

Marta ‘Cartoonized:’ Depictions of First Lady Marta Sahagún in Mexican Political Cartoons

Abstract

This paper focuses on gendered depictions of Mexican First Lady Marta Sahagún (2001-2006) in political cartoons. This study entails content and discourse analysis of 51 political cartoons and it was designed according to the study performed by Charlotte Templin featuring Hillary Clinton. In here I argue that although depictions of Marta Sahagún are consistent with the gendered portrayals attributed to other First Ladies around the world, Marta Sahagún presents a unique case because her depictions reflect on the Mexican President and the Presidency as a whole.

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In Mexico the First Ladyship is rarely discussed in the media or even in political settings. However, President Fox’s Presidency (2000-2006) showed the need to redefine the First Ladyship in Mexico. First Lady Marta Sahagún (2000-2006) became the most public First Lady since the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Yet, the media attention that she received portrayed particular perceptions on the First Ladyship and its relationship with the Presidency.

Marta Sahagún and her presidential aspirations were criticized and ridiculed in the media, particularly in political cartoons. Sahagún, the first Presidential wife to openly express intentions to run for a Presidential election, claimed to be redefining the First Ladyship. Nonetheless, some people were concerned over the way she was doing it.

It has become obvious that the Mexican First Ladyship needs to be redefined. However that is something that has to be negotiated between the Presidency, political actors, the media and society. Until now, the First Ladyship remains a highly traditional and culturally-bounded institution where traditional roles are perpetuated.

This paper offers content and discourse analyses of Marta Sahagún’s portrayals in political cartoons between January 2004, when Sahagún first expressed interest in the Presidential candidacy, and July 2004, when she had to renounce her ambitions. Political cartoons were chosen because they reflect cultural assumptions on the First Ladyship while providing particular opinions on the events that took place.

The goal of this study is to determine how Marta Sahagún was portrayed in political cartoons and the gender discourses surrounding her depictions. Similar studies have observed that political cartoons tend to reflect particular gender assumptions in relation to the Presidency and the First Ladyship.

Introducing Marta

The Mexican First Ladyship is not a formal office; however, like in other countries, the institution has strong symbolic connotations and is attributed cultural notions of femininity. In addition to be recognized for being a support for their husbands, Mexican First Ladies have often worked behind the scenes on welfare programs. The majority of them have been related to children’s and women’s issues¹. Some First Ladies founded schools, others created institutions for the protection of women and children while someone else institutionalized Mother’s Day². Clara Scherer explains that these are activities that reflect what women already do at home. The First Ladyship, without question, assumes that women have the appropriate character to promote things like health care, welfare and women’s issues in spite of a First Lady’s desire to perform these activities³. Sefchovich acknowledges that customary practices in the First Ladyship reflect social

¹ “Se acuerda usted de las "Primeras Damas" priístas.” *Contenido*. August, 2003, 58.

² “Se acuerda usted de las "Primeras Damas" priístas,” 58.

³ Sara Sefchovich, *Veinte preguntas ciudadanas a la mitad más visible de la pareja presidencial con todo y sus respuestas (también) ciudadanas*. (México: Oceano, 2004): 21.

agreements between the electorate and the presidency and provide legitimacy.⁴ Nonetheless, she explains that, despite the constraints, Mexican First Ladies have also been able to participate in other policy-making projects⁵ (2004); yet, the institution remains under the Presidency's control and the First Ladyship's activities automatically become the legacy of the Presidency (Wekkin, 2002).

Few First Ladies in Mexico have been as public as Marta Sahagún de Fox. Unlike most First Ladies since the Mexican Revolution, Sahagún married Fox after he had won the historical 2000 election. Fox, the first opposition president after 70 years of one-party rule, achieved the presidency by promising change and real democracy.

Marta Sahagún became prominent in the media before her marriage to President Fox due to the affair that they maintained before and during his campaign (Wornat, 2003). The 'celebrization' of her image was such that their relationship, and later their marriage, was discussed in national and international media outlets (2004). Wornat (2003) shows that Marta Sahagún was first 'celebritized' for her relationship with President Fox and later demonized for her ascension to the First Ladyship from a Presidential spokesperson position.

From early in Fox's presidential period, Marta's ambitions were questioned. Her close relationship to the President and their affair were a matter of debate, and some even imply that Fox's political advisors and members of cabinet suggested the marriage as a strategy to shun Sahagún's political aspirations and decreasing her political power (Wornat, 2003) by transforming her into a traditional First Lady.

Once in the First Ladyship, Marta Sahagún became a source of criticism towards Fox's administration due to her involvement in the government, her public comments on political issues and her displays of influence over Fox's decisions. While Wornat (2003) criticizes Marta for the power she held during Fox's presidency, Sefchovich (2004) argues that Sahagún did not comply with the principles of democracy, which include sovereignty, rule of law, legitimacy, and the limits of power.

The power Sahagún displayed in public was troublesome for many politicians (Wornat, 2003), the media (Wornat, 2003; Baca and L.R.C., 2005), and a number of citizens (Sefchovich, 2004). Sefchovich (2004) questions the legitimacy of that power since it was acquired through marriage and not by electoral means. However, Edwards and Chen (2000) challenge this argument by explaining that despite the number of cabinet positions that are not democratically elected, legitimacy of Presidential advisors or cabinet members is rarely questioned. Yet, unlike Marta, few of them attain those positions without achievement.

Much of the media coverage pertaining Sahagún focuses on her political aspirations and ambitions (Wornat, 2003; Baca and L.R.C., 2005; Thompson, 2004; Mexico's Evita, 2004) instead of on the policy issues or her position on specific situations. Irregularities in Marta's activities were major points of criticism in Sahagún's media coverage. However, the protection provided by President Fox during these events was a key source of disapproval, against Fox and his administration, for the media and some political actors. Moreover, Sahagún's appeals to 'feminist' arguments (Wornat, 2003; Sefchovich, 2004; Thompson, 2004), were used to undermine her ambitions. Although female politicians may use 'gender-relevant' strategies (Scharrer, 2002), Marta's comments were not perceived as 'feminist' or even women-friendly by some people. Sefchovich (2004) critiques Marta's use of 'feminist' arguments for their essentialist undertone and their simplistic definition of women as a category. Nonetheless, these were employed by the

⁴ Sefchovich, 13-17.

⁵ Sefchovich, 144-152.

media to question Sahagún's political viability. Finally, criticisms against her 'essentialized' her role as the Presidential wife and undermined her capacity to transform and redefine the First Ladyship; an urgent political matter for many people in Mexico (Sefchovich, 2004; Peters, 2001).

Conceptual Framework

Gender in Political Cartoons

Gender is commonly conceived as a social construct that tends to be related to power, status and economics (Crawford, 2003). Crawford (2003) argues that gendering may determine a person's behavior because gender can be used to manipulate information and produce essentialist views on men and women.

The media, in general, have been acknowledged to have a different reaction towards female politicians than to male ones (Gilmartin, 2001). The media have also encouraged the 'celebrization' of women in politics by bypassing female political achievements and focusing, instead, on specific representations of femininity in which women are objectified and understood according to a 'virgin-whore' dichotomy (Van Zoonen, 2006). This is problematic not only because it undermines women's political capabilities and diminishes the value of women's political participation, but it also objectifies female politicians by highlighting their body image and personal characteristics (Van Zoonen, 2006; Gilmartin, 2004).

On one hand, the media are likely to ignore women, affecting their visibility (Edwards, 2007). On the other, whenever coverage is available, it tends to focus on women's political viability and not on their political achievements or position on the issues (Gilmartin, 2004). The 'celebrization' of women in politics leads many of them to imitate men in order to be taken into account and be considered equally capable (as cited in Van Zoonen, 2006, p.292). Yet, some argue that women are more successful when they can appeal to motherhood and nurturing roles while in political positions (Van Zoonen, 2006; Jalalzai and Krook, 2010).

Women's presence or absence in political cartoons tells us something about cartoonists' treatment of political women and First Ladies. While there are still not as many women as men in political positions, cartoonists might contribute to women's misrepresentation in the media by not commenting on their political performance and focusing instead on physical and personality features (Edwards, 2007). In addition, the gendering of politics in political cartoons highlights traditional gender roles and excludes women from serious political commentary (2007). Sena (1985) acknowledges that in terms of politics, women are expected to behave in specific ways. The range of female acceptable behaviours is by far more limited than the ones accepted from male politicians. For instance, women must be perceived to be assertive and strong without being threatening and aggressive; besides, women are coerced into being 'masculine' and are expected to interact as males in the political arena without abandoning 'female' nurturing and motherly behaviours (Sena, 1985). This is often expressed in political cartoons. Yet, Templin (1999) explains that cartoonists are products of their specific societies and historical contexts. Consequently, at times, cartoons may not be women-friendly.

Political Cartoons and the First Ladyship

First Ladies, in general, tend to have less presence in the media and in political cartoons. Nonetheless, this might either be part of the secondary role attributed to the First Ladyship or it may be part of the visibility issues faced by women in politics in general (Edwards, 2007). However, some First Ladies are more prominent than others, and they are likely to receive more media attention. Hillary Clinton, for example, has been portrayed in a number of political cartoons and her depictions have been analyzed in various academic papers including those by Templin (1999), Edwards and Chen (2000) and Scharrer (2002).

Political cartoons focusing on First Ladies provide a commentary on the Presidency and reflect assumptions on the symbolic role of virtuous femininity embodied in the First Ladyship (Edwards and Chen, 2000). Moreover, depictions of the First Ladyship constantly reinforce patriarchal understandings of gender and essentialist views on sex-roles (2000).

Many authors acknowledge that political cartoons pay special attention to First Ladies who disrupt the gender order, such as Hillary Clinton, or who are the 'ideals' of the institution, like Barbara Bush (Edwards, 2007; Scharrer, 2002; Templin, 1999; Edwards and Chen, 2000). While 'proper' First Ladies are treated more positively (Edwards and Chen, 2000), cartoonists tend to punish First Ladies who transgress the limits of the traditional First Ladyship role (Edwards, 2007). Reprimands against political women may not be as acceptable anymore; however, it is not uncommon to see cartoons of First Ladies who are often scolded for 'misbehaving' (Edwards and Chen, 2000).

Commentary on Presidential wives tends to be a criticism of the Presidency (Edwards and Chen, 2000). The binary that endorses men as the dominant part of the marriage and women as the weak half is threatened when a First Lady is perceived to be a protagonist (2000). Therefore, First Ladies are 'disciplined' in cartoons (Edwards, 2007), while Presidents are emasculated (Edwards and Chen, 2000).

First Ladies portrayed in cartoons are sometimes depicted as a threat to the Presidency since the First Ladyship is supposed to endorse the dominance of the Presidency by playing a secondary role in the private sphere (2000). A transgressing First Lady brings the private into the public and breaks the balance; cartoonists frequently perceive this negatively (2000).

Similarly, women violating the terms of the First Ladyship may be accused of being a misrepresentation of 'proper' gender behaviour (Templin, 1999) and a source of misplaced authority (Edwards and Chen, 2000). Edwards and Chen (2000) observe that cartoons about First Ladies tend to be more negative than the ones portraying female politicians, Presidents and male politicians. Cartoons then become commentaries on the private/public divide (2000), on sex-roles (Edwards, 2007), on perceptions of marriage (Edwards and Chen, 2000), or on the assumptions attributed to the 'femininity' and 'virtue' of the First Ladyship (Edwards and Chen, 2000; Scharrer, 2002; Templin, 1999).

Marta 'Cartoonized'

Methodology

This research analyses political cartoons through two different methodologies. First, content analysis has been employed as a quantitative method to measure Marta Sahagún's prominence in the cartoons and to extract the main themes through categorization. The categories used in this study are based on the ones employed by Charlotte Templin (1999) in her study of Hillary Clinton's political cartoons. Nonetheless, due to the difference in context, some of the categories have been tailored to fit the context in which Mexican cartoons of Marta Sahagún arise. Next, this research employs discourse analysis to study some of the meanings expressed through the visual composition of the images and the socio-political context in which they were developed. These two methods have been combined to complement each other and avoid the methodological problems outlined by Harrison (2002). Harrison (2002) explains that one of the main issues in performing content analysis is contextualization. Discourse analysis is used to provide the context by making obvious the non-explicit meanings of the cartoons. Both methods allow for a rigorous

analysis that provides an overview of Marta's prominence in political cartoons and the gender discourse (s) used to qualify her political aspirations. This paper has also used Trimble, Way and Sampert's (2010) methodology as a reference. Their study analyzed the depiction of Canadian voters in political cartoons (2010).

This methodology allows this paper to answer two key questions:

- 1) How is Marta Sahagún depicted in political cartoons? And,
- 2) Are the discourses about Marta Sahagún explicitly or implicitly gendered?

Gender and Gendering

Edwards (2007) acknowledges that historically politics have been identified as a feature of masculinity. Thus, political cartoons tend to recourse to traditional gender stereotypes to describe political women (2007); particularly, First Ladies. In political cartoons, sexist attitudes and anxiety are often shown when it comes to non-traditional Presidential wives (Templin, 1999). First Ladies, who step out of the boundaries placed by the presidency, are subject to scrutiny that challenges their way of doing gender (1999) according to prescribed cultural and traditional formulas. Gendering of women in political cartoons includes underrepresentation, description of women in terms of sex-roles and emphasis placed on division of gender roles that seclude women to the private sphere (Edwards, 2007).

Hypothesis

Templin (1999), Edwards and Chen (2000), Scharrer (2002) and others have found that depictions of First Ladies are often implicitly or explicitly gendered in a variety of ways. On one hand, 'female' physical traits tend to be emphasized and there is a focus on women's sexuality (Templin, 1999; Gilmartin, 2001). On the other, First Ladies are considered a potential threat to gendered structure of the presidency and are reprimanded for transgressing behaviours (Templin, 1999; Edwards and Chen, 2000).

This study will show that Marta Sahagún is gendered in both ways. In addition, I argue that unlike Hillary Clinton's cartoons, Marta is not solely blamed for her ambitions and, different from Bill Clinton, President Fox is not portrayed as a victim of his wife's political aspirations. On the contrary, this study demonstrates that President Fox is largely blamed for Marta's political influence, power and ambitions. Finally, I demonstrate that political cartoons on Marta Sahagún are a commentary on President Fox's presidency, masculinity and leadership skills.

Sources

This study focuses on political cartoons taken from three different sources: two newspapers and a narrative book on Vicente's Fox presidential period. The chosen newspapers were *La Jornada* and *El Universal* and the book is titled *El Sexenio se me Hace Chiquito* (El Fisgón, Hernández and Helguera, 2004). Both newspapers have national coverage in Mexico and keep on-line archives. The book is a collection prepared by some of *La Jornada* cartoonists, and it expands on their work at the newspaper. Although the book is a narrative regarding Fox's presidency, it includes few cartoons that were not published in *La Jornada* and that are relevant to this study. In terms of the newspapers, even when there are other prominent sources, these two were chosen due to archive availability and frequency of published cartoons.

Neither newspaper is free of biases or stand-points. *La Jornada* is often described as a left-wing paper, while *El Universal* is a center-left wing paper. *El Sexenio se me Hace Chiquito* (El Fisgón, Hernández and Helguera, 2004) has the same issue since the book was written by the same cartoonists who draw the political cartoons in *La Jornada*. The non-conservative tone of the three sources is one of the reasons why so many political cartoons were available. In comparison to right-wing newspapers, these two provide more open criticisms to the government and political

events in general. Nonetheless, criticisms of Fox's government were particularly strong in these newspapers. A critique that may arise to this research is the fact that the material is not ideologically diverse; however, ideology is not relevant for the argument presented in this paper. This research aims to examine representations of Marta Sahagún in relation to gender.

It is also important to note that, due to the target audience, the political cartoons published in both papers, but particularly in *La Jornada*, tend to include a lot of cultural symbols and Mexican slang. Additionally, in comparison to the cartoons in *El Universal* and in other papers, the readers of *La Jornada* are expected to be more knowledgeable about the issues depicted in the cartoons. This is noticeable through the number of symbols used, the lack of complete names and the reference to previous events in relation to a particular character. To facilitate this, *La Jornada* accompanies political cartoons with a descriptive title or/and a critical article that explains the issue at hand. The book is somehow different since it is organized chronologically to tell the story, through both narrative and political cartoons, of Fox's presidential period up to 2004. The context is explained by the narrator and it works as a left-wing information source and critique of Fox's government.

Although it is virtually impossible to get official statistics on the number of readers that each Mexican newspaper has, Pérez-Espino (2002) locates *El Universal* and *La Jornada* between the first and third most read newspapers in the country. It is important to acknowledge that although these newspapers are usually classified as "national" newspapers, as Pérez-Espino (2002) explains, this just means that they are published and in circulation in Mexico City. Nonetheless, the centralization of politics and the economy in the Mexican capital makes these newspapers more prominent than others in terms of audience, coverage and reliability.

This research focuses on political cartoons that explicitly or implicitly portray or refer to Marta Sahagún from January 2004 to July 2004. The rationale behind this timeframe is that by January 2004 Mexican political parties were preparing for the 2006 election, and they had started presenting their unofficial presidential candidates. It was during 2004 that high-profile politicians initiated the pre-campaign period in order to gain support. At the time Marta Sahagún was pursuing a political position, and most notoriously, she was interested in the Presidency. Although the PAN never openly accepted her as a candidate, Sahagún often hinted at these aspirations (Wornat, 2003). By 2004 Sahagún was frequently in the newspapers and magazines and had raised her public and political profile. Critics of her ambition and behaviour commonly faced President Fox's criticisms, who felt compelled to defend her whenever she was criticized and who openly expressed that "all women should be like Mrs. Marta" and that "the best public policies' were created by her" (as cited in Sefchovich, 2004, p.150). After few months, the political pressure against her political objectives was such that Marta Sahagún was forced to publically abandon her aspirations (Thompson, 2004). This happened on July 2004, and it led to a new wave of political cartoons mocking her retreat.

While analyzing the cartoons, it is important to note that all the cartoonists that worked for *La Jornada* and *El Universal* on 2004 were male. This makes a difference because, as Gilmartin (2001) explains, outcomes could be different if more women worked in the media. Consequently, there might be a perceived or factual gender bias in the way Marta Sahagún is portrayed due to the fact that the only commentators on her political aspirations were men. *Sample*

For this study a total of 51 cartoons were selected from those published between January 2004, when Marta's ambitions for the Presidency became the subject of press attention, and July 2004, when she announced she would not seek the position. Although this sample is small in comparison to the ones examined by Templin (1999) and Gilmartin (2001) the cartoons were

chosen based on their accessibility, and their applicability to the research question. The cartoons were obtained from the *La Jornada* and *El Universal* online archives, which are accessible and free. Most of the cartoons were taken from *La Jornada* because the newspaper tends to publish cartoons more often than *El Universal* and, at least on 2004, their content dealt more frequently with presidential politics. The selection incorporated in here includes only those cartoons which referred, either directly or indirectly, to Sahagún's presidential ambitions. Out of 51 cartoons 38 belonged to *La Jornada* and ten to *El Universal*. Therefore, *La Jornada* published almost four times the number of cartoons that *El Universal* published in relation to Sahagún. Just three cartoons were selected from the book *El Sexenio se me Hace Chiquito* (El Fisgón, Hernández and Helguera, 2004) since it has fewer images that directly refer to Sahagún perhaps because by the time it was published she had just started raising her political profile.

All the cartoons were published in Spanish and I translated them into English for the purposes of this paper. It is important to emphasize that political cartoons tend to be a representation of a socio-cultural context; consequently, in most cases the jokes cannot be accurately translated. In addition, it is essential for the reader to have some kind of knowledge of the context in which the cartoons are developed; otherwise, the reader is less likely to understand the gender discourse outlining the images. Finally, as Templin (1999) notes, political cartoons are not objective or fair. They distort, change, emphasize or modify truth; thus, they can neither be said to be a precise reflection of the political context, nor can they be said to represent the audience's attitudes or feelings. However, political cartoons could arguably be a source of public opinion.

Content Analysis of Political Cartoons

Marta Sahagún is quite prominent in the cartoons since she is present in 41 of the 51 cartoons. Sahagún was not depicted in ten of the total cartoons; in these images, others talk about her. While she was portrayed alone in 13 of the cartoons, she was drawn along other powerful political figures in five of them. In addition, Fox could be found alone in five of the cartoons talking about Sahagún. Interestingly, Sahagún was mostly depicted with Fox (23 cartoons), which demonstrates the prominence of the relationship within the political context.

Little attention is paid to Sahagún's role as First Lady. Only five cartoons refer to her position implicitly and none of them mentions the First Ladyship explicitly. Yet, the First Ladyship is alluded to through the relationship with President Fox. However, ten cartoons directly refer to Marta's Presidential aspirations, and this fact is implied through visual metaphors in 34 of them. In these pictures Marta is constantly depicted close to Presidential symbols, political figures and money.

Most of the cartoons do not show civilians. Only two cartoons depicted regular citizens, while the rest showed prominent political figures such as Fox, Bush and other presidential candidates.

The following chart explains the distribution of the cartoons in relation to Sahagún's prominence.

Table 1.1

Marta's prominence in total sample	Number of Cartoons	Percentage
Marta depicted in the cartoon	41	80.3%
Marta not present, others talk about her	10	19.6%

Table 1.2

Marta & other figures	Number of Cartoons	Percentage
Marta alone	13	25.4%
Marta with Fox	23	45.1%
Marta with other figures	5	9.8%
Fox alone talking about her	5	9.8%

Table 1.3

Marta's First Ladyship	Number of Cartoons	Percentage
Explicit reference to first ladyship	0	0%
Implicit reference to fist ladyship	5	9.8%

Table 1.4

Marta's Presidential Aspirations	Number of Cartoons	Percentage
Explicit reference to Marta's aspirations	10	19.6%
Implicit reference to Marta's aspirations	34	66.7%

The fact that Marta Sahagún was present in political cartoons every week from January 2004 to July 2004 speaks about her prominence not only in the media, but also in the popular imagination. Although this paper focuses on 51 cartoons that commented either on her position as First Lady or on her political aspirations, Marta Sahagún started being present in the media since 2003. Nonetheless, from January to July 2004, Sahagún was depicted almost exclusively in political settings, which is unusual for a First Lady.

In addition to Marta Sahagún's prominence in the cartoons, there are various identifiable themes that are repeated through the images. As mentioned above, these categories are based on Templin's (1999) observations. Some of her categories have been adapted for the purpose of this research since some themes do not fit the Mexican context or were simply not observed in this sample. Templin's (1999) themes are based on her examination of Hillary Clinton's cartoons. Clinton, as a female politician, was criticized primarily for her public prominence while in the First Ladyship (Templin, 1999). It was perceived that Clinton did not follow the First Ladyship protocol, and that she was a threat to traditional gender roles within the political sphere (1999).

Although Sahagún did not occupy a political position, both Sahagún and Clinton had political aspirations that went beyond ‘appropriateness’ in terms of their role as First Ladies and, some would say, as women. Therefore, it can be argued that criticisms towards both women are similar. Even when Sahagún could be compared with First Ladies who have played prominent political roles, such as Hillary Clinton, Eleanor Roosevelt or Eva Perón (Argentina), this paper does not aim to draw comparisons. Nonetheless, Templin’s categories are useful because many of the patterns that she observes in Clinton’s case can be transferred to the analysis of Sahagún’s situation within an appropriate time-frame. In addition, her categories guided the modifications made to the clusters created for this research by drawing comparisons between gender roles, political and cultural contexts, as well as women’s political roles.

Charlotte Templin (1999) identifies eight categories she used to cluster the cartoons that she analyzed. However, not all the themes are present in Sahagún’s cartoons; thus, this paper outlines five main categories. For the purpose of clarity, the following chart explains Templin’s categories and the themes that are used in the analysis of Sahagún’s political cartoons. This chart also shows the similarities and differences between clusters, and it explains what is being studied. In those situations where Templin’s categories did not fit Sahagún’s case, the modified themes were described and located side by side with a similar category in Templin’s study in order to show the relationship between the two:

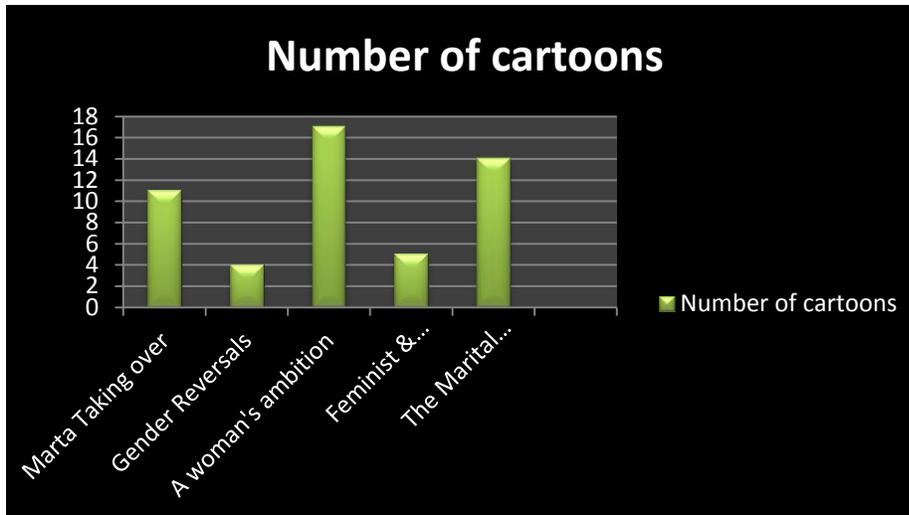
Table 2.1

<i>Clinton’s Constant Themes (Templin, 1999)</i>	<i>What she observed</i>	<i>Sahagún’s Constant Themes</i>	<i>What can be observed</i>
Gender Reversals	Hillary taking over and/or sharing the presidency and/or being the real president.	Marta Taking over	Marta as the real president or/and Marta as an assured 2006 presidential candidate or/and elected president.
Hillary Clinton as radical feminist and emasculator	Hillary as failed woman. Hillary emasculating Bill. Hillary defined by her sexual destructiveness.	Marta as Feminist and Emasculator	Focus on Marta. Marta emasculating Fox through her “feminist” traits. Fox’s lacking control over his wife.
Domestic Imagery	Hillary in domestic settings. Hillary perverting her role as wife. Hillary as a liberated wife.	The Marital Relationship	Marta abusing her position as wife. Fox relying on Marta and supporting her aspirations instead of taking care of the country. Fox and Marta sharing the presidency through

			marriage. Marta as a traditional wife once in a while.
Woman as Body	Focus on Hillary's body as sexuality. Hillary as "body."	-	-
The Public Woman	Hillary living the life of a man.	A Woman's ambition	Marta as overly ambitious. Not good enough for the presidency. Marta as a threat to democracy.
Cherchez la Femme	Amount of blame being laid on Hillary. Hillary embodying many female negative stereotypes.	-	-
"Take my wife please"	Bill wishing Hillary to go away.	Gender Reversals	Focus on Fox. Commentary on Fox's lack of manliness. Fox as a failed man. Fox as feminine.
Silencing Hillary Clinton	A desire to keep Hillary quiet.	-	-

The overall discourse analysis methodology required the categorization of Sahagún's cartoons in the above themes. The cartoons selected often overlapped; however, they were placed in the theme that better represented the overall message of the cartoon. The clustering process required the identification of the most prominent issue in the image. For example, there are a number of cartoons where Marta and Fox are represented together; however, unless the cartoon directly alludes to the marital relationship it was not clustered in the "The Marital Relationship" category. The cartoons appear only once in a category to avoid overlapping and to simplify the analysis. The cartoons were categorized in the following manner:

Chart 3.1



Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis has been employed to complement the method. This section provides an overview of the two elements analyzed through discourse analysis: the images and the language. It also explains further the circumstances in which Marta Sahagún was depicted in political cartoons. Finally, I offer an analysis of her portrayals in the cartoons, which demonstrates the ways in which Marta Sahagún's depictions were gendered and were based on sexist assumptions about the First Ladyship and its influence in politics.

First of all it is important to recognize that discourse analysis requires the analysis of two elements: the image and the text. Political cartoons combine both elements to convey a message that includes both meaning and some kind of humour (Fiore, 2004). Both pieces are important because the images provide accessibility (Fiore, 2004) to the reader while delivering a commentary, opinion or reality. The images in the cartoons allow the reader to access the written message and the humour facilitates the transmission process by making the discourse easier to understand. Fiore (2004) identifies the power of political cartoons as prompting people to look at them even if they do not like what they see. Therefore, it can be argued that political cartoons may cause reactions, confirm beliefs or change opinions. However, it would be difficult to assume that political cartoons provoke political outcomes (Buell and Maus, 1988) since, at least in this research, it is not possible to measure the impact of the cartoons on public opinion. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that political cartoons reflect some voters' existing feelings and opinions (Buell and Maus, 1988) and may endorse present beliefs.

In the case of Marta Sahagún, political cartoonists did not seem to expect a political outcome in the electoral process of 2006; however, their commentaries on Sahagún reflected the sentiments of some sectors of society towards her protagonist image. Moreover, and more importantly, commentaries and criticisms on Sahagún represent direct attacks to the figure of president Fox within the Mexican context. Most cartoons that represented a negative aspect of the First Lady criticized Fox's inability to control her or to at least keep her in the background.

Unlike other public women, Sahagún was criticized both as First Lady and as a female politician due to her aspirations. A constant theme through the cartoons is her ambition rather than her competence for the Presidency. The omission of female politicians' aptitudes in political cartoons has been identified by other authors (Templin, 1999; Edwards, 2007). In Marta's case, most of the cartoons do not discuss her possibilities of electoral success due to competence, but her potential to become the presidential candidate due to her marriage to Fox.

Marta's Depiction in Political Cartoons.

In this section I aim to analyze the categories resulting from the application of the methodology. This part provides a detailed description of the cartoons placed in each cluster (since this paper is a short version of the original essay, only one cluster has been included). Discourse analysis allow us to identify the ways in which Marta Sahagún's cartoons have been gendered and used to discipline her for stepping outside the boundaries of the First Ladyship.

Consistent with depictions of other First Ladies, Marta was 'punished' in political cartoons through the judgment made against her political ambitions, the emasculation of her husband in the cartoons and the demonization of her image.

A Woman's Ambition

This is by far the most prominent theme throughout the selection. Seventeen out of fifty one cartoons discussed Marta's ambition as the primary topic. Even when Marta's aspirations and ambition can be seen in most cartoons, those in this category focus solely on that. On the one hand some of the cartoons criticize Marta's behaviour and depict her as overly ambitious. On the other, a few images portray her as evil and despotic. However, only two actually discuss her qualifications for the Presidency. Although this cluster includes seventeen cartoons, the theme can be illustrated through the following sample.

The main topic in this selection is related to the cartoonists' perception of Marta, caused by what they considered to be exceedingly ambitious Presidential aspirations. In a number of cartoons Marta appears making reference to the 2006 elections or with presidential symbols around her, which represents the cartoonists' rejection of her attitudes. In one of the images the cartoonist recreates Boticelli's famous *The Birth of Venus*, but substitutes Marta for Venus and Fox for the angel. Marta appears with long hair, a pearl necklace, earrings and high heels. Marta's body is covered by the Presidential sash, while she smiles assertively. Fox, who is dressed like Boticelli's angel, is wearing his famous cowboy boots⁶. He is portrayed pointing at a confident soon-to-be President Sahagún, according to the cartoon. However, at the bottom of the image the cartoonist writes "With apologies to Boticelli" (#50). In a different cartoon called *The Color of Money* the cartoonist refers to Marta's ambition and willingness to run for the Presidency under any conditions. In this image a politician nicknamed the Green Boy⁷, who is depicted as an immature child picking his nose and holding a stack of American dollars, says "And now, with this scandal, who will be our alliance for the 2006 election?" Marta, who is right in front of him, is holding the Financial Times, which had just denounced her Foundation for corruption.⁸ She is looking right at him with an evil smile that indicates her intentions to run with whatever party offers her an opportunity (#20). Marta seemed to be identified by cartoonists as an imminent threat to the political future of the country. This is particularly noticeable in a cartoon labeled *From Porfirio to Martyrdom*. Even though the title aims to express two meanings through the words "Martyrdom"

⁶ Fox was famous for wearing cowboy boots even in official settings. This was considered inappropriate by some people.

⁷ The Green Boy, originally called José Emilio González Martínez, president of the Environmental Green Party of Mexico (PVEM) since 2001. González Martínez served as Federal Deputy from 1997 to 2009 in various periods. The party allied with the PAN on 2000 to achieve Fox's success. On 2004, González was put under investigation after a video showed his intentions of receiving 2 million dollars in exchange of getting construction permission in Cancún's touristic zone, illegally (Mendez Ortiz, 2004)

⁸ The Financial Times was the first newspaper to denounce Marta's organization, Vamos México, for corruption.

and “Marta” in Spanish, the meaning cannot be accurately articulated in English. The image portrays Mexican Dictator Porfirio Díaz⁹ looking at himself in the mirror while wearing his underwear, boots and holding a sword. Díaz says “You were lucky! With a wife like Marta, you would have had me for another 30 years” (#16). Marta’s insistence to be a presidential candidate was largely known by the time she had to relinquish her political aspirations. In the cartoon titled *Presidency (Country Music) Genre* Rocha uses various popular songs to mock Marta’s ambitions. In the image Marta is dressed with a traditional dress, and she is sitting in the presidential chair. Fox is depicted as a Mexican ‘charro’¹⁰ or Mariachi singer without pants or hat, but with his well-known cowboy boots. On the left hand side there is a banner that has the lyrics of a famous Mexican song. Marta then says to Fox, “Now sing to me the song that says ‘Jalisco never loses and if it loses it snatches’” (#44). The cartoon makes reference to the fact that although Marta had to renounce to her political aspirations, she was ambitious enough to snatch the candidacy from other people if it was necessary. Even though this did not happen, Mexican cartoonists used this type of argument to completely delegitimize Marta.

Another collection of cartoons emphasizes Marta abusing power. In these images she is portrayed as evil, abusive and despotic. In one of Helguera’s cartoons with the title *Invasions*, Fox is depicted as a shadow in the background saying, “The horror! They invaded my ranch!” While Fox refers to the incident where financial functionaries performed an inspection in his ranch in order to investigate the couple’s financial activities,¹¹ a comfortable Marta appears sitting in the presidential chair with a big, confident smile (#13). Helguera plays with the title to imply that Marta was invading the Presidency while Fox was concerned about less important ‘invasions.’ Marta’s nepotism is also addressed by Rocha in a cartoon called *Your light and your joy*. In this image, a very serious Fox stands looking upwards and with his hands on his heart. Marta, who is standing innocently at his right, asks, “Tell me Vicente, who is the pride of your nepotism?” (#19).

By 2004 it was well-known that the Presidential couple was involved in corruption cases, which emphasized Marta’s image as a despotic, evil woman who was taking advantage of her role as First Lady. Moreover, this opinion was described in the cartoons as a threat to the political scene and, in some cases, to democracy itself. Helguera portrays both Fox and Marta together. In the background two bags full of money can be seen. One of them is labeled as “Marta’s Friends” and the other one as “Fox’s Friends¹².” The cartoon, called *Transparency Week*, shows Marta behind her husband, holding his arm while he says, “True democrats should act with transparency and be accountable...” Marta completes the phrase by saying, “The good thing is that in here we are in a monarchy!” (#31).

Marta’s unlawful actions are furthered discussed in other cartoons. In *What do you aim for when you dream Mexican?* a regular citizen is shown holding a lottery ticket and dreaming about

⁹ Porfirio Díaz ruled the country for 30 years. He was overthrown by the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

¹⁰ ‘Charro’ refers to a horseman from the north of Mexico. Charros are recognized through their big hats and specific type of attire, which often includes black pants and jacket, white shirt and a colorful topknot in the neck. This outfit is also worn by northern Mariachi singers.

¹¹ The investigation was later dropped.

¹² “Fox’s Friends” was the organization created by one of Fox’s friends, José Luis González González, to support Fox’s campaign on 2000. The organization was later accused of funneling funds from the U.S for Fox’s campaign, which is illegal under Mexican law.

buying a new house and a new car. Marta Sahagún stands beside him holding a bag that has thousands of dollars in donations from the National Lottery, and she sees herself in the Presidential chair wearing the sash and aspiring to be elected as President (#32). Moreover, Marta is portrayed in a different cartoon dressed up as a princess, with an umbrella, walking towards a National Lottery symbol that stands between Marta and the road to the 2006 election (#33). The cartoon, which is titled *A little stain*, mocks Marta's involvement in the corruption case where her foundation, Vamos México, received a large monetary donation from the National Lottery to illegally fund her campaign as President before even being nominated as candidate. However, the cartoon also makes a commentary on what the cartoonist considered Marta's monarchical tendencies. This attribute was particularly important due to her relationship with Fox. No woman in Mexico had attempted to succeed her husband in the Presidency; therefore, Marta was breaking the standard and more importantly, she was doing it with her husband's support. Nevertheless, Fox's help seemed forced to some. In one of his cartoons, Rocha shows a resigned Fox sitting in the presidential chair and tied up with the Presidential sash. An evil Marta stands in front of him saying "It is not true that I have kidnapped the president. The only thing I have kidnapped is the Presidential chair" (#38).

Few cartoons in the selection consider Marta's qualifications for the Presidency. However, the cartoons that judge her have nothing positive to say. Marta is depicted in both of them as a tiny woman sitting in the Presidential chair. Both cartoons, drawn by Naranjo, question Marta's ability to become President. One of them called *Aspiration*, just shows Marta in the Presidential chair but no explicit commentary is made (#5). In the second cartoon, titled *Undecided*, Marta says, "I still don't know if I want to be president or queen" (#21). This shows that the cartoonists do not think that Marta is capable of governing the country democratically, and they imply that if Marta achieves power it would only be through non-democratic means.

The End of Cartoony Marta

After July 2004, Marta Sahagún was rarely seen in political cartoons. Her public appearance declaring that she would not seek the Presidency ended a period of intense criticisms. In this study it is possible to see that the media, especially political cartoonists, pay special attention to 'rebellious' First Ladies.

Marta Sahagún was 'celebritized' through her ascension to the First Ladyship and during her husband's administration up to 2004. It is possible to see that depictions of Marta were gendered in two important ways. On one hand, her image was hyper-feminized through intense makeup, fancy dresses, high heels and jewellery. On the other, she is in different instances portrayed as a traditional, caring and nurturing wife. Yet, cartoonists seem to imply that these features are applied to manipulate the President. Thus, Marta is depicted as using her femininity and sexuality to influence President Fox.

This shows that, as observed by different authors, women are objectified and treated differently than men in political cartoons. Likewise Hillary Clinton (Templin, 1999; Scharrer, 2002; Edwards and Chen 2000) and Elizabeth Dole (Gilmartin, 2001), Marta's image was strongly 'celebritized' while completely ignoring her political capabilities. Although no specific references to Sahagún's sexual or intimate life were made, cartoonists reflected essentialist views on the role of women in politics by implying that a First Lady's most prominent political ability is her sex-appeal.

Interestingly enough, this views are juxtaposed with the expectations held towards First Ladies. As noted by other studies, First Ladies are expected to be archetypical housewives and mothers. Anything outside this is a source of criticism. The private nature of the First Ladyship

remains a constant 'threat' to the public sphere controlled by the President. Gender-related misbehaviours are considered a transgression to the 'natural' gender order that rules the Presidency.

Marta Sahagún, as a rebellious First Lady, violated the First Ladyship's implicit protocol by aspiring to the Presidency and aiming to participate in the President's decision-making process. Cartoonists scolded her for that. Yet, Marta's case is slightly different than those presented by other authors. First of all, Sahagún's image was 'celebrized' during her affair with Fox, before their marriage, and afterwards. Next, Sahagún claimed to be redefining the First Ladyship through the first opposition government in 70 years, which caused a division of the public opinion among those who believed that the First Ladyship should be reconsidered. Then, she was allegedly involved in illicit activities related to her own political endeavours. Finally, she aspired to the Presidency while no other Mexican First Lady had sought the position.

Although Marta had many things that could be critiqued, cartoonists focused on her aspirations and on President Fox's support of her political ambitions. Much of the criticisms came from Marta's inability to maintain a low profile and to seem non-influential or threatening. The comments offered by members of Fox's administration demonstrate that biases against Presidential wives still exist. Both Weckin (2002) and Geer (as cited in Templin, 1999, p.23) argue that influential First Ladies should avoid accusations and criticisms by maintaining a low profile in order to be able to participate in the policy-making process. In other words, Sahagún was unable to avoid blame for her influence and partaking in the decision-making process. Nonetheless, it is evident that some members of the public sphere feel threatened by Presidential wives.

Moreover, other people challenged Marta's participation in the government and her political aspirations due to the intimate nature of the relationship that she had with President Fox. For some, it seemed inappropriate for Sahagún to seek office, and they perceived her aspirations as a dynastic attempt to challenge democracy. This illustrates the fact that First Ladies are required to maintain the balance between the public and the private spheres, and are a symbolic personification of legitimacy. Unconventional First Ladies are problematic since they display in public what, some consider, belongs in the private sphere. The Presidency calls for First Ladies' strict discipline in maintaining the private/public divide while enhancing the President's public display of masculinity.

The most important feature of this study is that, unlike other First Ladies, Marta is used to construct a criticism of President Fox's administration. Cartoons on Marta's aspirations challenge Fox's masculinity and Presidential attributes. Despite Sahagún's political ambitions, she is less blamed than Fox for the political implications of those aspirations. While it is bad enough for a First Lady to seek the Presidency, it is completely unacceptable for a President to support those ambitions. President Fox was the one that was perceived to violate the public/private divide by offering his unconditional support to Marta. Fox is criticized for being unable to seclude Marta to the private sphere and further admonished for further encouraging her ambitions.

Marta's depictions are used to criticize Fox and to emasculate him in order to challenge the legitimacy of his government. This is very significant because it tells us something about Mexican political culture. Sahagún's aspirations demonstrate that the First Ladyship is still perceived as an ideal of housewifery and not as a political role. Thus, the First Ladyship is not a bridge to political participation, and will likely not be redefined as long as it does not entail an official role in politics. The First Ladyship remains so secluded that any obvious interference would break the delicate balance and would defy political legitimacy. Bringing the private into the public sphere challenges traditional gender-roles. This is a problem because the Mexican

Presidency strongly relies on the perceived masculinity of the President to draw authority and legitimacy. A transgressing First Lady is a source of disruption of the 'natural' order. However, it is the President's responsibility to maintain his dominion over the First Ladyship. In Mexico, the President still needs the First Ladyship to attest his masculinity and his heterosexuality; otherwise, he is not worthy of leading a country. Marta Sahagún was an unconventional First Lady; nonetheless, Fox is blamed for it. He is further emasculated in political cartoons for being unable to control his wife. Most importantly, Fox is denounced for not fulfilling his campaign promises, cartoonists imply that he was neither the President that brought change nor a person that guaranteed 'real' democracy.

E. Cervantes-Altamirano

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