

“Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca

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**Women’s Representation and Discourse
in Contemporary Politics.**

Case Study: Romania & the United States of America

PH.D. THESIS

Ph.D. advisor:

Prof. Habil. Sandu Frunză, Ph.D.

Ph.D. student:

Andreea-Nicoleta Voina

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Political women, political representation, gendered discourse, feminine style, feminism, gender negotiation, Hillary Clinton

“Where there are no ceilings,

The sky’s the limit.”

(Hillary Rodham Clinton)¹

Introduction: An Academic Endeavor towards another “Year of the Woman”

Women are remarkably underrepresented in the political realm. One critical look into any political decision-making venue verifies the sheer prevalence of male representatives. As of 2017, women can cast their vote in every country, except for Vatican City; over the past two decades, the number of women in national parliaments has doubled, a growth that brings us to a 23.3 percent all-time high². Women are better represented within legislative bodies than executive offices, yet increasingly more capital cities around the world are chaired by female mayors: Prague, Paris, Warsaw, Sofia, Madrid, Baghdad, Rome, with the recent additions of Bucharest and Washington D.C.

The dynamics of women’s representation are continuously changing, and vary significantly within and across countries. In terms of politically empowering women, no year mirrors the previous, no elections generate the same results, and not a week goes by without the media presenting a breakthrough in the global gender glass ceiling. However, more work is needed in the practice of politics, in order to achieve gender balance and normalize the idea of women as political leaders, and more academic work is essential in determining where we are, how we got to this point, and what or where we aim next.

¹ Soundbite from Hillary Clinton’s nomination acceptance speech, delivered at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, on July 27th, 2016.

² According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010117.htm> as of January 1st, 2017. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is a collaborative platform created among parliaments, and has been ranking countries according to women’s descriptive representation for three decades.

This paper fills a gap in the literature on women's political representation and communication, through a comparative analysis between Romania and the United States of America, two democracies that have yet to deliver a first female head of state. Although the association of these two countries might seem arbitrary, the line of reasoning behind this research choice is rooted in and deeply connected to the *kairos* – the context or timing of the discourse – given by the 2016 elections.

Why conduct yet another inquiry about women in politics? Because it is fair, because it is useful, and because it is time. Women make up half of the world we live in, while the number of women heads of state, heads of government, members of parliament, governors, and mayors are far from echoing this reality. When attaining political office, women bring new perspectives, different from the deeply entrenched hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, debates on women in politics are gaining momentum, generating the need to detach from gender-averse attitudes and behavior, and to engage in affirmative action. I am, thus, employing the logic of sameness, the logic of difference, and the logic of timeliness. When the political reality strikes us with its overt gender imbalances, we can always go back to the metaphorical power of the swing dance, and retrieve that image of Ginger Rogers doing everything Fred Astaire did, but going backwards and wearing heels.

Expected to end into a more groundbreaking “Year of the Woman,”³ due to the historical presidential nomination of Hillary Clinton by the Democratic National Convention, 2016 turned into an “almost” pioneering episode in history. Similarly, the Romanian legislative elections offered Alina Gorghiu, the first woman leading the country's historical political party⁴, i.e. the National Liberal Party, a well-timed opportunity to engage and demonstrate leadership skills.

³ In reference to the original “Year of the Woman,” a label assigned to the year of 1992, following the congressional elections that generated a record number of women in the Congress. Anecdotal narratives surrounding the outstanding election results ascribe the surge of female candidates and winners to the famous Thomas – Hill episode, when Anita Hill came forward regarding Judge Clarence Thomas' sexual harassment, and had to face an all-male Senate Judiciary Committee. These hearings catalyzed women's emergence in the American political life (“The Secret History of Women in the Senate,” 2015, January/February; Dow & Condit, 2005, p. 459; Sanbonmatsu, 2006b, p. 369).

⁴ The first woman elected leader of a political party in Romania was Daniela Popa, in 2008, by the Conservative Party (Chiru & Gherghina, 2014, p. 151), but Alina Gorghiu is the first female leader of the first and oldest Romanian political party.

However, the party scored second, barely winning 20 percent of votes; deemed as a leadership failure, it triggered Gorghiu's resignation⁵.

Recent events have smoothed the way for identifying patterns of backlash in women's ascension to power: in a strikingly similar manner to Clinton, former Peruvian First Lady Keiko Fujimori narrowly loses her second presidential contest ("Keiko Fujimori concedes in Peru's Presidential Election," 2016, June 10), and former Guatemalan First Lady, Sandra Torres, loses the election battle in favor of a TV comedian ("A wrong turn for Guatemalan democracy," 2015, November 5). 2016 also sparks allegations of corruption and massive street riots, culminating with the impeachments of Dilma Rousseff ("Dilma Rousseff is ousted as Brazil's president in impeachment vote," 2016, August 31) and Park Geun-hye ("South Korea enters period of uncertainty with president's impeachment," 2016, December 9), the first women holding the presidential seats of Brazil and South Korea. Female candidates Maia Sandu and Tsetska Tsacheva lose elections on the same day, in favor of male candidates who ran for the presidential seats on anti-establishment, pro-Russian platforms ("Pro-Russian candidates win presidential votes in Bulgaria and Moldova," 2016, November 14). Silver linings in women's paths to power do come, however, from the United Kingdom, through the post-Brexit appointment of Theresa May as Prime Minister ("Theresa May officially becomes UK Prime Minister," 2016, July 13), and from Myanmar, through the unprecedented leading role, of state counselor, designed for Aung San Suu Kyi, a widely appreciated icon of democracy and human rights ("Burma creates far-reaching 'state counselor' post for Aung San Suu Kyi," 2016, April 5). However, "The Year of the Outsider" (Canon, 2011) seems to extend over time and space, generating increasingly more amateurish, anti-establishment candidates in various countries and elections.

In regard to the dynamics of women's representation in the Romanian Parliament and the United States Congress, I extend the timeframe of my analysis from 1990 to May 2017, capturing almost three decades of progress in women's legislative empowerment. Why 1990? In Romania, this year marks the first free elections in which women can cast a vote; though they are granted voting rights in 1938, the surge of communism delays this privilege for nearly five

⁵ Alina Gorghiu is followed by another woman, as the party's Standing Bureau unanimously appoints Raluca Turcan as interim president, candidate under whose leadership the party's local organization in Sibiu county scored highest within the parliamentary elections ("Raluca Turcan, interim president of PNL until the National Convention/Raluca Turcan, președinte interimar al PNL până la Convenția Națională," 2016).

decades. In the United States, 1990 captures the image of the Congress before the Year of the Woman, which allows us to assess the momentum which 1992 generated. The analysis will bring us as close to the present day as possible, due to the timely legislative elections held in the United States in November, 2016, and followed by those in Romania, roughly one month later. Beyond the gendered dynamics of members, the review of the two legislative bodies will sketch women's legislative activity, capitalizing on two paramount features of legislators, more specifically bill-passing and discursive performance.

“Artifacts of political representation” (Myers, 2013, p. 170), discourses constitute means of power legitimation, conveying the identity, the message and, ultimately, the reality that the speakers wish to convey to their targeted audiences. By addressing the public, political personalities enforce an act of representation. Strategically designed to convey meanings through ethos, pathos, and logos, discourses are delivered within a kairos – *“perhaps the most important of the strategies”* (Novak & Johnson, 2013, p. 131) –, which potentiates these meanings. Critical discourse analysis and its feminist perspective are conceived as interpretative mechanisms of identifying underlying meanings, justifying rhetorical choices, and comprehending language in certain social contexts.

For the most part of history, “anonymous” was a signature used by women in order to lend credibility to their message, piece of art, or literature. More often than not, an unknown source used to be given more credit than a female source would have been granted, as “unknown” stood in the collective consciousness as a male source holding back their identity than a woman. I begin this quest guided by the will to correct this gender imbalance, which – I argue – substantiates my approach of comparing women to one another, rather than comparing them to their male counterparts. I deliberately decline to perpetuate the idea that male leadership is the norm, the standard in the political life. Moreover, I believe that neither gender should hold monopoly over traits, but rather they should be shaped by each individual's internal structure. For this assertion stands the idea that the feminist discourse itself is not gender-determined. John Stuart Mill contributed to feminist scholarship through his writings, and President Barack Obama relentlessly defined himself as a feminist.

Language defines the way we structure reality. Employing a gendered frame when we discuss women in leadership positions, by adding the “female,” or “woman,” before the

individual's position, signals a standard deviation. In politics, women are still perceived as deviations from the traditional masculine norm; when we get to a point where we refer to women in upper ranks without attaching their gender, it will mean that we have managed to move the needle, to internalize gender balance, and no longer startle at the idea that women are in charge. Sheryl Sandberg anchors in such future developments: "*One day there won't be female leaders. There will just be leaders*" (qtd. in Schnall, 2013, p. 213).

An Overview of the Romanian Political and Electoral System

In light of the communist heritage which has not yet faded from the Romanian socio-political system, it is imperative to outline practices that have impacted heavily on the country's post-communist transition. Romania both aligns to a status quo shared by countries from the former soviet bloc, and constitutes a unique case study, through developing its own feminist version. Cultural factors are paramount in grasping women's relative absence from political office, and the failure of advancing a feminist agenda.

State socialism claimed to put efforts into reaching gender equality, by making women an important part of the economy and empowering them to participate in the political realm. However, the reality of communism revealed that women were hired into low-paid work sectors, while being subjected to pronatalist policies, and overburdened with household chores, situation defined as the *double burden*. No policies aimed at reassigning traditional gender roles.

Galligan and Clavero (2008) emphasize tokenism as a strategy employed in countries ruled by state socialism, meant to boost women's representation through legislated quotas, while cultivating an image of women who comply with decisions taken by the male-dominated sole party in state. Cultural explanations stemming in communism range from the cultural legacy of quotas, as propagandistic measures advanced in order to promote infamous women, to the prevalence of traditional gender attitudes, and the lack of women's mobilization to form critical mass (p. 151).

Ana Pauker, the first female Minister of Foreign Affairs in modern history (Brodeală, 2015, p. 14; Miroiu, 2010a, p. 582; O'Connor, 2010, p. 336; Roman, 2001, p. 56), was the first

woman to lead a traditionally masculine portfolio in Romania; Pauker was deemed as “unique” (Fischer, 1985, p. 128) in Romanian politics, due to leading the ministry with a high hand, thus enforcing an autocratic leadership style. Female members of the Communist Party were more prominent at local levels, yet generally their power was inversely correlated to their numbers: the higher the ranks, the lower their power. Along with Ana Pauker, the beneficiary of quotas was the communist leader’s wife, Elena Ceaușescu, an intruder in the Romanian political setting and an accessory to her husband’s policies. She undoubtedly lacked “*the practical competence and concern of an Eleanor Roosevelt or the mystical charm and beauty of an Eva Perón*” (Fischer, 1985, p. 122). Elena Ceaușescu dwells in the Romanian collective consciousness as the source of “Elena’s syndrome,” a belief that women are mischievous political animals (Brodeală, 2015, p. 14). Hence, quotas were justifiably found at fault for the political participation of unqualified women under state socialism (Rueschemeyer, 2008, p. 120).

During the post-communist transition, women reject feminism as ideology and rhetoric on the very same grounds as most of the former communist countries. The socialist experience makes women reluctant to the ideological promise of emancipation; they claim a dissonance between the egalitarian regime desideratum and communist policies; they further dismiss any action labeled as “collective” (Fischer, 1998). Moreover, balancing the private and the public sphere determines women to seek a label of strength rather than one of victimhood. The gynaeceum, back then, is highly valued by Romanian women, and feminism is perceived as an anti-male – rather than egalitarian – ideology. In this context of non-receptivity, the need to align to European Union standards before the internal public even recognized a need for a feminist agenda generates a local type of feminism, coined by Mihaela Miroiu (2004b) as “room-service feminism”. This version of feminism does not spring from an authentic will of mobilization against routine injustice, neither does it reflect a genuine commitment to women’s cause, but rather satisfies a supranational requirement. The need for feminism in successfully breaking patriarchy should be reflected on a political level, yet the case of Romania sees feminism developed “*in the area of civil society, with rare and limited influence over the political agenda*” (p. 230).

In his study of representation trends in post-communist Europe, Richard Matland places Romania in the category of “*success stories*” (2003, p. 322) in terms of women’s emergence in

the halls of political power, due to the proportional representation electoral system. Systems based on proportional representation are usually perceived as favorable for increasing women's descriptive representation; they tend to generate a spillover effect among parties and the multi-member constituencies leave room for gender balancing of party tickets (Rueschemeyer, 2008, p. 121). The Romanian elections system for legislative competitions has undergone structural changes since the first democratic suffrage, in 1990, and as recent as 2016. Starting from proportional representation in 1990, the system altered into a mixed version, proportional by compensation, with votes in uninominal districts (Asociația Pro Democrația, 2008, p. 25), which leads to an enlargement of the Parliament. In 2016, elections switch back to the proportional representation, opening back to competition a number of 465 seats, 329 for the Chamber of Deputies and 136 for the Senate. Despite a referendum held and passed in 2009 on the Parliament converting into a unicameral body and reducing the number of representatives to 300, the Constitution has not been modified to accommodate the will expressed by the Romanian people.

Romania is a *de facto* semi-presidential republic, similar to the French model, nurturing a dual executive. A first attempt of a woman for the presidential seat takes place in year 2000, when independent candidate Grațiela Elena Bârlă obtains 0.55% of the popular vote (Butnaru & Rus, 2014, p. 11). The next presidential contest involving women emerges fourteen years later, when Monica Macovei and Elena Udrea launch a presidential bid, from different standpoints. Macovei, an epitome of Schwartzberg's (1995) political non-woman, running as independent on an anti-corruption platform, opposes Udrea, at the time leader of the young Popular Movement Party, who specifically target female voters and plays the gender card in building the campaign (Hosu et al., 2014). The first election round places Elena Udrea 4th, gathering 5.20% of the popular vote, and Macovei 5th, with 4.44% of votes. However, Romanians living abroad resonated well with the latter, judging by the score of 15.20% that positions her 3rd among voting preferences, merely 0.70% behind the diaspora runner-up, Victor Ponta⁶.

⁶ More election statistics for the Romanian presidential contest in 2014 are provided by the Central Electoral Bureau and can be retrieved from <http://www.bec2014.ro/rezultate-finale-2-noiembrie-2014/index.html>

Prior to the presidential elections in November 2014, the INSCOP research institute conducts a study regarding the Romanian public's perceptions on women's presidency⁷. While 47.5% of respondents declare an open mind for the idea of a female presidential candidate, gender seems to be an insignificant aspect in the presidential contest. This assertion is substantiated by the 39.9% who consider that electing a woman would not bring about change, and the 42.9% who state that the gender of the commander-in-chief is of little importance. Moreover, only 1 of 10 individuals surveyed believes that a woman would be more suitable for office than a man. INSCOP conducts a follow-up study in February 2015⁸, on women in politics, which reveals a slight improvement in attitudes. While 2 of 10 individuals believe that a woman prime minister would boost Romania, they articulate the same effect for women's greater involvement in politics. Furthermore, 44.5% of those inquired support legislated quota, as a means to politically empower women.

Despite the progress made after the 1989 moment – which marked a backlash in terms of descriptive representation –, women remain underrepresented. Progress has been continuous, but insufficient to mirror the gender structure of the population. Romania still lags behind regional and world averages of women in national parliaments, it has not yet elected a woman president or appointed a female head of government, nor has it reached parity in government portfolio assignments.

An Overview of the U.S. Political and Electoral System

Contrasting with the evolutions presented in the Romanian case, the United States of America represent the launching venue for the feminist movement, as will be further elaborated in Chapter I. Due to the activism of passionate women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, women gain a voice in American politics (Paxton & Hughes, 2017, p. 38).

The rich racial diversity of the United States has posed different challenges to women's political empowerment, which substantiates the intersectional approach I will employ in

⁷ The methodology and findings can be retrieved from <http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/INSCOP-Sept.2014.-Candidat-femeie.pdf>

⁸ The methodology and findings can be retrieved from <http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/INSCOP-Feb.2015.-Femeia-in-politica.pdf>

analyzing the dynamics of women's representation in Congress, notably by pointing out the breakthroughs marked by the 2016 elections. The United States of America is a presidential republic, *par excellence*, under the leadership of a strong presidential figure. Benefitting from a remarkably long democratic tradition, the United States have generated a tremendous body of research trying to explain women's underrepresentation. Even though studies attest to the fact that "*when women run, women win*" (Sanbonmatsu, 2006b), the 2016 election results have altered the ethos of this strand of research.

The United States Congress comprises 535 members, of which 100 are elected Senators – 2 for each state, for 6-year terms – and 435 are Representatives elected for 2-year terms; in addition, the Congress accommodates non-voting delegates from the District of Columbia and the five island territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands). Despite lacking voting capabilities, they can still influence congressional works by committee activity and remarks.

The incumbency advantage of usually being credited for subsequent congressional terms leaves three types of opportunity seats. Considering men are overwhelmingly holders of congressional seats, it is fair to say that incumbency generally gives odds to men rather than women. Thus, the means for women to emerge as congresswomen comprise open seats, where the incumbent is no longer running for office, marginal seats – in which case the incumbents marked a narrow victory during previous elections or present vulnerabilities –, and redistricted seats for House candidates, which are strategic decisions meant to secure victories in less favorable districts. The third type of seat for Senators entails appointment by state governors, as interim holders of the office (Foley & Owens, 1996, p. 56).

More likely than through elections, the 20th century path to power in American politics was "the widow's mandate" (Fitzpatrick, 2016, p. 79), which entailed the appointment by special election of a woman to carry out the congressional term won by her husband; however, some women displayed ambitions of their own, seeking reelection. Mae Ella Nolan was the first representative to succeed her husband in Congress, successfully furthering his legislative agenda.

Before Nolan, however, suffragist Jeannette Rankin is elected to the House of Representatives in 1917, on a Republican ticket, adding to the history-making event by opposing

through vote the United States entry into World War I. She loses reelection in 1918, but wins a second term in 1940, and chooses to cast a vote against the U.S. entry into World War II. Singling herself out as the only opponent to the interventionist option, she made a decision that put an end to her political career (Paxton & Hughes, 2016, p. 72).

Remarkably, the highest-ranking cabinet member, fourth in the line of succession to presidency, the gallery of Secretaries of State comprises three notable female office-holders. President Bill Clinton opens the series of women Secretaries of State by appointing Madeleine Albright in 1997, which offered her the distinction of highest-ranking female in the American history, at that time. Eight years later, President George W. Bush pursues the women's empowerment challenge by appointing Republican Condoleezza Rice, enriching American history with the second female Secretary of State, and the second African-American official holding the office, right after Colin Powell. Well-known for her "Women's rights are human rights" Beijing declaration, Hillary Clinton champions first lady diplomacy (Hastedt & Eksterowicz, 2006), and later becomes the most-traveled Secretary of State, during her 2009-2013 tenure, under President Barack Obama.

Before Clinton's presidential bid, other women have tried to reach the highest American office. Leader of suffragettes Victoria Woodhull opened the list of presidential contenders in 1872, nearly five decades before the ratification of the 19th Amendment, granting women voting rights. Margaret Chase Smith, another female pioneer – the first woman to be elected to both Congress chambers – made it to the Republican Convention in 1964, seeking the party's endorsement for a presidential nomination; the outcome was rather symbolic. Eight years later, Shirley Chisholm becomes the first African-American woman to seek the highest office, but does not make it beyond primaries (Fitzpatrick, 2016). Although unsuccessful, both Democrats and Republicans manage to place a woman on the presidential ticket; nearly 25 years ahead of the Republicans, Geraldine Ferraro makes the Democratic vice-presidential choice in 1984, followed by Republican Sarah Palin, running alongside McCain in 2008.

A Comparative Analysis of Women in Romanian and U.S. Politics

The World Bank data place the two countries among those in which the female population slightly outnumbers the male counterpart, amounting up to 51.6% in Romania and 50.4% in the United States of America, as of 2015⁹. In terms of population, most countries find themselves close to gender balance, slightly overrepresenting one gender or the other, except for a few outliers from the Middle East, vastly populated by men. This gender balance does not mirror within national parliaments, however, as Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics reveal. As of January 1st, 2017, both Romania and the United States rank below the world and regional averages¹⁰. Each country's evolution and current situation will be later presented in great detail.

Strikingly different from the *marianismo* specific to Latin America, which empowers women to emerge as nurturing mothers of the nation in times of political distress (Skard, 2014, p. 207; Christie, 2016, p. 18), Romania's deeply embedded Elena's syndrome still governs the public's perception on women in politics. Americans, however, can resort to the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of ideals of freedom and equality, while it also receives the gendered dimension of the male character of American citizenship (Krause, 2000, p. 2).

Despite their different cultures and political history, the highest office women have held in both countries is that of the second official in the presidential line of succession. Nancy Pelosi was appointed the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives in American history, during 2007 and 2011, whereas Roberta Anastase broke the Romanian Parliament's deeply masculine tradition by becoming the first female Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, between 2008 and 2012. Both the U.S. Congress and the Romanian Parliament are bicameral legislative bodies, in spite of the different loci of power in state. Roskin et al. (2011, p. 79) explains the logic of upper chambers as representative venues for constituent units of federal states.

Neither Romania, nor the United States of America have been able to produce a female head of state, yet the year of 2016 has drawn both countries closer to breaking the glass ceiling. Following the legislative elections, the Romanian leading party (i.e. the Social Democratic Party)

⁹ Measured as percentage of female population out of total; further data can be retrieved from <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS&country=>

¹⁰ The world average of women in parliaments with both chambers is 23.3%, while the Americas raise the average to 28.3%, and Europe to 26.4%, according to data retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010117.htm>

designated Sevil Shhaideh as candidate for the prime minister seat, but the proposal was dismissed by the President (“Romania’s president rejects first female candidate for prime minister,” 2016, December 27). Had the President’s response been favorable and the nomination further approved by the Parliament, Shhaideh would have been the first woman leading the Romanian government, as well as the first Muslim to do so.

Hillary Clinton and Alina Gorghiu both embody the “unlikability” factor framed by Sheryl Sandberg, when she refers to women “*in positions of power, or seen as confident or ambitious*” (quoted in Schnall, 2013, p. 215). Beside this stigma, Sandberg argues that female leaders are intensely subjected to scrutiny due to being representative of women (2013). Regardless, Clinton and Gorghiu face an overwhelmingly high rate of reluctance from the citizens, as shows by opinion barometers. A series of surveys conducted by the INSCOP research institute during February 2015 – March 2016 indicate that Romanian voters have barely gained trust in Alina Gorghiu, co-President of the National Liberal Party during that time. The rate of respondents declaring little and very little trust in Gorghiu has declined by 10 points during the spring of 2015, followed by an unfavorable trend, in which 2 out of 3 respondents rather declared mistrust (Fig. I.1.).

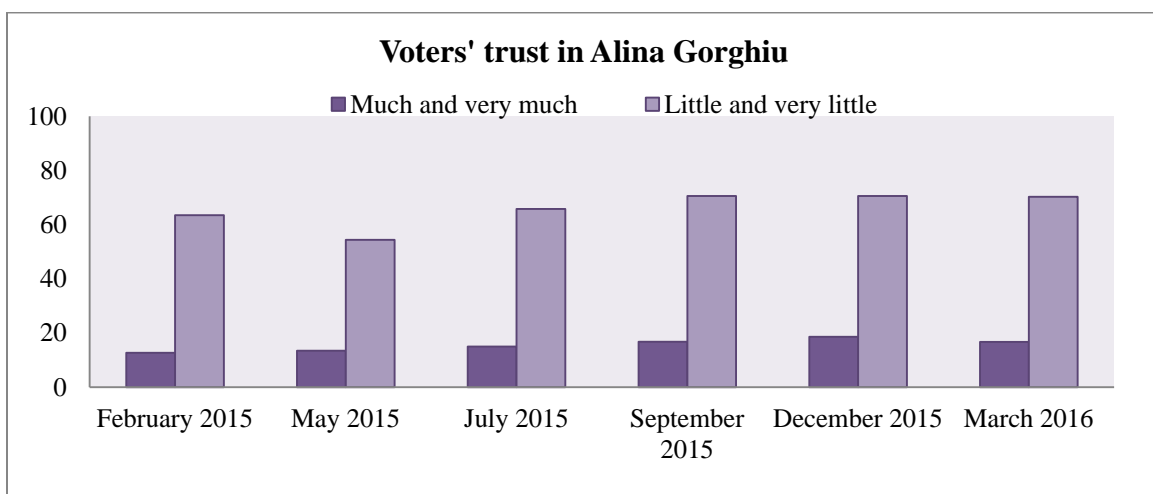


Figure I.1. Graphic representation of voters' trust in Alina Gorghiu¹¹

¹¹ Data retrieved from INSCOP’s survey report on the public’s trust in political personalities, retrieved from <http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/INSCOP-raport-martie-2016-Incredere-personalitati.pdf>. These are all the data publically available on measuring opinions in regard to Alina Gorghiu

The trend is similar in Clinton’s case, yet the attitudes toward her are more nuanced: despite fluctuating, her favorability scores are higher than Gorghiu’s, and the opposites are lower. According to Gallup, Clinton starts off with a 50% favorability score and a low 39 opposite, but reaches a critical point of only 38% favorable attitude and a high 55 point adverse attitude just a few months before the elections, during July – September, 2016 (Fig. I.2.).

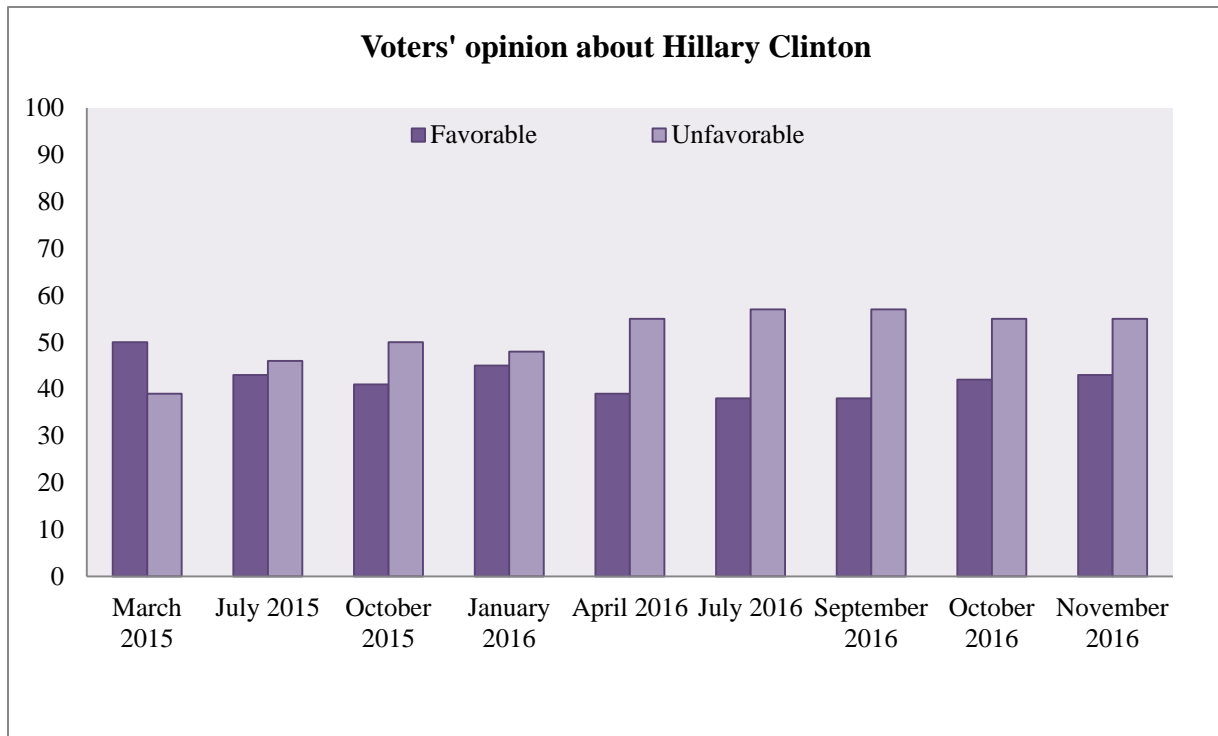


Figure I.2. Graphic representation of voters’ opinion about Hillary Clinton¹²

Why investigate women’s representation within legislative bodies, considering that the core of previous research focuses on the same decisional body? Why not choose to explore a yet uncharted territory? First off, it constitutes the common venue of representation between the two countries; it is also an elective body, which reflects a party’s decision to promote women, and the voters’ decision to get them elected. Legislatives also foster surrogate representation, which allows women legislators to represent the interests of women from other constituencies – this might enhance the quality of deliberation and lawmaking. Likewise, Parliaments might serve

¹² Data retrieved from Gallup’s surveys on favorability of people in the news, retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1618/Favorability-People-News.aspx>. I reduced the amount of data in order to compare perceptions on both women, in the same timeframe, 2015 and 2016. In so doing, I selected the favorability rates from the first surveys conducted in each of the months selected.

as launching platforms for presidential candidates, as obvious is the case of Hillary Clinton, and not off the cards in Alina Gorghiu's political evolution.

Research Aim, Objectives, and Hypotheses

As stated above, through this research endeavor, I aim to further the feminist project, by filling in a gap in the literature on women's political representation and discourse. A comparative analysis between a country in which the feminist movement flourished and one in which it ceased altogether for a few decades might seem arbitrary, and yet the similar stages in which both countries find themselves today substantiate the present undertaking.

I structured this paper in order to reach a series of research objectives:

- To analyze the dynamics of women's descriptive (numerical) representation in the Romanian Parliament and the United States Congress, between 1990 and 2017;
- To assess the distribution of the women representatives across the political spectrum;
- To measure the level of seniority of these female legislators;
- To identify their level of empowerment in terms of committee leadership;
- To determine their rate of discursive activity and legislative efficiency;
- To explore the discursive performance of Hillary Clinton and Alina Gorghiu during the 2016 presidential, respectively legislative campaigns;
- To investigate whether and how the two female politicians use their pioneering status;
- To canvass the double bind in their campaign communication, both in content and style;
- To emphasize marks of liberal feminism within their discourses.

The exploratory undertaking on the two American and Romanian candidates' campaign discourses is meant to shed some light on the following matters:

RQ1: Both Hillary Clinton and Alina Gorghiu are pioneering candidates; while the former is the first woman to top a major U.S. party presidential ticket, the latter is the first

female candidate running for legislative office as party leader. Do they capitalize on their pioneering status in their discourses, and how do they frame it?

RQ2: Clinton is making a bid for the highest seat, whereas Gorghiu is an incumbent parliamentary candidate aiming to switch districts. As they both target traditionally masculine seats, how does this weigh on their communication style?

RQ3: One of the double binds facing women who run for office entails competence being deemed as masculine, and femininity being regarded as incompetence. How does gender play out in the candidates' campaign discourse? How do Clinton and Gorghiu balance hard topics and soft topics?

RQ4: Clinton and Gorghiu both candidates with liberal backgrounds. Do they employ liberal feminist core topics and views in their discourse?

At the same time, I set out in this research endeavor towards testing the following hypotheses:

H1: The dynamics of women elected to the Romanian Parliament and the United States Congress since 1990 are similar in terms of numbers and trends;

H1.a. The number of women legislators has gradually increased since 1990, but at a slow and insufficient rate, far from either reaching a critical mass level or equal representation;

H2: The political Left has been more successful in promoting women than the Right;

H3: The women who have been in office the longest tend to be more empowered within the permanent committees;

H3.a. They tend to be assigned more prestigious committees;

H3.b. They tend to chair more than one committee during the same legislature;

H3.c. They tend to be appointed to senior leadership positions;

H4: Congresswomen and female MPs are more likely to chair committees dealing with soft policy issues;

H5: Seniority status enhances women's legislative activity;

H5.a. The higher their level of seniority, the more vocal they are;

H5.b. The longer they have served, the higher their legislative efficiency is.

Structure

Based on the fact that the feminist movement has been pivotal to women's representation in its contemporary dimensions, any academic project on this latter topic has to be grounded in the feminist paradigm. Feminism is key in comprehending how women have coagulated their efforts in order to make their voices heard, the repertoire of claims which they have addressed across time, and the mechanisms engaged in their fight for gender equality. Thus, *Chapter I* makes its debut with a discussion on definitions of "feminism," tightly connected to their area of emergence and manifestation. Further, I advance the discussion by presenting the three waves in which feminism has developed and thrived, along with their claims and achievements. Grounded in the feminist "the personal is political" slogan, the chapter also provides a review of feminist ideologies, which substantiate the different stances held by women in regard to women's issues. Moreover, the comparison between the United States of America and Romania calls for drawing the line Western and Eastern feminism, based on events leading up to the current state of affairs.

Chapter II advances the theoretical framework on women and politics by discussing the concept of "representation". This section is founded on theories and models of representation, and it is imperative to create an outline from the outstanding contributions of Anne Phillips' (1995) deliberation on the politics of ideas versus that of presence, Hanna Pitkin's (1967) integrated model of formal, descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation, Jane Mansbridge's (2003) perspective of anticipatory, gyroscopic, and surrogate representation, and up to the model of global patterns of representation, framed by Pamela Paxton and Melanie Hughes (2017). I further advocate for women's presence in the political realm by laying out arguments drawing on previous research, and I discuss paths to power, building on the opportunities and barriers which women meet on their journeys towards breaking the glass ceiling. Serving as either catalysts or barricades, factors such as political parties or systems, culture and media, individual and social components impact on women's political momentum.

Accelerating towards the contribution brought by the present research, I address a series of gender aspects in communication content and styles, in *Chapter III*. Capitalizing on previous research, I aim to discuss feminine patterns of communication style versus those deemed and valued as masculine, which vastly impact the manner in which leaders are perceived. Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) conceptualizes the "double bind," which faultlessly explains perceptions,

attitudes, and behaviors in regard to women and men in positions of power; stemming from the private versus public dualism, the expectancies from leaders are deeply gendered, placing women in the “damned if they do, damned if they don’t” narrative (Hillin, 2015). Double binds also weigh on areas of discursive practices, labeling all soft issues (i.e. education, health, social justice) as feminine. Developing this idea, I conclude the theoretical considerations by discussing rhetorical frames identified in discourses delivered by women holding political power.

Chapter IV and *V* embody the contribution which I aspire to convey to the feminist knowledge community. I deliberately engage in a dual perspective, in drafting my research narrative: while I undoubtedly aim to deliver an intellectual perspective, given by the systematic nature of the research, I also embark on a socio-political movement. It is in the very nature of feminist research to “*be not just on women, but for women*” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, p. 40). Chapter IV focuses on the research methodology; I employ content analysis in order to collect, code and interpret data on women’s representation in the United States Congress and Romanian Parliament. I further use the Critical Discourse Analysis framework and build on its feminist perspective, in analyzing campaign discourses of Hillary Clinton and Alina Gorghiu. Chapter V meticulously presents the findings, both individually and comparatively. The first section deals with the *representation* dimension and analyzes the dynamics of women’s representation within the legislative bodies of the two countries, in order to test the research hypotheses. The second part elaborates on the *discursive* component and reveals the two candidates’ discursive practices during the 2016 campaigns, based on the research questions generated by the literature review and assorted with the research objectives. In the *Conclusions* section, I briefly outline the theoretical framework, in relation to the research hypotheses and questions, while emphasizing how these findings not only reflect women, but address to women.

Results and discussion

The analysis carried out based on the collected data generates empirical arguments that allow testing the research hypotheses. Thus, starting with 1990 and culminating with the gender structure of Parliament and Congress following the 2016 legislative elections, both Romania and the United States displayed a low increasing pattern of representation, from 4.86 to 19.13% for

the former, and 6.36 to 20.37% for the latter. However, both countries rank below the world average, of 23.3% (“Women in National Parliaments,” 2017), and their regional averages¹³. The levels of descriptive representation reached as a result of the 2016 elections show a four-fold (for Romania), respectively a three-fold (for the United States) favorable evolution compared to the 1990 picture of the legislative body. In both cases, women were significantly better represented in the lower chamber, and about 4.5% of the female lawmakers have served in both chambers. Moreover, both countries exhibit constituencies that have been more successful in electing women, as well as constituencies that have yet to mark the breakthrough of electing a woman legislator. Thus, Hypothesis 1 has grounds for validation.

While these trends are fairly similar and consistent between the two legislative bodies, there are significant differences in what concerns women’s longevity or seniority level. 279 women were elected or appointed to the Romanian Parliament, and 222 to Congress, yet there are striking differences between these women’s service tenure. 90% of women elected to Congress carried out at least one full mandate, whereas only 60% of Romanian lawmakers did so. The average service tenure for a Congresswoman successfully finishing at least one term amounts up to 9.50 years, while Romanian women served, on average, for 5.52 years. Senior women lawmakers – serving for multiple full terms –, however, average 11.59 years of service in Congress and 10.55 in the Parliament, which sets the threshold for high level of seniority at 12 years, for both cases. Only 15 percent of Romanian female MPs make the seniority ranking, while 31 percent of Congresswomen outperform their female peers by ranking as high senior members. Thus, even if the number of women serving in the two legislative bodies is similar, American lawmakers show significantly greater consistency in getting re-elected than their Romanian counterparts. From this standpoint, Hypothesis 1 is only partially confirmed. Yet, even if the descriptive dimension contrasts vastly in terms of how many female lawmakers are credited with and carry out multiple terms, the threshold for high level of seniority, set at 12 years, is common to both Romanian and Americans.

The pace of progress in terms of representation has been rather slow. While Congress reached the 20% milestone during the 114th Congress (2015-2017), the Romanian Parliament has

¹³ According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as of March 1st, 2017, the average scored by countries in the Americas, for bicameral parliaments, amounts up to 28.1%, while the average across European countries – excluding the Nordic states – adds up to 25.1%.

yet to do so. Moreover, the critical mass theory, previously discussed, set the critical cut at 30%, for women lawmakers to actually be able to make a difference, to enhance substantive representation; reaching the 30% threshold would entail, for both legislative bodies, an increase of over 50% from the 2017 situation. According to this theory, women's descriptive representation in both the Romanian Parliament and the United States Congress is insufficient, which confirms the hypothesis.

While recognizing the intricate machine of party and ideology in the multi-party system in Romania and the two-party system in the United States, for the purpose of data reduction, I classified all parties according to the left – right ideological spectrum. Hypothesis 2 is validated, as both the Romanian Parliament and the U.S. Congress have encompassed a higher population of leftist female lawmakers than rightist. 51.24% of women serving in the Romanian Parliament between 1990 and the present – 2016-2020 – legislature won seats as members of left-wing parties, and half of the women ranking as the most long-lasting female MPs belonged to the Left. The political Right in Romania has a less frequent recurrence across high seniority members, whereas only 38.43% of female MPs ran on behalf of a right-wing party. In Congress, only 3 in 10 women holding a seat belonged to the Right, while almost 7 out of 10 were leftist. Moreover, amongst the ten longest-lasting women in Congress between 1990 and the current, 115th Congress, the political Right featured only one Congresswoman, namely Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

In both legislative bodies, the least frequent leadership position assigned to women was that of president/ chairperson of the permanent committee. The highest number of standing committees led by women was recorded during the 113th Congress – seven Chairwomen –, respectively the 2004-2008 and 2012-2016 Romanian legislatures, when eight committees were presided by women. In contrast, Romanian lawmakers under analysis were more likely to be appointed vicepresidents or secretaries within the bureaus' leadership, while American legislators were more likely to be designated Chairwomen of subcommittees, and – to a lesser extent – vice-chairs of committees and subcommittees. Hypothesis 3 is partially validated, however, based on the fact that most standing committees run by women in the time frame analyzed were commissioned to lawmakers ranking among high seniority members. Considering all leadership positions held by women within the legislatures under analysis, women who have

been more empowered by being designated as leaders of standing committees rank among the longest-serving female lawmakers. However, not all senior members experienced empowerment through committee leadership, yet those who made the ranks of committee bureaus, were more likely to benefit from subsequent appointments.

Of the few high-prestige committees chaired by women in the Romanian Parliament, Foreign Policy and European Affairs were the policy areas prominently run by senior members Manuela Mitrea and Anca Boagiu; the other women in charge of high-prestige portfolios did not rank among the highest senior members. However, a vast majority of the Congresswomen assigned to high-prestige standing committees spent more than 12 years in office; among them, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen has been consistently assigned portfolios of International Relations, Mary Landrieu and Candice Miller have organized legislation in the area of Homeland Security, and areas such as Finance or Armed Services were not foreign from female leadership. Hypothesis 3.a. is partially validated, as it finds solid ground in the American Congress, yet resonates less with the Romanian legislative setting.

Similarly to the former hypothesis, Hypothesis 3.b. is partially confirmed by findings, as only two of the senior Romanian women MPs – liberal Raluca Turcan and social-democrat Doina Silistru – held more than one committee leadership role within one term, while significantly more senior Congresswomen have done so. Among them, the most empowered through multiple leadership roles on standing committees were 26-year-tenure Eleanor Norton Holmes, Barbara Mikulski, and Barbara Boxer, 24-year-tenure Patty Murray, Zoe Lofgren and Olympia Jean Snowe – in office for 22 years.

Even though the number of women assigned the top leadership position on standing committees – president or chairperson – is strikingly low, Hypothesis 3.c. finds validation in the fact that a good amount of these committees were actually presided by senior female lawmakers. Romanian social-democrats Ecaterina Andronescu, Rodica Nassar, Smaranda Dobrescu, and Doina Silistru, as well as liberal Raluca Turcan rank among the few women – senior MPs – who presided over standing committees between 1990 and the 2016-2020 legislature. In the American setting, senior Congresswomen who officiated legislative works as standing committee Chairs were Democrats Barbara Boxer, Barbara Mikulski, Louise McIntosh Slaughter, Patty Murray, Nydia Velazquez, Zoe Lofgren, Dianne Feinstein, Mary Landrieu, Deborah Stabenow, Maria

Cantwell, as well as Republicans Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Olympia Snowe, Nancy Lee Johnson, Virginia Foxx, Candice Miller, Lisa Murkowski. Women holding a legislative tenure for less than the average seniority time are, thus, less targeted for the highest leadership role.

Unlike the balance between the two legislative countries exhibited in the previous findings, Hypothesis 4 finds a more solid ground in the Romanian Parliament than Congress. The matrix employed in distinguishing policy areas set as most feminized the portfolios dealing with *social welfare* – health and welfare, social insurance, labor market, and education – and those tackling *culture and justice* – cultural affairs, justice, law, and constitutional affairs. While women appointed to standing committees in the Romanian Parliament were mostly commissioned to soft policy areas, namely 42.04% of the appointments were channeled towards social welfare portfolios and 26.75% to culture and justice, only 8.83% of Congresswomen’s leadership assignments focused on social welfare committees and subcommittees, and other 13.56% to those dealing with culture and justice. Overall, Romanian women’s committee leadership appointments fell prominently within the feminized echelon of policy areas, while American women’s legislative portfolio designations concentrated vastly on rather masculine policy areas, diverging from gender lines.

Data analysis on legislative and discursive performance of women in the Romanian and American legislative bodies revealed another set of differences between the two cases. While the dynamics of senior Congresswomen entirely validated it, Hypothesis 5 partially found support in the Romanian legislative body. The peak of activity for Romanian lawmakers seemed to be reached by women completing two mandates, and gained yet another momentum for women carrying out four terms, after recording a drawback for female MPs between the two categories of longevity. Whereas these results might be explained by the small sample in these other categories, the evolution of legislative activities for senior women MPs in the larger samples showed fluctuations that do not support the hypothesis. On the other hand, the legislative activity among Congresswomen displayed an overall increasing movement, in regard to legislative initiatives, discourse, and Legislative Activity Index. The highest levels of activity were recorded for service tenures of over 16 years, but the pattern exhibits incremental improvement throughout across the cases investigated. From a comparative perspective, while the average discursive performance across the two legislative bodies score similar values, a pivotal contrast arises in

terms of legislation; Romanian women MPs initiate notably less laws than their American counterparts, for every piece of law sponsored by a female member of the Romanian Parliament, her Congress counterpart sponsored, on average, 22 legislative initiatives¹⁴. However, Romanian lawmakers scored higher efficiency rates than Congresswomen, as a larger part of their sponsored legislation translated into laws. Thus, while about one in five of Romanian women's legislative initiatives materialized into laws, while only 1 in 20 pieces of legislation signed by American Congresswomen became laws¹⁵.

Hypothesis 5.a. only holds for the female population holding a congressional seat in the United States for over one term, while Romanian female parliamentarians seem to exhibit an opposite pattern. While women in Congress became increasingly more vocal, the more time they spent in office, women in the Romanian Parliament tended to engage to a lesser extent in floor discussions. Lastly, legislative efficiency of senior Romanian parliamentarians exhibited a slightly increasing trend, while Congresswomen recorded a standstill. On that account, Hypothesis 5.b. does not meet a baseline for validation.

As for the gender negotiations in the campaign rhetoric of the two liberal candidates under analysis, Hillary Clinton and Alina Gorghiu, their discourse shows both similarities and differences in style and content. Self-portrayal as pioneering candidates is a double-edged sword: while prompting the urgency of breaking the glass ceiling, it paints the female candidates as persistent novices, making a stride for an office yet not attained and experienced. The pioneering status of the two candidates studied differ substantially, as Clinton typified an aspirant possessing a diverse and extensive political portfolio, having experienced politics from various elective and appointive positions, whereas Gorghiu was running for an elective office already experienced, but from a leadership perspective – hence performing in order to elevate the party to the desired election results. Unknown to her electorate, as she made a pitch for a different constituency than represented in her previous mandates, Gorghiu was not campaigning to renew a position, but to actually win over a new electorate.

¹⁴ The ratio was computed by dividing the arithmetic means between the average legislative initiatives per each level of seniority, of the Romanian Parliament and the United States Congress.

¹⁵ The efficiency scores of senior women in the Romanian Parliament range between 17.99 and 27.55, and in the U.S. Congress between 4.5 and 6.33, all computed according to levels of seniority.

The analysis carried out above plainly displayed Clinton's focus on her pioneering status, by recounting her struggles on her political pathway, stressing the pivotal moment in American history marked by the unprecedented nomination, and regarding women as her cornerstone audience. Gorghiu presented herself before her campaign audience in a polar opposite manner, barely speaking for herself as a candidate, and rather focusing on advancing the party platform and the National Liberals' choice for the prime-ministerial seat. In lieu of the fresh experience of the local election results, and in full awareness of the political party's internal matters, Gorghiu's rhetoric rather showed her cushioning the defeat *a priori*; although her legislative seat was guaranteed by her position on top of the party list, her campaign rhetoric displayed no effort of establishing her office suitability before her constituency or her pioneering status before the nationwide constituency. While Clinton embedded her pioneering efforts in the anatomy of her campaign rhetoric, Gorghiu framed her candidacy as promoter-in-chief of the National Liberal Party.

Both candidates understood the requirements of the male-dominated cosmos they were aiming to permeate, and adopted some rhetorical version of self-communication to their audiences in which they negotiated the gendered dimension of their candidacy. Both Clinton and Gorghiu inferred their audiences' adherence to their personas, ideas, and country projections, and capitalized on a feminine type of communication through recurrently inviting their crowds' engagement and participation, and addressing them as peers; moreover, they both emphasized *cooperation* as their choice of governing and the most favorable mechanism of getting their ideas across. Thus, the two candidates exploited similar stylistic resources to different extents, in order to convey their legitimacy as political candidates.

One rhetorical strategy "*open to and rewarded in women*" (Jamieson, 1995, p. 195) that enhances women's legitimacy as political actors is storytelling. Effective in conveying "*who she is, why she belongs there, and what principles define her*" (*ibid.*), women use narrative as a means for self-disclosure, of establishing a relationship with the audience, and a mechanism for relatability; Hillary's *listening tour* strategy has enabled a discursive mechanism that, through narratives of people from her constituency, yielded a sense of commitment to her electorate, and an ethics of care. However, the candidates differed strikingly in the extent to which they were willing to share in order to build rapport. Clinton's rhetoric widely monetized the personal in

exchange for political capital; her signature rhetorical style deeply meant turning the personal into political – anecdotes of her own and her family’s lives, situational narratives, and collectible stories from her lifetime public engagements, reflective of her policy stances, projections, and achievements. Hillary Rodham Clinton, thus, demonstrated mastery in storytelling, building on her rhetorical *pathos*. On the polar opposite, Gorghiu abstained from exploring the personal for political gains, which may be reflective of a post-communist psyche struggling to balance the public and the private spheres, and the requirement to prove mastery of masculine communication traits and techniques in order to qualify for a political seat. The discourse analysis revealed the deliberate choice of avoiding feminine rhetorical strategies, opting to deliver technical speeches, devoid of emotions, focused on policy content, while acting as a spokesperson for the liberals’ choice for heading the Romanian Executive.

Moreover, the two liberals under scholarly eyes differed in their use of masculine techniques: while the American candidate unequivocally listed her expertise as her primary source of viability, the Romanian candidate mostly used expert authority by spelling out a line-up of statistics to substantiate her proficiency in politics. Thus, Clinton’s ethos of credibility derived from her expertise, while Gorghiu’s sprung from her use of other authorities’ expertise. On a related note, both candidates underscored the critical importance of the elections by narrating an impersonal experience, presenting the founders’ – i.e. the Founding Fathers, in Clinton’s case, and the founders of the National Liberal Party, in Gorghiu’s narrative – projection of the country.

In relating to their opponents, both Clinton and Gorghiu displayed an overconfidence by assuming a favorable *kairos* for the campaign and its rhetorical settings; they both assumed a shared understanding of their opponents’ low character and a strong compatibility in this respect with the electorate, and took for granted the audiences’ attachment to liberal values. Both candidates assumed that dismantling their opponents’ morals was the optimal strategy leading them to a majority of votes, and failed to lay importance on debunking their opponents’ policies.

Whereas both candidates marshaled empirical evidence to show proficiency in the policy areas tackled, Gorghiu seemed to regard statistics as the only available rhetorical option efficient in navigating the double bind. The thematic universe of Clinton and Gorghiu’s campaign rhetoric relied heavily on a gender balance between education and economy, two areas of expertise

situated on polar opposites on a gender scale. Manning (2006) made an accurate description of Hillary's communication skills, concluding that "[s]he is passionate about the topic, but does not allow herself to become emotional" (p. 118). Clinton spoke as passionately about education as she spoke about the economy, while Gorghiu counted exclusively on *logos* in generating the desired election results. In similar fashion, both liberals envisioned an economy that would work for all, not just for certain privileged segments of population. Sharing similar professional backgrounds, both candidates presented a perspective of attaining social justice, but deeply anchored in their country's realities. Beyond formulaic discourse reflective of masculine or feminine competence, Clinton's indisputable core topic within the limits of the present comparison consists of her lifetime commitment to children's rights, the cornerstone of her rhetoric being a target population situated outside her electorate limits, and yet potentially generating more electoral capital than other agendas. In closing, empirical evidence supplied by the speeches analyzed shows that gender does matter; the mechanisms employed in navigating gender emerge from both style and content, and the absence of gender-specific communication practices can also serve as basis for comprehending individual and cultural assumptions about gender roles and discursive negotiations of their meaning.

In line with literature on the East – West divide, Gorghiu kept away from displaying a feminist view. However, her strategy of using the pretext of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to underline her legislative initiatives on this topic, followed by an explicit call to action towards women, was a sample of her commitment to correcting a gender imbalance. This particular segment of Gorghiu's campaign rhetoric can be regarded as feminist despite the speaker's overt act of avoiding this label, through the ambiguity involved in introducing the topic. Clinton's liberal feminism emerged as Gorghiu's polar opposite, as she deliberately and recurrently stated her commitment to gender equality, through balancing men and women in her policy proposals, targeting the wage gap, intersectional women facing racism, military and police personnel, and specifically aiming at women, towards boosting their entrepreneurship, education.