# SCANDAL: POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN

## The impact of *political television dramas* on political debate



## ABSTRACT

"*Scandal:* political influence and leadership of women" explores how and to what extent television dramas, especially TV series, affect attitudes and beliefs, suggest models in which to find inspiration, and can also affect beliefs about gender roles and women's political ambition.

The view that a fictional story, a political-social narrative, can have impacts and leverage over the citizens' political views has been widespread and debated for some time. The citizens-spectators, indeed, are approaching to political messages offered by entertainment television, because this TV offers effective representations of a public world to which people cannot access directly. Introducing several topics, distinct groups by gender or ethnicity, in terms of how and how often are seen, the media are shaping

cultural knowledge and influencing opinions on structures of the social world.

The type of TV series focused on by the study is the *political drama*, meaning a representation in which the political component is predominant (or even exclusive) and which explores universal themes and related to society, such as human rights and health, law-making, and conduct of election campaigns, abort and struggle to achieve integration; but the reference type is also *political thriller* because describes struggles for political power, international and national scenarios, corruption, terrorism, and war.

The common thread of this study is the *political television drama Scandal* (hence the reference to the title of this deepening), because it showed, more than most, that the policy can and must be accessible to the women, showed three-dimensional characters, real, with weaknesses and strengths common to all the real-life "characters". *Scandal* is the contradiction par excellence, where everything is the opposite of everything, and all involves and influence the spectator: it is at the same time the elaborate and thorough version of *The Manchurian Candidate*, the not romantic vision of *The West Wing*, and the institutional dignified and the social gravitas what is lacking in *House of Cards*.

Chose *Scandal* also for way it tells true or falsely true political play, describes contents that dramatize and examine realistic political issues, like police brutality towards Colored People or like violence against women in the army; it presents women in leadership positions, command, or strong influence.

The representations like this stimulate the imagination of the public and invite to raise awareness and greater understanding towards inclusive social and political environments, where people of all ethnicities, genders, religions, may be in a leadership position as a birth consequence.

Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi - Faculty of Political Science
Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and International Affairs
Thesis Advisor Prof. Luca Mencacci

This study underlines that the politics-TV series duality allows to create debates on real principal issues, and, thanks to characters like Jed Bartlet, Frank Underwood o Olivia Pope, reaches an increasing number of citizens because they feel involved, identify themselves, and understand the languages used by politics without necessarily being an expert or trained.

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