

The Routledge Companion to Leadership

Chapter 30 Media Portrayals: From Leadership Cults to Celebrity Politicians¹

Maja Šimunjak and John Street

Introduction

This chapter is about how various media represent leadership, in particular political leadership. Why might this be important, either for the specific case of politicians or for leadership more generally? We suggest that there are three main reasons.

First, in the case of political leadership in democratic regimes, media representations are assumed to be vital to electoral success. Managing representation, and by implication reputation, is seen as key to winning office or retaining it. The army of media advisers (or ‘spin doctors’) that are now part of the leadership entourage is testimony to this (Franklin, 2004; Jones, 1995).

Secondly and more broadly, such developments are themselves symptomatic of wider trends in which the traditional sources of party loyalty (class, community, family, religion, etc.) are increasingly attenuated. Other ways have to be found to attract voters, and one of these is the ‘personality’ of the leader (Swanson and Mancini, 1996). He or she is required to embody and represent the party. This is a process that depends on the creation of media images that capture the leader’s ‘character’. Media are taken to be intrinsically linked to the constitution and -communication of the persona adopted by the leader.

Thirdly, the focus on leaders and their media presence is further sustained by governmental politics. Many democratic regimes are marked by an increasing ‘presidentialization’ of political leadership (Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Webb and Poguntke, 2013). This describes the concentration of political power with the leader, and the downplaying of cabinets and other decision-making bodies. As the Financial Times’s political commentator wrote of the UK system: ‘the government of the day is a magnification of the prime minister’s character’ (Ganesh, 2015). Even allowing for the journalistic hyperbole, such arguments underline the importance of media. It matters for citizens to know what kind of leader they have or might have. And media are their source of knowledge.

So for these three reasons, among others, it is apparent that political leadership is intimately tied to media. It is, however, one thing to note the increasing dependence of political leadership on media. It is quite another to ask how that relationship operates: that is, how media contribute to, as well as reflect, the exercise of leadership.

One of the obvious starting points is to ask how media represent leaders. What images, narratives and frames are used in mediated discourse about leaders and leadership? How do audiences and readers get to see and imagine their leaders? Research into this has taken a variety of forms. It has led to comparisons between the media representation of male and female leaders (Norris, 1997; Van Zoonen, 2005), and between coverage that focuses on personality rather than on policy (Langer, 2011; Stanyer, 2007). It has also compared media and political systems to establish whether coverage of leaders is dependent on either system (Stanyer, 2013), or whether for example leaders are differently represented in authoritarian and democratic regimes (Šimunjak, 2014).

Representation, though, is not the only issue. There is the further question as to whether the coverage matters. A measure of this is how citizens' judgement of leaders is determined by the coverage received by those leaders. Political leaders clearly act on the assumption that how they appear matters to their electoral success, but such assumptions may be wrong. Experimental research has indicated that the framing of leaders does indeed matter to the way that they are viewed (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997).

Media scholars and others have also highlighted the different styles of leadership that have been adopted as a result of media dependence (Corner and Pels, 2003). One symptom of this has been the emergence of the 'celebrity politician'. This has taken many guises (Marsh et al., 2010; West and Orman, 2003), but two serve to illustrate the phenomenon. The first is the rise of figures from popular culture and entertainment who assume the guise of political leadership, and who trade on their fame and their fans to establish legitimacy. Figures like Bono, George Clooney, and Madonna all fit this category. The other version is the traditional politician who borrows from popular culture, either in the form of endorsements or platforms (the chat show), to validate their leadership claims. Studying how such figures operate, and how the media is intrinsic to their operation, provides a further insight into the role of media in political leadership.

Among the more famous of the 'celebrity politicians' are Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger, people who moved from Hollywood into political office. Besides being representative of the celebrity leader, they are also symbolic of something else: how

leadership is imagined and evaluated. Popular conceptions of leadership, and particularly of 'good' and 'bad' leaders, are not simple products of performance or of media reporting of that performance. Politics is an art as much as a science, and it is a performative art (Alexander, 2011; Hajer and Uttermark, 2008). What is to be performed and the manner of its performance derive in part from popular culture, from how citizens imagine and understand leadership. The kind of roles that Reagan and Schwarzenegger played in the movies – the cowboy, the Terminator – were not incidental to their leadership: they were intrinsic to them. How works of fiction construe and construct leadership matters, as do the narratives that attach to it. Both are important to what political leadership entails in the modern world.

In this chapter, we explore these themes further. We begin by looking at how political leadership has been represented in news reporting, particularly in relation to ideas of 'personality', 'persona' and 'personalization'. We then turn to the fictional representation of leadership and the phenomenon of the celebrity politician. In this combined approach, we hope to indicate how media and leadership are linked. We would further contend that, while our focus is on political leadership in democratic settings, our analysis might apply equally to leadership in authoritarian regimes and to leadership more generally.

News Media and Leaders: the Rise of Personalization?

The media have focused on political leaders in their coverage of politics since their early days. A simple explanation for this is that, from the media perspective, individuals are seen as newsworthy. In one of the first studies of news values, Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965) claimed that the media invariably focus on individuals, as opposed to structures and processes. News is what individuals do; it is not the shifts in class relations or routine institutional practices. Subsequent studies of news values have continued to conclude that the media focuses primarily on individual political actors, and sometimes their personae, at the expense of collectives and structures (Campus, 2010; Kriesi, 2011; Mazzoleni, 1987; Stromback, 2008; Takens et al., 2013).

Current concern with the 'mediatization of politics' (Hjarvard, 2013; Esser and Stromback, 2014) has led to the view that political leaders are nowadays even more media visible than they were before, while political issues and collectives have been further marginalized. The attention is not only focused on leaders' professional acts and qualities, but on their private lives as well. The increased media visibility of political leaders is usually referred to as the 'personalization of mediated political communication' (Balmas and Sheaffer, 2013; Downey

and Stanyer, 2010; Stanyer, 2007; Van Aelst, Sheafer, and Stanyer, 2011), although it has also been characterized more broadly as the 'personalization of politics' (Balmas et al., 2014; Karvonen, 2010; Langer, 2011; Maier and Adam, 2010).

One of the reasons why scholars started to examine politicians' media representation is the perceived discrepancy between what should be the role of political leaders in politics and their real role and its media representation. Jean Blondel (2005, 2014) argues that Western European party theory has tended to ignore the role of political leaders in studying politics until the last few decades, partly as a response to the role that leaders were seen as playing in the prelude to, during, and after the Second World War. He notes that:

'not only has political leadership ostensibly led to horrible developments in countries hitherto described as 'civilized', in Europe in particular, but the emergence of new countries after the Second World War has been associated with atrocities and graft on a huge scale seemingly stemming from actions of leaders.' (2014: 705)

Consequently, according to Blondel, Western European party theory during these periods treated political leaders as 'aberrations' (2005: 4).

The centrality accorded to leaders in the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of twentieth century led Western political actors and scholars alike to argue that strong political leaders were incompatible (and inconsistent) with democratic systems, and that the focus should be put on political collectives, e.g. parties and cabinets/executives (Kane et al., 2009). Although, it should be noted that there are also scholars who argue that strong leaders are necessary in an unpredictable, globalized world (e.g. Bjerling, 2012; Manin, 1997). They think that leaders and their personae can help voters feel better represented, more interested and engaged in politics (e.g. Garzia, 2011; Kruijemeier et al., 2013). Against this background, scholars became increasingly aware of the rise of the new, highly mediated leaders. As they did so, their attention fell upon the need to explain this rise in media visibility, to understand its form and to analyse its effects.

Representing Leaders

Research into how political leaders are represented in the news media can be seen as focusing on three major themes. First, the extent to which news reporting can be seen as

leader centred: that is, focused on political leaders at the expense of political collectives (such as the party or the cabinet) or political issues. The second major theme concerns the extent to which, and ways in which, the leaders' private personae, their personal qualities and private life, are prominent in mediated content. And finally, there is a significant body of research that looks into the role that gender plays in politicians' media representation. The main focus here is on differences and similarities between the ways in which female and male politicians are represented in news media.

In spite of this considerable scholarly interest in the role of political leaders in news reporting and the growth of empirical evidence, questions remain as to how universal is the personalization phenomenon and what factors account for it. This gap in our knowledge can be ascribed to the problems with studying the personalization of political communication. In the first instance, there is no widespread consensus on how 'personalization' should be conceptualized. There has, however, been an emerging consensus that personalization is a multifaceted phenomenon which involves at least two dimensions. One dimension is associated with the increasing emphasis on politicians as individuals at the expense of political collectives, and hence its labelling as 'personalization', 'individualization' or 'presidentialization' (Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Rahat and Sheafer, 2007; Van Aelst et al., 2011). The other dimension can be seen as concerned with communicating information associated with the political leader's private sphere, and has been called the privatization of politics, the politicization of private personae, or intimization (Holtz-Bacha, 2004; Langer, 2011; Stanyer, 2013).

Conceptualizing personalization, though, is not the only challenge that scholars face. Operationalizing the term is a problem too, especially when it comes to research that focuses on how a leader's personality, and especially their private persona, is represented in the media. Some scholars concentrate only on the mediated visibility of a leader's private life; others focus on the leader's private qualities. The main problem stems from inconsistencies in how a leader's private persona is conceptualized and operationalized. Much research fails to explain what is meant by the 'private sphere', 'private life' or 'private qualities' (for notable exceptions see Langer, 2011; Stanyer, 2013). Consequently, given the lack of consensus about the key terms, comparison of national case studies provides limited evidence of the extent to which, and ways in which, the personalization phenomenon has spread across different societies.

To establish whether we are dealing with a universal phenomenon, or whether there are significant variations between countries and systems, it is, however, important to use a

comparative approach. Despite the advantages of the comparative approach, such studies are very rare. Apart from problems of agreement over the key terms, difficulties also lie in acquiring access to comparable datasets, and the language barriers which make cross-national studies of media representation of political leaders challenging.

Comparative Studies of the Representation of Leaders

Nonetheless, comparative studies do provide important indications of the state of the relationship between leadership and the media. There is evidence that political leaders have become increasingly prominent in news reporting in the past few decades in established, Western democracies. Russell Dalton and Martin Wattenberg (2000) investigated whether there is an increase in focus on leaders (as opposed to parties) in the US, France, the UK, Austria and Canada. They analysed newspaper campaign coverage from the 1950s to the 1990s, comparing the ratio of candidate to party mentions cross-temporally and cross-nationally. They revealed that over time the number of occasions on which a candidate is mentioned outnumbered the mentions made of their parties in all countries, but with a significant difference emerging between presidential and parliamentary systems. In presidential systems, such as in the US and France, the ratio of candidate to party mentions was four times higher than in parliamentary systems (the UK, Austria and Canada).²

However, a more recent comparison of leader-centred news reporting in the UK and Germany calls for caution in drawing conclusions about the universality of this phenomenon. Christina Holtz-Bacha et al. (2014) studied mediated visibility of British and German political leaders and parties in the 2009 and 2010 General Elections. They found that news reporting in the UK was indeed leader-centred, meaning that the media mentioned political leaders to a greater extent than their parties, while the same was not true for Germany. The German media, by contrast, reported their 2009 General Elections by focusing more on political parties than leaders. Hence, it would be wrong to assume that political leaders are central figures in the communication of politics in all Western societies.

The Media and Leaders' Behaviour

Does leader-centred news reporting affect the behaviour of leaders themselves? Some scholars think so. Analysts speak of politics being 'colonized' (Meyer, 2002) or 'mediatized' (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Stromback, 2008). In both cases, the assumption is that politicians are forced to adapt their political behaviour and style of communication to conform with 'media logic'. It is only by doing this, the argument runs, that they can be

accommodated by the media and reach voters/audiences, who have become accustomed to media forms of communication. It is claimed that politicians have internalized media conventions and aesthetics in adopting media logic (Corner and Pels, 2003; Stromback, 2008).

Key to this process of adaptation has been 'personalization' (Kriesi, 2011; Mazzoleni, 1987; Stromback, 2008; Takens et al., 2013). Politicians have pursued a personalized form of communication because this is what the media expect or require. The politicians put the focus on themselves, rather than on their parties, because the media put the spotlight on them as individuals (Stromback, 2008).

Despite the plausibility of such arguments, there is, in fact, little empirical evidence for the suggestion that politicians' communication has become more personalized over time, or that personalized media reporting is what has caused the change. In reviewing research into personalization, Michaela Maier and Silke Adam (2010) found very few studies that examined changes in the extent to which political actors have focused upon their individual personae in their communication. Indeed, it may be that leader-centred political communication was initiated by the politicians, rather than the media. In Germany, for example, research has revealed that, while there had been a rise in leader-centred media reporting from 1990 to 2002, this represented the reaction of media to the party leaders' campaigns (Schulz and Zeh, 2005). Similarly, findings from an analysis of the UK's 1992 General Election campaign coverage suggest that British media responded to the political parties' communication strategies. Holli Semetko et al. (1994) found that party leaders were the most prominent political actors in both press and television election coverage, largely due to the parties' leader-oriented campaign communication strategies. Nonetheless, it is, again, impossible to make any generalizations from this scarce and context-specific data.

Leaders and Their Personal Lives: Who Are Our Leaders Sleeping With?

Whoever is responsible for the focus on leaders, the question remains as to whether the focus is more and more on the private lives of politicians. As we have already mentioned, it is often suggested that the media increasingly focus on matters that were typically thought to be 'private', and in doing so politics is thereby 'trivialized' or 'dumbed down' (Franklin, 2004). Others, who also see the rise of personalized communication, argue that it actually serves to enhance democracy by engaging viewers and readers (Garzia, 2011; Langer, 2011). Recent studies seem to support both points of view. In the Netherlands, Sanne Kruijemeier et al. (2013) conducted experiments which revealed that personalized communication increased

citizens' political involvement. Meanwhile Nael Jebril et al.'s (2013) study, which relied on data gathered from a panel survey of respondents from the UK, Spain and Denmark, came to the conclusion that exposure to information about politicians' private lives increased cynicism among citizens in these three countries.

Comparative research into political leaders' private personae in news media has also revealed that there are significant variations in the media attention given to private lives and personal qualities. James Stanyer (2013) conducted one of the first, and most comprehensive, comparative studies of the visibility of political leaders' private lives. He did this by concentrating on the number of press references to the leader's birthday, to their spouses and to their holidays. He also tracked the number of books published about the leaders' private lives in the 1990s and 2000s. He concluded that there was an increase in the media visibility of leaders' private lives in the US, the UK and France, and to some extent in Australia. On the other hand, in Italy and Spain, similar trends were visible but very weak, while in Germany there was a decline in such coverage. Holtz-Bacha et al.'s (2014) study confirms these differences between the mediated visibility of British and German politicians' private lives. They showed that British media put more emphasis on their leaders' private lives and qualities in the 2010 General Election than did the German media in their 2009 elections.

Interestingly, another comparative study of how/whether leaders' private lives appear in news media did not find that French politicians' private lives have become significantly more visible in the last few decades. Bas den Herder (2013) found that British and Dutch newspapers mentioned their leaders' private lives in around 24 per cent more interviews in 2010 than in 1990, while the equivalent increase in the French press was only 3 per cent. Specifically, in the UK the proportion of interviews which referred to politicians' private lives rose from 16 to 39.4 per cent, and in the Netherlands from 9.4 to 33.3 per cent. France had the lowest figures: 8.6 per cent, in 1990; 11.4 per cent in 2010.

Den Herder also claims that one of the reasons why politicians' private lives feature in news media across Western democracies is because political leaders use them strategically to humanize and normalize their public image. His analysis revealed that 'politicians willingly disclose details about their family life to portray themselves as authentic people who spend time with their loved ones' (den Herder, 2013: 476). However, other research suggests that the willingness of political leaders to reveal details of their private lives differs between countries. Liesbeth Hermans and Maurice Vergeer (2013) examined the type of information that politicians from 17 European Union countries shared on their websites in the 2009

elections for the European Parliament, and came to the conclusion that there are significant differences between countries in the extent and type of personal information that political leaders communicated. According to this study, British politicians were more willing to disclose information about their home and family life and personal preferences than were Dutch and French politicians. However, what was most striking about this research is that politicians from the new democracies – the post-communist countries – shared the most personal information. Two possible explanations have been offered for this finding. On the one hand, it was suggested that such politicians needed to communicate personal information to bond with voters, in circumstances where they lacked the professional experiences of European politics. Another explanation focused on the historical political communication practices of these countries, where there was a tradition of glorifying political leaders. It was possible that ‘practices of presenting professional feats are still engrained in post-communist cultures’ (Hermans and Vergeer, 2013: 83).

The explanation for personalization in established Western democracies is different. It has been argued that politicians started to disclose more information about themselves because the media required it of them (Jamieson, 1988; Meyrowitz, 1985). Kathleen Jamieson (1988) noted that in the pre-television era US presidents did not mention their families, their pets or their childhood, and she claims this changed only with the introduction of television. Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) also sees television as the factor driving the rise in personalized political communication. He claims that, due to the television effect, disclosing private information has become routine because ‘without such intimate revelations [the politicians] seem stuffy and unrealistic’ (1985: 179; italics in original).

However, while this might be true for the US, evidence from some Western European countries suggests otherwise. There it was the political leaders, not the media, that put the emphasis on the private realm. Traditionally, the French media were reluctant to reveal details of a politician’s private life (Kuhn, 2004). It was Nicolas Sarkozy who changed this in 2007, when he revealed to the media his love life, hobbies, vacations, family, and insecurities (Campus, 2010). Something similar might be observed in the United Kingdom. Despite the UK’s vibrant tabloid sector and the absence of protection for privacy in common law (Deacon, 2004), it has been argued that the attention paid to politicians’ private lives has been derived largely from changes in the leaders’ political strategies. Based on a longitudinal content analysis of British daily newspapers and a historical qualitative analysis of politicians’ communication strategies, Ana Ines Langer (2011) suggested that it was the political actors who initiated the focus on these private issues. However, she remained tentative in her conclusions, aware that no causality had been established.

What these comparative studies reveal is that there are important differences in the extent to which political leaders' private personae feature in news media, and that this has to do with the willingness of politicians from different countries to use their private lives for political purposes. Despite the temptation to attribute the changes to 'mediatization' and other such processes, we should be wary about doing so. Rather, it seems that leaders are more inclined to use the media to secure their leadership claims, as opposed to having the media dictate their behaviour.

It should, however, be noted that the reason why politicians' private personae are in the media spotlight might be much more complex. Specifically, recent research showed that this phenomenon is connected with a range of both politically and media-related factors. Several studies that have employed fuzzy-set, qualitative, comparative analysis have revealed that the focus on politicians and their personae is connected with factors such as the type of political system, size of tabloid sector, politician's age and ideological position (Downey and Stanyer, 2010, 2013; Stanyer, 2013).

Gender and the Representation of Leaders

Our argument is not that the media have no independent effect upon the conduct of contemporary political leadership. Studies examining the ways in which politicians are represented in news media frequently reveal how gender differences affect (and are affected by) reporting. Differences in the representation of female and male politicians establish 'important things about the relations between gender, power and politics' (Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012: 422). Female politicians are, for example, sometimes represented as less capable of performing, and less suitable to perform, leadership roles than their male colleagues.

The research on media representation of women leaders has revealed comparable findings across Western democracies, showing that the coverage of female politicians is typically centred on their private personae, especially their appearance, lifestyle, fashion sense, family life, and maternal and marital status (Everitt, 2003; Mavin et al., 2010; Wasburn and Wasburn, 2011; Van Zoonen, 2006). In addition, the female politicians' private sphere is frequently politicized in such a way as to connect their appearance and marital status to their competence to perform public duties (Heflick and Goldenberg, 2009; Mavin et al., 2010; Muir, 2005; Wasburn and Wasburn, 2011).

That said, comparative studies again reveal more differences than similarities, and paint a more nuanced picture of the representation of female politicians. For example, Inaki Garcia-Blanco and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2012) have examined how media in France, Italy, Spain and the UK reported the first majority female government in Spain. They found considerable diversity in how these women were represented. The appointment of female ministers was reported as a 'sign of normality' in French newspapers (2012: 428), while Italian newspapers offered a more conservative view. The French press focused on Carme Chacon, who was pregnant when appointed minister, and were critical of the fact that she was travelling to Afghanistan. The Italian press portrayed her as an 'uncaring mother' (2012: 434) and even questioned her 'suitability to be a mother' (2012: 437). Part of the Spanish media displayed similar prejudices. In the UK and Spain, there were papers that focused on topics such as gender equality, quota systems, and the role of women in politics, and there were others that reported on the women's physical appearance and dress sense.

Another aspect of the reporting of female leaders is the discussion of their emotions. Ingrid Bachmann (2009) reports that there are differences in how news media report women politicians' displays of emotion. Her textual analysis of election coverage in Germany, Chile and the US revealed that Angela Merkel's emotions were often, but briefly, reported in German newspapers, while the emotions of Chile's Michelle Bachelet were a frequent topic of her news coverage, and were used to portray her as different from her male colleagues (as both emotional and charming). In the US, Hillary Clinton's emotional management was also frequently mentioned, but almost always in a negative way. She was portrayed as aggressive and lacking empathy. In this case, Clinton was seen as being too like her male colleagues.

Bachmann (2009: 23) ascribes the diversity of media representations to 'culturally bound differences', and does not acknowledge that the differences might also be attributed to differences in the personalities of the political leaders and their communication strategies. By contrast, Van Zoonen (2006: 295) argues, based on her analysis of European female leaders, that Angela Merkel and Tarja Haltonen 'both present a thoroughly political and professional persona to the public and rigidly conceal their private lives' because they do not want to give media reasons to focus on their private personae. The conclusion that Van Zoonen (2006: 299) draws is that 'women – willingly or not – may end as the last keepers of traditional modernist ideas of politics as a separate sphere in which rational actors and representatives publicly deliberate and decide on the course of society'.

This short overview of personalization research not only points to the fact that there are as many differences as similarities between Western countries in the ways in which political leaders are portrayed in news media, but also to the fact that most of this scholarship is Western-centric. We know little about how, if at all, personalized reporting in non-Western systems affected the ways in which politicians were represented in their media. There is also a gap in our knowledge about how citizens are affected by news media coverage of leaders in these countries, and about how the development of personalized media reporting might best be explained. Hence, while there is limited, and often contradictory, evidence available for established, Western democracies, there is a lack of evidence about how political leaders are represented in non-Western countries.

From News to Entertainment

In reporting on the relationship of media and leadership, we have, until now, concentrated on the 'real world' of political leadership and news reporting. But as we argued at the beginning, this is to consider only one, albeit very important, dimension of the relationship. The worlds of politics and entertainment, of political reporting and showbiz gossip, are not always discrete. Indeed, they are increasingly entwined (Corner and Pels, 2003; Jones, 2005; Richardson et al., 2013; Street et al., 2013; Van Zoonen, 2005). One of the more obvious examples of their entanglement emerges in the phenomenon of the celebrity politician.

The Celebrity Political Leader

The phenomenon of the 'celebrity politician' has attracted considerable attention in recent years. Typically, it has been associated with the political role assumed by stars of the entertainment industry. Towards the end of the last century, it was hard to avoid images of Bono, the lead singer of the band U2, in the company of world leaders. He was pictured with presidents, prime ministers and even popes. Following events such as Live Aid in 1985, Bono had come to be seen as the representative of global compassion, able to speak on behalf of the poor and the destitute (Browne, 2013). Time (2 March 2002) magazine put him on its cover with the headline 'Can Bono Save The World?' In 2005, at Live Aid's successor event Live 8, Bono and his co-activist Bob Geldof claimed that they had persuaded the G8 leaders to revise their policy on developing country debt (see: <http://www.live8live.com>).

Whether these rock stars actually persuaded the G8 to change tack remains a contentious issue. Many factors were in play, and it is difficult to disentangle them, and to identify the

specific contribution made by the musicians (Street, 2012). What cannot be disputed is that the stars of popular culture have appeared to act as political representatives, and to lead their fans and a wider public to adopt causes and concerns that might have otherwise been neglected. Bono and Geldof are but two examples. Others include George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Russell Brand and Sean Penn. Indeed, the 'celebrity politician', as we have defined it so far, is not a recent phenomenon. It has been with us for many years. During the 1960s, actors such as Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, Robert Redford and Warren Beatty spoke against the war in Vietnam. And before them, Charlie Chaplin and Paul Robeson spoke out against government (Chambers, 2006). Nor is it a phenomenon confined to the Anglo-American world. In Latin America and Africa, musicians and others have come to assume the guise of political leader (Peddie, 2011; Wheeler, 2013)

Accompanying the rise of celebrities as politicians has been a change in the way in which traditional political leaders present themselves. The trend towards the personalization of leadership, which we described earlier, can be seen as another form of celebrity politics. In order to reach an increasingly disengaged or disillusioned electorate, politicians have not just sought to expose and highlight their personality and their personal life. They have also adopted platforms and modes of communication that derive directly from popular culture and popular entertainment (Crouch, 2004; Meyrowitz, 1985).

This has typically meant appearing on television shows that allow, indeed require, revelations of the personal. In the UK, David Cameron, just after he had secured the leadership of the Conservative Party in 2005, appeared on the Jonathan Ross Show on BBC TV. He was the first politician to be a guest. His predecessors had been the usual chat show mix of film and television stars, musicians, and comedians. The relatively unknown Cameron saw Ross's programme as an opportunity to present himself to a wider (and younger) audience than would have watched a standard political interview. In exchange, he had to answer questions, not about policy and party ideology, but about his personal life. At one point, it emerged that as a teenager he had had a poster of Margaret Thatcher on his wall. Ross asked whether she was, therefore, the object of Cameron's sexual fantasies. The question was rather awkwardly laughed off by the discomfited prospective Prime Minister.

Mrs Thatcher had herself appeared on the Michael Aspel Show, a much cosier precursor of Ross's. For her, this was an opportunity to present her 'softer' side: to indicate that there was more to her than the 'Iron Lady' (Cockerell, 1988). In the same vein, George Bush appeared with Oprah Winfrey, and Barack Obama with Ellen DeGeneres (he danced with the host before subjecting himself to her questions).

Behind these communication strategies, and their implications for how 'leadership' is represented and conveyed, is another process. This is the increasing reliance of leaders on those with expertise in the marketing of politics (Scammell, 2014). The underlying logic is that leaders and their parties need a 'brand' in order to convey what they represent quickly and accessibly. As Anthony Downs (1957) pointed out many years ago, acquiring detailed information about a leader's or party's policies is not rational for a voter who knows that their vote will count for little. A brand reduces the voter's information costs. If branding is key to political communication, then it follows that to do this successfully requires the advice and guidance of those with the relevant knowledge and skills. These people include advertising executives and marketing professionals, but also film and video directors. They help to blur the line between politics and popular entertainment, and to turn political leaders into performers and icons of the brand.

Key to such developments is the notion that media are central to the conduct of political leadership. And this in turn prompts the argument that political leaders have to follow the dictates of 'media logic', as opposed to 'political logic'; or that the former 'colonizes' the latter (Meyer, 2002). The modes of communication adopted or required by media are those that conform to the conventions of a medium consumed in a domestic setting, rather than in a debating chamber or public meeting (Silverstone, 1994). It requires a confessional mode of address rather than a declaratory one. Leadership, and the virtues associated with it, are filtered through the expectations and demands of the medium of its communication. This, in turn, affects how leadership is received and judged by citizen audiences (Richardson et al., 2013).

'Role Models' and Narratives: Imagining Leadership

While the impact of media on the thoughts and actions of their readers and audiences remains a matter of much debate, it is increasingly apparent that it cannot be discounted as it once was. Citizens' understanding of the world and their responses to it are shaped, to a significant extent, by media representations (Newton and Brynin, 2001; Ladd and Lenz, 2009; Whiteley, 2011). Media's role in the representation and communication of political leadership is not simply that of providing a platform or space in which the politician operates. It provides ways of understanding what 'leadership' is supposed to be, and how we are to understand and evaluate 'leaders'.

The framing of political leaders in news reports as either principled or strategic actors can influence our response to them. Presenting them as strategic, as acting to maximize votes only, leads to cynicism among the electorate (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997). Something similar occurs (as we have noted) in the case of the representation of women political leaders, who, insofar as they are represented as breaking with tradition, are simultaneously burdened with expectations that are not felt by their male counterparts (Norris, 1997).

It is not just news representation that matters, however. Research has suggested that shows that bridge politics and entertainment – such as Jon Stewart’s Daily Show – can inform citizens as (or more) effectively than straight news. Those who watch ‘infotainment’ programmes of this kind are shown to be more knowledgeable about, and more engaged in, politics than those who do not (Baym, 2005). And even works of pure fiction, such as *The West Wing*, can provide voters with the resources to think about real world politics (Van Zoonen, 2005; Richardson et al., 2013; Street et al., 2013).

One of the implications of this evidence is that we need to take seriously the representation of political leadership in popular culture as much as in news and current affairs coverage. This might mean, on the one hand, being sensitive to how entertainment portrays leaders, and how the attributes of leadership are presented. In his mapping of the representation of politicians in British cinema 1944–1964, Steven Fielding (2008: 121) says that films tended to depict politicians ‘as a group apart, preoccupied with advancing their own interests’. In research conducted with young people in the UK, it was revealing to see how, when asked who, in the world of entertainment, would make a good prime minister, young people identified Jeremy Clarkson (*Top Gear*), Simon Cowell (*X Factor*) and Alan Sugar (*The Apprentice*) (Street et al., 2013). (It might be rewarding to explore further how fictional leaders are portrayed and understood in these terms – from Dumbledore to the leaders of the warring factions in *Game of Thrones* or Frank Underwood in *House of Cards*.)

Key to appreciating how leadership is imagined in fiction is only partly about the character; it is also about the narrative in which they are located. In her surveys of popular cultural representations of politics, Liesbet Van Zoonen (2005; and Van Zoonen and Wring, 2012) has suggested that politics is typically portrayed – in fiction and fact – within a limited number of storylines. These include the quest, in which our hero strives for election, overcoming obstacles of various kinds en route; the conspiracy, where dark and malign forces design to thwart the ideals and ambitions of elected representatives; the bureaucracy, where the dead weight of administration thwarts the democratic will; and, finally, soap opera, where flawed but well-intentioned individuals strive to serve the people. In each of these

narratives, leaders assume a different guise – from honourable success to innocent failure. And in these guises, they posit different attitudes or dispositions to leadership. Leaders might appear as warrior heroes or innocent dupes, as malign or benign. Van Zoonen's analysis chimes with that of Cappella and Jamieson's (1997) experiments with the framing (cynical vs principled) of politics and political leaders, to which we referred earlier.

The interplay between the fictional world and the 'real' world of political leadership is nicely illustrated by the Leadership Debates that accompanied the UK's 2010 election campaign. Kay Richardson and her colleagues (2013: 138) write of these debates:

'by having the three major TV events at which three party leaders made their pitch along-side each other . . . the issue of leadership was projected with a new directness of comparative performance. The widely used analogy of the 'talent show' (X Factor) model, often employed disparagingly, but not always . . . made great imaginative play with the nature of the events.'

This is suggestive of the way in which popular culture is used to understand and evaluate political leadership. One aspect of this is the recognition that political leadership has to be performed; it is art, and has to be evaluated as such.

The Art of Political Leadership

The 'art' of political leadership is not simply that of skilfully managing friends and foes, of winning elections or policy debates. It is about making and justifying claims to represent a people or a constituency. Such claims are not made on the basis of statistical data, but rather by the application of the imagination. The historian Frank Ankersmit (2002) has described political representation, and the role of leadership in it, as requiring an ability of 're-presenting' to voters a sense of themselves as 'the people'. Just as Benedict Anderson (2006) talked of nationalism as a form of 'imagined community', so representation is understood as involving an imagined people on whose behalf the politician acts. This requires the politician to be able to conjure up or evoke a sense of community to which voters are willing to subscribe. This is a cultural process as much as a political one.

The bond between leaders and those who follow them assumes a different guise by this analysis. 'Style', rather than statistics, becomes key. This is especially true of populist movements. Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey (2014) argue that populism is to be

understood in stylistic terms, rather than ideological ones. Populist leaders have to evoke their 'people' and the future that they can enjoy through rhetoric and gesture. The form of this rhetoric, and of the accompanying gestures, are shaped by the culture of communication in which they are expressed. Indeed, key to these views of political leadership is the suggestion that it involves cultural practice, and that these practices do not simply require the platforms offered by the media, but draw on the tropes, images and roles that media itself constructs and circulates. It is not obvious that this argument applies only to populism. Style, and hence media representation, may be key to all forms of leadership that seek the support of those to be led.

Conclusion

What we have argued in this chapter is that media are central to the way leadership is understood and enacted. We have suggested that it operates not just in representing the political leader, but in shaping the response to them. Moreover, we have argued that this process operates in both factual news and current affairs reporting, and in popular entertainment.

We have raised questions about the direction of the relationship, suggesting that it may owe as much to the strategies and tactics of leaders as it does to the demands and conventions of media. We have also pointed to how the differences in media and political systems point to the contingent factors at play. We should be wary of sweeping generalizations. At the same time, we would also emphasize the importance of studying political leaders in conjunction with the study of media representation and media processes.

What we have said has applied primarily to democratic political leadership, but we would contend that it applies also to leadership within authoritarian regimes. It applies too to leadership of social movements or unconventional political parties. We need to think only of the media reports devoted to the dress style of the Syriza leaders in the immediate aftermath of their electoral victory in early 2015. How they looked – the leather jackets and open-necked shirts – almost seemed as important as what they said.

It might be argued too that the account we offer here has application to other forms of leadership. All leaders are in the communication business. And as such, they are required to draw upon the conventions established by their mode of communication.

Notes

1 Acknowledgements: we are very grateful for the comments on an earlier version of this chapter that we received from Paul 't Hart and Toby James.

2 In the mid-1990s the ratio for the US and France was 5:6, while for the UK and Austria it was 1:3 and for Canada 1:6. (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000: 52).

References

- Alexander, J. (2011). *Performance and Power*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
- Ankersmit, F. (2002). *Political Representation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bachmann, I. (2009). *Gender, Emotion, and Politics: A Comparison of National Press Coverage of Female Political Leaders' Emotional Management*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association. Chicago.
- Balmas, M. and Sheafer, T. (2013). Leaders First, Countries After: Mediated Political Personalization in the International Arena. *Journal of Communication*, 63 (3), 454–475.
- Balmas, M., Rahat, G., Sheafer, T. and Shenhav, S. R. (2014). Two Routes to Personalized Politics: Centralized and Decentralized Personalisation. *Party Politics*, 20 (2), 37–51.
- Baym, G. (2005). The Daily Show: Discursive Integration and the Reinvention of Political Journalism. *Political Communication*, 22, 259–276.
- Bjerling, J. (2012). *The Personalisation of Swedish Politics*. University of Gothenburg. Doctoral dissertation.
- Blondel, J. (2005). *The Links between Western European Parties and Their Supporters. The Role of Personalisation*. Occasional Papers. Centre for the Study of Political Change. Available at: http://www.circap.org/uploads/1/8/1/6/18163511/occ_16.pdf. Accessed 10 May 2015.
- Blondel, J. (2014). What have we learned? In Rhodes, R. A. W and 't Hart, P. *The Handbook of Political Leadership*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Browne, H. (2013). *The Frontman: Bono (In the Name of Power)*. London: Verso.
- Campus, D. (2010). Mediatization and Personalization of Politics in Italy and France: The Cases of Berlusconi and Sarkozy. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 15 (2), 219–235.

Cappella, J. and Jamieson, K. (1997). *Spiral of Cynicism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chambers, C. (2006). *Here We Stand: Politics, Performers and Performance*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Cockerell, M. (1988). *Live from Number 10*. London: Faber & Faber.

Corner, J. and Pels, D. (eds.) (2003). *Media and the Restyling of Politics*. London: Sage.

Crouch, C. (2004). *Post-democracy*. Cambridge: Polity.

Dalton, R. J. and Wattenberg, M. P. (eds.) (2000). *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Deacon, D. (2004). Politicians, Privacy and Media Intrusion In Britain. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57 (1), 9–23.

Den Herder, B. (2013). Personal Questions, Political Answers. *Journalism Practice*, 7 (4), 465–480.

Downey, J. and Stanyer, J. (2010). Comparative Media Analysis: Why Some Fuzzy Thinking Might Help: Applying Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis to the Personalization of Mediated Political Communication. *European Journal of Communication*, 25 (4), 331–347.

Downey, J. and Stanyer, J. (2013). Exposing Politicians' Peccadilloes in Comparative Context: Explaining the Frequency of Political Sex Scandals in Eight Democracies Using Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis. *Political Communication*, 30 (3), 495–509.

Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.

Esser, F. and Stromback, J. (eds.) (2014). *Mediatization of Politics: Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Everitt, J. (2003). Media in the Maritimes: Do Female Candidates Face a Bias? *Atlantis*, 27 (2), 90–98.

Fielding, S. (2008). A Mirror for England? Cinematic Representations and Party Politics, circa 1944–1964. *Journal of British Studies*, 47 (1), 107–128.

Franklin, B. (2004). *Packaging Politics: Political Communications in Britain's Media Democracy* (Second edn.). London: Edward Arnold.

Galtung, J. and Ruge, M. H. (1965). The Structure of Foreign News. *Journal of Peace Research*, 2 (1), 64–91.

Ganesh, J. (2015). Policy is trivial – personality is destiny. *Financial Times*, 30 March. Available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/93924b4c-d6c1-11e4-97c3-00144feab7de.html#axzz3XU3np6P0>.

Garcia-Blanco, I. and Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2012). The Discursive Construction of Women Politicians in the European Press. *Feminist Media Studies*, 12 (3), 422–441.

Garzia, D. (2011). The Personalization of Politics in Western Democracies: Causes and Consequences on Leader–Follower Relationships. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22 (4), 697–709.

- Hajer, M. and Uttermark, J. (2008). Performing Authority: Discursive Politics after the Assassination of Theo Van Gogh. *Public Administration*, 86 (1), 5–19
- Hjarvard, S. (2013). *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*. London: Routledge.
- Heflick, N. A. and Goldenberg, J. L. (2009). Objectifying Sarah Palin: Evidence that Objectification Causes Women to Be Perceived as Less Competent and Less Fully Human. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45 (3), 598–601.
- Hermans, L. and Vergeer, M. (2013). Personalisation in e-Campaigning: A Cross-National Comparison of Personalisation Strategies Used on Candidate Websites of 17 Countries in EP Elections 2009. *New Media & Society*, 15 (1), 72–92.
- Holtz-Bacha, C. (2004). Germany: How the Private Life of Politicians Got into the Media. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57 (1), 41–52.
- Holtz-Bacha, C., Langer, A. I. and Merkle, S. (2014). The Personalization of Politics in Comparative Perspective: Campaign Coverage in Germany and the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Communication*, 29 (2), 153–170.
- Jamieson, K. H. (1988). *Eloquence in an Electronic Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jebiril, N., Albaek, E. and de Vreese, C. H. (2013) Infotainment, Cynicism and Democracy: The Effects of Privatization vs Personalization in the News. *European Journal of Communication*, 28 (2), 105–121.
- Jones, J. (2005). *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jones, N. (1995). *Soundbites and Spin Doctors*. London: Cassell.
- Kane, J., Patapan, H. and ‘t Hart, P. (eds.) (2009). *Dispersed Democratic Leadership: Origins, Dynamics, and Implications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karvonen, L. (2010). Introduction. In L. Karvonen (ed.), *The Personalisation of Politics: A Study of Parliamentary Democracies*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Kriesi, H. (2011). Personalization of National Election Campaigns. *Party Politics*, 18 (6), 825–844.
- Kruikemeier, S., van Noort, G., Vliegenthart, R. and de Vreese, C. H. (2013). Getting Closer: The Effects of Personalized and Interactive Online Political Communication. *European Journal of Communication*, 28 (1), 53–66.
- Kuhn, R. (2004). Vive la difference? The Mediation of Politicians’ Public Images and Private Lives in France. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57 (1), 24–40.
- Ladd, J. and Lenz, G. (2009). Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive power of News. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53 (2), 394–410.
- Langer, A. I. (2011). *The Personalisation of Politics in the UK: Mediated Leadership from Attlee to Cameron*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Maier, M. and Adam, S. (2010). Personalisation of Politics: A Critical Review and Agenda for Future Research. In C. T. Salmon (ed.), *Communication Yearbook 34*, pp. 212–257. Oxford: Routledge.
- Manin, B. (1997). *The Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marsh, D., 't Hart, P. and Tindall, K. (2010). Celebrity Politics: The Politics of the Late Modernity. *Political Studies Review*, 8 (3), 322–340.
- Mavin, S., Bryans, P. and Cunningham, R. (2010). Fed-up with Blair's Babes, Gordon's Gals, Cameron's Cuties, Nick's Nymphets: Challenging Gendered Media Representations of Women Political Leaders. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 25 (7), 550–569.
- Mazzoleni, G. (1987). Media Logic and Party Logic in Campaign Coverage: The Italian General Election of 1983. *European Journal of Communication*, 2 (1), 81–103.
- Mazzoleni, G. and Schulz, W. (1999). 'Mediatization' of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy? *Political Communication*, 16(3), 247–261.
- Meyer, T. (2002). *Media Democracy. How the Media Colonize Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Meyrowitz, J. (1985). *No Sense Of Place*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moffitt, B. and Tormey, S. (2014). Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style. *Political Studies*, 62 (2), 381–397.
- Muir, K. (2005). Media Darlings and Falling Stars: Celebrity and the Reporting of Political Leaders. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2 (2), 54–71.
- Newton, K. and Brynin, K. (2001). The National Press and Party Voting in the UK. *Political Studies*, 49 (2), 265–285.
- Norris, P. (ed.) (1997). *Women, Media, and Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Peddie, I. (ed.) (2011). *Popular Music and Human Rights. Volume II: World Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Poguntke, T. and Webb, P. (eds.). (2005). *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rahat, G. and Sheaffer, T. (2007). The Personalization(s) of Politics: Israel, 1949–2003. *Political Communication*, 24 (1), 65–80.
- Richardson, K., Parry, K. and Corner, J. (2013). *Political Culture and Media Genre*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scammell, M. (2014). *Consumer Democracy: The Marketing of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schulz, W. and Zeh, R. (2005). The Changing Election Coverage of German Television. A Content Analysis: 1990–2002. *Communications*, 30 (4), 385–407.

- Semetko, H., Scammell, M. and Nossiter, T. (1994). The Media's Coverage of the Campaign. In A. Heath, R. Jowell and J. Curtice (eds.), *Labour's Last Chance? The 1992 Election and Beyond*. Aldershot: Dartmouth.
- Silverstone, R. (1994). *Television and Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.
- Šimunjak, M. (2014). *The (de)personalisation of mediated political communication in communist and post-communist societies: The case of Croatia*. Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia.
- Stanyer, J. (2007). *Modern Political Communication: Mediated Politics in Uncertain Times*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Stanyer, J. (2013). *Intimate politics*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Street, J. (2012). Do Celebrity Politics and Celebrity Politics Matter? *Political Studies Review*, 14 (3), 346–356.
- Street, J., Inthorn, S. and Scott, M. (2013). *From Entertainment to Citizenship: The Politics of Popular Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Stromback, J. (2008). Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13 (3), 228–246.
- Swanson, D. and Mancini, P. (1996). *Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy*. New York: Praeger.
- Takens, J., van Atteveldt, W., van Hoof, A. and Kleinnijenhuis, J. (2013). Media Logic in Election Campaign Coverage. *European Journal of Communication*, 28 (3), 277–293.
- Van Aelst, P., Sheafer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2011). The Personalization of Mediated Political Communication: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings. *Journalism*, 13 (2), 203–220.
- Van Zoonen, L. (2006). The Personal, the Political and the Popular: A Woman's Guide to Celebrity Politics. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9 (3), 287–301.
- Van Zoonen, L. (2005). *Entertaining the Citizen*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Van Zoonen, L. and Wring, D. (2012). Trends in Political Television Fiction in the UK: Themes, Characters and Narratives, 1965–2009. *Media, Culture and Society*, 34 (3), 263–279.
- Wasburn, P. C. and Wasburn, M. H. (2011). Media Coverage of Women in Politics: The Curious Case of Sarah Palin. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33 (7), 1027–1041.
- Webb, P. and Poguntke, T. (2013). The Presidentialisation of Politics Thesis Defended. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66 (3), 646–654.
- West, D. and Orman, J. (2003). *Celebrity Politics*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Wheeler, M. (2013). *Celebrity Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Whiteley, P. (2011). *Political Participation in Britain*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.