

“Most voted women” – representations of gender in the Portuguese media coverage of the 2021 Presidential elections.

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The aim of this research is to examine the media representation of women politicians in the Portuguese press with a view to understand whether there are differing linguistic practices in how media discourse describes and represents gender. The focus of this study is the 2021 campaign for presidential elections in Portugal, in which five men candidates, including the incumbent President, faced two women candidates of opposing political fields, Ana Gomes and Marisa Matias. The study analyses the coverage of the presidential campaign in the run up to the election by extracting reports from a number of print media outlets (for the sake of comparability and viability, the media selected were traditional, print media outlets – Van der Pas & Aaldering 2020 – such as established broadsheets in the Portuguese public sphere). The reports are then examined by means of a mixed method approach, hinging on 1) a more discursive-analysis based approach looking at words, lexicalisation, presupposition (Lakoff 2003) and collocations, and 2) a more content-based approach examining topic selection such as personal and/or family traits and/or a focus on personal lives (Rohrbach et al. 2020) in order to learn whether the Portuguese media covers gender differently and whether there is any gender bias of significance (Fernandez-Garcia 2016). Preliminary research conducted so far suggests the following: an interplay between gender and class of some significance, with the ‘working class’ woman candidate often described by means of her ties to her hometown and family background; emotionally loaded language to describe the performance of the two women politicians in the coverage of campaign debates; in the aftermath of the election, the media coverage of the two women politicians resorted to collocations and adjectives which again lent a sentimental load to their representation (for example, *magoada* – “hurt” –, *arrumada* – “being over and done with,” an idiom), a discursive choice which was mostly absent from the coverage of the remaining men politicians. Because this is ongoing research, the paper will focus on the differing gendered linguistic representations in the media which have been collected so far relative to the women politicians who ran for President in 2021.

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