

HIGHER EDUCATION AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS MAKURDI, BENUE STATE NIGERIA

Political participation has over time been a major challenge faced by women both in the developed and developing countries. Despite, the fact that women constitute about 56% of the total population (NPC, 2011), they are discriminated against in the political process. This means that, women participation in politics is low. However, in order to enhance women political participation, many studies point out that education is of central importance. In most studies of political behavior it is found that women with higher education participate to a larger extent in political activities than individuals with less education (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Franklin 2004; Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012). Improving participation of women in Higher Education (HE) may be identified as one of the most significant developmental challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa (Oduga, 2005). Yet, this may influence their participation in politics.

At both the national and international levels, there is a growing academic interest in the level of participation of women in politics. In countries like USA, Europe, Austria, the rate of women participation in politics is low (Verba and Brady 2012). In Nigeria, among the Hausa people, women's access to political participation is exemplified by the emergence of Queen Amina of Zazzau, a renowned military and political leader who was reputed to be a formidable woman who personally led her army to the battlefield and succeeded in saving her people from extermination (Olojede, 2009; Mohammed, 1985). Queen Kambasa of the Ijo and Queen Owari of Ilesa were said to possess the same attributes. Elsewhere in Yorubaland, Madam Tinubu, who later became the Iyalode of Egba and Iyalode Efunsetan of Ibadan made history because they were able to assert themselves and applied their opinions. After the Second World War, Lady Oyinkan Abayomi founded the women's party and campaigned for the expansion of opportunities for women. In 1946, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti's lead Abeokuta Women Union projected and promoted special interest of women. Yet, in 1929, in the present south east Nigeria, there was the famous "Aba women riot" during which over 50 women lost their lives fighting injustices against women (See Uhuo, 2011; Irabor, 2011; Olojede, 2009; Mba, 1989). The riots were a testimony to the political vigour of women as well as women's capacity to mobilize. According to the United Nations (2005) Nigeria was classified as a low development country in respect of equality in educational accessibility with female adult literacy rate (ages 15 and above) for the country was 59.4% as against male 74.4%. However, majority of developing countries may be observed as having many girls discriminated against with regard to access to school by UNESCO (2007). Precisely, they comprise about 57% of all out-of-school children. Education could be seen as crucial for development and social empowerment, necessary for the realization of the equal participation of women in politics. In recent times, as a variable of international development, gender equality may serve as a major prerequisite in accessing foreign aid by the developing nations.

Zurita (2016), notes that there is a correlation between education and political participation among women. It means that, educated women have the tendencies of high political participation. Education is the process of becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner that leads to effective action upon it. An educated man/woman understands his/her world well enough to deal with it effectively. In the opinion of Edukugho (2002) cited in Imogie (2002), the prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenue, nor the strength of its

fortifications, but on the number of its cultivated citizens, men (and women) of education, enlightenment and character.

The difference in education and political participation between male and female to a great extent may have been so wide. Omolewa (2002), notes that a gross disparity exists between schools' enrolment of boys and girls in Nigeria. Social determinants, such as cultural beliefs - wifeinheritance, early/forced marriage and widowhood practices - obtainable in most rural and semiurban settlements and narratives of religion have continued to impede educational accessibility by women in the country. Moreover, the denial of inheritance and property rights, dysfunctional and gender-skewed development policies may have equally been constraining women from taking advantage of educational opportunities, and by implication, political participation and economic opportunities. However, the Eurocentric contextualization of male-gender privilege, impact of tenets of Christianity (and Islam), and more importantly, the colonial 'ideology of domesticity' ('housewifification') have all combined together to lay the foundation for women's educational disempowerment in our society. Indeed, they serve as the pivot around which other impediments revolve (Omolewa, 2002).

. It is opined that with a functional gender mainstreaming policy in place, all these odds could be meaningfully tackled, and Nigerian women would be better for it. More importantly, educational unevenness has been constraining women in globally from active socio-economic and political participation, unduly. According to INSTRAW (2007) the pattern of women's poverty in Nigeria has often been a consequence of unequal institutional gender-role ascriptions; accessibility to resources and institutions.

The woman gender may remain a highly indispensable social group in all aspects of human endeavor. The discourse on women participation in societal development may become a recurrent decimal, and this could be premised on the realization by stakeholders in development projects that women are central to the success of any development policy or initiative due to their numerical strength, productive and nurturing roles. The bigger picture of this argument is that women empowerment is crucial in all aspects of societal life.

Globally, tertiary education particularly may be said to have attracted new attention with gender implications as education could be recognized as an important determinant of living standards because of its immense contribution in the transformation of societies, through enhancement of the quality of life of the individual such as building up one's personality. Indeed, history points to the fact that rapid economic and technological developments, experienced globally have heralded the knowledge that society and improvement is directly derived from new inventions and research at the tertiary level of education (Genyi, 2012).

Resumen

Este estudio examinó la educación superior y la participación de las mujeres en la política Makurdi, Estado de Benue.

400 Los encuestados fueron muestreados para el estudio utilizando el método Taro Yamane. Cluster y simple aleatorio Se utilizaron técnicas de muestreo para los datos cuantitativos, mientras que el muestreo intencional se utilizó para Estudio cualitativo. Los datos se recopilaban mediante cuestionarios y entrevistas con informantes clave. Datos recolectados para el estudio fue presentado y analizado tanto cuantitativa como cualitativamente. Los datos cuantitativos fueron presentado en tablas de distribución normal, porcentajes simples, frecuencias, desviación media y gráficos. La Los hallazgos del estudio revelaron que hay un aumento en el nivel de acceso de las mujeres a la ES en Makurdi, el El nivel de participación de las mujeres en la política en Makurdi es bajo. Los hallazgos del estudio revelaron relación insignificante entre la ES y la participación política de las mujeres, los principales desafíos que enfrentan las mujeres que participaban en la política eran la política monetaria, la educación política deficiente, el padrismo y la violencia política. El estudio recomendó que el gobierno federal hiciera esfuerzos para cerrar la brecha entre la participación educativa y política de hombres y mujeres. Por ejemplo, por extra asignaciones presupuestarias para la educación de la mujer y becas. Es probable que esto sea más efectivo en áreas donde los escasos recursos de las familias pobres afectan la capacidad de los padres para enviar a las niñas a instituciones superiores. Promover la incidencia sobre el acceso de las mujeres a la ES y su participación en la política, El gobierno y las ONG deben promover la inclusión y la transversalización de género en la política de puestos de toma de decisiones; Por lo tanto, aumentar las oportunidades de las mujeres en estos campos parece ser un forma racional de mejorar el acceso de las mujeres a la educación superior y la participación política. Los partidos políticos deben promover la participación de la mujer de manera más eficaz, y debería desarrollar mecanismos de rendición de cuentas y buscar asistencia técnica, incluso de la sociedad civil, para alcanzar este objetivo.

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Supra-madre: A Persona of Female Leadership for the Twenty First Century

For half a century, Elsa Chaney's conceptual model of female political leadership in Latin America has served as the linchpin of numerous gender and leadership studies. Radical changes have transpired in that time span. In Latin America, eight female presidencies materialized since the debut of Chaney's *supermadre* in 1971, with over half in the last two decades alone. Writing in 2006, Leslie Schwindt-Bayer signaled a lacuna of "empirical research ... on the attitudes and behaviors of female politicians ... and how they have changed since Chaney's characterization, if at all" (570). The increasing numbers of women that pursue public office or executive positions in organizations make that a timely inquiry. Choices about which paths to take to those positions and which leadership models to adopt once they arrive are critical factors of sustainability.

In its simplified version, the *supermadre* model embodies the premise that women exercise political leadership at the municipal or national level as an extension of the maternal role, where the political setting translates as an amplified version of the home. Even in the new millennium, it would be irresponsible to classify this model as completely obsolete. The link between social imaginaries and the maternal construct endures. Francie Chassen-López notes that while "feminist scholars in the United States and Europe" take a dim view of "the repeated utilization of the discourse of motherhood," it remains "an incredibly effective political stimulant in Latin America" (188). As recently as 2015, experts reiterated that "maternalism's emphasis on caretaking, compassion and domestic management still shapes the public's response to female political leadership" in Latin America (Franceschet et al. 3). While these observations spotlight a specific region, a global sampling indicates that the political application of the maternal construct is not in actuality altogether absent from cultures outside the region.

One of the world's most powerful leaders, Chancellor Angela Merkel, has been designated *Mutti* by the media and a sector of the German electorate although she is not a mother in the biological sense (Murray 14). Angela Leadsom, candidate for Prime Minister in 2016, suggested that as mother and grandmother she was more heavily invested in the future of the United Kingdom than her childless rival, Theresa May (Hope). Only months later, the media and Member of Parliament Anne Jenkins urged the newly installed Prime Minister May to play the role of "nanny" and tackle the problem of childhood obesity (qtd. in Baird; Foges). A strategy to "humanize" Hillary Clinton in the 2016 U.S. election portrayed her as "a mother and a grandmother who would do anything to help our children thrive" (Strauss). Commentary on the French election of 2017 claimed that Marine Le Pen's campaign utilized maternal rhetoric to "sanitize the party's image" (Chira). In December 2018, after mediating a heated exchange with U.S. President Donald Trump and Senator Chuck Schumer, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi explained, "I was trying to be the mom" (Tcholakian). Maternal imagery persists across cultures. And yet, a wide lens view of the political track records of these leaders demonstrates that the real or perceived maternal qualities ascribed to their personas have not circumscribed their political *modus operandi*. In contrast, Chaney acknowledged the *supermadre's* intrinsic constraints: "women's universal task of motherhood has profoundly influenced the boundaries and style of their interventions in public life" (10). Given that the *supermadre* model retains varying degrees of status in political contexts by virtue of social imaginaries, the argument for its residual influence cannot be completely

overruled. However, social imaginaries and social realities encounter acute points of discord when a model that “extends traditional sex roles into the political sphere” and “reinforces patriarchy” (Chassen-López 188) is superimposed on twenty first century praxis. This circumstance encompasses more than a reshaping of the style of female political intervention. A diminishing market for fatherhood as the normalized image of political leadership over time potentially reshapes the style of male political intervention. Herein lies the case for an altered model. For containment, this discussion of that model is situated in the Chilean context, with specific application to the political record of Michelle Bachelet.

My observations comprehend at least three distinguishing features of the recast model. First, the *supra-madre* is a hybrid that interfaces both traditional and nontraditional gender roles. In Chile, its early stages of development unfold in the appointments of several women to high-profile posts over time, with notable acceleration in the twenty-first century. Soledad Alvear became Chile’s first female Foreign Minister in 2000. In 2002, Bachelet became Minister of Defense, the first woman to hold that position in Chile and Latin America, and one of very few to hold it in the world. In 2006, Bachelet became Chile’s first female Head of State. Carolina Tohá, who became Chile’s first female Minister Secretary General of Government in 2009, was also the first woman to serve as president of the Party for Democracy in 2012 and the first female mayor of Santiago. That same year, Barbara Figueroa became the first female leader of a multi-union in Chile and in Latin America. In 2014, Isabel Allende became Chile’s first female head of congress and Bachelet was elected for a second presidential term. None of these appointments falls within the category of traditional sex roles. Moreover, their execution logically mandated behaviors that were not in strict compliance with the *supermadre* paradigm.

One catalyst for the altered paradigm came from the male sector. Bachelet’s predecessor, President Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006), appointed more women to upper echelon posts than had been appointed in the previous 40 years (Izquierdo and Navia 82). Analysts link this action to the call for gender equity, a successful rallying point of the 2005 Bachelet campaign (82). Chaney described a far different setting for the *supermadre*: “Many [women] find themselves marginated to old line ministries and agencies far removed from power, social innovation, and change ... few women of the left attain front rank in government or party hierarchies” (339). The Bachelet CV indicates a much-altered landscape. The post of Minister of Defense placed her uniquely close to the center of “power, social innovation, and change” on the heels of Chile’s transition to democracy. Her two presidencies placed her squarely in the center. To press the point, her two presidential terms, her post as Executive Director for UN Women, and her current post as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights rank at a considerable distance from “marginated” roles.

The Lagos appointments not only cultivated a degree of receptivity to women in nontraditional power positions but also paved the way for the “Bachelet Phenomenon”— the unprecedented rise of female outsiders to the executive office. This is based in part on the theory that “male attitudes about the suitability of female leaders are more prone to fluctuation based on pro- or anti-egalitarian cues from elites” (Morgan and Buice 646). While the Lagos cue appeared to favor Bachelet’s tenure as Minister of Defense, which yielded substantial political capital, the executive office was still perceived as an inviolable bastion in *tierra de hombres*. In the latter case, public opinion prevailed and Bachelet’s *Concertación* party backed her candidacy, albeit “a regañadientes,” grudgingly (Dockendorff 167). Given the stakes, this was not surprising. Bachelet’s breach threatened to dismantle the established order that Chaney claimed

systematically “marginated” female politicians to low impact positions while reserving high profile posts for male counterparts.

Where Bachelet did not meet all the criteria of the *supermadre* model, the *supra-madre* allowed for substantial accommodation. The public formed a connection with her “weaknesses,” as defined by traditional Chilean social norms and political profiles, and perceived in her the requisite combination of qualities to represent their humanity. Rubén Dittus expands on this: “One does not vote for the person but, rather, for the imaginary that the candidate represents...it is the common citizen that ends up creating the candidate” (43, 46). Therefore, they created her in their own image as the “everyday” Chilean, despite her privileged upbringing and multiple violations of alleged norms. Just as the *supermadre* model is not entirely a product of intentional design, neither is the *supra-madre*. I view it as the sociopolitical outcome of what Deborah Frieze and Margaret Wheatley have coined “the perfect storm:” a “result of a number of discrete and often invisible factors converging in perfect synchrony” (Wheatley and Frieze). In the Bachelet case, those dynamics included broad scale disillusionment with political parties, diminishing conservatism both socially and politically, and endemic disengagement from the status quo. These game-changers were not transitory elements in concert with an anomalous political shift as some claimed. Rather, they were the culmination of processes that incubated over time in both detectable and undetectable undercurrents of social transformation.

The pronouncement that Bachelet’s election signaled “a leap forward for women in one of the world’s most machista societies” (Vogler, *Chile’s*) foreshadowed departures from the status quo. In a country with gender roles inextricably tied to the patriarchal template for centuries, there is value in the claim that “in few years, a region known for its secular machismo seems to have been converted into the vanguard of equality between sexes, at least at the peak of political power” (Marugán and Durá). Yet, does this signal a sustainable transformation? While a deep probing of the impact of Bachelet’s presidencies on the preponderance of *machismo* exceeds the parameters of this discussion, the concept of *machismo* merits consideration as a counterpoint to the *supra-madre* model. Prior to the 2005 Bachelet election, Renee Mengo observed that female political integration had gained traction based on visible alterations to the social structure:

women have come to be co-protagonists of public life, in the parties and social movements, in electoral processes and fields of power. And her incorporation has produced in the politics, just like in the social collective, the most important revolution of the twentieth century. Society is not the same and neither is the place of the woman in that society. (202)

Hindsight provides an informed perspective. In the 2005 election, Bachelet captured almost equal percentages of male (53.7) and female (53.3) votes, thus indicating no disproportionate bias on the part of male voters at that time (Navia 316). A Latinobarómetro survey conducted four months before Bachelet’s first election revealed that only 26 percent of Chileans agreed that men were better political leaders than women (Franceschet 19). Admittedly, that statistic does not guarantee that more women will run for office, that more women will be elected, nor that gender bias has been completely eliminated from processes. What it does confirm is a shift in attitudes about female political suitability since the Chaney study.

Additional research conducted in 2014 in the United States with 85 women in high power positions in 60 companies offers insight into developments in female leadership in general. The study group scored female leadership traits highest in the areas of “assertiveness, ego-drive, abstract reasoning, urgency, and risk-taking,” indicating a general “results-and-action-oriented approach”

(Caliper 4). The researchers noted “personality traits of women leaders closely match what are universally considered to be ‘male leadership’ traits” (7). They also noted that female leaders practiced “both transformational and transactional leadership styles” (6). This validates the emergence of a model where traditional and nontraditional gender roles intersect. After tracking these kinds of studies over time, I find this to be a trend across many cultures.

The second distinguishing feature of the *supra-madre* model is that, in addition to challenging the patriarchal template, the *supra-madre* may co-opt it. At the onset, the first Bachelet term (2006-2010) seemed destined to perpetuate the *supermadre* model:

It would appear that the Chilean people were looking for a maternal figure with the hope that she could help heal the wounds left by the abusive dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. It is clear that Bachelet campaigned and was received by a majority of the Chilean people as a feminine maternal leader who was closer to the people than a male leader and whose ability to restore the health of the country depended upon her feminine attributes. (Haddad and Schweinle 104-05)

Yet, a close examination reveals an essential departure from the *supermadre* norm: this was not maternal imagery that reinforced patriarchy. In contrast to the negative association between patriarchy and authoritarianism, the maternal offered psychological compensation for male abandonment or abuse, both consequences of the military regime. This allowed for co-optation by the maternal constant. Here, the “maternal constant” is characterized by trustworthy and empathetic power practices. Far from a deficit, Bachelet’s status as a female head of household could transmit competence to a society where a third of children are raised by single mothers (“Writing”). It is problematic to assume that female leadership, even when assigned a symbolic representation of the maternal, arbitrarily reinforces patriarchy. In societies with histories of colonial or totalitarian systems, women have successfully orchestrated numerous subversive initiatives that challenged patriarchal protocol.

Although pre- and post-election commentary focused on how Bachelet’s gender might impact her governance, typecasting a leadership style based on gender is an inaccurate science at best. Mapping out specific sets of strengths and weaknesses by gender encounters numerous variables. A study conducted in Spain using created profiles of male and female leaders serves as illustration. Leaders of both genders with stereotypical female leadership styles received “significantly better evaluations” in measurements of competence, effectiveness, and desirable leadership characteristics, regardless of the gender of the leader or the evaluator (Cuadrado et al. 62). A broad scale comparison of results from studies of this kind produces one indisputable point of consensus: leadership expectations are in transition in both corporate and political structures across the globe.

An analysis of the Chaney model requires that a distinction be made between maternal and female leadership. In spite of some common denominators, they are not identical: female leadership is not unequivocally maternal at its core. Research in 2014 found that although “the majority [of people] ... make the assumption that women will excel at nurturing competencies,” the competencies that ranked highest in women— “taking initiative, displaying integrity/honesty, [and] driving for results”—do not support that assumption (Sherwin). In contrast, Chaney found that women in political positions were expected to function in the “nurturant and affectional tasks society assigns to women, rather than in the instrumental male role, which is defined as more aggressive, authoritarian, and achievement-oriented” (20). Those expectations were largely still

in play when Bachelet assumed the presidency in 2006. Subsequently, the new way of doing politics was expected to be short-lived:

It's evident that something changed in a dramatic way in the balance of symbolic power between women and men in the country... Since the arrival of Michelle Bachelet to the government a series of skirmishes was initiated, small tactical actions and strategies of masculine power in their fight to recuperate lost ground that they considered their property and privilege, as part of the "natural" order. (Valdés 267-68)

Attempts at recuperation floundered and the "natural" order of male preeminence was not completely restored. In 2005, two women campaigned for the presidency; one of them won. The 2013 runoff vote between two female candidates saw a woman win a second term.

I include the following comments about Bachelet by Chilean voters to press the case for an altered model:

To working women she was a survivor, ... men admired her approach to life; ... Surveys of the armed forces showed that a plurality considered her the best minister of defense in decades ... for men, she represented courage ... middle- and even upper-middle-class women could identify with her upbringing, her education, and her resilience. For young adults born after the coup ... she was a symbol of what it was possible to achieve in Chile ... They saw in her a person who could really give them the resources and the opportunity to be a part of the sociopolitical scene. First and foremost, Bachelet was perceived as a symbol of political, economic, and social change. (Fernández and Vera 13)

Had Bachelet conformed to the *supermadre* paradigm, it is doubtful she could have garnered the support and wielded the power to become a symbol of "political, economic, and social change." The fully invested female citizen-leader had arrived.

Changes in the sociopolitical dynamic were not readily comprehended by the established order even as the evolution of the *supra-madre* model was well underway. Teresa Carballal explains the roots of those changes as a consequence, albeit unintended, of the dictatorship:

The new female heads of state of this last decade ... were politicized during the brutal military regimes. They played a very big role in resistance movements, sometimes fighting alongside men and proving themselves capable as organizers, militants and leaders ... That formative period was characterized by a rejection of traditional forms of leadership and a more inclusive form of politics that didn't focus on gender or class as a condition to hold an important political role. (qtd. in Kubi)

The "rejection of traditional forms of leadership" translated to a growing disassociation with the patriarchal template. The very expectations that required a woman "as the maintainer of tradition ... to maintain practices that were not her own" actually served as a catalyst (Morello-Frosch 90). She was free on two accounts—both as a female and as an outsider—to approach the traditional as an "alien discourse" and "ironize it, modify it, [and] deconstruct it in order to expose its imperfect functioning ... as a project of resistance and realignment" (91). As Chaney's study established, female leadership in Latin America happens "under conditions of change that undermine tradition" (Paxton and Hughes 170).

Bachelet's second election indicated that Chileans of both genders were receptive to less conventional options. A view from the inside expands on the topic:

Although it is conservative discourse which ideologically confers a certain degree of “unity” on the Chilean population, it is clear that it is losing ground in the national psyche because of the process of modernisation in the country ... conservative norms which do not really represent our culture are prevalent ... Our society lacks new collective, symbolic reference points which give sense to people’s actions. (Palacios and Martínez 31)

I propose that what was framed as “novel” or “unorthodox” in Bachelet’s backstory helped forge one of the “new collective, symbolic reference points”—that of the *supra-madre*. By 2006, *Time* magazine depicted Bachelet as “revolutionizing this traditionally conservative Catholic country,” with her government viewed by some as a “menace to traditional values” (Edwards). As traditional values lost ground, so did the traditional, restrictive qualities of the *supermadre* paradigm.

An article on female leadership advises that “becoming a leader involves much more than being put in a leadership role, acquiring new skills, and adapting one’s skills to the requirements of that role. It involves a fundamental identity shift” (Ibarra et al.). Persistent opinions about female inability to execute power in masculine domains required Bachelet to surpass the domestic orientation of the *supermadre* construct. As Minister of Defense under Lagos, Bachelet’s decision to board a tank and ride through the flooded zones of Santiago not only gave her celebrity status as a “champion of the common good” (Kornblut 240), but also interfaced stereotypical masculine qualities of authority and control with feminine and maternal qualities of care and compassion. In the *supra-madre* role, Bachelet conveyed an image of particular resonance for the Chilean electorate as it “humanized” the use of military power and presence.

As stated, assumptions about gender and leadership styles can lead to flawed conclusions. The *supermadre* model suggested that female governance informed by the maternal construct would, in turn, accommodate expectations linked to commonly held gendered perceptions. There is, however, an essential caveat: not all female leaders fit female stereotypes and not all male leaders fit male stereotypes. Gaps exist between expectations and praxis, regardless of gender. A growing discourse on how contemporary styles of leadership reinforce the value of feminine qualities for male leaders raises new concerns (Colvin; Murray). If men adopt leadership traits perceived as feminine, will they lose status? Will they be evaluated as less competent? Likewise, would “the ability of women to learn how to act and think like men” assure that women would be “accepted as if they *were* men?” (Janeway 236). Those may now be irrelevant considerations. A global survey conducted in 2014 by Ketchum, an organization dedicated to leadership studies, revealed:

that to inspire trust, leaders of both genders need to avoid a “macho,” command-and-control approach to leadership communication, which tends to be one-way, domineering and even arrogant. Instead, we are seeing the birth of a new model of leadership communication based on transparency, collaboration, genuine dialogue, clear values and the alignment of words and deeds, a model being followed far more consistently by female leaders. This research finally puts to rest the flawed assumption that women need to act like old school male leaders to make their mark. (“Global Leadership”)

The *supra-madre* interfaces with the emergent model described here on several accounts. However, the changing landscape it comprises has not been fully mapped due to variations in the rate at which expectations make the necessary adaptations to changing contexts.

Undoubtedly, the political leadership model is a pivotal choice as women may still be evaluated based on gendered images of power and not on actual aptitude (D’Adamo et al. 92-93). Bachelet

acknowledged the risk: “I took a gamble to exercise leadership without losing my feminine nature” (“Bachelet: Democracy”). The risk was not exaggerated. In spite of a professed progressiveness in the twenty-first century, old and new social expectations coexist. Cross-cultural surveys conducted on women in leadership establish that women who adopt a primarily masculine style may attain a high position but “have difficulty enlisting respect, support, and cooperation from coworkers” and “are rated lower as leaders” (Kellerman and Rhode 7). Herein lies the dilemma: the “manly” stance that favors the attainment of a position can also elicit negative evaluations of its performance. Developments in the United Kingdom serve as a case in point. June 2017 witnessed an ironic bow to Bachelet’s much-criticized model of consensus when Defense Secretary Michael Fallon stated that May’s leadership style “had to start being more consensual” and form a “more collective government” (Merrick). Ironically, in the present sociopolitical context, male leaders can also face similar criticisms when they adopt the command-and-control “*mano dura*” approach.

What can be established is that acting outside of the maternal construct requires female leaders to navigate an ever-shifting reef of public opinion. Suzanne Brogger advises that “If a woman can only succeed by emulating men, I think it is a great loss and not a success. The aim is not only for a woman to succeed, but to keep her womanhood and let her womanhood influence society” (qtd. in “How Women”). Moreover, adopting a male leadership model may transmit a skewed message “that masculine character traits are those most needed for executive office, thus reinforcing the linkages among men, masculinity, and the presidency” (Franceschet and Thomas 190). The dichotomous nature of the combined criteria can produce a zero-sum outcome when matched with the capricious nature of electorates. Bachelet was criticized for not practicing “a traditional ‘command,’...[and] for not delivering discourses in the traditional tone and speaking with a distinct rationale” (Montaner 182). Amidst increasing corruption scandals involving both the government and business sectors in May 2015, Bachelet took the “alpha male” approach by dismissing her entire cabinet in a single day. The aftermath saw both approval of her boldness and accusations of incompetence. At the same time, the “*comando tradicional*” approach did no favors to Brazil’s “Iron Lady” Dilma Rousseff, as evidenced by her comment during her impeachment trial: “I’ve always been described as a hard-charging woman in the midst of delicate men ... I never saw a man accused of being hard-charging” (Romero and Kaiser).

Female candidates face the additional challenge of “being an ‘insider’ (one of the boys) while also demonstrating that you have the freshness of an ‘outsider’” (Wilson). Bachelet’s decision to assume her executive position without forfeiting her “feminine nature” in a political context accustomed to male leadership enhanced her “outsider” status. Paula Escobar Chavarría, editor of *El Mercurio*, recognized Bachelet for “not adopting all the male-dominated codes of power but transforming them” (qtd. in Bennhold). Her rhetoric of gender parity, inclusiveness, and seeking consensus mirrored the contemporary leadership model “menos vertical y mucho más horizontal” (Marugán and Durá 96). It required, if anything, a modicum of balance between seemingly contradictory approaches.

In line with the *supra-madre* model, Bachelet chose to forefront her gender as a difference marker but not her maternal status in televised messages. Meanwhile, her male opponents heavily exploited their image as fathers (López-Hermida). An analysis of media coverage during the 2005 campaign found that when Piñera played to the traditional “rol de padre” in televised appearances, Bachelet downplayed the role of mother (14). The unforeseen outcome saw her range of appeal increase during the campaign period as she established rapport with marginalized and

disillusioned citizens. Evidence exists that, consciously or subconsciously, feminine qualities nurture a political advantage “when the salient issues and traits of the campaign complement a woman’s stereotypical strengths” (Kahn 2).

Fortuitously, in 2005, many of the issues interfaced with female concerns: education reform, reduction of inequality, reduction of poverty, and support for at-risk family units (Bonilla and Silva 14). Corruption and economics also made the list. One study that logged specific time limits given to topics in televised discourse revealed that in the first round, Piñera took the lead in “asuntos típicamente femeninos” and even increased the time allotted to those in the second round. Bachelet did the same, but with respect to “los temas masculinos” (López-Hermida 3-14). The effectiveness of that approach is endorsed by findings that “men may have more flexibility to choose whether and when to emphasize feminine issues, whereas women need to stress masculine issues consistently in order to convince the audience of their competence” (Deason et al. 141). In contexts where female leaders must perform in capacities that overreach the maternal construct, the *supermadre* model falls short.

Nevertheless, it was not Bachelet’s articulation of masculine issues alone that won votes. Sociologist Manuel Garretón credits Bachelet with “the capacity to read in a very correct manner what was happening in the Chilean society” (Reyes). That ability, called “contextual intelligence,” is an increasingly desirable commodity for contemporary leaders (Nye, *Leadership*). In televised discourse, Bachelet couched the theme of gender equality in a message that her status as a female head of household and single parent linked her to all Chileans who experience discrimination (López-Hermida 12, 14). Although there is an overlap here with maternal imagery, the core message positioned her beyond the role of mother. This was neither a mother focused primarily on mothers’ issues nor a woman focused primarily on women’s issues. In the capacity of *supra-madre*, she assumed the role of citizen advocate, enabling her to engage multiple sectors of the electorate based on the mantra of “shared fate.” Chilean journalist Paul Walder acknowledged the amplified role prior to Bachelet’s first term: “What woman didn’t identify with her as she seduced the army without contrivances? If she could do it, why couldn’t other working women control their labor relations, or at least their own husbands? And if she could tame the army, why couldn’t she tame the political class and run the country from La Moneda?”

The transition from *supermadre* to *supra-madre* was abetted by intentionality. Bachelet’s campaign unapologetically played the “woman card” as counterpoint to the opposition’s promotion of masculine hard power as the ideal: “Because of *machista* campaign attacks, we wanted to show that her gender would enable her to do things differently” (qtd. in Steinberg). Doing things differently was a hard sell to a public that saw “stereotypical male personality traits as those more compatible with the executive office, such as assertiveness, ambition, vision, decisiveness, rationality, and strength” (Steckenrider 249; Kornblut 21-22). Bachelet was aware of the gap between Chilean expectations and her leadership persona: “There are those who think I’m all smiles and a fool” (Politzer 83). The media sought to trivialize her political gravitas by casting her as an affectionate housewife, or “ama de casa” (“Michelle Bachelet (perfil)”), a “marketing product,” and a “populist media star with a hidden agenda up her sleeve” (“Señora Presidenta”). Bachelet understood that public perception could remain fairly static as long as stereotypes were presented as uncontested truths. That situation would limit the potential to effectively address some of Chile’s most pressing problems. Bachelet described her role in the process:

Every time any of us starts something new we have to confront prejudices. We have to confront resistance to change ... if I could be successful at this, I would be opening doors and windows for so many women—and men, because they would free themselves of prejudice. (“Berkeley”)

Paradoxically, men thanked her for opening new doors of possibility to their daughters.

The third distinguishing feature of the *supra-madre* is that while it retains the maternal element at the symbolic level, it does not operate primarily from a maternal initiative at the pragmatic level. In order to attain and retain power, the *supra-madre* must possess a multi-dimensional, autonomous political persona. During her first campaign period, Bachelet transmitted a leadership style that was “more approachable, and more rooted in the everyday experiences of ordinary Chileans” than those of her opponents (Thomas, *Michelle* 75). To the extent that she challenged the status quo, she was perceived as an alternative to politics-as-usual with the male political elite at the controls. While stereotypes are undeniably influential, they are not the ubiquitous scapegoat for all inequalities and contradictions. Due to the number of variables, studies on the degree to which gender stereotypes “harm or benefit female candidates” yield inconsistent conclusions (Bauer). What can be concluded is that female “stereotypes do not always shape how individuals perceive female candidates” (Bauer). In fact, research predicts that as female candidates become less anomalous, the relevance of stereotypes will diminish (Bauer).

A reading between the lines of Paul Walder’s assessment that Bachelet “symbolize[d] reason, access to the equality of modernity, a break with the baggage of macho tradition” suggests that she simultaneously projected the image of citizen advocate, progressive political actor, and autonomous woman. Commentary by a supporter on the threshold of Bachelet’s first election verifies the altered view of female status:

I am voting for her because it is historic for the country. She is the fruit of the fight and work of the women in Chile. Just five years ago, I could not have thought it was possible to have a woman president. It is an opening up of possibilities, especially for young girls—now that they have in their heads the possibility of being president. (qtd. in Thomas, *What* 130-31)

Chaney foresaw the potential of these possibilities for a new generation of females, citing a study conducted by Armand and Michèle Mattelart in 1968: “Once the principle of personal autonomy is recognized, it is evident that the roles of mother and wife may be reevaluated” (qtd. in *Supermadre* 159). In short time, that expectation materialized:

During the military period, women began to view themselves as equal partners in the political processes with the right to occupy and define for themselves what constitutes political space. By empowering themselves as individuals, they challenged the state’s right to define their political identities. (Chuchryk 94).

Bachelet was the beneficiary. Her blend of traditional and nontraditional career paths and traditional and nontraditional personal choices epitomized the element of personal autonomy in keeping with the *supra-madre* model.

The proposal of a modified model in no way diminishes the accomplishments of the *supermadres*. Credit is due to the legacy of Chilean women who engaged in groundbreaking political processes viewed by many as “apolitical.” Literature held that “their traditional domestic roles were extended into the public realm, as mothers in the human rights organizations and as housewives in the popular economic organizations” (Valenzuela 177, 179). Even if evaluated as apolitical, maternal,

and domestic in origin, their efforts served as important staging events for the next phase of political engagement. I base this on the logic that if conditions had remained static in Chile, the probability of two female presidencies and multiple female candidacies would be minimal to nonexistent.

In an explicit departure from the *supermadre* model, Bachelet “reconfigured the meanings of motherhood and [gave] it multiple dimensions that reach far beyond traditional essentialized characterizations of the mother as morally superior, domestic, and dependent on men” (Pieper-Mooney 200). This is significant. Based on interviews among women half a century earlier, Chaney singled out the term “decente” to describe the ideal “desirable female behavior in Latin America” or, “in sum, the virtuous and the proper” (34). In 1971, there was no positive social designation for a woman like Michelle Bachelet. The “madre decente” centered her life on the well being of her family; the “mujer de mala vida” sought fulfillment outside the domestic sphere and lived independently of male authority (35-37). Bachelet’s admission, “I unite all of Chile’s deadly sins within me,” verifies that the Bachelet biography falls short of the aforesaid traditional profile characterized by moral superiority, domesticity, and dependence on a male figure. It appears that a new model more representative of Chilean reality has taken shape.

In line with Gabriela Mistral’s appeal to “not burn our femininity in the crater of politics,” Bachelet assumed the “risk” to preserve her female identity in her approach to governance. Yet, that did not restrict her agenda to areas traditionally categorized as maternal or female concerns. Her administrations achieved pension reform, educational reform, electoral system reform, tax reform, reform to abortion laws, the implementation of gender quotas, the establishment and judicial support of commissions to monitor and prosecute corruption, the punishment of crimes committed by the regime, the reduction of poverty, and the establishment of multiple agencies to reduce discrimination and increase the quality of life for those with minimal resources. Several were landmark reforms deemed impossible missions by analysts and veteran politicians. Clearly, they required actions far beyond the scope of the *supermadre* paradigm.

Four years after Chileans elected a female Head of State for the second time, senator Carolina Goic was nominated the Christian Democrat candidate for the presidential election of November 2017 (Brown). The left-wing party Frente Amplio nominated journalist Beatriz Sánchez (Castillo). Sánchez, an outsider, garnered 20% of the vote. Analysts called this election “the most interesting and unpredictable political constellation since the return to democracy in 1989” (Benediker and Zlosilo). The Mattelart prediction in 1968 of a reevaluation of the maternal role appears to have materialized: Goic is the mother of two children, Sánchez is the mother of three. This gives credence to Susan Carroll’s observation that as “motherhood is becoming increasingly politicized,” it is losing the stigma of “liability” (qtd. in Dvorak). That being the case, the *supra-madre* is well positioned to disqualify the stigma of “inability.”

Resumen

La publicación de la investigación de Elsa Chaney sobre el compromiso político femenino en América Latina en 1971 aseguró su legado como pionera en ese campo. También proporcionó a décadas de investigadores una línea de base para la evolución de las teorías asociadas con el modelo supermadre. Los desarrollos sociopolíticos del siglo XXI ahora cuestionan la viabilidad de ese modelo en el futuro. Esta discusión sugiere un modelo refundido, una “adaptación de especies” con capacidades mejoradas: la supra-madre.

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"Writing the Next Chapter in a Latin American Success Story." *Economist.com*. *Economist*, 31 Mar. 2005. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

Isotopies of Chilean political discourse: TV ads from the 2013 presidential election

The aim of this paper is to characterize, at least in part, the representations and imaginary present in the discourse of the major political sectors of the country: the Nueva Mayoría [New Majority], a centerleft conglomerate, and the Alianza por Chile [Alliance for Chile], center-right. To achieve it, we will appeal to the identification and classification of redundant sets of semantic categories -or isotopies- observable in the spots for the television time frame for the balloting of the presidential election of 2013, in which Michelle Bachelet and Evelyn Matthei clashed. From this point of view, the study can be located in the field of Political Communication, although its main ambition is to contribute to this area from the perspective of Semiotics. This possibility is explained by the particular condition of semiotic analysis, which distinguishes it over other methods of social research, including traditional content analysis and discourse: its focus on the question of meaning.

When speaking of sense, Semiotics seeks to define a broader level of understanding of reality than the production of particular meanings. Formally the meaning is the correlative of all significant (Saussure, 1945, p. 93), i.e., an element in the structure of the sign. The question of the meaning goes beyond that. From the semiotics perspective, human beings live in a world of sense (Greimas, 1973, p. 8), as the culture itself is a network of individuals and extended meanings (Zecchetto, 2002, pp. 29-30), which accounts both, knowledge of reality, and attributes of the subject from this reality (Klinkenberg, 2006, pp. 88-90). And this is possible because the sense implies significance, but also direction, intent and purpose (Greimas, 1973, p. 12). In other words, the problem of meaning is not pose to a human being, for the sense exists, it is imposed as evidence (Greimas, 1973, p. 8), it is present in the collection that he has of the world around him (Zecchetto, 2002, p. 188). From this, Semiotics can be understood in a more complex way, as the study of the processes of meaning and sense in society.

If from Morris (1985, pp. 31-32) it is stated that semiotics studies both relations between signs (syntax) and between them and the objects they represent (semantics), and the relationship with their interpreters (Pragmatic), then the whole semiotic perspective is not confined to the

identification of meanings. The question of meaning does not seek to make a catalog of meanings or discover the correct meaning, but to explain how, at a given moment of a given community, something makes sense (Magariños de Morentin, 2002, p. 22). Semiotic perspective, therefore, not only involves the analysis of texts, but identifying those categories of thought that justify that discursive use in society. This form of observation can be applied perfectly in the field of Political Communication, given its interdisciplinary character (Kaid, 2004a, p. Xiii) and the enormous diversity of methods used in it (Graber, 2004).

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CUADERNOS.INFO N° 37 / DECEMBER 2015 / ISSN 0719-3661 / E-VERSION: WWW.CUADERNOS.INFO / ISSN 0719-367X

RESUMEN:

Este artículo muestra los avances de un estudio sobre la representación discursiva y los imaginarios de los principales grupos políticos en Chile –la Nueva Mayoría y la Alianza–, a partir de las isotopías presentes en sus spots para el balotaje de la elección presidencial 2013. Se concluye que mientras la campaña de Bachelet construye su discurso desde una isotopía de la inclusión (“Todos con Michelle”), la de Matthei lo hace desde una de la posibilidad (“Sí se puede”). Estos usos, respaldados por isotopías relativas a los programas de gobierno (derechos vs. elección) y a sus perfiles en cuanto mujeres (cuidado vs. autoridad), permiten reconocer los imaginarios tradicionales de cada sector: una centro-izquierda estatista y una derecha de inspiración neoliberal.

BEYOND HEARTH AND HOME: FEMALE LEGISLATORS, FEMINIST POLICY CHANGE, AND SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION IN MEXICO*

The dramatic increase in women’s numerical presence in legislatures across Latin America raises the possibility that qualitative improvements in policy and governance will follow. These expectations are grounded in normative discourses that see women –by virtue of their deferent social positions and roles– as introducing new perspectives to policy debates: the more diverse the legislative body, the more responsive and inclusive the decisions.

In the words of Argentine activists who supported the electoral quota law that compelled parties to nominate women, “With few women in politics, women change, but with many women in politics, politics changes” (Marx, Borner, and Caminotti 2007:61). For scholars of gender and politics, this connection is studied as the link between women’s descriptive representation (that is, women’s numbers in legislative office) and women’s substantive representation (that is, women’s policy interests). Researchers have explored whether Latin American female legislators are more likely than male legislators to support policies related to women’s interests, conceived as women’s rights policies or social policies such as education and health. Generally, findings have been positive: female legislators do change politics by supporting equal rights legislation and social welfare policies (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013; Miguel 2012; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Yet none of these studies have included the Mexican case, despite a highly successful electoral quota law that has raised women’s descriptive representation to over 30 percent. This study offers the first quantitative assessment of the descriptive-substantive connection in the Mexican Congress. The Mexican case also provides an opportunity to answer some outstanding theoretical and methodological questions. First, how can scholars parse the causal effects of gender identity versus party membership? Scholars have debated whether women’s policy preferences can be attributed to their sex or to their adherence to party platforms (Htun and Powers 2006; Piscopo 2011a). In the case of Mexico, two of the major three parties have staked clear, consistent ideological positions: the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) on the right, advocating economic neoliberalism and social conservatism, and the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD) on the left, advocating state-led social welfare regimes that benefit the working class and other marginalized groups. Looking at substantive representation within the Mexican political parties offers an opportunity to explore whether rightist women (female panistas) still stake out progressive positions on women’s issues. Second, and related, how can scholars measure women’s substantive representation without neglecting the diversity of identities and preferences within women as a group? Celis and Childs (2012) have asked what scholars of women’s substantive representation should “do” with conservative women. That is, the standard conceptualization and operationalization of women’s interests has examined feminist policy change, ignoring instances wherein female legislators support policies that restrict women’s rights or protect male privilege.

Yet under a strict definition of women’s substantive representation—that women’s interests are advocated for in policy debates—there appears no reason to exclude, *ex ante*, conservative visions. After all, as a female panista commented in an interview, women who identify as housewives have interests in economic policies that support women’s domestic—as opposed to formal sector—work.

This paper thus takes a “values-neutral” approach to substantive representation, comparing female legislators who represent feminist policy change (proposals that would advance women’s rights and roles beyond those associated with hearth and home) to female legislators who represent non-feminist policy change (policies that shape women’s rights and roles in relation to hearth and home). And, finally, can male legislators substantively represent women? The causal factor linking descriptive representation to substantive representation is legislators’ gender identity. Consequently, male legislators are not typically theorized as advocates for women’s interests. Yet this theoretical formulation confronts an empirical reality: male legislators may represent women less than female legislators, but they do not neglect women’s interests all of the time (Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013; Piscopo 2011a; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). When, then, are men considered women’s interests advocates? This paper explores this question by attending more carefully to the frequencies of men’s and women’s advocacy of feminist versus nonfeminist policy proposals, as well as proposals related to child wellbeing. This paper thus uses the Mexican case to address outstanding questions about which legislators undertake substantive representation and which policies count as substantive representation. I ask the following research questions: Does women’s descriptive representation enhance women’s substantive representation? Does gender identity (as proxied by sex) or party ideology best explain legislators’ policy preferences on women’s interests? Finally, how much evidence exists for substantive representation that is non-feminist and/or undertaken by men, and what are the theoretical implications of these trends? I focus on substantive representation as process, which Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) conceptualize as alterations to the legislative agenda (as opposed to substantive representation as outcome, which consists of policy change). I operationalize substantive representation as bill introduction, using quantitative data from the Mexican Chamber of Deputies between 1997 and 2012. I supplement the statistical analysis with qualitative data from ten elite interviews conducted with female legislators from Mexico’s three largest parties in December 2009. At the time, interviewees were current members of the Chamber of Deputies or Senate, or had served at least one term in either chamber between 1997 and 2009.² Consistent with other studies from Latin America, I find that electing women indeed adds women’s interests to the legislative agenda. While right parties are less likely to represent women overall, female deputies from the right and left are more likely than their male colleagues to represent women’s interests. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of substantive representation is feminist.

Related, my coding scheme for women’s interests shows that researchers must untangle the complicated nexus between women, hearth, and home. When feminist proposals are separated from non-feminist proposals, and non-feminist proposals are divided between women, on the one hand, and children, on the other, significant differences between male legislators’ and female legislators’ bill introduction emerge. Male legislators, particularly those on the left, do propose some feminist bills, but many male legislators abandon an

explicit focus on women in favor of an explicit focus on children. This abandonment is most notable among men on the right.

These findings suggest that previous studies, which have not divided women's interests in this way, may have over-estimated the participation of male legislators in feminist substantive representation. That is, when a single "women's interest" measure includes proposals addressing women and children, deference's in female legislators' and male legislators' approaches to substantive representation are overlooked. I build this argument as follows. First, I present background data on women's descriptive representation and legislative politics in Mexico. Second, I analyze overall trends in women's substantive representation, followed by an examination of the bills' content – that is,

whether substantive representation means the advocacy of feminist proposals, non-feminist proposals, or proposals focused on children. I conclude that female legislators are largely responsible for placing feminist women's interests on the agenda.

Bibliografía

*Data was first analyzed as part of author's Ph.D. Dissertation, "Do Women Represent Women? Gender and Policy in Argentina and Mexico" (2011), University of California, San Diego. ** Assistant Professor of Politics, Department of Politics, Occidental College, Los Angeles; piscopo@oxy.edu.*

1 Interview with former PAN legislator, December 7, 2009.

All interviews took place in person, in Mexico City.

Resumen:

Este artículo utiliza el caso mexicano para explorar temas pendientes en la conexión entre la representación descriptiva de las mujeres (es decir, la presencia numérica de las mujeres en la legislatura) y la representación sustantiva de las mujeres (es decir, las políticas que responden a los intereses de las mujeres). De acuerdo con trabajos previos sobre América Latina, encuentro que la elección de mujeres hace que la agenda legislativa sea más diversa, y también que las legisladoras –más que los legisladores– presenten propuestas que se sustentan en perspectivas feministas sobre los derechos y roles de las mujeres.

Estas tendencias se mantienen a través de todos los partidos políticos mexicanos que se organizan ideológicamente, indicando que las activistas feministas deben preocuparse por que se elijan representantes de izquierda y mujeres. Es decir, las mujeres de derecha son aun más progresistas que los hombres de derecha. Para concluir, planteo la necesidad de desentrañar la relación entre las mujeres y el hogar y de eliminar la fusión de “intereses de las mujeres” con la niñez.