

Gender as a crucial element in communication processes and in politics

This dissertation is mainly focused on how the variable of gender and media are interconnected and the results that this connection creates. That is because what media decide to include and exclude from their content has a very concrete effect on what people perceive as the reality in which they are living.

Understanding the differences, gender bias and cultural, social and political issues that produce them is imperative, this is because there seems to be moving into a future where women are increasingly the protagonists, or at least that is what we hope .

It has been highlighted how an unbalanced representation of gender is not a true reflection of social reality, as would be obvious to think, but is only the result of an ideology that supports certain behaviors and actions and obviously considers some things appropriate for women e some for men. We wanted to emphasize repeatedly the importance of the media in the process of sexual identity formation and how the media sphere can accentuate even more the inequality between the sexes by conveying specific messages that hide the hegemonic ideology.

To do so and to allow a clearer understanding of this elaborate, it was necessary to recall some theoretical steps of the relationship between gender and media. Firstly we had to define the concept of gender as a socially constructed entity able to influence how people behave and their way of thinking.

The first chapter is dedicated to this thanks to the work of Cultural Studies that analyzed this reciprocal influence of gender and media and considered media as frames that regulate social knowledge. Within Cultural Studies, some key concepts are adopted. Those concepts are ideology, with the meaning that Althusser gives as a common sense adopted by whoever

accepts it and the concept of hegemony as Gramsci explained it. After that, it was important to examine the issue of identity and the role that media play in its construction. We focused on Stuart Hall and Judith Butler works and interpretation of the concept of cultural identity.

After discussing the theoretical foundations and major researches conducted on the subject of gender and women on the audience, in the second chapter the focus has been mainly addressed to the issue of gender equality within political institutions.

From this point on the attention has been paid to the various gender stereotypes which assign specific abilities and skills to men and women. It has been seen that these prejudices dominate the political environment and the society itself and it has been pointed out that some have consequences on women in politics. Following this guideline, it has been deeply analyzed the role of women leaders and theories of the double bind by Kathleen Jamieson.

To complete the picture we wanted to remember the process of media hype and spectacle of politics and the progressive banalizing effect that results from that. We also examined the effects that these processes have on the actresses of the political game.

Much of the work is devoted to the situation of women in politics and the representation that the media offer of them. It is essential to analyze the relationship of the media with politics because, as demonstrated by the facts, mass media are the only instruments by which citizens can interact with political actors.

Then we described the typical characteristics of political leaders both male and female. To do this, we have taken into account prejudices, sexist forms of representation and their different effects to which women in politics must comply with. This has been possible mainly thanks to the contribution of scholars' research on the perception of women's leadership.

The third and final chapter is devoted to a survey based on the application of what has been seen in previous chapters. It has been considered in detail the Italian case, the political tradition of the country and the results achieved so far. In this sense, a part was focused on

the debate concerning quotas for women and their utility and function. A complete paragraph has been dedicated to an analysis of the most recently formed government Renzi, its composition and choice policies pursued until now. The focus was then brought on the criticism that the government has received and the treatment that the media have chosen to dedicate it.

Finally it was possible to introduce the case studies dedicated to two ministers members of Renzi's executive. These two analyzes intended to represent what was said during the discussion and we try to sum up everything by demonstrating in practice how the bias that the media help spread are present and still strongly used in the media representation of women.

Taking into account the power that the media in conveying certain messages and images, we understand the importance of analysis in this regard, and especially since the different treatment given to candidates in relation to gender.

With the help of the mass media actions and the actions of political bodies, are able to get as close as possible to the citizen. Considering that, is easy to understand how essential it is to reach an adequate gender representation. If the interests of women, however, are limited or are not represented adequately in relation to their participation and position in society, the consequences can be serious for politics and democracy itself.

A final analysis was focused on the situation in Italy. First of all, we took into consideration some data that exemplify the gender gap in our country. It was found what Italy has done in the field of equity and how much still needs to do (since Italy is at 71st place in the GGGR classification). It has been confirmed that as a true egalitarian democracy that would need a serious protection of the rights and equality of all members of society. In this sense, we have analyzed the different positions in the debate on the possible introduction of quotas for women in Italy.

Finally, attention has been paid to the current government and what he could do for gender equality. The analysis was carried out thanks to suggestions and criticisms offered by many journalists and political commentators. We focused in particular on the choice of premier

Renzi to appoint eight women in the Council of Ministers and the abolition of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities.

It has been stressed how those choices could explain how Italian society has still a lot to learn in terms of gender equality.

Afterwards we discussed the issue of communication strategy called *pink-washing*, which according to many observers has been carefully chosen and used in the composition of the present government. The term, according to Sara Schuman is referred to the promotion of the gay-friendliness of a corporate or political entity in an attempt to downplay or soften aspects of it considered negative. She thinks that strategy has been largely used by the Israeli to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians' human rights behind an image of modernity signified by Israeli gay life. According to many observers and feminist scholars this "communicative plan" has been carefully chosen and used in the composition of the present government. In order to show how much the Democratic Party (PD) cares about women's struggles for their rights what is the better way of demonstrating people than appointing the exact same number of male and female members in the government? Surely with that move Matteo Renzi has earned a lot of consensus and he also has the perfect image of an equal and non-discriminating representing system.

The last part of this chapter was then devoted to an analysis of how mass-media tended to represent government members and in particular, female ministers.

It has been examined also the representation that media gave of two ministers, members of Renzi's council of ministers. Those two are Federica Mogherini, foreign affairs and Maria Elena Boschi, minister of constitutional reforms and relationships with parliament.

It has been studied how newspapers, websites, blogs and others described those two politicians. The central focus was on searching for elements that could suggest an use of prejudices, stereotypes or sexist linguistic scheme.

The results were not so encouraging as for minister Boschi, while ex-minister Mogherini has received a much less sexist treatment. These different treatments were much likely attributed to the diverse positions that the two ministers hold, considering in fact that Mogherini has been appointed High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy it was also the source of criticisms that was different. The newspapers talking about minister Boschi were all italian while most of those focused on Mogherini, were american or international newspapers.