements as she is depicted as the daughter of Ernst Albrecht and not the president of the Commission in the first instance.

Also, the usage of female attributes has decreased when describing von der Leyen. Previously von der Leyen is more often described with attributes such as passionate or having verve, all eventually connected with emotions which are regarded as stereotypical for women. While this usage has decreased, a few examples remain such as the use of the word *suppleness*, which is mentioned in a rather unusual context like winning an election with suppleness. By using those female attributes, one is activating the traditional gender stereotypes by implying that all women should fit into the traditional female stereotyping.

“Geschmeidig und nervenstark gewann die frühere deutsche Verteidigungsministerin im Sommer im Europaparlament ihre Wahl zur EU-Kommissionspräsidentin“ [engl.: „The former German Minister of Defence won her election as EU Commission President in the European Parliament this summer with suppleness and strong nerves“] (Süddeutsche, 29th September 2019)

In terms of a positive or negative attitude towards Ursula von der Leyen, this can also be made out quite easily. In general, the two international newspapers seem to have a more positive attitude overall towards von der Leyen, whereas the *New York Times* shows its attitude most overt as shown by the example below:

“The lineup was the commission’s most gender-balanced yet, with 12 women plus Ms. von der Leyen at the helm, alongside 15 men.” (New York Times, 10th September 2019)

Before becoming president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen has vowed to establish a gender-neutral college of commissioners for the first time in history. Eventually the commission is composed of twelve woman and 15 men. This can be viewed in two different views. First, one could see that as an accomplishment as the goal was almost achieved and this is the most gender-neutral commission to date. This view is taken by the *New York Times* which is generally supportive towards von der Leyen. The newspaper that is generally most critical of von der Leyen, the left-wing German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, meanwhile takes the diametrically opposed view. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is claiming that von der Leyen has failed her goal of a gender-neutral commission as illustrated below. Therefore, this particular example shows best how one can turn the exact same fact into different directions depending on which position one is supporting.

„Ihr Ziel, ein Kollegium zu führen, ‚das aus gleich vielen Frauen wie Männern besteht‘, hat sie knapp verfehlt“ [engl.: „She narrowly missed her goal of leading a college 'composed of equal numbers of women and men“.] (Süddeutsche, 10th September 2019)

6.3. Overall Findings

As a whole, 100 articles were used to analyse the media coverage of the President of EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen. 48 articles were examined during her first pre-election period and 52 were included in the analysis of the media coverage during her political crisis when three out of 26 proposed commissioners were rejected by the EU Parliament. Within this sample Ursula von der Leyen’s news media portrayal, too, fulfils numerous aspects for *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping*. Within the 50 analysed international newspaper articles, she is mainly referred to as *Ms. von der Leyen*, in a total of 21 articles (14 in the pre-election period). In addition, two articles within the *Financial Times* even use the married form of *Mrs. von der Leyen*, which is otherwise not very commonly used anymore when referring to female politicians. Secondly, von der Leyen is often mentioned in line with two other politicians. The first one is her father, who is mentioned in 13 out of 100 examined articles. Even more prominent is the recurring connection and allegedly close relationship to Angela Merkel, as Angela Merkel is mentioned in 39 out of 100 articles. In regard to the focus on the physical appearance,

one can say that it has decreased compared to the mentioning of the physical appearance of Thatcher and Merkel, nevertheless, still eight out of 100 articles mention either her blazer or her handbag. The image of motherhood is ambiguous concerning Ursula von der Leyen and differs quite a lot between the national and international newspapers. While only four out of 50 German newspaper articles mentioned the topic of motherhood, 14 out of 50 articles from the two international newspapers emphasise this topic. Looking at this specific 14 articles, it is interesting that eleven derive from the pre-election period and only three articles from the crisis. This shows that despite the short distance between the two analysed timeframes the topic of motherhood becomes much less relevant once von der Leyen is in office. Likewise, the use of stereotypically female attributes in reference to von der Leyen differs during the pre-election period and the news reporting during the crisis. 32 out of 100 newspaper articles use stereotypically female attributes, such as passionate, during the pre-election period, but only five of 52 articles use such attributes during the crisis. However, during the period of the crisis, a different aspect arises, namely the foregrounding on her age. While none of the articles put any special attention on von der Leyen's age during the pre-election period, 13 articles put forward von der Leyen's age during the crisis, making her rather old age a topic of concern.

In general, *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* in regard to Ursula von der Leyen is present across all the four different examined newspapers, once again with different levels concerning its manifestation regarding its different aspects. Similar to Merkel's news coverage, the *Financial Times* and the *New York Times* generally seem to have a more positive attitude towards von der Leyen, most visibly by praising her for the most gender balanced commission to date for example.

The two national newspapers the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* seem to be quite sceptical after von der Leyen's nomination for the position of President of the EU Commission, of which the left-wing *Süddeutsche* was especially critical and sceptical towards von der Leyen. The best example is the contrary view on the gender-balanced commission. That same fact that is regarded very positively by the *New York Times*, is considered as a failure by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* because von der Leyen has not succeeded in making the commission completely gender balanced. Further, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* does not value the fact that her commission has more women than ever in history.

7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

As discussed above, women in leadership positions are subject to *gendered mediation* and a specific media bias in form of *gender stereotyping* in their media portrayal. The first hypotheses claimed that despite the existence of female political leaders in Europe for 40 years now, a woman in the top position is still subject to *gender stereotyping* and tends to be portrayed in a different manner to their male counterparts with a particular focus on their appearance, style and the image of motherhood. In order to compare the level of *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* it is useful to look at each aspect and its development in detail.

The first aspect concerns gender markers and women being directly pointed out to be female by using the prefix *Mrs.* or *Ms.*, of which the form *Mrs.* can be regarded as even more fatal because it highlights that the woman is married at first read. *Gender stereotyping* indicates that we thereby see the married woman first and therefore bringing her back to the private sphere and only afterwards we see her as the politician. During Thatcher's media portrayal, the use of *Mrs. Thatcher* was by far the most common way to call her as manifested by 68 out of 100 articles using this term as the common way to refer to her. During Merkel's news reporting the phrasing *Mrs.* or *Frau* is used less frequently, only 27 out of 100 times, while also calling her *Ms.* becomes a common way to call her, which is used 23 times within the sample of 100. In addition, the longer Merkel is in office more and more articles simply start referring to her as Merkel or Chancellor. This trend is continued during the news coverage of Ursula von der Leyen and most often she is called simply von der Leyen, occasionally *Ms. von der Leyen* (21 out of 100 times) and only two, out of the ordinary, articles refer to her as *Mrs. von der Leyen*. Therefore, one can say that the use of female prefixes has decreased, while simply calling her by her last name and title has increased. Interestingly this holds particularly true comparing the media coverage of the female leaders during the campaigning before being in office and after being elected, while managing crisis. In case of Thatcher this compares as 77% (37 out of 48 articles) call her *Ms.* or *Mrs.* before being elected and only 60% (31 out of 52 articles) during the crisis. This is similar for Angela Merkel with 77% (37 out of 48 articles) before being elected and 25% (13 out of 52 articles) during crisis. Von der Leyen counts 29% (14 out of 48 articles) during the campaigning period and 17% (nine out of 52 articles) during the crisis. This allows for the conclusion that while running for office a gender bias in form of using *gender stereotyping* is occurring more often than while

being in office, when the view changes more towards the political sphere. This fact might also add on the preliminary statement that it is even harder for women to win office by a direct vote as they are even more affected by the media bias in the pre-election period. Also, a difference between German news and the international English-speaking news coverage can be detected. This explains the very frequent use of gender markers in regard to Thatcher and likewise in regard to Merkel in the earlier days of her first election. While the international newspapers keep holding on to the tradition of calling a female politician Ms., the use of *Frau* in German news reporting is non-existent, which might also be a potential cultural or linguistic difference, however this is subject to a different analysis.

The use of nicknames, which tends to downplay the female politician's achievements, is visible in particular during Thatcher's and Merkel's media coverage. While during the pre-election period, Thatcher has not had a particular nickname, during her premiership the nickname *Iron Lady* arises which she is still known for today. During the sample of 52 for her media coverage during the crisis, this nickname is used a total of 18 times which equals to 34 %. Merkel's nickname, mostly used during the pre-election period contrary, are *Kohl's Mädchen* and *Angie*. These are used 14 out of 48 times, 29% altogether. During her term in office, calling her *Mutti* can be said to become her new nickname, however, this topic will be discussed in regard to another aspect of *gendered mediation*. By calling Thatcher Iron Lady, one suggests that a woman is not automatically tough and firm, as suggested by the phrasing the iron. Also, by calling Merkel Kohl's Mädchen (=girl) one depicts Merkel as a little girl that is dependent on her mentor Kohl. While this aspect has decreased in its quantity, nevertheless, it remains a central aspect in Merkel's news coverage, too.

A new aspect that occurs from the news coverage of Merkel is the constant comparison of the current female leader to one of her female predecessors. This aspect is non-existent for Thatcher because she is the first female political leader in Europe and has no predecessor on the European continent. However, when Merkel is about to come into office and during her term, Thatcher can be regarded as her direct predecessor in terms of a woman governing a powerful country in Europe. However, this can be said to remain the only main fact the two have in common. This means, simply due to the fact of being two women governing powerful states, the two are compared in 10% (ten out of 100) of the articles across Merkel's news coverage. For Merkel's and von der Leyen's comparison and references in von der Leyen's news coverage, this number is even higher

as the two have a few more things in common such as being from the same country, party and advocating for similar policies. Therefore, 39 out of 100 articles mention the two female politicians in line. Further on, the two are also always depicted as confidantes, allies and friends, even though none of them has ever confirmed that they actually are. So simply because the two are female, German and members of the CDU, the media portrays them as being friends.

Most research on *gender stereotyping* reports that female politicians are also described with attributes that are traditionally ascribed to women. Mostly those are emotional attributes such as passionate, caring or sensitive. This is only partially true for the three examined female political leaders. This assumption mostly coincides with the news coverage of EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, most of all during her pre-election period. During this time, she is very often described as passionate or launching a charm offensive. In total she is described with such attributes 37 out of 100 times. For Thatcher this is only partly applicable. She is occasionally described as caring (of her people), which the left-wing *Guardian* turns into the nanny image. This is used in four out of the 13 articles published by the *Guardian* during the crisis. Another phrase she is constantly confronted with, including a more negative connotation, is *strident female*. A phrasing stereotypically only used in reference to women in order to point out their combative behaviour, which Thatcher did not like and opposed. Nevertheless, 13 out of 100 articles use this phrasing on her. Other than that, the opposite of female attributes is applied to Thatcher and Merkel, who seem to be described with mostly stereotypically male attributes. The most common attributes used in reference to Thatcher are tough, robust and firm, a total of 31 out of 100 times. Finally, Merkel is mostly being described as mathematical or analytical, in total 17 out of 100 times. Before the two have assumed office in their respective countries, the top political position has previously been occupied only by men. Therefore also the language regarding leadership is run by a male-dominated arena. Consequently, a good leader is described with stereotypically male attributes. This concludes that, in order to establish oneself in the male-oriented arena, women have to adapt to it, which Thatcher and Merkel allegedly have succeeded in.

Another aspect all three women face, is the focus on the physical appearance, resulting from double standards and stereotypical thinking that a woman competing for political office has to be both, qualified but also represent a well-groomed woman. In Thatcher's news reporting, in particular, her hair style and glasses are highly discussed and are

mentioned in 23 out of 100 articles. In Merkel's news reporting it is also her hair that catches the attention of the media, but also her coloured blazer gets regular attention, which are mentioned in 19 out of 100 articles altogether. For Ursula von der Leyen it is also mainly her blazer and her handbag that are being discussed in 'only' eight out of 100 articles. If you calculate all three women together, in total 50 out of 300 articles mentioned the physical appearance of the female politicians, namely every sixth article. However, for Thatcher it was almost a quarter of all articles that mentioned her physical appearance. While overall the focus on the physical appearance has decreased over time comparing Thatcher, Merkel and von der Leyen, one can, nevertheless, still see regular attention to that. Still, in 2019, looking at von der Leyen, almost every tenth article is not only talking about the political message of the female politician, but also mentions her clothing, even though it does not add any relevance to the rest of the article. In reference to the theory of *gender stereotyping* this eventually leads to detract attention from the important topics in politics, namely the policies and the content of speeches. Similar to the mentioned use of Ms. and Mrs., also in this respect it is interesting to see that the importance of physical appearance seems to be decreasing when comparing the pre-election phase and the phase while managing crisis. For Thatcher, the mentioning of her physical appearance decreased from 27% (13/48) to 19% (10/52). For Merkel, the respective numbers are 19% (9/48) and 15% (8/52). For von der Leyen, the numbers decreased as well from 10% (5/48) during the pre-election period to 6% (3/52) during the management of the crisis. This leads to the conclusion that the physical appearance of the female politician received more attention before she is actually in office. The focus on that decreases, however, once she is office.

The last aspect concerns the image of motherhood. However, this topic will be even deeper discussed under hypothesis four. Thatcher was known for her tough leadership style, however occasionally she is also described as *caring* in some newspaper articles. Though she never depicted herself as that she is often called *mother of the nation* or *grandmother of the nation* (she preferred the second) and in total 24 out of 100 articles use this imagery. Looking at Angela Merkel this is rather different. Not having children of her own is of particular interest during the pre-election phase. It can be said that this fact potentially even tries to undermine her political leadership abilities in particular within the two German newspapers as almost half (eleven out of 24) of the newspaper article mention her childlessness. During the refugee crisis this attitude changed completely and instead of worrying about her not having children of her own, one rather

regards her as *Mother of the Nation*, even calling her *Mutti* (=Mummy). This even becomes her most used nickname during that time. Interestingly, 81% of the articles from the period of the crisis (42 out of 52) use the mother image or the term *Mutti* in reference to Merkel at least once. Ursula von der Leyen, too, is subject to the motherhood image, or in her case rather the mentioning of the fact that she herself has seven children. This is mentioned 18 out of 100 times in her overall news coverage.

As illustrated above, all three women were and still are subject to *gendered mediation* and a media bias in terms of *gender stereotyping* in their media coverage. However, one cannot simply confirm the first hypothesis without any further ado. While it is true that even today von der Leyen faces *gender stereotyping*, when looking at the quantity of the examples for each aspect, one can see that gendered news reporting is indeed decreasing. Thatcher's news reporting overall, for example includes 23 out of 100 articles reporting on her physical appearance, Merkel's media coverage counts 19 out of 100, and Ursula von der Leyen's news reporting 'only' includes eight out of 100 examples. Not only is it decreasing for the next female politician, but it is also decreasing for each politician when comparing the pre-election period to the period of the crisis. For von der Leyen for example, who even has the shorted time span from her time of being elected until the analysed crisis, the articles mentioning her physical appearance decreased from 10% to 6% as mentioned before. A similar pattern is identifiable throughout most other aspects as well. Other aspects itself have changed over time. Most newspaper reporting about Thatcher used *Mrs.* Thatcher, the prefix for a married woman, as the most common way to call her, even during her term as prime minister, while not a single article called her *Ms.* Thatcher. During Merkel's news coverage the prefix *Ms.* appears and alternatingly she is being referred to as *Ms.* and *Mrs.* Merkel, however, by that time, the tradition develops to call her by her last name, full name or official title. In the case of von der Leyen the use of *Mrs.* has almost disappeared. While occasionally foreign newspapers tend to call her *Ms.* von der Leyen, calling her by her full name or last name overall becomes the usual way to call her. In general, this shows that even though female politicians are still referred to with the female prefix *Ms.*, yet they are not referred to by the married form and therefore being directly linked to their husband. More so, a tendency is visible to also call female politicians by their last name and official title. Therefore, while *gender stereotyping* is still apparent, it has in fact decreased over time and the manifestation is also not as strong as it used to be.

The second hypothesis suggested that international newspapers tend to be less critical of the female political leader than national newspapers. Throughout the news coverage of all three female political leaders this assumption is confirmed. In general, the two foreign newspapers, the European-level *Financial Times* as well as the global-level *New York Times*, have not criticised any of the three of their own volition. If there has been a critical tone, it was quoting the notion of the national media coverage. The national newspaper, in contrast, are more critical and sceptical towards their respective politician. Examples where this differing opinion is especially overt includes the overall image of Angela Merkel during the refugee crisis and von der Leyen's almost gender-balanced commission. The two international newspapers praise Merkel for her warm heart and humane approach in taking so many refugees, while the Germans were highly critical of her actions. Granted it is easier for the two foreign newspapers to praise her humanity than it is for the two German newspapers as Germany was directly affected by the wave of refugees entering the country, once again being connected to the distance the two foreign newspapers have to the actual crisis. Secondly, von der Leyen had previously promised to compose a gender-balanced commission, with an equal amount of men and women. Eventually it is composed of 15 men and twelve women. While the *New York Times* praises her for the most gender-balanced commission to date, the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* claims that von der Leyen has failed her promise. The same holds true for Thatcher, while the *New York Times* praised her for her neoliberal policies, the *Guardian* continuously calls her a *strident female*.

The third hypothesis claimed that the right-wing national newspapers are less critical of the female political leaders, who all derive from conservative right-wing parties, than the left-wing national newspaper are. After looking at the different media across different countries, this hypothesis looked at the differences in the domestic media coverage. Therefore, looking at the differences in the reporting between the left-wing *Guardian* and right-wing *Times*, and the difference between the left-wing *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the right-wing *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* respectively. In general, the case for this hypothesis is not as overt as for hypothesis two. Concerning Margaret Thatcher, the right-wing *Times* is indeed more openly supportive of her than the left-wing *Guardian*. Examples being when the *Times* openly cheers after Thatcher's election and the *Guardian* constantly quoting people that are opposing Thatcher as prime minister for multiple different reasons. In regard to Ursula von der Leyen, the situation is similar. As mentioned earlier, the left-wing *Süddeutsche Zeitung* outlines von der Leyen's failure in composing

a gender-balanced commission. The right-wing *FAZ* mentions von der Leyen's suitability for Brussels several times, as she is returning to her birthplace and is following the footsteps of her father. In the case of Merkel, the differences are not as continuously as overt. During the pre-election period, however, the differences were still clear. While the conservative right-wing *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* subtly shows its support for the right-wing conservative candidate Merkel, in form of praising her boldness, the left-wing *Süddeutsche Zeitung* acts contrary. They openly support Merkels opponent, Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder, who was German Chancellor at that time. Later, in 2015, the tone of the *Süddeutsche* has softened. During the pre-election period, this newspaper was openly supporting its candidate of choice, Schröder, therefore the tone towards Merkel was especially critical and sceptical. While the *Süddeutsche* is not supporting all of the decisions and actions initiated by Merkel during the crisis, one can hear an underlying tone of respect towards Merkel. In addition, even the *Süddeutsche* is calling her *Mutti*, meaning the phrasing has passed onto all Germans and Merkel is regarded as the mother of the whole nation, despite not everyone agreeing with everything she does. While the latter example is not as overt as the rest, one can nevertheless say that overall the left-wing newspapers are indeed more critical of the female conservative politician than the right-wing newspapers. The differences are even stronger during the pre-election period when the left-wing newspaper is supporting the left-wing candidate and the differences are fading outside of the election period, as most of all visible during Merkel's media coverage. Therefore, the third hypothesis is confirmed, however the differences during the period of the crisis are not as strong as during the campaigning.

The fourth hypothesis stated that *gender stereotyping*, such as the image of motherhood in particular, affects all female politicians as all of them are forced into the same stereotyping no matter if it does actually reflect their private lives. One example is the question of being mother in real life or not. Therefore, coming back to the aspect of motherhood, which was briefly discussed before. In regard to the private lives of the three politicians, the topic of motherhood is different for each of them. Angela Merkel does not have children of her own, Margaret Thatcher is a mother of twins, while Ursula von der Leyen has seven children. As outlined earlier, the image of motherhood played a role in each case. Despite rather being known for her tough political style, Thatcher was occasionally also described as caring and also as *mother* and *grandmother of the nation*. This also coincides with her private life as a mother. At the beginning this is also similar in the case of Merkel. In the pre-election period, it is above average mentioned that

Merkel is an academic without children, which is aimed at undermining her political leadership abilities. Then the situation changes completely. Ten years later, during the crisis her childlessness does not matter anymore and is not even mentioned. Rather Merkel has suddenly become the *Mutti (=mummy) of the nation*. Despite not having children, 81% (42 out of 52) of the examined articles newspaper articles during the crisis call her *Mutti* at some point. So even though Merkel does not have children in her private life, the motherhood image is above average applied to her in the period of the crisis. Ursula von der Leyen is a mother of seven, and while this fact is indeed mentioned, it is not an aspect that is highly discussed. In total, it is mentioned 18 out 100 times while mainly within the two international newspapers, whose readers might have not been as familiar with von der Leyen's background as German readers. In von der Leyen's media coverage, the motherhood image mainly appears by mentioning the number of children she has. For Merkel the overarching image of *Mummy of the nation* is created. Judging from the sample of the three female political leaders, it is particularly interesting that the motherhood image is applied most on the one, who does not have children in her private life. This confirms and highlights the hypothesis that *gender stereotyping* affects all female politicians no matter if it does or does not reflect their private lives.

8. CONCLUSION

This master thesis was written in 2019/2020 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of female political leaders in Europe. Margaret Thatcher became the first ever European woman to govern a European state in 1979 and pioneered for many other European women such as Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen. In 2019, for the first time, a woman in form of Ursula von der Leyen was elected to head the European Commission, therefore the aim of this master thesis was to analyse whether the *gendered mediation* and media bias in form of *gender stereotyping* in the media coverage of those female leaders has remained the same over the past years or if it has changed in some ways. In order to conduct this analysis, three well-known and influential European leaders were chosen, which are Margaret Thatcher, Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen. Those three women were or still are the leaders of the United Kingdom, Germany and the European Commission. In addition, they were all the first woman to govern their respective countries, they all derive from conservative parties and they govern nations or an EU institution that is relevant on the world stage. The latter guarantees enough media coverage from newspapers all over the world.

After a general introduction in chapter one, the second chapter introduced the two pillars this paper relies on: First, *gendered mediation*, deriving from feminist theory, and second, media bias, in form of *gender stereotyping*, deriving from communication theory. The different aspects and manifestations of *gendered mediation* are the amount of media coverage, the over-emphasis on personal attributes and characteristics, mentioning the female leaders marital status, the image of motherhood, the foregrounding of their physical appearance and look, women being held to different standards than men, the likability trap, the use of nicknames as well as gender markers. The used communication theory was the gender bias in the media and its systemic use of stereotypes which includes pointing women out as aggressive or combative, describing them as less viable than men, dissociating them from public life and pointing out direct female stereotypes.

The third chapter focused on the four hypotheses and the methodology of this master thesis, for which a qualitative content analysis was used. This also included the two pillars named above, looking at feminist theory in form of the different aspects of *gendered mediation* as well as using the communication theory of *gender stereotyping*. This is important to explain why the different portrayal of female politicians matters as it does in

fact influence the opinion of the public. The aim was also to put the three female political leaders in a historical perspective, while a cross-border and cross-level analysis was undertaken. This was achieved by looking, for each politician, at roughly the same time frames and roughly the same conditions in form of first, the electoral campaign period and second, during a political crisis during the term in office. For each politician a sample of 100 newspaper articles was analysed, which included one left-wing national newspaper (*Guardian* and *Süddeutsche*), a right-wing national-newspaper (*Times* and *FAZ*), a European-level newspaper (*Financial Times*) as well as a global-level newspaper (*New York Times*).

The fourth chapter then focused on the media coverage of former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during her first pre-election campaign as well as during the miners' strike, a main crisis Thatcher had to manage. The main findings looking at her media coverage was that she was surpassingly often called Mrs. Thatcher, while her male colleagues were commonly referred to by their full title or last name. As mentioned, the form *Mrs.* can be regarded as even more fatal than *Ms.* because it highlights that the woman is married at first read. Additionally, her tough leadership style was often repeated leading to her nickname *Iron Lady*, which she is still known as today. Despite being known for her tough style, she was occasionally also referred to as mother or grandmother of the nation during the political crisis, meaning that the motherhood image was applied on her. Particularly evident was also the focus on the physical appearance as her hair, glasses and clothing were mentioned frequently.

The fifth chapter then turned to the media coverage of German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her first pre-election campaign as well as during the migrant crisis. In regard to Merkel, the analysis showed similar findings: The designation *Mrs.* Merkel still played a huge part in her media coverage, however also the phrasing *Ms.* Merkel appeared. Interestingly, over time, *gendered mediation* decreases while more and more articles started to call Angela Merkel by her official title as well as simply by her last name. In addition, the media also compared Merkel to her British predecessor Thatcher numerous times despite the fact that the only main thing both have in common is the fact that they are the first woman to govern their nation. During the pre-election period, Merkel was also known under the two nicknames *Angie* or *Kohl's girl*, however they were non-existent during the crisis. During the crisis a new nickname had appeared namely *Mutti* (=Mummy), as she was commonly referred to as the mother of the nation so to say. This

fact is of particular interest as it reveals a significant contrast compared to her pre-election period. In fact, Angela Merkel has no children of her own and it was her childlessness that caught a lot media attention during the pre-election period as it was seen as a potential fact to undermine her leadership abilities. Further, Merkel's physical appearance attracted large media attention as her hair and blazer were of high interest in numerous articles.

The sixth chapter then focused on Ursula von der Leyen and her media coverage during her pre-election period as well as the commissioner crisis when three of her proposed Commissioners were rejected, which resulted in a later start of Ursula von der Leyen's term. For von der Leyen, too, several aspects were particularly striking. Without two minor exceptions von der Leyen was not called Mrs. anymore, instead she was referred to as Ms. von der Leyen or even most commonly by her official title or last name only. Von der Leyen was quite regularly compared to her father but more importantly she was above average compared to her German 'ally' Merkel, who she is allegedly also good friends with. Her physical appearance, mainly in form of her handbag or blazer, was mentioned a few times but did not constitute a striking aspect in her media coverage. What is indeed worth mentioning is von der Leyen's description with particularly female attributes especially during the pre-election period. The image of motherhood was ambiguous during her news coverage as during the pre-election period, especially the two foreign newspapers, frequently mentioned that von der Leyen is a mother of seven, however during the period of the crisis, this fact lost attention.

Finally, chapter seven summarised and theorised the findings. The first hypothesis, claiming that women in leadership positions are subject to *gender stereotyping* today, was discovered to be partially true. While it is true that even today von der Leyen faces *gendered mediation* and the systemic use of stereotypes, one has to acknowledge that the number of articles including gendered mediation and stereotyping has decreased overall as well as the level has changed. Both, the second hypothesis, claiming that international newspapers are less critical of the female politician, as well as the third hypothesis, claiming that the right-wing national newspaper is less critical of the conservative female politician than the left-wing national newspaper, were found to be true overall. However, regarding the third hypothesis, the differences among the left-wing and right-wing newspapers in terms of critical news coverage tends to slightly become less when the female politician is in office. Likewise, the fourth hypothesis, claiming that all female politicians are forced into the same stereotyping no matter if it actually reflects their

private lives, was found true as well. This was examined by looking at the motherhood image, which affected all three female politicians. Interestingly, the motherhood image was applied most on Angela Merkel, who does not actually have children in her private life, as she was depicted as the mother of the nation and was nicknamed Mutti (Mummy).

To conclude, this master thesis discovered as the first main finding that *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotyping* is still present today, however the level and the manifestation differs from its occurrence around 40 years ago. In 1979, it was accepted to call a prime minister *Mrs. Thatcher*, while other male leaders were called by their official title in that same sentence. Today this usage presumably would not be acceptable and most likely newspapers would be called out if they used this overt reference today. Hence, the media refrains from that usage and female leaders are indeed called by their official title most of the time. Another factor for that is that Thatcher was the first female leader, and in order to point her out as different, the prefix *Mrs.* was used. Meanwhile today, while female leaders are still underrepresented, it is not something totally out of the norm and has not to be pointed out as different by using a different title. However, during the analysis of all three women, the reference to the private sphere, where women traditionally belonged to in the past, is still evident. Women were always and still are judged on their physical appearance. This remains the same from Thatcher to von der Leyen. The ultimate culmination of femininity, however, remains motherhood, therefore all three women are subject to *gender stereotyping* including the image of motherhood. Margaret Thatcher was not known for her soft leader leadership style, nevertheless she was called mother of the nation or grandmother of the nation by several journalists. Calling someone mother of the nation reached its peak with Merkel and the common usage of the term Mummy in reference to her, despite her actual childlessness. While Ursula von der Leyen is not called mother of the nation, the media often mentions the number of children she has as she is commonly being referred to as “mother of seven”. Therefore, all three women were and still are strongly connected to the private sphere, however the manifestation of how this is presented in the newspapers has changed in some ways over time.

The second main finding is that the use of *gendered mediation* and the media bias including the systemic use of *gender stereotypes*, varies when comparing the news coverage during the pre-election period with the news coverage during the crisis. For all three female political leaders, it holds true that the news coverage during the pre-election

period included more examples of *gendered mediation and gender stereotypes* than the news coverage during the crisis. Therefore, one can conclude that *gender stereotypes* admittedly persist throughout the whole political career of a woman. Nevertheless, the media bias is strongest before a woman enters the top position, and once a female politician manages to overcome this glass ceiling, the media bias decreases. To gain this decrease in the use of stereotypes, a woman does not have to be in office for long. The example of Ursula von der Leyen shows that this result is also achieved almost immediately after election, as she showed fewer signs of *gendered mediation and gender stereotyping* within months.

As already mentioned, this master thesis was written on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of female political leaders in Europe as in 2019 von der Leyen became the first woman to lead the European Commission, 40 years after Thatcher becoming prime minister of the UK. This is also the main limitation of this paper. Ursula von der Leyen is not a leader of a country, such as Merkel and Thatcher, but leads an institution and was elected in a somewhat different way compared to the other two. In addition, due to Ursula von der Leyen's recent election, her examined time frames are slightly shorter than the ones of the other two. Likewise, this paper only compares female political leaders with one another, but does not compare female political leaders with their male counterparts. Lastly, this paper does also not take into account linguistic aspects and differences, which includes that English newspapers used the phrasing *Ms.* and *Mrs.* a lot more often than German newspapers uses *Frau*, which potentially might be a linguistic difference.

Nevertheless, enough similarities, such as party affiliation and being the first woman to lead the nation or the institution, existed among the three that enabled a sufficient comparison of their media coverage. However, this analysis is only to be taken as a first indicator of the changes that occurred in 40 years. This first comparison of the media coverage of female politicians in 40 years identified that a *gendered mediation and gender bias* including systemic use of stereotypes do indeed prevail in modern news coverage, however the amount, level and manifestation of *gendered mediation and media bias* has decreased. Once again, this analysis is a first indicator of the current development concerning the media coverage of female political leaders. However, for the future research, the best possible comparison, in terms of analysing the development of the media coverage of the first female political leaders in Europe, is when more countries in Europe have a female leader. The ideal case would be when France has a female President.

In that way, the media coverage of the female leaders of the three most powerful countries in Europe can be analysed. However, at the moment it is impossible to predict when this is going to take place. France is yet to have a female president, however France, contrary to the United Kingdom and Germany, has a presidential system rather than a parliamentary system and becoming the President in a presidential system can be regarded as one of the few true remaining glass ceilings for women as shown by France and the United States, where a woman came incredibly close but ultimately lost to her male counterpart.

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10. ABSTRACT (English)

This master this was written on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of female political leaders in Europe as Ursula von der Leyen became the first female president of the European Commission 40 years after Margret Thatcher became prime minister of the UK. This thesis shows whether and how the media coverage as well as the media bias towards female political leaders has changed within that time frame.

To analyse several female political leaders in Europe, who were the first female to govern, this paper includes an analysis of the media coverage of Margaret Thatcher, the first ever European woman to become head of government in 1979, Angela Merkel, the first female German chancellor, and Ursula von der Leyen, the first female president of the European Commission, the most recent example of a female political leader. The paper puts them in a historical, cross-border and cross-level perspective.

In order to conduct this analysis, this thesis has employed a qualitative content analysis including two different pillars. The first pillar included the feminist theory of *gendered mediation*, explaining how female politicians are portrayed in a different way to their male colleagues. The second pillar included a communication theory and examined the media bias and the systemic use of stereotypes used for female politicians.

The research unveiled that female political leaders still face *gendered mediation* and a media bias today, however the amount *gendered mediation* and *gender stereotypes* has in fact decreased, while some aspects in itself have changed. The results also showed that the media bias towards each of the three female leaders was higher before they assumed office and decreased once they were in office. In total, this paper serves as a first indicator of the development of the media coverage of female political leaders in Europe.

11. ABSTRACT (German)

Diese Masterarbeit wurde anlässlich des 40. Jahrestags weiblicher politischer Führungspersonen in Europa geschrieben, als Ursula von der Leyen, 40 Jahre nach der Ernennung von Margret Thatcher zur Premierministerin des Vereinigten Königreichs, zur ersten weiblichen Präsidentin der Europäischen Kommission wurde. Diese Arbeit zeigt, ob und wie sich die Medienberichterstattung sowie der *Media Bias* gegenüber weiblichen politischen Führungspersonlichkeiten in diesem Zeitraum verändert hat.

Daher enthält diese Arbeit eine Analyse der Medienberichterstattung über Margaret Thatcher, die 1979 als erste europäische Frau Regierungschefin wurde, Angela Merkel, die erste deutsche Bundeskanzlerin, und Ursula von der Leyen, die erste Präsidentin der EU Kommission, das neuste Beispiel einer weiblichen politischen Führerin. Die Analyse stellt die Frauen in eine historische, grenz- und ebenenübergreifende Perspektive.

40 Jahre liegen zwischen Thatcher und von der Leyen, daher war das Ziel dieser Masterarbeit, zu untersuchen, ob sich die Medienberichterstattung über weibliche Politikerinnen in diesem Zeitraum verändert hat und wenn ja, auf welche Weise.

Um diese Analyse durchzuführen, wurde in dieser Arbeit eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse mit zwei verschiedenen Säulen durchgeführt. Die erste Säule beinhaltete die feministische Theorie der *Gendered Mediation*, die erklärt, wie Politikerinnen anders als ihre männlichen Kollegen dargestellt werden. Die zweite Säule beinhaltete eine Kommunikationstheorie und untersuchte den *Media Bias* und den systematischen Gebrauch von Stereotypen, die für Politikerinnen verwendet werden.

Die Forschung enthüllte, dass weibliche politische Führungspersonen heute, nach wie vor, mit *Gendered Mediation* und einem *Media Bias* konfrontiert sind, dass jedoch das Ausmaß der *Gendered Mediation* und der Geschlechterstereotypen abgenommen hat, während sich einige Aspekte in sich verändert haben. Die Ergebnisse zeigten auch, dass der *Media Bias* gegenüber jeder der drei Politikerinnen vor ihrem Amtsantritt höher war und nach ihrer Amtsübernahme abnahm. Insgesamt dient dieses Papier als ein erster Gradmesser für die Entwicklung der Medienberichterstattung über weibliche politische Führerinnen in Europa.