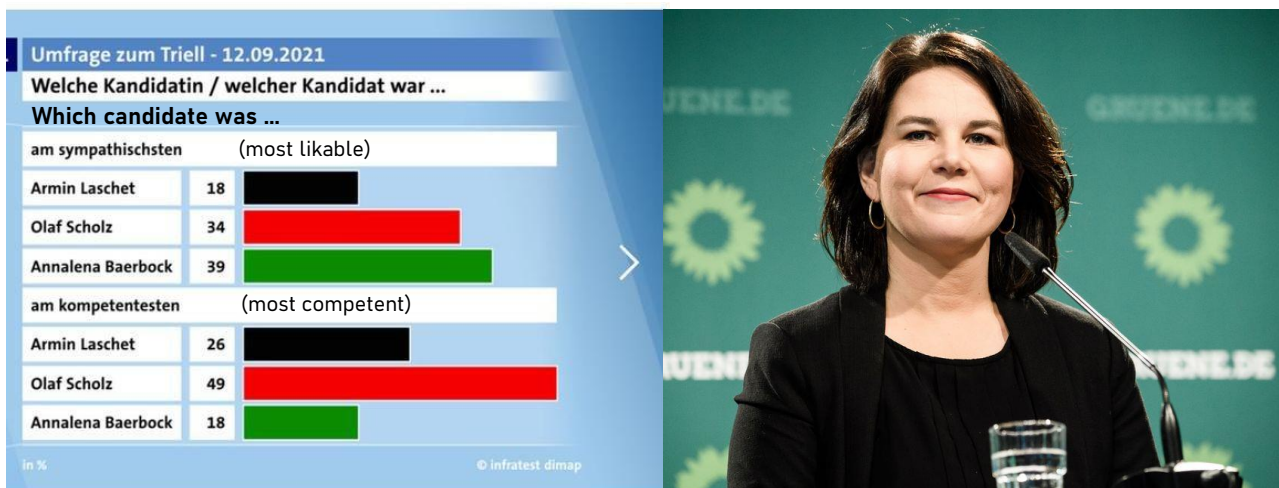


Competent enough as a mum, competent enough as a chancellor?

A qualitatively oriented content analysis of how German media framed Annalena Baerbock during the German federal elections 2021



Master's thesis in Communication Studies

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Abstract

This thesis aims to analyze the portrayal of Annalena Baerbock, the Green Party's first female candidate for chancellor in the 2021 federal election, in the German media regarding her gender. The thesis focuses on the six largest national daily newspapers and the four largest national weekly newspapers in Germany and includes 84 articles published in a period of eight days after Baerbock's candidacy was announced and in a period of eight days leading up to the September 2021 federal election. Mayring's qualitatively oriented content analysis and Entman's framing theory are used to inductively discover frames in the German media regarding Baerbock's gender. Mills' theory on hypothesized stereotypes and indirect sexism will be used to support the results of the analysis. Based on the theory and the findings, seven different frames were found: The choice of Baerbock as the Chancellor candidate because of her gender, the use of female connotated activities and characteristics, the questioning of Baerbock's competence, the role of a woman in male-dominated politics, sexism and objectification, the increased focus on her private life, and the comparison Baerbock with other female politicians.

It can be concluded that gendered mediation still takes place in the articles analyzed. It became clear that tabloid newspapers and right-wing, neoconservative newspapers such as *Bild*, *Bild am Sonntag*, *Die Welt* and *Die Welt am Sonntag* tend to frame Baerbock more negatively than the socially liberal-oriented quality press and make increased use of existing stereotypes. It was also found that some articles were critical of the use of gender stereotypes and roles. These articles were mostly from socially liberal-oriented newspapers such as *SZ* or *TAZ*.

Keywords: Annalena Baerbock, gender bias, gendered mediation, German media, framing analysis, gendered media coverage

1. Introduction

“It is a girl” - with these words, the *Tagesthemen*¹ Twitter account announced on April 19, 2021, the decision that Annalena Baerbock would run as the Green Party’s candidate for chancellor in the 2021 German federal elections (Kares, 2021). Baerbock was thus the only female candidate, competing against two male candidates: Armin Laschet of the Christian Union (CDU)² and Olaf Scholz of the Social Democratic Party (SPD)³. After the announcement of her candidacy, German polls showed that Baerbock’s popularity was higher than that of the two other chancellor candidates. However, this changed: After she was accused of mistakes in her CV, the candidate's popularity declined: Baerbock was repeatedly asked about her role as a mother of children in interviews, gender-related false news about her circulated on the Internet (Görz y Moratalla, Kolvenbach & Schader, 2021), and her competence was questioned frequently.

Past studies have shown that there is a gender bias in quantitative and qualitative media coverage of women in Politics: There is less media coverage of women and gender stereotypes continue to be used in the media. Especially after 16 years of Angela Merkel as Germany’s first female chancellor, it is clear how important it is to analyze how Baerbock was framed by the German media in terms of gendered mediation. There is also a significant gap in research on German female German politicians other than Angela Merkel, and therefore this thesis can contribute to the research field. The issue of gender bias in the German media was already raised during the campaign for the 2021 federal election, and brief analyses have been made – but a comprehensive analysis has yet to be conducted.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to analyze how the ten largest national newspapers in Germany framed Annalena Baerbock in terms of gender in the first eight days after she announced her candidacy and in the eight days before the election at the end of September 2021.

In addition, there is an ongoing discussion about whether tabloid media and quality media with rather neo-conservative orientations tend to frame female candidates differently from the quality press with a socially liberal orientation⁴. This thesis will also examine whether German newspapers with a social liberal orientation or neo-conservative orientation portray Baerbock more negatively or positively and whether there is a difference between quality press and tabloid media.

¹ *Tagesthemen* is a news show broadcasted by the public broadcaster *Allgemeiner Deutscher Rundfunk (ARD)*

² From now on always shortened as CDU.

³ From now on always shortened as SPD.

⁴ These two options should not be seen as binary, but more as a fluent scale.

First, I will pose the research question, provide some research considerations, and shed light on Germany's election system and the context. Then, I will summarize the current state of research on the gender representation of female politicians in the media. I then turn to the theory used to support the findings. With that, I will introduce the methodology and selection of empirical material. This is followed by the analysis and discussion. Finally, I will summarize the results, relate them to my research question, and provide an outlook on possible follow-up topics for this thesis.

1.1 Research question

How was Annalena Baerbock, the woman chancellor candidate running for the German federal elections 2021, framed by the ten largest national German printed newspapers regarding gender during the eight-day period of her candidacy announcement and the eight-day period leading up to the elections in September 2021? Furthermore, how differently frame the newspapers Annalena Baerbock considering their political orientation?

1.2 Considerations

Since all newspaper articles considered in this thesis were published in German, the relevant sentences that are used to search for frames are translated from German into English. When translating, the meaning of words may be lost or distorted by my own choice of words and my interpretation of them. However, I will try to avoid this by providing explanations if an exact and accurate translation is not possible. This may be the case with metaphors or sayings, but also with irony or sarcasm. The use of elements of German culture will also be explained to help understand the meaning for readers who are not familiar with German culture and language. One example where language plays a role is the gendered language in German, which is sometimes either criticized or emphasized by some journalists in the articles. In German, the word ending *-in* makes a word feminine. As is visible in the articles, with the entry of Annalena Baerbock into the election race, some journalists emphasize this by comparing Baerbock to Merkel and discussing whether it would not be to speak of "Kanzlerinnenkandidatin" [a female candidate for the role of the female chancellor]. The linguistic term is marked in the relevant places in my work.

1.3 Context

This section outlines the context of the election – namely, the events of Baerbock's campaign and an explanation of the German electoral system. After 16 years of Angela Merkel as German chancellor, the Greens decided to run for Chancellor with their own candidate. This came after the Green Party led the election forecasts in early 2021 and subsequently decided to run their own candidate for chancellor for the first time in the Greens' history. Annalena Baerbock ran internally against her co-chair Robert Habeck – but the decision for Baerbock was a choice

between the two internal candidates. This is significant because newspaper articles, especially Baerbock was announced as the candidate for chancellor, talked about the decision for the female candidate over the male candidate.

During the election campaign, Baerbock was the focus of German media attention several times: first, Baerbock was accused of mistakes in her CV, then she was accused of plagiarism after the publication of her non-academic book – which, however, was described by the Greens as a character assassination attempt, as the origin of the accusations came from people close to the CDU and the discussion that a book published for the masses does not have to use academic sources (Oltermann, 2021a). In May 2021, it became known that Baerbock had failed to declare a bonus payment from her party over the Christmas period. This led to more media attention and shortly thereafter, Baerbock's popularity dropped in polls (Oltermann, 2021a).

By the end of the campaign, Baerbock's popularity was at an all-time low: 26 percent trusted her to be chancellor, while 69 percent rated her as unsuitable for the office, according to polls conducted by ZDF⁵ (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen e.V., 2021a). Initially, after announcing her candidacy, she quickly gained popularity and 43 percent considered her suitable for the office of chancellor (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen e.V., 2021b).

For this thesis, it should additionally be taken into account that chancellor candidates in Germany cannot be directly elected by the population – the chancellor is elected by the members of the federal parliament – the *Bundestag*, which is elected by different constituencies at the regional level, with the “first vote”. In addition, the “second vote” goes directly to the party and determines the distribution of seats.

Therefore, even if the party officially nominates a candidate, the election of the chancellor does not take place until after the election of the *Bundestag*. However, studies concerning German chancellor candidates suggest nonetheless that the announcement of a chancellor candidate influences the elections and their outcomes. Chancellor candidates are increasingly presented and tested in the media in talk shows or debates, and the candidate of the largest party in the coalition can be expected to be elected chancellor if the party, together with its coalition partners, is successful in the elections: “Voters are well aware that their party choice has a bearing on the future leader of the German government” (Hogwood, 2004, p.243). This was also true for the 2021 German federal election: the SPD was ahead in the polls with 25.7%, followed by CDU with 24.1% (Bundeswahlleiter, 2022). As a result, the SPD began coalition negotiations,

⁵ ZDF: Public broadcast TV in Germany. Forschungsgruppe Wahlen is a research group that is advising ZDF on political polls.

and by the end of November, the coalition agreement with the Greens and the FDP⁶ had been finalized. On December 8, 2021, Olaf Scholz was elected Chancellor of Germany (Oltermann, 2021b).

⁶ Free Democratic Party: Classical-liberal party allocated in the centre to centre right

2. Literature Review and Research field

This section outlines an overview of current research in the area of gender representation in the media - particularly on female politicians and the newspaper medium. This literature review is intended to help provide an overview of existing scholarly work and to position one's research at the end. Furthermore, the literature review will help to identify similarities and differences between existing studies and the later following analysis of the empirical material. First, I will look at international research, including studies from the United States and European countries. Then, I will focus on quantitative coverage of women in media and its implications. In the third part of the literature review, the focus will shift to German research on the representation of Angela Merkel in the German media and other German female politicians. Finally, the academic relevance of the thesis will be discussed, and then positioned in the current academic research field.

2.1 Gender representation of politicians in international research

Much research has been conducted on female politicians and their coverage in the international media, both in terms of qualitative and quantitative coverage (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020, p.114). In reading various studies, it became clear that the focus used to be on quantitative methods such as quantitative content analysis or word counting. In the last 10 years, the use of qualitative approaches such as text analysis or qualitative content analysis has increased. Often, the concept of framing is used to emphasize the journalist's position and representation of reality through salience and selection. This concept of framing will also be used in this thesis presented in the theory part of the thesis.

2.1.1 Male-dominated politics

One assertion found in several contributions within the field is that politics is a male-dominated field and therefore is most often associated with stereotypically masculine characteristics (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011, p.632; Burke & Mazzearella, 2008, p.414).

Harp, Loke & Bachmann (2016) and Koenig et al. (2011) argue that politics, and leadership roles, in particular, are associated with male stereotypes: "The figure of a political leader is often linked in public opinion polls to stereotypical male traits, such as competitiveness, strength, and ambition, particularly for high-profile positions" (Harp et al., 2016, p.193). In addition, Koenig et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of past studies on masculinity and leadership and concluded that leadership is viewed as culturally masculine and there is an expectation that men will perform better in leadership positions, that women usually struggle and that they are challenged in leadership (Koenig et al., 2011, p.637).

Aaldering and Van der Pas confirm the media's expectations of a male-dominated leadership role in politics: In their content analysis study in the Netherlands, they found that the media tend to attribute leadership qualities to male politicians than to female candidates (Aaldering & Van der Pas, 2020, p.911). They see a difference in how journalists write about male and female politicians when it comes to leadership: while male politicians are often described as having political craftsmanship and vigorousness, female politicians are rarely attributed these characteristics. Qualities such as integrity, communicative skills, and consistency are used for both female and male politicians when talking about leadership (Aaldering & Van der Pas, 2020, pp.913). The use of male and female stereotypes is particularly visible in the media: according to Burke and Mazzarella, gendered language is often found in articles about politics. By highlighting men through language and metaphors, the male is reinforced as the normative (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008, p.413). The notion of *gendered mediation* – introduced by Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1996) – describes how news frames view the masculine and masculinity as the norm: “The way in which politics is reported is significantly determined by a male-oriented agenda that privileges the practice of politics as an essentially male pursuit” (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, cited in Gidengil & Everitt, 2003, p.210).

In election campaigns, this public preference for men in political leadership positions also works to the disadvantage of women or men who are seen as having feminine characteristics. According to Heldman, Conroy & Ackermann, voters develop a preference for candidates with strong male connotated qualities. If a candidate is presented in a feminine way, femininity is seen as a weakness, and therefore, it becomes unlikely that voters are voting for the candidate (Heldman et al., 2018, pp.31).

Semetko and Boomgarden (2007) were able to identify a difference when they analyzed media coverage of Angela Merkel and her opponent candidate in the 2005 election campaign: While her male opponent candidate Schröder was portrayed "as being likable (*sympatisch*), a winner (*Gewinnertyp*), media competent (*medienkompetent*), a strong leader (*führungsstark*), and energetic (*tatkräftig*)" (Semetko & Boomgarden, 2007, p.163), these qualities were not as strongly attributed to Merkel. Problem-solving ability was a trait more often attributed to Merkel than to her opponent (Semetko & Boomgarden, 2007, p.163).

Meeks (2012) argues that gender incongruencies could occur when a social role is not fulfilled in a professional context: “When the stereotyped gender of a professional role does not ‘fit’ with the gender of the person seeking the role, discrimination often occurs in the form of negative evaluations” (Meeks, 2012, p.176). Given the dimension of male-dominated politics, a female politician might face high professional obstacles.

Meek's study and results focus on the USA, which should be taken into account when researching German politics. Boeser points out that the share of women in the German parliament has increased in recent decades and ministerial posts have been given to women, including the chancellorship to Merkel (Boeser, 2012, p.229). However, the author concludes that women are still more discriminated against and that important offices are held by men. Moreover, when women held ministerial positions, they are often associated with gender stereotypes such as the Ministry of Family or Culture (Boeser, 2012, p.238). In 2022, 34,9% of the members of the German *Bundestag* (German parliament) identified themselves as women (Statista, 2022). 8 out of 17 federal ministers are women as of February 2022 (Die Bundesregierung, 2022).

2.1.2 Double bind: Femininity/competency

One of the important points discussed in the field of gendered mediation is the double bind femininity/competence introduced by Jamieson (1995): women in leadership positions – such as women in political leadership positions - are considered competent if they radiate qualities such as coldness, will, or strength. If they, however, exude qualities such as warmth, emotionality, or communication, they are considered less competent. Therefore, it is often conveyed that the co-existence of femininity and competence is mutually exclusive.

This became clear in the study of Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad, and Gaffney (2012): The researchers examined how the media talked about the personality of female politicians and their connection to competence and asked a group of people to rate female and male politicians who were unknown to the group by presenting them with news articles about the politicians. The results were that qualities such as warmth, likability, and incompetence were often associated with women, while top politicians were expected to be cold and competent. When female politicians were rated based on an article about their competence, their competency was rated highly, but this contrasted with the lack of warmth and likability in the ratings (Bligh et al., 2012, para.). In contrast, when the article focused on their personality, politicians were rated as warm but rather incompetent in line with existing female stereotypes.

Recent studies such as the 2016 study by Harp et al. on Hillary Clinton, were able to show that Clinton was portrayed as hardworking and competent. This contrasted with the narrative that Clinton lacked authenticity (Harp et al., 2016, p.205). Therefore, Harp et al. proposed a new double-bind: Competence/authenticity in female politicians. When Clinton showed emotion, it was often associated with less competence in news articles, albeit in more indirect ways than in the past. However, Clinton was also accused of lacking authenticity in the sense that it was questioned whether Clinton's emotions were genuine. This in turn led to doubts about her competence.

2.1.3 Influence of toning of news articles on the outcome

In addition to the first part of their study on the double bind, Bligh et al. (2012) examined the tone of articles and the effect on potential voters. The competence of the candidates was assessed in particular. An important finding was that readers who read a news article that framed a female politician positively tended to have a more positive perception of the politician than an article that portrayed the politician negatively. When reading a negative article about a male politician, this was not the case and perceptions of the politician's competence decreased only slightly (Bligh et al., 2012, para). Furthermore, it should be noted that Bligh et al. found that readers' pre-existing attitudes were strong: Readers with strong attitudes towards a candidate who read a contradictory article about the candidate were not influenced by the article (Bligh et al., 2012, para).

Other studies that examined the influence of the tone of articles, such as of Soroka, Bodet, Young & Andrew (2009), came to the same conclusion that the negative or positive framing of articles can have an impact on a candidate's success and the readers' voting behavior (Soroka et al., 2009, p.371). Furthermore, O'Neill, Savigny & Cann (2016) found in their study conducted during the 2012 UK national election that women politicians were at increased risk of 'political death' from quantitative or qualitative media coverage: Women politicians' achievements and views were misreported, ignored or not mentioned to the same extent as men's views and achievements (O'Neill et al., 2016, p.304). This is also something that O'Brien points out: In her study, it became clear that problems and scandals are more talked about among female politicians than among male politicians (O'Brien, 2014, p.513). According to Gidengil and Everitt, journalists seem to write more aggressively and negatively about female politicians than male politicians (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003, p.209).

Another ongoing discourse is the question of the influence of the party affiliation of female candidates on media coverage: It is debated whether the party affiliation of a female politician plays a role in the election results and the framing of news articles. Lau, Bligh & Kohles point out that "voters are likely to evaluate candidates with the same party affiliation more favorably and consider them as more effective" (Lau et al., 2019, p.424). Especially with multiple identities, such as gender and political affiliation, it becomes difficult to find causal links between perceptions of a female candidate and her gender. Some scholars argue that social identities coexist and that one usually takes center stage while the other identities are then displaced, while others argue that two social identities can operate in parallel (Lau et al., 2019, p.424). "Although scholars have attempted to understand the interplay between gender and political identities in a political context, their findings have been inconclusive" (Lau et al., 2019, p.424).

2.1.4 Private life = women; Public sphere = men?

Another significant research topic is the media's focus on the private lives of women politicians and the focus on the professional career of male politicians, as Devitt notes: Devitt (2002) suggests that media coverage of women politicians plays a role in whether they will succeed or fail in their election campaign: In his 1998 study, he finds that female politicians were portrayed differently in the US media than male politicians. He claims that women politicians overall were portrayed more with personal attributions "such as age, personality and attire" (Devitt, 2002, p.457). In addition, female candidates were less likely to be reported on about political issue. Although there is no causal relationship between the success and media coverage of female candidates due to other variables such as party affiliation or the status of the officeholder, Devitt argues that there may be a gender bias and effect that could influence whether people vote for a female candidate (Devitt, 2002, p.457). This could be confirmed in studies by O'Neill et al. (2016), and Harmer (2016). O'Neill et al. identified that during the 2012 UK national elections, female politicians were more likely to be mentioned in non-political articles; when female candidates were talked about, it was usually about their appearance, their family including children, or their marital status: "While women have made some progress in their descriptive (numerical) representation in politics, their interests remain narrowly defined and homogenised around traditional patriarchal views of what women are and what they should be" (O'Neill et al., 2016, p.304). The media's emphasis on private lives also happened to male candidates, but not to the same extent female candidates were exposed (O'Neill et al., 2016, p.304). Harmer was able to find that although female candidates ran for a seat in the parliament, the wives of male politicians received more attention than the female candidates themselves (Harmer, 2016, p.266). However, the wives were also interviewed about their private lives, adding to the media's focus on women's private lives. The fact that the female candidates were addressed by their first names in the news articles was also a difference from their male opponents: Carlin & Winfrey believe that the female candidates are taken less seriously as a result (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009, p.329).

2.1.5 Sexism & Objectification

Sexism and objectification were also common in female politicians' media coverage and have been confirmed in several studies. O'Neill et al. noted that the media emphasized appearance – "such as inexperienced 'girls', sexy pin-ups or harridans" (O'Neill et al., 2016, p.304) and therefore marginalized female candidates to sexist stereotypes. This was also evident in the paper by Carlin & Winfrey: their study on the candidates Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin during the election campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential and vice-presidential nominations in the USA showed that both were sexualized and objectified: While Palin was repetitively portrayed as attractive and sexy, Clinton was described by the media as not feminine enough

because of her thick ankles. Often the choice of their outfits was commented on and how they behaved in their clothes (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009, p.330). Similar results could be found by Heier (2016). She analyzed the media coverage of candidate Katja Kipping of the Left Party 2013 in Germany and could conclude that the candidate had been represented as “cute” and “visually eye-catching”, confirming that the appearance of the candidate was constantly judged by the media (Heier, 2016, p.32-33).

2.1.6 Horserace frames

Another recurring frame is the horserace frame: It describes the repetition of public opinion polls results and the chances of candidates winning the election (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013, p.211). Studies from Semetko & Boomgarden (2007) or Van der Pas & Aldering (2020) were able to show that female candidates, in contrast to their male opponents, were frequently mentioned in connection with their chances of winning. The horserace frame could only be detected in quantitative studies, as the quantity of the frame was compared between female and male candidates.

2.2 Quantitative studies on media coverage

Other studies look at the quantitative coverage of women politicians in the media. Gill argues that media coverage of female politicians is significantly lower compared to male politicians, even when smaller studies are conducted (Gill, 2007, p.109). A recent meta-analysis of 90 international studies on quantitative media coverage of politicians by Van der Pas & Aldering (2020) was able to confirm this. The authors point out that there are three main directions of the analyzed studies: First, that media coverage of female politicians is less frequent; second, the opposite or a balance between both men and women politicians; and third, a shift from a more frequent coverage of men to more balanced coverage of both male and female politicians over the last century (Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020, p.115). When comparing and combining the studies, the authors found an existing gender bias in quantitative media coverage of female politicians: Women politicians received 17% less media attention, resulting in a significant gap. The authors argue that a discrepancy between male and female politicians and their media coverage leads to a lower representation of women in politics (Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020, p.133). However, there was a difference between media forms and their media coverage of women politicians. On television, women politicians appeared less than men, but in the written media this difference was not as great. This could be explained, as the authors point out, by a greater focus on written media in their study. Furthermore, there was a difference when it comes to a country's voting system: “In party- rather than person-oriented systems, women appear to be disadvantaged in the media” (Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020, p.134).

In light of this thesis on a German politician, Koch (2007) highlights the quantitative dimension of the gender representation of politicians in the media and focuses on Merkel as a research example. He points out that in studies on quantitative news coverage of politicians, it became clear that Merkel was covered more than her male opponent, which contrasts with American studies and the meta-analysis conducted by Van der Pas & Aldering, which found an underrepresentation of women candidates in the media (Koch, 2007, p.148). However, as Koch argues, this could be an isolated case or could be due to Brettschneider's (2005) research finding that the CDU is generally mentioned more often in newspapers during election campaigns. Therefore, Merkel might have gained more attention due to her party affiliation (Brettschneider, 2005, p.23).

2.3 Gender stereotypes of women chancellor candidates in German media

This part focuses first on research on gender representations of Angela Merkel by the media and is then followed by research on other German politicians and their gender representations in the German media.

2.3.1 Angela Merkel

Especially the election of Angela Merkel in 2005 led to more extensive research on gendered mediation and gender bias in the media in Germany. Both qualitative studies and quantitative studies were conducted to investigate the relationship between gender stereotypes and further whether the media challenge them. Additionally, some studies dealt with quantitative media coverage of Merkel.

The first German studies on female politicians in election periods were conducted after Merkel's election as Chancellor: By conducting quantitative content analyses, authors such as Koch (2007), Schulz & Zeh (2006), and Gnändiger (2007) concluded that Merkel was not portrayed differently or only partially in terms of her gender by the German media compared to her male opponent. Moreover, the dichotomy of the media interest in women's private lives and men's professional and public life diminished, as Koch and Schulz & Zeh found (Koch, 2007, p.156; Schulz & Zeh, 2006, p.297).

In contrast, Lünenborg and Maier (2015) examined how politics is associated with men and masculine associated adjectives in the German media. In their qualitative study, they compared Angela Merkel, when she was the Chancellor, with the then Social Democrat Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who is now Federal president of Germany, in terms of their media constructions, political power, and gender. The results showed that Merkel was often addressed as a woman, e.g. as 'Ms. Merkel', 'lead woman' or 'first female chancellor' which was not the case with Steinmeier (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015, p.186). She was also referred to as 'mother of the nation' or 'Mutti' (affectionate form for mum), which places her in the female gender role of

mother. Additionally, the research team found that Merkel's clothing style and her appearance were central. However, a direct link between these terms and power attributes could not be established. This was more evident in Steinmeier's case, where his clothing was directly linked to his political performance in some articles (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015, p.187).

In their book, Lünenborg, Röser, Maier, Müller & Grittmann (2009) were able to analyze that the German media targeted Merkel on her clothing style and haircut, while men's appearance was not as important and was not mentioned as frequently. This was particularly evident during the first election campaign before Merkel became Chancellor. The focus on her appearance decreased after her election, but at an event where Merkel presented herself in a dress and showed her cleavage, the German media discussed her appearance intensively (Lünenborg et al., 2009, pp.79). Lünenborg et al. point out that the dress was interpreted as a sign of more femininity, as Merkel tended to wear high-necked clothes. With terms like "using her weapons as a woman" by showing her body, her sexuality and her body became important for her role as a politician and her power. Especially the daily newspapers in Germany criticized her choice of dress, while the tabloid newspapers saw it as a revelation of her femininity. Lünenborg et al. argue that by positively framing the showing of Merkel's cleavage, the masculinity-dominated field of politics enabled the simultaneous existence of both femininity and masculinity, while quality media denounced her appearance as unacceptable for a leader and further questioned her role as a politician (Lünenborg et al., 2009, p.98).

One important finding is that talk about Merkel's competence and her appearance decreased after she took office. The authors argued that by focusing on power and her leadership role, the media tended to avoid her position as a woman and instead portrayed her in terms of masculinity. Lünenborg and Maier argue that this was a strategy actively chosen by Merkel to avoid foregrounding her femininity (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015, pp.189). Furthermore, Merkel was also framed as a powerful person who challenged masculinity in politics: By being party leader, as the tabloid paper *Bild*, in particular, argued, she kept men at a safe distance and thus threatened male power (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015, p.189).

Overall, the authors conclude that although Merkel was accepted as a woman in power, the framing of politics as a male domain has not changed. By adhering to the binary gender dichotomy and its ideology, the attributions to masculinity and femininity have not been challenged. One reason for the perception could be that Merkel actively wanted to prevent the perception of her role as a woman (Koch, 2007, p.152). Joyce Marie Mushaben points out that Merkel actively avoided topics such as feminism or the role of women in society during her last two election campaigns in order to counter stereotypes about women and to present more masculine attributions (Mushaben, 2018, p.47).

Further, Lünenborg et al. concluded that although the trivialization and avoidance of media coverage about women have changed nowadays, the German media tend to fall back into old patterns, as the situation of Merkel's dress showed. Here, the sexualization of her body in the media, which had partly stopped after her election, continued (Lünenborg et al., 2009, p.99).

2.3.2 Research on other women politicians in Germany

Beck (2016) conducted a study on the candidacy of female politicians from the SPD in federal-state elections (Langtagswahlen). In doing so, she examined how gender was constructed by the German media – mainly written media, i.e., news articles. The results showed that female candidates were often framed as 'the other women', 'exceptional women', or 'exotics' and went against female gender stereotypes and expectations of women (Beck, 2016, pp.112). This in turn creates an image of an exceptional woman among all women. When attributions with female connotations were mentioned, these were often in contrast to men who did not show emotion. This was sometimes also described as positive, as these women expressed more closeness to the people (Volksnähe) (Beck, 2016, p.114). Beck also points out that the representation of women politicians was no longer based solely on gender, but the otherness was still used to declare a women's political personality (Beck, 2016, p.239). Gender was often associated with women's personalities: a large proportion of news articles made use of gender stereotypes and gender associations (Beck, 2016, p.240).

As Lünenborg et al. similarly noted, Beck also points to the sexualization and trivialization of female politicians in the media. Beck argues that tabloid papers in particular to this and pounce on scandals or create their own scandals (Beck, 2016, p.242).

Another important concept is the use of reversed stereotypes. Thiele (2015) and Maier & Lünenborg (2012) argue that women are often no longer portrayed in feminine stereotypes such as 'the housewife', but are increasingly referred to by terms such as 'power woman' or 'career women'. This can be positive and signify a change in existing stereotypes towards more women with power, although it can also be seen as negative as these women are still framed as part of a social group, e.g. career women and successful women, and therefore reduced to a few characteristics. Moreover, these reversed stereotypes are often associated with male associations such as power or career. Therefore, older stereotypes are replaced by others or changed to a certain extent (Thiele, 2015, p.284).

2.4 Differences between tabloid and quality press and their political orientation

Some studies highlighted the aspect of the role of newspaper's type and the use of gender bias in the media: For example, Morna found that tabloid newspapers were more likely to use gender stereotypes and give a stronger role to appearance of female candidates (Morna, 2008, p. 58). Considering the ideological orientation of newspapers, Lau et al. could conclude that

liberal oriented newspapers in the US framed Clinton during the election campaign more positively, while conservative newspapers represented her more frequently in connection to gender stereotypes and as incompetent (Lau et al., 2019, p.432). A German study by Engelmann and Etzrodt (2014) showed that tabloid papers such as *Bild* or *Bild am Sonntag* focused more on politician's private lives, which was not as evident in the German quality press. It could however also be found that there was no significant gap between female and male politicians when *Bild* addressed politicians' private lives. Furthermore, the ideological orientation of newspapers plays an additional role: "Moreover, conservative newspapers link female politicians in particular to private matters more often than left-wing newspapers, whereas this differential construction does not exist for male politicians" (Engelmann & Etzrodt, 2014, p.78).

2.5 Academic relevance

It became clear that there are large numbers of studies on the portrayal of female politicians in both the international and the German media. However, it also became clear that most German studies focused on Angela Merkel. Studies on other female German politicians and their media coverage are rare. This could be due to the fact that Merkel was until recently the female chancellor candidate and subsequently chancellor, which plays a significant role not only for Germany but also in international politics. Moreover, the studies that examined German candidates date from the 2010s, so changes may have occurred. This study can help to generate new results – with the second female candidate for chancellor in Germany, Baerbock plays an important role in research on gendered media coverage. Furthermore, the results of the different studies on Merkel were partly contradictory, e.g. some studies showed no gender bias in German media, the rare or frequent use of gender stereotypes, or personality traits associated with femininity. With this thesis, it is possible to contribute to the field and to find out how Baerbock was framed and portrayed. Claims such as that tabloid papers use more gender stereotypes or that sexist language is increasingly used in them can be investigated. In addition, this thesis will enrich the field with some qualitative data. Since most German studies examine the material with a quantitative content analysis, a qualitative analysis can complement existing results or discover new frames.

Furthermore, this study should keep in mind that the framing and tonality of newspaper articles can play a key role in how women politicians are perceived. Moreover, the coding of power, politics, and leadership associated with masculinity may help to find frames associated with or critical of it. In particular, since Baerbock has often been criticized for a lack of competence, the double bind of femininity and competence can help find an existing prejudice that is reinforced - just in a more indirect way.

3. Theory

The following part presents the theory that can support the results of the analysis. Based on my literature review, different types of theories were identified that have been used in previous studies. It further describes how the theories presented are used in the analysis.

3.1 Framing

Media framing describes the “focus on how issues and other objects of interest are reported by news media as well as what is emphasized in such reporting” (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004, p.257). As Dan and Iorgoveanu argue, framing in media coverage of politicians can be understood as “emphasizing a certain standpoint on a given person, issue, or event, and down-playing others” (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013, p.210).

The term *framing* is widely in academia and especially in Communication Studies. It was originally introduced by Bateson, who described the ex- and inclusion of information in news articles. According to Jecker, the concept was further developed by Goffman from a sociological perspective: He argued that people tend to classify, categorize, and order events in order to define reality and thereby explain social phenomena (Jecker, 2017, p.12). Due to its interdisciplinary nature and the use of the term in different contexts and concepts, it has been criticized for the difficulty in agreeing on a general definition. However, many framing concepts have one thing in common: they focus on the idea that language cannot be neutral and therefore always influences the construction of reality (Matthes, 2014, pp.9).

Nowadays, framing analysis is often associated with Robert Entman, so in the following, I will focus on his definition and concept of selection and salience and the communication process. Especially with his focus on news articles, his theory can support the use of terms that can be used in the analysis and provide a basis for understanding why the portrayal of female candidates in terms of gender can be problematic for audience reception.

“Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993, p.52).

This quote shows what Entman means by framing. He points out that by omitting information from an article – what he calls *selection* - the producer actively or idly excludes information and instead emphasizes other aspects that might seem important in the reality they perceive. By *salience*, Entman means emphasizing other aspects, either by increasing the frequency, the way an aspect is conveyed, or the place in the article (Entman, 1993, p.52). This can be

done through “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (Entman, 1993, p.52). An example of salience might be “the highlighting of a person’s gender when this is not particularly relevant for the context” (Devere & Davies, 2006, p.65). By regularly mentioning the gender of a person, the aspect becomes salient for the reader.

Entman notes four distinctive frames when it comes to issue-specific news frames, i.e., the framing of individual topics or issues:

“(1) ‘Particular problem definition’: focuses on the problem of a topic and actors involved in it

(2) ‘Causal interpretation’: responsibility is given to actors or situations

(3) ‘Moral evaluations’: simplified presentation of the problem

(4) ‘Treatment recommendation’: recommendations for actors or situations”

(Entman, 1993: in Klitgaard et al., 2020)

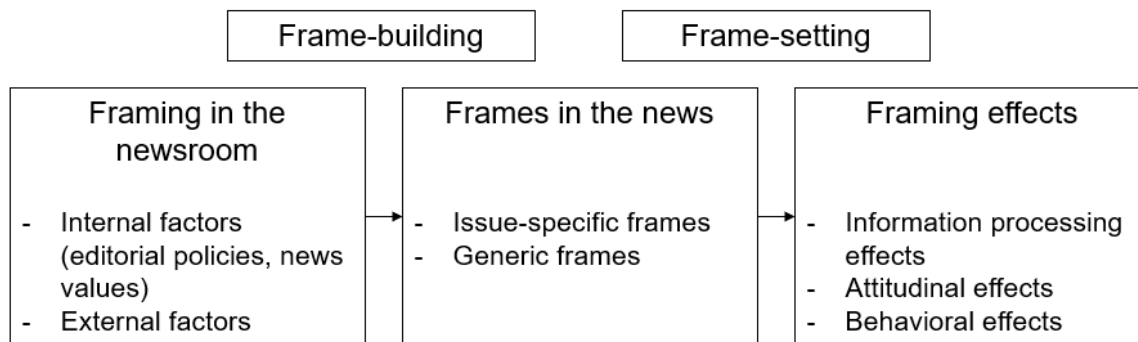
Since these four frames are mostly applicable only to specific issues and topics, I add the concept of generic news frames, which are often used when assessing levels of contextualization across topics and therefore include broader concepts such as gender (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013, p. 210). These generic news frames “have their roots in journalists’ more or less conscious professional norms and routines” (Rinke, Wessler, Löb & Weinmann., 2013, p.475), e.g., the journalistic norm that gender should not play a role in media coverage on men and women.

This approach is advantageous to this thesis, as Baerbock’s portrayal of gender spans many articles and topics and is not linked to one topic discussed in the media. Furthermore, as the literature review was able to show, there are other, non-issue-related frames, such as the horserace frame or the framing of women’s private lives. Even though this project follows an inductive approach and therefore tries to find frames primarily from the material, these found frames can be compared at the end with the existing frames from the literature review.

3.1.1 Framing as a process

Based on Entman, but also other researchers within framing analysis, the process model of framing is presented. This model can help not only to recognize the importance of recognizing frames but also to show where these frames emerge. Furthermore, it shows how frames can ultimately affect the reader.

Carter points out that journalists who produce news and consciously or unconsciously select ideas about a problem, “they represent reality subjectively rather than objectively” (Carter, 2013, p.8). Carter argues that the production of texts and the internal and external processes of how journalists create articles – *frame building* - and the reception of frames by audiences - *frame-setting* – are important in dynamic communication processes.



Process model of framing (De Vreese, 2005, p.52).

De Vreese goes on to describe the different influences when a journalist writes an article: Already in the newsroom, the *communicator*, e.g., the journalist, is influenced by internal factors such as editorial guidelines or how journalists should frame issues. In addition, external factors such as the interaction with elites and social movements can also contribute to the influence of journalists (De Vreese, 2005, p.52). On this basis, the *text* reflects the interactions in the form of frames. The *receiver* – e.g. the reader of the article - then perceives the frames and combines them with their prior knowledge: “Frames in the news may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events” (De Vreese, 2005, p.52-53). On both the individual level and the societal level, framing can have consequences, such as changing an individual’s opinion on an issue or increasing the chances for “political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions” (De Vreese, 2005, p.52) in society.

As Jecker argues, framing theory and its effect on audiences are controversial. The lack of theoretical background for the effect of framing is often criticized in that the impact of frames on the individual and society is difficult to measure, as the receiver might be influenced by other factors after reading an article (Jecker, 2017, p.14). However, this thesis will mainly focus on the frames in the news and not on the impact of frames on the audience. Based on the presented model of the communication process, it should be considered that frames can also emerge unconsciously or be interpreted differently than the journalist’s intentions, if I, or the reader as the receiver, find frames.

3.2 Hypothesized stereotypes

The second theory used in this thesis is Sara Mills' introduction to two different forms of sexism through hypothesized stereotypes and language. She further makes a difference between indirect and direct sexism. Therefore, these two forms are introduced as follows.

Mills describes the concept of hypothesized stereotype as "a range of possible scripts or scenarios (sets of features, roles and possible narrative sequences) that we hypothesise" (Mills, 2008, p.126). This definition serves as an alternative to the belief that stereotypes are a fixed set of characteristics and that the same stereotypes are available to everyone. However, as Mills also points out that in recognizing that stereotypes should not be overgeneralized, one should acknowledge structural inequalities and the stereotypes that are adopted because of these inequalities.

Mills describes the formation of stereotypes as follows: By first hypothesizing some extreme aspects of members of a group, this aspect is then generalized to the whole group. Therefore, according to Mills, a stereotype may be based on a characteristic that has occurred in a group, "but the stereotype is one noticeable form of behavior which is afforded prototypical status, backgrounding all of the other more common, and in a sense more defining, forms of behaviour" (Mills, 2008, p.126). The notion of prototype highlights the judgments that are made about a group and the creation of unconscious ideas about what is appropriate. Thus, it can be seen that stereotypes of femininity may have originated in an era when characteristics were ascribed to women but were also questioned or contradicted during the era (Mills, 2008, p.127).

Moreover, Mills argues that the hypothesis of stereotypes is something that is actively used and played within the media and where new stereotypes are developed. The old stereotypes are not replaced by new ones, but rather co-exist with or influence the new stereotypes. By being mediated through the media, these assumed stereotypes, as Mills argues, have an impact on the individual as they are endorsed at an institutional level, e.g. through the media (Mills, 2008, p.127), and furthermore can be harmful to both women and men because of the assumptions made about women or men and the perception of self.

Mills also argues that feminism helps to actively challenge stereotypes: by critiquing judgments about the appropriate behavior of women and men, feminism will always have to be seen in the discourse alongside the use of gender stereotypes. Moreover, female stereotypes such as the association with the private sphere and the values associated with it have changed as women have become more economically active. Mills points out that "the ideals of femininity have [not] simply disappeared, because they are constantly invoked, sometimes ironically, but

often in contradictory ways in relation to this commonsense feminist set of ideas about women's position" (Mills, 2008, p.130).

As Mills furthermore states, "stereotypes of femininity can be considered to be sexist when they are evaluated negatively" (Mills, 2008, p. 129). An example, she cites the stereotype that women are considerate. However, if this characteristic is judged as weak, this can be described as sexist.

"We should [...] not assume that stereotypes are permanent, unchanging discursive structures, but we should see them rather as resources which can change fairly rapidly, with certain anachronistic aspects being available to be called upon by certain speakers and writers within particular communities of practice" (Mills, 2008, p.132). By constantly questioning the meaning of something, every utterance is part of a process of change. Mills adds that some structures, however, seem to be more enduring, "simply because they have endured over a relatively long period of time" (Mills, 2008, p.132). An example of this is sexism, as Mills suggests.

Understanding Mills' hypothesized stereotypes as something that can be actively changed and critiqued can contribute to the thesis in the sense that journalists have the power to change media representations of women politicians and women in general and to reduce the use of recent, but also older, anachronistic stereotypes over time. In analyzing media representations of Baerbock in the German media, I will actively try to incorporate Mills' understanding of hypothesized stereotypes, changing stereotypes, anachronistic stereotypes, and questioning the use of stereotypes in the media.

3.2.1 Indirect sexism

Another focus of Mills is the analysis of indirect sexism through language. Mills points out that women in positions of power in particular are belittled and portrayed differently from men in positions of power, which makes the representation sexist (Mills, 2008, p.137). However, this usually happens mostly indirectly and therefore more difficult to recognize: For example, when the gender is not directly addressed in a conversation, but rather when "the presuppositions underlying [...] utterance[s] are gendered and based on sexist beliefs" (Mills, 2008, p.128). Thus, Mills introduces six different types of indirect sexism that can help to find latent sexist messages in the material.

Mills' six different types of indirect sexism (Mills, 2008, p.137-149):

- 1) **Humor:** Humor is used to hide sexism. This can be the use of certain words or phrases.
- 2) **Presuppositions:** A form of indirect sexism that is difficult to refute because the presuppositions are not directly contained in the utterance itself but are linked to it. An

example of this would be the assumption that a student must be female if they cannot participate in an exam due to childcare issues.

- 3) **Conflicting messages:** Conveying mixed messages about gender and feminism: these could be changes made to portray women no differently than men, but at the same time still conveying underlying presuppositions about women.
- 4) **Collocation:** Collocation describes words that are accompanied by other words: An example Mills mentions is the word 'mum', which is not sexist in itself, but becomes sexist when followed by other words such as 'working mum', which express conflict about the responsibilities of motherhood. In addition, the connotation of the accompanying words is examined.
- 5) **Androcentric perspective:** The androcentric perspective describes the tendency of society to focus on men and their needs. As an example, Mills cites an article written from a male perspective, such as when implicitly arguing from a male perspective why women should not become bishops.
- 6) **Scripts and metaphors:** Scenarios or narratives are transposed onto women. One example Mills mentions is the story of Romeo and Juliet, which is cast on a banker's wife and portrays her as a lover.

It should be noted, however, that the German language partially excludes presupposition by using the affix *-in* to make a word feminine. However, this is a current debate in Germany about whether the affix *-in* should be used more to include women and other non-binary genders.

4. Methodology

The following section discusses the methodology and empirical data in detail. In this thesis, qualitatively oriented content analysis is used to uncover existing gender stereotypes in German media. First, the philosophy of science on which this thesis is based is introduced. Then, the method based on Mayring is presented.

4.1 Philosophy of Science: Social constructionism and post-structuralism

In the following part, I will argue on which theoretical paradigms this thesis is based. Especially when it comes to gender, stereotypes, and framing theories, the position of social constructionism can help to think critically about the reinforcement of constructs like gender or stereotypes by journalism. In addition, post-structuralism is a philosophy that will also play a role in this thesis.

Social constructionism is a way of looking at the social nature of knowledge and science. Historically, it dates back to Marx and was further developed by Berger and Luckmann (Dreher & Hector, 2016, p.54). It is based on the idea that things are socially constructed through social action: the interaction with other people (Detel, 2015, p.228). Social constructivists argue that things appear to be created and determined by the laws of nature, but upon closer inspection turn out to be the result of human interaction and are therefore adaptable. This argument allows people to look critically at their own social constructions and the status quo (Detel, 2015, p.228).

Social constructionism involves different things: These can be beliefs, facts, or social relationships. Based on these, it can be seen that something is constructed by social interaction. If this is judged to be bad, it is assumed that changes could help to make it better or even end the construct (Detel, 2015, p.229). Thus, social reality is a process; meanings and interpretations are constantly changed to produce knowledge and shape the world. In Communication Studies, this means that communication shapes the social world; therefore, any action can influence the meaning of something. Language plays an important role in the process: The power over meanings lies in language itself, and these meanings cannot be completely controlled and determined, but rather negotiated (Galanes & Leeds-Hurwitz, 2017, p.3). “Language is not only used by human beings as a means of communication, but it also serves as a defining aspect of humanity” (Carter, 2013, p.2).

Examples of things that are socially constructed and discussed in the humanities and social sciences include cultural concepts such as gender, race, and sexuality (Kang, Lessard, Heston & Nordmarken, 2017, para.).

By also considering post-structuralism in this thesis, the critical view of language and social reality is sharpened. Post-structuralism assumes that language not only reflects social reality but also actively produces it through its categories – thus, issues such as gender, as discussed in this thesis, are a result of the construction through language and not naturally given. Moreover, post-structuralism addresses the question of how language is used to represent a social phenomenon while assuming that there is no objective reality (Brodén, 2006, p.795). Meaning is created through the interaction of subject and object, such as through language. Text is seen less as a system and more as a process with different meanings of words (Williams, 2014, p.4). By emphasizing that processes and discourses in society are reflected in the system of language, analysis of the text (e.g., a newspaper article) can help identify changes in discourse that are reflected in society. Like social constructionism, post-structuralism sees the possibility of change in structures and discourses that can lead to social change. This thesis takes advantage of this view by considering texts as a source of social reality, which furthermore has

the power to lead to social change, rejecting categories and binary options such as female/male or rational/emotional, etc. This is reflected both in the idea of the thesis that female and male candidates should not be portrayed differently in the media and Mills' theory of hypothesized stereotypes and indirect sexism.

In this thesis, social constructionism becomes relevant when discussing gender, gender stereotypes, and expectations. Using postfeminist theory, gender is viewed as a social construct. Closely related to that are gender stereotypes. When stereotypes are viewed from a social constructivist perspective, they are created through meanings and conceptions of reality:

“The reconstructivist [or social constructivist] approach assumes, on the one hand, that natural as well as social reality exists largely independently of the subject (such as the journalist) and can be reconstructed by the subject because, as a rule, parts of the mediated conceptions of reality can be confirmed intersubjectively, which is what lays the foundation for people to be able to communicate in the first place, but that, on the other hand, reality is too complex to be graspable as a whole and is therefore selected, transformed and insofar actually constructed”
(Hafez 2002, in Thiele, 2015, p.57)

Furthermore, in applying framing theory in this work, it can be assumed that journalists have the power to influence the representation of gender and people – such as the representation of Baerbock. By highlighting or deselecting things, social constructions can be reinforced or even actively altered.

However, a contradiction between the method and the paradigms becomes visible: As it will follow in the methodology part of this thesis, terms like validity – often replaced by trustworthiness - or reliability is often used by researchers to justify the quantitative parts of qualitative content analysis. These terms speak to a positivist terminology and are contrary to the paradigm of social constructivism, as Drisko and Maschi point out (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p.92). When first considering qualitative content analysis, the claim of a subject-independent approach used in many quantitative methods that stem from the paradigm of positivism contrasts with the observational, interpretive approach. Nevertheless, I would argue that the focus of qualitative content analysis is on interpreting the text and meaning directly from the material – and with inductive analysis of the material, social constructions are found and can critique beyond that. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis allows for alternating the method, which makes it possible to be as inductive and as close to the material as possible.

4.2 Mayring's qualitatively oriented content analysis

Philipp Mayring's qualitatively oriented content analysis is derived from quantitative content analysis, which is frequently used in communication studies. Its focus lies however on qualita-

tive tools using various qualitative-interpretative approaches to analyze texts. Therefore, it ensures the incorporation of the benefits of both quantitative content analysis and qualitative methods.

As Mayring describes, all types of communication can be used for qualitatively content analysis – especially extensive amounts of text. According to Diskro and Maschi, qualitatively oriented content analysis is “a set of techniques for the systematic analysis of texts of many kinds, addressing not only manifest content but also the themes and core ideas [latent content] found in texts as primary content” (Diskro & Maschi, 2016, p.82).

Mayring describes the approach as a mixed-method approach due to the combination of qualitative and quantitative steps in the procedure (Mayring, 2019, para.); with an emphasis on a subjective interpretation of the material, as Roller and Lavrakas point out (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p.231). As Mayring notes, the rules of a quantitative approach can be maintained and followed, which can ensure trustworthiness: “The [quantitative] content analysis developed in communications and media [...] [is] relevant because of its adherence to rule-based systematic analytical procedures” (Mayring, 2019, para 2). By not excluding quantitative steps such as the formation or frequency of categories, text analysis can enrich the context and thus include the complexity of meaning in the analysis, which can ensure that the result is broader and includes more patterns, structures, and non-verbal meanings (Diskro & Maschi, 2016, p.85). In addition, the focus is on the research question: At the end of the analysis, the question should have been answered by the analysis and its categories. Open content analysis is the most commonly used text analysis, leaving behind other methods such as standardized content analysis or conversation analysis (Mayring, 2019, para 2).

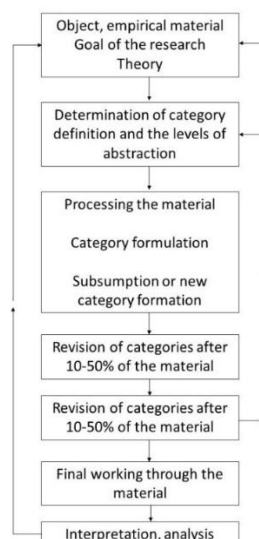
A key point of qualitatively oriented content analysis is that the analysis is based on categories that are formed either inductively or deductively. These categories appear in the analyzed material and summarize the appearance of aspects of the texts. For this reason, the analysis is limited to these categories. Content that is not included in these categories is excluded and not considered. Due to the strict set of rules of quantitative content analysis and its systematic approach, the process of the method is clear and can be followed step by step (Mayring, 2019, para 2). This allows texts that are normally interpreted more freely to follow a systematic process that can be repeated at any time by oneself or others and can be replicated (Mayring, 1991, p. 213).

Mayring developed several techniques within content analysis where he distinguishes between an inductive and a deductive approach – I will mainly focus on the inductive formation of categories that arises from the material as it is used in this research and will continue to adhere to the rationale of choice for my thesis.

4.2.1 Inductive approach

In an inductive procedure, the categories for the coding agenda are derived and developed from the material used: These categories are formed after reviewing the selected empirical material. The research question and the theoretical background play an important role in the selection of the categories: In order to answer the research question, all material is divided into categories. Additionally, these categories are revised in different steps and combined into new categories – the main categories. By regularly comparing the introduced categories and the material, reliability is considered throughout the whole coding process. This ultimately means that there are no firm assumptions about patterns or frames in the material before the process begins. This approach can help discover new patterns and structures that are present in the text by reducing the researcher's prior assumptions. It also allows for working close to the object and the material (Mayring, 2015, p.86). Another approach that also allows 'open coding' is grounded theory; qualitatively oriented content analysis differs from it in its use of repetitive processes and its systematic nature.

Mayring provides a step-by-step guide for the formation of inductive categories:



Mayring's process model for inductive category formation (Mayring, 2015, p.86)

First, the material that can answer the research question is selected. Here, limitations should be defined as precisely as possible, and material that is not relevant to the research question should be excluded. It should also be decided how specific the categories should be (Mayring, 2015, pp.86).

In the second step, the material is processed step-by-step: Once the selection criteria are met, the first category should be formed: Here it becomes important to work as close as possible to the text. A term or a sentence is formed to describe the new category (Mayring, 2015, p.87).

The third step is to continue going through the material. Once the selection criteria are met again, it should be checked if a new category should be formed or if it fits one of the already existing categories. This process continues until it is difficult to form and find new categories (Mayring, 2015, p.87)

Then, after reaching half of the material, the existing categories should be reviewed again: It should be checked whether the categories can answer the research question and whether the selection criteria and the level of abstraction are reasonable. As Mayring points out, if the analysis does not fit, it should be done all over again. If no distortions could be found, the analysis continues, and new categories should be formed (Mayring, 2015, p.87).

“The result is a system of categories on a specific topic, linked with concrete text passages” (Mayring, 2015, p.87): This allows further interpretation of the results, i.e. the formation of main categories based on theoretical concepts or a quantitative approach analyzing the occurrence of the categories.

This thesis primarily uses the inductive approach. As became clear in the literature review of this thesis, there are numerous studies on the representation of gender framing in the media – also in the German media – and especially on the media coverage of female politicians in election campaigns. However, by choosing a more inductive approach, new frames might be discovered in the empirical material. Considering that Baerbock’s nomination is the first announcement of a female candidacy on the federal level in 16 years after Merkel’s first campaign, frames might have changed. For this reason, the decision to take an inductive approach seems reasonable.

After conducting the analysis, I will interpret the results of the categories or frames⁷ of my analysis found in the material. The theory used in this thesis and frames previously in other

⁷ Different frames (i.e. choosing or excluding an aspect of an issue) can appear in the different categories (topics/generic frames); therefore the categories will help to categorize the different frames. However, categories and frames still present different aspects of the content.

studies will be considered and compared to the frames found in the material. In this way, the linkage between previous research and my analysis will become clear, new results can be considered, and gaps can be discovered.

5. Empirical Data

The following section deals with the selection of empirical data, which is described by Mayring as the first step. Here, non-relevant material that cannot answer the research question should be excluded (Mayring, 2015, p.87). In addition, the level of abstraction should be determined - that is, it should be decided how concrete the categories should be.

In the first part, I will discuss the selection of newspapers, then describe the sample of the project, proceed with the data collection, and finally turn to the approach I will take in analyzing the newspaper articles.

5.1 Selection of newspapers and their relevance

Due to the lack of resources and space for this project, it was decided to include the six largest national daily newspapers in Germany, which are published daily except Sundays, and the four largest national weekly newspapers, which are published once a week: These national newspapers focus mainly on national and international political and economic events and are available throughout Germany (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, n.d.).

It was also decided that the focus would be on printed newspapers, including e-papers. This is due to the complexity and number of articles that have been published on this topic. This method may help reduce the number of articles. Print media is still one of the main sources for the inhabitants of Germany: according to ZMG⁸, 56% of the German population will still read printed newspapers once a week in 2020, even if the number of readers of print media is decreasing (ZMG, 2020). If the digital offerings of newspapers (e-paper) are included, 63.4% of the population accesses newspaper articles at least once a week (ZMG, 2020). It can therefore be argued that printed newspapers, including the electronic version of newspapers, represent an offering that reaches more than half of the population in Germany. It should be noted that the study conducted by ZMG also takes regional newspapers into account.

⁸ Zeitungsmarktforschungsgesellschaft deutscher Zeitungen (Newspaper market research association for German newspapers)

According to IVW⁹ (2022), the six largest national printed daily newspapers in the third quarter of 2021 were as follows:

Name of newspaper	Number of newspapers (Digital and printed subscriptions + individual sales)
Bild	970.948
Süddeutsche Zeitung	273.812
Frankfurter Allgemeine	174.721
Handelsblatt	86.415
taz. die tageszeitung	41.040
Die Welt	40.668

The breakdown of digital and print subscriptions to Germany's largest national weekly newspapers and individual sales in the third quarter of 2021 is as follows (IVW, 2022):

Name of newspaper	Number of newspapers (Digital and printed subscriptions + individual sales)
Bild am Sonntag	598.379
Die Zeit	527.946
Die Welt am Sonntag	219.725
Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung	177.386

With the selection of newspapers, a wide range of newspapers is included in the empirical data and the most significant newspapers in terms of readership were selected. The newspapers *Bild* and *Bild am Sonntag* can be categorized as tabloid newspapers, while the other selected newspapers are classified as newspapers with a political profile (Andersen & Woyke, 2013, p.387).

Looking at the readership of the different newspapers, a broad political orientation is addressed and can allow for a differentiated view of the topic: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*,¹⁰ including its Sunday newspaper, is more known for a conservative readership (Burkhardt, 2012) while *taz. Die Tageszeitung*¹¹ has a left-alternative audience (Groll, 2012) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*¹² a socially left-leaning audience (Hachmeister, 2012). *Die Welt* and its Sunday edition are perceived as a more conservative-nationalist newspaper (Sasse, 2012). *Die Zeit* is a more liberal and centrist newspaper (Hess, 2009, p.76). *Handelsblatt* has a focus on economics and is often described as economic liberal (Bayaz, 2014, p.366). *Bild*, including its sister newspaper *Bild am Sonntag*, can be classified as center-right and conservative-populist (Silverstein &

⁹ Information Association for the Determination of the Distribution of Advertising Media

¹⁰ From now on: FAZ.

¹¹ From now on: TAZ.

¹² From now on: SZ.

Stevens, 2021, p. 91). With this information, it becomes easier to see if there are differences in reporting between newspapers and, if so, how those differences become apparent.

5.2 Sampling

As mentioned in the introduction, the thesis targets two different periods: First, a period of eight days in which Baerbock's candidacy was announced can be considered a key event: On April 19, 2021, the other party leader besides Baerbock - Robert Habeck, who was also running for the position of chancellor candidate within the party - announced her candidacy and his support. During this time, the Green Party's internal choice in favor of Baerbock was intensively discussed in the media. Moreover, I assume that Baerbock has been portrayed in various newspapers since the announcement of her candidacy brought her person to the fore, and based on these articles, different frames about her gender can be found. During the data collection, it became clear that most of the articles about Baerbock's candidacy were published in the following eight days. These eight days were selected based on the number of articles published during this period and taking into account that the four national weekly newspapers publish articles only once a week. Therefore, the eight-day period includes the days from April 19, 2021, to April 26, 2021¹³.

The second period chosen was the week before the election: I assume that from September 19, 2021, to September 26, 2021¹⁴, newspaper articles will cover Baerbock and summarize the campaign, including the scandals leading up to Election Day, which may help to find different frames about Baerbock.

5.3 Data collection & selection criteria

To collect the empirical data, the NexisLexis database was used to find relevant newspaper articles. Articles from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* had to be collected individually in their own archives, as they were not available on NexisLexis. Articles published in *Handelsblatt* were accessed via the WISO database.

In all databases and archives, articles were identified with the keywords “Baerbock”, “Annalena Baerbock” and “Kanzlerkandidatin”¹⁵. In addition, the filter was set to the selected time periods and only the relevant newspapers were selected. A total of 148 articles could be found in week one, the week the candidacy was announced, and 161 articles mentioned Baerbock at least once in week two, the week before the elections. However, it became clear that many of the

¹³ From now on: Week one.

¹⁴ From now on: Week 2.

¹⁵ Female version –in for chancellor candidate.

articles were not written exclusively about Baerbock but mentioned her name only once. Thematically, these articles differed from the rest of the articles, and representations based on single sentences were difficult to find or did not exist.

Therefore, it was decided that only articles that mentioned Baerbock in more than three sentences should be included in the analysis. Considering the three candidates for chancellor and the frequently published articles comparing Baerbock with the other candidates, it makes sense to set a limit here. In the first week, this was a total of 54 articles, and in the second week, a total of 30 articles. All articles included in the research can be found in a table with codes such as title, newspaper, publication date, and descriptions in the appendix.

Columns and opinion pieces are also included in the material. The idea behind this is that the editors of the newspaper have decided to include the article in the newspaper and therefore pay attention to the content and its framing. By highlighting an opinion in the newspaper, a frame can be emphasized. Therefore, articles written by both journalists and non-journalists are included in the material. Also, when reading a newspaper, the reader may not care or not be aware of who wrote the article, and therefore the reader may not distinguish between different types of articles.

However, interviews conducted with other candidates for chancellor or party members that include questions and direct quotes about opponents are excluded from the analysis because these expressions are not selected by the journalist but by the candidate or politician. One could argue that the journalist also plays an active role in selecting or deselecting questions to ask politicians or in selecting direct quotes for headlines. Nonetheless, these interviews are excluded from the analysis because the weight of the direct quotes from the opposing candidates is higher than the arguments that the journalists put into the article.

5.4 Further process & challenges

It might be difficult to distinguish articles about Baerbock's gender from her party affiliation. As became clear during the literature search, this is widely discussed among scholars. For example, it could be scandals, such as the accusation against the leader of the Green Party of having accepted internal party bonuses, that call Baerbock's competence into question.

6. Analysis

In this part of the paper, the results of the analysis are presented. As described in the methodology part, the findings are drawn from the material and then compared with the theoretical concepts and frameworks found in previous research.

6.1 Categories in the material

6.1.1 Category 1: Baerbock was chosen as the candidate (only) because of her gender and the women's quota

The most dominant frame in the first week is the idea that Baerbock was chosen as the Green Party's candidate for chancellor because of her gender. In 20 out of 54 articles in the first week, this topic was picked up in almost all analyzed newspapers: *Die Welt* wrote in its article of April 20, 2021 (article 12) that in Baerbock's election "the question of 'emancipation' had also played a role", and thus the decision is actively attributed to emancipation, but as a secondary role and not as the main reason. Moreover, *Die Welt* notes that this happened because of her party affiliation and the party's insistence on adhering to the women's quota: On April 19 (article 15), it is stated that "...she is a woman, which is not unimportant for a feminist party". The *FAZ* writes on April 20 (article 34), that "it would have been an irony of history if the Greens, of all parties, had chosen the man with almost equal qualifications. However, Annalena Baerbock will not have prevailed over Robert Habeck in the competition for the chancellorship only because, as a woman, she wants to succeed a woman", thus also arguing that the decision was made partly because of her gender, but not entirely because of it.

Other articles, such as the April 22 article in *Bild* (article 2) and *FAZ* (article 38), give more weight to the decision to choose Baerbock as a candidate, citing Baerbock's gender as the main reason for her nomination as a candidate. Both newspapers choose to quote Habeck directly, saying, "The fact that Annalena is a woman in an otherwise male election campaign was a key criterion". *Bild* further interprets that "in plain language [...], Habeck accuses Baerbock of not becoming a candidate because she is better than him - but because she is a woman". By interpreting the decision from a man's perspective and reducing Baerbock's qualities to her gender, it seems that Habeck is 'forced' to take a step back and let her be the candidate. This implies that there are no other arguments that played a role in the decision. In general, the decision to let Baerbock run for chancellor has often been reported from Habeck's¹⁶ male perspective and interpreted as meaning that he was not happy with the decision: In *Bild* and *Die Zeit* on 22 April (article 30), the focus on Baerbock's gender is more prominent. It is reported that he 'had to take a step back' or 'cleared the way' for Baerbock as a candidate for chancellor.

Another perspective is that Baerbock was elected because of her gender and the gender of her opponents from the other parties. They were all men, and as *Bild am Sonntag* argues on April 25 (article 8), electing a female candidate puts her in an opposing position and gives her

¹⁶ Visible in articles from *Bild* (article 2, 3), *Die Zeit* (article 30).

an advantage as an alternative to the men: "She wants to present herself in the election campaign as an alternative to two 'carry on' men". This perspective also appears in other articles, such as the one in *Die Welt* on April 20 (article 12). Here the issue of emancipation is discussed, followed by the sentence that "she is now running against two men". In an April 21 article (article 4), *Bild* also highlights a quote from a newspaper from Croatia, that the nomination is a "prudent decision because all the other parties nominate male candidates". *Bild* thus attributes a primary role in the selection to Baerbock's gender, both by comparing her with the skills of her colleague and with other male counter candidates.

Closely related to the women's quota argument is criticism of Baerbock's competence. In articles such as the *FAZ* article from April 25 (article 39), Baerbock is actively compared to her opponent candidate Habeck: "The two strongest parties [CDU and Greens] have obviously put forward the wrong candidates: Laschet instead of Markus Söder, Baerbock instead of Robert Habeck. [...] the Greens [preferred] the inexperienced woman to the experienced man". This shows that Baerbock is seen as less competent when it comes to experience. The decision to vote for Baerbock is criticized by calling it a wrong decision. The frame of incompetence that runs through the entire article and the connection with the fact that the article focusses on the aspect of Baerbock being a woman is discussed in category three.

Some articles in the *FAZ* or *Die Zeit* focus on Baerbock's own opinion and on the fact that she does not want to be seen as a quota woman. The *FAZ*, for example, in an April 20 article (article 36) focuses on the women's quota and Baerbock's message that she does not want to be singled out because of her gender: "However, Baerbock had always refused to play the women's card in recent months. She knows that the label of quota woman is not helpful". *Die Zeit* also highlights in its April 22 article (article 30) that "Baerbock herself thought about the women's question for a long time, as other women who spoke to her about it reported. On one hand, like every woman who reaches for power - she was worried about being seen as a quota woman. On the other hand, she came to realize that patriarchy does not disappear when one criticizes it but then submits to its logic". In the case of *Die Zeit*, then, the focus shifts from the quota woman to other reasons why Baerbock took the lead, portraying the women's quota and the decision for Baerbock as positive.

Bild, on the other hand, points out in its April 22 article (article 2) that Baerbock herself did not want to be the quota woman went in the wrong direction and that Baerbock's expectations were not met with the decision: "An absolute affront to the Greens! After all, Baerbock had always stressed that she did not want to be a quota candidate." By using expressions like 'absolute affront', the negative undertone article underlines the interpretation that it was a bad decision and purely based on gender.

When comparing the different news articles, it becomes clear that the idea that Baerbock was chosen only because she is a woman is highlighted differently. While some articles present the decision as a minor one, others focus on the argument that gender was the main reason for the decision.

All in all, it can be said that the repetition of the argument that Baerbock was elected because of her gender, with both a negative and a positive undertone, contributes to its salience. Other articles¹⁷ that write about the Green Party's decision and press conference to choose Baerbock as its candidate elevate the argument and shift the focus away from Baerbock's gender. It is also clear that this framing was most visible in the first week; no articles fell into this category in the second week.

From the literature review point of view, the frame of being selected only based on gender does not exist in other research projects. Therefore, a new frame could be found to contribute to both the international, but also national research fields. The focus on Baerbock's gender in deciding the candidate for chancellor could be explained by the recent focus on introducing quotas for women in Germany. Since 2016, 30 percent of supervisory boards of listed and parity-determined companies registered in Germany must be composed of women (DIW Berlin, n.d.). Especially since the Greens consider the fight for women's quotas one of their main qualities, the criticism of Baerbock's election based on her gender could also be closely linked to party affiliation and German political discourses.

Women's quotas are increasingly discussed at the EU level and in different contexts such as corporate representation, but also political offices, and therefore this frame might play a role in other studies in the future.

As for the negative reporting of experience and collocations such as "inexperienced women" and "experienced men" as presented in the material, this has already been observed in older studies and can be related to the double bind of femininity and competence. In the articles presented, Baerbock's competence is reduced, and the selection is seen solely in terms of her gender. I will examine the double bind of femininity and competence in category three in more detail.

6.1.2 Category 2: Feminine connotated adjectives and qualities: Expectations of women

In analyzing the material on Baerbock, it became clear that in the articles some of Baerbock's characteristics are directly associated with her gender, such as empathy or emotionality, as is evident in an article in *Bild am Sonntag* from September 26 (article 10): "Annalena Baerbock

¹⁷ Articles in SZ (article 54, 60).

is not as ripped off as some of her fellow politicians [German male form of politicians]. She has more emotional strength and humor than analytical thinking or pragmatic sobriety". It was further reported that she "[had] tears in her eyes several times [when looking at the floods in the Ahr valley]. Her empathy – also towards children – is genuine". This phrase can also be related to the role and expectation for women to care for children. In addition, empathy is a quality that is repeatedly mentioned when describing Baerbock: *Bild am Sonntag* on April 25 (article 8) points out that "Baerbock tries to talk very indirect, not to hurt any potential voters. In the election campaign, she will have to speak more clearly" or in the *FAZ* on April 20 (article 36)¹⁸ that Baerbock said that qualities such as "fairness, empathy and humanity" are important to her, "even when making tough decisions". This is also used in the April 20 *SZ* article (article 59): She is described as having taken care of her little sisters from an early age and is quoted as saying that her best quality is to be "very empathetic". This is commented on with the observation that "sometimes emotion also makes one vulnerable" and that empathy could therefore also be an obstacle to running for chancellor. As Harp et al. point out in their study, emotionality stands in contrast to the male-dominated political sphere: Articles often convey "that women are frail and that (female) displays of emotions have no room in political settings" (Harp et al., 2016, p.205). Therefore, it can be concluded that the link between emotionality and weakness is still present in the analyzed material. Even though some of the articles mention it as a strength, others see it as an obstacle.

In the *SZ* of April 24 (article 51), the decision in favor of Baerbock is described as "[relying] on 'soft power' and with Baerbock having sent a woman into the race for the chancellorship". Here, the qualities of 'soft power' that convey the reputation and values that are at the forefront act as a metaphor. These qualities are directly associated in the article with the fact that it is a woman, and are therefore more directly associated with the role of women compared to the arguments made earlier.

Baerbock is also described as immature and childish: In the *FAZ* of April 22 (article 41), it is emphasized that "when the wind blows against her, she really turns up the heat" and that "behind the professional facade, almost childlike defiance emerges at times". In the *SZ* of April 20 (article 59), the word "controlling" is attributed to Baerbock: "Kontrolletti' [word for control freak] that is what her husband calls her from time to time". This attribution is also mentioned in *Bild am Sonntag's* article of September 26 (article 10): "Annalena Baerbock is considered to be extremely controlling, risk-adverse and sometimes overcautious". All these attributions have in common that they have rather negative connotations.

¹⁸ Similar argument can be found in article 37 (*FAZ*) and 59 (*SZ*).

Her way of talking is also described in several articles: From “chatty, superficial [and] talked like a machine gun” in *Bild* on April 20 (article 1) to ‘babbling’ in *SZ* on April 21 (article 55), ‘gossiping’ in *Bild* (article 2) and “little squeaky Annalena!” in *TAZ* on April 20 (article 70) - these attributions almost all have negative connotations and there are latent presuppositions in these expressions about women: For example, that women cannot stop talking or that women talk about trivial topics. According to Mills, this type of indirect sexism is difficult to combat “since it is necessary to make overt the assumptions upon which the sexism is based” (Mills, 2008, p.145).

In *Bild* on September 22 (article 6), the author trusts Baerbock “to leave it to the brats [Gören]¹⁹ to keep a habitable planet” - although this is phrased in a way that Baerbock and the expectation that women, in general, seem better able to address environmental issues, the choice to use 'brats' as 'humor' to convey a message can be labeled sexist, according to Mills, because these terms are demeaning and mocking to women (Mills, 2008, p.145).

Baerbock is also expected to speak about issues that affect women: In general, news coverage found that female politicians were quoted in the context of ‘soft’ issues such as family, education, or culture, and less so on hard issues such as economics, foreign policy, or finance (Hayek & Russmann, 2020, p.228; Lünenborg, 2009, p.38). In O'Brien's study of politicians in Ireland, there was a significant gap between how male and female politicians were interviewed, quoted, or portrayed about issues - and like Hayek & Russmann, O'Brien was able to identify a dominance of coverage of discussions of soft issues (O'Brien, 2014, p.506). In Baerbock's case, this could also be reflected in an article in the *FAZ* of April 20 (article 35), where it is stated that “she spoke a lot about children, pensioners, and single parents”. She is also expected to take on women's issues and is criticized for not making feminist issues her main interest: In particular, the *TAZ*, in an April 20 article, calls for Baerbock to champion feminist politics and criticizes her first candidacy speech (article 73), saying, “Women's policy? Not a thing. What concerns half of society still seems too provocative, too niche, in such a prominent place as the speech on the candidacy for female chancellor”. A subsequent letter to the editor a day later in the *TAZ* (article 76) mentions that the topics Baerbock spoke about are apparently 'women's issues': “The topics that were mentioned are clearly women's policy: daycare, care, school, social cohesion - all topics that affect women more than men.”

In general, it is difficult to identify a causal relationship between the choice of adjectives and characteristics used to describe Baerbock and her gender. Here, a comparative analysis with

¹⁹ A word that is often used as degrading – meaning: “[dirty, naughty] child; [cheeky, naughty little] girl” (Duden, 2022).

other female or male candidates or a quantitative analysis could help to find causal relationships. It can be noted, however, that traits with a female connotation are not always seen as negative only. For example, empathy is portrayed as a positive trait that can be beneficial for the role of Chancellor, while in other articles it is viewed more negatively. Beck's 2016 study on German female politicians showed something similar: female politicians were often framed with attributions with female connotations, such as warm, emotional, nice, flirtatious, charming, or pitiful; however, other attributions that do not fall into the category of attributions with female connotations, such as self-confidence, independent thinking, astuteness, or bravery, were also used to portray female politicians while actively seeking to present them as feminine. Beck, therefore, argues that contrary to studies in the past, gender representations have changed and are not exclusively negatively constructed, as was the case with early female politicians (Beck, 2016, p.113).

6.1.3 Category 3: Baerbock's competence – is she overestimating herself?

Also dominant is coverage of Baerbock's experience. In 27 of the 84 articles, Baerbock's experience, and thus often indirectly her competence to lead a government, is mentioned. This is often accompanied by aspects such as age, but only twice directly by her gender. Either her competence is emphasized positively or formulated negatively, if negatively, then in combination with her lack of experience in governing. This lack of experience is seen as a disadvantage, but in other articles, it is sometimes seen as refreshing and a call for change.

Most articles in the first week mention that Baerbock did not hold any positions that involved government work. *Bild am Sonntag* on April 25 (article 8) calls it "her greatest weakness", *Die Welt* on April 20 (article 12) calls it "her weak point"²⁰, and FAZ on April 20 (article 33)²¹ says that "she lacks [Habeck's] governing experience". *Die Welt* further writes on April 23 (article 13)²² that "[Baerbock] had herself openly admitted to having little experience with political office". Again, the lack of experience is perceived as negative, using words such as 'openly admitting', suggesting that she is forced to actively admit her weakness to the public.

Other articles, such as in *Handelsblatt* on April 20 (article 81), see the lack of experience differently and rather as a strength: "During her speech, she turned her lack of experience into a strength of the 'unused'". By "going on the offensive", she transforms this supposed weakness into a strength. *Die Welt* headlines the article on April 20 (article 12) with the words "Baerbock even presents her great weakness as a strength". However, it becomes clear that the lack of experience is still presented as a weakness. The 'even' underscores the courage to try to

²⁰ Similar formulation in FAZ (article 36: [ihre offene Flanke]).

²¹ Similar argument in FAZ (article 34).

²² Similar argument in SZ (article 60).

change perceptions. The *FAZ* frames her lack of experience as a strength in its September 22 article (Article 41), and then adds that “she is a woman who actually does not believe in the advantage of the lack of government experience”. Like the article in *Die Welt*, this highlights the strength presented as a weakness.

In week two, the focus on her lack of experience is no longer as present as in week one. In articles dealing with the election campaign, she is only mentioned in passing: *Bild am Sonntag* reports in an article on September 26 (article 10) on the three chancellor candidates and points out that “Annalena Baerbock, for example, has neither state nor federal experience”. *SZ* on September 25 (article 61) Baerbock’s experience with that of her opponents: “But in the end, their experience catches on more than their opponent's appeal of the unused.”

The lack of experience is presented as a challenge and her competence is questioned, as in the *SZ* article of April 20 (article 58)²³: “The candidate has no experience in office. Can she then lead an entire country?” The lack of experience is closely related to her competence to lead the office. The doubts about her ability to lead the office are also evident in the *SZ* article of April 24 (article 51), which states, “the choice of Baerbock as candidate for chancellor unfortunately offends the vast majority of structurally-minded voters who do not see the totally important office of chancellor for Germany as an apprenticeship for sympathetic trainees”. This implies that voters expect more experience to lead the chancellorship and rate her as incompetent for the office.

Moreover, her competence, but also her confidence to become a candidate for chancellor, is negatively questioned, as in the *Welt am Sonntag* article of September 26 (article 26): “In the case of [...] Annalena Baerbock [...], the tendency and the state of the voter polls speak for this: [she] probably gave [herself] [...] too much credit. Intelligent young woman with a polished curriculum vitae”. Through the use of irony and criticism of her inexperience, her decision to run for chancellor is associated with hubris. The article goes on to moralize the decision, saying: “Good advisors who point out to a politician when his or her CV might not be suitable for the chancellorship in the election campaign - Annalena Baerbock would probably be better off with them”. This sentence further expresses and underlines the framing that Baerbock is not suitable for the office because of her lack of experience.

The aspect of overestimating oneself also becomes clear in an article in *Die Zeit* of April 23 (article 11), in which the author writes that “Annalena Baerbock should realize that she has never in her life had the slightest bit of government responsibility”. The expression 'she should realize' addresses her self-assessment and judges it negatively. This negative attitude is also

²³ Similar argument in *SZ* (article 51).

found in an article in the April 22 edition of *Die Welt* (article 16), in which a reader expresses his displeasure with Baerbock, noting that “[offering] the chancellorship to Mrs Baerbock - so far without any real experience in governmental responsibility - seems to me downright negligent”. The sentence is accompanied by criticism that 'young' people from Baerbock's generation tend to be 'spoiled' and 'brimming with self-confidence'. This once again portrays her as a person who overestimates herself.

In *Bild* on September 24 (article 5), her knowledge of international politics is highlighted, however, the article criticizes her for bragging about her knowledge: “She arrogantly boasts about her knowledge”. In general, her self-confident appearance is sometimes interpreted as self-overestimating or arrogance - when she mentioned her experiences and compared them with those of her colleague Habeck, *Bild* (article 2) called this 'gossip', which in turn is seen as negative.

One article from April 22 in *Die Zeit* (article 30) takes a critical stance: It asks why Baerbock is being addressed in her competence and sees a connection with her role as a woman: “But - the two little children? Just because of that! But - the lack of [her] government experience? With Friedrich Merz that didn't bother anyone!” By comparing her lack of experience with the lack of government experience of a popular male politician, the frequent criticism of Baerbock's competence is questioned and directly linked to her role as a woman.

Previous studies found that the double bind of questioning competence for an important office and being feminine was recurrent. Competence was judged negatively when candidates with feminine connoted characteristics appeared. In my material, it is difficult to see a direct link between feminine connoted adjectives and the representation of Baerbock as incompetent, as has been the case in previous studies. However, if the femininity/competence double bind is still in the material, then, however, in a more indirect and latent way. Often, Baerbock's gender is not mentioned, sometimes her competency is questioned with collocating words such as 'young' or 'woman', like in *Handelsblatt* on 23 April (article 82): “The Greens had nominated Annalena Baerbock, a young woman with no experience in government, as their candidate for chancellor”.

What is striking, however, is the frequency with which Baerbock's experience is criticized and negatively highlighted. The power of the media to question a woman's competence is also something Fiig discusses: she points out that the media plays an important role in creating constructions about a person's political competence through the repetition of terms (Fiig, 2010, p.42). Bligh et al. also emphasize that the tone of articles can play an important role in how a candidate's competence is perceived. Therefore, it can be assumed that the negative coverage

of the lack of experience contributed to Baerbock being perceived as less competent. As Entman also argues, once a frame is repeated, it is also perceived more strongly by the reader (Entman, 1993, p.52). This can potentially explain and reflect the later polls when Baerbock was rated less competent by the German population: The more the German media wrote about her inexperience, the less competent for the role of chancellor she appeared.

6.1.4 Category 4: The only woman in male-dominated politics – Her against him

One category that was also found is the preoccupation with the masculine connotation of power. Most notably, Baerbock is portrayed either as a threat to male power or as an alternative to male connoted power. Furthermore, the focus is on Baerbock within male-dominated politics. Here, male connoted characteristics are attributed to her, or she is compared to her male counter-candidates.

In the context of her election as candidate for chancellor, the argument that Baerbock has 'taken power' is reported directly from the perspective of her colleague Habeck. She is described as 'power hungry' in *Bild* on April 20 (article 1), and "[makes] big compromises to get into power" or 'power conscious' in *Die Zeit* on April 22 (article 31). In *Die Zeit* on April 22 (article 30), a metaphor is used to describe how easily she seizes power: "Probably for the first time when power was at stake, men were not the masters of the proceedings, but a woman was the mistress". This reflects the notion that power is dominated by men and that Baerbock has taken charge and power. Burke and Mazzarella argue that metaphors with masculine connotations are often used to "reinforce the ethos of male as 'norm' and female as 'other'" (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008, p.401). Given the German metaphor "masters of the proceeding" [Herren des Verfahrens], which uses a male perspective, describing Baerbock as a "mistress" [Herrin] places her in a male metaphor and therefore describes her from an androcentric perspective.

Moreover, from the male perspective, Habeck is reported to have "cleared the way [...] for the youngest candidate in history of the republic running for the most powerful office", as already mentioned in category one, which contrasts with the argument that Baerbock came to power with ease: "In the end, Annalena Baerbock won, without defeating. She gained power without having to fight for it. She simply took it". In *TAZ* of April 20 (article 74), this is seen as positive: "[The decision to select Baerbock as the candidate] can be interpreted in terms of symbolic politics and say: finally, a woman is taking what she can get and what she deserves."

Baerbock is attributed in the *Die Zeit* article (article 30) with characteristics that are considered masculine: "Unlike Habeck, she has something that is actually considered a specialty of men: rope relationships, one would say in the Union, the Greens prefer to call it 'support structures'".

Even though the analysis is not about a word count, it is noticeable that Baerbock was described with qualities that have masculine connotations: These include aggressiveness²⁴, strength²⁵, ambition²⁶, and self-confidence²⁷, which Devere and Davies cite as traits previously found in articles describing women in politics and generally considered inappropriate for women (Devere & Davis, 2006, p.75). In particular, Baerbock's self-confidence was a trait that tended to be viewed negatively, as stated earlier in category three. Her ambition was criticized for setting her goals too high, and especially in week two this was presented as negative. The *Handelsblatt*, for example, points out on September 23 (article 83) that some party members were disappointed because Baerbock could not meet her own high goals. The *SZ* also argues on September 21 (article 65) that her high ambitions have led to mistakes, contributing to the framing and perception that Baerbock has too high expectations that she cannot meet. However, *Handelsblatt* writes in an April 19 article (article 79) that “qualities [...] are needed for such a candidacy, such as a certain toughness, resilience, assertiveness, negotiating skills and willingness, all these can easily be attributed to Baerbock”. Although these are qualities that Devere and Davis say are often associated with male-dominated politics and leadership (Devere & Davis, 2006, p.76), they are attributed to Baerbock and she is portrayed positively. This shows how different articles portray Baerbock in different ways: From fulfilling qualities associated with male leadership to aiming high and disappointing others, tone can contribute to how Baerbock is perceived: As failing or as succeeding.

Moreover, Baerbock is portrayed as the antithesis of male dominance and aloofness. The *Die Zeit* article from April 22 (article 30) describes a scene of 'sisterhood' in which Baerbock sits on the lap of the female parliamentary director, embraces her, and pulls her close. This is seen as a contrary image, “because the images of political closeness have so far almost always been male”. The *SZ* of April 21 (article 56) describes that “she is not only good at soft power” and has qualities such as detailed expertise on various topics, implying that she can do more than the topics that are often feminine connotated. The author adds that Baerbock stands in contrast to “a country where charisma in politics is always considered somehow suspect, is remarkable, to say the least”. This, in turn, sets her apart from the other candidates and shows her as an alternative who is shaking up male-dominated politics: “...Her age, her gender, her appearance and her inexperience in government shift the parameters of evaluation”. The article in the *TAZ* of April 20 (article 73) makes the case for Baerbock as an alternative to the male candidates and calls for a change:

²⁴ Seen in articles in *TAZ* (article 69, 72).

²⁵ Seen in articles by *TAZ* (article 68) or *Handelsblatt* (article 79).

²⁶ Seen in articles by *Die Welt* (article 16), *TAZ* (article 83) or *Handelsblatt* (article 80, 83).

²⁷ Seen in article by *FAZ* (article 41) and *Die Welt* (article 16).

“A woman, on the other hand, and a young one at that is still considered a risk in German politics. The reference figure is the man, deviations must be explained [...]. But women still have to defend themselves against misogynistic patterns, and for some it will still look as if someone wants to take what she is not entitled to because of her gender: power. But therein also lies an opportunity. It is possible that Baerbock, who is an expert in international law, climate and the environment, is not the mediocre number Habeck would have been” (TAZ article 73, 20.April 2021)

As a result, Baerbock tends to be portrayed positively, but also as someone ‘different’ from her male opponents. As Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross pointed out, “the image and language of mediated politics, therefore, support the status quo (male as norm) and regards women politicians as novelties” (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, cited in Gidengil & Everitt, 2003, p.210). Men are seen as the norm in the media, and news production actively helps to perpetuate this masculine framing. As Burke and Mazzarella argue, this may be due to the dominance of male journalists (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008, p.398). The portrayal of female politicians as “other” was also confirmed in Beck’s study of German female politicians: She argues that articles make use of the gender dichotomy of man and woman (Beck, 2016, p.112), which is evident in many of the articles when Baerbock’s gender and that of her opponents is emphasized. Headlines such as “She or he” from April 22 (article 29) on the front page of *Die Zeit* or the sub-headline “A female chancellor or a male chancellor?” [Eine Kanzlerin oder ein Kanzler?] in *Welt am Sonntag* on 19 September (article 25) contribute to the perception of gender dichotomy and the differences. The position of the expression, such as the headline and the page position (front page), makes the message even clearer and more salient, as Entman argues (Entman, 1993, p.40). Elements such as headlines, pictures, or quotes that are highlighted can draw attention to different arguments.

In general, Baerbock is still portrayed differently than her male opponents. This is done by portraying her as an alternative to male-dominated politics - which is often reflected in the articles in which Baerbock is described as a ‘fresh’ and ‘alternative’ counter-candidate. In other articles, however, she is portrayed more negatively, as not being able to fulfill the leadership qualities associated with male characteristics. As Meeks points out, failure to fulfill gender roles in the professional environment can lead to gender incongruence and discrimination. Consideration should also be given to how voters ultimately view the candidate: Meeks argues that voters tend to favor candidates who fulfill male stereotypes in higher office. Because politics is associated with masculinity and men, leadership positions such as U.S. president are widely associated with a male leader (Meeks, 2012, p.176). However, Meeks points out that in the last decade, expectations for fulfilling traditional gender roles have changed. Now women can

also acquire some traits associated with masculinity and combine them with 'feminine' traits - the same is true in reverse for men. This is evident in some of the articles, such as the *Handelsblatt* article (article 79), in which Baerbock is attributed male-associated characteristics with a positive undertone. Although the dichotomy of male- and female-associated traits still exists, the boundaries have softened. However, women are still expected to have predominantly female-associated traits, Meek asserts (Meeks, 2012, p.177).

6.1.5 Category 5: High heels and girly dresses – sexualized and objectified

One image that appeared primarily in neoconservative and right-wing newspapers was the focus on Baerbock's appearance: As *Bild* wrote on April 20 (article 1), Baerbock has changed her appearance: "As leader of the party, Baerbock underwent a visual metamorphosis; [she] no longer wore glasses, dressed more conspicuously (leather jacket and high heels, bright red dresses)". The notion of dressing 'conspicuously' and using the metaphor of 'metamorphosis'²⁸ to describe the process of transformation from youth to adulthood, and often from something bad to something better, not only reinforces not only the media's focus on a woman's appearance but furthermore judges her looks. The idea of transforming into a feminine woman underlies this phrase, as it also mentions individual items of clothing that could be considered stereotypical of women, such as high heels or dresses.

In another *Bild* article from September 22 (article 6), the authors write: "Who is the least evil [das kleinste Übel²⁹]? Olaf Scholz: 1.70 meters. Armin Laschet: 1.72 meters. Annalena Baerbock: no indication, but high heels on the pictures" - this shows a difference in the portrayal of Baerbock's male opponents and herself. While the focus is on height, a comment is added about Baerbock's shoes and thus her appearance, even if it is used as a metaphor that Baerbock wears high heels that make her taller and thus more evil [das größere Übel]. Also on September 25 (article 7), *Bild* focuses on Baerbock's style: "Style: Floral dresses, leather jackets, jeans - too private for the office she aspires to. In the truel³⁰ more grown-up, more serious, with killer heels". This adds a condemning layer to the sentence: the flowered dresses are seen as too private for a woman in office, and the sentence indirectly portrays her as young and incompatible with the office of chancellor. The second sentence rather fulfills the author's expectations of the role of the chancellor, where respectability is a quality that a chancellor

²⁸ "A process in which somebody/something changes completely into something different" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2022).

²⁹ "Das kleinste Übel" translates to 'the least evil'; the word "klein" (meaning: short) in this context is used as a metaphor.

³⁰ TV debate with three candidates

should have. Therefore, I would argue that the framing is closely related to the frame of inexperience and expectations of leadership positions. It should be noted that the article also assesses the style and appearance of Baerbock's opposing candidates.

In contrast to the negative tone of the *Bild* article, *SZ* on April 24 (article 48) notes that Baerbock enjoys fashion: "She likes to wear leather jackets, pointed boots or even floral dresses. Her look is perfect domestic politics: not old, but not hypermodern either, like that of most women in classic green voter districts. [...] Power dressing in the form of a trouser suit would have looked like an old-fashioned claim to power. In any case, Baerbock should not sacrifice her feminine style to any male-influenced dress codes for the possible future office: it is so time for floral prints when visiting the White House!" Even when Baerbock's style and appearance are evaluated, it is presented positively, while the expectations for women to dress formally are criticized. Here, Baerbock is urged to continue to spread her style to bring about a change that women can wear feminine clothing and be in high positions at the same time. She is also portrayed as courageous by challenging her style, for example by emphasizing that she 'even' wears floral dresses. In the last sentence, it is added that "only the quality of her clothes should then be a bit more upmarket, more respectful, more foreign-political. In other countries the sensible clothing budget is not known." In a way, this is a conflicting message: even though Baerbock's appearance is analyzed, contributing to the focus on the appearance of female politicians, the article speaks in terms of feminism and the desire to change existing norms about what women should wear. However, in the final section, this is reversed and the existing norms are reasserted. Critical of the comments about her appearance is also the article in *SZ* of September 22, which adds a quote from two women entrepreneurs about being a woman (article 66)³¹: "From the way Annalena Baerbock is discussed, you can already see that women are treated differently. What does she look like, does she get red? Is her voice loud? We never talk about Friedrich Merz's ill-fitting suit." By selecting this quote, the difference in reporting about female and male politicians is shown and criticized. By demanding change, existing assumed stereotypes can be changed and adapted, as Mills points out, drawing on feminist discourse, gender stereotypes need to be seen in the light of feminism can therefore lead to questioning and enabling change in the use of certain gender stereotypes (Mills, 2008, p.130).

FAZ am Sonntag relies on a quote from Kapek, a party colleague of Baerbock, by making it the headline of the April 25 article (article 25): "She's really good-looking" - by choosing the

³¹ A similar argument can be found in article 21 (Die Welt)

quote as the headline and in the article, it reinforces that looks matter when becoming chancellor. In the article, the quote is expanded to “and she's mega good-looking, so that doesn't hurt either”. This implies that Baerbock's looks give her an advantage.

In the *Die Welt* article from September 24 (article 18), there is direct sexism: “28 percent of the interviewees and thus unbeaten in the lead, would prefer to have sex with Annalena Baerbock (Greens)”. Here Baerbock is sexualized and objectified in comparison to other politicians and reduced entirely to her looks, with no mention of political qualities for the political role for which she is running. The article expresses that her looks and sexiness could be the trump card to get into the office: “From a purely sexual point of view, the government's mandate has already been chosen”. Compared to the other articles, the *Die Welt* and *FAZ* articles are the only ones that focus on Baerbock's body and appearance, while the other articles focus on her clothing and exclude any comments about body features.

The focus on the appearance and sexuality of female politicians is a frame that was prevalent in previous studies such as Caitlin and Winfrey's study of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin. In Baerbock's case, she was also portrayed as a sexual object, albeit more indirectly and sometimes with a critical stance that considers the journalist's own position. Nonetheless, these frames reinforce the prominence and importance of a candidate's appearance. As Carlin and Winfrey argue, “describing women in sexist terms reduces their credibility or may cause them to be seen as less human” (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009, p.328).

When looking at the political orientation of the newspapers, it becomes clear that the more neoconservative newspapers such as *Bild*, *Bild am Sonntag*, *Welt am Sonntag*, *Welt* and *FAZ am Sonntag* analyze Baerbock's appearance without taking a critical stance. An article in the *SZ*, and thus a more left-social newspaper, analyzes Baerbock's clothing but encourages her to wear what she feels like. The other *SZ* article takes a critical stance on the analysis of Baerbock's appearance, as well. Other newspapers refrain from any comments on Baerbock's appearance. Beck pointed out that especially tabloid newspapers in the German media sector contribute to the sexualization and trivialization of female politicians (Beck, 2016, p.242). Therefore, this increased focus on a female politician's appearance is still visible in the analyzed material, especially in the tabloid papers, but also in the quality press. The focus has shifted more to her clothing. Almost none of her physical features were addressed or mentioned in the articles of the analyzed period.

6.1.6 Category 6: Private sphere: Family, age, trampoline, and taking care of her children

Another representation that became visible in the material was the focus on Baerbock's private life and thus on trivial concerns: In Baerbock's case, the focus was on her family - from the

mention that she has children and a husband to her youth and her career as a trampoline athlete. Moreover, the question of her role as a mother while working as a politician was indirectly or directly questioned by the media.

Her youth and career as a trampolinist are not only used to introduce her but also used in metaphors, as *Bild* proclaims on April 20 (article 1): "She is ready for a jump: Annalena Baerbock (40), ex-trampolinist (TSV Pattensen)". This highlighting of her youth continues in the April 13 *Die Welt* article (article 13): "The ECB President even found Baerbock's athletic trampoline skills remarkable." The *SZ* article of April 24 (Article 50) focuses exclusively on her career as a trampoline athlete, linking it through metaphors to her position as a candidate for chancellor. Even though an ironic undertone runs through the entire article, her private life is nevertheless highlighted and brought to the fore. The headline of the article, "Jump, Annalena, Jump" further emphasizes the emphasis on her private life - including the use of her first name, which plays a private role and friendly tone in German culture. The use of her first name runs throughout the article. "...Female candidates are often taken less seriously at the beginning of a campaign and are referred to by their first names while their male opponents are called 'mister'" (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009, p.329). Other *TAZ* articles (articles 70 and 71) from April 20 and April 24 also use her first name, and in both cases, her first name is used in exclamations with an ironic undertone.

The *SZ* article goes on to write ironically that "even the last German citizen lounging on the sofa with crisps learned that the candidate for chancellor of the hearts and probably of the galls, kidneys, and livers was a trampoline gymnast in her youth, incidentally with TSV Pattensen". While highlighting the irony of this sentence and criticizing that too much is said about Baerbock's trampoline career, it further contributes to the portrayal of Baerbock's private life. Another *SZ* article from April 21 (article 55) uses metaphors and rhetorical questions focusing on trampolining to also question the media's enthusiastic coverage of Baerbock: "Will linear television in Germany have recovered by then in its sheep-like enthusiasm about the 'young woman' of whom we will learn in words and pictures on Tuesday night: that she is good at trampolining?" and "One thing is certain: 40-year-old international lawyer Annalena Baerbock will be the next German Chancellor. Not bad for a former trampolinist". The difference between the articles lies in the position of the frame. While the first *SZ* article emphasizes it throughout the article, the second *SZ* article uses the trampoline metaphor in a more indirect and integrated way. A third *SZ* article, dated April 21 (article 56), criticizes the trivialization related to her gender, including the notion of Baerbock's trampolining: "In public TV reports, the candidate for chancellor was seen doing trampoline gymnastics, and of course, the reference to her two children (how many children does Armin Laschet have again?) was nowhere missing."

With this comparison of Baerbock's and Laschet's portrayal in the media, the critical attitude becomes visible through the ironic use of the words 'of course' and a rhetorical question, and thus trampolining is seen in a different context, where its use in the media is openly criticized as gender specific.

In addition to highlighting her trampoline career, Baerbock is presented as the mother of two children or the wife of her husband. The *Bild am Sonntag* article of April 25 (article 8) says: "The international law scholar [...] lives with her husband, the ex-lobbyist Daniel Holfleisch (48), and their two daughters (6, 10) in Potsdam".³² While this sentence reflects some aspects of her private life, other articles more directly question her role as a mother and as a politician: The *FAZ* writes on April 20 (article 36)³³:

"Her family also fully supported her, said Baerbock, who is the mother of two daughters of primary school and kindergarten age. When she was elected party leader three years ago, she told herself and others: 'I will continue to be a mother, even as a top politician'. Baerbock has reserved Wednesday afternoons for her children, whatever happens. Will that also work in the future? On Monday, Baerbock said: "My children know where my heart and my home are".

In this case, Baerbock's decision to run for chancellor is evaluated morally and her role as a mother is brought to the fore. It is precisely the compatibility of the role of the mother and that of a politician that is called into question. The passage conveys a certain responsibility for her children as a mother, which contrasts with taking responsibility as a politician. In addition, in an April 24 article (Article 48), *SZ* emphasizes her role as a "working mother." Using Mills' collocation type, this can be classified as indirectly sexist: "Although the word 'mum' is not in itself sexist, in the media it is often used in situations where there is conflict over responsibility or where there is a convenient perception on the newspaper's part that there is a conflict between the person's actions and their roles as wife and mother" (Mills, 2008, p.149).

Other articles address this more indirectly by writing about her husband's role: The September 19 *Welt am Sonntag* (article 27)³⁴ says: "If Annalena Baerbock moves into the chancellor's office, Holfleisch [Baerbock's husband] will be a stay-at-home dad [...] Making all net feminist's wildest dreams of equality come true – as a First Husband who has his wife's back by making sandwiches for the kids and sitting out parent-teacher conferences, while she mixes up the politics of old-white men". In particular, reporting from the male perspective - in this

³² Other examples of this type are visible in article 9 (*Bild am Sonntag*), 59 (*SZ*), 67 (*TAZ*), 68 (*TAZ*) and 80 (*Handelsblatt*).

³³ Similar type of the argument can be found in article 59 (*SZ*).

³⁴ Similar arguments can be found in article 1 (*Bild*) and 46 (*FAZ am Sonntag*).

case, Baerbock's husband - adds a moral judgment to the division of roles. Although this judgment is not direct, it does call into question Baerbock's responsibility as a mother. Moreover, the use of irony and sarcasm reinforces this accusation that her husband is being forced into the role of mother and her responsibilities.

Some articles point to her marital status and role as a mother, but add a critical stance by comparing whether other male politicians would have been asked the same questions: *Die Welt* writes in its April 20 article (article 12)³⁵: "Baerbock is married and has two small children. What would they have said about running for chancellor, she was asked. 'I will of course remain a mother,' she replies. Habeck's four children have already moved away from home, but would he have been asked the same question?" It is clear, then, that this article reflects the problem of criticizing or commenting on Baerbock's decision to run for chancellor while she is a mother. Given the hypothesized stereotypes implied by Mills, statements that question or criticize placing the responsibility for children on the mother can help change and transform the stereotype. In addition, Mills has pointed out that expectations of women, such as the social role of the mother and concurrent occupation, are increasingly linked to discourses of feminism (Mills, 2008, p.128).

Another thing that stands out is that the word 'woman' is often associated with the word 'young': Being a 'young woman' is interpreted as positive, but also as negative. The *SZ* argues on September 23 (article 64): "Many Brits would probably have been envious of a young woman as the successor". In general, Baerbock's age is something that is mentioned quite frequently in all newspapers: In *Die Welt* of April 23 (article 13), she is described as a "young woman, who is very committed to climate change and environmental protection", in other articles, the collocation is toned down and framed as rather negative and ironic: "Intelligent young woman with a polished curriculum vitae" in *Die Welt am Sonntag* (article 26). The *SZ* criticizes the collocation of 'young woman' in an April 21 article (article 56)³⁶: "Young, woman, two children - what does that say about the candidate? The contents count" and therefore demands an exclusion of private topics when addressing Baerbock.

The focus on the private lives of female politicians and women in general in the media was also evident in various studies, as outlined in the literature review. Ross argues that the media focused primarily on female politicians' responsibilities for the household and childcare, which was also visible in Baerbock's case. In addition, the struggle to reconcile career and motherhood was also addressed, often in a condemning manner (Ross, 2002, p.87). Therefore, it can

³⁵ Similar types in article 9 (*Bild am Sonntag*) and 56 (*SZ*).

³⁶ Similar arguments in *SZ* (article 55, 59), *TAZ* (article 71, 73, 77).

be said that this frame of trivialization was also present in the material about Baerbock. As has also become clear, many news articles mention Baerbock's children and their marital status, others comment on them, and still, others mention the family but criticize it as irrelevant or something that should not be included in the media representation of Baerbock. However, by mentioning family, the frame is reinforced. It would be interesting to conduct a comparative analysis of her male opponents to see if their private lives were mentioned as often as Baerbock's private life. If there were a significant difference between the coverage of male and female candidates, this would be in contrast to the quantitative studies conducted on the coverage of Merkel, which found that Merkel's private life was reported less frequently than the privacy of her male opponents. However, the qualitative studies by Lünenborg & Maier (2015) and Beck (2016) would confirm the use of gender roles, such as the focus on Merkel as a mother - even if it is only used in the form of a metaphor in Merkel's case.

Looking at the different newspapers, one can see that all of them mention parts of Baerbock's private life, e.g. that she is a mother of two daughters, is married to her husband, is a young woman, or used to be a trampoline gymnast. It also became clear that neoconservative newspapers such as *Die Welt am Sonntag*, *Bild*, and *FAZ am Sonntag* tended to use condemnatory language in Baerbock's portrayal as a mother and politician. Socially liberal and left-wing newspapers such as *TAZ* or *SZ* criticized the mention of Baerbock's role as a mother, but one of the articles by *Die Welt* and one by *Bild am Sonntag* also added the critical stance. For this reason, it can be concluded that there are a few differences between the different newspapers, but they are minor. The biggest difference is the tonality and condemnatory language.

6.1.7 Category 7: Comparing Baerbock to other female politicians

Also noticeable was a repetition of comparisons in which Baerbock was compared with other German and international female politicians. Merkel was particularly frequently used as a comparison; sometimes it was written that Baerbock resembled Merkel, other times the differences between the two were mentioned. In the first week after her candidacy was announced, Baerbock was mentioned several times as a possible successor to Merkel: *Bild am Sonntag* on April 25 (article 8) described Baerbock as "not only the only woman in the line-up of possible Merkel successors, but she also shows similarities in her political style: The Green is considered pragmatic, fact-oriented and well-prepared". Baerbock is often credited with qualities such as realism or tenacity when compared to Merkel, as in the April 20 *FAZ* article (article 36): "Political opponents also report that Baerbock has delved deeply into the intricacies [of issues] and can negotiate hard. Greens take it as praise that Baerbock is sometimes compared to the Chancellor [Merkel] on this point", or in the *TAZ* of April 20 (article 68), where Baerbock's relationship with Merkel is highlighted: "Because of her [Baerbock's] love of detail and control,

she is a feared and respected negotiator. Angela Merkel, who is similarly controlled and detail-obsessed, appreciates Baerbock. She sometimes took her aside in the Bundestag to discuss things woman to woman. For minutes they chatted, intimate and relaxed, sitting in a back row". This frames Baerbock as a person who is valued by Merkel. By describing the relationship between the two with the words 'woman to woman,' the gender of the two is emphasized.

In other articles, Baerbock is portrayed as a candidate who stands in opposition to Merkel and does not bring any qualities that distinguish Merkel: *FAZ am Sonntag*, September 26 (article 47), describes Baerbock as "not even [...] entered as a funky Anti-Merkel", implying that Baerbock does not qualify as an accurate counter-candidate. She is also described as standing in Merkel's shadow. The choice of the headline "Merkel's shadow" conveys that the candidates do not stand out compared to Merkel.

Baerbock is not only compared to Angela Merkel but also other female politicians. In an article in the *SZ* of April 20 (article 57) about a situation in which Erdogan did not offer von der Leyen (President of the European Commission) a chair, the author comments on what Baerbock would have done in this situation: "The almost submissive behavior of many women in such attacks on their equal position probably encourages gentlemen of this in their behavior. Perhaps a new generation of female politicians' rights and their place more confidently. What would Annalena Baerbock have done in this situation?" This article therefore calls for women politicians to stand up for their rights and actively criticize male dominance. By addressing Baerbock in this article, her role as a woman and a feminist is addressed. The question is whether Baerbock would have reacted differently as a feminist than Von der Leyen. In this context, it is also interesting to analyze that the article is written in a way that the woman should change her behavior, not the man forcing a change. This contributes to the fact that politics is determined by male narratives and a male-dominated field.

Another time, she is compared to other young female leaders in the Nordic countries: *SZ* on April 24 (article 53) quotes male politician Söder arguing that while she has no government experience, "she has her life experience, and the model of a young female candidate has found many supporters in Finland, Denmark and New Zealand". Here her experience is presented rather positively and her 'freshness' and 'modern' approach stands as an alternative to old ways, but also to male and old opponents. Thus, the young woman is again presented as 'something different - and again as a novelty, as already described in category four.

Towards the end of the campaign, Baerbock is being compared to Hillary Clinton and her campaign and further criticized for comparing herself to Clinton. Based on Clinton's experiences with sexism and fake news, Baerbock spoke about her experiences in an interview and stated

that she could imagine something similar happening to her. The September 22 *FAZ* (article 41) describes how she initially always rejected being treated differently because of her gender, “then it burst out of her in an interview with the New York Times: 'In a certain way, what I have experienced is comparable to what happened in the USA when Hillary Clinton was running', Baerbock said a fortnight ago.” In the following sentences and by using words such as ‘bursting out’, this is seen as weak and shifting responsibility to others. The comparison with Clinton is also mentioned in *Die Zeit* on September 23 (article 32), and with an ironic undertone, it is reported that the election campaign was perceived as unfair by the Greens. The article argues that Baerbock's comparison with Clinton is understood by some as giving in and giving up, and implies that the comparison with Clinton is weak. This, in turn, presents Baerbock as a person who is firstly weak, but secondly is also required to be strong when treated differently than her male opponents.

The comparison of a female candidate with other female politicians was not considered in previous studies but is also closely linked to other frames. In the case of Baerbock, it became visible that parallels to other candidates were drawn via characteristics: From weakness and giving up in the case of Clinton, to the portrayal of a young female candidate as a “fresh alternative” to the male opponent and thus the otherness of female candidates, to the assessment that Baerbock is either stronger, similar, or weaker than Chancellor Merkel. The consequences of a comparison with other women are partly the classification of the woman into a category and a social group: Here it is either demanded that she should not behave like others in her social group, or just similar to other women. This builds on the idea that women have certain characteristics and that they are different from men.

6.2 Further remarks

In this part, I will discuss further remarks: Especially in week one, Baerbock's chances of victory were frequently discussed, and mostly on the basis of recent poll results, such as in *Die Zeit* on April 22 (article 28), where it was expressed that she does not have to prove herself to anyone because she “is meanwhile so strong in the polls” or in *SZ* on April 21 (article 56) “that she has a chance of winning this office is probably not even disputed by her political opponents.” The framing in week one was generally more positive - and it was expressed that she had a high chance of winning.

The horserace frame, mentioned and analyzed in previous studies, could possibly be found as well - but more in the qualitative sense of discussing Baerbock's chances of winning rather than the frequency of how often female and male candidates' chances of winning are addressed, which is what the Horserace frame is about. Van der Pas and Aldering argue that

the repetition of these odds leads to more questioning of female candidates' viability by focusing on their professional backgrounds. This may lead to negative evaluations of their viability as opposed to male candidates and fewer direct quotes from female politicians in the news (Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020, p.118). However, since the horse race is about whether female candidates are mentioned more often in the context of their chances of winning or losing than men, it is difficult to find an answer to this question unless the analysis conducted is comparative.

In the second week, this framing became even stronger, as Baerbock was portrayed as the candidate who had no chance of winning: for example, in *Handelsblatt* on September 23 (article 83), it is expressed that "Baerbock has long since given up her ambitions for the chancellorship", that "she has obviously settled into her role as the third force [even though] [...] in terms of arguments she was often the best in the truels anyway" in *SZ* on September 21 (article 65) or "even if it [Baerbock becoming chancellor] probably won't happen that way now" in *SZ* on September 23 (article 64)³⁷.

In general, it was also clear that Baerbock was no longer mentioned as frequently as in week one. 54 analyzed articles were published in week one, and another 30 articles were included in the analysis in week two. Here it would be interesting to see why Baerbock no longer plays a major role in the articles published in week two.

7. Discussion

7.1 Tabloidization & the political orientation of newspapers

As became clear in the analysis, tabloid newspapers such as *Bild* or *Bild am Sonntag* and neoconservative newspapers such as *Die Welt* and *Welt am Sonntag* focused on Baerbock's appearance and even portrayed her as a sexual object. In addition, they increasingly made use of gender-specific stereotypes and the moral assessment that Baerbock was neglecting her role as a mother - often phrased negatively and reproachfully. This confirms previous German studies' findings by Morna (2008) and Engelmann & Etzrodt (2014) which emphasized that traditional gender stereotypes appeared more frequent in neoconservative newspapers.

Socially liberal and left-leaning newspapers such as the *SZ* and *TAZ* conspicuously neglected to mention gender, especially when it came to selecting a candidate. Nevertheless, Baerbock's gender was repeatedly highlighted in these newspapers, but often in reference to the criticism of others or her role as a feminist. Examples included calls to highlight her role as a woman and to fight for women's issues because she was a woman and a feminist.

³⁷ Similar arguments in *SZ* (article 62), *FAZ* (article 41).

As Mills pointed out, a shift in the use of gender stereotypes often occurs when feminism is included in the discourse. The socially liberal and left-leaning newspapers in particular reflected critically on their own framing and that of other newspapers. Both *SZ* and *TAZ* wrote an article about Baerbock and the media and how sexism plays a role in the perception of Baerbock. But *Bild am Sonntag* and *Die Welt* also took a critical stance on the use of gender stereotypes (e.g., the role and responsibility of a mother; the incompetence of young women).

Lünenborg and Maier argue that the increasing tabloidization “[has] fundamental consequences for gender portrayal” (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015, p.3): The scholars point out that there is an opportunity to reach ordinary people, not just political and economic elites, through tabloids. In this way, the gender gap could potentially be reduced in the future: Lünenborg (2009) argues that the number of female journalists working for tabloids has increased in Germany, and therefore female journalists could gain the power to reduce the use of gender stereotypes and dichotomy (Lünenborg, 2009, p.25). In addition, women journalists are increasingly writing for the political and business sections of newspapers.

Semetko and Boomgaarden further argue that women politicians are often portrayed more negatively or have a negative undertone in the tabloid media, which contrasts with the quality press' framing of women politicians (Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007, p.166). The results of this work show that tabloid newspapers such as *Die Welt*, *Welt am Sonntag*, *Bild am Sonntag*, and *Bild* more often portray her with skepticism and as incompetent. In addition, Baerbock was described with derogatory words. However, other newspapers that do not fall into the tabloid category, such as *Die Zeit* or *FAZ* talked about her inexperience and portrayed her as negative, although this was done in a rather indirect way.

All in all, it can be said that there are some differences in the portrayal of Baerbock between the tabloids and the quality press: This is most visible in the form of direct sexism and talks about appearance and the evaluation of her role as a mother. The discussion of Baerbock's gender and her expectations is more critical in the quality press and especially in the socially liberal-oriented newspapers: the *TAZ* and *SZ* add feminist critical viewpoints when they talk about gender roles. Moreover, the choice of negative and derogatory words for the portrayal of Baerbock in tabloids also contributes to the difference between neoconservative and social-liberal newspapers.

7.2 Hypothesized stereotypes and indirect sexism

During the analysis, it became clear that hypothesized stereotypes are still present in media: Especially when considering Baerbock's role as a mother and assessing the comparability of responsible mother and politician, some anachronistic, sexist stereotypes can be found and

are repeated. In addition, Baerbock has been attributed with qualities such as empathy, but also inexperience, which have been associated with the female gender. As Mills argues, the use of hypothesized stereotypes in the media can harm the individual-in this case Baerbock - and determine whether someone is seen as acting appropriately (Mills, 2008, p.127), therefore possibly leading to gender incongruence that is then again rated negatively.

However, as mentioned earlier, in some articles the use of gender stereotypes and indirect sexist remarks are accompanied by a critical stance towards these terms and thus questioned. Drawing on feminist discourse, the stereotypes can be transformed into new ones or eventually rejected altogether. Especially after the election campaign, there has been a wave of new articles criticizing the election race and Baerbock's framing. Considering Mills' argument that stereotypes are changeable and not permanent, this is a trend that can affect how women are viewed: Challenging existing assumed stereotypes makes readers aware of how stereotypes are used, and they need to think about it.

Nevertheless, there are hypothesized stereotypes that were used by many of the newspapers: When these are used negatively, such as the indirect judgment that Baerbock will not be able to adequately care for her own children and leave the household to her husband, or her 'young' age and role as a politician in an important, powerful office, this can be characterized as sexism. Therefore, I would argue, that the use of the hypothesized stereotypes that are negatively evaluated are still used to some extent. It would be interesting to see if the use of negative stereotypes has increased or decreased in comparison to other female politicians in the past.

In considering the use of indirect sexism, the analysis could particularly highlight the types of presuppositions, humor, androcentric perspectives, and collocations. These could help find the latent messages of an article and could strengthen the argument that direct and blunt sexism is decreasing, but indirect sexism is not. In particular, the type of collocation and reporting from a patriarchal perspective were dominant and could show that reporting is still often done from the male perspective, where men are seen as the norm.

In summary, being critical of the use of assumed gender stereotypes about women could lead to a slow process of change or perhaps even the elimination of these stereotypes. However, sexism still plays a role: while direct sexism was not as present in the articles, indirect sexism was still used in most of the articles. As Mills points out, indirect sexism is more difficult to address and combat (Mills, 2008, p.137).

7.3 The communicative process of framing

Reflecting on the framing process, it is clear that journalists play an important role in reinforcing gender stereotypes and perceptions of politicians. Although this paper did not directly address the issue of framing, it is worthwhile to look ahead to further research.

It would be interesting to conduct studies with journalists to determine if they consciously choose to select or deselect aspects of gender stereotypes. When considering the framing process according to De Vreese, journalists reflect on internal strategies and interactions with external factors and frame their articles based on this (De Vreese, 2005, p.52). Therefore, it would be further enriching to conduct interviews with journalists about internal editorial policies and external factors that might influence the framing of issues. To achieve a shift toward less direct and indirect sexism and gender stereotyping in the portrayal of female politicians, journalists need to become aware of the effects of gendered framing and change their own use of gendered framing.

7.4 The role of the media: Consequences

As mentioned earlier, taking Entman's perspective of the framing process and Mills' view of the media, the media have the character of an institution of society and therefore have the power to influence it. Embedded in everyday life and consumed by a large part of the German population, the various media channels play an important role: through their content, they can convey values and norms and bring about social change - in traditional media, mostly through one-way communication that does not allow for substantive discussion. Thus, the media can promote gender equality, both internally by ensuring a balance of male and female journalists, and externally by guaranteeing a balanced and unbiased representation of women and men in the media. However, they also have the power to reject ideas of gender equality and to misrepresent or underrepresent any group in society.

As also discussed by Entman, when a frame is repeated frequently, it becomes more present to the reader (Entman, 1993, p.52). Because of this process of selecting different aspects of content, the media cannot be completely neutral in its role as a news outlet: By having the power to consciously or unconsciously select different aspects, the reality journalists portray will always be framed to some degree. Entman also argues that values espoused by neoconservative elites-such as capitalism, heterosexism, and even patriarchy-are the subject of dominant frames in order to maintain the status quo (Entman, 2007, p.170). Therefore, the media fails to represent all the different groups in society, which allows for the marginalization of different individuals or groups when they are dominated by the power of the elites.

Looking at the results of the analysis, it is clear that some frames are more dominant than others and therefore may be more salient than others. These frames are then reflected in society and discourse. This is not only problematic for the individual who is marginalized, but also for a group of people who are under the power of the media and its frames of reality. It also has implications for gender equality, democratic society, and the democratic process of an election.

However, one should also keep in mind that people are not a black box when talking about theories such as framing, which extend agenda-setting theories and base their theory on the assumption that the media influence and affect the more passive audience. Other conditions might influence the audience to form a political opinion when they read the news, or the audience might resist some media frames.

However, I would argue that due to the important role of media in society, its embeddedness in everyday life, and the creation of a public sphere by it, there is no doubt about the power of media on society. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the media have the power to shape: Both in negative and positive ways. In order to overcome the different treatment of women and men in the media, the media must challenge these differences.

7.5 Consequences for democracy

This work was able to identify an increased focus on a female candidate's personal life, incompetence, and inexperience, often mediated through indirect sexism and the androcentric perspective. Although this study was unable to show a direct comparison between the portrayal of female and male candidates in the media, the role of negative coverage of female candidates, trivialization, sexism, and gendered mediation should be considered when considering the implications for the democratic process of an election and gender equality in a democratic society.

When female candidates are portrayed differently than male candidates, this can paint an unbalanced picture of women and men and thus influence society's perception of women – either by mis- or underrepresentation. In particular, the active use of gender stereotypes can put women in roles and reinforce existing stereotypes: The Global Media Monitoring Project in 2020 was able to show that gender stereotypes are hardly challenged by the media worldwide and that gender stereotypes are still as present as they were 15 years ago (Macharia, 2020, p.53); furthermore, the use of a critical view aimed at breaking down gender stereotypes has stagnated. The report also highlights that the media in Europe that actively challenged gender stereotypes in the categories of politics, governance, and economics is only 2% (Macharia, 2020, p.53). Furthermore, the less frequent coverage of female candidates and women - as

also visible in the second week, where Baerbock was not mentioned as often or was portrayed as the candidate who had no chance of winning - leads to an underrepresentation of a large group of the population and thus to a large gender equality gap. Due to indirect and direct sexist reporting from an androcentric perspective in all analyzed newspapers in Germany, women are still relegated to the role of the minority and the abnormal, while men enjoy the advantage of being portrayed as the cultural standard. This leads to a disadvantage for female candidates when they are perceived by readers through a gendered lens; and when it finally comes to the election. A gender bias in the media cannot only affect the reader, but also the female candidate: It could lead to the avoidance of candidacies due to the fear of being marginalized by the media.

Gender inequality in the media is therefore still a major problem that also affects gender equality in society: if women are not represented and included in parliaments, important offices, or decision-making, gender equality, which is central in a democracy, is not and cannot be achieved. However, it is becoming clear that despite continued public attention to women through feminist movements and empowering discourses such as #metoo in recent decades, there is still a long way to go to achieve gender equality not only in the media but also in society.

7.6 Limitations of the study

Given the complexity of the Bundestag election and the volume of newspaper articles about Baerbock, restrictions had to be placed on the project.

7.6.1 Methodology

Since qualitatively oriented content analysis depends on the context and is more interpretative when analyzing empirical data, the result can be more subjective, which can affect the validity of the research, as Prasad claims (Prasad, 2019, para). This is also something that Roller and Lavrakas point out: The authors address the subjectivity of the process when coding begins and when the coding scheme is followed. This, they mention, can be a challenge to the method. They suggest using a computer that can limit this influence. However, they also point out the important aspect that humans can only detect latent - "hidden" - content, which a computer cannot (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p. 230). In addition, researchers must be trained to conduct the analysis: One must be able to read and understand latent content, according to Roller and Lavrakas. It can become a problem if a researcher is not aware of details or concepts in a text and therefore misses important patterns (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p.245). Especially considering the goal of finding latent messages in this thesis-and in the case of indirect sexism-using a computer was not an option. By building on Mills' types of direct and indirect sexism, I was able to find relevant latent messages. However, because I was the only researcher working on

the project, there may be additional messages that other trained researchers could have found in the material. Working in a team could ensure an even more precise analysis.

One issue of which the researcher should be aware is the problem of discerning causality that results from a textual analysis: Roller and Lavrakas point out that it can be difficult to find a causal relationship between interpretation and text, and that causal relationships are presented that do not exist. This is especially the case when analyzing materials that were not created for the purpose of research, but for a different audience. With little or no knowledge of the creation process, it can be difficult to find causal relationships (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p.246). As can be seen from the analysis, this was also the case in my work: since the connection between the role of women and the frames shown can be influenced by other factors such as party affiliation, it was difficult to show coincidental connections. Furthermore, as the thesis has used material that was addressed to another audience, it becomes more difficult to address the intentions of journalists.

7.6.2 Empirical data

Another limitation to qualitatively oriented content analysis is that the process is labor-intensive: Due to the systematic step-by-step approach and coding by one or more researchers, resources may increase in terms of time or cost. Especially when working with substantial amounts of data, this process can take time (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p.248).

Due to the complexity and the number of articles describing Baerbock, the time period to be analyzed had to be reduced. Therefore, two different periods were selected. Other periods, such as post-election coverage, were excluded due to lack of space and resources: Baerbock was appointed German Foreign Minister after the elections; coverage of this could also be interesting, as there were discussions about her competence and English language skills in the first weeks of her tenure, but since the focus of this project is on the election campaign, it was decided not to include another time period. Considering the gap in research on female politicians during their everyday political life and not during the election campaign (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015, p.5), this would be a great idea that would contribute to both the field and this project. In addition, it would have been interesting to shed light on the coverage a few weeks before the election, as coverage of issues mostly took place during this period.

It was also decided to focus only on newspaper articles and not empirical data from social media or television broadcasts. This should be taken into account in the results when considering the reach of newspaper articles. Even though 63,4% of the German population still reads printed newspapers or articles in e-papers (ZMG, 2020), the conclusion should consider that some parts of the population do not reach newspaper articles. However, by selecting a wide

range of newspapers, different types of newspapers such as tabloids and quality newspapers are evaluated, thus reaching the media consumption of a broad audience in Germany.

7.7 Gaps

In addition to the qualitative analysis that this project conducted, quantitative content analysis could support the finding in the future: Particularly the horserace-frame or the quantitative coverage on women politicians builds on the frequency of mentions, and therefore, a mixed-method approach could confirm my qualitative observations that Baerbock was portrayed either as a candidate with high chances in the first week and with almost zero chances in the second week. Closely related to this is the choice of research object: as emphasized several times in the analysis, a comparative analysis with Baerbock's male opponent candidates could have helped to discover differences. My research is based solely on what could have been found through the material - but it was difficult to draw conclusions based only on one person's account. An alternative would have been to include material on other female candidates portrayed in the media.

As Van der Pas and Aaldering note in a similar context, it would be interesting to examine the Green Party's campaigns and whether the party's campaign was gendered and whether this also influenced the way the media wrote about her (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020, p.135). Green party members have increasingly expressed concern about sexist media coverage of Baerbock since the beginning of the election campaign. Thus, it would be interesting to examine the election campaign, as well as the opposing parties' engagement with Baerbock.

It also became clear that most of the literature is concerned with analyzing the use of stereotypes in the media; fewer turn to the question of how to overcome the use of stereotypes, as Maier points out (Maier, 2021, p.38). She suggests more research on how journalists can be sensitized to recognize gender stereotypes in order to ultimately break down gender stereotypes and the dichotomy of men and women. She also calls for more awareness among readers and wants to popularize more methods to recognize gender mediation using methods such as the reverse test, in which published expressions are flipped to the opposite gender to test for differences.

As was evident from reading various articles on gendered media coverage, less attention has been paid to the research field of masculinity and gender stereotypes in media coverage of elections (Smith, 2021, p.452). Some research on toxic masculinity has been conducted in recent years, but comprehensive research on men related to election campaigns and the role of the media has yet to be made.

8. Conclusion

In this thesis, I asked the question of how Annalena Baerbock was framed in terms of gender by the ten largest German print media in the campaign for the 2021 federal election. I also wanted to answer the question of whether there was a difference in the coverage of the various newspapers and their political orientation, including differences between quality press and tabloids. Using qualitatively oriented content analysis, I was able to examine how the media wrote about Baerbock - both in terms of latent and direct frames.

I was able to identify seven categories that were prevalent in the material. Baerbock was described as follows:

- 1) In the various articles, she was portrayed as the woman who was selected as a candidate for chancellor either because of her gender, partly because of her gender, or for other reasons (exclusion of gender).
- 2) Other articles focused on what expectations Baerbock must or must not meet as a woman. These were mainly about qualities associated with femininity.
- 3) Some articles took the view that Baerbock lacked experience, that she had enough experience, or that she did not need experience to fulfill the role of chancellor.
- 4) Other frames that could be found were about Baerbock's representation in the media as an alternative or threat to male-dominated politics.
- 5) In some of the articles, Baerbock's appearance and especially her clothing were highlighted - both negatively and positively. Both indirect sexism and direct sexism were particularly evident here.
- 6) In most articles, Baerbock's private life, including her career as a trampoline gymnast, her age, her marital status, and her role as a mother played a role. The focus on private life was sometimes criticized, while other articles also condemned her candidacy based on her role as a mother.
- 7) The last frames compared Baerbock with other female candidates - she was compared above all with Angela Merkel.

Most of these frames could also be found in previous studies; others, such as the frame that Baerbock was elected only because of her gender or the comparison of Baerbock with other female politicians, could be discovered for the first time in the material. The first frame can be related to the relatively new discourses in Germany about gender quotas. It would be interesting to investigate further with other female candidates whether this frame recurs.

By drawing on Mill's theory of imputed stereotypes and indirect sexism, I was able to identify several forms of indirect sexism in the articles, as well as some forms of direct sexism - dominant, was the reporting from a male perspective and collocated words. This reflects on the idea that modern sexism is more subtle and indirect, making it even harder to recognize. Furthermore, I analyzed the repeated use of gender stereotypes and expectations that Baerbock had to fulfill as a woman. Nevertheless, it was observed that some articles expanded their arguments about gender expectations to include a critical perspective: this may be a way to change existing gender norms and stereotypes or revoke them all together in the future.

When looking at the differences between the newspapers, it became clear that the tabloid press reported more on Baerbock's appearance compared to the quality press. In addition, it was mainly social liberal newspapers that introduced feminist ideas into the articles and criticized other articles for their stereotypical view of female politicians. Tabloids and neoconservative newspapers generally framed Baerbock more negatively and used pejorative words to describe Baerbock. However, socially liberal and left-wing newspapers also described Baerbock as an inadequate candidate.

It should be noted that in many frames it is difficult to make causal connections between the portrayals and the gender. Other factors, such as party affiliation or her previous political career, might have influenced coverage of her as a person. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a quantitative content analysis and a framing analysis on other female politicians in Germany to see if there are similarities - especially considering the newly found frames. It would also be useful to conduct a comparative analysis between Baerbock and her male opponents to examine frames based on quantitative coverage of the politicians, but also qualitative coverage.

Through the analysis, it was shown that there is still a long way to go to achieve fair and equal coverage of female and male candidates and politicians. The consequences of a different coverage are big: not only for the female candidate, who is portrayed as incompetent and her winning chances but also for a large group of the population that is still exposed to stereotypes and not considered the norm. It is precisely values of democracy such as gender equality that must be consistently enforced: Journalists, too, because it is precisely the power of the media on the population that can have a positive effect: Namely, to achieve equality in all spheres of life in society.

8.1 Outlook

Since the use of social media and the use of these platforms to read political news has increased in all age groups in Germany in recent years, but especially among young people

(Hölig & Hasebrink, 2016, p.538), it would be interesting to track news about Baerbock on social media, and additional discourse analysis on social media platforms would enrich the current research on how Baerbock was framed. Since this project already addresses a medium that reaches a large portion of the German population, analyzing news content on social media could contribute to more knowledge about how Baerbock was framed.

9. Communication article

This section deals with the communication of the result of my master thesis through a communication article. For this purpose, I will first explain the choice of the article's target audience, then the article's media distribution, followed by the justification of the content, and finally, the article itself follows.

9.1 Target group

This thesis aimed to analyze how a female politician was portrayed by the German media in terms of her gender. These different representations were analyzed with the help of the framing approach. Embedded in the field of political communication and critical stance on gender constructions and norms, this thesis also aimed to highlight the direct and indirect forms of sexism used in the articles to critically reflect on them and further contribute to this academic field. Therefore, I believe it is important to share the knowledge with people who are unaware of sexist gender norms that could influence an individual's perception of a female candidate and ultimately, perhaps, their voting decision.

First-time voters in Germany, in particular, are more easily influenced by the opinions of their parents, and friends, but also by the media - in the last ten years, especially by social media (Schmid, 2001, p.152). By already making them aware of general concepts such as framing or gendered mediation, young people can use the concepts when learning about politics in printed news articles and online articles, social media discourse, television, YouTube, and other channels. These can help break down gender stereotypes from an early age and ultimately lead to changes in perceptions of female politicians as more people become aware of framing.

9.2 Choice of media outlet

99% of 14-29 year-olds in Germany use the Internet every day, and Instagram usage in this age group was 73% in 2021, according to the German Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020 conducted by Hölig and Hasebrink. Furthermore, young people tend to increasingly get their news from the Internet and social media (Hölig & Hasebrink, 2020, p.55).

Therefore, I would argue that an online article may reach more young people than a printed version. The Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung) in Germany aims to make children and young people, as well as older people, active citizens, to strengthen their political education, and encourage them to take a critical look at the media and its sources. On their website, they publish articles primarily aimed at young people and conveyed in easy language, but also provide materials for teachers and leisure clubs. Especially during election campaigns, their coverage is primarily aimed at young people who are

voting for the first time, and they have previously published content about gender constructions in the media. They also run social media campaigns on different apps to deliver different media content. I see this as a great opportunity to reach young people and stimulate discussion about gender mediation. Combining the news article on their website with some infographics on their social media pages would be best to appeal to more young viewers.

9.3 Reasoning of content

The primary focus will lie on the consequences and implications for democracy, equality, and subsequently the individual when women and female candidates are mis- or underrepresented. To support this, I will use my own research study to show how Annalena Baerbock was represented by the German media regarding her gender. Here, I will pick the most dominant categories that I could find in the material and include them in the communication article to give relevant examples. Moreover, the article will continue with suggestions on how to become aware of gendered mediation since this is relevant for readers that are not aware of tools to recognize direct and indirect sexism. In the end, an outlook on how to overcome sexism in the media is given.

9.4 The actual communication article

Sexism in the election campaign: young, inexperienced, woman

A recent study could find that Annalena Baerbock was disadvantaged by sexist media portrayals during the 2021 federal elections – but what consequences does sexist media coverage have for society and democracy?

After Angela Merkel was Germany's first female chancellor for 16 years, one would expect equal representation for chancellor candidates regardless of gender. However, a recent study was able to show that there is still a long way to go in the media's portrayal of female candidates: Annalena Baerbock, the Green Party's candidate for chancellor in Germany, was repeatedly portrayed in sexist stereotypes, called a "climate brat" and described as the most attractive candidate to have sex with. One of the dominant questions in media coverage of Baerbock: Can a mother of two become chancellor? The answer in the newspapers was not always clear: Maybe - but certainly at the expense of her children or her duties as a potential chancellor. But why does this sexist portrayal have devastating consequences for democracy, elections, and society? What needs to happen to allow fair media coverage of female politicians? What can you do as a first-time voter?

Framing as a journalistic tool

Understanding the concept of framing can help us answer the question of how differently male and female candidates are treated in daily media coverage.

Framing means that different communicators, e.g., the journalists of a newspaper article, select an aspect of a story and specify it at the same time, thereby including or excluding content. The same topic can be framed differently so that the reader gets a different picture from different articles. An example of this is three different newspapers writing about the announcement of Baerbock as a candidate for chancellor. Two of the articles deal with Baerbock's role as a mother: while one of the articles mentions Baerbock's children and the difficulty of balancing her children's daily life with her responsibilities as a potential chancellor, the second article adds the aspect that Baerbock has children, but critically questions whether this information is relevant to the article and the role as chancellor. The third article does not address this information. The result can be a different effect on the reader: The first article conveys that Baerbock should not morally become chancellor because of her children, and the second article conveys information about Baerbock's private life but critically questions its relevance. Both articles, however, contribute to the notion that a politician's private life matters. The third article does not provide information about Baerbock's life; therefore, this article does not contribute to the discussion about Baerbock as a mother.

All of these perspectives can influence how the reader ultimately views and chooses a candidate: It may be the tone of the article, both positive and negative, the coverage of trivial aspects that ultimately do not represent the qualities of the candidate required for the job for which he or she is applying, or the moral judgment of the compatibility of social gender roles, such as being both a mother and a chancellor.

Sexualized and trivialized

It is natural to structure and categorize various issues. However, when this is done structurally through patterns in relation to one group of society, it leads to a misrepresentation or underrepresentation of the group and can further marginalize and defame not only the individual but also a large group of society. Studies in the past have been able to show that women's personal lives are the focus of the media, while male candidates have had more coverage of their professional careers. The new study on Baerbock was able to confirm this: Baerbock was por-

trayed as a former successful trampoline gymnast – which is not relevant for the role as chancellor, as her husband's wife who now has to take care of the children and therefore putting her role of the irresponsible mother, and as someone with whom 28% of the German population would like to have sex - she was thus seen as a sexual object and reduced to her appearance. Her competence, on the other hand, was questioned and criticized: she was seen as incompetent and inexperienced, too young for an important office, and it was questioned whether she was elected as a candidate for chancellor based on her competence or purely on her gender due to the women's quota. The Global Media Monitoring Project 2020, which looks at how women are portrayed in the media, was able to show that the more sexist the media coverage of a female candidate, the less chance the candidate ends up having. This is not only a problem for the individual candidate, but also for democratic values such as gender equality.

Harmful consequences for democracy

In a democracy, when an election is held, it must be assumed that all candidates should be treated equally: This also means that all candidates should receive similar coverage: If, for example, it becomes visible that a female candidate is mentioned less than her male colleagues, then this leads to a disadvantage. But it is not only quantity that plays a role in coverage. The way a candidate is addressed, whether negatively or positively, is also important for fair and equal coverage. This does not mean that candidates cannot be criticized, but if patterns in the media coverage repeat themselves depending on the gender of the candidate, this shows that there is no equal reporting. For example, the Global Media Monitoring Project 2020 was able to show that women are still portrayed and interviewed within gender stereotypes. And the world is still at the same level as 15 years ago when it comes to critically questioning them: only 2% of all articles that actively use such gender stereotypes also question their use. This shows us that we are still at the very beginning of a long journey to overcome gender stereotypes in campaign reporting.

Your role as first voter

Congratulations! You have already become aware of the problem by reading this article. Even though there is still a long way to go before equal media coverage is achieved, you can start learning how to recognize framing, as well as sexism, that ultimately leads to unfair coverage.

This will also help you confront your internal biases and get you thinking critically about articles where sexism is used more subtly.

To be well-armed against sexism in the media in the future, several techniques can help readers decode and recognize it: One good trick is to simply turn the sentences of an article about a female or even male candidate of the opposite sex. For example, the FAZ wrote in an article about Annalena Baerbock that “her family also fully supported her, said Baerbock, who is the mother of two daughters of primary school and kindergarten age. When she was elected party leader three years ago, she told herself and others: ‘I will continue to be a mother, even as a top politician’.” You could now replace Baerbock's role with a male politician. Do you notice a difference? Does that sound strange to you, that a man must defend his role as a father? This way you can decipher the use of gender stereotypes and ask yourself if there is a difference in reporting.

Another good piece of advice is to consume different newspaper articles and other media to get different perspectives on an event or person. This will help you form your own opinion about the person and think about the different points of view that the different sources give you.

Overcoming sexism? Everyone must act

But where do we go from here? You have probably been confronted with stereotypes about women yourself - like most people in Germany. Ultimately, the responsibility to recognize and overcome sexism and gender stereotypes lies with everyone: Taking a critical look at gendered media coverage is a good start, and movements like #metoo could show us that creating awareness can lead to social consciousness and even change. Therein lies an opportunity to make everyone aware of the problem, including the journalists who ultimately set the issues and produce the articles that people read. Writing letters to the editor when you spot the use of sexist stereotypes, or sharing the news with your friends and family, can be a good start to showing that misogyny needs to be addressed and overcome.

Ultimately, this can lead to the media reflecting more critically on its own production: The media we may consume on a daily basis, which ultimately influences candidates' impression on public opinion and that of individual voters, has the power to actively change the imbalance in coverage between women and men. Only when women no longer must justify their behavior, their private lives and their competence will the path to gender equality be paved.

Find more information about the Global Media Monitoring Report 2020 [here](#).

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