Warlords or Midwives?

Representations of Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster in British quality news discourse and their positioning as political leaders

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Abstrakt:

This study looks at how British quality online newspapers represented three female political leaders Theresa May, Prime Minister; Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP); and Arlene Foster, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and First Minister in Northern Ireland during October 2018.

This study examines: (1) to what extent (if any) were these women trivialized or stereotyped on account of their gender, and what linguistic or rhetorical strategies were used to do this?; (2) Were similar strategies applied in representing all of them, or were there particular differences?; and (3), how did the media represent the female party leaders as public speakers? Finally, (4) what do media representations tell us about the contours of public discourse on gender and political leadership?

The corpus for this study consists of 60 online news articles collected for one month from the British quality newspapers *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*. The method of analysis is thematic analysis, which is a useful tool for finding patterns in large amounts of data.

The political leaders were described within both negative and positive themes. Theresa May was described within themes of weak leadership, illustrated by the rhetorical use of war metaphors (being 'under attack'). Nicola Sturgeon was described within conflicting themes of leadership, both positive ('dutiful' and 'democratic' leader), but also negative ('unreliable'). Arlene Foster was thematically described as militant or violent by metaphorically 'torpedoing' or 'shooting down' others.

The findings in this study suggest that leadership is still a very 'masculine' concept. Media text invokes the typically masculine attributes of physical strength, authority and decisiveness in its descriptions of female leaders, and that the metaphor 'politics is war' is widely used in political media discourse.

Nyckelord: gender, leadership, thematic analysis, political media discourse	
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1. Introduction

The political communication today that reaches the public is mediated. Rather than meeting a politician face to face to ask questions, the public partakes in political discourse through newspaper coverage or TV debates. Furthermore, when making decisions which political leader to trust with power, readers of media texts are influenced by opinions about and portrayals of individual qualities and leadership characteristics. Thus, broadcast, print and online media have a substantial impact on shaping public opinion on politicians, as they are the main source of information regarding political issues (Tucker-McLaughlin & Campbell 2013: 174; Cameron and Shaw 2016: 79). Looking at how female political leaders are portrayed in the media is important, for leadership features have traditionally been 'masculine' in nature, such as related to physical strength or authority. How the media portrays women leaders can often reinforce negative opinions of women in authoritative positions, but there is also research showing that these traditionally masculine attributes connected to leadership are changing, projecting a more gender-neutral view of leadership.

This study will look at how British quality online newspapers represented three female political leaders Theresa May, Prime Minister; Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP); and Arlene Foster, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and First Minister in Northern Ireland during October 2018. Based on a similar qualitative study by Cameron and Shaw (2016) this study will perform a thematic analysis on quality news articles, to see how the media represent these female political leaders. The research questions it investigates are: (1) to what extent (if any) were these women trivialized or stereotyped on account of their gender, and what linguistic or rhetorical strategies were used to do this?; (2) Were similar strategies applied in representing all of them, or were there particular differences?; and (3), how did the media represent the female party leaders as public speakers? Finally, (4) what do media representations tell us about the contours of public discourse on gender and political leadership?

Chapter 2. outlines existing theories and studies about the relationship between language, gender, leadership and the media. In chapter 3. the method thematic analysis is presented, as well as the material selected for this study and a brief background on the British press and the selected politicians. Chapter 4. presents the results: the first section presents the overall coverage of the three politicians; the second section provides the thematic analysis. In chapter 5. the themes are discussed and linked to existing theories: section 5.1. discusses the women politicians; section 5.2. outlines the differences in the newspapers; section 5.3. examines the themes; 5.4. examines the themes from a viewpoint of linguistic structures; and 5.5. discusses the findings as features of media text. Chapter 6. provides a conclusion of the study.

2. Background

This chapter will present an outline of existing theories about the relationship between language, gender, leadership and media, as well as a brief background on research on women leaders and their representation in the media. Previous studies on these topics will be described, focusing on women political leaders, their representations in media discourse and what linguistic strategies are used to do so.

2.1. Gender and leadership

In history, the concept of leadership has been closely connected to masculinity (a king, father, lord and boss are all stereotypical images of leadership) and the characteristics of power are usually masculine (such as strength, force, authority over others) (Campus 2013). Even though gender and leadership have become important areas of research, which can be seen as an effect of the increase of women leaders within the workspace (Townsend 2012), overall research continues to confirm that efficient leadership is still associated with masculine characteristics (Campus 2013).

A developed model of leadership is the notion of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is an inspirational and interpersonal style, and transactional leadership is an authoritative, task-oriented style (Townsend 2012: 18). Empirical research has shown that transformational leadership style is more commonly practiced by women leaders, but as the concept is gender-neutral and proposes a view of leadership that is less masculine than traditional ones (but not specifically feminine, either), the transformational model is promising in the prospect of closing the leadership gender gap (Campus 2013: 4).

There is a common belief that the views of women leaders are affected by ideologies and power relations within society and that gendered inequalities still occur within politics and business (Townsend 2012). Research on gender-related inequalities have focused on differences between men and women in leadership positions, some arguing that men and women have different styles of leading. Others, however, argue that there is more variation in leadership styles within a group than between sexes. Within political leadership, research has suggested that women national political leaders display leadership features more similar to their male counterparts than to average female politicians (Campus 2013: 4).

Gender, writes Townsend (2012), is also 'done' through organizational discourse practices. Language and communication are therefore considered as "social (inter)action through which subjective meanings of women leaders are created" (2012: 25). Much research demonstrates the strong connection between gender and discourse, thus generating the idea that discourse 'does

gender'. There is also some research, according to Townsend, that the perceptions of women leaders are currently being re-constructed and, thus, that gender can be 'undone' (2012: 26). These changes in perspectives on women include the notion of women possessing particular qualities that render them well-suited for leadership positions, such as interactive leadership skills.

Due to the 'masculine' constructs in leadership representations, it is of interest to look at how masculinity is theorized. Interestingly, studies on masculinity in language have largely been neglected up till the twenty-first century due to their status as an "unmarked" or "invisible" category (Black & Coward 1998; Benwell 2003; in Benwell 2014: 240). Today, there is more theoretical discussion of masculinity which indicates that masculinity is, as is femininity, problematic (Benwell 2014). For example, within gender and communication studies there is a significant concern with the ways in which the media contribute to the construction of masculinity as "inherently violent and out of touch with everyday (domestic) life" (Kellner 2008, in Mendes & Carter 2008: 1702).

2.2. Gender and political media

The development of feminist and gender studies as a field seems to have gone hand in hand with that of global media (Gill 2007, in Mendes and Carter 2008: 1703). In a world dominated by media, Gill writes, feminists have had to come to terms with the ways in which media represents women, which has accelerated the growth of feminist and gender research. Mendes and Carter (2008) write that at its core, feminist communication studies have the goal of examining how gender relations are represented, how an audience interprets them or how media practitioners' actions maintain sexual inequalities. Central to this view is that "hierarchical relations (re)produce social inequalities across time and cultures, thereby making it difficult for men and women to be equal partners in democratic society" (Mendes and Carter 2008: 1702).

Mendes and Carter (2008) summarize the dimensions of gender research within the news culture, ranging from examinations of gendered news production, content, reporting men's and women's issues, to representations of male and female athletes and politicians. They highlight a study by Croteau and Hoynes (1992, in Mendes and Carter 2008), where evidence suggested that the gender imbalance in news production has resulted in male-centered news culture, for example the importance of public matters over private ones or the demand for objectivity and detachment. In a similar study, Gallagher (2005 in Mendes and Carter 2008: 1710) found that men tended to report more 'hard' news topics (such as politics, business and economics), whereas women were most likely to cover 'soft' news topics (such as health and education). Also, in media reporting women were more often portrayed as victims. As for media representations of women in politics, the main focus is on gender

roles, domestic and child services, and women are more often described in terms of attractiveness, age and marital status (Page 2003, in Mendes and Carter 2008: 1711).

Carter (1998) writes that the notion of 'stereotypes' has been common in much research on women's portrayal in media texts. When journalists use stereotypes in their publications it has been argued to have negative and unfavorable societal consequences for women. Stereotypes are defined as "standardized mental pictures which provide sexist judgements about women such that their subordinate status within patriarchal society is symbolically reinforced" (Carter 1998: 6). On a similar note, research has also suggested that news discourse follows a 'masculine narrative form', where women appear in articles as passive reactors to societal events or as victims, rather than as active agents or participants in society (Carter 1998: 137).

A large volume of research exists on political leaders' representation in mass media discourse, within gender studies particularly looking at how women politicians are represented. In the US, media reporting of Hillary Clinton during the 2015 Benghazi hearing (Harp et al. 2016) and the 2008 and 2016 Presidential campaigns have been analyzed (Curnalia & Mermer 2014; Carlin & Winfrey 2009; Wilz 2016). Longitudinal studies have also analyzed Clinton's speech style (Jones 2017), suggesting that as her political career progressed Hillary Clinton spoke more "like a man" and followed noticeable gender norms of American politics (Jones 2017: 130). A study by Nissinen (2018) analyzing American and British media opinions of Hillary Clinton and Theresa May found that both women politicians were portrayed in negative ways and through gender stereotypes, with British news putting a large focus on Theresa May's appearance.

Townsend (2012) writes that the mass media are a crucial force in creating new socio-cultural settings for new meanings of gender in connection to leadership. The (positive) media attention given to women leaders and research about gender and leadership plays an important role in 'undoing' gender (2012: 26-27).

2.3. Previous studies

A study by Atkins and Gaffney (2020) analyzed Theresa May's persona, narrative and performance as a political leader through the lens of rhetorical construction in media and public exchange. They write that during the Conservative leadership contest in 2016 May was regarded as a "strong, down-to-earth politician who would heal the divisions wrought by the EU referendum" (Atkins & Gaffney 2020: 13). However, the failure to express a vision of Brexit resulted in accusations of weak leadership. The narrative of 'One Nation' which Theresa May projected, as well as her portrayal as a 'healer archetype' were undermined by the image of 'just about managing' that was prevalent in the

media. They also write that Theresa May's "aloofness and awkward manner ensured that her nickname, 'the Maybot', gained traction with news organizations […] and so diminished her credibility", and that what was initially a "strong and stable" leadership mutated into "weak and wobbly" (Atkins & Gaffney 2020: 13). The authors state that contemporary British politics still have a strong presence of archetypes and myth, for example the 'Iron Lady' archetype that was found in comparisons between Theresa May and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Press discourses surrounding Nicola Sturgeon were examined in a study by Higgins and McKay (2016) focusing on gender and the manner in which Sturgeon was depicted in media. They performed a critical discourse analysis of prominent Scottish newspapers, gathering lexical items associated with Sturgeon from 2004 to 2014. Sturgeon's political persona was portrayed in gendered discourses throughout the ten-year period, especially with images of female aggressiveness, such as 'nippy sweetie'. Softer, traditional feminine discourses were introduced towards the end of the time period, such as shopping for clothes. This personal story was evaluated as a calculated move by Sturgeon to show a 'normal' or 'feminine' side to her in the political media discourse. She was also described as powerful within her political performance. The study shows "how women politicians can develop gendered representations to their partial advantage" and, at the same time, "that these are forms of representation that continue to limit and objectify women that operate in the political realm in significant ways" (Higgins & McKay 2016: 6).

In a qualitative analysis by Cameron and Shaw (2016) British news articles were analyzed in order to answer questions about how female politicians were described in the campaign running up to the UK General Election in 2015. The politicians in question were prominent female politicians: Nicola Sturgeon (leader of the Scottish National Party), Natalie Bennett and Leanne Wood (then leader of the Green Party and leader of Plaid Cymru, respectively). The main focus of analysis related to the concept of women's 'different voice' – an ideology of gender, language and politics where women supposedly bring distinctive concerns and qualities into the political field.

In their qualitative analysis Cameron and Shaw addressed the following questions:

> How did the media represent the most prominent female politicians in the campaign? To what extent (if any) were these women trivialized, sexualized, or otherwise stereotyped by gender, and what linguistic/rhetorical strategies were used to do this? Were similar strategies used in presenting all of them, or were there individual differences?
>
> (Cameron & Shaw 2016: 82)

Firstly, Cameron and Shaw looked at how the women were discursively positioned in the discourse. Secondly, they looked more specifically at how the media represented the female party leaders as public speakers (their skills, their styles, their voices, their effectiveness) during two televised

debates, bringing the focus of the study to the ideologies of gender and political speech. Finally, they looked comparatively at the three female politicians. In their analysis Cameron and Shaw looked at content, rhetorical construction and linguistic form in the news discourse. They found representations that personalized, trivialized and stereotyped the three female politicians, but they also reported a clear trend towards positive representations of the women's success in TV debates.

In a study by Townsend (2012) the focus of research was on the social contruction of gender and leadership. The study performed a linguistic analysis of public discourse, looking at both political and business women leaders in order to understand how they were characterized. In this study, the public discourse referred to written communication (news articles' lead openings and headlines), as well as autobiographies about the leaders in question (2012: 8-11). The high-status subjects of the study were (political leader) Hillary Clinton and (business leader) Nicola Horlick.

Townsend performed grammatical, semantic and pragmatic analyses in five emprical studies. More specifically, the linguistic structuring devices in focus were (1) varying *premodifications of the subject phrase*, (2) *linguistic forms of reference*, (3) *linguistic forms of self-reference*, (4) *implicit collocations* and (5) *narrative themes of self-presentation* that were used in text to portray women leaders (by themselves or by others) (Townsend 2012: 13).

In the first empirical study, *premodifications of the Subject Phrase* referred to the lead openings of news articles. This builds on the idea that the opening information unit in an article has high-information value (2012: 38). The data consisted of news articles from the *New York Times*, where Hillary Clinton was featured. Lead openings were classified according to the grammatical and functional structure of declarative sentences. The structure of a declarative sentence is that the subject precedes everything else. Townsend then identified 'unmarked themes' (a thematic structure within Functional Grammar, which additionally serves as the grammatical subject) and 'marked themes' (a theme that is not the grammatical subject) in the lead openings about Hillary Clinton (Östman & Virtanen 1999: 97, in Townsend 2012: 38). The data extract "**Hillary Rodham Clinton** flew to South Florida last month for a fund-raiser attended by a few dozen people at the home of a wealthy bankruptcy expert, William A. Brandt Jr." was an example of an unmarked lead opening, and "**In her speech announcing her candidacy on Sunday,** Hillary Rodham Clinton told of visiting an overcrowded school in Queens" an example of a marked lead opening (2012: 39, emphasis in original). In conclusion, Townsend writes that Hillary Clinton was promoted as a significant political candidate in the newspaper leads rather than as the First Lady (2012: 46).

The second empirical study was an examination of the manner in which characterizations of gender and leadership were generated through *linguistic forms of reference*. Hillary Clinton's political campaign coverage was examined in 49 news articles, using critical discourse analysis as method.

More specifically, 'independent' and 'dependent' characterizations of politicians were identified, where an independent reference portrayed Hillary Clinton as a Senate candidate (*Hillary Clinton*, *Clinton*), and a dependent reference portrayed her relating to gender stereotyping (*Mrs. Clinton*, *the First Lady*), primarily making reference to Clinton's marriage to Bill Clinton (2012: 40).

The following examples highlight the implicit comparison between the status of two Senatorial candidates Rick Lazio and Hillary Clinton (2012: 40, emphasis in original):

1) **Lazio** faults **Mrs. Clinton** for record in health care
2) **Lazio** and **First Lady** quarrel on ethics, Israel and schools

By comparing the use of the title 'Mrs. Clinton' vs. 'First Lady', we can see the linguistic forms of reference were used to portray Clinton in part as a private person, in part as an independent political candidate. Rick Lazio, writes Townsend, is mainly portrayed with an independent form of reference.

In the third empirical study on women politicians' *self-reference* in autobiographical texts Townsend (2012) found that self-reference in linguistic forms are important tools in managing their image. For example, in the study of Hillary Clinton's autobiography on her website, the use of the reference 'Senator Clinton' was found in connection to expressions of political issues with 'masculine' connotations ("A strong advocate of New York, **Senator Clinton** works with communities throughout the state to strengthen the **economy** and expand opportunity"), whereas she was referred to as 'Hillary' linked to more 'feminine' issues ("Hillary has spoken clearly about the importance of protecting our **constitutional rights**") (Townsend 2012: 41, emphasis in original). Hillary Clinton was portrayed as a political leader in the U.S. Senate election, her professional image based on characterizations typically connected to men leaders, such as statements of achievement. Her more personal image, on the other hand, was based on characteristics commonly linked to women leaders, such as family and health issues (2012: 49). Within the self-representations of Nicola Horlick existing stereotypes were found, for example the theme of being a working woman and mother, as well as a victim. Horlick was also presented with the characteristic of shared professional success that is typically linked with women leaders.

In the fourth empirical study Townsend examined gendered characterizations of women and *implicit collocations*. The linguistic term collocation refers to the "relation between words that are habitually used together" (Sinclair 1991, in Townsend 2012: 43). That is, words are thought to acquire part of their meanings from the other words surrounding them. This can include node-words which typically co-occur with the word, either preceding or following, but collocations can also be based on a whole span of words occurring within a text. These are "implicit collocations" (Östman 2005: 190-191, in Townsend 2012: 43) because they are based on implicit choices rather than other-than

propositional choices. Hillary Clinton was characterized in relation to gender-stereotyping as the President's wife, but also, contrastingly, in the non-stereotypical way as a competent and independent political candidate running for office. Townsend concludes that in election coverage the characterizations of women leaders were highly associated with the making of an 'interesting' news story and that, surprisingly, Clinton seemed to be more newsworthy in her role as political candidate rather than gender (Townsend 2012: 48). The business text analyses found that the implicit collocations in the descriptions of Nicola Horlick were used to construct a 'human' image of her, in order to contrast with her 'superwoman' image.

Finally, Townsend (2012) investigated gender stereotypes as *narrative themes of self-presentation* in the autobiographical text concerning (business) leader Nicola Horlick. The narrative organization of the text, the content and personal pronouns and lexical choices were identified and analysed, in order to see how they were used to structure the theme of self-representation (2012: 44). Gender stereotypes as narrative themes of self-representation were utilized to highlight Horlick as a feminine character. Townsend's study identified three main themes. The theme of 'being successful' was presented as correlating with professional acheivement, both as an individual and as a shared effort. Secondly, the theme of being a 'working woman' was found in self-representations. Thirdly, the depiction of Horlick as a victim was constructed through lexical choices relating to injustice (2012: 45).

> Townsend concludes:
>
> Since the findings of the empirical studies suggest that the media do not always necessarily present gender-stereotypical representations of women leaders in an ideological manner, that is, in a manner which typically ties gender with the power relations in society, I contend that the media do not – as is usually claimed – 'routinely' socially construct, or 'do gender'. Rather, I argue that the media also – explicitly or implicitly – 'undo gender' through linguistic communicative processes and, as a result, socially (re)construct meanings of gender. In this research project, it seems that the (re)constructions of gender relate to business practices, that is, gender is used to produce news stories that 'sell' and thus create an interest within the general public.
>
> (Townsend 2012: 48-49)

Townsend writes that the findings suggest that connections between different leadership areas can be made. Both domains, that is, both the media and the women leaders, used linguistic structuring devices when creating characterizations of women leaders/themselves, especially when creating other than stereotypical meanings of gender (Townsend 2012: 47). For example, the women leaders used stereotypical views of gender (both of men and women) in a 'non-stereotypical' manner in their autobiographies. In order to present new aspects of themselves they used 'familiar' gender frames.

To summarize, the relation between gender, politics and media representation is far from simple. Gender and media discourse have been studied from the viewpoints of news production, content, representation and linguistic features, to name a few. What many of these studies have in common is the importance given to news producers as significant players in influencing public opinion and reinforcing and maintaining (or undoing) cognitive realities.

3. Method and material

There are many methods available for analyzing language in newspaper articles. For this study thematic analysis has been chosen as the theoretical framework for its ability to give an extensive and qualitative outline of a text's content, as well as identifying patterns in text. Thematic analysis differs from other approaches to analyzing discourse, such as the widely used critical discourse analysis (CDA), in the way that it allows for a data-driven analysis and can be coded without categorizing the themes into any existing frame, as will be discussed further on in the chapter. Thematic analysis is, however, similar to CDA in that it analyzes hidden structures of power as expressed through language. The following section briefly introduces CDA before discussing the thematic analysis used this study.

3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be defined as an approach to social research concerned with analyzing opaque or transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. The aim is to critically investigate social inequality as it is signaled or expressed in discourse or by language use (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 2). CDA allows for specific ways of interpretation, connecting theoretical assumptions with empirical data. Because this method generally takes a critical approach to social inequalities and aims at clarifying power relationships that are often hidden (for example those of race, class or gender), it can cross over from the social scientific research field into that of political argumentation, which is how CDA principally differs from other sociolinguistic approaches (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 14-15).

Breeze (2011) points out that CDA has been criticized for being conditioned by researchers' political alignment. Fairclough has stated that even though his own stance is left-leaning, the nature of critical research can equally be right-wing (Fairclough 1996: 52, in Breeze 2011: 500). Fowler commented that "it seems that anything can count as discourse analysis […] There is a danger of competing and uncontrolled methodologies drawn from a scatter of different models in the social sciences." (Fowler 1996: 8-12, in Breeze 2011: 502). Other researchers say that the very fact that CDA findings can be linked to a wide range of philosophical or sociological concepts is its strength, as it shows that the field has a broad base. Therefore, it is for CDA researchers to make clear their political stance before interpreting and explaining social phenomena (Breeze 2011: 501-502).

Many feminist language studies and critical discourse analyses are based on critical perspectives on unequal social arrangements maintained by language use, and have the goal of changing these existing social conditions. More specifically, feminist critical discourse is concerned

with examining and critiquing discourses that maintain a patriarchal social order: the relations of power that methodically privilege men as a social group and disempower women as a social group (Lazar 2005). One aim is to show that social practices in general are gendered, and Lazar writes that they can be gendered in two ways. Firstly, 'gender' is an informative category for participants in a community to make sense of and structure social practices. Secondly, and relevant for this study, is the assumption that gender is a social relation that partly constitutes all other social relations and activities (Lazar 2005: 5). Based on the unequal meanings of 'male and 'female', and the consequences of being assigned to either one within social practices, such an allocation becomes a constraint on further practices (ibid.). In this study, gender is defined as the "socially constructed categories of masculine/masculinity and feminine/femininity that are culturally connected to men and women, respectively" (Meeks, 2012).

3.1.1. Discourse

James Gee (2008), who writes about "Discourses" (with a capital "D") (Gee 2008: 2), states that Discourses include more than just language, but ways of behaving, interacting, thinking, speaking, reading and writing within specific groups. For example, ways of speaking or acting can vary between groups whether they are lawyers, a biker gang, a family, people in a business meeting or men or women of a certain sort. Each of these Discourses have their own specific features or "theories": what is acceptable to feel or think, or viewpoints on status or worth. For example, within the dominant Discourses of some male-based public institutions there exists a conflict for many women and can be sites of struggle and resistance. These "theories" always permeate the use of language and are what Gee calls ideologies. He writes that "language is inextricably bound up with ideology and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from it" (Gee 2008: 4). Discourses, Gee says, are socially situated identities, and language and literacy make no sense outside Discourses because they are embedded within these social practices (Gee 2008: 2-4).

Similarly, Cameron (2014: 293) writes that there is evidence that language ideologies seem to influence linguistic practice, that is, language is a resource for performing identity and gender. For example, speakers can make choices to use 'men's' or 'women's' language, which are constructs with culturally meaningful representations.

In the present study discourse is seen as a construction of reality. As stated by Weedon (1987), Foucault refers to discourses as:

> […] ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning.

> They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern.
>
> (Foucault 1969, in Weedon 1987: 108)

In the context of Discourse of gender, the knowledge, social practices and power relations in the above citation refer to the relationship between language and gender. Research within this field identifies for example the construction of gender in men's and women's use of language or the role of language in creating and maintaining social inequality between men and women. For example, women's speech styles are often thought to be cooperative, whereas men's speech styles are often considered to be competitive (Stokoe, 1998: 217). Cameron and Shaw write that a "community's understanding of the speech of men and women is invariably related to its understanding of the qualities and proper social roles of men and women themselves. Gender differences in language use are not treated as arbitrary and superficial, but are taken to index deeper differences in ways of thinking, feeling, and relating to others" (2016: 5). The constructivist approach to gendered discourse regards gendered speaking styles as existing "independently of the speaker" – that is, gendered discourse provides a source through which women and men can present themselves, and that individuals strategically draw on gendered discourse in expressing their individual styles (Kendall & Tannen 2001: 557).

A discourse consists of individual discourses which are spoken or written utterances and statements, for example a news article, a televised speech, or a conversation. These discourses construct reality and communicate knowledge of that reality in a social context, forming the objects of which they speak. For example, Goffman (1976) analyzed illustrations from print advertisements of women, showing how the gendered self is accomplished through postures that ritualize subordination and are linked to gender, such as the concept of receiving help or smiling more than men (in Kendall & Tannen 2001: 557). Institutions and social context play an important role in the maintenance and circulation of discourses (Mills 2004: 10). MacDonnell (1986) states that "discourses differ with the kinds of institutions and social practices in which they take shape and with the positions of those who speak and those whom they address" (MacDonnell 1986: 1, in Mills 2004: 9-10). In the case of this study, the social context in question is newspaper media, and the producers of the discourses are the journalists and editors, who are ultimately authorized by the media corporations that publish the newspapers (Höglund, 2007). Producers of the discourses are in this case also those individuals featured in the articles, in for example their citations or in their reproduced statements.

Discourses can be understood only with reference to their context, a perspective which takes factors like culture, society and ideology into account (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 15). The

constructionist perspective, according to Braun and Clarke, overlaps with some forms of discourse analysis where broader structures and meanings are theorized as underpinning what is articulated in the data. "[M]eaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced" (Burr 1995, in Braun & Clarke 2006: 13), and seek to theorize socio-cultural contexts.

3.2. Thematic analysis

The methodological framework for this study is thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke in their article "Using thematic analysis in psychology" (2006), thematic analysis is a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) across data. A theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question" and represents a "patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke 2006: 10). Thematic analysis is useful for this particular study because it provides a rich description of the entire data set and is a convenient method for qualitative research when investigating an area where the participants' views on a topic are unknown.

Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke, is a flexible method as it can be applied across theoretical and epistemological approaches. They point out that there are several other analytic methods which can be used to describe patterns across data such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded theory (GT) and thematic discourse analysis. These methods overlap with thematic analysis in the sense that they search for patterns across a whole data set, rather than within a single data item (such as, for example, an individual interview). However, IPA and GT differ from thematic analysis in the way that they are theory-based methods, that is, the analysis is conducted within a theoretical frame. Thematic analysis differs from *framing* within communication studies in the way that thematic analysis relies on the interpretation of the researcher, where a researcher actively looks for themes within the text based on one or more research questions. Framing "retains the systematic procedures of gathering data of news texts in order to identify the signifying elements that might be used by audience members" (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 58).

The study was conducted according to Braun and Clarke's five-phase process of thematic analysis. In the first phase the researcher becomes familiar with the data, which entails repeated reading of the data so as to find initial ideas, which are used as the base for possible codes and patterns. In the second phase the researcher creates initial codes. In the third phase of analysis the initial codes of data are sorted into potential themes. This step means thinking about links between the codes and themes and finding overarching themes as well as sub-themes within them. The fourth phase is a review of the themes, and in the fifth phase the themes are named and defined, distinguishing why

they are interesting and what information they contribute to the research question. Finally, the report of the themes is presented along with examples and evidence, providing an analytic narrative and making an argument in relation to the research question (2006: 22-23).

3.3. Newspapers selected for this study

The newspapers selected for this study were the four largest circulating quality newspapers in Britain: *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Times* (Statista 2019; Mayhew 2019) and their related Sunday versions (the *Observer*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Sunday Times*, and *Independent on Sunday*). While popular outlet newspapers like *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* have larger readership numbers in Britain (Mayhew 2019), this study looked at media sources that are categorized as quality news outlets. Media research tends to distinguish between quality (broadsheet) and popular (tabloid) outlets (Burggraaff & Trilling 2016), due to differences in news values (Esser 1999, in Burggraaff & Trilling 2016), topics, issues and actors in news events. This study will use the term "quality" newspapers to refer to newspapers that traditionally emphasize facts and information to serve public interest over subject matter, and event topics and language that serve to interest the public (Lefkowitz 2016: 19).

The reason for looking at newspapers' online editions was because electronic text allowed for convenient word processing actions such as keyword searches or assembling data into tables, but also due to practical reasons: online articles being accessible (without cost) in a region where printed versions of the same are not easily (or at all) available. The selected newspapers and the British press in general, as well as the relation of the online edition to its print counterpart are explained further in section 3.6.

3.4. Selection of articles

The corpus used in this study consists of articles from the chosen newspapers. The content of the *Times* and the *Telegraph* was available online for a limited time of one month after registering as a subscriber; the content of the *Guardian* and *Independent* was available online free of charge. The articles were collected for one month, between October 1, 2018 and October 31, 2018 through the news sites' own search functions. The parameters of the search were set to collect all articles which mentioned any of the three political leaders Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster by name in any part of the article. From each newspaper, five articles were selected for further thematic analysis. This generated a total of 60 articles, 20 articles on each political leader. In the case of Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster, the articles that mentioned each leader the largest number of times were chosen. Due to the substantial amount of media coverage of Theresa May, the articles about her were

selected randomly. The articles were read closely in order to exclude duplicates and articles which only mentioned the political leaders in 'related article' or 'further reading' links situated on the same page.

Since this study investigates the range of representations of each political leader, the selected articles were not limited to any type of article, but ranged from news reports, featured articles, editorials, columns, opinion pieces and entertainment to caricatures. Live update-type articles were excluded (such as the *Independent*'s 'as it happened' articles, which for the most part consisted of real-time Tweets and comments from political conferences or other events); as were articles containing summaries of British tabloid newspapers' front-page of the day. This was due to the possible complications from including these very particular, short text formats (Cameron & Shaw, 2016: 84).

3.5. Selection of themes

For this study the data was first coded and then sorted into potential themes. The coding process involved reading and re-reading the data and extracting all instances mentioning the three political leaders, directly ("Theresa May celebrates her lack of cough at this year's Tory Party conference"[11])[1] or indirectly ("The Brexit Secretary might be happy to entertain them, but the DUP [here: Arlene Foster] isn't so genial."[53]).

The data extracts were then categorized as positive, negative or neutral according to the tone of the article (see example in Table 1. below). Tone reflects the stance of the writer (both towards the reader and the subject) and can be distinguished by, for example, identifying positive and negative words and phrases in a text (Macnamara, 2005).

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[1] The numbers refer to the articles in the corpus. A full list of articles can be found at the end, in the list of primary sources.

Table 1. Example of data extracts concerning Theresa May from *The Independent*[9] and their coding as negative, positive or neutral.

Reference nr: 9
Newspaper: *The Independent*
Type of article: News report
Author: Lizzy Buchan
Title: "Theresa May faces fight for her leadership as mutinous Tory MPs warn she is 'drinking in last chance saloon'".
Date: October 21, 2018
Link: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-conservative-leadership-brexit-tory-mps-david-davis-a8594311.html

Extract nr	*Data extract*	*Neg/Pos/ Neutral*
1	Theresa May faces fight for her leadership as mutinous Tory MPs warn she is 'drinking in last chance saloon'	Neg
2	The prime minister has been told to attend a so-called show trial at the 1922 committee of Conservatives	Neg
3	Theresa May is facing a fight to save her leadership as mutinous Tory MPs demanded she appears before them to justify her Brexit plans.	Neg
4	The prime minister has been urged to attend a so-called show trial at the 1922 Committee of Conservatives on Wednesday, after last week's crunch summit in Brussels broke up without a deal on Britain exit terms.	Neg
5	Amid an outpouring of backbench anger, former Brexit secretary David Davis said Ms May had "managed to anger not just Leavers but ardent Remainers as well"	Neg
6	Critics of the prime minister claim the 48 letters needed to trigger a no-confidence vote could soon be reached.	Neg
7	Tory MP Andrew Bridgen told The Mail on Sunday: "This week, Theresa May will find that she is drinking in the last chance saloon and the bad news for her is that the bar is already dry.	Neg
8	"If she doesn't turn up to the 1922 that will only make the letters go in even faster."	Neg
9	Downing Street sources said the prime minister's diary would be set out on Monday, deciding whether she would address the committee of backbenchers.	Neutral
10	Ms May signalled she would consider extending the Brexit transition period to give negotiators more time to solve problems, including the vexed issue of the Irish border.	Neutral
11	"The prime minister has rightly refused to rule out considering different approaches – including extending the implementation period, as an alternative to the backstop," Mr Raab wrote in The Sunday Telegraph.	Pos

Positive extracts were descriptions of the leaders that could be seen as portraying them as successful, effective or powerful. Therefore, descriptions of the leaders where they expressed 'strong' views or 'attacked' someone in a debate were categorized as 'positive', if the overall tone of the article was supportive of the leader, for example: "Scottish first minister and SNP leader to *press case* for continued membership of single market and customs union"[24] and "Foster *ramps up pressure* on May over border proposals"[59] (emphasis added). In the table above, Theresa May is coded as being described positively: "The prime minister has rightly refused to rule out considering different approaches – including extending the implementation period, as an alternative to the backstop," Mr Raab wrote in The Sunday Telegraph."[9]

Data extracts showing the political leaders in a poor light were categorized as negative: "Theresa May *has led our party so badly* even I wouldn't vote for it, says Conservative MP"[9];

"opposition parties accused Nicola Sturgeon of *being motivated only by her desire to break-up [...] Britain* after she called on MPs to vote down any compromise deal secured by Mrs May."[34] and "Foster and her party enjoy projecting uncompromising unionism *but their actions may have unintended consequences*".[57]

'Neutral' coverage refers to factual accounts of the politicians' actions. This categorization was based on persuasive techniques in journalism as per Huggard et al. (2006), some of which are sensationalism, clichés, attacks or praise, loaded words, labeling, inclusive language, emotional appeals, emotive language, connotations of words, or positive or negative adjectives. A neutral theme did not include any of the above listed qualities. For example, "Downing Street sources said the prime minister's diary would be set out on Monday, deciding whether she would address the committee of backbenchers."[9] from Table 1. above is a data extract factually stating Theresa May's schedule and was therefore labeled neutral.

Data extracts were then coded. For example, the data extract "[Nicola Sturgeon's] ability to tell her troops only what they want to hear won't last for much longer"[31] was coded for Nicola Sturgeon as 'military leader'. The coded extracts were then sorted into groups of themes, in this case into the theme 'militant metaphor'.

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a theme can tell us something important about the research question and that this question can guide the researcher when searching for themes within the data: "the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures – but is to be understood in terms of whether it catches something important in relation to the research question" (2006: 10). Accordingly, the themes in this study have been selected on the basis of what they reveal about the descriptions of the politicians Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster. Questions that guided the selection of themes were: What images of the politicians are portrayed in the discourse? Are the descriptions emotive or rational? Do the descriptions render the politician successful or not? Was she trivialized or stereotyped by gender?

The themes were identified in an inductive way, meaning that the themes were data-driven and coded without categorizing them into any existing frame. The themes were further analyzed on a latent level, that is, the themes were identified beyond the semantic content of the data in order to identify underlying ideas, assumptions or ideologies (Braun and Clarke 2006).

In the present study, some themes were found across all four newspapers, while other themes occurred only once. Several subthemes were identified, such as themes concerning leadership, power (or lack of), and personal characteristics. The majority of the themes consisted of one sentence, but there were also instances of two themes within one sentence, or one theme stretching over several sentences. The themes were selected from the entire textual content of the article, including headline,

introduction, body of the article and image captions. It was common for the title and introduction to be sentences from the article itself, but they tended to be shortened or otherwise altered fragments from the article and were therefore of interest for this study, as they could highlight the main topic of the article or be deliberately framed to act as 'click bait' for newspaper consumers.

It is important to acknowledge the very active role that the researcher has when looking for themes. Braun and Clarke write that the themes do not simply "emerge" from the data set of their own accord, but that the researcher recognizes the theoretical framework and the method as decisions, and that they match what the researcher wants to know (2006: 7-8).

3.6. The British press

Traditionally, British broadsheet (quality) and tabloid (popular) newspapers have been distinctive categories of news, with differences in reporting, style and format. Today, there is a concern regarding quality media outlets' increasingly adopting the styles and format of the popular press. The tabloids *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror* and their Sunday editions have the largest print circulations in the UK. As a result, they play an important role in shaping public opinion, and even form the points of discussion in media space.

3.6.1. The British media tradition

Newspapers in Britain can be categorized according to frequency of publication (such as daily or Sunday editions), coverage (national or local coverage), political stance (for example left or right-wing) and according to style (broadsheet or tabloid). Many British newspapers are by no means unbiased nor do they attempt to be: they show their political stance through more or less subtle ways. Political party endorsements, editorials, choice of letters to be published and linguistic strategies (such as collocations or grammatical structure) can portray a newspaper's stance on certain issues (Gabrielatos & Baker 2008: 8).

There has been a tradition of allegiance between British newspapers and political parties, and even though these relationships are now less clear than before, Higgins et al. (2010) write that British newspapers are important to the readership's sense of political identity. The media as the 'fourth estate of the realm' also represents the British population against the institutions of power. The media and how readers align with them indicates that the press is an important socio-political identifier and that it reproduces traditional political and class-based social groupings (2010: 10).

As for the newspapers in the present study, the majority of the topics in the articles were concerning Brexit. This is why the newspapers' political alignment, whether or not they supported

the Prime Minister and their relation to Europe and Brexit is relevant for the analysis. *The Guardian* was aligned with the Labour party in the 2017 election ("The Guardian view on the election: it's Labour" 2017) and is generally regarded to be placed within the left-wing press (Copeland & Copsey 2017) but includes writers with a wide variety of opinions and perspectives. Whereas *The Independent* has stated an independent, liberal or center policy (Butler 2011: 564; "Editorial: A liberal gamble too far" 2013), this newspaper has supported the Liberal Democrats and promoted anti-Conservative voting (Sweney 2015). *The Independent* has been published in an online-only format since 2016 (Martinson 2016). *The Telegraph* (previously *Daily Telegraph*) is a traditional right-wing newspaper and takes a pro-Conservative line (Butler 2011: 564; McKee 2017). *The Telegraph* has endorsed the Conservative party in UK general elections (Willis 2010; Stoddard 2010) and supported Theresa May as the candidate for the Conservative party leadership, as well as supported her announcement of the snap election (McKee 2017). Higgins et al. write that *The Times* has a historical reputation of being a serious newspaper of record and is read by members of the establishment (2010: 286). It has become increasingly Conservative, even though historically it has lent its support to a wide variety of political parties (Stoddard 2010). *The Times* supported Theresa May as leader of the Conservative party (McKee 2017).

The *Guardian*, *Independent*, and *Times* all supported remaining in the EU or maintaining a close relationship with Europe, and *The Telegraph* supported the leave side (Copeland & Copsey 2017). All four newspapers belong to the quality market sector (Higgins et al. 2010: 289).

3.6.2. A changed media landscape

Newspaper markets have been characterized by falling profitability and loss of paying readers, the trend being people turning to online news (Ghersetti 2013). The news landscape today involves news consumed not only through print and television but increasingly online and through social media, a movement which is being reflected in the practices of news organizations (Newman et al. 2012). Particular concern (and a topic of much debate) regarding online media is whether or not the internet could undermine printed newspapers on several points: a loss in the business models supporting high-quality journalism could lead to a decreasing quality and diversity of news coverage; individual users could source their own, independent information and could have the potential to be a political force but without the centralized, institutional, editorial and fact-checking processes of the media organizations; and the potential for audiences to be more selectively exposed to information, leading to a reinforcement of prejudices through the virtual "echo chambers" (Newman et al. 2012: 6-7; Garett 2009).

Online news articles differ from their printed versions in technology-based and format-related ways (Ghersetti 2013). Firstly, online news is constantly accessible and frequently updated. It often provides multimedia presentations (animations, videos, image slideshows, etc.) or a selection of further reading by showing related articles or hyperlinks within the article text. For example, *The Independent*, which is in a digital-only format, includes video material in the beginning of each written article. Secondly, format attributes such as shorter articles and shorter paragraphs, spaciously placed, make it easier for the consumer to read (longer feature stories are easier to read in print) (Ghersetti 2013).

When it comes to content, it is not clear to what extent print and online news differ (Burggraaf & Trilling 2016). In the early stages of news online comparative studies concluded that there were few or no differences in the content that is produced online and in print, because the online version of the news article was a duplicate of the print version (Ghersetti 2013). Some newer studies show that online news can lack accuracy, whether due to factual errors or due to articles published while incomplete. This is due to changes in the journalistic routines in the online news environment: because of more stories being published per day, journalists have a heavier workload and, as a consequence, less time for checking facts (Witschge & Nygren 2009, in Burggraaf & Trilling 2017; Ghersetti 2013).

A study by Kuiken et al. (2017) compared news headlines in digital and print newspapers and found that online news headlines follow several distinctive characteristics. Digital news articles' headlines have a different function from their printed versions. In its printed version, a headline's primary function is to be informative: when a reader scans the newspaper, the headline gives a clear understanding of the article's content (van Dijk 1988, in Kuiken et al. 2017). In an online context, the main function of the headline is to attract the viewer's attention and curiosity, thus, luring the reader into opening the article (Chen et al. 2015, in Kuiken et al. 2017). In the online news environment, journalists are competing for click-through rates (CTR) meaning that headlines include heavy "clickbait features" in order to attract viewers to click on them. CTR is a means of providing advertisers with a measurable success rate, as it conveys information about how many people view each internet page and therefore potentially click on an advertisement (Gao 2012). *Clickbait* is an umbrella term, according to Kuiken et al. (2017), referring to textual features and techniques with the goal of arousing the curiosity and (click-through) action of a viewer. These features include simplification, spectacularization, negativity and provocative content. Forward referencing is another stylistic feature of a clickbait headline (Blom & Hansen 2015, in Kuiken et al. 2017: 1303), meaning that something in the article is referred to in the headline, often signaled by words like "this", "why" or "what". For example, this article from *The Telegraph*'s website's home page on March 11, 2020,

includes two forward references: "Coronavirus symptoms: *how* quickly they show – and *what* to look for" (Nuki 2020a, emphasis added). The use of questions and numbers has also been linked to clickbait headlines (Kuiken et al. 2017), for example: "Is it time to stop using public transport?" (Nuki 2020b); and "Will your local trust have enough beds to deal with coronavirus?" (Kirk 2020). Another feature of online article headlines is that when a consumer has clicked through to the actual article, the headline is altered into a more informative version (Kuiken et al. 2017).

Journalism, according to Burggraaf & Trilling (2017) is going through a process of commercialization which is defined as 'any action intended to boost profit that interferes with a journalist's or news organization's best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve' (McManus 2009: 219, in Burggraaf & Trilling 2017: 113). For example, in order to attract advertisers and investors the journalists try to create content that attract as large an audience as possible – and journalists have detailed information about readership preferences by analyzing website metrics, making it easy to maximize their audience by making decisions based on data and facts rather than on instinct (Anderson 2011, in Kuiken et al. 2017: 1303). This is a strategy expected to be used by tabloid news outlets (Burggraaf & Trilling 2017: 113) but also broadsheet newspapers are "moving toward the news values of the tabloids" (Sparks & Tulloch 2000: 3). A closer look at tabloidization is provided in the following section.

3.6.3. Tabloidization

A concern in today's media landscape involves the concept of tabloidization. Researchers have disputed the nature of the changes in diversity and quality of information that media produce, as well as whether or not these changes can have a negative impact on society and democracy (Uribe & Gunter 2004: 388). There is no common definition for tabloidization, however, Lefkowitz (2016) summarizes it as the following:

> "Tabloidization" can be understood as the convergence of "quality" newspapers towards the values characteristic of tabloid newspapers, which can be identified as personalization and sensationalism, and the linguistic features through which these values are represented.
>
> (Lefkowitz 2016: 2)

In line with this statement, McLachlan and Golding (2000, in Uribe & Gunter 2004) define tabloidization as a process in three parts: (1) *range*, where the proportion of information (news items) decreases in comparison to entertainment or service items; (2) *form*, which indicates less proportional space dedicated to text and more to headlines or visuals; and (3) *style*, which refers to more space devoted to stories including a personalized style of coverage, such as presenting public figures as private persons. Other studies have described tabloidization as a trend identified by changes in

journalistic behavior, 'feminization' of news presentation or emphasis on private life and 'soft' news coverage (Uribe & Gunter 2004: 388-390).

The commercialization of journalism, as mentioned above, and the "[increasingly competitive market] has meant a move away from balanced reporting, positive, politician-centered communication to a more negative, journalist-dominated approach and one-story front pages, screaming headlines and short, punchy campaigning prose at the expense of more detailed text of long quotations from politicians." (Conboy 2011: 119, in Lefkowitz 2016: 3). For example, tabloidization seems to include an increase in sensational or panic-inducing headlines; highly violent or physical metaphors in headlines ("Bank of England *slashes* interest rates in emergency measure to *tackle* coronavirus threat" (Sullivan 2020, emphasis added)); and a limited range of topics (Bączkowska 2019). Tabloids' news reporting tends to focus on people and personalities rather than issues and provide limited (or no) space for perspectives or stories opposing the general stance of the newspaper (Lefkowitz 2016).

Whether or not quality news outlets are adopting the tendencies of the popular outlets is a question under much dispute. In a recent study on the language of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers in Britain, Lefkowitz (2016) points out that the term *tabloidization* is used intuitively to describe the developments in (quality) news production, rather than on the basis of empirical findings. Her research focused on quoted speech in the (quality) newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Times* and (tabloids) *Mirror* and *Express*. Based on her findings Lefkowitz suggests that the term "tabloidization" within quoted speech seems to be a process of dual-convergence, where both tabloid and quality press have increasingly used the values initially characteristic of tabloids (2016: 16). Lefkowitz writes that there is a need for more research using both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the influence of tabloids on quality newspapers ("Tabloidization in the UK newspapers 1970–2010" 2016).

The broadsheet news landscape in Britain should be read against the backdrop of the strong tabloid presence. The largest circulating newspapers in Britain are the tabloids the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, and the *Mirror*. Though tabloid newspapers are not part of the corpus for this study, their content in relation to the political leaders Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster will be mentioned briefly. As Cameron and Shaw (2016) point out, the tabloids tend to set the tone for public debate, especially regarding politicians. This includes perceptions of prominent politicians, with (often) what seems to be a bias against prominent or outspoken female politicians, regardless of their party. For example, the coverage of Diane Abbott for Labour has been so negative, especially in the British tabloid press, that many national and international news sources have commented on it (Elgot 2017; Chakelian 2017a).

Donges et al. (2014) write that changes in news reporting and its implications for politics is widely debated. The process of *mediatization* is explained to be the intrusion of media logic into the political process, where changes in media coverage is stated to be "at the heart of the broader changes that the relationship between political elites and mass media is argued to have undergone" (Vliegenthart et al. 2011: 92, in Donges et al. 2014: 197).

Examples of this are, as mentioned previously, personalization, commercialization, entertainment and negativism in news reporting. Within political discourse, issues have been taken over by the modes of entertainment, personalization, dramatization of events, polarization of conflicts, and this promotes a mood of antipolitics (Habermas 2006, in Donges et al. 2014: 196). With respect to gender, female political figures have been stereotyped by gender and news reporting has focused on appearance rather than their opinions. However, some studies suggest that many women use these stereotypes to their advantage (Townsend 2012).

3.7. The politicians selected for this study

At the time when the sample for this study was collected there were three women in the most prominent political positions in the UK: Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster. Due to the political situation involving both Scotland and Northern Ireland in the Brexit negotiations, Sturgeon and Foster received considerable media coverage. National media spotlight is essential for candidates' re-election possibilities (Kahn 1996, in Carroll 2003), which is why this study focused on elected officials, rather than selecting articles from a campaign running up to a general election.

Theresa May was the British Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party 2016-2019. Upon her election May started the process of withdrawing the UK from the European Union, a topic which the British news landscape has been dominated by during the period of this study. In brief, a referendum was held in June 2016 in the UK to decide whether the country should leave or remain in the European Union. The word 'Brexit', merging the words *Britain* and *exit* is the shorthand term for describing the UK leaving the EU. The Leave side won by 51.9% to 48.1%. After May was elected Conservative Party leader and assumed the post of Prime Minister, article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which allowed two years for the country and the EU to agree to the terms of the separation, was invoked on 29 March 2017. This meant that the process of the UK leaving the EU would have to be final on 29 March 2019. After this date, the UK would have entered a transition period, during which free movement would continue and the final details of the new relationship would be agreed upon.

Politicians have since been negotiating a withdrawal agreement to ensure a smooth exit from the EU, especially for businesses and individuals (also referred to as a 'soft Brexit'). However, there

is also a prospect of the UK leaving without a deal, a so-called 'no-deal Brexit' or 'hard Brexit' (Hunt & Wheeler 2019).

The British Members of Parliament did not pass any of the three withdrawal agreements May proposed, the last vote taking place on 12 March 2019. Instead, MPs agreed a new deadline for the UK withdrawal agreement to be October 31, 2019 ("Brexit: Your simple guide to the UK leaving the EU" 2019). Theresa May resigned her post as Prime Minister on July 24, 2019 to be replaced by Boris Johnson.

Press coverage of Theresa May in British tabloid newspapers during the time of this study was overtly negative. Even though tabloids like *Daily Express*, *Sun* and *Daily Mail* supported Theresa May over Jeremy Corbin in the 2017 elections (Pearson-Jones 2017), most of the coverage during the time the sample for this study was collected was not supportive of Theresa May. During October 2018 the *Daily Mail*, *Mirror* and *Daily Express* featured front pages commenting on the dance moves of Theresa May before her conference speech. The *Daily Mirror* titled May's performance "strictly shambolic", her actions giving her "zero credibility". The *Daily Mail*, on the other hand, wrote that the "PM danced her way back to authority with a bravura speech […]" ("Newspaper headlines: Has the Dancing Queen ended austerity?" 2018), giving their support in alignment with the newspaper's conservative political stance (Willis 2010).

Nicola Sturgeon is the leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and First Minister of Scotland since November 2014. Sturgeon is a clear supporter of the UK remaining in the EU and she was critical of the withdrawal bills that Theresa May's government proposed. Sturgeon, also being pro Scottish independence, is also working to "steer the current of events towards an independent Scotland" (Torrance 2016). The position of Sturgeon prompted negative assessments of her political motivations, a fact which was highlighted in both quality and popular news outlets, many of which questioned her credibility. In the 2016 referendum, a majority of voters in Scotland opted to remain in the EU.

Arlene Foster is the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party and First Minister of Northern Ireland. Due to the Conservative party losing its majority in the 2017 General election, the DUP signed an agreement to support Theresa May's party, thus attaining a sufficient number of MPs to gain majority. The Conservative party and the DUP did not, however, form an official coalition (Mattsson 2017). This arrangement meant that the DUP held the balance of power in Westminster, making them (despite their small number of MPs) disproportionately influential. Arlene Foster was featured frequently during this time period due to the DUP's 'confidence and supply' arrangement with the minority Conservative government (Cowley & Kavanagh 2018: 449). Many of the articles from this time were on the topic of whether or not Arlene Foster (who was not herself an MP) and

the DUP would support the propositions put forward by Theresa May's government, as well as the question of Northern Ireland's future border with the EU. While the majority of voters in Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU, the DUP and Arlene Foster supported Brexit ("EU referendum: Northern Ireland votes to Remain" 2016).

The tabloid coverage of the politicians did not exclude gendered language. For example, the *Daily Mail* featured a front-page picture focusing on the legs of Nicola Sturgeon and Theresa May with the title "Never mind Brexit, who won Legs-it" (cf. Vine 2017 for the article). The journalist, Sarah Vine, was criticized for the sexist piece, whereas the *Daily Mail* replied that the paper also comments on male politicians' appearance, such as hairlines, waistlines or legs, which justified their "Legs-it" headline (Oppenheim 2017). Upon being elected Prime Minister, Theresa "Maggie" May's leopard-printed shoes were on the front page of the *Sun* (see Image 1. below) with the title "Heel, boys. New PM Theresa can reunite Tories & deliver Brexit" (Hawkes & Cole 2016). Cameron (2017) interprets this as two-fold: the (Conservative) paper supported the leave-side that won the referendum and implied (sympathetically) that "Maggie" May was a new Margaret Thatcher, who could unite the country and deliver Brexit. Yet, the other message which was implied was that of a dominatrix, visualized by Theresa May's foot coming down on the heads of the (subordinate) male colleagues. This theme of a (sexually) dominating woman, writes Cameron, follows the female archetypes that often represent women in positions of authority. Other examples of female archetypes found in news reporting about women leaders are schoolteachers, headmistresses or nurses (Cameron 2017).

Image 1: The front page of *The Sun* on July 12, 2016.
Available: https://debuk.wordpress.com/tag/theresa-may/ [March 15, 2020]

As for the response to these types of articles that focus on appearance, Theresa May said: "As a woman in politics throughout my whole career I have found that very often, what I wear – particularly my shoes – has been an issue that has been looked at rather closely by people. Obviously what we do as politicians is what makes a difference to people's lives. I think that most people concentrate on what we do as politicians. But if people want to have a bit of fun about how we dress, then so be it." (in Oppenheim 2017). This kind of statement touches upon theories of women politicians' management of their public images. Women are not always 'victims' of objectification or sexism, but can use these notions to their advantage. For example, to gain media attention women politicians are known to intentionally have worn brightly colored clothing (Jansens 2019).

The attention to women politicians' clothing in media texts can also be seen as a statement of the "differentiation logic in the gender system" (Markstedt 2007: 27), and an attempt to uphold the male politician as the norm, because when women politicians answer questions about their choice of clothing it diverts attention from their political priorities (ibid.). Research has shown that negative news coverage of a political candidate's appearance can have a harmful effect on their chances of being elected (Jansens 2019).

3.8. Current topics in the selected articles

The overwhelming majority of news reports featuring the three women leaders in October 2018 were on the ongoing Brexit negotiations. The three political leaders were during this time frequently represented in the media, due to an important summit on October 18, 2018 when the European Union and Britain were to discuss the future shape of British relations with the EU.

Prime Minister Theresa May was featured the most in all four newspapers, mostly within the context of Brexit. Nicola Sturgeon, first minister in Scotland and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) was featured in articles about Brexit and about Scotland's future within Great Britain. Arlene Foster, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in Northern Ireland was featured frequently during this time period due to the DUP's large amount of influence in the government.

The Guardian declared their support for a continued membership of the EU ("The Guardian view on the EU referendum: keep connected and inclusive, not angry and isolated", 2016). *The Independent*'s news coverage reflected support for remaining in the EU. In 2018 they launched the campaign *Final Say*, pushing for a referendum where citizens could vote on the final Brexit deal put forward by Theresa May ("The referendum gave sovereignty to the British people, so now they deserve a final say on the Brexit deal", 2018). In an opinion piece *The Telegraph* wrote that "[a] world of opportunity is waiting for a fully independent Britain" ("Vote leave to benefit from a world of opportunity", 2016), showing their support for the Leave campaign in the Brexit referendum. *The Times* supported the view to stay in the EU ("Remaking Europe", 2016).

3.9. Limitations

Given the long tradition of British news discourse, and my own position as a non-British news consumer, it might be easy to overlook certain insinuations, intertextuality, etc. However, this may also be to the advantage of the researcher, allowing a more objective viewpoint on the news topics.

As Townsend (2012) points out, due to the fact that her research on media representations on women leaders concerns only two individuals (and the current study includes three), the findings can be regarded as "important traces of the phenomena under investigation." (2012: 13). Furthermore, due to the relatively small size of the corpus of this study, the findings cannot crystallize into any general conclusions of women leaders in public discourse, but rather help to confirm or add to already existing theories.

4. Themes

4.1. Overall results

In the following chapter a summary of the largest themes is presented, proceeding to a more detailed analysis and discussion of the themes. All three leaders received negative, positive and neutral coverage in the newspapers. There were differences in the volume of the coverage of each individual woman, as well as in the particular themes found in the representations of them.

Table 2. The total number of articles mentioning each politician during October 2018, out of which the sample of 60 articles was selected for this study.

Newspaper	Theresa May	Nicola Sturgeon	Arlene Foster
The Guardian	300+	15	22
The Independent	300+	14	13
The Telegraph	300+	15	15
The Times	300+	25	12

As shown in Table 2. above, the overall media coverage of the three women varied. A clear majority of articles mentioned Theresa May. The search results showed a maximum of 300 articles, so in reality this number could be larger. This amount, however, also includes instances where Theresa May is mentioned in related articles and 'further reading' links, so the true number of items featuring Theresa May is not known. For this study, five articles featuring each politician from each newspaper were selected, totaling 60 articles.

Both Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster were featured in fairly similar numbers of articles during this time. Arlene Foster was featured in more articles in *The Guardian* (22 in total), whereas Nicola Sturgeon received more coverage in *The Times* (25 articles in total).

Table 3. Distribution of negative, positive and neutral themes about Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster in all newspapers.

Themes, all newspapers	Theresa May		Nicola Sturgeon		Arlene Foster	
	Occurances	Percentage	Occurances	Percentage	Occurances	Percentage
Negative	191	84.14%	67	33.84%	28	19.18%
Positive	22	9.69%	88	44.44%	95	65.07%
Neutral	14	6.17%	43	21.72%	25	15.75%
Total	**227**	**100.00%**	**198**	**100.00%**	**146**	**100.00%**

Table 3. presents the overall coverage of the women in all four newspapers. In the 60 selected articles a total of 571 data extracts were identified. Theresa May was mentioned the highest number of times (227), Nicola Sturgeon 198 and Arlene Foster 146 times.

The majority of the themes were negative (84%) in the articles about Theresa May, whereas the largest group of themes describing Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster was positive, with 44% and 64% respectively. Nicola Sturgeon had the largest portion of neutral themes (22%), followed by Arlene Foster (17%) and Theresa May (6%). The following table presents a breakdown of the positive, negative and neutral themes found within each newspaper.

Table 4. Distribution of negative, positive and neutral themes about Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster in the newspapers *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*.

| Newspaper	Themes	Theresa May		Nicola Sturgeon		Arlene Foster	
		Occurances	Percentage	Occurances	Percentage	Occurances	Percentage
The Guardian	Negative	47	78.33%	9	16.36%	9	32%
	Positive	9	15%	36	65.45%	15	54%
	Neutral	4	6.67%	10	18.18%	4	14%
	Total	**60**	**100.0%**	**55**	**100.00%**	**28**	**100%**
The Independent	Negative	37	90.24%	0	0.00%	8	15.69%
	Positive	2	4.88%	41	85.42%	34	66.67%
	Neutral	2	4.88%	7	14.58%	9	17.65%
	Total	**41**	**100.00%**	**48**	**100.00%**	**51**	**100.00%**
The Telegraph	Negative	42	91.3%	49	79.03%	4	9.76%
	Positive	2	4.3%	3	4.84%	31	75.61%
	Neutral	2	4.3%	10	16.13%	6	14.63%
	Total	**46**	**100.0%**	**62**	**100.00%**	**41**	**100.00%**
The Times	Negative	65	81.25%	9	27.27%	7	26.92%
	Positive	9	11.25%	8	24.24%	15	57.69%
	Neutral	6	7.50%	16	48.48%	4	15.38%
	Total	**80**	**100.00%**	**33**	**100.00%**	**26**	**100.00%**
	All	**227**		**198**		**146**	

Table 4. shows the overall number of themes found in the corpus, and their percentages. The balance of the negative, positive and neutral coverage of the women differed. To clarify these numbers further, these percentages are summarized in graphs below. The numbers are rounded.

Graph 1. Distribution of negative, positive and neutral themes about Theresa May in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*.
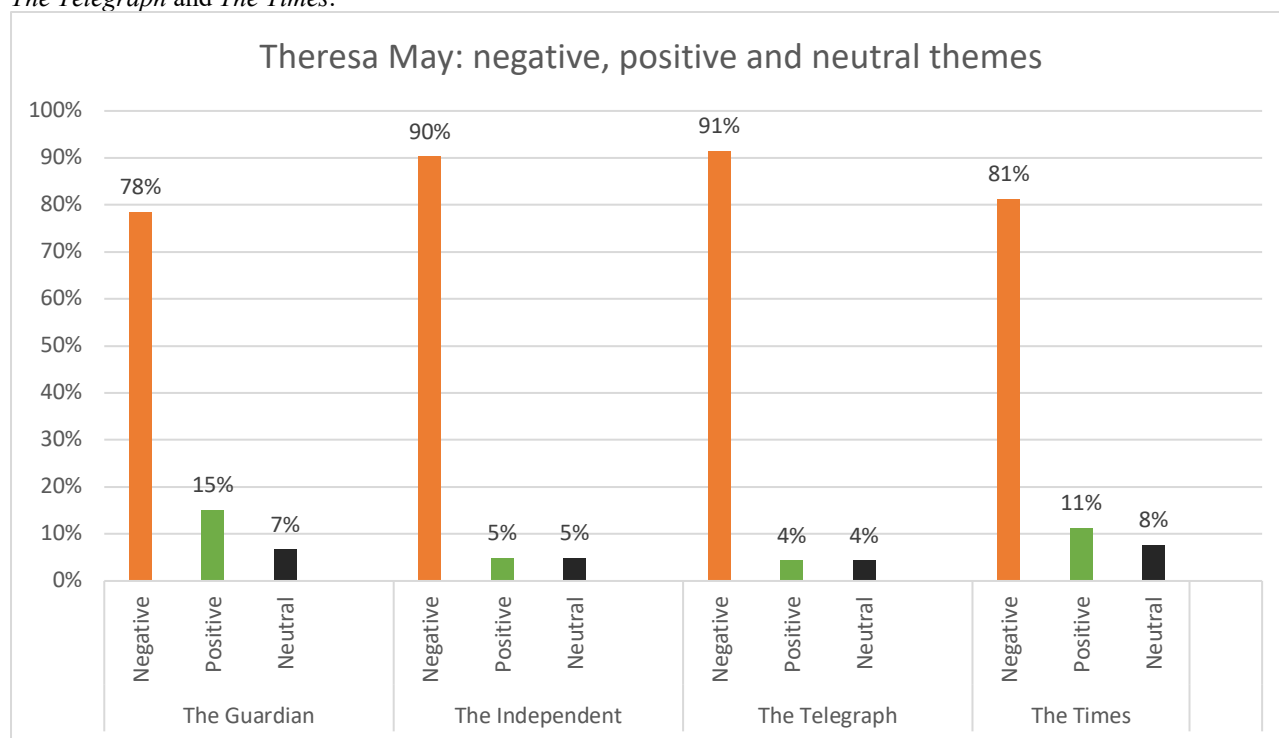
In all four newspapers, negative themes describing Theresa May formed the largest group and neutral themes formed the smallest (see Graph 1. above). *The Independent* and *The Telegraph* both had the largest number of negative themes in their articles about Theresa May, approximately 90% of all their data extracts, followed by *The Times* (81%) and *The Guardian* (78%). *The Guardian* had the largest share of positive themes describing Theresa May (15%), followed by *The Times* (11%), with very few positive themes in *The Independent* (5%) and *The Telegraph* (4%). Neutral coverage relating to Theresa May formed the smallest share of themes in all four newspapers.

Graph 2. Distribution of negative, positive and neutral themes about Nicola Sturgeon in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*.
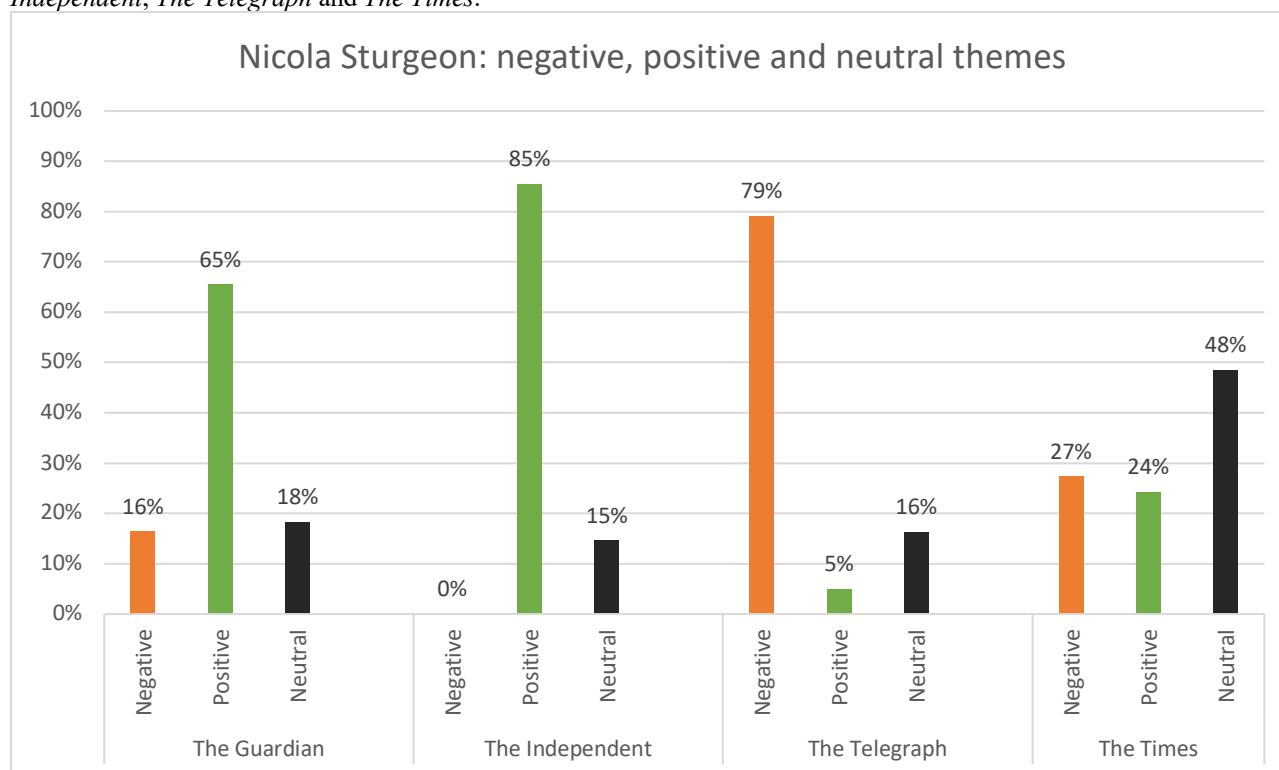

As shown in Graph 2. above, the largest percentage of themes about Nicola Sturgeon was positive in both *The Independent* (85%) and *The Guardian* (65%), whereas *The Telegraph*'s coverage was chiefly negative (79%) and the largest group of themes in *The Times* was neutral (48%). Interestingly, the least number of data extracts describing Nicola Sturgeon was found in *The Times*, with 33 occurrences (see Table 4.). This newspaper also had the largest share of neutral themes, possibly implying that factual coverage makes shorter articles or makes fewer references to the politician in question than do the ones overtly emphasizing positive or negative themes. Notably, no negative themes were found in the sample of *The Independent*'s descriptions of Nicola Sturgeon. The positive themes about her amounted to 85%, the highest share of positive themes in all four newspapers.

Graph 3. Distribution of negative, positive and neutral themes about Arlene Foster in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*.
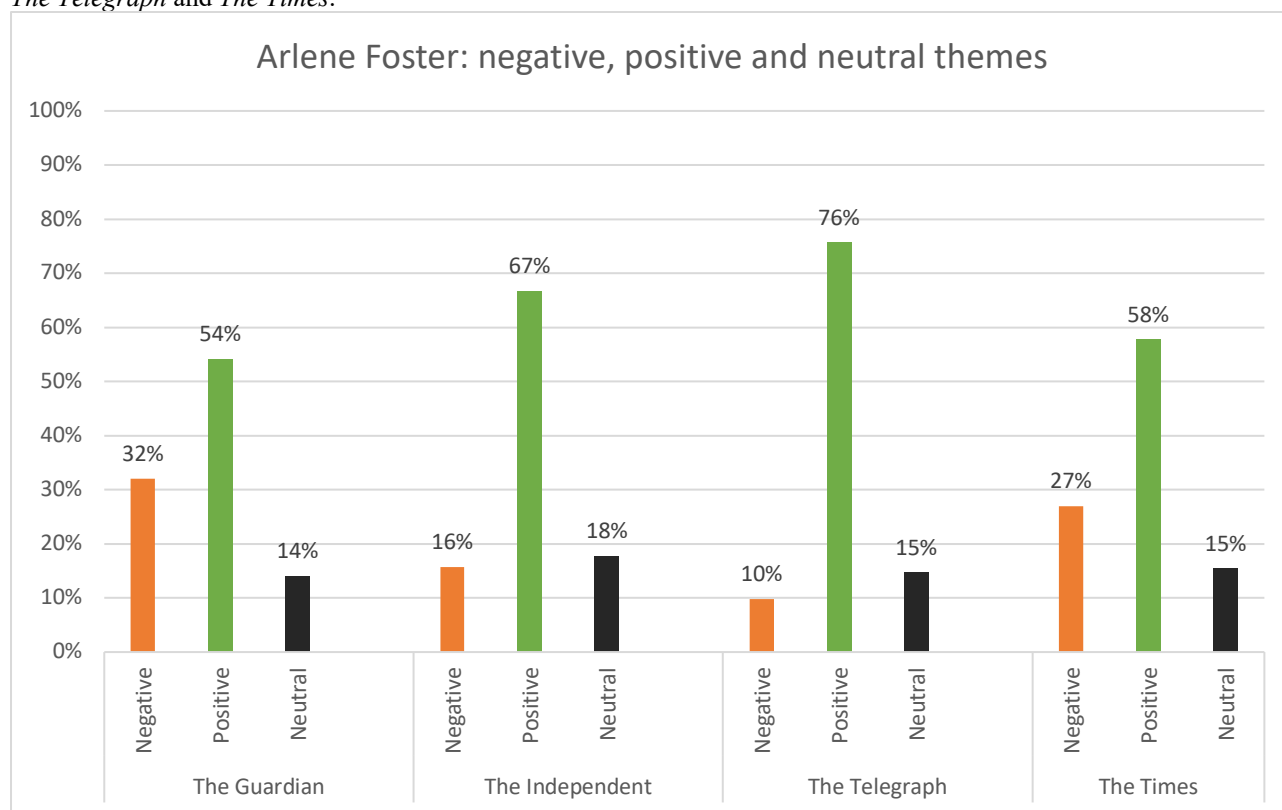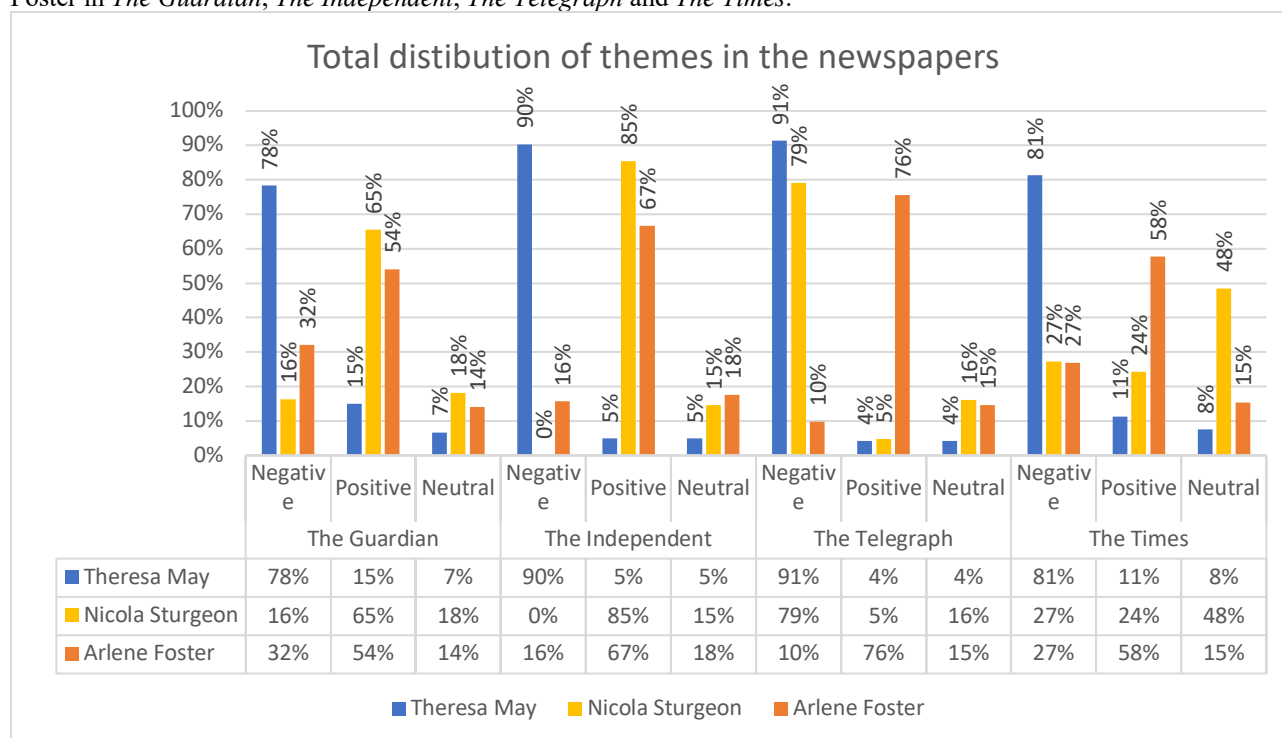

Notably, positive themes about Arlene Foster formed the largest group in all newspapers. In order of favorability, they were *The Telegraph* (76%), *The Independent* (67%), *The Times* (58%) and *The Guardian* (50%). *The Guardian* featured the largest group of negative themes (30%), followed by *The Times* (27%), *The Independent* (16%) and *The Telegraph* (10%). All newspapers featured Arlene Foster in neutral terms, between approximately 15% and 20%.

Graph 4. Total distribution of negative, positive and neutral themes about Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*.

Total distribution of themes in the newspapers

	The Guardian			The Independent			The Telegraph			The Times		
	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral
Theresa May	78%	15%	7%	90%	5%	5%	91%	4%	4%	81%	11%	8%
Nicola Sturgeon	16%	65%	18%	0%	85%	15%	79%	5%	16%	27%	24%	48%
Arlene Foster	32%	54%	14%	16%	67%	18%	10%	76%	15%	27%	58%	15%

Legend: ■ Theresa May   ■ Nicola Sturgeon   ■ Arlene Foster

The differences in the newspapers' balance of positive, negative and neutral coverage can partly be interpreted as reflective of their political alignment, stance on a subject or whether or not they agreed with the politician in question. For example, the Eurosceptic and Unionist *Telegraph* did not favor Nicola Sturgeon, who supported a continued EU membership and an independent Scotland. Predictably, her largest share of negative themes was found in *The Telegraph* (79%).

The Independent showed a clear preference for Nicola Sturgeon within the scope of this corpus, despite of its stated 'independent' political alignment. For example, *The Independent* stated its support for a continued EU membership, which in part explained the choice of positive themes (85%) and lack of negative themes (0%) in its articles about Sturgeon. However, the lack of a balanced coverage of the political leaders, especially in the case of Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon, is remarkable. As for *The Independent*'s coverage on the topic of Scottish independence, it has tended to be balanced and reported a variety of views on the subject.

For being a traditionally conservative newspaper that initially supported Theresa May for party leader, *The Telegraph* had an overwhelmingly large percentage of negative themes (91%) describing May, which was more than its negative descriptions of Nicola Sturgeon (79%). Reasons for this large number of negative themes is further examined in the thematic analysis below.

4.2. Thematic analysis

Several themes were identified in the data set and the following table present a selection of data extracts. Similar for all three politicians was the metaphorical use of war in the representations of the three female party leaders. The way in which the violent metaphors were used, however, differed for each individual woman. Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster were often described in aggressive terms, as 'attacking' or 'torpedoing' someone, whereas Theresa May was described as being under attack. Personal charisma or qualities were notable themes in the representation of each woman. Leadership success and/or failure was a recurring theme in the descriptions of Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon.

Table 5. Selection of positive and negative data extracts about Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster in the newspapers *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*. Neutral data extracts have been left out of this selection. Note that due to the ambiguous meanings of some of the extracts, they have been labeled as both positive and negative.

		The Guardian	The Independent	The Telegraph	The Times
Theresa May	Neg	Dancing Queen Mocked Socially awkward Robotic Swaying Weak Forced (to act) Pressed Getting by on borrowed time Has no confidence Fails to see Lurched Awkward Incurably awkward Robot Destined to be laughed at Stressed and weird	Faces fight Criminal on trial Drinking in the last chance saloon Has broken promises Causing nothing but misery for the country Bizarre Micro manager Terrifically socially awkward woman Undecisive Making excuses Under attack Unreliable Ridiculous	Has led the party badly In a bunker Not listening Weakness in political direction Trapped in a very big hole Her removal is but a matter of time Congenitally allergic to teamwork Having a cough Lurches Signs her own political death warrant	Enters 'killing zone' Has 72 hours to save her job Failure to govern Plead for her job Under attack Not listening A headache for May Demand May's head Tottering Can expect no sympathy Slipping away Walking the plank Being under attack Cautious nature
	Pos	Classy Totally brill Is right	Has rightly refused to rule out considering different approaches Had one of her best [weeks]	Believes in what works Delivered a strong and stable speech Managed to keep symptoms under control	May's inspiration Teresa Brasier Theresa May's pledge to bring about earlier cancer diagnoses Deserves respect Has proved them wrong
Nicola Sturgeon	Neg	No 10 said it regarded Sturgeon's intervention as unhelpful. Speech style: Tout		Under attack Has been accused of undermining the SNP's independence campaign Criticized for failing to get guarantees Facing menace Her troops Her foot soldiers	Critics said Nicola Sturgeon was using Brexit to push for a second Scottish independence referendum Nicola Sturgeon's comments are not helpful Has clashed publicly

				Being under attack Nationalist Selfish and shameless Dithering Cautious Speech style: 'anti-Brexit bluster', 'lively but frankly workmanlike speech'	Was swiftly rebuffed Is under pressure
	Pos	Reminded Cautioned Told Confirmed Objected strongly Was critical of Has a duty Buoyant Scottish first minister and SNP leader to press case for continued membership of single market and customs union	NS calls on PM Urged Was right The Scottish leader's intervention Sent a well-judged message A political leader who listens to her voters	Dutiful Widely regarded as the most competent and effective political leader north of the Border, if not in the UK as a whole. Speech style: 'lively but frankly workmanlike speech'	MPs who vote a "cobbled-together" Brexit deal through parliament would be guilty of a dereliction of duty, Nicola Sturgeon has claimed. Rebukes Has urged
Arlene Foster	Neg	Insisted Sought to defuse criticism "I worry about the Arlene Foster story. She is technically [the] most powerful woman in [the] country"	Take over from the prime minister Critics accused Ms Foster of "reckless and desperate stuff" Roundly condemned the DUP leader's comments Arlene Foster is not an MP and not even first minister but she holds the trump card in these negotiations.	Frustrated Not reassuring Unclear	Foster and her party enjoy projecting uncompromising unionism but their actions may have unintended consequences Former first minister can never again be first minister The DUP leader's mistake is believing she can force more changes against the will of nationalists and the Irish government.
	Pos	Warns Could not accept Believes Is now "ready" to trigger a no-deal Brexit The DUP leader was "ready"	Ms Foster had effectively "taken over" Brexit negotiations from Theresa May Ms Foster torpedoed the prime minister's plan Appeared to shoot down Ready She holds the trump card in these negotiations	Torpedoes Warned Reminded Alert Prepared Determined Unionist	Ramps up pressure on May Refused Rejected Unionist As women we're very good at finding things we have in common and building relationships on that

4.2.1. Theresa May

A significant portion of the themes about Theresa May's personality and characteristics were negative. Two articles in *The Guardian* were dedicated to May's speech at the Conservative party conference in October 2018, where she entered to the song "Dancing Queen" by ABBA and danced her way to the podium. This drew "more than a little mockery on social media" and she was described with the words "robotic", as "an affront to my favourite song" and with the hashtag "#cringe"[1]. May's dance moves were also mentioned in *The Telegraph*: "Putting aside that jig at the start (who are we to judge a little dance in front of the eyes of millions?) […]"[11], describing, in an ironic tone, the success of May's conference speech.

The adjective 'robotic' was used to describe not only May's dance but also her personality. Both *Guardian* and *Independent* articles stated: "There is no point trying to pass her off as a normal person when she cannot maintain human responses for more than eight seconds in a row"[3]; "[y]ou either own the awkwardness or dress her in a robot suit and apologise to the nation for ever pretending she was anything else"[3] and "Bizarrely, the worse things get, the more serene she seems to be"[10]. These statements portray May as being incapable of normal emotions, or inhuman. On a similar note, descriptions of May's personality as awkward surfaced in two newspapers: *The Independent* described May as a "terrifically socially awkward woman"[7] and *The Guardian* wrote that "Theresa May's incurable awkwardness is easily her most redeeming feature"[3].

May was described as being cautious: "I hope that she throws aside *her cautious nature*"[16] and "Today [Conservative MP Johnny Mercer] attacks what he calls an "abject failure of this government to govern, to lead", condemning *May's cautious managerial approach*."[2] (emphasis added). May was also described as lacking decisiveness and confidence: "Johnny Mercer said Theresa May's Brexit plan was 'the ultimate in not making a decision'"[8] and "[Theresa May] has one job: *exude confidence*"[16], implying that May was, in fact, not confident.

Another theme which emerged was that of May being weak, helpless or on the brink of losing her job as Prime Minister. This was a significant theme in *The Telegraph* within the newspaper's negative coverage of Theresa May.

1) The *weakness* in political direction, a function of a hung Parliament, a bitterly divided Tory party and an incoherent Opposition, has led to the Prime Minister *being trapped in a very big hole*.[14]
2) Hammond's budget giveaways highlight May's weakness[5]
3) Do we bend our energies to helping a *tottering* prime minister keep the show on the road?[19]
4) Having *tied herself to the mast* by betting everything on a Chequers Minus deal […][14]

5) Tories tell PM she has *72 hours to save her job*[20]

6) This week, Theresa May will find that *she is drinking in the last chance saloon* and the bad news for her is that the bar is already dry.[9]

7) It's not too late to save Brexit, if only the PM would *abandon her bunker* and start listening[14]

8) I have the sense that it is *slipping away rather fast* for Theresa May.[19]

Wording such as 'tottering' portrays May as being in an unstable position – the exact definition being 'walking unsteadily' or 'lacking stability' (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *tottering*). This theme was voiced in several newspapers, both explicitly ("May's weakness"[5]) and metaphorically ("trapped in a very big hole"[14]).

A significant number of themes in *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times* was that of May being under attack or in a war:

1) David Davis has stepped up his *assault* on Theresa May's Brexit plan[6]

2) She is now *under attack* from her MPs *on five fronts*[20]

3) An ally of David Davis, the former Brexit secretary who is tipped as an interim leader, said May was entering "*the killing zone*". One who hopes to succeed added: "*Assassination is in the air.*"[20]

4) A Tory rising star today issues a *call to arms* for MPs to *oust* Theresa May, […][20]

5) David Davis today calls for a cabinet *uprising against Theresa May* over Brexit — as MPs and ministers said they are ready to *oust* her if she does not change course.[18]

6) Cabinet *mutiny threatens to kill* Theresa May's Brexit[18]

7) The Sunday Times can also reveal that Conor Burns, Johnson's former parliamentary aide, threatened to *demand May's head* in an extraordinary showdown with JoJo Penn, the prime minister's deputy chief of staff[20]

8) […] it is becoming increasingly clear that whichever way she *lurches*, she signs her own political *death warrant*.[12]

9) "She's not listening. That's *kamikaze*."[20]

10) The Prime Minister can lead this debate or *she can remain in her bunker*[14]

These examples highlight the metaphor of politics as war. Within this frame Theresa May is described as being under attack, by the use of lexical items "kamikaze", "death warrant", "killing zone", "a call to arms", to name a few. These descriptions apply to both men and women politicians alike. However, Theresa May is clearly positioned either as a leader who is under assault (1-2), as a leader to be overthrown or assassinated (3-8), as a leader who is making bad decisions (8-9) or as residing or hiding in a bunker (10). These are four very different variations within the theme of the battle metaphor, all depicting May in various lights. In the first examples (1-2), May is depicted as having been declared war upon, or as fighting multiple other political actors. Examples (3-7) imply the death of Theresa May in more or less palpable ways. Extracts (8-9) imply that May does not have control

of the situation. Example (10) implies that May is in hiding, rendering her cowardly or irresponsible for her actions.

May was also portrayed within the theme of being a criminal put on trial: "The prime minister has been summoned to *plead for her job* before the back-bench 1922 committee on Wednesday — a process dubbed "*a show trial*" by one Tory"[20]. This theme places Theresa May in a very negative frame, by suggesting she is a criminal.

Positive themes about Theresa May were those supportive of her statements or actions: "The prime minister is right to recognise that public services need investment" [2] and "[s]he is also right that councils must build homes"[2]. Other positive themes were found in the descriptions of May's dance moves, such as the appreciative adjectives "classy"[1] and "totally brill"[1].

A positive theme in an article in *The Times*[16] was that of May having respect or admiration. The article showed support for May's hardiness in the tough political times:

1) she has one big thing going for her and that is the sheer resilience that she has shown over the past year[16]
2) Nobody in that hall has any doubt that she has staying power. [16]
3) There is widespread admiration for a woman who can drag herself out of bed to do that job and few believed she would address them again as prime minister. But she has proved them wrong. [16]
4) she deserves our respect for staying put at a time that would push any leader to the limit[16]
5) That is why the faithful will give her a standing ovation this week and why she will live to fight another day. [16]

Here, the article is clearly optimistic about Theresa May. However, because the respect that May earned is due to the fact that she can 'drag herself out of bed', the theme can simultaneously be interpreted as negative. Similarly, by stating that "she deserves our respect"[16] implies, simultaneously, that she is not, in fact, respected. These themes construct an image of Theresa May being a victim and invoke empathy in the reader.

One article in the sample did not concern Brexit, but a personal story: "Praise for PM's inspiration Teresa Brasier"[17], "The god-daughter who inspired Theresa May's pledge to bring about earlier cancer diagnoses was a pillar of her community"[17]. This discourse offered a personal story about Theresa May, where a close family member had passed away from cancer, portraying a soft and personalized media image of May.

4.2.2. Nicola Sturgeon

The largest groups of themes concerning Nicola Sturgeon were, similarly to Theresa May, those relating to war or violence. Nicola Sturgeon was, however, figured as both an 'attacker' and as being 'under attack'.

The theme of being authoritative or strong emerged in the use of verbs quoting Sturgeon, such as 'quits', 'objected strongly', 'was critical of', 'summarised', 'maintained', 'cautioned', 'stated', 'not likely to be tempted', 'warned' and 'accused':

1) She *urged* MPs to reject the "false choice" between whatever deal Ms May secures and a no-deal Brexit, and not to allow themselves to be railroaded into backing the prime minister over fears of a catastrophic cliff-edge exit from the EU. [28]
2) In a *warning* to MPs in London would who try to block another vote on Scottish independence, Ms Sturgeon said: "You can oppose independence - that is your democratic right. But you cannot - *and you will not* - deny Scotland's right to choose." [27]
3) Scotland's first minister *objected strongly* to inclusion of Donald Trump's former aide[25]
4) The Scottish leader's *intervention* comes as the prime minister was due to make an unscheduled commons statement on the state of Brexit negotiations after weekend talks broke down over arrangements for the Irish border. [28]

The common feature of these examples is the portrayal of Sturgeon's quotes or actions as strong or determined. Judging from the overall tone of the article, these were labeled as positive themes because they reflect a competent or efficient picture of Sturgeon. An intervention, for example, is an interference in a condition or process with the aim of changing the outcome (in order to prevent harm) (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *intervention*). This choice of wording angles the sentence to portray Sturgeon in a positive light, compared to if the writer would have chosen the synonym 'interference' or 'interruption', which have more negative connotations.

Contrastingly, negative themes were found about Sturgeon's authoritative manner:

1) That's a problem both for proponents of the Union and *Nicola Sturgeon's SNP*. [37]
2) Which brings us back to today's speech by Sturgeon to *her party faithful*. [31]
3) Sturgeon has bought herself some time: as yet, few of *her foot soldiers* are publicly challenging her cautious approach. [31]
4) Her ability to tell *her troops* only what they want to hear won't last for much longer. [31]
5) Nicola Sturgeon gave *her foot soldiers* what they wanted [31]
6) Mr Sillars accused the SNP membership of *following Ms Sturgeon like "sheep"* on the issue at the party's autumn conference earlier this month, when she announced the policy change [32]
7) But she has not been helped by interventions from some of *her awkward squad*, particularly among her MPs, suggesting that a mandate at a UK general election could be enough to declare independence. [35]

Extract (1) is from *The Times*, whereas the rest (2-7) are from *The Telegraph*'s articles. A sense of Sturgeon being the owner or possessor of the SNP is depicted with phrases like 'Nicola Sturgeon's

SNP'. In the data extracts Sturgeon is painted as a military leader of the SNP, where the military terms 'foot soldiers' are used to describe 'her' party members. The party members are on one hand described as 'her party faithful', being supportive of Sturgeon, but also referred to as 'sheep', reflecting an image of Sturgeon being the shepherd of the party, where the party members follow her obediently or rather foolishly (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. *be (like) sheep*). The theme of Nicola Sturgeon being in a fight was referenced through the use of violent verbs: 'Sturgeon *rebukes'*, '[Sturgeon] has *clashed* publicly'.

Sturgeon was described as being under attack from within her party, the SNP:

1) Senior SNP MP *attacks Nicola Sturgeon*'s backing for second EU referendum[31]
2) in an *extraordinary attack* [against Nicola Sturgeon] [31]
3) *the real menace facing Nicola Sturgeon* is restless Scottish nationalists[31]
4) *Nicola Sturgeon has nice words but no red meat* for SNP's slumbering lions[32]

In the data extracts the theme of Sturgeon being in danger emerged: she is described as being 'under attack' from her own party members (1-2) and facing a 'menace' in Scottish nationalists (3). In the data extract (4) the SNP's members are the metaphorical 'slumbering lions' when awaiting news about another independence referendum, posing as a potential threat if they were to be 'woken up'. The metaphorical 'red meat' that Sturgeon fails to deliver refers to news of an independence referendum and will be discussed further in chapter five.

In extract (1) Nicola Sturgeon is described as being attacked by a 'senior' SNP MP. This emphasis on a *senior* role stresses the MP's importance in relation to Nicola Sturgeon, and gives a certain proportion of credibility to the SNP MP. The source's name was revealed later in the article.

The theme of 'being a nationalist' was reflected in a data extract about Sturgeon:

1) But however much of a reality that legal hurdle is, it's not something any *self-respecting nationalist leader* can admit, especially to her own conference. [31]
2) SNP leader *predicts 'momentum for independence will be unstoppable'* as she *attacks* government's record on Brexit[27]

Judging from the tone of the article the nationalism referred to is negative. *The Telegraph* quoted Nicola Sturgeon's take on nationalism, which conflicted with their own view (shown by the choice of reporting verb "*claims*"): "The difference between Scottish nationalism – open, progressive, inclusive, tolerant – and the British nationalism she claims was responsible for spurring the Leave campaign – inward-looking and intolerant – was clearly spelled out." [31] Here, the use of emotive language in Nicola Sturgeon's statement touches upon nationalism rhetoric and political advertising, which is further discussed in chapter five.

The theme of Nicola Sturgeon being unreliable, a gambler, or having a hidden agenda was found in several extracts:

1) Everything *to play for* if MPs reject Brexit deal, says Nicola Sturgeon[21, 22]
2) Ms Sturgeon *raised the stakes* on that possibility on Sunday by committing the SNP to vote in favour of a "people's vote" second Brexit referendum in any Commons vote at Westminster. [22]
3) Critics said Nicola Sturgeon *was using Brexit to push for a second Scottish independence referendum*[39]
4) However, political rivals *accused her of refusing to compromise so she could press the case for independence.* [39]

The extracts (1) and (2) invoke a picture of gambling or playing, rendering Nicola Sturgeon unreliable. In extracts (3) and (4) there are "critics" and "political rivals" opposing Sturgeon. The anonymity assigned to sources is a tendency in journalism (Zelizer 1989, in Lefkowitz 2016: 5), where sources are commonly referred to as "experts" or "government officials" (or, in this case, "critics"), positioning them as a credible informants and, thus, discrediting Sturgeon.

The theme of 'being dutiful' was found in data extracts concerning Nicola Sturgeon:

1) For MPs to support a bad or blindfold Brexit ... would *in my view be a real dereliction of duty'*[39]
2) MPs who vote a "cobbled-together" Brexit deal through parliament would be guilty of a dereliction of duty, Nicola Sturgeon has claimed. [39]
3) The First Minister - who had a brief meeting with Mrs May on Monday night - claimed in a speech in London that politicians who helped the Prime Minister get a "cobbled together" deal would be guilty of a dereliction of duty. [34]
4) "For MPs to support a bad or blindfold Brexit – a cobbled together withdrawal agreement and a vague statement about our future relationship – would in my view be a real dereliction of duty," Ms Sturgeon said. [28]
5) Sturgeon said *her administration had a duty to work to ensure that vote was respected.* [24]
6) On this crucial issue Nicola Sturgeon *is showing she is a political leader who listens to her voters*[26]

The data extracts (1-5) are self-representations of Nicola Sturgeon, in either direct or indirect quotes. Sturgeon states that her duty is to make sure MPs do not make a harmful political decision, creating a narrative theme of 'dutifulness'. Extract (6), however, is an opinion voiced by the journalist where Sturgeon is described as 'a political leader who listens to her voters', both highlighting the fact that she is a political leader and that she sticks to her principles, (dutifully) follows the values of an elected official within a representative democracy rather than giving way to avoid conflict.

A theme of Nicola Sturgeon's style of speaking was referenced in several articles, for example:

1) Nicola Sturgeon *touts* 'commonsense' Brexit alternative[24]
2) What they got instead was Sturgeon *bluster* about how wicked the Tories are and how much of a mess Brexit will make of the UK. [31]

3) Nicola Sturgeon gave her foot soldiers what they wanted in a *lively but frankly workmanlike* conference speech in Glasgow yesterday – except what they really wanted. [32]

The word 'blustering' has negative connotations, defined as 'to talk or act with noisy swaggering threats' or 'to utter with noisy self-assertiveness' (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *bluster*). This theme relates to a very masculine way of speaking. 'Tout' is to promote or talk up (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *tout*). The adjective 'workmanlike' can be either seen as meaning skillful and efficient, or, with the negative implication, 'competent and skillful but not outstanding or original' (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *workmanlike*), which is in this case the more likely option, prompted by the conjunction 'but'. The examples above portray a speech style featuring the "loud and confident" attributes of masculine speech.

A theme of caution was found in the descriptions of Nicola Sturgeon:

1) Some accuse her of *dithering*, not least because she said after the EU vote in 2016 that another Indyref would be held about now, but that was before the Nationalists took a bath electorally at the snap general election last year, losing 21 seats at Westminster.[33]

2) But just in case his activists believed that he was defying his leader's *ever-cautious approach* and demanding another independence referendum as soon as possible, Mr Russell got quickly back on side, saying that such a vote could only take place when the 'right moment' arrived. [32]

'Dithering' means 'to act nervously or indecisively' (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *dither*), and while it is a verb used both in descriptions of men and women (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. *dithering*), it brings on the rather gender-stereotypical connotation of 'indecisive women'.

Gendered language was found in an excerpt from *The Telegraph*:

Meanwhile, back in the parallel universe inhabited by more cerebral Nats, Brexit minister, Mike Russell, emphasised his opposition to the Tories' plans through the use of not one, not two but three poets – all of them English.
Bromley-born Mike made plain his party's opposition to becoming what he called "…the midwives of Brexit, willing dislocation and disaster upon our country".
And he spoke more than a degree of sense when he added: "Rational choices are what politics is about. A rational choice is not whether to choose, or dump, a leader solely because she can dance on to stage. [32]

This data extract is a figurative comparison between politicians and descriptions of a typically woman-dominated profession. The *Telegraph* article quoted the SNP member Mike Russell, calling him "more cerebral" (it is understood from the article that the writer means 'than Nicola Sturgeon'). Furthermore, the article highlighted his birthplace, Bromley, which is a London borough, perhaps in an attempt to make him acceptable in the overall SNP-critical line that *The Telegraph* maintains. In its description of Mike Russell as "more cerebral", meaning "demanding or involving careful thinking

and mental effort rather than feelings" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. *cerebral*), the article suggests that Nicola Sturgeon acts based on her emotions, which can also be seen as a gendered description.

4.2.3. Arlene Foster

The majority of the themes describing Arlene Foster were positive, portraying the First Minister of Northern Ireland in a successful or efficient manner. Other prominent themes were those of power, violence, and authority.

Similar to the phrases and verbs recounting Nicola Sturgeon's actions, positive or powerful words were used to describe Arlene Foster:

1) Arlene Foster told a Conservative MEP *she was "ready"* for the failure of talks between the UK and the EU, according to an email leaked to The Observer newspaper. [48]
2) Arlene Foster *is prepared* to reach a compromise on a Northern Ireland amnesty[51]
3) The leader of the Democratic Unionist Party *believes* a no-deal Brexit is *the "likeliest"* scenario, it has been reported. [48]
4) Ms Foster *knows* that it can be renegotiated. [57]

In the examples above Arlene Foster is depicted as being well-informed, knowledgeable and prepared, which are positive leadership features.

The theme which was referenced the highest number of times was Foster as violent or militant:

1) "It is telling that now she *has gone to Brussels to take over from the prime minister* as we get to the crunch. Theresa May and her government are in the pocket of the DUP." [47]
2) Critics of the government said Ms Foster *had effectively "taken over" Brexit negotiations from Theresa May* – as she prepared to meet representatives of member states, negotiators, officials, and top EU parliament figures. [47]
3) In a later interview, she *poured cold water on Theresa May's idea* of having regulatory checks in the Irish Sea[46]
4) Her party *has threatened to cause a political crisis by voting down the budget* if Ms May gives way to Brussels and Ms Foster said: "The DUP's actions this week are not as some have suggested about '*flexing muscle*'. [49]
5) Arlene Foster knows what message she is sending Theresa May by openly toying with the idea of propping up her nemesis Boris Johnson instead: do not take the DUP for granted. [53]
6) In a separate interview with Bloomberg TV, Ms Foster *torpedoed the prime minister's plan* for regulatory checks in an attempt to resolve the Irish border wrangle. [46]
7) She has in recent days *appeared to shoot down* a nascent bid by the British government to compromise on checks across the Irish sea, *describing her red-lines as "blood red"*. [47]
8) Arlene Foster *torpedoes* Theresa May's Brexit compromise as she warns new regulatory checks in Irish Sea are a 'complete non-starter'[52]
9) It was a familiar plan for Arlene Foster on Tuesday as the Democratic Unionist Party leader *went to Brussels to redraw her "blood-red" Brexit battle-lines*. [54]

In the extracts (1-2) Foster is described as having 'taken over' Brexit negotiations from Theresa May, and in extract (3) as having put a stop to Theresa May's proposal. This is a portraying Foster in a very powerful manner, because the article is suggesting that Foster is assuming control over the Prime Minister's tasks or having the disproportionate amount of power to intervene in them. In extract (4) Foster is described as threatening, and in a quote Foster deflects earlier media commentary, where the DUP had been described as 'flexing muscle'. This is an extremely masculinized description of the DUP. The metaphor of politics being a warzone where Foster is leading military actions is depicted with the verbs 'torpedo' or 'shoot down' (7-8). Foster uses adversarial speech in her comment where she is drawing 'blood red Brexit battle-lines', which refers to the issue of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. There was concern over the movement of trade across the border as well as whether previous tensions could resurface (O'Grady 2019) if the UK were to leave the EU's customs union.

Arlene Foster was referenced together with Gavin Williamson, a British Conservative politician and, at the time of the collected articles, the Secretary of State for Defense:

1) Sources in Belfast and Whitehall say that the DUP leader and Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson are now 'on the same page'[51]
2) A senior DUP insider told The Telegraph that *the pair* both believe a "double jeopardy" rule could be introduced, which would prevent the historic allegations team from bringing new cases against veterans who had already been investigated. [51]

The data extracts are from an article published in *The Telegraph*. The overall tone is positive in its descriptions of Foster, a point which is reinforced by positioning Foster favorably beside Conservative Gavin Williamson. Cameron and Shaw (2016) write that describing two politicians as a 'pair' draws on the conceptual metaphor comparing political relationships with personal or sexual ones. There are also studies which have investigated statements from female political executive members in the media, suggesting that in media text their opinions are often confirmed or validated by including a quote by a male political colleague (Hultberg et al. 2006).

In the majority of the articles in all four newspapers, Foster was described factually as 'the DUP leader'. In one extract Foster was referred to by her initials: "AF said the DUP were ready for a no-deal scenario, which she now believed was the likeliest one."[48] At the time of the collected articles, Arlene Foster was not first minister in Northern Ireland, a fact that was highlighted in *The Independent*[47] and *The Times:*

1) She has "already established connections" with Foster*, the former first minister in the Northern Ireland executive, which has been suspended for nearly two years.* [58]

2) On the restoration of Stormont, republican figures in Belfast have *resurrected the demand that DUP leader Arlene Foster can never again be first minister* — a demand Sinn Fein had quietly dropped last year. [60]

This theme of being suspended casts Arlene Foster in an unreliable light or having a disproportionately large amount of power. This theme was also highlighted in descriptions of Arlene Foster's power as an issue of concern:

1) Labour MP David Lammy, a supporter of the Best for Britain campaign, said: "Arlene Foster is *not an MP and not even first minister* but she holds the trump card in these negotiations." [47]
2) Vine said: "A no-deal Brexit would be a disaster ... I worry about the Arlene Foster story. *She is technically [the] most powerful woman in [the] country* ... and a no-deal is already a bad scenario, and [the] other two options are fudge[s]." [45]

Extract (1) discredits Arlene Foster by describing her as having power disproportionate to her (low) status of 'suspended first minister'. Extract (2) is a comment of concern of Foster's amount of power.

5. Discussion

This chapter presents a summary of the themes found in the descriptions of each political leader (see Table 6. below); followed by a discussion of the differences in the newspapers; the themes found in the analysis and how they relate to existing theories; and what rhetorical and linguistic strategies were used in the discourse. A brief discussion on the themes from the viewpoint of media communication studies is provided, including theories of media negativity and actor description.

5.1. Summary of main themes

This section presents a summary of the main data extracts as sorted into larger groups (see extracts in Table 5). The groups are the overarching themes of leadership qualities, personal characteristics and the politicians' actions.

Table 6. Summary of positive and negative data extracts sorted into larger themes about Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster. Note that due to the ambiguous meanings of some of the extracts, they can occur in several themes.

		The Guardian	The Independent	The Telegraph	The Times
Theresa May	Neg	Leadership qualities (weak, no confidence) Personality (awkward, weird, stressed, mocked, robot, Dancing Queen) Actions (forced, pressed, fails to see, lurches)	Leadership qualities (micro manager, making excuses, on trial, undecisive, causing nothing but misery for the country) Personality (bizarre, socially awkward, ridiculous, unreliable) Actions (has broken promises, faces fight, under attack, drinking in the last chance saloon)	Leadership qualities (has led the party badly, weakness in political direction, congenitally allergic to teamwork) Personality (having a cough) Actions (In a bunker, trapped in a very big hole, on limited time, signs her own political death warrant)	Leadership qualities (failure to govern) Personality (cautious) Actions (enters 'killing zone', can expect no sympathy, has 72 hours to save her job, slipping away, walking the plank, not listening)
	Pos	Actions (dance) (classy, totally brill) Actions (political) (is right)	Actions (is right, had a good week)	Personality (believes in what works) Actions (delivered a strong and stable speech, managed to keep symptoms under control)	Actions (deserves respect, Theresa May's pledge to bring about earlier cancer diagnoses, has proved them wrong)
Nicola Sturgeon	Neg	Actions (unhelpful) Speech style (tout)		Leadership (her troops, her foot soldiers, nationalist) Personality (selfish, shameless, cautious) Actions (under attack, unreliable, failing,	Actions (unreliable, not helpful, has clashed publicly, is under pressure)

				facing menace, being under attack, dithering) Speech style (bluster, lively but frankly workmanlike)	
	Pos	<u>Personality</u> (buoyant) <u>Actions</u> (reminded, cautioned, objected strongly, was critical of, has a duty, to press case)	<u>Leadership</u> (political leader who listens to her voters) <u>Actions</u> (intervene, sent a well-judged message, urged, was right)	<u>Leadership</u> (dutiful, competent and effective) <u>Speech style</u> (lively but frankly workmanlike)	<u>Leadership</u> (dutiful) <u>Actions</u> (rebukes, urged)
Arlene Foster	Neg	<u>Leadership</u> ([the] most powerful woman in [the] country) <u>Actions</u> (insisted, sought to defuse criticism)	<u>Leadership</u> (not an MP, not first minister) <u>Personality</u> (reckless and desperate) <u>Actions</u> (taking over)	<u>Leadership</u> (not reassuring, unclear) <u>Personality</u> (frustrated)	<u>Leadership</u> (can never again be first minister) <u>Actions</u> (may have unintended consequences, believes she can force changes)
	Pos	<u>Leadership</u> (ready, prepared) <u>Actions</u> (warns, could not accept)	<u>Leadership</u> (ready) <u>Actions</u> (taking over, torpedoed the prime minister's plan, appeared to shoot down, holds the trump card in these negotiations)	<u>Leadership</u> (Unionist) <u>Personality</u> (determined, alert) <u>Actions</u> (torpedoed, warned, reminded)	<u>Leadership</u> (Unionist) <u>Actions</u> (pressured, refused, rejected) <u>Woman</u> (good at finding things in common and building relationships)

In Table 6. the positive and negative extracts are presented in larger groups of themes about leadership, the politicians' personalities and their actions. Themes of leadership related both to the politicians' positions (Arlene Foster, for example, was on several occasions discredited due to her position of *not* being an MP nor, at the time, First Minister), and to particular leadership qualities (such as the ability to lead, manage or give political direction). Themes relating to personality were for example direct descriptions of personal characteristics (such as 'weird', 'socially awkward' and 'reckless') but also descriptions of personal health (such as having a cough) or the display of emotions (being frustrated). Action themes described both the politicians' political actions ("sent a well-judged message" [30]) as well as action verbs, such as 'warns', 'insists' or 'refuses'.

Many of these extracts can be sorted into multiple themes, for example, 'being weak' or 'dutiful' could be interpreted as sub-themes to both personality and leadership qualities. Similarly, 'having a cough' could be interpreted as both a personal description and a (negative) leadership

quality, because it displays weakness. These categories are many times flexible and can be examined from several angles.

5.2. The women

5.2.1. *Theresa May*

In short, the themes depicting May in the corpus did not paint a positive picture of the Prime Minister. She was described within the negative themes of being weak, unstable, a criminal facing trial, in hiding, under attack, and under threat of assassination. This was a strikingly uniform narrative found across the contrasting newspapers. When it came to May's personality, she was described as robotic and socially awkward. The positive themes surrounding May were those in support of her statements, stating admiration for her resilience in the tough political climate and those in approval of her dance entry to the conference podium.

The findings in the thematic analysis confirm what Atkins and Gaffney (2020) found in their study of archetypes surrounding Theresa May in media discourse. From the time of her campaign for Conservative leadership to the end of her time as Prime Minister, her descriptions drastically changed from 'iron lady' to 'weak and wobbly' (2020: 12). The themes in the present study place Theresa May firmly in the second stage, where the media narrative portrayed her as weak.

Certain specifics of the appointment and resignation of Prime Minister Theresa May resonate with the 'glass cliff effect', a concept referring to the practice that "women are given leadership in troubled organizations to bear the blame of any organizational shortcomings caused by the adversity" (Haslam & Ryan 2008: 542, in Townsend 2012: 25). A feature of the political situation for Theresa May was that, while she was seen as doing badly, no-one else wanted to take over and take responsibility for the Brexit process. This fact was highlighted in one *Times* article in the corpus, stating "We may not like Mrs May. We may not like her Brexit plan. But she deserves our respect for staying put at a time that would push any leader to the limit".[16] Although this conclusion can only be drawn with further research, Cameron (2016) noted the same in the 2016 campaign for the Conservative party leadership, where two women (Theresa May and Andrea Leadsom) were the top two of five candidates. This situation, writes Cameron, could be seen as invoking the concept of the glass cliff, where "women are more likely to be chosen as leaders when an organization is in serious trouble and the risk of failure is high" (Cameron 2016).

5.2.2. Nicola Sturgeon

Nicola Sturgeon received much more positive media coverage than Theresa May. Among the negative themes, however, the thematic analysis shows that a variety of leadership roles were assigned to Nicola Sturgeon in the discourse. Firstly, the image of Sturgeon as an autocratic ruler was prevalent in the sample for this study. In the description of the SNP membership as 'following Ms Sturgeon like sheep', it is implied that the SNP members were easily influenced, but it also paints a domineering picture of Sturgeon. Secondly, Nicola Sturgeon's leadership was described as a shared process, where her leadership was only enabled by the party members. These members were described as ready to turn their backs on Sturgeon, who was depicted as being under attack from within the party. This contradicted the positive themes of leadership, where an image of Sturgeon as a democratic and principled leader was shown, a theme found mainly in *The Independent*'s articles. Finally, Sturgeon was also depicted favorably as a strong or effective leader, mainly in the use of lexical items (such as 'intervention' or 'strong objection') in descriptions of her political actions.

In the context of newspaper coverage Nicola Sturgeon was very popular already at the time of the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014 and there was a surge in support for the SNP when she took over as leader in November 2014 (Forsyth 2014). In the following years this positive image continued (Dathan 2015; Cameron & Shaw 2016), which is why this established popular image of Nicola Sturgeon is potentially open to a more negative evaluation as a serious political threat. *The Telegraph,* in particular, had a large portion of negative themes about Nicola Sturgeon. Cameron and Shaw (2016) write that the negative coverage of Nicola Sturgeon, as concluded by Ross (2015), was not only a result of the "everyday, reflex contempt for women which remains common in parts of the British press" (Cameron & Shaw 2016: 89) but she was attacked because she was evaluated as a "credible political threat" (ibid.).

5.2.3. Arlene Foster

Of all three leaders the overall coverage of Arlene Foster was the most positive. This could reflect, as Cameron and Shaw write, the 'political calculation' factor (2016: 87): in comparison, Foster was politically not as strong as May and Sturgeon, thus seen as less of a threat and therefore received less negative media coverage. This, on the other hand, contradicts the themes of Foster, where she was portrayed as a pivotal force in the Brexit negotiations and as essential to the British government and Theresa May remaining in power. The themes of being a threat to the Conservative government, having leverage over Theresa May or "propping up" the government was emphasized in the articles.

Arlene Foster was described with themes of being "ready" and "prepared" for the future. This positioned her as being knowledgeable or an expert. She was also described within themes of vivid

violence, with verbs such as 'torpedoed' a decision or 'threatening' to cause a political crisis. Remarkably, Foster herself used this militant metaphor in a quote, where she described her political lines as 'blood-red'. The features of Northern Irish politics and their background in the Troubles might explain the lingering imagery of violence. For example, Arlene Foster's father was shot in a sectarian killing, a fact that was highlighted in a *Telegraph* article: "Mrs Foster, whose father, the Royal Ulster Constabulary reservist John Kelly, was shot by IRA terrorists in 1979, said her family had always been "100 per cent" behind the Armed Forces, adding that she was "enormously proud of our soldiers"."[51]

5.3. Differences among the articles

Editorials and other commentary written from the personal point of view of the journalist tended to be more openly critical of the political leaders and contained more extreme (negative) commentary. The articles in *The Independent*'s "Voices" section are editorials, letters, comments and reviews. An article in the corpus used for this study, "In the white heat of the excuse furnace, Theresa May is forging a whole new language"[7], was written by the political sketch writer Tom Peck, and the tone of the article was negative and ironic.

Another heavily ironic article was found in the category *Health and Fitness / Body* in *The Telegraph*: "How to get through the working day with a cold (just like Theresa)".[11] The inclusion of these genres of articles, such as entertainment, political satire and other non-news reports, in the sample for this study resulted in an increase in negative themes, as compared to if the analysis were only on news reports.

Another dimension to be considered is the gender of the journalists. This can shed light on whether men and women write about women differently, although some scholars have stated that because of the male-dominated cultures within news production many female journalists adopt the same (masculinized) style in discourse (Mullany 2009). For example, the previously mentioned *Daily Mail* front-page headline "Never mind Brexit, who won Legs-it" (2017) was written by (female) columnist Sarah Vine. Vine also featured in an article in the corpus used for this study: "Brexit: Sarah Vine tells Tory cabinet members to stop 'willy waving'"[45] and "Vine said: "A no-deal Brexit would be a disaster ... I worry about the Arlene Foster story. She is technically [the] most powerful woman in [the] country ... and a no-deal is already a bad scenario, and [the] other two options are fudge[s]."" [45]. Both examples illustrate the use of gendered and sensational language.

5.4. Themes

5.4.1. Leadership

Even though leadership, as discussed in Townsend (2012: 16), is a topic that has received a lot of research attention, opinions on what factors qualify as leadership are still divided. One distinctive feature seems to concern individual characteristics, that leadership is dependent on certain specific "individual dispositions that may (or may not) result in personal charisma" (2012: 17). A second definition is "leadership focuses on different ways to lead people by means of establishing direction as well as motivating and inspiring other people" (Kotter 1990: 4-5, in Townsend 2012: 17), suggesting that leadership is rather a role of encouragement rather than management. Thirdly, leadership can be seen as a collective agency. When approached from a social constructionist perspective, leadership is seen as an interactional process which is shared between a leader and their followers (2012: 19).

In the descriptions of Theresa May, references to her (failed) attempt to lead were found, for example, "Theresa May has led our party so badly even I wouldn't vote for it, says Conservative MP"[12] and "the weakness in political direction […] has led to the Prime Minister being trapped in a very big hole" [14]. Both of the extracts were from *The Telegraph*'s articles and cohere with the definition of leadership as a means of leading people by establishing direction or motivating people. Furthermore, the representation of Theresa May as "socially awkward"[7] suggests that she is uncharismatic and does therefore not have the individual disposition of being a leader. On both points Theresa May seems to be failing in the portrayal of successful leadership.

Among all three politicians, reference to Sturgeon's leadership as a collective agency was most common (for example in the extracts 'her troops', 'her sheep'). This negative theme, along with themes of being an unsuccessful public speaker, implies that Sturgeon's leadership qualities do not stem from her as an individual, but are rather due to the interactional process shared with her followers. This could further imply that if Sturgeon lost the support of her followers (which was hinted at through the themes of being under attack from within her own party), she would not possess adequate leadership qualities. The theme of leadership was specifically voiced in an article in *The Telegraph*:

> "Nicola Sturgeon, the party leader and Scotland's First Minister, is widely regarded as the most competent and effective political leader north of the Border, if not in the UK as a whole. This may well be true, but it also has to be said that when you inherit a stratospheric poll lead from your predecessor, a party membership desperate to fete you as a rock star rather than a political leader, and an array of opposition parties in a state of panic following the independence referendum of 2014, it's actually quite difficult to see how you can fail.

Whatever her good fortune up until now, Sturgeon has led a steely and disciplined party." [31]

The quote above suggests the idea that Sturgeon is not a true leader. The fact that Sturgeon "inherited" the position as leader from her (male) predecessor Alex Salmond implies that Sturgeon did not earn her position by building up a following on her own. On the other hand, the extract also states that the followers celebrate Sturgeon "as a rock star rather than a political leader", implying that Sturgeon's success as a leader resides in her individual features, or personal charisma. These different themes of leadership project a very mixed image of Sturgeon as a political leader. The features that qualify a successful leader have traditionally been 'masculine' ones, which is why Cameron and Shaw (2016) suggest that a female in the position of power is problematic to depict in news discourse.

In another view on leadership, Cameron and Shaw (2016) write that when it comes to politics, an efficient leader is "no longer imagined as an aggressive, ruthless, hyper-competitive individualist; the 'modern' ideal of leadership emphasizes 'people skills' such as teamwork and motivation, which call for the [feminine] virtues of cooperation, empathy and openness" (Chamorro-Premuzic 2013, in Cameron & Shaw 2016: 15-16). In many cases women are stated to be better communicators than men, yet, paradoxically, there has been a promotion of men rather than women to what Cameron and Shaw call the "Venusian leader" (2016: 16). These are, for example, Barack Obama and Tony Blair, whose speech styles include both traditionally 'masculine' features (such as the ability to project authority) and 'feminine' qualities (such as expressing emotion in ways that feel 'authentic') (2016: 16).

Townsend (2012) writes that the terms leadership and management are sometimes used synonymously, even though the two concepts are, in fact, very different, especially in the context of organizational practices. Management, in comparison to leadership, "is the effort by managers – who always hold a position of authority at some level – to get the trains to run on time. While it may, or may not, involve an element of coercion, management does not, in and of itself, involve significant change." (Kellerman 1999: 10, in Townsend 2012: 17). Leadership, on the other hand, "is the effort by leaders – who may hold, but do not necessarily hold, formal positions of authority – to engage followers in the joint pursuit of mutually agreed-on goals. These goals represent significant, rather than merely incremental, change." Kellerman (1999: 10, in Townsend 2012: 17). The distinction between leadership and management rests firstly on an individual level: management is related to officially recognized authority, whereas leadership is not necessarily based on formal authority. Secondly, management focuses on the ways to manage organizational tasks and work (e.g. planning

and problem-solving) while leadership entails ways to lead people by means of establishing direction (e.g. motivating people) (2012: 17).

The concept of political leadership is complicated and has many dimensions (both for women and men), which is perhaps why the notion of leadership is reflected in a multifaceted manner in the media. This mix of representations stems from the challenging situation that 'being a British political leader' demands: that while, on one hand, the part of management has to be played, on the other hand, it has to be balanced with the notion of 'being a leader', along with possessing certain personal characteristics that make a charismatic leader. This is not uncomplicated, which may partly be a reason to why there are conflicting themes about leadership in the descriptions of Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster.

5.4.2. Violence and war

The thematic analysis suggests that 'politics is war' is a common conceptual metaphor. Violent, physical or military themes were found in the descriptions of all three women. In the case of Arlene Foster and Nicola Sturgeon, both women were described as being effective or strong within the metaphors figuring politics as a violent combat. Theresa May, on the other hand, was described through the theme of being under attack.

Metaphors, according to Kalmoe (2012), act as more than linguistic embellishments. They are useful in making an abstract idea more understandable by referencing more tangible processes or objects. Politics can be complicated or require extensive knowledge to be understood, which is why metaphors (such as warfare or battle metaphors) can provide a convenient means for rendering a complex situation comprehensible. Some studies suggest that, even though violent language is recognized as metaphorical, violent political metaphors can increase the risk of literal violence in the forms of mob violence, assassination or war, because they act like cues for activating aggressive cognitive and emotional structures in memory. This makes aggressive responses more accessible and is a similar mechanism to some priming and framing effects in political communication research (Kalmoe 2012: 5-5). Lakoff (1996; 2001) similarly writes that metaphors are means by which we organize our abstract knowledge in terms of more experiential concepts; however, such metaphorization may well mis-represent knowledge in the interest of powerful elites (in van Dijk 2011: 36-37).

Koller (2004) analyzed business magazines with primarily male readerships and found that the most dominant metaphor was that of war or violence. Examples of lexical items relating to violence were 'blood', 'bruise', 'killer' and 'cut-throat' (Koller 2004: 65, in Mullany 2009: 220), which is the same or similar to lexical items found in the present study: '. However, even though the

metaphor was used to describe both men and women, the war metaphor is culturally coded as a male activity, thus masculinizing female subjects (Cameron & Shaw 2016). This same conclusion can be drawn in the present study, where Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster were masculinized within the metaphor of war. Theresa May was presented as being under attack and performing poorly within this frame, corresponding to the conclusion of Koller's (2004) study, where she writes that battle metaphors ultimately work to exclude women from the business world by maintaining that it is a male one (in Cameron & Shaw 2016: 103).

Where both Nicola sturgeon and Arlene Foster are the 'attackers', it could follow the feature of polarization in news reporting that Theresa May is on the receiving end of the attack. Along with features like personalization, negativism and simplification of complex matters in journalism (Donges 2014), it is not uncommon to see a complicated political matter simplified. In this case, the matter is simplified into two politicians (Arlene Foster and Theresa May) opposing each other. This is a common feature within personalization of politics and will be discussed further below.

Nicola Sturgeon, on the other hand was described with the themes of both being a (successful) military leader as well as being undermined or under attack from within the SNP. The food-related term *red meat* was used when describing Nicola Sturgeon's conference speech in Glasgow: "Nicola Sturgeon has nice words but no red meat for SNP's slumbering lions". This 'red meat' metaphor implies feeding dangerous animals, where Sturgeon fails to satisfy the demands of a potentially dangerous political group. Another explanation of the term is "something substantial that can satisfy a basic need or appetite" ("The politics of red meat" 2019). The term was already a political figure of speech in the 1940s and was in some sense regarded as synonymous with 'inflammatory'. As for the "slumbering lions" of the SNP, this metaphor, according to Komlik (2015), is a powerful call for freedom and nonviolent resistance against oppression. The phrase "*Rise like Lions after slumber*" can be found in the 1819 political poem "Mask of Anarchy" written by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Phrases from this poem have been used in many political movements since its publication, including in Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto during his campaign for the 2017 general election ("Londoner's Diary: Jeremy Corbyn's Romantic notions traced back to Percy Shelley" 2017; Chakelian 2017b). Cameron and Shaw (2016) found similar ambiguous messages in the themes about women leaders. As in the example with Nicola Sturgeon, where the description ("Nicola Sturgeon has nice words") is clearly meant to be positive, the negatively loaded words ("no red meat for SNP's slumbering lions") produce ambiguous or contradictory messages.

The sample in this study did, however, contain several examples where Nicola Sturgeon is described as strong within the battle metaphors. Higgins and Mckay (2016: 7) also comment on the 'war as metaphor' approach to politics in their study on Scottish media representations of Nicola

Sturgeon. They describe the political space as a "place of struggle for dominance and the destruction of enemy forces" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, in Higgins & McKay 2016: 7) where Nicola Sturgeon is portrayed as a woman trying to compete within a martial, and therefore typically masculine, domain. Since their study in 2016, and in the light of the present thematic analysis, it seems as though Nicola Sturgeon is no longer competing for credibility within this political 'war zone', but has already established her place as leader, as is portrayed with phrases such as "her foot soldiers"[32] within the corpus.

Notably, Arlene Foster herself used the violent or masculine metaphors "blood-red" and "flexing muscle", as these lexical items appeared in direct quotations in several of the articles. Cameron and Shaw (2016) write that several studies suggest that women who enter male-dominated workplaces tend to adopt the style of speaking that exists within that working culture. Institutions or professions which historically excluded women and where women continue to be outnumbered by men have the same tendency, where the working culture influences speech style rather than gender. The same, they write, appears to be the case with men in female-dominated professions such as nursing (2016: 11). In addition, the issues at hand were of critical importance to the DUP, where there was a strong desire to avoid rekindling previous tensions. In using these graphic metaphors, i.e. adopting a frame familiar to both discourse producers and readers, Foster was able to emphasize her message and receive (a lot of) media attention. In the light of this research, I would argue that in these comments Foster is intentionally invoking the battle metaphor. This follows the theory of the 'performance' of gender, where gendered speech is a linguistic choice, conscious or subconscious, made by individuals.

Cameron and Shaw (2016) state that because the 'Iron Maiden' archetype has become naturalized in the media representations of female leaders negative or demeaning descriptions are overlooked. The stereotypical 'battle-axe' might simply be a default theme within contemporary political discourse, in the absence of a better option with the same familiarity. On a similar note, Ochs (1992) notes that "ways of speaking are associated with stances that are in turn associated with women or men in a given culture. Thus, ways of speaking "index gender"." (Ochs 1992, in Kendall & Tannen 2001: 557). This indirect relationship between gender and discourse results in individuals not being aware of the influence of gender on their speaking styles (Kendall & Tannen 2001).

5.4.3. *Power, strength and weakness*

The theme of 'power' was portrayed through the descriptions of the women in several ways. Arlene Foster was described as powerful in terms of holding a "trump card" in the Brexit negotiations because the DUP "props up" Theresa May's government. This relationship was widely reported by

the media (*The Telegraph* in particular), who used metaphors or similes of power and military strength to depict Arlene Foster. The portrayal of Arlene Foster depicts her in predominantly masculine ways, reinforcing the statement by Cameron and Shaw (2016: 92) where, for women, power and authority are seen as unnatural or de-sexing.

Nicola Sturgeon was described as using her power to the SNP's advantage ("Critics said Nicola Sturgeon was using Brexit to push for a second Scottish independence referendum"[39]). This theme portrayed her as selfish or malicious. However, her power was also portrayed as being under threat from within the party. This theme of 'unstable' power was less absolute than Arlene Foster's strong and very physical power.

Theresa May was described as lacking power. In the discourse it seems that 'power' is synonymous with 'strength' (being bold, decisive and standing one's ground, etc.). Qualities, which according to most articles, seem to be deemed important for ensuring a suitable Brexit deal for Britain (see, for example, *The Telegraph*'s article "At last. A government strong enough to take the right decisions and ignore noisy voices" (Murray, 2020), where the new government led by Boris Johnson is "getting our country back" when the "failed state we [lived in] only a few months ago" could not). In the corpus of the present study Theresa May was described as 'weak' and 'lurching towards her biggest battle yet with the DUP and Tory Brexiteers'[53]. Theresa May was also depicted as having to battle her own allies, in addition to the EU enemy

A study on Hillary Clinton's campaign in news coverage reported the theme of 'losing the game' portrayed in the media (Curnalia & Mermer 2014). Similar to their findings, the portrayal of May as weak is a challenge to her endurance and a theme that emphasizes the political process because it suggests that May could not endure the rigor of the political situation.

5.4.4. Femaleness

In an article in *The Times* featuring Arlene Foster the theme of femaleness was voiced in an interview with Irish Sinn Féin politician Liadh Ní Riada regarding Arlene Foster: "Being a woman would help her establish a rapport with Foster, Ní Riada said. "I think as women we're very good at finding things we have in common and building relationships on that." [58] This theme of Foster 'being a woman' builds on a common notion of sisterhood or solidarity between women and that women can build relationships easily. It also reflects the 'female' quality of being effective communicators that is often associated with women politicians.

Power and solidarity are important features of negotiation theory. The creation of solidarity, according to Bülow (2009: 146), is often studied through the use of pronouns. In the article, the Sinn

Féin politician's use of 'inclusive *we*' (referring to both women in general as well as herself and Foster) creates a power stance in order to portray herself in favorable light.

This theme of femaleness contrasts with the militant and violent image of Foster painted by the media, which was the most common theme. Competing media images seem to be common in the depictions of the female leaders. Mäkelä et al. (2015) studied media representations of politician Jutta Urpilainen in her candidacy for leader of the Social Democratic Party in Finland. They write that the discourse portraying women as 'refreshingly different' usually coexists with other, contradictory portrayals. On one hand femaleness might be presented as a positive quality, where women bring something new and fresh to politics. On the other hand, femaleness might be considered negative, where women lack the authority and toughness that is required for leadership (Cameron and Shaw 2016: 95).

This is also termed the 'gender double bind', where the characteristics that are expected of women simultaneously hold them back (Jamieson 1995). Binds, she writes, generally simplify complexity due to the human tendency to split apart and dichomotize a complicated situation. Thus, contrasts are used: good and bad, strong and weak, male and female, true and false, and so on. These are problematic, because a person cannot be both at once, nor in between (1995: 5). In more recent studies where the gender double bind is examined in the news reporting of Hillary Clinton (Curnalia & Mermer 2014; Harp et al. 2016), researchers concluded that the double bind was still prevalent. In the study by Curnalia and Mermer (2014) Hillary Clinton was framed as a winner and a loser; someone unfeminine yet that could only appeal to women; and as broken-down and victorious, simultaneously.

News framing has many definitions according to Curnalia and Mermer (2014): a "central organizing idea" in a news story (Gamson 1989: 11); a way to "promote" particular definitions (Entmann 1993: 52); and the "selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes" in a news story (McCombs 1997: 37, in Curnalia and Mermer 2014). In political news, common frames within which politicians are referenced are the 'strategy frame' and the 'game frame': the first one focuses on tactics, whereas the latter one is characterized by a focus on who is winning or losing, on opinion polls and election outcomes as well as the use of war or sports language (Aalberg et al. 2012, in Walter 2018:). 'Issue frames' emphasize candidates' stances and are less frequent in the media (Kerbel et al. 2000: in Curnalia and Mermer 2014).

In the case of Arlene Foster in the present study, she is depicted as exceptionally tough and authoritative, to the extent that she is not portrayed with 'female' attributes at all. Within national politics women politicians are often depicted as aggressors in the political game frame (Campus 2013, in Curnalia and Mermer 2014). This places women within a masculine frame that accentuates the

double bind, because the features of being a powerful 'leader' often conflict with 'feminine' displays of emotion or sensitivity. This is why, according to Campus, female politicians avoid expressing emotions like anger or sadness (in Curnalia and Mermer 2014). This was a point echoed by Cameron and Shaw (2016). In their example, Natalie Bennett raised her voice in a television debate and was reported by the *Mirror* as having 'lost her temper', being 'over-emotional', being 'out of control' or as 'showing her claws' (2016: 98-99). In the same debate the researchers observed that Nigel Farage displayed extreme behavior but that it was not reported in the news articles.

In the themes about Theresa May being 'robotic' and 'inhuman' we encounter another gender double bind. There is a common belief that women are incompetent leaders because they are expected to be too emotional to be rational leaders, as reported by Falk (2010, in Curnalia and Mermer 2014). In the case of Theresa May, however, she shows a lack of emotion and is consequently 'inhuman' in news reporting, so much so that she gained the nickname 'Maybot' in the media (Atkins and Gaffney 2020). The theme 'inhuman' was a theme found in a thematic analysis of Hillary Clinton in news reporting (Curnalia & Mermer 2014). Hillary Clinton was often depicted as unempathetic, emotionless or cold ('Ice Queen'). This, they write, illustrates a problematic gender double-bind for women, where if they are too unemotional they are 'robots', whereas if they display emotion they are seen as unstable leaders.

5.4.5. Archetypes of female authority

Atkins and Gaffney (2020) write that archetypes in political narratives are powerful due to their simplicity and their ability to take on different forms depending on context. In their study, Cameron and Shaw (2016) refer to Rosabeth Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), a classic text on gender stereotypes in the workplace. Kanter suggested that female authority could be understood through a set of categories based on established archetypes of female power. The four main archetypes were (1) the 'mother', who nurtures or self-sacrifices; (2) the 'pet', who is unthreateningly feminine and appeals to men's desire to protect her; (3) the 'seductress', who uses sexuality to gain influence over men; and (4) the 'iron maiden', who exercises power directly and who is regarded as masculine and threatening (2016: 100). These archetypes were applied to the analysis of the women political leaders in Cameron and Shaw's study, and all but the 'seductress' were identified in the themes surrounding the women in the present study.

Firstly, the 'mother' archetype could be identified in some depictions of Nicola Sturgeon. In an editorial published by *The Guardian* Nicola Sturgeon was described: "On the one hand, Ms Sturgeon wants to *protect* Scotland from what she sees as an economic and political disaster. On the other, she is committing the SNP to *help save* Britain from a Brexit process which might otherwise

trigger the separation from Britain that is the party's prime goal." [21] (emphasis added). Here, the description of Sturgeon as a protector of Scotland and savior of Britain invokes motherly connotations of someone who looks after protects others.

Another extract from the same article could be interpreted as following the 'mother' or the 'iron maiden' archetype: "Ms Sturgeon knows she must continue for the moment to *temper* nationalist ardour for independence" [21]. The ambiguous word 'temper' means 'to soften by the influence of something else' or 'to exercise control over' (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *temper*). This could be interpreted as Sturgeon softening a quarrel, an action that could be seen as motherly. On the other hand, the same phrase could be seen as Sturgeon governing or restraining the 'nationalists', an act which adheres to the iron maiden archetype.

The 'pet' archetype could be traced in the depictions of Theresa May. *The Times* wrote: "There is widespread admiration for a woman who can drag herself out of bed to do that job and few believed she would address them again as prime minister. But she has proved them wrong."[16] The theme of 'trudging on, despite the circumstances' renders Theresa May non-threatening and invokes sympathy.

Out of Kanter's archetypes the 'iron maiden' figure is the most salient one in the descriptions of Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster. Nicola Sturgeon was depicted as a military leader both through figurative language ("her troops"[32], "her foot soldiers"[32]) and through reference verbs ("she attacked"[32]). Even though this depicts Nicola Sturgeon as a strong and powerful leader, these themes are negative in their tone. This gendered metaphor masculinizes Nicola Sturgeon and even though it seems to be used in descriptions of both men and women, it is problematic in this case because war is culturally coded as a male activity (Cameron & Shaw 2016: 101).

Arlene Foster was thematically depicted with clearly violent expressions: "It was a familiar plan for Arlene Foster on Tuesday as the Democratic Unionist Party leader went to Brussels to redraw her "blood-red" Brexit battle-lines." [54]. Reference verbs such as "appeared to shoot down" [47] and "torpedoed" [52] were also used in the descriptions of Arlene Foster. According to Burke (2017) this kind of direct language is not uncommon from the DUP, who promote uncompromising Unionism, which can explain Arlene Foster's choice of vocabulary. The metaphor of 'iron maiden' may signal that the female politician is strong or successful, but is problematic because it reinforces the notion of politics being a masculine realm.

Atkins and Gaffney (2020: 6) write that during Theresa May's Conservative leadership campaign and upon being elected, May performed a persona of being an archetypal 'healer', where she would bring the UK, torn by a bitter referendum campaign, back together into 'One Nation'. The healer archetype as described in Atkins and Gaffney resonates with the 'mother' archetype of

someone caring and helpful. Cameron (2017) also writes that during the same period, the *Sunday Times* reported that May was described by Tory MPs as "Mummy" (Shipman 2017). During the leadership campaign May was described by George Freeman, a Conservative MP, as having "John Major's moderate and decent One Nation instincts with a touch of Maggie's steel, and it's a winning combination" (in Atkins and Gaffney 2020: 7). Here, the 'iron maiden' archetype is used in the description of Theresa May in the discourse surrounding the Conservative leadership campaign. However, in the present study this archetype did not emerge in the analysis, confirming the results of Atkins and Gaffney's study where the archetypes surrounding Theresa May changed from 'iron lady' to 'weak and wobbly' towards the end of her time as Prime Minister (2020: 12).

Notably, no instances of the 'seductress' archetype were noted in the present study. The lack of positioning the women leaders within themes of flirting, romance, sex or marriage was remarkable, as it was a salient theme in the study by Cameron and Shaw (2016). In their study, the descriptions of Nicola Sturgeon in particular involved the conceptual metaphor of political alliances equating sexual relationships. The lack of this theme in the present study could be due to several things: firstly, the study by Cameron and Shaw analyzed televised debates that were set before the 2015 general election, whereas the present study dealt with already elected officials. In pre-election debates the politicians were positioned against one another and the performance of each politician was assessed, a situation which can produce animated debates. Secondly, Cameron and Shaw included tabloid news coverage in their corpus, which, following the sensationalist nature of tabloid news reporting, naturally generated more provocative and gender-stereotypical themes.

In the light of the themes found in the present analysis, two additional archetypes were identified: the 'hero(ine)' and 'maleficent' archetypes. In *The Independent*'s positive themes describing Nicola Sturgeon she was said to have "put her nationalism second to the national interest, expressing her belief that the public must be given the right to pass judgement on whatever outcome Theresa May reaches in the tortuous, seemingly never ending negotiations.", portraying Sturgeon as righteous or self-sacrificing. This theme could adhere to Kanter's 'Mother' archetype. However, the extract also depicts Sturgeon as democratic and dutiful, a theme which surfaced in several data extracts ("For MPs to support a bad or blindfold Brexit ... would in my view be a real dereliction of duty" [28], "Scotland's first minister [...] called for a Norway-style deal with Brussels, as the only "democratic compromise" that would unite different factions." [28]). This theme, where inspirational and emotive words such as 'duty' and 'democracy' are used, adheres to the classical archetype of the 'hero', who "pursues a moral mission on behalf of societal values and a greater common cause" (Kelsey 2016: 976). Kelsey analyzed the hero mythology in *Mail Online* stories about Nigel Farage, the leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). The journey to Brexit was for Farage and his

supporters a big win. Farage was depicted as a protagonist in a hero's journey, which is, according to Kelsey, a powerful and recognizable mythological trait. The hero myth, Kelsey writes, "often takes on similar forms from age to age. The Hero is born into humble circumstance. The Hero initiates a quest or journey. The Hero faces battles or trials and wins a decisive victory. The Hero returns triumphant." (Lule 2001: 82, in Kelsey 2016: 976). This could perhaps add a fifth archetype to Kanter's four: the 'Hero(ine)', who acts selflessly out of pure virtues for a greater good. This is not the first construction of Nicola Sturgeon as a hero in news discourse. In a study by Burnett et al. (2013) where media coverage of an outbreak of C. difficile in the UK was analyzed, Sturgeon was portrayed as heroic. She was described in the discourse as talking 'compassionately' about patients and being 'determined to ensure lessons are learned' (Burnett et al. 2013: 1548), within similar strong and aspirational descriptions as in the present study. The study by Burnett et al. also reported that, contrastingly, Sturgeon was depicted within the theme of 'villain', where she was blamed for the outbreak and for not taking action. This suggests that, as within the present study, there are many conflicting themes of leadership within which women political leaders are portrayed.

In the depictions of both Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster their positions of power were also cast in a malevolent or malicious light – while posing as strong and powerful which follow the 'iron maiden' archetype (Sturgeon with the power to 'intercept' government actions; Foster having the power to withdraw government from majority position) – both are described as having hidden agendas. Nicola Sturgeon was on several occasions described as using her power to the SNP's advantage ("Critics said Nicola Sturgeon was using Brexit to push for a second Scottish independence referendum"[39]). Furthermore, Arlene Foster is described as having the power to override Theresa May's decisions and portrayed as willing to do so through the use of strong, threatening metaphors if she does not have her way. While politicians are and should be scrutinized by the media, the women seem to be portrayed as excessively malevolent rather than being simply criticized for potential misuse of power. This theme of using power for selfish purposes heeds another famous female archetype, which is the 'witch' or 'maleficent' archetype. This female archetype comes in many shapes in fairytales: the sly witch or the evil stepmother; and in other narratives in the shape of the spy, where the character poses as honest/helpful/wise but is, in fact, corrupt or evil. This differs from the archetypal 'femme fatale', who lures or seduces her victims, or who hides her true nature by posing as (unthreateningly) feminine and therefore strikes closer to Kanter's 'seductress' archetype. This archetypal figure is close to the 'trickster' (Lule 2001), who is 'one of the most fascinating and complex mythological figures found in hundreds of societies, given that it embodies such diverse qualities as cunning, playfulness and a desire to push boundaries' (Lule 2001: 24 in Atkins & Gaffney 2020: 3).

This 'witch' or 'maleficent' archetype could therefore also be an addition to Kanter's four archetypes, because it is a well-known mythological depiction of female authority. This archetype can be seen as ominous, because in this narrative the character usually falls when her 'true', i.e. corrupt or evil, nature is exposed.

5.4.6. Gender as a theme

Cameron and Shaw (2016) found that women politicians were often subject to comments on appearance during the General Election 2015 campaign (although they also point out that men were not excluded from such commentary). In the present study, Nicola Sturgeon was no longer a candidate running for office but an elected official, and gender as a theme in itself was not found in the descriptions of Nicola Sturgeon. This might imply that an elected party leader opens up a different kind of political discourse (in the quality press), where comments on appearance are no longer common – although, in 2016, for example, the price of Theresa May's leather pants did provoke a political row. This event was also discussed in quality news outlets (Moseley 2016). Do the representations here differ among men and women? A comparative study on elected party leaders of different genders (pre and post-election) could shed more light on this particular aspect.

An extract concerning none of the three party leaders, the *Times*' article "Sinn Fein president Mary Lou McDonald fails to break free from the iron grip of IRA's hard men of Belfast"[60] shows a gendered positioning of 'the women' against 'the men'. In the sample, the Sinn Fein president Mary Lou McDonald clearly fails to 'break free' from the 'iron grip of IRA's hard men of Belfast', ultimately positioning McDonald as weak, whereas the 'men' are (gender stereotypically) portrayed as hard or threateningly strong. Cameron and Shaw found the positioning of women versus men a salient theme in their study. They, however, reported a frequent tendency to construct this rhetorical opposition where the women are marked as the positive term (2016: 93). This current example falls into a category where the woman is marked as the negative term.

In a data extract from *The Telegraph* a gendered example of a typically woman-dominated field was found: "Bromley-born Mike made plain his party's opposition to becoming what he called "…the *midwives of Brexit*, willing dislocation and disaster upon our country""[32] (emphasis added). This use of the term 'midwife' can be seen as a continuation of the widely used phrase 'delivering Brexit', invoking the collocations of delivering a child. The extract simultaneously suggests a very negative view on the profession of midwife.

In a *Guardian* article the Daily Mail columnist Sarah Vine was quoted: "it would be quite nice if all the men stopped shouting and screaming and waving their willies around, and maybe just gave [Theresa May] a bit of a hand occasionally"[45]. This depiction of 'all' the men as shouting and

willy-waving implies that they were behaving rather like monkeys. A similar instance was mentioned by Cameron and Shaw (2016) in their analysis, where media text makes use of the rhetorical opposition of 'the women' (here, Theresa May) and 'the men'. Here, the screaming men are contrasted with a presumably hard-working Theresa May. Cameron and Shaw stated that this image of "interchangeable men shouting" (2016: 97) is a common description both in media and in utterances.

5.4.7. Voice and power: women as political speakers

A common device in literary discourse is using non-generic quotatives, that is, verbs of speaking, that say more than simply 'X said Y'. For example, Cameron and Shaw (2016) noted cases of 'barked', 'snapped', 'scowled' and 'squeaked' in the descriptions of women politicians' speech. However, the generic quotative 'said' was used when reporting the male participant Ed Miliband's contribution to the discussion. Cameron and Shaw (2016) write that these verbs describing women's speak index an affective stance that indicate displeasure with the speaker. They also point out that the writer might not have had the conscious intention of communicating those meanings, but illustrate the existence of a 'gendered script' (Cameron and Shaw 2016: 106).

Nicola Sturgeon's speech style was evaluated in several of the data extracts. For example, the gendered adjectives 'lively but workmanlike' were used, and she was described as 'blustering', which also is a masculine feature. Cameron and Shaw (2016) write that there are conflicting ideologies of gender and political speech which coexist. First, one suggests that women are and should be different from men, whereas the second suggests that the effectiveness of a politician resides in being able to "land punches in competition with men" (2016: 99). They write that in an (approving) description of Nicola Sturgeon she was described as "combative without seeming aggressive" (2016: 99), indicating the delicate balance between being too meek or too angry.

There were very few instances in the corpus where Theresa May was quoted at all, only two were found in a *Times* article: "Mrs May said on Wednesday that Ms Brasier had been diagnosed several years ago." [17] and ""She underwent treatment and it seemed to be working," Mrs May said. "But then the cancer came back. Last summer she sent me a text to tell me that she was hoping to see another Christmas. But she didn't make it."" [17] The lack of direct quotes might in itself be worth noting. Lefkowitz (2016) writes that quoted speech in news reports are of interest because it represents the views and opinions of the politicians, and therefore indicates how (or if) the press informs and represents members of the public sphere (2016: 2). Notably, there were no other instances of gender-stereotyping in the reporting of the women's speech style.

5.5. Linguistic structures in the corpus

While the thematic analysis can give us clues about patterns in the data, analyzing certain linguistic structuring devices as outlined by Townsend (2012) may shed some light on how these themes are constructed in text. Similarly, van Dijk states that grammar is a strategy or structure that can be looked at in discourse analyses. Sentence syntax may show what knowledge is conveyed, emphasized or de-emphasized in for example active and passive constructions. This information can, in turn, signal accentuation or concealment of agency and responsibility for specific actions and events (Lambrecht 1994, in van Dijk 2011: 39).

5.5.1. Linguistic forms of reference

As per Townsend's (2012) study on women leaders' representations in media discourse, this study briefly explains certain themes according to her analysis of varying *linguistic forms of reference* and *implicit collocations*. Townsend (2012) writes that analysis of lead openings of news articles is of interest when looking at representations, because the opening information unit in an article has high-information value (2012: 38). Looking at how women politicians were referenced from a linguistic perspective tells us something of how the theme is constructed in the text.

In the lead openings Theresa May was commonly referred to as 'Theresa May' or simply 'May'. In a *Telegraph* article titled "How to get through the working day with a cold (just like Theresa)" [11] she is referred to with only her first name. As the article was ironic, very negative in tone and commented on Theresa May's health (the article was featured in the news genre 'Health Fitness/Body'), this use of first name activates the story's personal angle.

In the articles' text, apart from the headlines and lead openings, Theresa May was referred to as 'May or 'Mrs May' (*The Independent* used 'Ms May').

In the lead openings of the articles Nicola Sturgeon was mostly presented as 'Nicola Sturgeon'[24, 26, 32, 39]. In an *Independent* article she was first referred to as 'Scotland's First Minister'[30]. The rest of the article contained only positive themes about her. The use of this form of reference reminds the reader of Nicola Sturgeon's (high) status and position as political leader, increasing her credibility in the rest of the article.

Apart from the lead openings, in the rest of the articles' text she was mainly referred to as 'Ms. Sturgeon' or, in some cases, 'Sturgeon'. The use of her last name was also found in an article's headline[36], which is not surprising as headlines tend to be shortened.

Arlene Foster was most often presented with the independent reference "DUP leader". However, other forms were also found, for example, "former first minister Arlene Foster". The first

example states Foster's role as the political leader of the DUP in a neutral tone, or what Townsend calls 'independent form or reference', whereas the second data extract shows her in a negative frame and casts the article in a negative tone, highlighting her suspension from her post as first minister. In January 2017 Sinn Fein pulled out of the Northern Ireland assembly due to a renewable energy scheme, where Arlene Foster's role was unclear. Foster was reappointed First Minister on January 11, 2020 (Walsh 2020).

Some articles showcased Arlene Foster within the theme of 'being suspended' very clearly: "On the restoration of Stormont, republican figures in Belfast have *resurrected the demand that DUP leader Arlene Foster can never again be first minister* — a demand Sinn Fein had quietly dropped last year"[60]. "Labour MP David Lammy, a supporter of the Best for Britain campaign, said: "Arlene Foster is *not an MP and not even first minister* but she holds the trump card in these negotiations.""[47] Similarly, in an extract not included in the corpus for this study, Arlene Foster was presented in the following linguistic manner: "Arlene Foster, *the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, which opposes gay marriage,* sent a congratulatory message to Davidson and Wilson via Twitter that read: "New life is wonderful. We can all remember our first cuddle. Many congratulations."" (Carrell 2018). Because the DUP opposes gay marriage, Arlene Foster's congratulatory message was reported in an article when Scottish Conservative party leader Ruth Davidson and her (female) partner had a child. This form of reference conveys a negative image of Foster.

In another example Foster is referenced with her initials, AF: "AF said the DUP were ready for a no-deal scenario, which she now believed was the likeliest one."[48] During the time of the collected articles Arlene Foster was often subject to news reporting due to her central role in the government, as well as due to the Northern Ireland border issue which was discussed in the British Parliament and in the EU headquarters, in Brussels. Perhaps she was so frequently referred to in news articles that she earned herself the abbreviation, "AF", although within the corpus of this study the case occurred only once.

5.5.2. *Narrative themes of self-presentation*

Townsend (2012) investigated gender stereotypes as themes of self-representation in auto-biographical text. In the present study there were no autobiographical texts in the corpus, however, thematic self-presentation was found in the politicians' own statements, as they were cited in the articles. For example, Nicola Sturgeon was quoted in *The Independent*:

1) "For MPs to support a bad or blindfold Brexit – a cobbled together withdrawal agreement and a vague statement about our future relationship – would in my view be a real dereliction of duty," Ms Sturgeon said. [28]

2) As Brexit talks hit an impasse ahead of a crucial EU summit, Scotland's first minister urged MPs to reject any "cobbled-together agreement" and called for a Norway-style deal with Brussels, as the only "democratic compromise" that would unite different factions. [28]

In the extracts above, Sturgeon seems to be using the narrative theme of democracy and duty as self-representation. This presents Nicola Sturgeon within the theme of 'being virtuous' or 'moral'.

5.6. Features of media texts

Why these rhetorical constructions of the female political leaders are used can be discussed by examining certain key features of media discourse. There are many, but based on the findings in this study the following features will briefly be discussed: media and negativity, the personalization of politics and the use of emotive language.

5.6.1. *Media and negativity*

The overwhelming number of negative themes describing politicians, as was reported in the thematic analysis, is not uncommon in news discourse. Walter (2018) writes that negative campaigning is a common news value within political news discourse and that negative appeals in the news are more likely to be covered than positive ones. Negative campaigning appeals to three news values: the game frame (the news frame where politics are portrayed as a game of winners and losers); negativity (negative reports have higher news value than positive ones); and personalization (the tendency to report on individuals, highlighting politicians' personal lives rather than political views). These features can partly be explained as occurring due to reasons similar to the process of tabloidization, where newspapers deal with decreasing audience numbers by tailoring their content of their articles to presumed readership preferences (2018). Even though the research by Walter looked at campaign news, similar trends can be said to characterize political news post elections.

Politicians' 'attacks' on each other are another example of media and negativity. Walter (2018) researched political attacks within negative campaigning in news discourse during the 2015 General elections in Britain. Negative campaigning refers to the strategy politicians use where they attack the political opponent to decrease the opponent's electoral attractiveness. There are various types of attack, for example, an opponent can be attacked on their issues or their traits, and that can be done prospectively or retrospectively (2018). According to this categorization, a (prospective) issue attack is for example, "Just imagine the chaos with NHS and the education spending cuts"

(*Daily Mirror* 2015, in Walter 2018), which is a warning from Liberal Democrats' party leader Nick Clegg in describing the potential Conservative party policies. A trait attack is, for example: "This exposes Miliband for the hypocrite and champagne socialist he is. He says he's on the side of the working people, but in reality his home life's like a scene from *Upstairs Downstairs*" (*The Sun* 2015, in Walter 2018), where politician Ed Miliband's integrity is questioned. Some evidence suggests that quality and popular newspapers both tend to over-report trait attacks in relation to issue attacks, but researchers dispute whether negative issue attacks or negative trait attacks are more effective (Walter 2018). Walter's study reported a clear tendency of newspapers to cover both more attacks and self-praise from the party they support, as well as attacks targeting the main opponent. This tendency can also be seen in the present study, where May is a target of both trait attacks ("Theresa May's incurable awkwardness is easily her most redeeming feature – though I admit the field is not especially crowded"[3]) and issue attacks ("In that respect, the prime minister's insistence on separating Brexit from other policy areas is at the root of her problems"[2]). Arlene Foster is represented as 'attacking' Theresa May, yet there are no examples of attacks from Theresa May herself.

5.6.2. *Personalization of politics*

As head of state, the decisions made by the government are described as Theresa May's own ("Theresa May's Alice in Wonderland Brexit", "May's Chequers plan"). This goes for all three party leaders ("Nicola Sturgeon's SNP"[37], "Her [Arlene Foster's] party"[49]). Michel Barnier, "EU's chief Brexit negotiator"[48], was a recurring person in a total of five articles and was positioned as being "difficult and hostile"[48] in a meeting with Arlene Foster.

The "personalized politics" is a tradition in British political media. Many scholars have expressed concern at British elections becoming more like presidential elections, where personal qualities rather than the political party the candidate represents are emphasized. The portrayal of political leaders in media discourse as solely responsible for the party's decisions, as found in this study, act as reinforcements to this phenomenon. Other scholars argue that the empirical evidence towards a personalization trend is not clear, and that content analyses of this change have been unsystematic and that some research has suggested that personalization does not, in fact, take place (Karvonen 2010, in Donges et al. 2014: 196).

Why does it matter how someone is portrayed? Van Dijk (2011) lists *actor description* in discourse as one of the strategies and structures that is affected by the management of knowledge. Van Dijk states that because much discourse and knowledge is about people, it is crucial to see how they are described. We can analyze in what identities, roles, relationships, memberships,

organizations, occupations, gender, class, ethnicity, age, appearance etc. the actors are described. This is the foundation for research on ideological polarizations (ingroups "Us" and outgroups "Them") and the analysis of stereotypes and prejudice (Van Leeuwen 1996). For example, Nicola Sturgeon used an inclusive *we* to refer to the SNP or all those in favour of Scottish independence: "If *we* do that, then believe me - the momentum for independence will be unstoppable."[27]

An evaluation of the qualities associated with individuals or groups indicates what values are part of the specific socio-cognitive representation. The evaluation can be further categorized into positive and negative, and implicit and explicit qualities. However, categorization of evaluative language can present a number of problems. For example, a statement from a speech by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair that 'the Muslim world [moves] towards greater democratic stability, liberty and human rights' could be categorized as implicitly positive. Simultaneously, the statement that 'the Muslim world' is 'moving towards' the values implies that these goals have not yet been achieved and could therefore be read as an implicitly negative evaluation (Koller 2011: 124-5). This was also the case within this study, for example in this data extract about Theresa May: "[Theresa May] has one job: *exude confidence*".[16] This example where the writer encourages May to 'exude confidence' implies that May was not doing so.

5.6.3. *Central persuasive techniques in media discourse*

Looking at the data collected in this study, we can see that not many themes were neutral. The discussion surrounding the politicians was highly emotive, something that is commonly used in political discourse. For example, in a message to Unionist parties Nicola Sturgeon said "You can oppose independence – that is your democratic right. But you cannot – and you will not – deny Scotland's right to choose."[27] The emotional appeal to democracy and the "right to choose" echoed the language surrounding the abortion campaigns in Northern Ireland (O'Toole 2018). This quote also resonates with the nationalistic rhetoric surrounding the independence campaign in Scotland.

The tradition of political advertising, and which is, to some extent, the normal state of political discourse, relies heavily on emotional appeals in order to get messages across and are designed to appeal more to emotions than intellect. This rhetoric has become the main medium in which political candidates attack, respond and persuade voters, as well as provoke fear, anxiety or disgust (Brader 2006: 1). Therefore, the language used by both the journalists and by the politicians themselves found in this study can be seen as political advertising.

In a statement by Arlene Foster, as quoted in *The Guardian*, the notion of the Union is mentioned: "I am the leader of the Democratic Unionist party. The clue is in the title […] I am a unionist, I believe in the union of the United Kingdom, all four elements of the United Kingdom"[42]

Burke (2017) writes that the DUP is known for "bluntness in stating its undiluted commitment to maximising British sovereignty, and its unwavering patriotism" (2017: 3), a statement which is confirmed by Arlene Foster's quote.

Parry-Giles (2014) studied constructions of Hillary Clinton in the American press and writes about the nationalism dimension that exists in (American) politics. Nations and nationalism, he writes, are primarily rhetorical constructions (see Anderson's "imagined communities" (2006)). Conceptions of national identity and national character reveal a "double-edged sword", because where nationalist rhetoric on one hand encourages a "shared identity", on the other hand it also "encourage[s] exclusion, intolerance, and even inhumanity" (Beasley 2004, in Parry-Giles 2014: 3). This seems to be a dimension of the very overtly negative and positive rhetoric describing the political leaders in Britain – due to the issues of the UK's future with Europe, and indeed within the UK itself, the political questions at hand strike at the very core of nationalistic constructions of the UK, what shape the imagined community is and will be.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of Koller's (2004) study was that battle metaphors ultimately work to exclude women from the business world by maintaining that it is a male one, and encourages journalists to stop using this deeply embedded war/fighting metaphors to characterize the world of business. Seeing how rooted this metaphor is within political media discourse, this recommendation also extends to journalists in news reporting. Lockhart & Mollick (2013) write that the language politicians, the media and the public use is what constitutes the political society at that given point in time – in other words, "those who control [political] discourse control society" (Shapiro 1982: 1-2). This is why journalists, editors, news outlets and politicians themselves have the ability to act as agents of change.

By using thematic analysis as its methodology this study has shown how the three female political leaders Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster were represented in four British quality newspapers *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times* for a period of one month. Specifically, the study looked at linguistic or rhetorical strategies trivializing or stereotyping the women in the discourse; how the strategies differed; how the media represented the female party leaders as public speakers; and, lastly, what the media representations tell us about the shape of public discourse on gender and political leadership.

Firstly, several linguistic and rhetorical strategies were identified in stereotyping the politicians in discourse. The use of violent metaphors in the descriptions of women leaders seems to be a common practice within news discourse. Mass media depend on this form of cultural shorthand, a 'battleaxe default', in order to make readers understand (Cameron & Shaw 2016: 103). This theme, along with themes of power, strength, authority, weakness, dutifulness, and femaleness draw from a larger picture of how leadership is portrayed in the media, in particular how female leaders are portrayed. The findings suggest that female leaders navigate an array of themes in relation to leadership. By using Kanter's (1977) archetypes of female authority, the study found that the women were represented within 'iron maiden', 'mother' and 'pet' archetypes. This analysis suggests the addition of two new archetypes to Kanter's four: the 'heroine' and the 'maleficent' archetypes: within Nicola Sturgeon's narrative theme of self-representation (analyzed in her quotes in the articles) a fifth, 'heroine' archetype was traced. This archetype draws on typical features associated with the classical 'hero', where actions are motivated by the virtues of the greater good. In some articles, however, her motives were widely questioned and the undercurrent of falsehood in her representations made up a sixth archetype, the 'maleficent' archetype of female authority. The archetypes of women in positions of authority, e.g. as mother or healer, pose a problem for women leaders because they are ultimately images of women executing power over children or the sick. Even

though the archetype of 'iron maiden' is a strong characteristic and was a salient theme within this study, this rhetorical construction helps maintain an ideology of power and masculinity.

Secondly, there were both similarities and differences in the themes used to portray each woman. All three were portrayed within the war metaphor, however, Theresa May was clearly trivialized and thematically portrayed as being under attack; Nicola Sturgeon was portrayed as a strong military leader with troops at her disposal, though without the sense of bloodshed apparent in references to Arlene Foster. Arlene Foster was depicted as waging war, 'torpedoing' Theresa May's suggestions and drawing 'blood-red Brexit battle-lines'.

Thirdly, the references to the female politicians as public speakers were few: Nicola Sturgeon was represented within masculine terms, such as 'blustering' or speaking in a 'workmanlike' manner. The quotative verbs were few in the descriptions of Theresa May, however, this lack of direct quotes in comparison to Nicola Sturgeon and Arlene Foster is striking. A further examination of direct discourse could shed more light on this observation.

In conclusion, the negative themes of (failed or flawed) leadership indicate that elected women leaders still face challenges in media descriptions. These themes seem to be less obvious and lie hidden within media discourse, because they draw on conflicting ideologies of women and leadership. The many nuances of leadership themes found within the corpus describing the three female political leaders hints at a wide and many times conflicting concept of leadership existing within British news discourse. There also seems to be a double bind, where the positive representation of female qualities tends to work against the qualities needed to be an effective political leader. The findings of more female archetypes within the media representations could signal that the manner in which women leaders are portrayed in media is changing. However, given the small size of the sample for this study the results can be seen as traces of much larger linguistic and rhetorical phenomena in media discourse. Therefore, it is important that discursive portrayals of more women (and men) leaders are examined, and in a wide range of news outlets, including the popular (tabloid) press, in order to achieve a more extensive image of female leadership.

A positive finding was that no gender-stereotyping in terms commentary on appearance or clothing was found in the corpus. However, as the thematic analysis showed, gendered ways of describing speech styles and leadership qualities still exist. I argue that these kinds of gendered descriptions are as important to highlight as more obvious gender-stereotyping, due to their quality of going by unnoticed and therefore forming a part of our cognitive reality.

One possible area for further research would be to compare the representation of women leaders with other female politicians, who have less or who do not have an explicit source of authority. The few references to other female politicians (for example Sinn Féin president Mary Lou

McDonald[60]) within the corpus suggest that they are portrayed in much more apparent gendered terms.

The British press participates in the symbolic reproduction of a set of cultural distinctions, because the newspapers set out particular markets based on political and cultural difference (c.f. Higgins et al. 2010: 292). Thus, as this small study has confirmed, the newspapers continue to act as key signifiers that the longstanding divisions stay in place on the level of political and cultural rhetoric.

Swedish summary/Svensk sammanfattning

Inledning

Nyhetsmedier har ett stort ansvar i sin återgivning av politiska personer och händelser. De politiska beslut som når läsare är oftast omskrivna eller förenklade, och medierna är inflytelserika opinionsskapare vilket gör att sättet på vilket de beskriver en politiker har stort inflytande på vår bild av hen. Hur medier skildrar kvinnliga politiker i ledande position kan ha avgörande effekter på huruvida hon kan bli tillvald i kommande politiska val, särskilt eftersom begreppet ledarskap traditionellt har förknippats med maskulina drag (fysisk styrka, auktoritet etc.). Genom att undersöka hur kvinnliga ledare representeras kan man upptäcka idéer kring och förklara ledarskap och genus.

Denna studie undersöker brittiska mediers framställning av kvinnliga politikerna Theresa May (Storbritanniens premiärminister), Nicola Sturgeon (Skottlands försteminister och partiledare för Scottish National Party) och Arlene Foster (Nordirlands försteminister och partiledare för Democratic Unionist Party), under oktober månad 2018. Frågor som undersökningen ställer är: 1. Hur var kvinnorna stereotypiserade i media (och om de var det), och vilka retoriska medel användes? 2. Fanns det likheter och skillnader i deras skildringar? 3. Hur framställde medietexterna kvinnorna som offentliga talare? 4. Vad säger mediernas framställning av kvinnorna om den generella diskursen om genus och politiskt ledarskap?

Metod och material

I studien undersöks nätartiklar från de fyra mest besökta brittiska kvalitetstidningarna *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* och *The Times*. Artiklarna samlades genom nättidningarnas egna sökportaler under en månads tid, den 1 till 31 oktober 2018. Alla artiklar som nämnde politikerna vid namn sparades, varvid fem artiklar från varje tidning och om varje politiker valdes, vilket resulterade i en korpus på totalt 60 artiklar. Eftersom sökträffarna för Theresa May gav flera hundra resultat, valdes artiklarna om henne på måfå. Artiklarna om Nicola Sturgeon och Arlene Foster valdes genom att se vilka som innehöll flest fall av sökorden (namnet på politikern) för att få så mycket material som möjligt för analysen.

Som metod användes tematisk analys, en metod för att hitta teman och underliggande mönster i en stor mängd text. Varje sats eller mening där politikern nämndes togs tillvara och analyserades huruvida den var negativ, positiv eller neutral i sin framställning av politikern. Dessa kategoriserades sedan enligt tema. Teman som hittades behandlade bland annat 'ledarskap', 'makt' och 'personlighet'. Ämnen som togs upp i korpusens artiklar var till största delen de pågående Brexit-förhandlingarna.

Resultat

Premiärminister Theresa May hade högsta andelen negativ rapportering av alla tre politiker, följd av Nicola Sturgeon och sist Arlene Foster.

Den positiva och negativa rapporteringen kan delvis förklaras av tidningarnas politiska linje, synpunkter på relationen med EU och huruvida de höll med politikern i fråga. Undantagsvis hade *The Telegraph*, en tidning som traditionellt understöder det konservativa partiet, flest negativa beskrivningar av Theresa May (som är partiledare för det konservativa partiet). Vid en närmare analys av de negativa beskrivningarna fanns teman som beskrev Theresa May som svag, vacklande, hjälplös eller som anfallen på flera fronter. Dessa teman målar upp en bild av en misstrogenhet till Theresa Mays förmåga att genomföra Brexit, på grund av hennes personlighet (svag och okarismatisk), hennes oförmåga att leda samt de starka krafter som var emot henne (politiker både utanför och inom hennes eget parti).

Nicola Sturgeon beskrevs både positivt och negativt i de fyra tidningarna. *The Telegraph* hade flest negativa beskrivningar, *The Independent* och *The Guardian*s rapportering var till största delen positiv, och *The Times* hade störst andel neutral rapportering. Teman som beskrev Nicola Sturgeon var bland annat 'plikttrogen', 'demokratisk', 'stark' eller som 'militant/stridslysten'.

Arlene Foster hade högst andel positiv rapportering i artiklarna. Inom temat ledarskap beskrevs hon som militärledare med verb som 'torpedera' och 'attackera'. Arlene Foster beskrevs också med temat 'kunnig/bildad' genom att beskriva henne som 'redo' och 'ha vetskap' om hur det politiska läget och Brexit skulle utspela sig.

Analys och slutsats

Att tidningarna rapporterade om både Nicola Sturgeon och Arlene Foster i positiva termer kan bero på att de inte har lika mycket politisk makt som Theresa May, vars rapportering var extremt negativ.

Flera retoriska strategier hittades i beskrivningarna av de kvinnliga politiska ledarna. Metaforiskt våld eller krigsföring verkar vara en språklig standard i brittiska politiska nyhetsartiklar. Andra teman så som makt, styrka, auktoritet, svaghet och plikttrogenhet målar tillsammans en bild av hur begreppet ledarskap är skildrat i medier. I ljuset av denna studie förknippas ledarskap (fortfarande) med maskulina termer. Studien analyserade också politikerna enligt Kanters (1977) arketyper av kvinnlig auktoritet, och fann att de beskrevs som en arketypisk 'stålkvinna' (*iron maiden*), 'mamma' (*mother*) och 'älskling' (*pet*). Andra arketyper som denna studie föreslår som tillägg till Kanters fyra är 'hjältinnan', en dygdig person som agerar enligt moraliska principer, och

’häxan’, som till synes är god men i själva verket är ond. Dessa arketyper fanns i beskrivningarna av Nicola Sturgeon.

Dessa beskrivningar av ledarskap är problematiska eftersom de skildrar kvinnorna som utövare av makt i begränsade mängder. En mor, till exempel, kan ses som utövare av makt över barn. Stålkvinnan är också problematisk, för medan hon beskrivs som stark är hon samtidigt beskriven i maskulina termer och ses därmed inte som kvinna. Denna skildring bidrar dessutom till att upprätthålla ledarskap som ett maskulint koncept.

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