



**Universidade de  
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Departamento de Ciências Sociais, Políticas e  
do Território

**JOÃO MIGUEL  
MONIZ LARANJEIRA  
DA SILVA**

**FRAMING POLITICIANS: THE EFFECTS OF  
EXPOSURE TO FICTIONAL POLITICAL DRAMAS**

**ENQUADRANDO POLÍTICOS: OS EFEITOS DE  
EXPOSIÇÃO A DRAMAS DE FICÇÃO POLÍTICA**



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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Ciência Política, realizada sob a orientação científica do Doutor Carlos Jalali, Professor Auxiliar do Departamento de Ciências Sociais, Políticas e do Território da Universidade de Aveiro e do Doutor José Santana Pereira, Investigador Pós-Doc no Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa, e Professor Auxiliar Convidado no ISCTE-IUL.

Dedico este trabalho a todos os que contribuíram para a sua realização.

## **o júri**

presidente

Doutora Patrícia Catarina de Sousa e Silva  
Professora Auxiliar Convidada da Universidade de Aveiro

arguente principal

Doutor Rui Costa Lopes  
Investigador FCT no Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa

orientador

Doutor Carlos Jalali  
Professor Auxiliar do Departamento de Ciências Sociais, Políticas e do Território da Universidade de Aveiro

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**palavras-chave**

Entretenimento e Política, Exposição aos Media, Framing, Metodologia Experimental, Eficácia Política, Atitudes para com os Partidos, Confiança em Instituições Políticas

**resumo**

Um dos desenvolvimentos mais interessantes no panorama político contemporâneo é a articulação entre a política e o entretenimento. Utilizando uma metodologia experimental, esta dissertação pretende estudar os efeitos que exposição a dramas de ficção política tem na audiência, quer no seu nível de eficácia política, nas atitudes para com os partidos e na confiança em instituições políticas. Foi possível confirmar parcialmente quatro das seis hipóteses. Estabeleceu-se uma relação entre a exposição a dramas de ficção política e mudança de atitudes políticas, sendo que a exposição a este tipo de entretenimento sortiu maiores efeitos ao nível da eficácia externa dos participantes da experiência.

**keywords**

Entertainment and Politics, Media Exposure, Experimental Methodology, Framing, Political Efficacy, Attitudes towards Political Parties, Trust in Political Institutions

**abstract**

One of the most interesting developments in the contemporary political landscape is the articulation between entertainment and politics. Through experimental methodology, this dissertation aims to analyse the effects of exposure to political fictional dramas on attitudes such as political efficacy, attitudes towards political parties and trust in political institutions. Four of our six hypotheses were partially confirmed by our experiment. We established a relationship between exposure to political fictional dramas and changes in political attitudes, being that the impact of this type of politically themed entertainment was most strongly felt at the level of the external political efficacy of the participants in our experiment.





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# 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most interesting features of late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century politics is its convergence with popular culture. Since Hollywood B-movie actor Ronald Reagan's presidential victory we have witnessed professional wrestler Jesse Ventura become governor of the state of Minnesota in 1999 and Austrian-born action movie star and bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger win California's gubernatorial seat in 2003, having announced his candidacy in *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*. Many high-profile Hollywood actors and filmmakers make financial contributions to US presidential campaigns while not shying away from making such contributions public, thus generating publicity for their candidate of choice. Recently, and more notoriously, we can point out the appearance of United States President Barack Obama on the internet comedy show *Between Two Ferns with Zack Galifianakis* and on the satirical *The Colbert Report*. In the latter, Barack Obama actively participates in the show's comedy when, seemingly tired of Stephen Colbert's political lampooning, he takes over for the host in one of the show's segments. The last two examples are important because they show, on the part of the United States presidency, an acute awareness of the popular culture zeitgeist.

In fact, one can argue that with the advent of television in the post-war period as a tool used by political parties in their political campaigns, politicians had to become celebrities. Political parties could no longer rely on the old cleavages they represented such as the proletariat, the bourgeoisie or particular religious-ethnic identities (Lipset & Rokkan 1967). As Van Zoonen (2005) puts forward, politics became extremely personalized in the context of an entertainment-soaked culture due to three political and cultural circumstances. The first is the increased focus on the individual traits of politicians as opposed to political programs, due to an effort on the part of the citizens to minimize the time spent on learning about politics. The second is that entertainment culture provides a framework that gives greater importance to individuals, psychological motives and personal efficiency over processes, power structures and abstract social developments. Both circumstances result in the third:

the constant need for politicians to travel between politics and entertainment in order to maintain their status and to remain relevant to their constituencies.

As Jackson (2009) argues, the way young people think about politics has also changed dramatically. Nowadays young people think of politics in more lifestyle and personalistic ways; politics have become more about lifestyle choices, tolerance, sexual and gender identity, and environmental concerns. This has resulted in an abandonment of

traditional kinds of political participation (voting in particular) in favor of more direct, volunteer activity because they can see directly the results of their activity. This is one of the reasons why the environmental movement has exerted such pull on this generation. One need not join a group or participate in a protest to become an environmentalist. All one needs to do is recycle one's trash – certainly an individual activity with direct results

Clymer in Jackson (2009, p. 52).

Despite this predicament, political science scholarship concerning popular culture and its effects on the polity and on political attitudes is still at its first stage. As Jackson (2009) and Van Zoonen (2007) argue, political science has overlooked popular culture as a field of study.

Van Zoonen points out that the dismissal of popular culture by researchers and scholars is rooted in a historical disdain for the entertainment industries and their possible articulations with politics. Citing a diverse set of scholars from Neil Postman, Pierre Bourdieu and Jürgen Habermas among others, Van Zoonen identifies the thesis behind this dismissal, which she labels the video malaise. The phenomenon is summarized by the author as a pervasive influence of television on political discourse, characterized by an increased tendency to simplify, sentimentalize and to conceptualize in a more personalistic way what previously was a “purely informational, rational, and deliberative” discourse (2005, p. 2).

According to Van Zoonen, this segregation between politics and popular culture can be explained by their distinct origins. Popular culture is rooted in oral traditions and folklore, while politics owes its evolution to literacy and modernity, and as the author further elaborates, this distinction carries with it asymmetric power relations and elite dominance (Van Zoonen 2005). Van Zoonen warns that if the political

sphere continues to pursue this disdain it risks alienating the contemporary citizen, as politics is forced to compete with other activities for citizens' attention:

Keeping up with politics by reading the newspaper has to be secured from other reading [...]. Keeping up with politics by watching the relevant television programs is in competition with sports, comedies, or quiz shows. Visiting a political demonstration is in conflict with going to a simultaneously scheduled classic car fair.

Van Zoonen (2005, p. 2)

In Portugal there are many instances where entertainment and politics have met which have been recently studied by Santana Pereira (2016). For instance, it is customary for politicians on the campaign trail to be interviewed in late-night talk shows such as *Herman SIC* (2000-2006) or in *5 Para a Meia-Noite* (2009-present). In a different register, less comedic but nonetheless familial and causal, there have been politicians who have appeared to be interviewed in *Alta Definição* (2009-present), an interview show produced for SIC. The Portuguese television industry has even produced its own version of the *Daily Show* hosted by Portuguese funny men *Gato Fedorento* with the shows *Gato Fedorento Esmiuça os Sufragios* (2009) and *Isso é Tudo Bonito, Mas* (2015) wherein the group of comedians covered the 2009 and 2015 legislative elections in Portugal. The show featured many politically themed satirical sketches and interviews with the main figureheads of the parties running for parliament. Another example of political satire in Portugal was the long-running puppet show aired by RTP *Contra Informação* (1996-2010). Relative to fiction, the offer is relatively lesser in quantity. An example are the situational comedies *A Senhora Ministra* (2000) and *A Mãe do Senhor Ministro* (2013).

However, this phenomenon has been scarcely studied in Portugal; there have been studies conducted that look at the articulation between entertainment and politics in Portugal. Deodato (2013) analyses the main themes of the Portuguese satirical television shows *Diz que é uma Espécie de Magazine* and *Os Contemporâneos*. The study finds that these shows' satirical messages stick to the Portuguese social reality and usually avoid discussing international politics and rely on comedic strategies which ridicularize political actors on the national scene as being corrupt and motivated by self-interest. In a similar study, Pardal (2015) critically assess the Portuguese satirical talk-show *Governo Sombra*. For the author, the political

comedic content the show is known for is crucial in destabilizing hegemonic conceptions of Portuguese politics through the use of satire. This is in line with Holbert (2013) who argues in favor of the normative role of political satire in democracy, through its ability to expose those in power. In view of these recent studies, our own distinguishes itself by focusing on the effects of entertainment rather than on the content of entertainment media.

The present research hopes bridge this gap by contributing to a growing field of scholarship, by probing into a seldom tapped, in Jackson's words, goldmine. More specifically the effects, if any, of fictional politically themed television entertainment content, on the people who watch it. To be even more accurate, the present research is going to answer the following research question: What are the effects of exposure to fictional political dramas on the audience's political attitudes? In other words, are people's attitudes toward politicians influenced by the television entertainment content they consume? In the present research, fictional politically themed television entertainment content is to be understood as drama series where politicians are heavily featured or are indeed the main focus of the narrative. In this study we used *The West Wing* (1999-2006) and *House of Cards* (US 2013-present). The choice of American dramas was made not only because these shows are/were very popular in Portugal, but also because there is no national production of political fiction in the country suitable for the needs of our study. For the purpose of answering the research question that anchors this research, an experimental design, which is outlined in Chapter 3, was employed. It is important to note that while the sample of participants that was used in our experiment consisted of Portuguese university students, the television series used in the treatment were produced and aimed at portraying the United States political reality is which substantially different from that of Portugal. Therefore, this strikes us as being a considerably harsh setting for the test of hypotheses concerning effects of political dramas on attitudes towards politics. If effects were to be seen, this would be proof of the power of political entertainment contents.

As will be shown, we were able to observe that there is indeed a relationship between exposure to fictional political dramas and a change in political attitudes such as political efficacy, attitudes towards politicians and trust in political institutions, which partially confirms our hypotheses.

This dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 outlines the literature on entertainment and politics, focusing on the effects of the former on citizens' attitudes towards the latter. It begins with an exploration of four of the most often used theories to explain how our attitudes are shaped by the media we are exposed to, namely cultivation theory, agenda-setting, priming, and finally framing which, of the four is the most relevant to our study. It then reviews the literature studying the effects of media exposure on political attitudes. Chapter 3 details the hypotheses which were tested in the experimental design, as well as outlines the thesis' research design and methodology. Before testing the hypothesis, a detailed description of the sample of university students who participated in this study is presented, in Chapter 4. This is followed by the presentation of the results of our experiment and its discussion (Chapter 5), with Chapter 6 presenting the conclusions of this research.





## 2. RESEARCH ON ENTERTAINMENT AND POLITICS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, we will identify and present the relevant literature for this thesis. The chapter is divided into two blocks: the first one (2.1) is an exploration of four central theories of media studies: cultivation theory, agenda-setting, priming and to a more elaborate degree, an overview of framing and why it is the model that best suits the present research.

In the second block (2.2 & 2.3), we will follow Holbert's (2005) typology on the multiple forms that politically themed television content can assume. The author identifies nine categories of entertainment television which provide opportunities for the framing of the political process. Following from here, I will present a review of significant studies on the effects of non-fictional entertainment media, such as talk-shows, reality shows and news programming, and more pertinently, fictional entertainment media. on political attitudes

It is important to survey what the literature tells us about the issue so that we can more effectively contribute to this growing body of research. In general, the literature gives evidence that media exposure is associated with attitude change. This is relevant in so far as it provides support for our research aims and methodology.

### 2.1. Cognitive effects of mass media use and cultivation theory

Researchers in the social sciences have studied the effects of mass media on society in the past, and to a lesser extent, popular culture. In Scheufele and Tewksbury's article (2007), four theoretical models for the study of media are identified: cultivation theory, agenda setting, priming, and framing.

### **2.1.1. Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation theory aims at studying the effects of television viewing in the process of socialization. As Gerbner (1998) argues, television has largely substituted oral and other forms of communicating the narratives that structure our lives through a coherent system of images and messages which “cultivates from infancy predispositions and preferences” (p. 177). Morgan and Shanahan (2010) summarize the theory thusly: “those who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and recurrent messages of the world of fictional television”. (2010 p. 337).

For Gerbner (1998), cultivation analysis begins with a systematic analysis of the most recurrent thematic patterns provided by television. The author points out, that while testing for cultivation effects with short-term exposure might potentially produce effects, the theoretical assumption of cultivation theory are more ambitious and pertain to repetitive, long-term and consistent patterns of mass media exposure.

Considering the long-term nature of cultivation analysis and the time constraints of our research design (see Chapter 3), we speculate that there won't be the necessary time of exposure to produce cultivation effects. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize the theory as a broader analysis of the political effects of media in general, and of entertainment television more specifically.

### **2.1.2. Agenda setting and priming**

Agenda setting is the theory that defends that the mass media and other bodies and structures in the polity such as the corporate world, religious and educational institutions (McCombs 2006), or even the executive dimension of the government, which is argued by Rutledge and Price (2014), set and define the topics that the public at large considers to be important.

Priming, which Scheufele and Tewksbury points out “is often understood as an extension of agenda setting” (2007, p.11), focuses on the importance certain topics are given in mass media and how these selected topics become the gauge with

which they assess the performance of the government, for example. Both these models share common assumptions according to Scheufele and Tewksbury. The underlying theory is that people use the salience of any given issue to construct attitudes and arrive at decisions. In sum: "By making some issues more salient in people's mind (agenda setting), mass media can also shape the considerations that people take into account when making judgments about political candidates or issues (priming)" (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p.11).

### **2.1.3. Framing**

Finally, framing, which as Van Gorp (2007) reports has become the paradigmatic research avenue in communication studies, is characterized by the premise that the way a particular topic is presented to the audience will influence the way it is received. The theory of framing is traced back by Scheufele and Tewksbury to the experimental work of Kahneman and Tversky and their Asian Disease experiment (1983). The authors created the hypothetical scenario to measure risk aversion where an epidemic disease, which is believed to kill 600 people, occurs and the government is expected to tackle the problem. Four alternative solutions to the problem are proposed (Kahneman & Tversky 1983). Participants in Kahneman and Tversky's research were asked to choose between these four options. The researchers discovered that even though all the options given to the participants in the experiment were interchangeable in content but not in presentation, participants altered their choices depending on the more positive or negative formulation of the options.

In Scheufele and Tewksbury's account of framing, the theory has both a macrolevel, associated with Kahneman and Tversky where, as it has been shown, "different presentations of essentially identical decision-making scenarios influence people's choices and their evaluation of the various options presented to them" (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p.11), and a microlevel. Using Goffman as a reference point, Scheufele and Tewksbury identify the microlevel with the assumed inability of individuals to fully comprehend the world around them and therefore, individuals

have to “apply interpretive schemas or ‘primary frameworks’ to classify information and interpret it meaningfully” (Goffman in Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p. 12). In sum, according to Scheufele and Tewksbury,

as a macroconstruct, the term “framing” refers to modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience [...]. As a microconstruct, framing describes how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions.

Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007, p. 12)

De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) add another dimension to the theory of framing by pointing out that often certain issues can be framed with either a clear positive or negative element, which the authors describe as valence framing. For example, news organizations might frame the recent refugee crises as either a humanitarian crisis that needs to be tackled, wherein the refugees are seen as victims running for their lives in the wake of a brutal armed conflict at home, or the issue can be framed as an organized invasion of Europe by Muslims seeking to take advantage of its generous welfare programs. Each of these frames carries with them a clear good/bad, positive/negative valence.

Through the content analysis of a cross-national sample of 717 newspaper and television news stories and a subsequent experimental design, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) test the effects of the valenced news frames of the European Union summit. In the content analysis, the researchers found out that news outlets across the three sampled countries (Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands) framed the issue of European integration and enlargement as being disadvantageous and that framing was homogenous across these countries (De Vreese & Boomgaarden 2003, p. 373). In the experimental design, university students were randomly assigned to two different experimental groups, one to be exposed to an advantageous framing of European integration and enlargement, while the other group was exposed to a negative framing of the issue. They discovered that those exposed to the disadvantageous framing displayed a more negative outlook towards European Union enlargement and less support for the EU in relation with those exposed to the advantageous framing (De Vreese & Boomgaarden 2003, p. 376).

In another study of valenced news frames, De Vreese et al (2011) employ an experimental design to test the effects of valenced news framing on attitudes towards Turkish membership in the European Union. They observed that different framing of the issue had a relationship with attitude change and that the impact of negative framing was greater than the impact of positive framing, which is in line with De Vreese & Boomgaarden (2003).

This notion of valence framing can be extended to fictional representations of politics on television. A script writer might frame the political process as something that is carried out by a group of principled individuals who have the best interests of the citizenry at heart; or as something that is done by ambitious power players whose objective is the maximization of their own power and status often in conflict with the interests of the population at large. That is the aim of this study: to analyze the effects of valenced framing of politicians in fictional political dramas and the effects produced in the audience.

## **2.2. Typology of political entertainment**

In order to better understand the multiple forms that political entertainment can take shape in our television landscape, Holbert (2005) develops a typology for the study of the intersection between entertainment television and politics. For Holbert, a typology such as this one is useful as a way to organize research in a new field like the intersection between entertainment and politics. Secondly, it highlights where research in the field is more advanced and where it is lacking. Another important aspect is that, even though a typology such as this one serves to draw lines in a map, so to speak, regarding the multiple types and genres of entertainment media connected with politics, it also serves to interconnect them. As Holbert puts it, “no one content type contained in the typology functions in a vacuum” (Holbert 2005, p. 448). The nine categories of Holbert’s typology are traditional satire, situation comedy satire, lifeworld content, fictional political dramas, political docudramas, reality-based content, and entertainment talk show interviews with politicians, soft news and entertainment television events, which we develop next. The reason we

have singled out fictional political into its own subsection pertains to the fact that our focus in this study is to look at the effects of exposure to fictional political dramas in the audience's political attitudes. We improved upon Holbert's typology by including into it a contribution made by Van Zoonen and Wring (2012) who identify another genre of politically themed entertainment television; the political thriller. This genre of television was included within Holbert's fictional political drama category since both genres share similar themes.

The first category in Holbert's typology is entertainment television events, which is usually entertainment coverage of events like awards ceremonies. According to Holbert, these programs "often communicates explicit political statements" such as more government funding for the arts, or criticisms of American foreign policy "but these statements make up a minor portion of a program and are not expected to be anything but secondary relative to the program's overall entertainment value" (Holbert 2005, p. 48).

Situation comedy satire is defined by television shows, which follow a narrative and are comedic in nature. This type of content does not rely in political commentary but nonetheless, viewers usually expect elements of political satire and comedic commentary in the show's runtime. According to Holbert, *The Simpsons* and *South Park* are prime examples of the situation comedy satire category (p. 444).

In Van Zoonen and Wring's historical analysis of the key trends in political television fiction in the United Kingdom (2012), three general frames have been identified in relation to the production of fictional representations of politicians in the UK, which offer the audience "potentially engaging qualities" (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012, p. 5). As the authors concede, "the quest and soap narrative offer specific possibilities for engagement, whereas conspiracy and bureaucracy are more likely to invite disengagement" (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012, p. 5). These three frames also coincide with three broad genres of entertainment: comedies, thrillers and dramas. In the comedy frame, Van Zoonen and Wring identify *Yes Minister*, its sequel, *Yes Prime Minister*, *The New Statesman* and *The Thick of It*. Politicians in these programs are often represented as "dim-witted, lazy and uncooperative at best, and as malign,

manipulative and obsessed at worst” (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012, p. 8). A running theme identified by the authors in the comedy frame is the rigid bureaucracy that the characters find themselves immersed in, where “failure and derision are their inevitable fate” (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012, p. 8). The theme of self-interest motivation is also present.

The third category in Holbert’s typology is lifeworld content, characterized by dramas or comedies dealing with individuals faced with challenging circumstances such as dealing with tough economic situations, health care related issues and so on. An example of this type of television content are some of the made-for-TV films produced for the Lifetime Channel in the United States. According to Holbert,

audiences do not turn to these programs for their socio-political statements. [...] Nonetheless, extant critical/cultural scholarship, cultivation-based inquiries, and more traditional media effects-based research all point to popular forms of prime-time entertainment television programming providing an audience with socio-political information, and that lifeworld content has the potential to influence public opinion concerning a range of issues

Holbert (2005 p. 445)

The fourth category is political docudramas. This genre of television content is very similar to the lifeworld content but with a greater focus on political issues: “these stories often focus on a particular set of individuals or a community dealing with a crisis, but the teleplays also present what are inherently political issues that involve citizens engaging public officials or some interaction between competing public versus private interests” (Holbert 2005, p. 446). Examples of this genre are *The Road to Guantánamo* (2006) produced for Channel 4 or *Game Change* (2008) produced by HBO. But unlike fictional political dramas, political docudramas are not set in political contexts like the White House as in *The West Wing* or Congress like the North American version of *House of Cards*.

The fifth category in Holbert’s typology is soft news. This type of entertainment news programs is usually dedicated to celebrity gossip and other entertainment industry related news stories, examples of this type of television can be found in Portugal such as *Fama Show* aired in SIC or *Caras em Destaque* aired in SIC Caras. In spite of this, Holbert points out that there is empirical evidence that people who tune

in these news programs will be indirectly exposed to political information through them: “audience members do not turn to *Entertainment Tonight* primarily for public affairs information, but it is clear that viewers of this type of programming will gain access to this content type during the course of the mass communication consumption process” (Holbert 2005, p. 448).

The sixth category is entertainment talk show interviews with politicians. Examples of this type of television content can be found in Portugal, like we have referenced in Chapter 1, *Herman SIC* and *5 Para a Meia Noite*, often featured appearances and casual interviews with Portuguese politicians such as António Costa or Catarina Martins. As Holbert argues, this type of television program has become a part of the public debate; for example, during the Portuguese 2009 legislative and local elections a satirical news program inspired by the *Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, called *Gato Fedorento Esmiúça os Sufrágios* interviewed all the front runners of the major political parties (Santana Pereira 2016). The example could be problematic since the show did not strictly follow the talk show format, but it is relevant inasmuch as it shows the need for politicians to engage in entertainment formats. As Holbert points out, “audience members have come to expect political topics to be dominant when public officials are guests on entertainment talk shows” (Holbert 2005, p. 447).

The seventh category in Holbert’s typology is reality-based content, or in other words, reality television such as *Big Brother* or *COPS*. Holbert includes documentaries in this category, giving the example of nature documentaries to defend this addition, as he argues that often these documentaries make explicit statements about environmental protection, which have political implications. Despite this, Holbert points out that political statements are not the driving force behind these television programs, but “there is a mix of explicit and implicit socio-political statements being offered beyond the entertainment value” (Holbert 2005, p. 447).

Holbert’s eighth category is traditional satire, defining this type of entertainment content as comedic in nature and offering social and political commentary. Thus, although these shows do not “provide explicit statements of political fact, [...] political messages provided through these outlets are predominately implied by the



very nature of their being grounded in humor” (Holbert 2005, pp, 444). Examples of this type of content are the political sketches in comedy shows like *Saturday Night Live* or the opening monologues in comedic talk shows like the *Late Show with David Letterman*.

Holbert (2013) outlines a normative approach to political satire in which three types of democratic regimes, republican, pluralist and elitist, are set against political satire’s normative value.

Within republicanism, Holbert identifies three normative roles of political communication: promotion of civic virtue; exposing corruption and ulterior motives of political agents; and the development of a space in which the public debate of ideas can take place (Holbert 2013, p. 312). Regarding the first role of political communication within a republican framework, Holbert points out two contradictory tendencies: the first is that political satire might increase cynicism in the citizenry but, on the other hand, political satire might serve to promote critical thinking. Holbert concedes that there is little empirical evidence to support either claims (2013, p. 312). In the second role, political satire is far more conclusive. Holbert points out that one of the main aims of satire is to expose human folly. As such, political satire plays an important role in the exposure of corruption and of the possible ulterior motivations of political agents. In the third role, political satire fills the space in more ambiguous ways. Coming from Althaus, Holbert identifies the republican ideal of a space for the debate of ideas that is informed, objective and inclusive. Objectivity for the political satirist is different to the objectivity required from a journalist, as Holbert points out. In order for the satirist to be objective, he must see “all who are in power as equally worthy of satirical ridicule” (Feinberg in Holbert 2013, p. 312). Holbert cites empirical evidence that shows satirists like Jon Stewart are more likely to target Republicans than Democrats but an attentive viewing of the Jon Stewart’s *The Daily Show* will attest that both sides of the American political party system have suffered from his satirical wit. As for political satire’s claim for inclusivity, Holbert argues, “Given the complexities of political satire as a message style, it is, arguably, far from inclusive” (2013, p. 313).

The normative role allotted to political communication within a pluralistic democracy is, according to Holbert, threefold: the first role is to inform interest groups when new subjects or events enter into the political debate; the second role is to inform political actors with the aim of influencing political outcomes and action; and third, to interface between political elites and their constituencies (2013, p. 314). In the first normative role, the political satirist finds a challenge. It is implied that the political satirist must select which issues should be part of the agenda and issues that should not, and this threatens his position as an impartial observer who is committed to exposing political folly wherever it may lie. In the second normative role, political satire encounters another challenge. As Holbert points out, there is no call to action in political satire, and that, when the political satirist steps into the field of political advocacy, he relinquishes his role as a satirist (2013, p. 315). Once again, citing the example of Jon Stewart who has done advocacy work like his Rally for Sanity. The third normative role, within a pluralistic democracy, is that of informing political elites on the needs of their constituents. Here, Holbert's appreciation of the political satirist as a vector of communication between these two social segments is less positive. For him, the political satirist's normative value is significantly reduced, as he argues that elites do not rely on political entertainment to access the needs of their constituents, often depending on their own organizations (Bennett & Manheim in Holbert 2013), traditional news outlets and other resources like surveys and polling.

Finally, Holbert looks at the role of political satire as a tool for political communication within the frame of elitist democracy, which according to the author produces the most interesting results. Holbert claims that in an elitist democracy, the requirements for political communication are to expose corruption and incompetence at the higher spheres of leadership, since in elitism it is inferred that power is in the hands a small clique of experts. As Holbert has argued before, the power of the political satire lies in its ability to expose human folly, therefore being a useful tool in the exposition of corruption and incompetence of those in power (Holbert 2013, p. 316).

In summary, political satire can be a normative good in different democratic contexts and in different ways, but its greatest normative power across all types of democracy is its ability to expose those in power, thus humanizing them.

### 2.2.1. Fictional Political Dramas

The ninth in the typology is fictional political dramas. This is also the most relevant of Holbert's category for this dissertation's research aims. This type of content is characterized by dramas set against a political background, such as *The West Wing* with its dramatization of the American presidency or the North American version of *House of Cards*, which chronicles the ascent of Democratic congressman Frank Underwood and what goes on in the background of party politics in the American Congress. Regarding *The West Wing*, Holbert argues that "many episodes of this program provide either the fictional President Bartlet, one of his staff members, or other elected officials the opportunity to clearly articulate explicit positions on a given policy issue" (p. 446). This facet of the fictional political drama differentiates the socio-political messages provided by this type of content from the ones provided by the other categories in his typology, according to Holbert.

Van Zoonen and Wring (2012), in their historical analysis of politically themed television series in the United Kingdom, argue that dramas are often set around the inner workings of the political machinery and the interrelationships between politicians focusing on the social and psychological aspects giving it a "soapish flavor" (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012, p. 10). The recurring themes identified by the authors are "the tensions that everyday political, party and media pressures create, especially for left-wing activists and idealism" (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012, p. 10). Themes of compromise between one's idealism and the pragmatic nature of the political machine such as television series like *Bill Brand*, *Love and Reason* and *Our Friends in the North*.

Within the boundaries of fictional political dramas, we can include political thrillers, which often feature shared themes. For Van Zoonen and Wring (2012), political thrillers are framed as narratives where the characters are faced "with

identifiable collective actors undermining government and/or the democratic process for political or financial gain" (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012, p. 8). The authors identify as sources of conspiracy, insidious foreign influences such as multinational corporations ranging from the food industry in *Natural Lies*, the oil industry in *State of Play* and financial markets in *The State Within*. An exception identified by Van Zoonen and Wring is the original version of *House of Cards* which first aired in 1990 and was distributed by the BBC, where a ruthless politician and his ascent to power replace insidious outside influence. The realistic frame is also evident in the thriller. According to Van Zoonen and Wring, references to state surveillance and real world conflict are common, and "many were framed as implicitly referring to the situation in Northern Ireland" (2012, p. 9). The presence of real world political figures in the production of this content lends credibility to the realist frame. As Van Zoonen and Wring point out the television series, *House of Cards* was based on a novel written by Conservative politician Michael Dobbs and *A Very British Coup* is based on a novel by Labour MP Chris Mullin.

Another dimension when dealing with how the political is represented in fiction is the differences present in the framing of the political in the United Kingdom and the United States (Van Zoonen & Wring 2012; Van Zoonen 2007 Fielding 2014; Bailey 2011). Referencing Robert Putnam, Fielding points out that the decline in trust of the average citizen with its elected representatives is linked with the decline in social capital,

that is the extent to which citizens connected with their family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. He argued that as social capital diminished so did those norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness, which had once underpinned popular participation in – and regard for – representative politics.

Fielding 2014, p. 327

But Fielding also argues that political scientists undervalue the extent that fiction played a role. For Fielding, the decline of trust in politicians in the UK is also the result "of important changes in the nature of television, which meant dramatists were increasingly encouraged to reinforce the belief that politicians of all parties were uniquely corrupt" (Fielding 2014, p. 327). These changes in television were brought about by the decline in television dramas and a greater demand for "soap operas,

costume dramas and crime serials” (Fielding 2014, p. 336). This also coincided with an increase in the level of competition in television ratings:

Greater competitive pressures meant those commissioning dramas narrowed and became more formulaic. In the chase for audiences now scattered amongst many more channels than ever before, those responsible for commissioning terrestrial television dramas became concerned as never before to give audiences what they presumed they wanted.

Fielding (2014, p. 336)

In the case of the UK, audiences wanted what Fielding classifies as *sleaze*, which framed politics and politicians around themes of financial corruption, abuse of power, sexual impropriety and spinning. In Fielding’s (2014) quantitative analysis of 24 television programs including comedies, dramas and documentaries with dramatizations, the theme of spinning was present 18 times, abuse of power 6 times, sexual impropriety 6 times and corruption 3 times. Meanwhile, in the United States, television programs like *The West Wing* which Bailey describes as “functioning as a sort of televised civics class” (Bailey 2011, p. 284) were being broadcast. Van Zoonen finds that, in this program, the United States presidency is framed as being inspirational, and that the *West Wing* provides an “especially fertile for people reflecting on the moral and political dilemmas that they consider part and parcel of the political process” (2007, p. 545).

### **2.3. Empirical research on effects of exposure to entertainment**

As we have pointed out, our study seeks to contribute to a growing body of research on the effects of exposure to entertainment media on political attitudes such as political efficacy, attitudes towards political parties and trust in political institutions, focusing on the exposure to fictional political dramas. As Holbert hints in his typology, there are plenty of empirical research on these effects. It is imperative to go through some of this research so has to see how our own study can contribute to the discussion. In an extensive study of the influence of pop culture on young adult political socialization and attitudes, Jackson (2009) – using data gathered from surveys on political socialization, attitudes and pop culture preferences - puts forward

interesting findings. For Jackson (2009), political socialization is defined as process whereby individuals obtain knowledge of political beliefs, values and norms. It is a process in the sense that it does not occur in a short period of time and it cannot be pinned down to a singular or specific event; in other words, it is a complex set of developments, which, in the earlier stages of development, involve the individual's parental influence as the baseline. The individuals then acquire knowledge through schooling and other forms of social interaction like peer relationships and, as Jackson argues, from popular culture (pp. 3-6).

The effects of entertainment culture in political socialization are so prevalent that in the United States, 33.9% American youths are more likely to identify themselves ideologically with Arnold Schwarzenegger than with their mother. Jim Carrey gets 44.8% of young American identification, and 46.6% for Bruce Willis (p. 60). This is interesting considering it provided a link between exposure to celebrity culture and cultivation effects at the level of ideological identification.

As Jackson also observes a link between music preferences and young adult's political attitudes and argues that music is most likely to have the greatest degree of influence in the political attitudes of young citizens. The author defends this assertion by point out that it is with music that young people in the United States spend most of their time and money when it comes to entertainment habits. A tendency is also observed in Canadian, Irish and United Kingdom youths (Jackson 2009, p. 84). But what is the effect of this exposure to music on young people's political attitudes?

Music preferences also correlate to political preferences, according to Jackson. For example, in the United States, alternative rock fans tend to be more liberal than non-fans. While classic rock fans and country music fans tend to lean towards conservatism. However, country music fans were more likely to identify themselves as being moderate, while both alternative and classic rock fans tended towards political polarization (p. 96). Within the rap fan demographic, white rap fans identified themselves overwhelmingly as being liberal, a tendency observed in alternative rock fans as well. The author also observed a relationship between musical preference and partisan politics. Rap and country fans were far more likely to sympathize with the

Democratic Party than either classic and alternative rock fans (Jackson 2009 pp. 96-97). By the author's own admission, it is hard to offer a theory that explains this. Despite this, Jackson's empirical findings are interesting because they correlate pop cultural preferences and consumption habits with political preferences and attitudes.

Relative to Holbert's second category mentioned above, Holbert, Shah & Kwak (2003) point out that female characters in situation comedy television often discuss openly issues such as sexuality and contraception as well as having to balance domestic and family life with their career. Through regression analysis, the authors were able to observe a relationship between watching situation comedies and support for women's rights, especially when the data was set against those who watch more traditional television which places men in positions of greater narrative prominence such as leadership roles in their respective communities while women in these shows are relegated to more domestic and caregiving roles.

Regarding soft news, the fifth category in Holbert's typology, Baum (2002) points out that it provides news content for audiences who generally are not interested in political issues and consequently have lesser degrees of exposure to more traditional news formats. Through a series of statistical tests using data from the Pew Centre survey of media consumption habits, the author observed that greater exposure to soft news was associated with a greater familiarity with international affairs.

In another study Baum (2004), looks into the implications of the differentiated way soft news outlets cover American foreign policy and military interventions. Baum points out that soft news usually frames the issue more dramatically and with a focus on human-interest themes. The researcher was able to establish a relationship between exposure to soft news and isolationist tendencies and skepticism towards American foreign interventionism among those least political attentive.

Baum and Jamison (2006) were able to establish a relationship between soft news consumption and a greater degree of propensity to vote consistently among those least politically attentive, going so far as to conclude that their findings suggest that "less politically aware citizens can act reasonably effective in the voting booth

without much hard news, presumably because alternative sources (...) provide them with sufficient political cues to vote in their own interests" (Baum & Jamison 2006, p. 958).

Despite the evidence produced by Baum, Prior (2003) in exploring the relationship between exposure to soft news content and political knowledge came across interesting results, which contradict the research of some scholars who argued that soft news attracted audiences who otherwise would not be inclined to watch other, more traditional and less entertainment based news formats. Prior's findings consistently pointed in the direction that those who prefer soft news display less political knowledge than those who prefer hard news formats.

Complementary to soft news are the entertainment talk show interviews where a politician is invited for a casual and laidback interview in a television show like *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Late Show with David Letterman*. These interviews are often comedic in nature and have more of a focus on life experience issues rather than political information. Nonetheless, in a study conducted by Baum (2005) on why North American presidential candidates began to appear on entertainment talk shows, like *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Late Show with David Letterman* in the 2000 presidential election, he argued that it was mainly due to the candidate's willingness to reach a wider audience of citizens not predisposed to being exposed to political information, although he argues that people who received political information via entertainment talk shows "received substantially different information than their counterparts who tuned in to more traditional sources of election news." (p. 230). These differences had an effect on voter attitudes, according to the author: less politically aware citizens who were exposed to candidates' talk show appearances were more likely to consider the opposition more favorably. These effects tended to diminish with increased political awareness.

In the field of empirical research on the effects of exposure to reality-based content, Escholz et al (2002) in a study aimed at assessing the effects of reality television centered around the police (shows like *COPS* or *America's Most Wanted*), found that people who consume this type of television content were more likely to



believe that crime rates had risen in their county. Another interesting finding was that the consumption of police-themed reality television was associated with an increased trust in the police among the white population while in African-American viewers, increased viewing did not have a relationship with increased trust in the police. The researchers interpret the data as a result of the disproportional portrayal of African-Americans as criminals versus the disproportional portrayal of the police as white males in these shows.

In another study probing the relationship between crime-related television viewing (which in the study includes television news, reality television programs and crime-drama) and endorsements for capital punishment and gun ownership, Holbert et al (2004) found that police reality and crime themed reality television viewing is associated with support for police authority but the same does not apply to crime-drama viewing and even less so with television news viewing. When it came to fear of crime, the researchers found out that both television news and police reality television viewing were related with greater fear of crime, while crime-drama viewing decreased fear of crime. The viewing of police reality shows and crime-drama had a relationship with endorsement of capital punishment, and in addition, police reality show viewing is also associated with support for gun ownership. It is important to review these studies because they demonstrate a positive relationship between television consumption habits and attitudes that have political implications such as endorsement of capital punishment, compliance with police authority and gun ownership.

In a related study, on the relationship between television viewing and viewer's perceptions of crime, Nabi and Sullivan (2001) found that time spent watching television was associated with an increased perception of widespread crime and violence in society, increased willingness to take protective measures and an increased belief that the world is a mean place.

One of the genres of entertainment most explored by political scientists is traditional satire. Through a two-tiered research design wherein 212 undergraduate students' reactions to politically themed comedic monologues delivered by comedian

Bill Maher were tested, Nabi et al (2007) found a positive relationship between how funny a message is with how the source is perceived as credible. Also, the funnier the message was perceived as, the less counterargument there was, that is, the ability to argue against the message that the participant is exposed to. From their first research design, the researchers were able to show three things; (I) that humor does not have a distracting effect on the ability of participants to process the message, and in fact, it might have an enhancing quality. (II) That humor is associated with less degree of counterarguing, and (III), that, despite this, humor is associated with message discounting (2007, p. 40).

In the second research design, Nabi et al (2007), which largely replicates their first, the researchers found a sleeper effect, that is, one week after participants were exposed to Chris Rock's funny social commentary messages, the researchers observed that those exposed to them manifested a persuasion effect that increased with time, which translated into attitude change. Nabi et al suggest that this might be explained due to the memorable nature of the message which prompted participants to think about the comedic messages they were exposed to (Nabi et al 2007, p. 50).

These seemingly contradictory findings on the persuasive effects of political humor are echoed by Young (2008), who points out humor's

positive effect on attention, modest effects on comprehension, and no demonstrable effects on persuasion. (...) Meanwhile, research in psychology suggests that humor not only fails to reduce cognitive elaboration – but actually requires it – resulting in increased message recall.

Young (2008 p. 120).

Young's research into the impact that humor has on the cognitive process of political messages used an experimental research design. In it, 263 participants were randomly assigned into 3 groups: (I) the humorous group, where participants read 10 politically themed jokes before answering a survey. (II) The non-humorous group, where participants had to read 10 not-funny equivalents to the jokes of the humorous group, before answering survey questions, and (III), a control group, which skipped right to the survey questions.

Young's findings are consistent with Nabi et al's and show that being exposed to humorous messages resulted "in more thoughts aimed at humor comprehension and appreciation than the non-humorous stimuli", also that "humor resulted in fewer total message-relevant thoughts. (...) In addition, humorous stimuli resulted in a smaller proportion of negative cognitive responses than did the non-humorous stimuli" (Young 2008, pp. 133-134). Young suggests that messages delivered in humorous ways are met by the recipients with less scrutiny, a tendency observed also by Nabi et al. Also consistent with Nabi et al was the finding that humor does not seem to have a short-term effect on persuasion and attitude change, but Young advances the hypothesis that this effect might be observable when prolonged exposure to humorous messages, such as the people who are frequent watchers of late-night comedy talk shows like David Letterman's *Late Show* or Bill Maher's *Politically Incorrect*.

In a study conducted by Landreville et al (2010), on the relationship between the effects of viewing late-night comedy, which Holbert's typology includes in the category of traditional satire, and talking about politics produced interesting results. Through regression analysis that late-night comedy viewing is a predictor of political debate viewing which in turn is a predictor of talking about politics. Using a statistical analysis of data from a sizable subsample of 796 respondents from the 2004's National Annenberg Election Survey debate panel, the researchers found that: first, it is statistically significant that engagement with all types of political communication before watching a political debate on television increased the possibility that the same people would transition into watching the televised political debate. Second, debate viewing is statistically significant as an indicator of people having political discussions in the post-debate period (Landreville et al 2010, pp. 490-91). Thus, the Landreville et al were able to confirm their initial theory:

Late-night TV comedy exposure was found to be a statistically significant positive predictor of debate viewing, and debate viewing was a statistically significant positive predictor of postdebate political talk.

Landreville et al (2010, p. 491)

Basically, Landreville et al were able to come to the conclusion that late-night comedy is able to exert an indirect effect on political talk, through the increased likeliness of promoting political debate viewing. Despite this, the authors concede that there was no direct relationship between the two, “no main effect was found for late-night entertainment TV viewing on subsequent political talk” (Landreville et al 2010, p. 491).

In a similar study, Feldman and Young (2008) investigated the potential of late-night comedy as a gateway to traditional news sources. The gateway hypothesis can be described thusly: viewers exposed to late-night jokes about political stories will be more inclined to then seek out more traditional news sources on politics in order to deepen their knowledge on the subject. Using data from the 2004’s NAES, gathered by the Annenberg Public Policy Centre, Feldman and Young looked into differences in news attention levels over the course of the 2004 presidential campaign between viewers of *The Daily Show* and viewers of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* or *The Late Show with David Letterman*. Through a cross-sectional study of the available data, the researchers found out a relationship between people who watch television news and greater attention levels to political campaign news and government and public affairs, which as Feldman & Young concede, is unsurprising. However, they discovered that attention levels in the aforementioned issues is even stronger for people who follow television shows like *The Daily Show*, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *The Late Show with David Letterman* (Feldman & Young 2008, p. 409).

The researchers moved on to perform a time series analysis of the 2004’s NAES dataset, wherein they found out that viewers of the previously mentioned television programs “are more inclined than non-late-night viewers to pay attention to traditional news at the outset of the primary campaign; most importantly, however, the attention of the Leno/Letterman dominant group also increases at a faster rate than does the non-late-night group” (Feldman & Young 2008, p. 416).

Moy et al (2005) investigate the priming effects of late-night comedy on presidential candidates’ evaluation for the 2000 United States presidential elections and come across interesting results. With recourse to the NAES 2000 dataset, Moy et

al looked at evaluations of both George W. Bush and Al Gore in the period preceding and proceeding their respective appearances on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *The Late Show with David Letterman*, using a variety of variables such as candidate evaluation and candidate's character traits. They observed that in regard to character traits, respondents show significant changes with regards to pre and post late-night comedy show candidate appearance:

statistically significant differences in respondent assessments emerged. In particular, respondents perceived Bush to be more honest, inspiring, and a leader, and rated him slightly warmer on the thermometer scale. Gore, on the other hand, was perceived to be more knowledgeable and caring.

Moy et al (2005, p. 202)

In a similar study, Baumgartner et al (2012) looked into the priming effects of the satirical impersonation of Sarah Palin, the running mate of John McCain in the 2008's United States presidential elections, by comedic actress Tina Fey in multiple *Saturday Night Live* sketches. Using a dataset of 1755 young adult respondents enrolled in 10 different universities across the United States, they observed that the average approval rating of Sarah Palin for respondents who saw the *Saturday Night Live* sketches was 8.5%, and the average disapproval rating was 75.7% versus the respondents who did not see the sketches whose average approval rating was of 16.1%, and disapproval rating of 60.1% (Baumgartner et al 2012, pp. 98-99).

When Baumgartner et al extended the analysis to the 2008's Republican ticket as a whole, they observed that respondents exposed to the sketch were less likely to vote for McCain, 45.4% versus the 34% of people who were not exposed (pp. 100-101). Finally, the researchers approached the dataset from an another angle, controlling for partisanship. They observed a significant negative effect of watching the sketches on self-identified Republicans and Independents (p. 101).

One specific television program that falls under the traditional satire category that is continuously referenced in the literature and has been the focus of many scholarly articles is *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, which the subsequent paragraphs will be dedicated to.

Relative to *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* we can find a number of relevant studies done which are worth reviewing for the sake of the present study. The first of these is Baumgartner and Morris's (2006) research into the effects that viewing this entertainment television program has on political attitudes such as candidate evaluation and political efficacy. Using experimental methodology, the researchers conceived an experimental design in which participants were divided into three groups; one who was exposed to coverage of the 2004 presidential election's clips from the *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, another who was exposed to news coverage of the same election from *CBS Evening News*, and a third control group who did not watch any television content whatsoever. After viewing the clips, all groups were instructed to answer a posttest survey, including the control group.

Baumgartner and Morris's come across interesting findings. They found that evaluations of both incumbent President George W. Bush and presidential candidate John Kerry were negatively affected by the exposure to the *Daily Show* clips, the association being statistically significant for John Kerry but not for George W. Bush. On the other hand, the exposure to conventional news clips from *CBS Evening News* did not influence the evaluation of either candidate in a significant way (Baumgartner and Morris 2006, p. 349). This finding had been hypothesized by the researchers beforehand, pointing out that media effects tend to impact the evaluations of less known candidates disproportionately when compared to more recognized ones (Baumgartner and Morris 2006, p. 345).

In the same study, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) observed that being exposed to the *Daily Show* had negative effects on participants' faith in the electoral system, one of the foundational pillars of contemporary representative democracy. This negative effect in the trust participants have in the electoral system was not observable in those exposed to the *CBS Evening News* clips. The effect of increased levels of cynicism is also extended to the perceptions of the news media themselves. Exposure to *The Daily Show* was related with decreased levels of trust in the news media, a relationship that was not observed in those participants who were exposed to the *CBS Evening News* clips (Baumgartner and Morris 2006, p. 352).

Relative to exposure to crime-drama television, a relevant piece of empirical research of attitude change is the experiment conducted Mutz and Nir (2010) to find out whether “narratives suggesting a favorable depiction of some target will influence political attitudes in a positive direction relative to unfavorable depictions of the same target” (Mutz & Nir 2010 p. 202). In the case of their study the target under review was the criminal justice system in the United States. Through their experiment, Mutz and Nir were able to conclude that fictional content – namely, from the TV show *Law & Order* – had an effect on viewers’ political attitudes. The researchers were even surprised to observe that the experiment had an effect on the viewers’ attitudes towards “deep-seated and immutable” attitudes such as the death penalty (pp. 210-11). Another important finding made by the researchers was the necessity of empathy as a condition for being influenced, which, as the researchers argue, makes it so that “television fiction may have a unique advantage over news in persuasive influence of this kind” (Mutz & Nir 2010, p. 212). Going so far as to quote studies that demonstrate that news stories do not succeed in influencing political attitudes in the viewer. For the authors it is the appearance of realism that lends a “distinct advantage in creating the kind of emotional involvement that facilitates persuasive effects on political attitudes” (Mutz & Nir 2010, p. 212). Going so far as to quote studies that demonstrate that news stories do not succeed in influencing political attitudes in the viewer.

As we have surveyed, there is evidence of a relationship between exposure to entertainment content and changes in political attitudes. These attitudes are multiple in nature, from attitudes towards politicians like candidate evaluation, attitudes towards the criminal justice system to support for women’s struggle. Our research hopes, through the use of experimental methodology, laid out below, to contribute to this field of research.





### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this chapter is to lay out the experimental research design employed in this study to analyze the effects of exposure to fictional political dramas on the audience's political attitudes such as political efficacy, attitudes towards political parties and trust in political institutions. We will go through all its aspects in a thorough fashion: the research question and hypotheses which will be tested, the methodology employed to test them, the experimental design itself, a content analysis of the treatment and a description of the questionnaire used to measure the participant's social-demographic data and political attitudes.

#### 3.1. Research question and hypotheses

In this thesis, taking into consideration how politics and politicians are framed and represented in popular culture, as the literature has demonstrated, and focusing on the entertainment content produced for television and cinema, we propose to answer the following research question: What are the effects of exposure of fictional political dramas on an audience's political attitudes? The dependent variables are the audiences' political efficacy, attitudes towards political parties and trust in political institutions, while the independent variable is going to be the way politicians are represented in popular culture, specifically in political fictional dramas (positively vs. negatively).

Positive representation of politicians is to be understood in this thesis as a representation that portrays politicians as responsible, idealistic and incorruptible. An example of a positive representation of a politician would be the cast of characters from the television series *The West Wing*, among them the President of the United States himself and his presidential staff. While a negative representation of politicians is to be understood as a representation that portrays politicians as opportunists, corrupt and scheming. An example of a negative representation of a politician would

most of the characters in *House of Cards* with Francis Urquhart being the greatest example.

Positive and negative effects are defined here as either an increase or decrease in participants' political efficacy, in their favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards political parties, and finally in terms of an increase or decrease in their trust in political institutions.

Political efficacy can be defined as the trust citizens have in the overall political process and how influential they perceive themselves to be to it (Niemi et al 1991; Pinkleton et al 1998; Aarts & Semetko 2003). Political efficacy can be divided into external and internal political efficacy. Broadly speaking, external political efficacy concerns the perception that the political process and institutions will respond to the demands of the citizenry, while internal political efficacy concerns the individual's perceptions and faith that he can understand the political process with some degree of confidence therefore granting him the tools to effectively participate in it. The present research's aims are concerned with the effects of exposure to political fictional dramas in the latter rather than the former. We chose to focus our analysis on external over internal political efficacy due to its relationship with the rest of the dependent variables in our study

Relative to attitudes towards political parties, Fielding (2014) argues that television's framing of politics, specially party politics in the age of New Labour has led to a considerable decline in positive attitudes towards political parties in the United Kingdom, through television series like *The Thick of It* and *State of Play*. This is due to changes in the nature of television which has been promoted by an increase in audience's demand for entertainment content that frames politics in terms of corruption, sexual promiscuity, spin doctoring and so forth. These changes also coincided with an increase level of competition between television companies which have exacerbated the issue. Thus, for Fielding there is a clear link between the way party politics are framed in television and the audience's attitudes towards the phenomenon.

Trust in political institutions is associated with one's perceptions of risk. It pertains to situations where one does not have full information about the functioning of a particular political institution, its intentions and outcomes, but nonetheless one is still confident that these institutions will not abuse or otherwise misuse their power (Luhiste 2006). In the instance of this study, we will consider trust in political parties, Members of Parliament (MPs), the President of the Republic and the Portuguese Government). These particular institutions were selected given their importance in the Portuguese political system.

The hypotheses to be laid out below are inspired by the research developed by Mutz and Nir (2010), which concludes that, "fictional content can affect respondents' political attitudes and policy positions" (Mutz & Nir 2010, p. 210). These authors sought to test the effects of exposure to the crime drama *Law & Order* on participants' attitudes towards the criminal justice system in the United States. Their experiment followed a two-group design wherein one group was exposed to an episode of the series depicted the criminal justice system in a favorable light, while the other group was exposed to was exposed to an unfavorable representation of that system from the same television series.

Baumgartner and Morris (2006) also lay the ground work which supports the hypotheses in the study, despite not treating fictional political dramas. The researchers were able to discover, by employing experimental methodology, a relationship between exposure to politically charged entertainment television programming, more specifically *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, and political efficacy such as decreased levels of trust in the American electoral system, to lower candidate evaluations and to increase cynicism towards the news media themselves

As Pinkleton et al's (1998) research demonstrates, there is a positive relationship between mass media (which did not include fictional political dramas) use and political efficacy and voting behavior (p. 42). Aarts and Semetko arrived at similar conclusions when studying the Dutch case, by showing that people who watch public television news are more knowledgeable about politics, thus internal political efficacy, but this effect also extends to external political efficacy (p. 776). Although their

findings indicate that those who watch commercial television, in detriment to public television news, are negatively on political knowledge, internal efficacy and voting behavior.

Reinforcement for the hypotheses below is also supported by Moy et al (2005) and Baumgartner et al (2012). Through statistical analysis Moy et al (2005) discovered that, regarding the evaluation of character traits of both George W. Bush and Al Gore, showed significant changes in the assessments measured pre and post late-night comedy show candidate appearances. Baumgartner et al (2012), through experimental methodology, found that exposure to the satirical impersonation of Sarah Palin by comedy actress Tina Fey in multiple *Saturday Night Live* sketches, primed young adult respondents enrolled in 10 different universities across the United States to rate Sarah Palin lower than those who had not been exposed.

Thus, the hypotheses below can be postulated:

- **H1** - Being exposed to the *West Wing* has a positive effect on political efficacy.
- **H2** - Being exposed to *House of Cards* has a negative effect on political efficacy.
- **H3** - Being exposed to the *West Wing* has a positive effect on attitudes towards political parties.
- **H4** - Being exposed to *House of Cards* has a negative effect on attitudes towards political parties.
- **H5** - Being exposed to the *West Wing* has a positive effect on trust in political institutions.
- **H6** - Being exposed to *House of Cards* has a negative effect on trust in political institutions.

### **3.2. Experimental methodology**

As McDermott points out, “the methodology of experimentation has been slow to garner a following in political science” (2002, p. 31), since there is a preference for

other methodologies such as case studies, comparative studies and quantitative analysis of statistical data. But as the author argues, it is the bringing together of more established methodologies with the emergent experimental methodology which offers “the most exciting opportunity for methodological advancement” since “formal models present hypotheses that are tested, refined, and explored through experimentation in a reciprocal manner” (2002, p. 31). This is precisely the intention of this thesis; to test the hypotheses laid out by the literature utilizing experimental methodology.

McDermott thusly defines the experimental method:

I take the term to refer primarily to laboratory studies in which investigators retain control over the recruitment, assignment to random conditions, treatment, and measurement of subjects. This definition assumes that experimenters take pains to assure that the experimental situation does not vary in any way other than the intended independent variables in order to assure the internal validity that allows causal claims

McDermott (2002, p. 32).

Experiments are useful because through them researchers can mitigate biases “that can exist in less rigorous forms of observation” (McDermott, 2002, p. 33). Of the aspects enumerated by McDermott, standardization and randomization are very important. Standardization is important to experimental methodology since it makes it so that the same stimulus and procedure is analyzed and that the same variables are under scrutiny. “Standardization requires that the same set of experimental procedures, or experimental protocol, is administered in the same way to subjects across conditions” (McDermott 2002, p. 33). This narrows the chances of the experiment being corrupted by environmental conditions. Randomization makes sure that, by assigning subjects randomly, the experiment will not have biased results due to differences between groups.

McDermott warns us against experimental bias, that is, by attempting to “maximize experimenter control over the independent variables in a study, the experimental process itself can introduce potential sources of bias” (McDermott 2002, p. 34). These potential sources of bias can come in the form of expectancy effects, which occur when the researcher indirectly and unconsciously hints at the

purpose of the experiment to the subjects, which subsequently condition the subjects' behavior. Reducing the involvement of the researcher with the subjects during the experiment can minimize this - and this is what has been done in the experiment reported here.

The most substantial concern regarding experimental methodology, especially to political scientists, is the tension between internal and external validity. Internal validity is understood to be the extent that causal relationships can be established within the experiment itself while external validity is understood to be the extent that the causal relationships established as a result of the experiment can be extrapolated to the general population. According to McDermott (2002), internal validity can be threatened by occurrences outside the control of the researcher, which can bias the results. Experiments that require more time between measurements are more vulnerable to this. But as McDermott points out, unexpected occurrences within the experiment itself can become sources of biases, such as "unknown preexisting relationships between some subjects might affect one session of an experiment but not another" (2002, p. 36). On the other hand, external validity can be threatened by unrepresentative subject samples, which can make it difficult to extrapolate the results of the experiment outside the sample of subjects. The *Hawthorne effect* also needs to be accounted for. As McDermott points out, the Hawthorne effect occurs when "people change their behavior merely because they are aware of being observed" (2002, p. 38).

Despite these threats, there are advantages in using experimental methodology. As the author notes,

no other methodology can offer the strong support for causal inferences that experiments allow (...). The ability to establish causal inferences; the ability to assert experimental control over most of the aspects of the experiment and the insurance that all the procedures are applied in a consistent and standardized manner; the ability to explore the details of the process where "complex relationships can be broken down and investigated in smaller units in order to see which part of the process results in the difference of interest

McDermott (2002, pp. 38-39).

Still, the question of external validity cannot be avoided. That said, given that most experiments are artificial constructs that cannot accurately recreate the totality

of social phenomenon of our everyday lives and since, as McDermott argues, there are ethical and financial constraints that condition the work of researchers who employ experimental methodology, this thesis is primarily interested in establishing valid causal relationships within the experiment itself.

### 3.3. Experimental design

The participants were recruited from the Department of Languages and Cultures and the Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences of the University of Aveiro. Potential participants were approached in class, and were told that they could volunteer for a study aimed at looking into the entertainment habits of the university's students. This concealment of the real aims of the study was done intentionally to minimize bias in the participants' responses.

After the recruitment phase was over, participants were randomly assigned into two groups, each being exposed to different treatments. The structure of each treatment is identical: first, participants were asked to answer a pretest questionnaire. Following this, participants were asked to watch the first episode of *The West Wing* ("Pilot") and of *House of Cards* ("Chapter 1"). We chose these television shows specifically for their valenced framing of the political process. In *The West Wing*, we witness a generally positive portrayal of politicians (Van Zoonen 2007; Bailey 2011), while in *House of Cards* we are exposed to a generally negative portrayal of politicians. A content analysis of each episode can be surveyed in Table 1 below. The treatments were administered to each group separately, with each participant having her own screen and set of headphones so as to avoid chatter between participants. These sections were conducted in computer laboratories of each of the departments mentioned above.

And finally, after viewing the episode, participants were asked to answer a final posttest questionnaire in order to measure the impact of exposure to the treatment. Participants were not told in the initial briefing that they would be answering a posttest questionnaire after watching the episode. This was done to avoid the possibility that participants would remember their answers in the pretest

questionnaire, thus weakening the findings. The experimental design used in this study is an example of the pretest-posttest multiple experimental design laid out by Holbrook (2011). It is important to remember that the purpose of this research design is to test the effects of the valenced frames generated by the episodes. Given the time restraints inherent of this experimental design, it is impossible to test more general cultivation effects since that theory is grounded in long-term exposure to mass media stimulus.

### **3.3.1. Episodes used in the treatment**

In order to justify the choice of each episode for the experimental treatment employed by this study, a plot synopsis of each of them will be presented as well as a brief content analysis of the episodes aimed at identifying the themes of each one (Table 1). These episodes are to be considered as the treatments in our study.

### **3.3.2. *The West Wing's Pilot***

It has been mentioned before, participants assign to the positive framing of politics watched the first episode of the North American television series *The West Wing*. As Holbert et al's point out in their research into the priming effects of watching the series (Holbert et al 2003), the *West Wing's* fictionalized version of the American presidency was perceived more positively than both George W. Bush's and Clinton's presidencies.

In *The West Wing's* first episode, we are introduced to the cast of hard-working politicians which constitute the staffers for Josiah Bartlet's presidential cabinet. The characters are introduced through multiple scenes as they are called into work, following news that the president fell in a bicycle crash. Tangential to this plot line, we have the character of the White House Deputy Chief of Staff Josh Lyman. Who in the day before in a televised debate with a Christian activist attacked the church's tax exemption status, saying "Lady, the God you pray to is too busy being indicted for tax fraud" and is now faced with the possibility of losing his position in staff. In the



meantime, we see White House Deputy Communications Director, Sam Seaborn engage in sexual relations Laurie who, unbeknownst to him, is a call girl. The episode deals mainly with how these characters' deal with these dramatic and moral dilemmas and how they interact with each other within the context of the White House. The general tone of the episode, establish through the series soundtrack and the relationship between the characters who are often busy solving the latest political crisis but nonetheless find time to spit witty remarks at each other, is one of earnestness and public service.

As we have mentioned in the Chapter 2, priming relates to the importance certain topics are given in mass media and how these selected topics become the gauge with which they assess the performance of the government, in the instance of the *West Wing's* pilot, the United States Presidency. As such, those who watch the episode can be primed into believing that in order to be a successful politician one must be talented, educated, honorable and conscientious like the characters on the show should be national decision makers.

### ***3.3.3. House of Cards - Chapter 1***

Participants assigned to watch the negative framing of politicians were given the first episode of the remake of *House of Cards*. Scholarly work on the United States' remake of the original British television show is scarce. But due to its similarities in the way it frames politicians with its more recent version, it is relevant to survey the scholarly work done about the original television show. As Van Zoonen and Wring point out, this show:

presents the story of cold- blooded and suave Tory Chief Whip Francis Urquhart on his Machiavellian route to the premiership. Three four-episode seasons (1990, 1993, 1995) show Urquhart eliminating his opponents through blackmail, leaking compromising details to the press and literally killing the people in his way"

Van Zoonen & Wring (2012, p. 9).

In the 2013 American remake of the television show, we follow Francis Underwood, the Democratic Party's Majority Whip in the United States Congress, who in the beginning of the show's plot line is snubbed by the newly elected United

States President Garret Walker, who promised Underwood the position of Secretary of State in the new presidential cabinet. This sets off a chain of events where Underwood will use all his charm and cunning to destroy Walker's presidency and rise to power through coercing lower level congressmen such as the alcoholic and promiscuous Representative Peter Russo, who after being caught driving drunk with a prostitute is forced to swear loyalty to Underwood in exchange for being saved from scandal and imprisonment through bribery. Another plotline in the episode revolves around a young and ambitious political reporter for the *Washington Herald*, Zoe Barnes who Underwood encounters. Underwood and Barnes develop a mutually beneficial relationship where Underwood feeds her insider information into the inner working of congress in exchange for spin doctored news articles and profiles against Underwood's political foes.

If on one hand, the *West Wing's* pilot was priming the audience into assessing one's aptitude to be a politician by giving relevance to such attributes as honor, high education standards and ethical rectitude. *House of Cards* is priming people that in order to be a successful politician one must be ruthless with one's rivals, compromise ethical values in the name of power accumulation and that this behavior produces positive outcomes for one's own career in detriment of the general well-being of the population.

Table 1) Content analysis of the episodes used in the treatment

Behavior display on	
<i>The West Wing's Pilot</i>	<i>House of Cards' Chapter 1</i>
Hard working politicians	Lewd behavior
Politicians working for the good of the population	Politician fails to deliver on his promises
Backstage deals	Backstage deals
Lewd behavior	Collusion with the press
-	Pragmatic ruthlessness over political ideals
-	Corruption
-	Spin doctoring

### 3.3.4. Participants

The data used in this experimental study was collected by the author between the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 and the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2015. The sample is composed of 52 university students from the University of Aveiro, more specifically from the Department of Languages and Cultures and the Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences. As Holbrook (2010) argues, university students often bring with them problems for experimental research such as, homogeneity between subjects, and the higher degree of susceptibility to persuasion effects that this demographic experiences. This is echoed by McDermott citing Sears who point out, that university students often are “more self-absorbed; they have less crystallized attitudes, a less clear sense of self, higher rates of compliance, less stable peer relationships, and stronger cognitive skills” (McDermott 2002, p. 37). Despite this, McDermott counter argues that many experiments that used university students as participants in experimental designs have proved to be exceptionally reliable. Druckman and Kam (2010), also urge that political scientists who employ experimental methodology in

their research should not fear of relying upon students as their subjects for experimental designs. The original aim of the research design was to have a sample of sixty participants but due to time constraints, we fell slightly short of the original goal.

In view that the participants in our research design are from Portugal, it is important to discuss young people's political attitudes in Portugal. According to Magalhães and Moral (2008), young people in Portugal tend to be dissatisfied with politics, despite displaying a lesser degree of dissatisfaction with politics than older adults. In general, young people also tend to be less involved in politics, but they display slightly higher levels of external political efficacy when compared with older adults. Crucially, younger people tend to be less exposed to political information and subsequently are less knowledgeable about politics. When it comes to self-identification in the left-right spectrum, young people in Portugal tend to identify themselves more in the right-wing side of the scale than older adults, but nonetheless place less confidence on such political identities.

Lobo et al (2015) echo the findings mentioned above about young people and their relationship with politics. Young people in general display lower levels of party membership than the rest of the Portuguese population, but on the other hand, they are more likely to sign a petition, participate in boycotts, make politically motivated purchases, have more favorable attitudes towards the environment, and are more likely to participate in fund raising campaigns for political and social associations. These findings are in line with Jackson (2009), who points out that young people tend to think about politics in a different way than their adult counter-parts. Taking this in consideration, it is likely that young people in Portugal might be affected by non-traditional forms of political information such as political satire or fictional political dramas, when compared with the rest of the population.

### **3.3.5. Questionnaire**

The pretest questionnaire was designed to take twenty minutes to complete. It contained twenty-seven questions in total, and the posttest questionnaire sixteen

questions. These included, first, socio-demographic questions such as age and gender of the participants. Questions regarding the television-viewing habits of participants were also assessed, in terms of the average amount of hours spent per week watching television series, preferred genres, the average amount of time spent discussing television programs with friends, family, and co-workers, and preferred viewing routine. The questionnaire also measured political attitudes such as interest in political issues, where in the left-right scale did participants place themselves, frequency with which the volunteers in this study talk about politics to their friends, family and co-workers, satisfaction with democracy, as well as several items aimed at operationalizing our dependent variables: political efficacy (no influence in government, politicians do not care, particular interests have too much influence, and citizens have no opportunity), attitudes towards political parties (political parties are all the same, political parties are necessary in democracy, and political parties divide people) and levels of trust in specific political institutions (political parties, Members of Parliament (MPs), President of the Republic and Government of Portugal). The specific question wordings and scales used to measure the dependent variables are presented in Chapter 5, along with the description of the results. For the complete questionnaires used in this study, check the appendix section of this study.

All questions designed to measure the political attitudes of the participants were taken from already used questionnaires employed in other studies, namely the 2012 Mass Questionnaire Survey used in the CIES – ISCTE study entitled “The Portuguese Members of Parliament in Comparative Perspective: Elections, Leadership and Political Representation”, the 2005 electoral study on the presidential elections in Portugal for ICS - University of Lisbon and the Eurobarometer 70 survey conducted in Portugal. Both the pretest and the posttest questionnaire are identical relative to the questions designed to measure political attitudes.

Many researchers studying the effects of media exposure on political attitudes and efficacy have identified potential variables that play into how and how much media exposure can be impactful. Below, we will be looking at intervening variables measured in this study, outlined in Table 2. These variables are used to test how

similar the two experimental groups are, so that we can make sure that both groups are equally susceptible to this type of treatment.

When researching the effect of viewing police based reality television on perception about crime and policing, Eschholz et al (2002) found that watching *COPS* impacted perceptions about crime significantly more in men than women, but the same was not true when after watching news coverage about crime, which affected women to a greater degree. Thus gender has to be accounted for in the present research.

Also, Jackson (2009) argues that socialization among peers is one of the foundational building blocks when individuals construct their political identities and worldview, going so far as to show that many young citizens in the United States actually identify themselves more often with celebrities rather than their parents (Jackson 2009, pp. 58-60). Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the contribution that socialization among peers and significant others has on young people's political attitudes, thus one of the variables that we must measure are frequency with which the participants talk with their family, friends and co-workers about both political issues and about the television series they watch. We can also add to this variable another one, measuring with whom the participants usually watch entertainment television.

Once again, Jackson aids our research by pointing out that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between hours spent watching entertainment television and talking about political issues and topics with one's family, friends and co-workers (Jackson 2009, p. 79). As the author mentioned earlier, talking about politics is one of the pillars for the construction of one's political identity. Thus we can assume that the amount of time the participants spend watching their favorite television programs will have an effect on the impact of being exposed to the treatment. We can also assume that accompanying this variable there is another one which compels the participants to engage in the type of social interaction, which is their interest in politics, thus we must take this into account when approaching the sample.

Another dimension approached by Jackson (2009) was whether young people identified themselves as being more liberal or more conservative and how does this interact with the way young people use their media consumption to create their political identities and attitudes. The author finds that American conservative youths were more likely to disagree with the socio-political messages from films than young people who identified themselves as being liberal (Jackson 2009, pp. 55-57 & 71-72), which may mean that they are perhaps more skeptical and less susceptible to effects. Thus, it is clear that the present research must take into consideration the political self-identification of the participants in the left-right spectrum.

The impact of these variables is controlled via the within-subject approach of data analysis, that is, what we do is to compare pre and post-treatment attitudes within each group. But when it comes to drawing comparisons about what happens in the two different experimental groups, one should also assume that the groups are similar in terms of these features. The two groups are believed to be similar because there was a random assignment of participants in the two experimental conditions. Nevertheless, to check whether randomization worked, given the relatively low number of participants in this study, in the next chapter I will devote some time to assess whether there are substantial differences between the two groups.

Table 2) Variables

Variables	Measure	Additional notes
Sex	Scale	-
Hours spent watching television	Ordinal	-
Time spent talking about television	Ordinal	-
With whom do watch television	Nominal	-
Identification in the left-right scale	Scale (0-10)	Recoded into a nominal variable
Frequency talk about politics	Ordinal	-
Interest in political issues	Scale (0-10)	Recoded into a nominal variable



## 4. ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE

What follows is a detailed descriptive analysis of the sample of university students who participated in this study on a voluntary basis (see Chapter 3 for a detailed account) and to see the degree of homogeneity between the two experimental groups. Given that our sample was small, we opted to set our level of statistical significance at 10%. Of the total 52 university students who volunteered for this study, 38 are female and 14 are male. Both groups are absolutely identical in terms of their gender distribution. The university students were aged between 18 and 28 years old, averaging 21.37 years old. In order to see if the *West Wing* and the *House of Cards* groups were distinct in the average range of ages of the participants, an Independent Samples T-Test was performed, with a result that is statistically significant (Table 3). The *West Wing* group is slightly younger than the *House of Cards* group.

Table 3) Demographic data

	Full sample	<i>West Wing</i>	<i>House of Cards</i>	T-Test results
Average age	21.37	20.77	21.96	$t(50)=-1.192$ ; $p=.080$
Male	14	7	7	
Female	38	19	19	

As part of the survey, the television viewing habits of the participants were assessed, following dimensions such as the average amount of hours spent watching television series, preferred genres of television, frequency of time spent talking about television programs with friends and family. As we can see in Table 4, when it comes to average amount of hours spent watching television series, 65.4% answered that they spent on average 1 to 5 hours a week, while 34.6% answered that they spent

more than 5 hours a week watching television series. In order to assess the amount of variance between the two groups, a Pearson Chi-square test was employed. The results were not statistically significant, which means that, relative to average amount of hours spent watching television series, both groups are homogenous ( $\chi^2=1629$ ;  $p=.653$ ).

**Table 4) Average amount of hours spent watching television series**

Hours	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
1 to 2 hours a week	26.9%	34.6%	19.2%
2 to 5 hours a week	38.5%	34.6%	42.3%
5 to 10 hours a week	26.9%	23.1%	30.8%
More than 10 hours a week	7.7%	7.7%	7.7%

In respect to the distribution of television genres young people in this study enjoy watching, there is a predominance of entertainment television such as drama, comedy, science fiction and fantasy over more information based television genres like news and commentary programs which is to be expected. This tendency continues to be observable when we break the sample up between *West Wing* and *House of Cards* groups (Table 5).

In order to see if both groups were homogenous in regard to the number of participants who watch drama, crime dramas and news programs, a Pearson Chi-square test was employed but with no statistically significant results<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Results: Drama  $\chi^2=0.780$ ;  $p=.500$ , news programs  $\chi^2=0.391$ ,  $p=.378$ , and crime dramas  $\chi^2=1.926$ ,  $p=.133$ .

Table 5) Preferred genres of television - Multiple responses possible

Genre of television	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
Comedy shows	76.9%	80.8%	73.1%
Fantasy	59.6%	65.4%	53.8%
Science Fiction	57.7%	57.7%	57.7%
Drama	55.8%	53.8%	57.7%
Crime dramas	48.1%	38.5%	57.7%
Horror	30.8%	26.9%	34.6%
News programs	26.9%	30.8%	23.1%
Sports	21.2%	15.4%	26.9%
Commentary programs	21.2%	26.9%	14.4%
Talk shows	19.2%	15.4%	23.1%

The next variable to be approached was the average amount of time spent talking about television programs with friends, family and co-workers. We can observe that the largest segment of the sample, 53.8%, says that they sometimes talk about the television programs they watch with their peers (Table 6).

Relative to the average amount of time spent talking about television programs with friends, family and co-workers for both the *West Wing* and *House of Cards* groups, the distribution is identical (Table 6). On both groups we can observe that the largest segment of both groups is composed of people who say that they sometimes talk about television programs with friends, family and co-workers sometimes.

A quick observation of Table 6, tells us that both the *West Wing* and *House of Cards* groups are identical when it comes to this variable, therefore making it unnecessary to employ a Pearson Chi-square test.

Table 6) Average amount of time spent talking about television programs with friends, family and co-workers

Frequency	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
Never	7.7%	7.7%	7.7%
Sometimes	53.8%	53.8%	53.8%
Frequently	35.8%	35.8%	35.8%

Following the assertion made earlier in a previous chapter that socialization is important in the development of one's political identity, we look at how the participants usually watch their preferred television series. As we can see in Table 7, most participants in the study say that they watch television series by themselves, 86.5%. This is followed by the people who also watch their favorite television series with their boyfriend or girlfriend, 30.8% (multiple responses were possible in this variable). This is relevant because, in the experiment, most people watched the episode by themselves that seems to replicate the most usual way the participants watch television series. This should contribute to the external validity of the findings.

Looking at the treatments separately we do not observe any significant difference between the two groups, as both display a predominance of people who watch their favorite television series by themselves (Table 7) A Pearson Chi-square test was performed, which did not produce statistically significant results ( $\chi^2=1486$ ;  $p=.209$ ).

Table 7) Generally, how do you watch your favorite television series - Multiple responses possible

How	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
By myself	86.5%	92.3%	80.8%
With my family	13.5%	15.4%	11.5%
With my boyfriend/girlfriend	30.8%	26.9%	34.5%
With friends	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%

As part of the pre-treatment survey, participants were also asked to answer questions designed to measure their political attitudes. Categories such as self-identification in the left and right of the political spectrum, interest in politics, frequency with which the participants discussed politics with friends, family and co-workers and satisfaction with democracy.

As we can observe in Table 8, most participants identify themselves as being in the center of the political spectrum, 50% of the total sample to be exact. The second largest group are the participants identifying themselves as being left-wing, 36.5% of the whole sample. Initially this variable was measured in a scale from 0-10, wherein 1 was extreme left and 10 extreme right. We recoded it into a nominal variable in order to facilitate result analysis.<sup>2</sup>

When we separate the full sample into the treatment groups, we notice a total absence of right-wing participants in the *West Wing* treatment as we can see in Table 8. What we observe is an even distribution between self-identified left-wing and center participants, 46.2% and 53.8% respectively. When we compare these findings with the *House of Cards* sample, the situation changes in a significant way. As we can see in Table 8, there is an equal distribution between participants who identify

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<sup>2</sup> Recoding parameters were: 0-3 = left-wing, 4-6 = centre, 7-10 = right-wing.

themselves as left-wing and right-wing, both being 26.9% of the sample. Therefore, there seems to be a visible difference in left-right self-identification between the *West Wing* and *House of Cards* sample, a Pearson Chi-square test was performed which produced statistically significant results ( $\chi^2=8470$ ;  $p=.014$ ).

**Table 8) Self-identification in the left and right of the political spectrum**

Left-right	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
Left-wing	36.5%	46.2%	26.9%
Centre	50%	53.8%	46.2%
Right-wing	13.5%	0%	26.9%

When we look at the frequency with which the volunteers in this study talk about politics to their friends, family and co-workers, we can observe that 73.1% participants in this study talk to their peers about political issues only sometimes (Table 9).

We observe very modest differences between the two treatments, but they are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2=3553$ ;  $p=.169$ ). The percentage of participants who say that they never talk about politics with their peers decreases from 30.8% in the *House of Cards* sample to 11.5% in the *West Wing* sample, while the percentage of participants who say that they sometimes talk about politics with their peers increases from 61.5% among the participants assigned to the *House of Cards* treatment in relation to the 84.6% of participants assigned to the *West Wing* treatment.

Table 9) Frequency with which you talk about politics to their friends, family and co-workers

Frequency	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
Never	21.2%	11.5%	30.8%
Sometimes	73.1%	84.6%	61.5%
Frequently	5.8%	3.8%	7.7%

Having measured how interested in politics the participants are, we can see an overwhelming lack of interest in political issues. The slice of participants who answered they are not interested is 53.8% while 26.9% of the participants said that they were mildly interested and 19.2% answered that they were interested, as we can see in Table 10. In both experimental groups most participants say that they are not interested in political issues; 61.5% of the *West Wing* group and 46.2% in the *House of Cards* group. By far the sharpest contrast between the two groups is observable in the percentage of people who said that they were interest in politics, with a sharp increase from 7.7% in the *West Wing* group to 30.8% in the *House of Cards* group (Table 10). In order to check the homogeneity relative to how interested participants are in political issues in both treatments, we employed a Pearson chi-square test which produced no statistically significant results ( $\chi^2=4457$ ;  $p=.108$ ).

**Table 10) Interest in political issues**

Interest in politics	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
Not interested	53.8%	61.5%	46.2%
Mildly interested	26.9%	30.8%	23.1%
Interested	19.2%	7.7%	30.8%

When we look at how satisfied with democracy the university students in this study are, we observe that the majority of the participants are not really satisfied with democracy (53.8% of the total sample) (Table 11).

When we focus on each of the two experimental groups, we get no statistically significant differences in levels of satisfaction with democracy between the two experimental groups ( $\chi^2=4949$ ;  $p=.176$ ). Participants who say that they are completely satisfied with democracy are negligible, only 3.8% in the *West Wing* sample and 0% in the *House of Cards* sample. Among the students assigned to the *West Wing* treatment, only 26.9% of them said that they were reasonably satisfied with democracy, while 53.8% of university students assigned to the *House of Cards* treatment responded that they were. In the *West Wing* group 57.7% responded that they were not really satisfied with democracy versus 42.3% in the *House of Cards* group. When we look at the participants who answered that they were not satisfied with democracy, 11.5% in the *West Wing* group and 3.8% in the *House of Cards* group.



**Table 11) Satisfaction with democracy**

Satisfaction with democracy	Full sample - %	<i>West Wing</i> - %	<i>House of Cards</i> - %
Satisfied	1.9%	3.8%	0%
Reasonably satisfied	40.4%	26.9%	53.8%
Not really satisfied	50%	57.7%	42.3%
Not satisfied	7.7%	11.5%	3.8%

The data analysis strategy employed in this study is within-subjects – that is, we are testing the effects of exposure to fictional political dramas within each group, before and after the treatment. Nonetheless, due to the existence of differences in the two groups, in terms of age and ideology, one should wonder if the two groups are, before the treatment, similar in terms of trust in political institutions, political efficacy and attitudes towards politicians, and if they are equally susceptible to this type of treatment. While the existence of differences would not impair the internal validity of the analysis on Chapter 5, the discussion of the results observed in both groups should acknowledge them.

We employed a test to look at the dependent variables in order to see if there were statistically significant differences between both groups in the pretest measures. This was done by performing Independent Samples T-tests on the mean values of all the dependent variables measured in the pretest. As we can see in Table 12, we do not get statistically significant results in the vast majority of our dependent variables, with the exception of the ones measuring levels of trust, specifically trust in political parties, the President of the Republic and the Portuguese Government. Moreover, these differences are of modest magnitude, usually 1 to 1.5 points in scales that range between 0 and 10.

Table 12) Testing dependent variables between-subjects

Dependent variable	Overall mean	WW mean	HoC mean	T-test results
Political efficacy				
No influence in government	4.10	4.46	3.73	$t(50)=-.897; p=.374$
Politicians do not care	6.12	6.46	5.77	$t(50)=-.897; p=.374$
Particular interests have too much influence	7.37	7.23	7.50	$t(50)=-.462; p=.646$
Citizens have no opportunity	4.87	4.96	4.77	$t(50)=-.282; p=.779$
Attitudes towards political parties				
Political parties are all the same	6.54	6.23	6.85	$t(50)=-.341; p=.341$
Political parties are necessary in democracy	7.12	6.92	7.31	$t(50)=-.587; p=.560$
Political parties divide people	3.75	3.50	4	$t(50)=-.645; p=.522$
Trust in political institutions				
Trust in Political Parties	2.96	2.38	3.54	$t(50)=-2067; p=.044$
Trust in MPs	2.40	2.12	2.69	$t(50)=-1067; p=.291$
Trust in the President of the Republic	2.56	2	3.12	$t(50)=-1729; p=.090$
Trust in the Government of Portugal	2.81	2.12	3.50	$t(50)=-2021; p=.049$

It was also important to check if there were any major significant differences in how both groups were affected by the treatment they received. In order to do this, we measured the degree of variation between the dependent variables in the pretest and posttest and subsequently employed an Independent Samples T-test on the mean values. This produced no statistically significant results ( $t(50)=-.773$ ;  $p=.443$ ), meaning that both experimental groups were evenly effected by the treatment. That is, on average, the magnitude of the effects is the same for both groups. Despite being slightly different in terms of age and ideology, as we saw above, both groups are equally susceptible to short-term shifts in their political attitudes after being exposed to political fiction.



## 5. TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

In this following chapter we test the hypotheses laid out in a Chapter 3 in a series of paired samples T-tests that were employed in order to compare the pretest and posttest variables and measure the treatment effects. The nature of the data analysis strategy is within-subjects. In other words, we are testing the effects of exposure to fictional political dramas within each group, before and after the treatment. In view of this we will not only test for statistical significance between the pretest and posttest values, we will also be looking at the mean values themselves and the degree with which they are impacted by the treatment. It is important to note that we are not claiming that both instances are equally important, but nonetheless it is interesting to look at these changes in the mean values because they might suggest patterns that could prove useful in future research.

### 5.1. Testing hypothesis 1 (Political Efficacy – The West Wing)

In H1 we predict that exposure to the *West Wing* would result in an increase of the participants' political efficacy. In order to do this, we conducted a series of paired-samples T-tests (all hypotheses were tested using this model). As we can see in Figure 1 and Table 13, the results tend to be mixed.

When we measure the effects on the perceived levels of influence participants have on the government's decisions<sup>3</sup> and on the perception that individual interests have too much pull on the making of public policies<sup>4</sup>, we observe no statistically significant results<sup>5</sup>. In the first instance there is almost no difference whatsoever between the pretest and the posttest means, (4.26 and 4.27), while on the second instance we can only observe a very modest decrease towards the expected direction, from 7.23 in the pretest mean to 7.00 in the posttest mean (Figure 1, Table 13).

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<sup>3</sup> Question: As pessoas como eu não têm nenhuma influência naquilo que o governo faz. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

<sup>4</sup> Question: Interesses particulares têm demasiado peso na feitura das leis. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

<sup>5</sup> Inferential test results  $t(25)=0.467$ ;  $p=.644$  and  $t(25)=1.000$ ;  $p=.327$ , respectively

On the other hand, when we test the effects of exposure to the *West Wing* on perceptions that the demands and opinions of regular citizens are not important to politicians<sup>6</sup>, we observe a decrease in the levels of agreement with this sentence, from 6.46 in the pretest mean to 5.35 in the posttest. This shift is statistically significant ( $t(25)=2568$ ;  $p=.017$ ), which is interesting and goes in the expected direction of exposure to a positive and idealistic representation of politicians such as the *West Wing*.

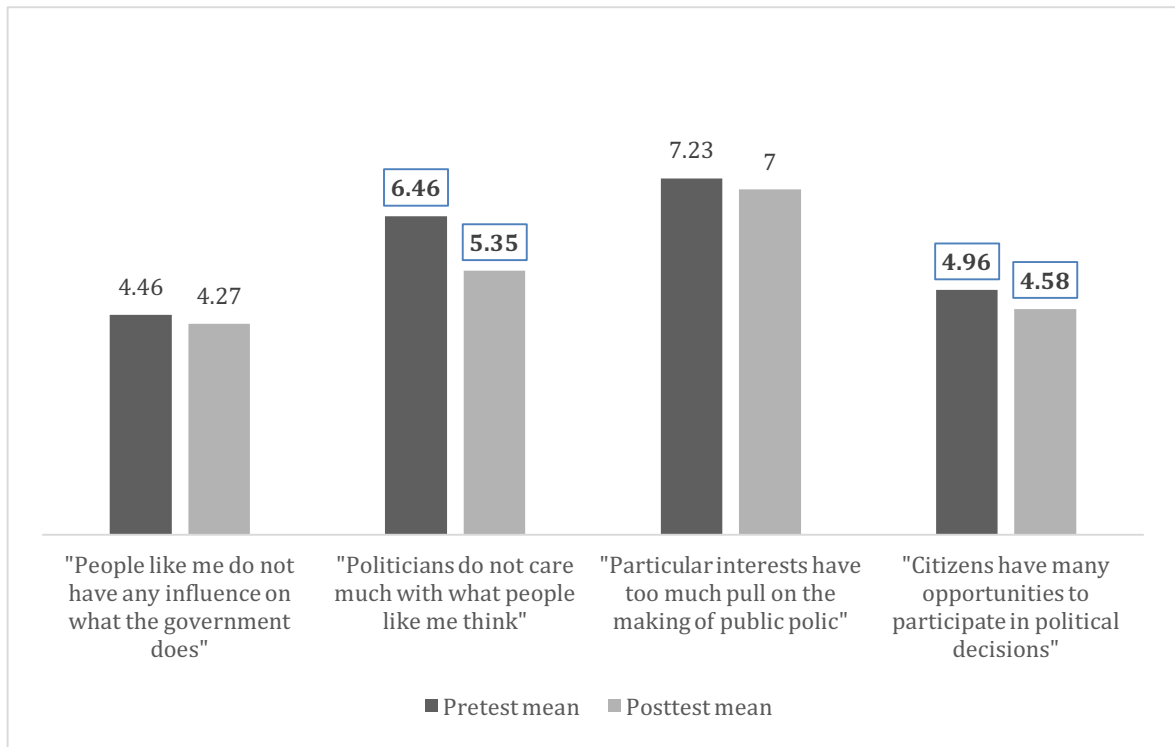
This trend changes when we look at the effects of exposure to the *West Wing* on the perceived opportunities that ordinary citizens have to be a part of political decision<sup>7</sup>. We observe a statistically significant ( $t(25)=1786$ ;  $p=.086$ ) decrease in agreement with the idea that there are many such opportunities, which goes against the direction that was to be expected. A possible explanation for this unexpected result is that despite the overall positive framing of politics and politicians, which is the hallmark of the show, it nonetheless portrays White House staff and the President of the United States as extraordinary and gifted individuals. This could be sending the message to the audience that politics is something to be done by those individuals who are talented and extraordinary, and thus not something that the ordinary citizen is capable of doing. This is in line with potential priming effects in which participants may be primed into believing that only exceptional individuals such as the characters on the show are capable of being national decision-makers, and not ordinary people like them. As we saw in Chapter 2, priming relates to the importance certain topics are given in mass media and how these selected topics become the gauge with which they assess the performance of the government, in the instance of the *West Wing*, the United States Presidency.

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<sup>6</sup> Question: Os políticos não se importam muito com aquilo que pensam pessoas como eu. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

<sup>7</sup> Question: Os cidadãos têm muitas oportunidades para participar nas decisões políticas. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

Figure 1) Effects on political Efficacy – *The West Wing*



Notes: Statistically significant results boxed.

Table 13) Effects on political Efficacy – *The West Wing*

	Expected direction	Sig
People like me do not have any influence on what the government does	No	n.s
Politicians do not care with that people like me think	Yes	p=.017
Particular interest have too much pull on the making of public policy	Yes	n.s
Citizens have many opportunities to participate in political decisions.	No	p=.086

Notes: paired-samples T test was used

n.s: Not statistically significant

## 5.2. Testing hypothesis 2 (Political Efficacy – *House of Cards*)

The second test to be conducted was on the *House of Cards* group. In H2 we predicted that exposure to a negative valenced frame of politics like *House of Cards* would produce a decrease in the participants' political efficacy. As we can see in Figure 2 and Table 14, the results tend to go towards the expected direction. But nonetheless we also observe one instance that seems to contradict the literature.

Testing the effects of exposure to *House of Cards* on perceptions of how important the demands and opinions of participants are to politicians<sup>8</sup> and on perceived opportunities that ordinary citizens have to be a part of political decision<sup>9</sup> produced no statistically significant results<sup>10</sup>.

Nonetheless, when testing the effects on the perceived levels of influence participants have on the government decisions<sup>11</sup>, we can see that exposure to *House of Cards* significantly increases agreement with the idea that normal people have no influence whatsoever ( $t(25)=-2952$ ;  $p=0.007$ ), with an increase from 3.73 in the pretest mean to 4.69 in the posttest mean. This is by far the best result our experiment produced, and clearly links exposure to a negative valenced framing of politics and a decrease in political efficacy. We also find statistically significant results when we test the effects of exposure to *House of Cards* on the perception that individual interests have too much pull on the making of public policy<sup>12</sup> ( $t(25)=1742$ ;  $p=.094$ ). We observe a decrease from the pretest mean of 7.50 to 7.08 in the posttest mean. This contradicts our expectations, since the group agrees less with the statement after exposure to the episode.

The first statistically significant result for H2, regarding the perceptions of one's influence on government decisions, goes in the expected direction, since the valenced

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<sup>8</sup> Question: Os políticos não se importam muito com aquilo que pensam pessoas como eu. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

<sup>9</sup> Question: Os cidadãos têm muitas oportunidades para participar nas decisões políticas. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

<sup>10</sup> Inferential test results  $t(25)=1286$ ;  $p=.210$  and on the second instance  $t(25)=-.254$ ;  $p=.802$ , respectively

<sup>11</sup> Question: As pessoas como eu não têm nenhuma influência naquilo que o governo faz. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

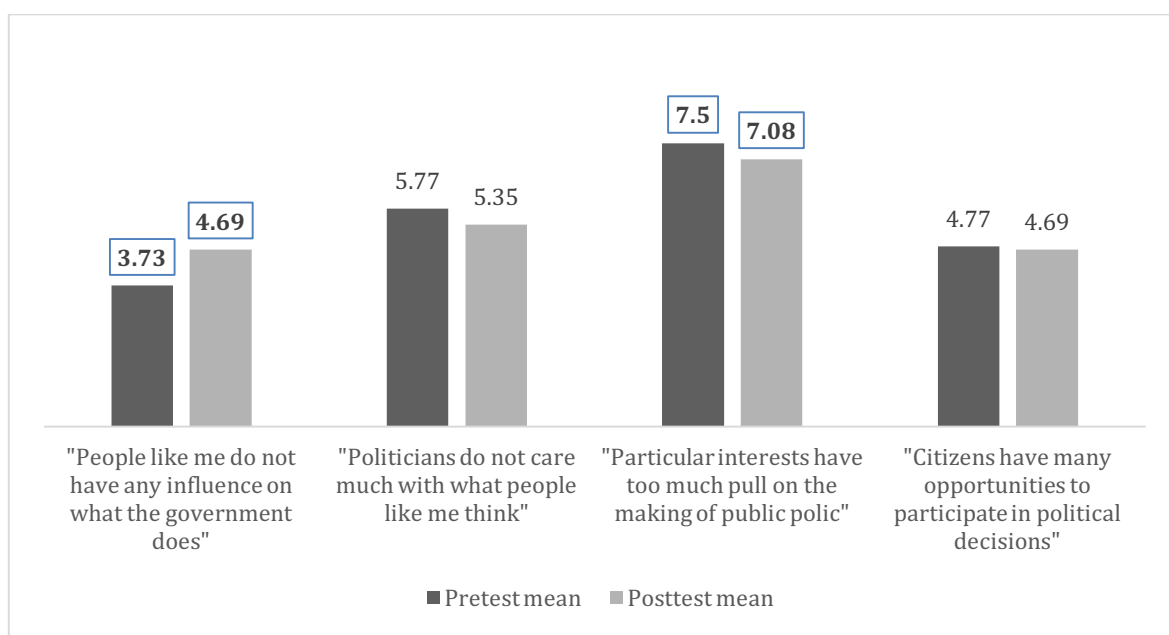
<sup>12</sup> Question: Interesses particulares têm demasiado peso na feitura das leis. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.



framing of politics that the television series provides is overwhelmingly negative. As we can see from the content analysis in Chapter 3, the show portrays the decision making process as a series of conspiracies and schemes set in the backrooms of the political process. According to the show, politics happens behind the curtains far away from the public and from public scrutiny. Not even the media can shed light on the process as it is often in collusion with it, condoning it in fact.

The second statistically significant result for H2, which is also the weakest in the entire study, pertains to the impact on the perceptions that public policy is made in the name of individual interests, contradicts the predictions made in Chapter 3 since Exposure to *House of Cards* increases disagreement with the sentence. The explanation for this unpredicted result lies in the episode’s narrative itself. In the episode the main character struggles to push his self-interested agenda to bend the political system to his aims. Right in the first part of the episode, he loses the nomination to become Secretary of State and begins to set the scene for his rise to power. We never actually see Frank Underwood succeed in making public policy during the episode.

Figure 2) Effects on Political Efficacy – *House of Cards*



Notes: Statistically significant results boxed.

**Table 14) Effects on Political Efficacy – *House of Cards***

	Expected direction	Sig.
People like me do not have any influence on what the government does	Yes	p=.007
Politicians do not care much with what people like me think	Yes	n.s.
Particular interests have too much pull on the making of public policy	No	p=.094
Citizens have many opportunities to participate in political decisions	Yes	NS

Notes: paired-samples T test was used

n.s: Not statistically significant

### 5.3. Testing hypothesis 3 (Attitudes towards political parties – *The West Wing*)

In Chapter 3 we predicted that exposure to a positive framing of politics in the *West Wing* would result in a better outlook on political parties from the participants. However, when testing this effect, no statistically significant results were produced (Figure 3; Table 15).

Regarding the impact of exposure to *The West Wing* on the perception that political parties are all the same<sup>13</sup>, we observe no significant impact on this perception ( $t(25)=.529$ ;  $p=.602$ ), as the pretest mean of 6.23 only slightly drops to 6.04 in the posttest, being these values virtually the same. Moving on to test the impact of exposure to on whether participants agree that political parties are necessary for democracy<sup>14</sup>, there is also no statistically significant increase or decrease in agreement with the aforementioned sentence ( $t(25)=.235$ ;  $p=.816$ ). This trend continues when we test for the impact of exposure to *The West Wing* on the

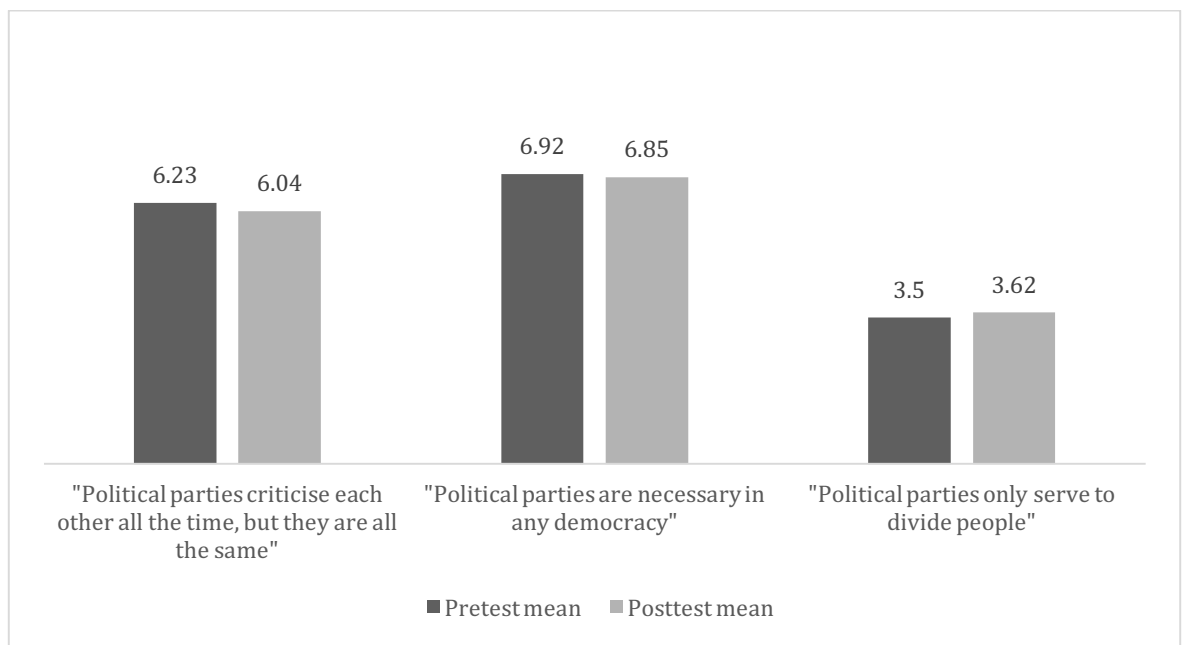
<sup>13</sup> Question: Os partidos criticam-se muito uns aos outros, mas na realidade são todos iguais. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement

<sup>14</sup> Question: Os partidos políticos são necessários em qualquer democracia. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement

perception that political parties are responsible for dividing people<sup>15</sup>. Here we can also observe no changes in the levels of agreement with the sentence, which go from 3.50 in the pretest mean to 3.62 in the posttest mean ( $t(25)=-.378$ ;  $p=.709$ ).

Overall, exposure to the *West Wing* does not produce any significant impact on attitudes towards political parties. This could be explained by the fact that the plot of the episode used in the treatment features no narrative threads concerning themselves with party politics and therefore there is no opportunity for the show's writers to frame the subject.

Figure 3) Effects on attitudes towards political parties – *The West Wing*



Notes: Statistically significant results boxed.

<sup>15</sup> Question: Os partidos políticos apenas servem para dividir as pessoas. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement

Table 15) Effects on attitudes towards political parties – *The West Wing*

	Expected direction	Sig.
Political parties criticize each other all the time, but they are all the same	Yes	n.s.
Political parties are necessary in any democracy	No	n.s.
Political parties only serve to divide people	Yes	n.s.

Notes: paired-samples T test was used

n.s: Not statistically significant

#### 5.4. Testing hypothesis 4 (Attitudes towards political parties – *House of Cards*)

The fourth test to be conducted was aimed at measuring the effects of exposure to *House of Cards* on attitudes towards political parties as it was hypothesized in H4. Back in Chapter 3, we predicted that exposure to a negative framing of politics would result in a negative outlook towards political parties. There is only one instance in which this is so (Figure 4; Table 16).

When analyzing the impact of exposure to *House of Cards* on the perception that political parties are all the same<sup>16</sup> or that they are necessary for democracy<sup>17</sup>, we obtain no statistically significant results<sup>18</sup>

However, we secured statistically significant results when we test for the impact of exposure to *House of Cards* on the perception that political parties are responsible for dividing people<sup>19</sup>. We see that the results move towards the expected direction, with an increase in the agreement for the aforementioned sentence, from 4.00 in the pretest mean to 4.62 in the posttest mean ( $t(25)=-2132$ ;  $p=.043$ ) Why is this so? If

<sup>16</sup> Question: Os partidos criticam-se muito uns aos outros, mas na realidade são todos iguais. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

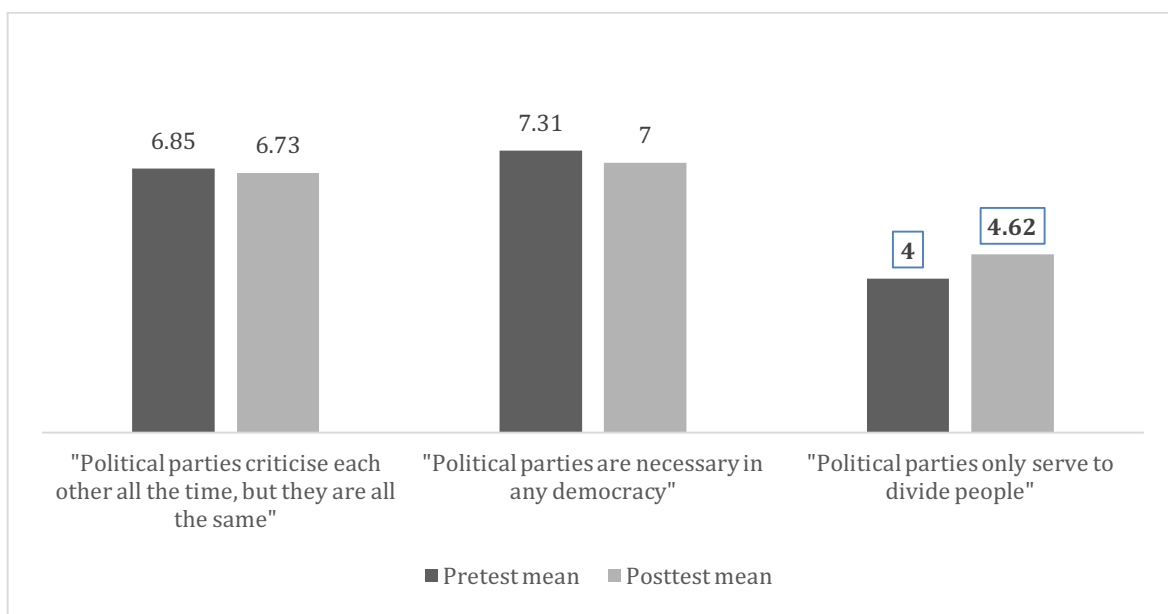
<sup>17</sup> Question: Os partidos políticos são necessários em qualquer democracia. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement.

<sup>18</sup> Inferential test results  $t(25)=-.398$ ;  $p=.694$  and  $t(25)=1443$ ;  $p=.161$ , respectively

<sup>19</sup> Question: Os partidos políticos apenas servem para dividir as pessoas. Answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means complete disagreement and 10 means total agreement

the *West Wing* treatment did not feature any framing of the party political game, *House of Cards* is rife with it. The show features heavily the backstage goings-on of congressional politics in the United States, thus offering plenty of opportunities for the show's writers to frame the United States political process in Congress, which as we have seen in Chapter 3 is overwhelmingly negative.

Figure 4) Attitudes towards political parties – *House of Cards*



Notes: Statistically significant results boxed.

Table 16) Attitudes towards political parties – *House of Cards*

	Expected direction	Sig.
Political parties criticize each other all the time, but they are all the same	Yes	n.s.
Political parties are necessary in any democracy	Yes	n.s.
Political parties only serve to divide people	Yes	p=.043

Notes: paired-samples T test was used  
n.s: Not statistically significant

### 5.5. Testing Hypothesis 5 (Trust in political institutions – *The West Wing*)

Another dimension approached in the pretest and posttest questionnaires was to have the participants in the experiment rate, on a scale from 0 (no trust) to 10 (complete trust), a variety of institutions which compose the political system in Portugal: political parties, the Members of Parliament (MPs), the President of the Republic and the Government of Portugal.

As we initially predicted in Chapter 3, exposure to a positive framing of politicians should result in increased levels of trust in the political institutions mentioned above. As we can see in Figure 5 and Table 17, most of the participants rate these political institutions low in terms of trustworthiness.

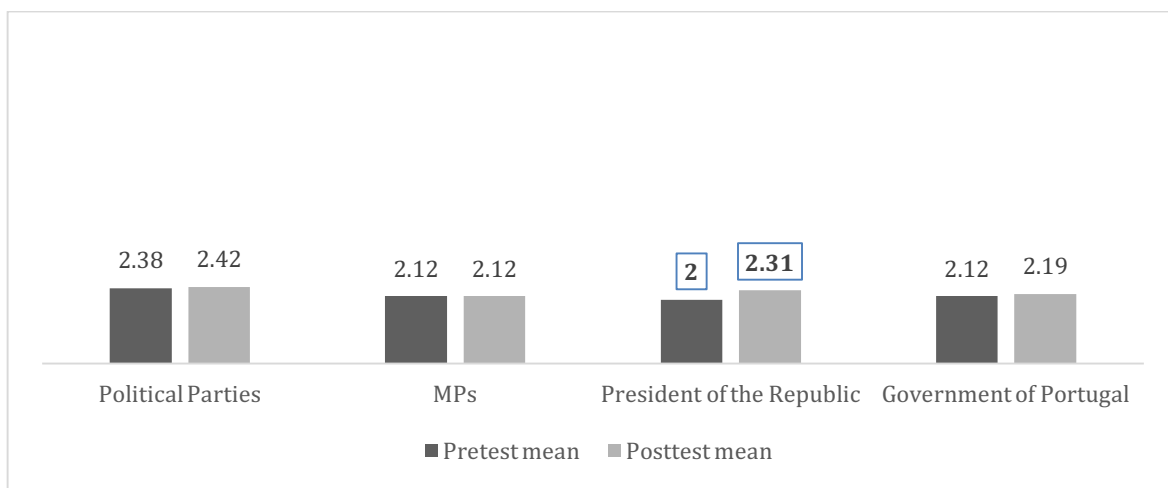
In terms of the effects of exposure to the *West Wing*, when it comes to trust in political parties, the average rating in the pretest (2.38) and posttest (2.42) do not display statistically significant differences ( $t(25)=-.372$ ;  $p=.713$ ). The second political institution to be tested for the effect of exposure to the treatment were MPs, and we see no change in the rating as the 2.12 pretest mean remains the same after the treatment. This could be explained by the fact that the episode of the *West Wing* used in the treatment features no character or plots that involve members of a legislature. The trend continues: when we measure the effects being exposed to the *West Wing* on trust in the government we can see no statistically significant impact from exposure ( $t(25)=.224$ ;  $p=.603$ ) (Figure 5).

And finally, the institution that was effected the most by exposure to the *West Wing* was by far the President of the Republic. These results are statistically significant ( $t(25)=-1.990$ ;  $p=.058$ ) When we test the effect, we see an increase in trust, from 2.00 in the pretest mean to 2.31 in the posttest mean.

These results can be explained by the interaction between an overwhelmingly positive framing of the President of the United States in the *West Wing* and the low levels of political sophistication that Portuguese young adults usually display, which are mistaking the two institution, despite their very dissimilar natures. As Magalhães & Moral (2008) and Lobo et al (2015) point out, young people in Portugal generally display lower levels of political knowledge and sophistication when compared with

the general population. This explanation can also be potentially applied to the lack of impact on trust in the government. As the participants might be mistaking the government's institutional role in Portugal with the United States presidency.

Figure 5) Effects on trust in political institutions – *The West Wing*



Notes: Statistically significant results boxed.

Table 17) Effects on trust in political institutions – *The West Wing*

	Expected direction	Sig.
Political parties	Yes	n.s.
MPs	No	n.s.
President of the Republic	Yes	p=.058
Government of Portugal	Yes	n.s.

Notes: paired-samples T test was used  
n.s: Not statistically significant

## 5.6. Testing Hypothesis 6 (Trust in political institutions – *House of Cards*)

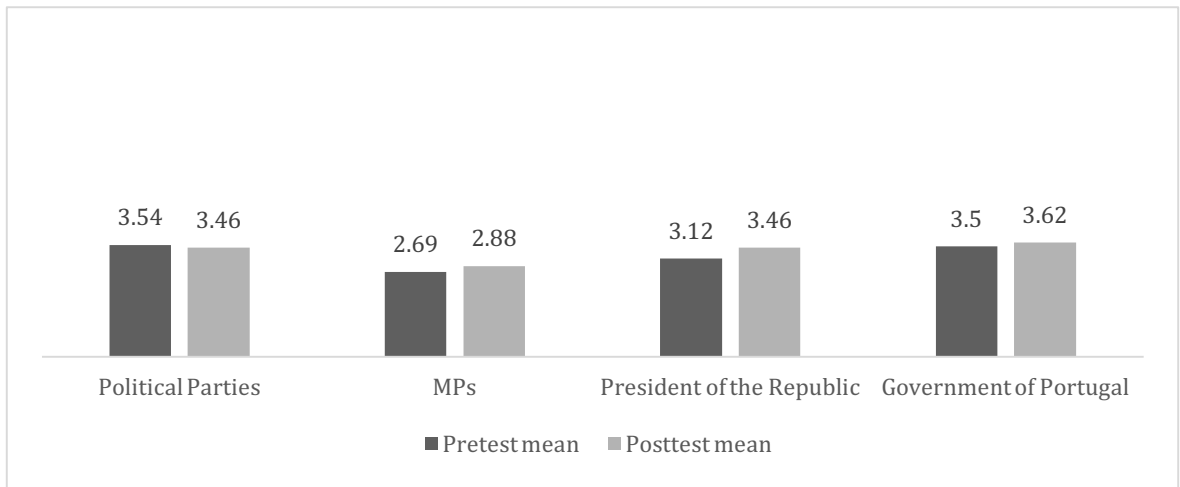
The tests on the effect of exposure to *House of Cards* on levels of trust in Portuguese political institutions display no statistically significant results in any of the four variables under study (Figure 6; Table 18): trust in political parties, MPs, the President of the Republic and the Government of Portugal. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the *House of Cards* group displays higher overall levels of trust in political institutions than its *West Wing* counterpart, which can be explained by the fact that the *House of Cards* group leaned more towards the right-wing side of the political spectrum and at the time of data collection (between the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 and the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2015) the party in government in Portugal was in the center-right of the spectrum.

Measuring the effect of being exposed to *House of Cards* on trust in political parties we see no statistically significant impact ( $t(25)=.319$ ;  $p=.753$ ). as the sample scored 3.54 in the pretest mean and 3.46 in the posttest mean Regarding the effect of exposure to *House of Cards* on trust in MPs, we see no statistically significant impact ( $t(25)=-.895$ ;  $p=.380$ );. The same is true when we measure the treatment's effect on trust in the President of the Republic ( $t(25)=-1.250$ ;  $p=.223$ ), as we observe a very modest, negligible increase from 3.12 in the pretest mean to 3.46 in the posttest mean. The trend continues when we measure the effects of exposure to *House of Cards* on trust in the government, with a statistically insignificant increase in trust from 3.50 in the pretest mean to 3.62 in the posttest mean ( $t(25)=-.461$ ;  $p=.649$ ).

Overall, exposure to *House of Cards* did not produce any statistically significant results on the effect on trust.



Figure 6) Effects on trust in political institutions– *House of Cards*



Notes: Statistically significant results boxed.

Table 18) Effects on trust in political institutions– *House of Cards*

	Expected direction	Sig.
Political parties	Yes	n.s
MPs	No	n.s
President of the Republic	No	n.s
Government of Portugal	No	n.s

Notes: paired-samples T test was used

n.s.: Not statistically significant

### 5.7. Discussion of the results

As the literature surveyed in previous chapters points out, there is evidence that media exposure to entertainment content has an effect on the political attitudes of those exposed to it. In order to test the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 3 an experimental design was employed, which produced interesting results.

Regarding the effect of exposure to the treatment on political efficacy, statistically significant results were observed when we tested hypothesis 1 and 2 (Table 18). We were able to find a relationship between exposure to positive valenced framings of politicians and a decrease in agreement that politicians do not care about what ordinary people think about politics. In a divergent direction, we established a relationship between exposure to negative valenced framings of politicians and both an increase in agreement that ordinary citizens do not have any influence in political decisions and that particular interests have too much influence on the making of public policy. Both these results confirm the literature and partially confirm hypothesis 1 and 2.

But the relationship between media exposure and its effects is not as linear as Van Zoonen exposes. We also found that exposure to the *West Wing* decreases the perception that normal people are given many opportunities to participate in the political process; these findings go in the opposite direction of the hypothesis laid out (Table 12). This deviation can be explained with recourse to Michelle Mouton's research (2003), which suggests that the show presents a slightly elitist conception of politics by presenting politics in a very professionalized manner through which "political work can effectively occur" (p. 198). The author also points out that the show's narrow focus on the White House's backroom and corridors leaves out of the series key actors of the political process, such as ordinary citizens, protesters, unions and "politically active young women and men who are on the outside of the professional class and its predominant discourse" (p. 198). This aspect of the television series could explain why it might lead some to see politics as something that should be left out to a small minority of extraordinary individuals. We can also argue that the show's focus on character development, as Holbert et al (2003) argues, could be framing the political process as something done by individuals instead of larger collective identities such as "the people", "the nation" or, "the workers", and thus could be alienating the participants from the political process, which is in line with Mouton (2003).

Another explanation pertains to priming effects of the episode which can lead to participants being primed into believe that only those politicians who are talented, educated, honorable and conscientious enough such as the characters on the show can be capable politicians. Thus driving ordinary people such as them out of the political process.

When we tested the effects of exposure to *House of Cards* on the participant's perceptions that public policy decisions are made in the name of individual interests rather than the interests of the population at large, our findings contradict the predictions laid out in Chapter 3 since agreement with the sentence decreased. This unexpected result can be explained with recourse to the episode's narrative itself. In this episode, the show's protagonist, the anti-hero Frank Underwood, struggles to rig the political process in his favor, despite succeeding in subsequent episodes which were not featured in our experiment. Nonetheless this was the weakest statistically significant result our study produced.

The effects of exposure to the valenced framing of politicians provided by *The West Wing* and *House of Cards* are less impactful relative to participant's attitudes towards political parties. There was only one statistically significant instance in the *House of Cards* treatment regarding the belief that political parties only contribute to divide the people, where an increase in agreement with the statement is observed. The weaker impact of exposure to fictional political dramas on attitudes towards political parties can be explained by the fact that the political reality portrayed in the television series selected for this experiment does not feature instances of party politics. Both of them were produced in the United States and the episodes aimed to represent the political reality of that country, which is very different from the reality that the participants inhabit. The United States polity is far less reliant on political parties to mediate the political process when compared to Portugal (Craig 2016). Nonetheless, the statistically significant result yielded by the tests performed to test hypotheses 3 and 4, can be explained by the specific way *House of Cards* frames the political process in conflict-oriented way, wherein the main characters are driven forward in the narrative.

Regarding the effects of exposure on participants' trust in political institutions, the results produced by the testing for hypothesis 5 and 6 followed this trend; impact on these variables is negligible, with the partial exception of the *West Wing* treatment which yielded statistically significant results in increased levels of trust in the President of the Republic. These results can perhaps be explained in a twofold manner. First, the overwhelmingly positive way the President of the United States is framed by the television series. The show's writers go out of their way to portray the president as someone who is extremely capable of performing his institutional role. President Josiah Bartlet is seen in the episode as a knowledgeable and good-hearted man who can out quote biblical scripture to religious fundamentalists. The second dimension which helps us explain these results is the well-documented fact that, as Azevedo and Menezes (2008), Magalhães and Moral (2008), and Lobo et a (2015) point out, young Portuguese people by-and-large have lesser levels of political sophistication and knowledge which could lead to participants into misunderstanding the institutional differences between the President of the United States and President of the Republic in Portugal.

Overall, these results help us to partially confirm our initial hypotheses that exposure to fictional political dramas has an effect on our political attitudes (Table 19).

Table 19) Findings

Hypotheses	Confirmation	Results
H1 - Being exposed to the <i>West Wing</i> has a positive effect on political efficacy	Partially confirmed	No influence in government (p=.644)
		Politicians do not care (p=.017)
		Particular interests have too much influence (p=.327)
		Citizens have no opportunity (p=.086)
H2 - Being exposed to <i>House of Cards</i> has a negative effect on political efficacy.	Partially confirmed	No influence in government (p=.007)
		Politicians do not care (p=.210)
		Particular interests have too much influence (p=.094)
		Citizens have no opportunity (p=.802)
H3 - Being exposed to the <i>West Wing</i> has a positive effect on attitudes towards political parties	Not confirmed	Political parties are all the same (p=.602)
		Political parties are necessary in democracy (p=.816)
		Political parties divide people (p=.709)
H4 - Being exposed to <i>House of Cards</i> has a negative effect on attitudes towards political parties	Partially confirmed	Political parties are all the same (p=.694)
		Political parties are necessary in democracy (p=.161)
		Political parties divide people (p=.043)
H5 - Being exposed to the <i>West Wing</i> has a positive effect on trust in political institutions	Partially confirmed	Political parties (p=.713)
		MPs (p=1)
		President of the Republic (p=.053)
		Portuguese government (p=.603)
H6 - Being exposed to <i>House of Cards</i> has a negative effect on trust in political institutions	Not confirmed	Political parties (p=.753)
		MPs (p=.380)
		President of the Republic (p=.223)
		Portuguese government (p=.649)



## 6. CONCLUSION

We sought out to contribute to the growing body of research on the effects of media exposure on political attitudes by challenging ourselves with the question “What are the effects of exposure of fictional political dramas on the audience’s political attitudes such as political efficacy, attitudes towards political parties and trust in political institutions?”

To better answer our research question we surveyed some of the theories on cognitive effects of mass media such as cultivation theory, agenda setting, priming and framing. All these theoretical models point out that there is indeed a direct relationship between being exposed to media such as television or films and changes in the political attitudes of those exposed. These models were then supplemented with review of empirical studies on the effects of media on political attitudes that could guide our own research. All of which provided clear empirical evidence for the existence of these media effects on a wide variety of genres of television including traditional satire, reality television, soft news and more importantly fictional political dramas.

It was from the point of view of one standing on the shoulders of those who came before that we established our set of six hypotheses, which were tested using an experimental design. Given the literature that had been cited before, we expected to replicate some of the findings and to confirm our hypotheses. These were partially confirmed by the tests we conducted. We observed a relationship between being exposed to fictional political dramas and attitude change at the level of political efficacy, attitudes towards political parties and trust in political parties, MPs, the President of the Republic and the Portuguese Government.

Hopefully our study will contribute to shed light in a less explored avenue of research in Portugal, the relationship between entertainment and politics. Given that our sample consisted totally of young adults, our findings can also contribute to explain the relationship between young adults and politics. As Magalhães and Moral (2008) and Lobo et al (2015) point out, this segment of Portuguese society has its own set of specifications, for example, they tend to be dissatisfied with politics, and

subsequently have lower levels of political involvement and political party membership. They also tend to be less exposed to political information and thus are less politically sophisticated. In view of this, by pointing out potential new sources of political information that can be more appealing to young adults in Portugal, our study can contribute to the inclusion of young adults into the political process. As Lobo et al (2015) and Jackson (2009) note, young people tend to think about politics and political activism in different ways, so why not have different sources of political information? While far from being a consensual issue among political scientists, authors such as Van Zoonen (2005) go so far as to argue for the articulation between citizenship and entertainment and in favor of a fan democracy.

Despite the positive results obtained with this experimental design, it is crucial to recognize its shortcomings. The most obvious one is that it relies on a small sample of only 52 individuals and that they are largely pooled from the same background, i.e. university students. As McDermott (2002) points out, university students often have more fluid attitudes and identities, and thus it would be interesting to expand this type of research with a more diversified sample of the Portuguese population. Another shortcoming of the experimental design was its use of political fictional dramas produced in the United States and who sought to fictionalize the reality of that country's political process and institutions. It is impossible to tell whether this had an impact on how the participants were effected but we can certainly speculate that, had the treatment been of fictionalized accounts of Portuguese politics, the results might be different. And finally, future experimental designs should seek to incorporate other methodologies like observational designs such as longitudinal studies in tandem with experimental methodology. These aspects are something that should be explored in future research in order to strengthen the external validity of the findings.

Another avenue for future research is to explore the potential cultivation effects of exposure to fictional political dramas. As pointed out by Gerbner (1998), cultivation theory presupposes prolonged exposure to mass media stimuli. As such, it was impossible to account for such effects in the present experimental design, where



we could only look into short-term valenced framing effects. It would be interesting to see whether or not these effects on attitude change persist over time. This goes in tandem with the argument made by Jackson (2009) earlier in favor of the influence of entertainment media and pop culture exposure and its capacity to solidify political attitudes. For the author this exposure contributes to political socialization, defined as the process whereby individuals obtain political beliefs, values and norms. Taking into account the long-term nature of cultivation analysis, future research could pursue this avenue, which would undoubtedly produce interesting results and discussion on the long-term effects of attitude change and its subsequent solidification produced by exposure to fictional political dramas.

Another option would be to study whether or not fictional political dramas can potentially produce agenda setting effects. The episodes which were used in the experimental design feature characters and plotlines revolving around important public policy issues such as education reform in *House of Cards*, and the plight of Cuban refugees seeking asylum in the United States in *The West Wing*. Which could potentially set the agenda for these issues. Nonetheless, it was only a single episode and as such these topics were not given the necessary attention to create the required degree of awareness to set the agenda. As Strange and Leung (1999) point out, there is evidence that both information based sources as well as fictional ones have agenda-setting properties. Still, it is easy to put forward a scenario whereby a new popular television series emerges on the media landscape, which centers itself on issues such as LGBT rights, environmental awareness or the plight of the refugees, and subsequently brings attention to its chosen topic. Klein (2011) argues in favor for televisions' potential role as a pedagogical tool on a variety of social issues. Can such as television show set the agenda for public policy by casting a dramatic light on a controversial issue? This is could be a vehicle for future research.

Is it possible to extract any normative conclusions from these findings? If we follow the explanation given above for hypothesis 5, that participants have mistaken the institutionally distinct roles of the President of the Republic and the United States President, then it follows that more attention and investment should be spent on

civics education in Portugal. As Azevedo and Menezes (2008), point out, young people's education in the field of politics and citizenship have a positive effect on levels of political and civic participation later in life.

The current research is breaking new ground in Portuguese political research, as such it is bound to be incomplete, contingent and flawed. Nonetheless, our findings must be taken into consideration and placed in the context of the overall scholarship dedicated to analyzing the intersection between politics and the media. The present research is but a small piece of the puzzle. We urge that our study be replicated with similar or even more ambitious research designs, treatments and samples, and hopefully more light can be shed on this landscape.

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# APPENDIX



## Entretenimento e Política

\* Required

### O estudo em que está a participar destina-se a analisar os hábitos de entretenimento e política dos alunos da Universidade de Aveiro.

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Por favor, preste atenção aos seguintes aspectos quando preencher o questionário:

1 - Leia as perguntas atentamente e responda o mais próximo possível da sua opinião pessoal. 2 - As suas respostas são ANÓNIMAS e os dados são CONFIDENCIAIS. Os dados serão utilizados apenas para fins científicos.

3 - Por razões de gestão de dados precisamos de algumas informações suas.

Por favor, responda às seguintes perguntas :

1. Qual é a primeira LETRA do nome da sua mãe? \*

.....

2. Qual é a primeira LETRA do nome do seu pai? \*

.....

3. Qual é a primeira LETRA do nome da cidade onde nasceu? \*

.....

4. Em que DIA do mês é o seu aniversário? \*

.....

## Inquérito

5. Idade \*

.....

**6. Sexo \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Feminino

Masculino

**7. 1 - Qual o seu estado civil actual? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Solteiro

Divorciado ou separado

Casado

União de facto

Other: .....

**8. 2 - Qual é a sua condição perante o trabalho? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Estudante

Trabalhador-estudante

Other: .....

**9. 3 - Qual é a sua religião actualmente? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Católica

Nenhuma

Other: .....

**10. 4 - Com que frequência vai à igreja/local de culto? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Nunca

Uma vez por ano

Duas a onze vezes por ano

Uma vez por mês

Duas ou mais vezes por mês

Uma vez por semana ou mais

11. **5 - Numa semana normal, quantas horas costuma dedicar a ver séries de televisão? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 horas
- 1-2 horas
- 2-5 horas
- 5-10 horas
- Mais de 10 horas

12. **6 - Que géneros televisivos costuma consumir? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- Crime
- Fantasia
- Noticiário
- Desporto
- Talk Show
- Drama
- Comentário
- Ficção Científica
- Terror
- Comédia

13. **7 - Normalmente, como costuma assistir às suas séries favoritas? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- Sozinho
- Em família
- Com namorada/o
- Com amigos

14. **8 - Com que frequência assiste a séries através da internet, mesmo que essas séries passem na televisão portuguesa? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Nunca
- De vez em quando
- Frequentemente

15. **9 - Com que frequência conversa com familiares, amigos ou colegas de trabalho a respeito das séries a que assiste? \***

Mark only one oval.

- Nunca  
 De vez em quando  
 Frequentemente

16. **10 - Em política é usual falar-se da “esquerda” e da “direita”. Como é que se posicionaria nesta escala, em que 0 representa a posição mais à esquerda e 10 a posição mais à direita? \***

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. **11 - Quando está entre pessoas amigas, discute assuntos políticos frequentemente, de vez em quando ou nunca? \***

Mark only one oval.

- Nunca  
 De vez em quando  
 Frequentemente

18. **12 - De um modo geral, qual o seu grau de interesse pela política? \***

0 = Nada interessada/o; 10 = Muito interessada/o

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. **13 - Das seguintes instituições, diga, por favor, qual o grau de confiança que lhe inspira cada uma delas. \***

0 = Nada confiante; 10 = Muito confiante

Mark only one oval per row.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Os partidos políticos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O parlamento	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A administração pública	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Os deputados em geral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A presidência da República	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O governo de Portugal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. **14 - De um modo geral está muito satisfeito/a, razoavelmente satisfeito/a, não muito satisfeito/a, ou nada satisfeito/a com o modo como funciona a democracia em Portugal? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Satisfeita/o
- Razoavelmente satisfeita/o
- Não muito satisfeita/o
- Nada satisfeita/o

**Em seguida, encontra uma série de afirmações a respeito da política e dos políticos. Usando uma escala de 0 a 10, em que 0 significa "discordo totalmente" e 10 "concordo totalmente", como é que se posiciona em relação a cada uma dessas afirmações?**

---

21. **15 - "Os partidos criticam-se muito uns aos outros, mas na realidade são todos iguais." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

*Mark only one oval.*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. **16 - "As pessoas como eu não têm nenhuma influência naquilo que o governo faz." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

*Mark only one oval.*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. **17 - "Os políticos não se importam muito com aquilo que pensam pessoas como eu." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

*Mark only one oval.*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. **18 - "Interesses particulares têm demasiado peso na feitura das leis." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. **19 - "Os partidos políticos são necessários em qualquer democracia." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. **20 - "Os cidadãos têm muitas oportunidades para participar nas decisões políticas." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. **21 - "Os partidos políticos apenas servem para dividir as pessoas." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Entretenimento e Política

\* Required

### O estudo em que está a participar destina-se a analisar os hábitos de entretenimento e política dos alunos da Universidade de Aveiro.

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1. Qual é a primeira LETRA do nome da sua mãe? \*

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.....

3. Qual é a primeira LETRA do nome do local onde nasceu? \*

.....

4. Em que DIA do mês é o seu aniversário? \*

.....

## Inquérito

5. 1 - Qual é o nome do Presidente dos Estados Unidos da América no contexto da série que acabou de assistir? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Francis Urquhart
- Walter White
- Josiah Bartlet
- James Hacker
- Frank Underwood

6. 2 - Em que cidade dos Estados Unidos da América se passa a trama da série que acabou de assistir? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Londres
- Nova Orleães
- Salt Lake City
- Los Angeles
- Paris
- New York
- Seattle
- Lisboa
- Tóquio
- Washington DC

7. 3 - Durante a trama, é introduzida uma narrativa secundária que concerne um grupo de refugiados. De onde é que são oriundos estes refugiados? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Síria
- Cuba
- Guatemala
- Laos
- Kosovo

8. 4 - De um modo geral está muito satisfeito/a, razoavelmente satisfeito/a, não muito satisfeito/a, ou nada satisfeito/a com o modo como funciona a democracia em Portugal? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Satisfeita/o
- Razoavelmente satisfeita/o
- Não muito satisfeita/o
- Nada satisfeita/o

9. 5 - Das seguintes instituições, diga, por favor, qual o grau de confiança que lhe inspira cada uma delas. \*

0 = Nada confiante; 10 = Muito confiante

Mark only one oval per row.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Os partidos políticos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O parlamento	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A administração pública	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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O governo de Portugal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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11. 7 - "As pessoas como eu não têm nenhuma influência naquilo que o governo faz." \*

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12. 8 - "Os políticos não se importam muito com aquilo que pensam pessoas como eu." \*

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13. **9 - "Interesses particulares têm demasiado peso na feitura das leis." \***

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14. **10 - "Os partidos políticos são necessários em qualquer democracia." \***

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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. **11 - "Os cidadãos têm muitas oportunidades para participar nas decisões políticas." \***

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Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. **12 - "Os partidos políticos apenas servem para dividir as pessoas." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Obrigado pela sua colaboração neste estudo!**

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## Entretenimento e Política

\* Required

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.....

3. Qual é a primeira LETRA do nome da cidade onde nasceu? \*

.....

4. Em que DIA do mês é o seu aniversário? \*

.....

## Inquérito

5. Idade \*

.....

6. **Sexo \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Feminino

Masculino

7. **1 - Qual o seu estado civil actual? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

União de facto

Solteiro

Divorciado ou separado

Casado

Other: .....

8. **2 - Qual é a sua condição perante o trabalho? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Estudante

Trabalhador-estudante

Other: .....

9. **3 - Qual é a sua religião actualmente? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Católica

Nenhuma

Other: .....

10. **4 - Com que frequência vai à igreja/local de culto? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Nunca

Uma vez por ano

Duas a onze vezes por ano

Uma vez por mês

Duas ou mais vezes por mês

Uma vez por semana ou mais

11. **5 - Numa semana normal, quantas horas costuma dedicar a ver séries de televisão? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 horas
- 1-2 horas
- 2-5 horas
- 5-10 horas
- Mais de 10 horas

12. **6 - Que géneros televisivos costuma consumir? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- Comédia
- Fantasia
- Ficção Científica
- Desporto
- Noticiário
- Comentário
- Terror
- Crime
- Drama
- Talk Show

13. **7 - Normalmente, como costuma assistir às suas séries favoritas? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- Sozinho
- Em família
- Com namorada/o
- Com amigos
- Other: .....

14. **8 - Com que frequência assiste a séries através da internet, mesmo que essas séries passem na televisão portuguesa? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Nunca
- De vez em quando
- Frequentemente

15. **9 - Com que frequência conversa com familiares, amigos ou colegas de trabalho a respeito das séries a que assiste? \***

Mark only one oval.

- Nunca
- De vez em quando
- Frequentemente

16. **10 - Em política é usual falar-se da “esquerda” e da “direita”. Como é que se posicionaria nesta escala, em que 0 representa a posição mais à esquerda e 10 a posição mais à direita? \***

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. **11 - Quando está entre pessoas amigas, discute assuntos políticos frequentemente, de vez em quando ou nunca? \***

Mark only one oval.

- Nunca
- De vez em quando
- Frequentemente

18. **12 - De um modo geral, qual o seu grau de interesse pela política? \***

0 = Nada interessada/o; 10 = Muito interessada/o

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. **13 - Das seguintes instituições, diga, por favor, qual o grau de confiança que lhe inspira cada uma delas. \***

0 = Nenhuma confiança; 10 = muita confiança

Mark only one oval per row.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Os partidos políticos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O parlamento	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A administração pública	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Os deputados em geral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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O governo de Portugal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



20. **14 - De um modo geral está muito satisfeito/a, razoavelmente satisfeito/a, não muito satisfeito/a, ou nada satisfeito/a com o modo como funciona a democracia em Portugal? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Satisfeita/o
- Razoavelmente satisfeita/o
- Não muito satisfeita/o
- Nada satisfeita/o

**Em seguida, encontra uma série de afirmações a respeito da política e dos políticos. Usando uma escala de 0 a 10, em que 0 significa "discordo totalmente" e 10 "concordo totalmente", como é que se posiciona em relação a cada uma dessas afirmações?**

---

21. **15 - "Os partidos criticam-se muito uns aos outros, mas na realidade são todos iguais." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

*Mark only one oval.*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. **16 - "As pessoas como eu não têm nenhuma influência naquilo que o governo faz." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

*Mark only one oval.*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. **17 - "Os políticos não se importam muito com aquilo que pensam pessoas como eu." \***

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0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. **18 - "Interesses particulares têm demasiado peso na feitura das leis." \***

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0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. **19 - "Os partidos políticos são necessários em qualquer democracia." \***

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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. **20 - "Os cidadãos têm muitas oportunidades para participar nas decisões políticas." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. **21 - "Os partidos políticos apenas servem para dividir as pessoas." \***

0 = Discordo Totalmente; 10 = Concordo Totalmente

Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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.....

4. Em que DIA do mês é o seu aniversário?

.....

## Inquérito

5. 1 - Qual é o nome da personagem principal da série que acabou de assistir? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Francis Urquhart
- Walter White
- Josiah Bartlet
- Frank Underwood
- James Hacker

6. 2 - Que posição é que a personagem principal da série que acabou de assistir ocupa no sistema político Americano? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Congressista
- Senador
- Deputado
- Presidente dos Estados Unidos
- Lobista
- Candidato a Presidente dos Estados Unidos
- Secretário de Estado

7. 3 - Um dos problemas que as personagens confrontam durante o episódio que acabou de assistir é a elaboração e aprovação de um pacote legislativo. Em que concerne esta nova legislação? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Reforma da educação
- Forças armadas
- Estado social
- Financiamento da cultura
- Reforma do sistema contributivo

8. 4 - De um modo geral está muito satisfeito/a, razoavelmente satisfeito/a, não muito satisfeito/a, ou nada satisfeito/a com o modo como funciona a democracia em Portugal? \*

Mark only one oval.

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O parlamento	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Mark only one oval.

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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. **12 - "Os partidos políticos apenas servem para dividir as pessoas." \***

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Mark only one oval.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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