SIMILAR POLITICIANS, DIFFERENT MEDIA. MEDIA TREATMENT OF SEX RELATED SCANDALS IN ITALY AND THE USA

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ABSTRACT *The article analyzes the media treatment of two sex scandals: the "Stormy Daniels scandal", which involved the current US President Donald Trump in 2018 and the "Ruby scandal", which involved Silvio Berlusconi in 2010, while he was Italy's Prime Minister. By combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies the aim is to discover whether the media treatment is different, as we can expect since the two countries belong to two different media systems, or if, following the theory of Americanization of political communication, the Italian media will tend to emulate the American model. Furthermore, another aim of this study is to detect whether a shift towards a more Polarized Pluralist model can be identified in the USA, as some authors have started foreseeing. The results will show that both countries' media behave coherently with the traditional feature of their media system, the Polarized Pluralist and the Liberal.*

KEYWORDS

BERLUSCONI, TRUMP, SEX SCANDALS, MEDIA COVERAGE, MEDIA SYSTEMS, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Common sense suggests that sex scandals involving politicians are universal. Nevertheless, studies suggest that their media exposure seems to be a daily occurrence in some democracies and are almost absent in others. Research, in fact, shows that politicians' sex lives exposure is predominately a feature in the USA and the UK (Sabato *et al*., 2000; Thompson, 2000; Tumber 2004) while in other countries such as, for example, Italy, France or Spain, (Chalaby, 2004; Esser and Hartung, 2004; Holtz-Bacha, 2004; Sparks and Tulloch, 2000; Merkl, 2001; Cepernich, 2008; Van Zoonen, 1998, Downey and Stanyer, 2013; Thompson, 2000) this topic is almost ignored by news outlets. There are very few academic attempts to explain what political, cultural or media variables may be affecting the exposure of political sex-related scandals in different countries. From the political perspective there is some evidence suggesting that the difference may be related to the centrality of the candidate/President and the consequent personalization of politics in certain countries (see Summers, 2007; Thompson, 2000), together with different legislative constraints that protect the privacy of politicians. Media studies, on their side, focus on the commercial pressures on the media and the tabloidization of the press (see Kuhn, 2004, 2007; Tumber, 2004), together with different journalistic cultures, that determine what should be considered 'public' and 'private' (see Barker, 1994; Castells, 2004; Garrard and Newell, 2006; Tumber and Waisbord, 2004a, 2004b). Nevertheless, on the one hand, the personalization of politics which is characteristic of presidential systems such as the United States, has also increased in semi-presidential and parliamentary systems since the 90s (Poguntke and Webb 2005; Wattenberg 1994). On the other hand, the growing professionalization of political campaigns is pushing most of the countries to follow the American model when it comes to political communication – the so-called process of "Americanization of political campaigns" (Mancini and Swanson, 1996).

Under these premises, our intention is to analyze the media treatment of two sex scandals: the "Stormy Daniels scandal", which involved the current US President Donald Trump at the dawn of the 2016 elections, and was exposed in January 2018, and the "Ruby scandal", which involved Silvio Berlusconi in 2010 while he was Italy's Prime Minister.

Donald Trump and Silvio Berlusconi belong to the countries that represent two opposite models of both political and media systems. Italy can be considered the perfect example of the so-called Polarized Pluralist Model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), characterized by a strong political use of the media, where elites, interest groups and private economic groups can express their ideas, improve their level of consensus and negotiate their interests and goals with other groups (Mancini and Swanson, 1996). The USA, on the other hand, is probably the best example of the Atlantic or Liberal Model, a market-dominated system, based on respect for freedom of speech and thus freedom of the press (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Nonetheless, they appear to be very similar when it comes to their personal and political profile, and to their communications strategies, especially in their relationship with the media. This resemblance is so evident that following Trump's election, different authors started arguing if, with the advent of the so-called Trumpism, "variants of Polarized Pluralist elements are entrenched in the American news system" (Nechustai, 2018: 1).

By comparing these two cases we aim at discovering whether the media treatment is different, as we can expect, since the media systems of the two countries are so different, or if, according to the theory of Americanization of political communication, the Italian media tend to emulate the American model also in this kind of news coverage, or, on the other hand, if, in the USA, a shift towards a more Polarized Pluralist model can be identified.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand the two cases properly, it is imperative to give some background information about Italy's and the USA's media systems, to introduce the operational concepts of political personalization and mediatization, and finally to contextualize and compare the two political figures.

The Media Systems in Italy and the USA

Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2006), in their influential work "Comparing Media Systems", describe typical patterns of how political systems, journalism cultures, media policies, media markets, and media uses are connected in a given society. As previously mentioned, according to their framework, Italy can be considered the perfect example of what the authors call the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model. As they point out, "the late, uneven and conflicting development of liberal institutions in Southern Europe is fundamental to understanding the development of the media in this region" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 128). Southern European mass media are inherently involved in the political conflicts that mark the history of this region: this has translated into a strong tradition of considering mass media as means of ideological expression and political mobilization. In Italy, in fact, due to the country's late democratization and the consequent strong role of the State, somehow "hijacked" by the centrality of political parties, the media have never fully developed as autonomous institutions and they have been, and still are, often dependent on the State, political parties, the Church and also private owners, but colluded with political interests. Since the development of commercial media markets has been relatively weak, the system is characterized by an elite-oriented press with relatively small circulation and by a corresponding centrality of the electronic media with a strong public broadcasting system, highly controlled by the government. Political parallelism tends to be high, with a strong tradition of advocacy journalism and, as said, a high level of instrumentalization of the media by the government and by political parties. Consequently, the professionalization of journalism is not strongly developed: it is often difficult to differentiate journalism from political activism and, because of that, the autonomy of journalism is often limited. The USA, on the other hand, can be considered the benchmark for the opposite model, the Atlantic or Liberal Model, since it is characterized by an early democratization, a weak state intervention and a market-dominated system, characterized by a strong respect for freedoms, especially freedom of speech and thus freedom of the press. In this context, we can find an early development of the mass-circulation press, centrality of commercial newspapers and information-oriented journalism. Since the control of the State is very limited – at any rate limited to

the control of the good functioning of the market - political parallelism is low, and internal pluralism predominates. Consequently, journalistic autonomy is more likely to be limited by commercial pressures than by political manipulation (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Personalization of politics

Political personalization is a "process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (*i.e.*, political party) declines" (Karvonen, 2010: 4). The rise of this individual-centred politics is understood as the result of two interconnected factors: first, the changing features of politics in advanced industrial society, mainly the erosion of the class-based society that led to the decline in party identification and to the weakening of traditional affective ties between voters and parties (Dalton, 2002) that boosted electoral volatility, and second, the technological developments in communication (Mazzoleni, 2000; Meyrowitz, 1985; Swanson and Mancini, 1996). Mass media, in particular television, have played a key role in emphasizing leadership and personal characteristics (Butler and Ranney, 1992; Manin, 1997; Swanson and Mancini, 1996) by bringing candidates' faces and voices into citizens' homes on a regular basis. Subsequently, the Internet fostered this phenomenon, offering opportunities for individual politicians to profile themselves (Balmas, *et al.*, 2014).

The shifting of news coverage from parties to candidates and leaders increases the representation of individual politicians as private persons (Karvonen, 2010; Rahat and Sheafer, 2007): this implies that media stop considering the politician as the occupier of a public role and start depicting him/her as a private individual, as a person. Adam and Maier (2010: 216) define this process "personalization of characteristics" pointing out the change from features regarding politicians' professional competence and performance to features concerning personality traits related to their personal life; Rahat and Sheafer (2007: 68) call it privatization, understanding it as "a media focus on the personal characteristics and personal life of individual candidates"; Van Zoonen (1991: 233) speaks of 'intimization', since "values from the private sphere are transferred to the public sphere"; Langer (2010: 371), finally labels 'politicization of the private persona' the increased media focus on personal life (family, upbringing, *etc.*) and personal qualities, whereby personal revelations cannot be divorced from the political. In other words, mediated political communication implies personalization (Musella, 2015).

In their seminal article, Mazzoleni and Schulz (2001: 251) argued that one of the key aspects of the mediatization of politics is that political actors have become "able to adapt their behavior to media requirements," that is, "they stage an event in order to get media attention", to fit the media's needs as regards timing, location, and the framing of the message.

Trump and Berlusconi: similarities

Many commentators have already pointed out the similarities between these two figures. Donatella Campus (2010: 224) points out four points a politician should follow in order to attract the media: building an appealing image, establishing an emotional

connection with voters, creating media events, and going personal. Both Trump and Berlusconi, consciously or unconsciously, seem to have mastered the ability to be media attractive: following Campus's four points, I will show that not only do they share many characteristics, but they also seem to share communicational strategies.

In terms of building an appealing image, both are tycoons-turned-politicians[1] who entered politics claiming to be the best option to fix the broken political system exactly due to their extraordinary business background – they both claim to be self-made men[2] - and due to the fact that they do not belong to the political "breed". As a matter of fact, the parties' collapse followed by corruption scandals in Italy (Calise, 2006) and the electorate fluidity in the USA, contributed to making these two outsider figures even more attractive. Moreover, both happen to be celebrities, specifically TV stars: Berlusconi once ran a TV empire[3] and Trump had a hit reality-TV franchise. When it comes to the emotional connection, even though they are far away from being "average people", presenting themselves as non-professional politicians – but very savvy salesmen – allows them to appeal to disgruntled voters by projecting themselves as someone belonging to the "people", a kind of "the guy next door", as someone that you would address in a familiar way (Wood *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, both have been remarkably successful in connecting to their voters in this field – by using a colloquial language made of rude statements[4].

Another interesting fact about their perceived closeness with people is the that fact that by virtue of being perceived as "one of us" they can afford to be sinners with human flaws and weaknesses: in fact, neither of them is afraid of presenting himself as an incurable womanizer and both of them seem to have few limits when it comes to expressing sexist comments of any sort[5].

In addition, thanks to this singular use of inappropriate – or at least unusual - language, and the frequent conscious or unconscious blunders, every time they open their mouth (or twit, in the case of Trump), a media event is automatically created. The examples are uncountable: from Berlusconi's jokes, to his sexist comment about Angela Merkel, to his racist comment about President Obama being "nice and tanned", from Trump's twitter fight with a teen actress to his numerous insulting comments on women, to calling CNN "fake news", *etc*. Finally, they both have mastered the technique of "making it personal" in terms of presenting themselves as the Boss, the strong leader in charge. On the other

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[1] Trump's bankruptcies are indeed very well-known and recorded, while Silvio Berlusconi entered politics precisely to save his business from bankruptcy, as demonstrated by the numerous ad hoc laws he promulgated once he became Prime Minister
[2] The USA President often, in his speeches, bragged about his incredible capacity to get good deals, capacity which would put his country in a position to "beat" other countries like China. "CNN (2016) Albany NY, Trump rally: We're going to win so much. Retrieved form: https://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/08/18/trump-albany-rally-winning-sot.cnn (01/09/2018).
[3] Berlusconi is the controlling shareholder of Mediaset S.p.A., also known as Gruppo Mediaset in Italian, an Italian-based mass media company which is the largest commercial broadcaster in the country. Founded in 1987 by former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and still controlled today with a 38.6% stake by his family's holding company Fininvest.
And Berlusconi, for example, declared during a meeting that Italians trusted him due to the fact he would not be tempted to steal money as he was already extremely rich. ANSA (2010, September 12th) http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2010/09/12/visualizza_new.html_1783567612.html (01/09/2018).
[4] See, for example, in the case of Trump, the "shithole" countries case. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-attacks-protections-for-immigrants-from-shithole-countries-in-oval-office-meeting/2018/01/11/bfc0725c-f711-11e7-91af-31ac729add94_story.html?utm_term=.f07ba2c73280 (01/09/2018).
[5] See Berlusconi's insult to Angela Merkel. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/jeremy-paxman-asks-silvio-berlusconi-is-it-true-you-called-angela-merkel-an-unfckable-lard-arse-9401897.html (01/09/2018).

hand, as they have a terrible relationship with the press, they show a great ability to depict themselves as innocent victims of a – liberal, in the case of Trump, and red, in the case of Berlusconi – media conspiracy. To conclude, both got involved in sex-related political scandals that went far behind the infidelity or the gossip story, since both cases actually involved serious law infringements or even crimes.

The two scandals

On May 27th 2010, Karima el-Mahroug, also known as Ruby Rubacuori (Eng. *Ruby the hearts stealer*), a 17-year-old Moroccan girl - until then unknown - was arrested for theft. Silvio Berlusconi, at that time the Italian Prime Minister, calls Milan's police station where she was kept and asked for her immediate release to avoid an international incident, alleging that she was Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's niece. The information was published for the first time on October 28th of the same year, after Milan public prosecutor's office launched an investigation into the incident. The investigators also discovered that Ruby had taken part in several infamous *bunga-bunga* party dinners at Berlusconi's house and allegedly had sex with him in exchange for money, being a minor. In February 2011, Berlusconi was placed under criminal investigation for underage prostitution and for abuse of office, and on June 24th, 2013, Berlusconi was found guilty, but he appealed against the sentence. The trial is still ongoing.

The "Stormy scandal" exploded in January 2018, when the Wall Street Journal reported that in October 2016, only a week and a half before the beginning of the 2016 Presidential election, Donald Trump's personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, had paid Stephanie Gregory Clifford, known professionally as Stormy Daniels, a former porn star, $130,000 in hush money (Rothfeld and Palazzolo, 2018) and made her sign a non-disclosure agreement to buy her silence on the alleged affair she declared to have had with the candidate a decade earlier, in 2006 (a year after he had married Melania, the current First Lady, and just months after she had given birth to their son, Barron). According to the Federal Election Commission, this payment could be considered illegal if proved that it was an in-kind contribution by Cohen to Trump's electoral campaign.[6] The case had a twist on August 21st, when Michal Cohen pleaded guilty to eight federal crimes, two of which involved the President's: specifically, he declared that Trump directed him to make payments to silence two women (Stormy Daniels and Karen McDougal) who alleged sexual affairs with him.

METHOD

These two scandals received an enormous amount of media attention worldwide, both for their gossip and for their political aspects. In order to compare the media treatment, I focused the research on national media outlets, and specifically on national television networks, as television was the medium with the greatest reach both in Italy in 2011 and in the USA in 2018 (Reuters Digital Report, 2018). News and current affairs TV programs, in

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[6] Under the Federal Election Campaign Act, contributions are, in fact, subjects to limits: in the specific case, an individual contribution has a $2,700 limit, which makes Cohen's payment about $127,300 above the amount he was allowed to donate for the campaign.

both major commercial and public service channels of the USA and Italy, were gathered during three months starting from the first scandal exposure, *i.e.*, from January 12th to April 12th, 2018 in the USA, and from October 28th, 2010 to January 28th, 2011 in Italy, and a total of 158 hours recordings were coded.

Within the large amount of material collected, I chose to focus my attention on the genre of journalistic interview, specifically on the interview with the protagonists, for two main reasons. First of all, interviews on TV have grown so popular to become a genre themselves, since they exert a special fascination in the eyes of the audience, offering them a unique chance to come, in a certain way, face-to-face with people they would hardly have the chance to know in most cases (Natsvlishvili, 2013: 348). Specifically, in this kind of high-profile cases, interviews with the protagonists are able to reach an enormous amount of people due to their particular relevance. Actually, as it will be explained later, the analyzed Stormy Daniels' interview is the fifth most watched interview in the history of American television. And, last but not least, the interview can be considered one of the – if not the – most important tools journalists have to expand on information and to clarify facts: according to most journalistic manuals, "it is used to formulate or complement a news or report," (Halperin, 2012: 23), *i.e.*, to deepen the basic "who, what, where, how, when and why" of newsgathering. None of the two politicians involved in the scandals released any interview on the topic: in fact, Berlusconi has always kept silence on the topic since then, and neither Trump, has spoken by now. However, the other protagonists did.

Selecting which interview to analyze has been a very easy task in the case of Ruby, since she gave only one exclusive interview in Italy, to the TV newsmagazine "Kalispéra!" in January 2011. Stormy, on the other side, appeared in several programs. Therefore, the first[7] and most watched interview she released on March 25th, 2018, on CBS "60 Minutes" was selected for this analysis.

The videos selected were analyzed by combining two methodologies: on the one hand, they were analyzed from a media perspective to understand what kind of journalistic sub-genre they belong to, and, subsequently, they were analyzed through content analysis. To do so, Femø Nielsen's (2006: 117-118) taxonomy of interviews was adopted. According to the author, it is possible to distinguish between argumentation, declaration and storytelling interviews by analyzing interviewers' speech, posture, gesture and facial expression and his/her interaction with the interviewee. In the argumentation interview, the interviewer adopts a neutral oppositional attitude in order for the interviewee to explain or defend a position; the declaration interview happens when the interviewer invites the interviewee to declare, admit or claim something without challenging it or holding the person accountable; and in the storytelling interview, the interviewer works on getting the interviewee to tell a story by aligning with the interviewee and, possibly, by collaborating in telling the story as well. Thus, the analysis focused attention on

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[7] Technically, this interview is not Daniels's first appearance on TV, because on January the 30th of the same year, she was invited as a guest on "Jimmy Kimmel Live": even if she touched the topic this cannot be considered a proper journalistic interview since the host is not a journalist and the program is an entertainment program, rather than a news program, so this appearance was discarded from the analysis.

the interview structure and the visual aspects of the studio, the protagonists and their interaction.

Subsequently, a computer-based content analysis, which implied using the text mining software Wordstat, was applied to the transcripts. This method of textual analysis, deriving from textual statistics, represents a hybridization of different disciplines such as linguistics, content analysis and statistics itself, and through statistical examination of vocabulary distribution, in terms of word occurrence and co-occurrence, allows identifying the features of a discourse, in terms of "lexical universes". The concept of lexical universe is connected with the concept of semantic field used in linguistics, understood as the network of relationships that a concept maintains with the words that qualify it. Content analysis is often criticized for being too quantitative, and I acknowledge that "the story is not only a string of words, ideas or data." (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2008: 145), so the reasonable amount of data allowed me to complement and enrich the text mining results with a manual qualitative analysis, aimed at achieving a critical understanding of the retrieved lexical universes and unveiling the story telling techniques behind each discourse.

"60 MINUTES" INTERVIEW

As said, when it comes to the case of Stormy Daniels, the very first journalistic interview she gave on national television after the story emerged, *i.e.* CBS's "60 Minutes" was selected for analysis. The interview, broadcast on Sunday, March 25th, 2018, at 7 pm Eastern/Pacific on CBS stations (and on the CBS digital streaming news service CBSN), was hosted by the journalist Anderson Cooper. "60 Minutes" is a newsmagazine that usually undertakes its own investigations and follows up on investigations started by national newspapers and other sources. It typically consists of two/three long-form news stories: each story is first presented from a studio set with a backdrop resembling pages extracted from a magazine that has already covered the same topic. This episode of "60 Minutes" reached 22.1 million viewers, thus making Daniels' interview the third most-watched interview in the show's 50-year history, and, as already mentioned, the fifth most-watched television interviews ever. The interview was recorded: it actually occurred earlier and was aired in spite of the fact that Trump's lawyer had obtained a restraining order from an arbitrator, which was meant to stop the interview from becoming public. The program was deleted from YouTube for copyright infringement, but both the video and the transcripts of the interview, together with extra materials, are available on the CBS website.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Studio set-up

The interview takes place in the program's usual setting, characterized by an aseptic yellow light and blurred background, without the presence of any audience, to create an impersonal environment, with the clear intention to keep the focus on the interaction between the host and the guest.

Direction and camera

The direction mostly uses tight close-ups of both the host and the guest, while background images are very rare. The focus is placed on the guest: the host is less focused and shows no emotional reactions besides listening.

The host and the guest

Both the host and the guest are in formal dress, which gives a rigorous, professional image of the entire scene. Cooper is wearing a dark grey suit and a tie and is shown holding working papers in his hands. Stormy is wearing a coral blouse and a black skirt: she in formal attire but she does not renounce wearing bright colours, which are her signature style.

JOURNALISTIC ANALYSIS

Interview structure

The interview's duration is 28 minutes: 16 of which are dedicated to the actual interview, while the other 12 are occupied by two side consultations, one with an expert, Trevor Potter, former commissioner and chairman of the US Federal Election Commission, and the other with Michael Avenatti, Stormy's lawyer. The interview follows the prototypical structure of an informative interview, rigidly based on the 6 W's. After a short presentation/contextualization, no more information is given about Stormy Daniels's life or background: all the conversation is dedicated to the fact itself and its legal implications. Stormy describes her meetings with Trump, the reasons behind these meetings, the signing of the non-disclosure agreement, the threats she received and her motivations to speak out. The expert is consulted to deepen the legal details of the possible law infringement in Cohen's contribution to the campaign, and Michael Avenatti about the possibility to consider the non-disclosure agreement null or invalid because Donald Trump did not sign it himself.

Journalistic style

This interview can be considered the perfect example of the argumentation interview. The interview is completely fact-centred and the interviewer's attitude is actually neutral and oppositional, in order for the interviewee to explain and defend her position. The journalistic style is the one of probing journalism: the host poses different questions that, somehow, confront the host and force her to deepen in the necessary details and the real reasons for her TV appearance. In fact, the interview starts with the following question: "for sitting here talking to me today you could be fined a million dollars, I mean aren't you taking a big risk?

TEXT ANALYSIS

The quantitative analysis of the lexical universes confirms the observation about the journalistic style. The conversation sticks to facts, and the story is told in a very precise and aseptic way. Legalistic affirmations are often done: in different occasions, for example, when confronted with sensitive topic, the guest answers "My attorney has recommended that I don't discuss these things". As it can be deduced from Figure 1, the most recurrent words are names of the people involved in the scandal, and words related to the story, such as payment, deal, pay, sign, *etc.*

▲ *Figure 1.*
Stormy's interview word cloud.
Source: Author, 2019

Story telling

The qualitative analysis shows that the story is told from a rigorous legal perspective with no place for emotions of any kind. Stormy presents herself as an empowered woman, who knows what she is doing and holds herself responsible for her own actions. When she is asked about the #MeToo movement, for instance, she replies: "I was not a victim. I've never said I was a victim. I think trying to use me to further someone else's agenda does horrible damage to people who are true victims."

"KALISPÉRA!" INTERVIEW

The interview was aired on January 19th, of 2011, within the night news magazine "Kalispéra!", broadcast by Canale 5, the most watched private channel in Italy. Canale 5 (in English Channel Five) is an Italian private television station, belonging to Mediaset S.p.A., the largest commercial broadcaster in the country, founded in 1987 by Silvio Berlusconi himself, and still controlled (with a 38.6% stake) by his family's holding company – Fininvest. The host of the program is Alfonso Signorini, a gossip columnist, with a long

employment relationship with Berlusconi: besides being a TV host, he is the director of the weekly magazine "*Chi*", property of the editorial group Mondadori which, once again, is controlled by Fininvest, Berlusconi family's holding. The show attracted more than 2 million viewers (24,02% of share) and the episode was the season's best performer. The full interview is almost irretrievable: it is not available in any Mediaset's archives, it has been deleted from YouTube for copyright infringement and only fragments of it are available on the web. The interview analyzed is taken from the authors' personal archive.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Studio set up

The studio is set up as a traditional home's living room: the guest and the host sit on two green armchairs with a classic country pattern, between them there is a table with a lamp and a flower pot, and on the carpet, next to the host, a blonde Labrador dog sleeps quietly. This setting, together with the relaxing soft blue lights, creates what the journalistic slang calls "the bubble effect", a warm environment, ideal for an intimate conversation. The aim of recreating a familiar setting, in other words, is to make the guest feel so comfortable to the extent of forgetting the presence of the camera and speak out in a confidential environment; and the same familiar environment also increases the emotional closeness, and eventually the bond, between TV viewers and the interviewee. Another interesting detail is the presence of the audience in the studio: even if it is never shown, it is perceived through clapping, laughs and whispering. This is another element of "humanization" of the conversation.

The host and the guest

Both Ruby and the journalist are dressed informally. Signorini's attire is in harmony with the set: he is wearing casual clothes, as if he were really in his living room –with no suit, and the warm colours of his clothes perfectly match the interiors. Ruby somehow represents the stereotypical personification of Berlusconi's televisions' woman[8]: for the occasion she renounces the colourful tight mini-dresses and the heavy makeup she became famous for when the scandal exploded, she is wearing less make-up, but still keeping a sexy "Berlusconi-TV" style, wearing tight jeans, stiletto heels and a transparent blouse with a grey tiger pattern.

Direction and camera

Direction is very important for the construction of this interview: the production, as already mentioned, opts for low lights, and the shots are mostly tight close-ups of both, the host and the guest. Faces are shown in detail and the shots become closer and closer the more the interviewee becomes emotional; the host, on his side, shows empathic reactions (amusement, suffering, tenderness) to each of the guest's statements. Moreover,

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[8] The representation of women on Berlusconi's TVs is one of the Italian media hot topic, since women (especially, yet not exclusively) on his channels, are objectified and nudity is very often exposed.

an extraordinary use of detail shots can be noticed, especially on Ruby's hands: she is holding a tissue in her right hand, and is using it as she becomes emotional when talking about her childhood, while, on her left hand there is an engagement ring. The connection between the ring shot and the interview is made clear at the end, when the host invites Ruby's fiancé on the stage.

JOURNALISTIC ANALYSIS

Interview structure

The host creates the perfect emotional profile interview, aimed at giving a glimpse on the character of the interviewee, more than exploring facts. In fact, everything is about Ruby and her life: no side information is given, no expert is consulted and the host lets the guest explain her story. This interview fits so much this category that many commentators at the time of the airing doubted whether it was information or a scripted drama. The structure is, as a matter of fact, the same of a mini-drama: it starts with Ruby talking about her traumatic past, with a lot of focus on her suffering, then the host brings about the topic of her meeting with the Prime Minister and finally she is asked about her plans for the future. The climax of the interview is reached with a stereotypical happy ending scene, when she declares that she finally found love and she is going to get married, and her fiancé is invited to join her on the stage. The focus on her personal life is also proved by the timing: only 51,33% (7 minutes and 40 seconds) of the time is dedicated to discuss the alleged sexual relations between the minor and the President, the rest, 7 minutes and 16 seconds (48,67% of the total time) is dedicated to trace Ruby's profile by discussing her past and her expectations for the future. Moreover, even within the minutes dedicated to the fact itself, the story is told in a very gossipy style, focusing more on the guest's feelings and sensations than on facts. For instance, the first question about Ruby's first meeting with the politician is as to what she was wearing.

Journalistic style

In terms of Nielsen's categories, this is clearly a storytelling interview, since the host lets the guest explain her story by aligning with her, and also by actively collaborating in telling the story. As mentioned before, the host clearly empathizes with the guest. First, and most importantly, he never confronts or puts the guest in an uncomfortable position: when she declares that she never had sex with Berlusconi and that she received 7000 euros only to attend a dinner, for instance, he takes this answer for granted and does not make any more fact-checking questions. Moreover, as it will be described later, one of the most recurrent words used by the host is "*certo*" (Eng. *sure, of course*), used after most of Ruby's answers, as a concept validation. Finally, since Ruby's mother tongue is not Italian (even if she speaks it perfectly), and she is not highly educated, she often makes grammatical, namely verbs conjugations mistakes, so the journalist helps by correcting her, and even by finishing her sentences.

Perhaps because of the above mentioned, Ruby's language is very colloquial, and the host adopts the same register even when referring to the Court case or to the alleged crime. For example, Ruby uses very colourful expressions (in two different occasions she makes her point by using swear words such as "*buttana*" and "*troione di prima categoria*" (both vulgar synonyms for *prostitute*), and the host reacts with an openly paternalistic attitude of amusement, clearly visible from his facial expression and body language. In addition, he always refers to his guest as "*ragazza*" (Eng. *girl*), once again showing closeness and a paternalistic attitude. The audience's applauses, laughs and whispering contribute to the creation of a soft- entertainment talk show style.

TEXT ANALYSIS

As it can be seen in Figure 2, quite surprisingly for an interview that should focus one, very specific fact, the quantitative visualization of most recurrent words is so varied and undefined to make it almost impossible to establish a lexical universe.

▲ *Figure 2.*
Ruby`s interview word cloud.
Source: Author, 2019

As mentioned before, amongst the most recurrent words there is "*ragazza*" (Eng. *girl*), used by Ruby to define herself and by Signorini to refer to her and "*certo*" (Eng. *of course*), a validation word used by the journalist to empathize with the guest. Interestingly, there is the word "*credo*" (Eng. *I believe*), which is one of the most used words by Ruby, accompanied, in the second place by "*sinceramente*" (Eng. *sincerely*). If Stormy's narration was aseptic and assertive, this lexical choice indicates that the focus is on feelings and opinions, thus a partial and personal version of the story. The qualitative analysis will help clarifying this apparently meaningless distribution.

Storytelling

As said, this interview is easily comparable, in structure and in content to a drama. Actually, two main stories emerge from the storytelling of this interview: a veritable Ruby's fairytale, starting with her difficult beginning and ending with a wedding proposal, and the depiction of the guest as somebody suffering a double personality disorder. If we analyze them following the classical drama pattern, the lexical universes will become very clear.

1. The fairy tale

The interview tells the story of Ruby using a fairy-tale structure. Ruby, described as a defenceless young girl in trouble, is the hero: the most significant words are "*ragazza*" (Eng. *girl*) and "*persona*" (Eng. *person*). Throughout the description, she emerges as an average good girl, whose dream is to become a wife and a mother (both words used by the host). When asked whether she has ever exercised prostitution she answers that she tried once, but she could not "do that", because "as my mama says, you either were born a slut or you cannot become one." (see the video). The villain is her family environment: as mentioned, a lot of time is dedicated to describe the struggles she faced in life, from the abuses suffered during her childhood (she shows the scars these abuses left on her body), to the difficulties of growing up in a strict Muslim household. The environment is also hostile: her birthplace, Morocco, is described as a very difficult place to live in and the economic difficulties she faced, once she moved to Italy, are also exposed. The reference words in this case are "*vita*" (Eng. *life*), "*stress*" and "*difficoltá*" (Eng. *obstacles*).

The pivotal moment of her life is the meeting with Berlusconi. Not only did Berlusconi ever ask her to have sex, but, according to her narration, he was the first person who listened to her "without asking anything back". And also granted her 7.000 Euros as a gift, the first time he met her for a dinner, simply because he perceived she might have been facing a complicated moment in her life. The reference words, in this case, are "*cena*" (Eng. *dinner*), and "*Euro*". Berlusconi is, thus, the fairy godmother who, thanks to his contribution (in this case economic) helped the young lady to overcome her struggles and finally find love. And the happy ending is guaranteed by the fiancé joining Ruby on the stage and talking about their future wedding plans.

2. The double personality

The other story is aimed at making the guest appear as someone suffering of some sort of double personality disorder. Karima openly states that she has always felt the need to lie, to the extent of developing a "parallel life", under the identity of Ruby the hearths' stealer, in order to overcome all the suffering she faced in life. In fact, in the word cloud it can be noticed that the word "*parallela*" (Eng. *parallel*) co-occurs more frequently with "*difficoltá*" (Eng. *obstacles*). She admits declaring she was 24 instead of 17 years old (therefore the President cannot be held accountable for inviting a minor to his dinners), reporting facts that never happened to appear more interesting in front of her friends (therefore we cannot believe in Ruby's telephone tapping, in which she tells her friend about her sexual relations with the President), and she also admits introducing herself

as Egyptian and not Moroccan (but in this case she does not say she introduced herself as Mubarak's niece). The host insists on accentuating this double personality aspect and indirectly suggests that all her actions should be interpreted in the light of these two parallel lives. The two stories finally come together when she states that after a life as a liar, she has finally found someone, Luca, her fiancé to whom she is completely honest.

CONCLUSION

The results illustrate how "60 Minutes" represents a perfect example of information-oriented journalism: rigorous, fact-based, news driven and objectively reported. The sex-scandal is reported as a case with no space for gossiping or entertainment. Moreover, the very fact that CBS decided to air the interview beyond the President's restraining order, shows a good level of journalistic autonomy. "Kalispera!", instead, stands on the opposite side, with a journalistic style that is definitely closer to an info-entertainment or gossip news program: exactly as most gossip interviews, it appears to be, if not scripted, at least constructed to generate emotions. However, in this specific case emotions serve a specific purpose: everything seems to be moulded in order to exculpate Berlusconi. The entire story-telling is geared towards sanctifying Berlusconi, who emerges as a Good Samaritan; meanwhile the alleged victim, openly defining herself as a compulsive liar, allows the audience to doubt about her trustworthiness. The figure of Trump, on the other hand, is objectively reported as an actor of the news story and the journalist does not sympathize with any person involved, neither suggests any interpretation to the viewer. To sum up, there is no need to underline that the Italian journalist works for a Berlusconi's company to state that his kind of journalism can, without any doubt, be listed within the category of advocacy journalism in which journalists "are advocates, linked to political parties, and very close to being active politicians themselves" (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 266), which is considered one of the main features of the Polarized Pluralist model.

It has to be acknowledged that our sample is small and limited, and, thus, it is difficult to find significant relationships or make strong inferences. However, since the sample size is less relevant in qualitative research, and our aim was simply to expose two specific cases, we can conclude that, in these specific cases, nothing has changed. Both media appear to display the distinctive journalistic culture of their traditional media model: in Italy the practice is still highly politically-oriented and the US medium implements fact-oriented journalism, a typical feature of the Liberal model. As a matter of fact, this case study seems to show how, in spite of the fact that neutrality or even journalistic freedom may be threatened under the Trump-era, the objectivity norm, as displayed by Schudson (2001), seems to be the rule in American journalism. On the other hand, in Italy, as pointed out by Poletti and Brants (2010), even if the commercial logic makes Italian media focus on what sells and forces them to be more sensationalist, the remnants of political parallelism and partisanship (Reinemann *et al.*, 2011) still remain unaltered.

DISCUSSION

Our conclusion may allow to affirm that, in the USA, the existence of a stable, institutionalized, commercial media system is able to resist any attack on freedom of expression and that, on the other hand, in Italy, even within a growing importance of commercial media, the politically-oriented tradition is so embedded in journalism that it stills dominates the news making practices. However, further research is needed to prove these assumptions, especially taking into account that these are not static models, so they can change and adapt throughout the time. Moreover, it is crucial to take into account the role of the internet (Cervi and Roca, 2017) and the growing phenomenon of citizen journalism in setting mainstream media agendas: active participation of citizens, together with the viralization power of social networks, in fact, can potentially force any media – independently of the country, the journalistic culture or the media system they belong to – to include in their agendas topics that, in the old mass media times, would have fallen outside.

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SLIČNI POLITIČARI, DRUKČIJI MEDIJI: MEDIJSKI TRETMAN SEKS-SKANDALA U ITALIJI I SAD-U

Laura Cervi

SAŽETAK *Ovaj rad analizira medijski tretman dvaju seks-skandala: skandala „Stormy Daniels" iz 2018. u koji je bio uključen sadašnji predsjednik SAD-a Donald Trump i skandala „Ruby" u kojem je sudjelovao Silvio Berlusconi 2010. dok je bio talijanski premijer. U radu se koriste kvantitativne i kvalitativne metode, a cilj je otkriti je li medijski tretman navedenih događaja drukčiji, što očekujemo s obzirom na to da dvije zemlje pripadaju dvama različitim medijskim sustavima, te može li se očekivati, na tragu teorije ameri-kanizacije političke komunikacije, da bi talijanski mediji mogli biti skloni imitiranju američkog modela. Nadalje, drugi cilj ove studije jest otkriti može li se zaokret prema tzv. polariziranom pluralističkom (tali-janskom) modelu pronaći u SAD-u, kako su pojedini autori počeli predviđati. Rezultati su pokazali da se mediji u obje zemlje drže svojih tradicionalnih načina tretiranja događaja koji zanimaju javnost.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

BERLUSCONI, TRUMP, SEKS-SKANDAL, MEDIJSKO IZVJEŠTAVANJE, MEDIJSKI SUSTAVI, POLITIČKA KOMUNIKACIJA

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