

Print Midia and Gender: constructing the Impeachment of Dilma Rousseff¹

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Abstract

Despite being re-elected as President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff was temporarily suspended 17 months after taking office. On August 31, 2016, she was finally ousted as president. Political parties, Congress, the judiciary, the media – among others – played relevant roles in the process of impeachment. In this paper it is proposed analyzing the role of the press along the months preceding the ousting of the re-elected head of state. Considering that the media plays a central role in the current democratic system, the gender biased performance of the press along the months prior to the impeachment was fundamental to determine the outcome. The analysis is concentrated on the newspapers Folha de S. Paulo and O Globo, published from April to September 2016. Qualitative/quantitative methodology was used to count and categorize articles and editorials for further analytical treatment, considering specialized literature. The results obtained suggest those newspapers coverage favored the impeachment, revealing some amount of sexism.

Keywords: Gender. Press. Impeachment. Dilma.

Presentation

Whenever an election takes place, a number of political actors interact along the electoral process. That also happened throughout the process of impeachment Dilma Rousseff was faced with. Politicians, political parties, the judiciary, the economic elite and the media were all part of the process, fighting for their own interests and playing a strong role in such political game. This paper is focused on print media, based on the understanding that the press plays a central role in modern democracies. In this particular case, such role was crucial to the outcome in August 2016.

¹ This is a modified version of the paper presented by the authors at the IX Congress of the Associação Latinoamericana Association of Political Science /ALACIP, Montevideo/Uruguay, July 2017.

Studies on media and politics are growing more and more relevant in the academy and various theoretical and methodological approaches to such dyad have been developed (FAUSTO NETO, 1995, LIMA, 1996, MIGUEL, 2000, 2002, RUBIM, 2004, AZEVEDO, 2006, MIGUEL; BIROLI, 2009, 2010, BIROLI, 2010, BIROLI; MANTOVANI, 2014).

Apart from the approach and the various research findings, there has been better understanding of the political field and the role of the media in contemporary society. In spite of the diversity of such studies, all of them acknowledge the influence that the media coverage exerts on the public (ALDÉ; VEIGA 2004). This paper is aimed at contributing towards a better understanding of journalism and its interference in society and politics. An example to be taken is the print press and the impeachment process that recently happened in Brazil. While television successfully reaches lower, middle and upper classes and TV news reverberates through all sectors of society, it can be said that print press is selective, since it reaches mostly the literate population, those who can afford a newspaper or a magazine, either on paper or online. Even restricted in number, such readers are relevant as long as they are qualified to spread the news (ALDÉ et al, 2007, p. 160). Compared to other means of communication such as radio and television, print press – especially weekly magazines and newspapers, which have either nationwide or worldwide circulation, tend to offer more information to their readers². Depending on the subject, there can be further and deeper information about the topic. Such set of characteristics justifies the choice of the newspaper as the object of the study presented in this article. So as to make the field of journalism in Brazil be understood, it has been chosen to analyze the performance of print journalism throughout the process of impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. Two important daily newspapers published in the Rio de Janeiro -São Paulo axis, *Folha de S. Paulo* (FSP) and *O Globo* were chosen, not randomly, but considering wide national circulation criterion, as well as the weight³ of those newspapers in forming public opinion.

By the end of 2015, the ousting of the Brazilian head of state became the main topic of the media coverage when the House Speaker, Eduardo Cunha, started the process of impeachment on December 2. That went on until August 31, 2016, when president Dilma was removed from office. Being an extended period, the analysis is limited to editions published from April 9th to September 1st, 2016 (42 editions). Empirical data is composed only of articles published on weekends, and of editorials, collected on any week day or at weekends. The observation began the week before the House of Representatives Special Commission voted for opening the process of impeachment and it lasted until the day immediately after the definitive termination of Dilma Rousseff's mandate.

Even though electing a woman for the nation's most important political position, in 2014, Brazil is still reluctant to welcome women as political representatives. The results of

² Online journalism has grown and caused changes in the media Market. Such debate, however, is out of the scope of this work.

³ According to the IVC (Institute for Verifying Circulation), in April 2016, *O Globo* had an average daily circulation of 181,000 and *Folha de S. Paulo*, 166,000. Source: Medium and Message. Available at: www.meioemensagem.com.br. Accessed on: December 6, 2019.

the 2014 election showed women conquering only 10,6% seats in Congress. Such percentage shows the country as 154^o in the world *ranking* according to women's participation in Parliament, as stated by the Interparliamentary Union studies⁴. Gender inequality is not limited to the political - institutional arena; in the media field, women are poorly viewed and are frequently pictured as stereotypes (BIROLI, 2010). Analyzing *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of the *impeachment* there is also an attempt to identify if there was a narrative diminishing female and disqualifying the President's figure, and which were the elements used by those means of communication.

Qualitative/quantitative methodology was used to count and categorize articles and editorials for further analytical treatment based on the concept of framework, an important analysis instrument to study how the media and the political field are related. It is of interest not only to understand how the print press constructed its discursive strategies and interfered in that political process but also to have a gender look on the material produced. The starting premise was that the press took a position for the *impeachment* and the criticisms about President Dilma involved sexism. Beyond the introduction, the text is divided into three more sections: in the first one, the scenery which led to the process of impeachment; then, a brief theoretical discussion; in the third and last one, the empirical material collected from the newspapers mentioned is analyzed. A few conclusive notes end the paper.

Chronology of “an announced coup”

What led to the impeachment of President Dilma should be understood from some electoral dispute (2010/2014). After two consecutive presidential mandates, president Lula appointed Rousseff to run for president in the 2010 elections, succeeding him. Dilma was born in the state of Minas Gerais, but moved to the state of Rio Grande do Sul in the 70's. She had never run for any electoral position, despite her career as a student and partisan militant, and being one of the founders of the political party PDT⁵. She also had a wide experience of government, having had positions in the municipal and state administrations under the PDT. As a State Secretary in charge of Mining and Energy (1998), Dilma got closer to the PT. Having experience in the strategic area of Energy, in 2002, she participated in the government transition team after Lula was elected President of Brazil. Such was her performance that she was appointed to be the Minister of Mining and Energy, and lately, Chief of Staff (2005 – 2010). That shows Dilma's strong party connections and refutes the criticisms received when she first ran for presidency. It was said then that she would be just a “technician lacking political experience”. Actually, the aim was just to disqualify her as a candidate.

4 ONU linked organization. Available at: <http://www.ipu.org>. Accessed on: June 15, 2017.

5 For almost 20 years Dilma was affiliated to the PDT; in 2001, together with a group of PDT politicians from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, left the party and joined the PT.

President Lula's engaged in backstage negotiations which led the PT and the PMDB political parties to form an electoral alliance aiming at Dilma Rousseff's victory in the 2010 presidential election. The previous PT governments, positively evaluated, and Lula's engagement in the campaign favored Dilma and she got elected President of Brazil. Despite such favorable scenario, the PT candidate had to be hard at it, especially with the opponent PSDB, which aimed getting back to power after having been defeated twice in a row by PT. The PSDB candidate José Serra and Dilma were entirely different since José Serra had participated in various electoral campaigns and been elected for municipal and state governments as well as for the Senate and for the House of Representatives. In spite of their political and ideological differences, both candidates had points in common such as a degree in Economy; they were also strongly connected to political parties and in the past were engaged in fighting the Military Dictatorship.

During the 2010 campaign the two main candidates running for presidency, as well as the media, got involved in a debate on the controversial theme of abortion. In an unfair attack to his opponent, Serra accused Dilma of having a pro-abortion position, giving rise to full exploitation of the issue. As a sequel to that, groups for and against abortion, hotly debated it; on one side the religious segment; on the other, the feminist movement. For days on end the press echoed the debate. Dilma's Catholic and Evangelical supports felt uncomfortable about the accusation, and the candidate had to publicly declare "being against abortion, but having to face the subject as a public health issue" (TRAJANO, 2010, ODILLA, 2010). Such statement was seen by the feminist groups as a backward step, since Dilma had previously stated an opposing view. The possible change of mind was exploited by the opposing candidacy and caused a negative effect on Dilma's campaign and, according to Mantovani (2014, p. 100), "there was a new fact" for the news: opinion polls showing that the abortion polemics had proved most harmful to the PT candidacy among the religious electorate, along the first round". Despite polemics, Dilma Rousseff was elected on the second round of voting. She won the electoral dispute polling more than 55 million votes (56% of voters), thus defeating her opponent, José Serra (43 million votes).

In the 2014 national elections, Dilma was again a PT – PMDB candidate for president. Then, the country's economy was in a different state, not in favor of the government. Likewise, Lula's involvement in the campaign was not so strong as in 2010. From the political point of view, the President faced difficulties in dealing with her supporters in parliament. As she started the campaign, she was politically frail. The main opposition party, PSDB, launched as candidate the experienced Senator Aécio Neves, from the state of Minas Gerais. In 2014 the electoral dispute was even harder than in 2010. Again, PT and PSDB were in opposing sides and for the fourth time in a row, the "toucans" - as the PSDB politicians are called - were defeated; this time, however, by a narrower margin. Dilma defeated Aécio by a little more than 3 million votes, i.e. just 3%. Such result clearly exposed how difficult would Dilma's second mandate be. It is worth highlighting the state of decline of the country's economy; the opposition's electoral growth between 2010 and 2014, so that the PSDB against

democratic principles refused to acknowledge its defeat; the behavior of the PMDB, the main partner in the presidential election. Disagreements opened up divisions within the PMDB whose members wouldn't entirely support Dilma's government, just like they did during the campaign. There was also some dissatisfaction with the government's policies and its measures to keep the country running ever since the PT took office, especially through the mass media.

Relating gender, print media and politics

For a long time, Political Science neglected the potential of the print media for interfering in political issues, but the contemporary scene demonstrates that a different standpoint should be adopted considering the media relevance. The various means of communication, especially newspapers, are the main tools to obtain information regarding the contemporary world of politics. Thus, media and politics constantly interact, in mutual interference, being the former where the latter is mainly staged (MIGUEL, 2002, LIMA, 1996).

The continuous interaction media-politics has been described by Bourdieu (1983, 1989, 2011). According to his theory, both are seen as social fields, in dispute and permanently fighting for interests inside and outside each one's field. Each field constitutes a set of social relations, structured and independent, sharing values, working rules and behavior. Within each set of social relationships, certain objectives and ideologies are legitimized, faced naturally by the field constituents, fighting dynamically, aiming at reaching a hegemonic view of the world from their field. In spite of having their own rules and autonomy, the media and political fields interact permanently, considering that past events will have mutual effect.

Champagne (1996) also argues that the media is a political performer, given its interfering capacity and the role it plays in political events contemporarily. In Champagne's (1996, p. 139) view, the media development and its central position as *locus* of political representation implies a "progressive dislocation of the political space gravity center from parliament to the media". Lima (1996, p. 239) uses a similar argument, emphasizing the media central position as a characteristic of the end of the XX century, to the point of turning into "stage and the privileged object of dispute for political power contemporarily".

In the media field, as well as in the political field, women are in a disadvantageous position. That also occurs in the Brazilian institutional politics, despite some advances in the last decades, such as the implementation of political party quotas in Brazil in 1996. The current legislation requires at least 30% candidates for proportional positions for one of the genders⁶. As much as such affirmative action is important, its practical effect has been slow. The female representation in the House of Representatives increased from 6,2% in 1994 to 15% in 2018, far behind the minimum amount required for female candidates.

6 Law 9.504/97.

The gender inequality picture is replicated by the media, in which female presence is less visible and, as Biroli (2010, p. 272) points out “such reduced media participation is magnified by gender stereotypes and linked to less prestigious positions, reinforcing the marginal position of women in politics”. The low visibility of women in the media is not mere reflex of the political reality; however, the press stimulates and reproduces it. Just like the means of communication corroborate the limits of socially created spaces inherent in men’s and women’s activities, having the females the private sphere and males, the public one⁷. The dichotomy public/private carries ambiguities and, according to Okin (2008), it affects especially women, since because of sex work division they end up destined to domestic chores. They are not seen as suitable for politics, while men are in charge of political activities and everything related to the public sphere. Studies which intersect the concepts of gender, politics, and media have demonstrated that the media performs in such a way as to reinforce that stereotyped scenery. According to Biroli (2011, p. 73-74),

Stereotypes appear as a dimension of a view of the world imposed by groups and dominant groups strata, and the media appears as a central instrument of its spreading. (...) That occurs, particularly, when analyses focus on women belonging to the private sphere as something natural, as well as family arrangements justifying and reinforcing such view, as the emphasis given to the female body and physical appearance.

Lately, studies have been undertaken aiming at measuring the media position facing political phenomena and political characters. We have joined those studies and propose the use of qualitative/quantitative methodology for analysis, the framing technique⁸ besides the Valuation Analysis Methodology (MAV). From a wide perspective, the framings

can be understood as more general, socially built interpretative marks which allow people to make sense of events and social situations (...); they are resources which organize discourse using specific practice (selection, emphasis, exclusion) and eventually construct a determined interpretation of facts (PORTO, 2004, p. 78-81).

Transposed to the analysis of the press, the idea is that the media forms its contents on interpretative pictures, which allow readers not only to learn what is proposed as a theme but also how the events are framed, causing the effect of constructing reality. That also helps give a form to political facts, limiting the possibilities of the spectators apprehend themes.

⁷ The use of such categories as opposing spaces disregards ample feminist criticism which signals that there are no clear limits to what separate each sphere from the other (PATEMAN, 2013, OKIN, 2008).

⁸ As such, the concept is present in *Frame Analysis*, by sociologist Goffman (1986).

The framings may be ‘positively’, ‘negatively’, ‘ambivalently’ biased or ‘neutral’, according to the MAV. Even being aware of the limitations of news identification based on a unique framework, as well as the difficulties implied, such as ignoring the contradictory character of the media and the information narrative, it is our belief the possibility of using valuation as there is not only one way to investigate what position the media takes. It is acknowledged the tension implied in using such methodology. What must be considered are specific texts, not how biased a newspaper is or any other aspect of the communication process. Various studies on the means of communication in Brazil have identified Manichaeism and polarization in the media contents (FERES JUNIOR, 2016). In order to enhance our methodology choice, we will take advantage of the concept of framing, qualitatively, so as to reach our aim to understand the intersection of politics and journalism and the gender theme connection. Thus, women in political positions are often made invisible by the media, or else have their physical attributes enhanced, to the detriment of other qualities. This being one of the ways sex roles are naturalized and gender hierarchy is established.

The print media narrative of the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff

The aim of this last section is to move towards the identification of the position taken by the press along the *impeachment process*, as well as analyzing such narrative from a gender prospective. The data collected from April 9th to September 1st, 2016 refers to the kind of press coverage in the newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*, in which a tendency pro impeachment can be identified, as well as gender biased elements in picturing President Dilma. For that purpose, the main discourse strategy used by those newspapers was to give her opponents plenty of opportunity to express themselves, on the one side, and to silence the President on the other. Besides, her characteristics as a political leader were described negatively.

The methodology adopted here starts from selecting the newspaper articles in which the words “*impeachment*” or “*impediment*” were mentioned in the given period, how frequently and in what form the theme appeared in the selected newspapers⁹. Quantitative analysis proves how central the topic “*impeachment/impediment*” was on print media along the 21 weeks subject to analysis: 111 newspaper articles were published. Sixty-two articles were published in *Folha de S. Paulo* and forty-nine in *O Globo*, apart from editorials. Qualitative analysis allows, using framework resources, identification of the players who could give voice to their views and the ones who remained invisible or silent throughout the process. Empirical data indicate that male voices are predominant in the news, while spokeswomen are minimized in both newspapers. Referring to *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage, the relevant role ‘the big media’ had in that political ‘game’ is evident, in that it contributed to the impediment of the President. According to Matos (2016, p. 225),

⁹ *Folha de S. Paulo* chose the term “*impeachment*”, while *O Globo* opted for “*impediment*”.

“the media explicitly participated in the orchestrated process, as an instrumental figure. That is why it is also a media characterized coup. As I was saying, it is a judicial, parliamentary and media coup”. Besides, constructing a negative picture of Dilma, print media pictured her as someone unable to the office of President, and ended up by reinforcing non- symmetrical positions of gender roles in politics, supporting unequal power hierarchy.

Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge that gender is one of the variables that go through political processes in general and, particularly, in the matter of president Dilma’s impediment. It is important to notice that the patriarchal system permeates and structures social and political life and the female presence in the public sphere - especially in the representative arena – is seen as threatening to the *status quo*, where male dominance prevails. The aggressive reactions to the President’s image had already been identified at the beginning of her second term of office, which according to researcher Matos (2016), express ‘sexist political violence’. The approach adopted by the two newspapers supports and validates the patriarchal discourse about the female role and position in society, connected to the private/domestic sphere, thus inhibiting the development and the participation of women in the public sphere and in decisive sectors. According to Scott (2005), the male / female non-symmetrical relations of power are exactly the ones which connect this group to minority, despite the fact that women represent 51% of voters in Brazil.

‘Positive’, ‘negative’, ‘ambivalent’ or ‘neutral’ are the frames of reference used for each piece of writing selected¹⁰. In order to minimize occasional discrepancies in using each category, the definitions and criteria previously used by Aldé et al (2007) were taken as reference, being adapted to the context of this analysis. Thus, ‘negative valency’ has been adopted for articles containing any caveat, criticism or display or expressing aggressiveness (either moral, political or personal) to President Dilma from her opponents or from the writer of the article; also as a result of unfavorable comments on the government or personal, indicated in polls. Articles expressing third party’s opinions obtained ‘positive valency’, favorable to the President (either moral, personal or political opinion) as well as favorable opinions of the President or the government, indicated in polls. Finally, ‘neutral valency’, was the frame of reference for articles about Dilma and / or the government without any moral, political or personal evaluation from the writer of the article. In case of balance positive/negative, the article is considered ‘neutral’. And if the position of the writer / the newspaper is not clearly expressed, the frame of reference is ‘ambivalent’.

The data collected along 21 weeks provided a *corpus* of 167 texts published in the newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* on the theme of *impeachment*. Most of it are articles or news reports (66,5%)¹¹; there were 56 editorials, i.e. 33,5% of total. To work with this analytical *corpus*, there was a substantial cut as to the type of material analyzed, being

¹⁰ Other editorial elements, the titles / headlines, are also taken into consideration, since they give the reader orientation and must be analyzed as well.

¹¹ Two interviews published in *Folha de S. Paulo* are included

‘opinion’ the editorials¹² and ‘information’ the pieces of writing published in the political section and on the front page of the selected newspapers. Such division is an attempt to define the section for ‘facts’ and the section intended for exposing the political position of the newspaper. The analysis starts with the 111 ‘pieces of information’; the editorials are approached further on.

The discourse construction of the *impeachment* in *Folha de S. Paulo* and in *O Globo* and gender bias

The quantitative analysis of the material published in the print media allows valency evaluation, determining the approach of newspaper coverage - positive or negative. In general lines, the empirical material suggests the press coverage was unfavorable to the President along the *impeachment* process. From the beginning of the observation it was noticed that in both papers the discourse strategy was to establish a negative image of Dilma, labelling her as “incompetent”, for example, and connecting her to political scandals. Thus, the President was considered not qualified or apt for office and, simultaneously, the process of *impeachment* was legitimized. Araújo (2018) points out that “gender biased political disqualification” occurred prior and throughout the proceedings to impeach Dilma also in other newspapers.¹³ It can be confirmed that such negative approach was oriented towards unifying *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage. The *impeachment* was chronologically introduced to the reader. The main characters were the same (Dilma, Lula, Temer and the PT), the events that compose the coverage are similar, and both newspapers acknowledge that being an enormous political and mass-media event, to which must be added the gender dimension, to be approached further on.

Comparing valency data in the two newspapers (Chart 1), it can be noticed they converge: the majority of articles are negative, both in *Folha de S. Paulo* and in *O Globo*, being equivalent the percentage of articles with such view. Similarly, the ‘neutral’ approach occurs in both newspapers’ articles, filling equally 1/3 of the coverage. Neither *Folha* nor *O Globo* diverge as to the percentage of ‘positive’ articles. Those were extremely rare throughout the process of *impeachment*, as is demonstrated in the chart below.

Chart 1 – Distribution of valences X ‘information’ articles

| Valencies | <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> | <i>O Globo</i> |
|-----------|--------------------------|----------------|
| | (%) | (%) |
| Negative | 54,1 | 55,8 |
| Positive | 9,8 | 11,5 |

¹² *Folha de S. Paulo* published 22 editorials in the period referred to; *O Globo* published 34.

¹³ The covers and articles in the magazines *Veja* and *IstoÉ* (April 1st and 6th, respectively) are paradigmatic examples of such approach. Cf. Matos (2016) and Araújo (2018).

| | | |
|------------|------|------|
| Neutral | 32,8 | 32,7 |
| Ambivalent | 3,3 | - - |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Source: the authors' research

The orientation of the valences shown above focuses on a subjacent issue, equally important. 'Impartiality' and 'objectivity', basic values frequently praised by the media, are compromised, according to the empirical data presented. That issue leads to other undertaken studies in communication and politics which focus critically on that binomial, such as what Miguel e Biroli (2010, p. 68) stated:

Although a critical view of objectivity and impartiality have spread in the last decades, the journalistic discourse is still presented as if coming from a 'universal' point of view. Adhesion to such discourse is supported by the productive professional routines and it is indispensable, not only to achieve respectability in the journalistic field, but also social legitimacy of the field. (...) It is impartiality that differentiates the journalistic discourse from other agents' who can try – and frequently do – mobilize such values, but always out of interest (being partial).

Those authors destroy the idea of the media being 'impartial' and 'objective'. Contrary to that belief, there is actually a speech conveniently placed in a specific situation, disputing space to construct a hegemonic discourse. Studies of the media behavior undertaken by Aldé et al (2007) signaled the value 'objectivity' was compromised in the Brazilian media coverage of the 2006 presidential elections. The valences shown in chart 1 also indicate that there was no balance in *O Globo's* nor in *Folha de S. Paulo's* respective approach. The predominance of negative content articles on the theme *impeachment* is evidence of the approach of those newspapers on that political event. As to the media position, Nunes (2004, p. 360) states,

(...) that is the new role played by mass communication media, politically and party biased, constructors of a unique discourse, unilateral, speech-monotone system.

Those means of communication - that served democracy relevantly in the past—long ago abandoned the classical role of social mediators. Nowadays, they are players. They do not report; they interfere in the fact and turn into the fact itself;(...) they do not inform, they construct opinions; they do not report the news, they express opinion.

Another important editorial element – useful to analyze valences- are the headlines and titles of the articles / reports published. In April, there were plenty of headlines/titles with a negative appeal. Coincidentally, it was on April 11 that the House of Representatives Special Commission approved the decision to impeach President Dilma. A week later (04/18), Congressman Eduardo Cunha sent to the President of the Senate the 12,044-page volume of the document. In the first two weeks in April, *Folha de S. Paulo*'s headlines were in Section 'A' (front page and inside): 'The President does not like Congress', states the Congressman in charge of the report' (4/9); 'Statistician predicts 72% votes pro impeachment' (4/9); 'Temer accuses Dilma of lying and says he will keep programmes' (4/17); 'Cars sound horns and people cry to voting result on Paulista' (4/18). In *O Globo*, in the same period: 'Toucans unify discourse favorable to oust Dilma' (4/9); 'Warning: Dilma near ousting' (4/18).

There was massive news coverage of *impeachment* as the selection of headlines / titles above illustrate. The contents of the articles also reveal both newspapers tendency shown in the information section. Thus the dynamics of the information section is similar to that displayed in the opinion sections, in which the editorial view is made explicit. That way, the traditional borderline between one section and the other disappears. Such Brazilian print media behaviour, which expresses a position taken against the PT, had already been identified by Aldé et al (2007) while studying the coverage given of the 2006 presidential election by the newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo*, *Estado de São Paulo* and *O Globo*.

It is also important to highlight the amount of effort taken by both *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* as, on the one hand, setting the agenda and guiding the Legislative body to the rhythm of the political process; on the other hand, constructing the impediment of the President in advance. That is, the print media had already set Dilma's fate, and she had been ousted even before the Senate decided. The media field interference in the field of politics had also been raised by Fausto Neto (1995, p. 120) while analyzing ex-President's Collor *impeachment*. The author states that the press acts aiming to "form the president's trial according to the rites of the media processes".

Print media displayed a tendency pro-*impeachment*, which is clear as editorials are analyzed. Observation along 146 days reveals 56 editorials were published, mostly in *O Globo* (34), featuring one editorial every four days on average. *Folha de S. Paulo* published one per week, bringing the total to 22 editorials during that period. Despite not varying much the frequency of editorials, both newspapers maintained the critical and negative view of Dilma Rousseff's government and the opinion section was always used to advocate the ousting of the President. Similarly to what happened in the 'information' section, Dilma's impeachment was considered as a certainty, in spite of the parliamentary proceedings in the lower house or in the Senate. On April 13, *Folha de S. Paulo* announced the outcome, even before the parliamentary session in which the Representatives voted for proceeding, which happened four days after the publication. In the editorial 'Dilma and the pendulum,' *Folha de S. Paulo*'s opinion was,

The scenery remains undefined, but a changing climate in Congress now indicates a tendency towards the approval of *impeachment* in the lower house. (...) Incidental or not, the disclosure means the vice-president is getting ready to take the vacant presidential seat, as he is familiar with the changes in the wind (FOLHA, 04/13/2016, p. 2).

It is noticeable in the highlighted fragment of text about the impediment of the President, that Dilma, the main character and focus of the process, is hardly mentioned. The public figures mentioned are Lula and Temer, male proponents actively interested in the process, e.g. ‘Lula came back to Brasilia in order to mobilize the physiological arsenal to strengthen the pendulum (...), towards Dilma’ (FOLHA, 04/13/2016, p. 2).

Most of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* editorials signal a position favorable to the ousting of the President, being the negative valences predominant. There is no questioning or critical reflection on the process of impeachment. For the newspapers, the ousting of Dilma was the only way. As *Folha de S. Paulo* stated on the day the lower house would vote for the continuity of the process:

(...) No doubt, a victory of *impeachment* this Sunday (17) means, to the vast majority of Brazilians, fair punishment for an incompetent and arrogant government that, deluded into its own isolation, destroyed economy, plunged into corruption and expressed disdain for the institutions (...) (FOLHA, 17/04/2016, A2, p.2).

On the day after the voting, in *O Globo*, the editorial “Near the End” announced the President’s fate, emphasizing her isolation and weakness, which would prevent her from reverse the process. The newspaper stated, ‘Yesterday Dilma Rousseff started to bid farewell to the presidential seat. (...) Isolated, (...) Dilma will hardly be strong enough to prevent the Senate from starting the process to remove her from power, voting out by simple majority along the next few weeks’ (*O GLOBO*, 04/18/2016, p. 1).

Folha de S. Paulo and *O Globo* often rejected the ‘parliamentary coup’ thesis raised by Dilma and her supporters. There were eight editorials in *O Globo* addressing the ‘coup thesis’ as farcical, more frequently in August¹⁴. The same position was taken by *Folha de S. Paulo* which labelled that thesis as ‘weird’ (21st April) to the point of accusing foreign press of ‘irresponsibility’ and ‘recklessness’ on supporting that idea. The editorial published in *O Globo* at the end of May sets an example of the narrative adopted,

(...) Dilma Rousseff, isolated in the Planalto Palace, was actively committed to a series of eloquent indoors speeches, repeating emphatically, the illusory thesis

¹⁴ The editorial dates: 4/20 and 21; 05/31; August 5, 9, 11, 25 and 30.

that she was the victim of a ‘coup’. That was useless, and the Senate accepted the requirement for *impeachment* on the grounds of responsibility crimes. (...). The suspended President maintained silence until last Sunday, when an interview given to ‘*Folha de S. Paulo*’ was published. She took advantage of that to develop the smart thesis of ‘coup’ – internally accepted by supporters, and abroad by allies, sympathizers, and ill-informed people (...) (O GLOBO, 05/31/2016).

According to the highlighted fragment of text above, the *impeachment* was formally required, based on fiscal and budget responsibility crimes committed by the President as there were decrees for additional public expenditure without Congressional approval, and the so called ‘fiscal pedaling’. That is a National Treasure practice, consisting in deliberately delaying transferring cash to public and private banks aiming at artificially improving the Union accounts. *O Globo* spared no effort to demonstrate that the President had actually committed fiscal and budget crimes. 11 editorials focused on the ‘fiscal pedaling’ theme, half of which published in August¹⁵, at the final stage of the impediment process. Besides that theme, the newspaper also considered the judgement was beyond the ‘fiscal crisis’, involving ‘corruption’ (4/18), ‘the big oil scandal’ and the ‘economic failure’ of Dilma’s government (5/23).

On the other hand, ‘*Folha de S. Paulo*’ acknowledged on August the 4th and 21st editorials that ‘fiscal pedaling’ was not the actual reason for the impeachment. In the editorial ‘Page Over’, it was stated: ‘(...) The legal reasons for the impeachment, thoroughly debated, turned out as questionable as relatively small in face of what is known of irregularities and corruption in Brazilian politics. (...)’ (FOLHA, 08/21/2016, p.2). According to that newspaper, the main reason for Dilma being ousted is the allegedly bad management of Economy and, consequently, the crisis originated; thus the reason to intervene, so that the country ‘gets back onto the right track’ (8/21). That is, the formal reason for ‘pedaling’ no longer makes sense, and all the PT government actions, as well as their political -ideological orientation is what really matters to throw Dilma out of office.

Besides the economy and the consequences of the crisis for the country, Dilma’s image was focused on editorials in which the negative biased valences are predominant, which was also identified in articles /reports about the Government. In both newspapers there were, repeatedly, sentences in which Dilma’s public figure is described as someone inept for the presidential office. *O Globo* expressed strong criticism, constructing an image of the President, using a great number of derogatory features. There was an attack on the government’s economic policies and Dilma was held responsible for the fiscal and economy crisis, being accused of either ‘not taking any action’ (4/12) or making ‘irresponsible economy decisions’ (5/12), so that her image as an ‘efficient and inflexible manager’ (6/4) was deeply

15 The ‘fiscal pedaling’ was mentioned on: 04/23; 5/04; 06 /5 and 17; 7/14; 08/11, 25, 28, 30 and 31; 9/01.

affected. She was also called a ‘liar’ (4/20), ‘an electoral fraud’ (4/11) and ‘one who spreads panic’ (4/18) in a generally lethal scenario, having no more supporters (9/1). The President was also connected to corruption, due to ‘the big oil scandal’, (5/23) and was accused of spending public money on personal items (6/4). Negative personal features were mentioned too. Dilma was labelled as ‘irascible’ (4/17), ‘authoritarian’, ‘stubborn’, ‘meticulous and controlling’ (4/18), ‘unkind’ (5/13), ‘impulsive’ (8/28), ‘irritable’, ‘authoritarian’, confused’ (8/31). On April 18, an extensive report about the President was published under the title ‘Dilma: the decline of a president by chance’ (O GLOBO, 4/18/2016, p. 03). The core of that piece of writing, whose authors were three journalists from the Brasilia branch, is an assessment of Dilma and her government. In the extensive article, Dilma, besides being described as someone who ‘is not a politician’, was connected to Lula in a derogatory manner: ‘Lula’s woman’ and ‘Dilma, Lula’s creature’¹⁶. The type of narrative presented in the editorials, especially in this report, has a double effect: to show Dilma’s inadequacy for the presidential office, on the one hand; also to serve as an indication that women only stand a chance to access the field of political representation under male protection. That makes them fragile subjects, dependent and unable to move on their own in the political sphere. Subtly, the newspaper reinforces the traditional gender roles and signals that the world of politics is not a place woman should aim at, which is a particularly worrying prospective in a country where female political representation is not significant. As Biroli (2018, p. 79) states, “Rousseff is attacked, and, at the same time, women’s role as political players is at stake”.

In its editorials *Folha de S. Paulo* stated the main ‘political sin’ committed by the President was that she would not ‘open a dialogue with Congress’ (4/17). As to the economy, she was labelled as ‘inefficient’ (5/9), ‘bad manager’ (8/28), ‘failed to run the economy competently’ (12/5) and handled a “disastrous economy policy” (8/11). For those reasons she was being ‘rejected by the people’ (8/4). Dilma’s personality traits were negatively highlighted; while *O Globo* emphasized her being ‘blunt’ (5/13), *Folha de S. Paulo* mentioned her ‘rudeness’ (4/15). Assessing Dilma’s defense speech at the Senate, *Folha de S. Paulo* stated that she ‘was firm and emotional, but not eloquent’ (8/30). Thus, while the newspaper enhances something positive, that aspect is emptied as it is connected to criticism. It can be understood Dilma is always somewhat inadequate as a political character. Whereas ‘bluntness’ and ‘rudeness’ can be seen as public men’s qualities, they are not proper for women, since they do not fit the expected female stereotype. Araújo (2018, p. 44-45) considers ‘ambiguity’ marked the construction of Dilma Rousseff’s image along her political trajectory,

16 In an editorial on August 2, *Folha de S. Paulo* mentioned ‘Dilma, the ‘lamp post choice’, to run to succeed Lula at the Planalto (...)’ (FOLHA, 8/2/2016, p.02) Access on: June 5th, 2017.

(...) The ambiguity of always being misplaced. Such image seems to have been used as a kind of supporting mechanism so as to make it viable to turn politically illegal someone to be thrown out of office. The ambiguity arises from personifying Dilma as someone lacking substance, virtually empty of personal qualities, having no intellectual capacity, no experience nor political capability, a worthless human being, in spite of going through life intensely. At the same time, she is a threatening, authoritarian, manipulative and greedy person. (...).

Another aspect to be mentioned, as to those two newspapers coverage, is related to strictly listening to and giving voice to the two presidential contestants; that is, there was no pluralism of opinions. Along the impediment process, *Folha de S. Paulo*, as well as *O Globo* made some effort to balance, quantitatively, listening to and giving voice to President Dilma's supporters and opponents. The articles and reports point to a larger number of supporters than of Rousseff's opponents. For example, in *O Globo*, 30,6% of articles mention Dilma's supporters, while her opponents are predominant in 22,4% of them. In *Folha de S. Paulo*, on the other hand, there is more balance between the two groups' views: 25,5% gave voice to the President's allies while in 22,6% of the texts to her critics. Such data, though, do not necessarily mean the ousted President was given voice throughout the *impeachment*; much on the contrary, she was silenced by the press. Most of the contents in both newspapers exposed the President without publishing her words. In the 62 texts published in *Folha de S. Paulo* which were analyzed, not more than 11 (17,7%) reveal the President speaking on her own, while in *O Globo*, only just 8 (16,3%) texts out of 49 allow Dilma to express herself. Silencing Dilma is a way of erasing the female figure from the political activity.

As much as in *Folha de S. Paulo* as in *O Globo*, Dilma was defended throughout the *impeachment* process by her male supporters, especially ex-president Lula and the then Union Attorney General José Eduardo Cardozo, but other PT members were also supportive. 35 male sources interviewed by *Folha de S. Paulo* and 25 by *O Globo* could be identified. In parallel with that, *Folha de S. Paulo* published four reports in which some women were interviewed; four out of seven of them criticized the President, while three were supporters. *O Globo* also brought in female sources in seven reports; two interviewees expressed support to the President, one of them expressed criticism while three of them were considered neutral, since they were political analysts and researchers in the field. Based on the whole of texts analyzed, it was possible to identify Dilma Rousseff being silenced along her *impeachment* coverage. Other women, Dilma's supporters and active participants in the Brazilian political institutional field, had their voices also silenced. Since the President could hardly express and defend herself, the male members of her party were in charge of speaking on her behalf to both newspapers. The opposition was also represented by male voices expressing their views. In such context, as Dilma's public figure was (de)constructed and silenced, the gender biased coverage given by the newspapers here analyzed can be clearly observed.

Concluding remarks

Dilma Rousseff's *impeachment*, in 2016, is a process that must be analyzed considering multiple variables and the participation of various political players, such as the judiciary, the legislature and the media. Based on the media central role in politics nowadays, it has been decided to analyze the Brazilian print press performance from a gender prospective. It has been understood the media discourse triggered that variable in such a way that it was an important element as the process went on to the eventual ousting of the President in August 2016. The ultimate aim was to identify the position taken by two important national newspapers throughout the *impeachment* process, identifying sexist views in the *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage. This study provides concrete evidence that, in both newspapers, there was predominance of negative contents, suggesting encouragement to Rousseff's impediment. Those newspapers' systematic approach confirms the premise on which was based the present work.

A view on the *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage, in the period of time under study, made it possible to identify gender bias in the way President Dilma public figure was (de)constructed. The patriarchal system that structures the Brazilian society defines that the public space is a male domain and, when women enter that arena, they are seen as aliens, being imposed demands and unreasonably expected to be flawless. Such logic underlies the frequent unsupportive attitude newly elected female politicians gain from peers, as well as being discredited in the press. From the moment Dilma Rousseff was appointed as Chief of Staff, in 2005, until she was suspended from office, she had to face adverse conditions, either as people joined rallies against her government, or in less ostensible ways. This analysis demonstrates that both newspapers, at first, picture an image of Dilma as a 'manager', highlighting how tough she was as the Chief of Executive. While the newspapers emphasize the technical character of her administration, she is also said to be 'incompetent' and a 'bad manager', implying she failed both as a ruler and as a technician. Those attributes, and some other features, establish a negative image of Rousseff as a politician incapable of being the President of the Nation. The narrative adopted by the print media ends in "challenging women's capability as political players" (BIROLI, 2018, p. 79).

The *impeachment* process began based on charges of Dilma manipulating the federal budget, focusing especially on the so called 'fiscal pedaling'. However, *Folha de S. Paulo* as well as *O Globo* (less intensely) listed other reasons for ousting Rousseff from presidency. The newspapers justified the President being thrown out of office as the country was facing an economic and fiscal crisis due to the PT ruler's incompetent governance. The thesis that there was a 'coup' being mounted in the country, exposed by the President and allies, was systematically dismissed as completely worthless. Whenever the President revealed her opponents' maneuvers, she was diminished and what she said was deconstructed. *O Globo* made its position more explicit than *Folha de S. Paulo* did, and it was possible to identify

in *O Globo* editorials, not only defense of the President's ousting, but also an ideologically biased anti-PT position.

Besides the negative construction of Dilma as a public figure, *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* coverage reveals some sexism as, repeatedly, Dilma's voice is silenced all through the weeks preceding her being thrown out of the presidency. It is understood that, connected to the massive option of listening to and giving voice to male sources, the socially accepted idea is that the political arena is a definitely male territory. Thus, women would be defined as inappropriate to take responsibility for acting in the public arena. Therefore, the print press - especially *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* - either openly or not, contributes to make natural the scenery of low female participation in the Brazilian institutional politics. That happens either by depreciating the public image of the President or silencing her throughout the political process she was the protagonist of, or still by lessening female participation as sources of information. Thus women are given unimportant roles or positions, reinforcing asymmetry in representative politics and supporting unequal power hierarchy.

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