

Gender and power in the 2022 presidential campaign in France

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Simone Veil in 1975 defending the abortion bill



The presidential campaign: a masculine arena?

- Fifth Republic (1958-) + 1962 referendum on the election of the president of the Republic.
- In 54 years: **Arlette Laguiller, Marie-France Garraud, Huguette Bouchardeau, Dominique Voynet**
- 2007: Ségolène Royal was the candidate for one of the important political parties at that time (Socialist Party) after a primary vote. She was the first woman in the second round.
- 2022: Valérie Pécresse was the candidate for the Conservative party (*Les Républicains*) after a primary vote
- 2017 and 2022: Marine Le Pen was in the second round for the far-right party

Presidential election (year)	Number of candidates	Number of women	Proportion
1965	6	0	0
1969	7	0	0
1974	12	1	1/12
1981	10	3	3/10
1988	9	1	1/9
1995	9	2	2/9
2002	16	4	¼
2007	12	4	1/3
2012	10	3	3/10
2017	11	2	2/11
2022	12	4	1/3



Arlette Laguiller



/Source for the picture: Wikipedia

The winning losers?

- Between 1965 and 2022, 114 candidates, 24 women and two strong candidates (Ségolène Royal, Marine Le Pen). But....Laguiller was candidate 6 times, Marine Le Pen 3 times and Nathalie Artaud 2 times.
- In 2022, three women, Anne Hidalgo for the Socialist Party, Valérie Pécresse for the Conservative Party and Marine Le Pen for the far-right party.
- Too early to say that women have more and more influence in politics as the whole political system has to be analyzed.

The winning losers?

- In 506,965 mandates (local council / Parliament...), 200,740 women and 301,225 men (around 40% of the women) (source: opendata, *répertoire national des élus*)
- 35,295 mayors (5,931 are women). 16.8% of women
- Since 2012, many progress for the composition of governments and the Parliament. Elisabeth Borne is the second woman who is Prime Minister in France.



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Research question and theoretical frame

- How do these women reflect on the question of gender to strengthen their legitimacy in a masculine arena?
- Self-reflection and not perception
- Construction of a public image
- The question of *ethos*. *Ethos* = posture in the public debate (construction of an image of the self) (Charaudeau, 2017)
- Amossy (2010) / Maingueneau (2014) / Druetta & Paissa (2020)
- Concepts of “prior ethos” (= capital and accumulation of reputation)/ “discursive ethos” (= image in the discourse)

Some definitions

- Prior ethos (= symbolic capital / reputation) /discursive ethos (image that appears during specific debates)
- Prior ethos (accumulation of traces that are selected and that contribute to build an image of the person)
- Discursive ethos : concrete ethos that appears in a specific situation. Contextualization of the ethos
- Prior ethos (recent history of the person)

Publishing a book : the impact on the Self

- Books from politicians. Books: elaboration of a specific *storytelling*
- Le Bart analyzes the way candidates in the 2007 presidential campaign built an image of proximity with the publication of books (Le Bart, 2009).
- Publishing a book : construction of a new image that can be integrated in the prior ethos. The prior ethos: the way the others perceive the Self.
- Publishing a book: strategy that corrects a prior ethos (authenticity...)
- Strategy of "extimacy" (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2014; Tisseron, 2011). The notion of extimacy challenges the traditional frontier between internal personality (intimacy) / public image.

Selection of the corpus

- How did Anne Hidalgo, Marine Le Pen and Valérie Pécresse propose a new image of themselves in their former books? More specifically, what was their strategy in terms of reflection on gender?
- Le Pen, M. (2006). *À contre-flots*. Paris: Grancher.
- Pécresse, V. (2019). *Et c'est cela qui changea tout*. Paris: Laffont.
- Hidalgo, A. (2021). *Une femme française*. Paris: éditions de l'Observatoire.
- Reasons for the selection (a little bit outside the presidential campaign)

Marine Le Pen

- *À contre-flots*. Autobiography.
- Difficulty of bearing a name like Le Pen (she is the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen). Victim of a terror attack in November 1976. The book explores the resilience of Marine Le Pen against the violence of a political universe.
- Description of Jean-Marie Le Pen as a gifted politician, but no empathy for the world of the children.
- “Car rien n’était anodin, rien n’était facile. On restait **les filles Le Pen**, on savait pourquoi on était **les filles Le Pen** et on nous le faisait sentir, toujours” (Le Pen, 2006: 87).
- Recurrent word “girls”

Valérie Pécresse

- The affirmation of gender. The book is a dialogue with an independent journalist, Marion Van Renterghem.
- She left *Les Républicains* and then she joined the party again.
- “Alors, j’ai pris, en **femme libre**, la seule décision qui s’imposait: reconstruire de l’extérieur” (Pécresse, 2019: 15).
- “Vous savez, pour une **femme comme moi...**” (Pécresse, 2019: 19)
- “Je suis une républicaine authentique et une **femme d’ordre**” (Pécresse, 2019: 22).
The noun “woman” is repeated 100 times / “feminism” (6 times) / “feminist” (10 times)
- She reminded the fact that the Right defended early the cause of women (Neuwirth bill in 1967 on contraception / Veil bill in 1975 on abortion) (Pécresse, 2019: 25)

Valérie Pécresse

- Many anecdotes when she had to defend herself against “machist” portrayals.
- Part II of the book “Une femme dans le pouvoir”
- Chapter “Un monde d’hommes” (Pécresse, 2019: 66-67)
- Accusations against political men (use of anaphora)
- “Ils ont essayé de me faire passer pour une **bigote**, ils ont essayé de me faire passer pour une **méchante**, ils ont essayé de me faire passer pour une **incompétente**, ils ont essayé de me faire passer pour une **hystérique**, ils ont essayé de me faire passer pour **une fille** qui n’avait pas d’autorité ou qui au contraire en montrait trop.” (Pécresse, 2019: 67).
- She faced the resistance of feminists from the Left / the men / the people who did not believe that a woman could be politician without sacrificing the family

Anne Hidalgo

- The title "*Une femme française*" (A French woman). The title summarizes the trajectory of Anne Hidalgo (her parents fled the regime of Franco in Spain).
- She corrects the language and the expressions in the book: "à hauteur d'homme ou de femme" (Hidalgo, 2021: 10).
- "le **temps des femmes** est venu" (Hidalgo, 2021: 13)
- Capacity of listening, and having empathy = "la première responsabilité d'une **femme politique**" (Hidalgo, 2021: 16). Trajectories of women / history (she used the French-Spanish background)

Anne Hidalgo

- “Première femme maire de Paris en 2014” (Hidalgo, 2021: 18). 123 occurrences of the noun “woman” in the book; “feminism” appears twice and the adjective “feminist” is used 4 times.
- Tribute to Simone Veil (consensus right – left)
- Part “Un engagement au féminin”
- Fight for the abortion

The repertoire (extimacy)

- Extimacy: integration, adaptation to social norms, coherence (Tisseron, 2011: 85).
- Hidalgo and Péresse: recognition of their trajectories. How they convinced the others of their positioning (two similar strategies)
- Le Pen: a strong culture of **resilience**. The violence is dealt with. The omnipresence of the father. She did not inherit anything as she had to protect herself from the political universe.
- This self-perception will be integrated in a part of the prior ethos

The repertoire

- Hidalgo / Péresse already oversaturated their narratives with their views on gender and on how to gender politics
- Le Pen began to talk about gender during the campaign of 2022 (gender identity)
- Contrast between prior ethos / discursive ethos where the contrast could make this topic new for Marine Le Pen.
- The oversaturation of the **prior ethos** gives no possibility / no lexical resources to integrate gender in the discourse. Hidalgo and Péresse tried to use this particularity in their campaign but the echo was weak whereas it was **new** for Marine Le Pen

Conclusions

- Necessity of paying attention to the publication of books. Indication on the strategies of extimacy.
- The overcommunication on gender will not necessarily be an advantage for the candidates.
- “Extimitazing” politics : gender as a “common good”? Model for other women?
- Normalization of “gender” in politics or presentation of the model of a *bourgeois* woman?
- The best visibility in the political discourse: the rupture of discursive ethos / prior ethos
- Further research on how the question of gender is dealt with in the memoirs of women who were politicians (the ***a posteriori* ethos**)

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