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Representations of Silvio Berlusconi on YouTube:

Identification Within a Supra-Logic of Entertainment

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the prevalence of the logics of entertainment and celebrification in a sample of political discourse on internet file-sharing website YouTube. Drawing inspiration from Postman's (1986) account of entertainment's dominance of broadcast television, it attempts to transfer the essence of his critique to the medium of YouTube. Through employing a content analysis methodology that attempts to transcend traditional quantitative and qualitative distinctions (Krippendorff, (2004), the study examines the extent to which entertainment logics structure representations of former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on YouTube. It also draws on the concept of 'celebrity politician typologies' (West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004), in an attempt to evaluate Berlusconi's representation on YouTube through an established set of celebrity 'traits'. This idea of 'celebrity politician typologies' is supplemented through the use of 'Burkean identification' (1958), in order to better understand how audiences articulate identification or disidentification with the controversial figure of Berlusconi. This thesis finds the YouTube representation of Silvio Berlusconi to be a discourse dominated by the logics of entertainment and celebrification. It also finds that Berlusconi's celebrity appears to transcend the boundaries of the existing 'celebrity politician typologies'. The application of Burkean identification reveals that, in some instances, Berlusconi appears to inspire a paradoxical form of identification; one in which YouTube users cognitively disidentify with him as a politician, yet display a degree of identification with him as an entertainer. The study concludes that Berlusconi's representation on YouTube demonstrates an audience internalisation, and even amplification, of the entertainment logics that Postman (1986) claimed structured political discourses in the broadcast television era.

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Preface

Neil Postman begins the forward for his seminal 1986 critique of television, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* by discussing two of the great dystopian literary warnings to emerge from the 20th Century: George Orwell's *1984* (1949) and Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World* (1932). Postman contends that, at the time of his writing, while the liberal democratic world was congratulating itself on having recently avoided the due date for the Orwellian nightmare, it was in fact succumbing to the 'slightly older and slightly lesser known' Huxleyan nightmare (Postman, 1986, p. vii). In distinguishing between these two dark visions, Postman cites Orwell's and Huxley's fears as diametrically opposed means of reaching similarly oppressive ends: namely diminishing people's capacity to think. Unlike Orwell's, Huxley's vision for democracy's demise requires no Big Brother to achieve its ends. Huxley's vision is one embedded in what he characterised in *A Brave New World Revisited* as 'man's almost infinite appetite for distractions' (Huxley, 1958, p.29). Postman argues that Orwell's vision feared 'those who would ban books', 'those who would deprive us of information', 'that the truth would be concealed from us', and 'that we would become a captive culture' (1986, p. vii). Conversely, he argues that Huxley's vision feared that 'there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one'. Rather than concern about those who would deny information, Huxley feared 'those who would give us so much information that we would be reduced to passivity and egotism', drowning the truth in 'a sea of irrelevance', and ultimately becoming 'a trivial culture' (Postman, 1986, p. vii). In Huxley's own assessment (1958, p. 21), in 1984 people are controlled through pain, while in *Brave New World* people are controlled by pleasure. Postman summarises the differences in Orwell and Huxley's visions: 'In short Orwell feared that what we hate would ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love would ruin us' (1986 p. vii). Postman ends *Amusing Ourselves to Death's* foreword by declaring that 'this book is about the possibility that Huxley, not Orwell was right' (Postman, 1986, p. viii). This thesis also entertains this possibility. Essentially, the concern is that an excess of trivial information can threaten the quality of democracy just as effectively as information being excessively controlled. This thesis explores the possibility of an 'excess of triviality' in the YouTube representation of Silvio Berlusconi.

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1: Introduction

1.1: Mediums, YouTube and the Supra-Logic of Entertainment

"Life imitates art far more than art imitates Life" - Oscar Wilde (1881)

In Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) the masses are largely subjugated through 'Soma' and elaborate forms of industrialised recreation such as 'Obstacle Golf' and 'Centrifugal Bumblepuppy'. In Postman's (1986) world the masses were in the process of being subjugated by the entertainment logics of commercial television.

Postman draws inspiration from McLuhan's (1964) famous 'the medium is the message' aphorism. This statement summarised McLuhan's observation that the real 'meaning or message' brought about by a medium is a social and psychological one, and that it depends solely on the medium itself, regardless of the 'content' conveyed by it (1964, p.8), Postman critically examined the medium of television, the communicative norms and logics it facilitates, along with the broader societal messages it carries beyond its content. He proposes a distinction between a technology and a medium, suggesting that:

A technology is to a medium as the brain is to the mind. Like the brain, a technology is a physical apparatus. Like the mind, a medium is a use to which the physical apparatus is put... A technology becomes a medium when it employs a particular symbolic code, as it finds its place in a particular social setting, as it insinuates itself into economic and political contexts (1986, p. 86).

As Postman acknowledges, fears analogous to his own were shared by scholars well before the invention of television. Nearly forty years before Huxley's masterpiece was published, Speed's (1893) *Do newspapers give you the news?* recorded the thematic contents of New York newspapers between 1891 and 1893, reporting that the papers had dropped their coverage of religious, scientific and literary matters in favour of gossip, sports and scandal. Speed's concerns about these trends in media preferences resonate as much with this project as Postman's work. The concern is

essentially that the Enlightenment ideal of reasoned public discourse (perhaps most famously reconstituted for the contemporary context as Habermas's public sphere (1974) – a domain of communicative rationality) will be drowned beneath the 'sea of irrelevance' crashing forth from a new and dominating mass communication medium. The concerns of this project relate to the medium provided by internet video sharing site YouTube, the types of political discourses it facilitates, and how audiences identify with political figures within these discourses.

To Postman 'entertainment is the supra-ideology of all televised discourse' (1986, p.89). That is to say that the over-arching logics of entertainment transcend whatever content might be being presented within the medium. His implication here is that all televised discourse, be it political, educational or even religious, will adapt itself to this visually stimulating 'entertainment supra-logic':

What I am claiming here is not that television is entertaining but that it has made entertainment itself the natural format for the representation of all experience (Postman, 1986, p. 89).

For the purposes of this project, Postman's 'supra-ideology of entertainment' concept has been reconstituted through the concept of discursively linked social logics (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) into what is referred to throughout the project as a 'supra-logic of entertainment'. Glynos and Howarth (2007) articulate a detailed system for understanding how different 'logics' operate in society. They suggest that any social order is constituted through a combination of analytically distinct 'social', 'political' and 'fantasmatic' logics. This project makes only limited use of Glynos and Howarth's broader approach beyond invoking their conception of discursive logics to pull together the various logics relating to entertainment (i.e. 'celebrification', 'sensationalism', personalisation etc.) under the singular title of 'the supra-logic of entertainment'. Glynos and Howarth suggest 'the logic of a practice comprises the rules or grammar of the practice as well as the conditions which make the practice both possible and vulnerable' (p.137). Their account of logics draws on the definition of discourse offered by Laclau & Mouffe (2001), who define discourse in a way that is linked to the concept of articulation: 'we will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we

will call *discourse*'. (p. 105). In the context of this study, the discursive practices, or structured totality, being analysed are those related to entertainment, and more specifically the relationship between entertainment, celebrity and politics.

Reflective of his understanding of the roles of ideologies/logics in structuring discourse, Postman's approach to assessing mediums was an epistemological one, addressing in particular how 'knowledge', or a perception of knowledge, is produced by television's discursive logics. The knowledge he considers television to impart is one in which people know 'of' many things but know 'about' very few. It is a 'factoid' knowledge without nuance or broader contextual appreciation (1986). While Postman saw television as an embodiment of Huxley's concern, this thesis attempts to broadly transpose Postman's critique of entertainment to online video sharing giant YouTube. Recognising its increasing significance as a part of the media mainstream (Burgess & Greene, 2009) (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009), it looks at an English language sample of the YouTube political discourse surrounding former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and examines some of the ways in which the celebrification of politics manifests itself within the medium.

In our world of the 2010s, television's grip – or at least the traditional mass-broadcast form of television discussed by Postman - over the reins of visual medium dominance is being challenged like never before. The extent of this challenge was clearly illustrated in May 2010, when it was reported that YouTube was serving more than two billion videos a day, which it (YouTube) described as 'nearly double the prime-time audience of all three major US television networks combined' (Chapman 2010).

The proliferation of broadband internet has created a technological platform for new communication mediums with capabilities far beyond those of the dial-up internet that preceded it (Burgess & Greene 2009) (Bennett & Strange 2011). While early incarnations of websites were more akin to magazines, constrained by bandwidth in terms of the visual content they could deliver, television then retained a substantial technical advantage in its ability to transmit moving images (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009). Postman (1986) had suggested that television was unique in that discourse on it is conducted as a 'conversation in images' making it the obvious medium for certain types of entertaining content that other mediums could not deliver. Widespread adoption of broadband internet, and the emergence of sites like YouTube, changes

this situation with profound implications for the types of communicative interaction possible.

Thompson's (2005) position on the powerful structuring effects of communication mediums on the types of information they convey and the types of communication they facilitate is consistent with those of Postman (1986) and McLuhan (1964):

Communication media are not merely technical devices which transmit information from one individual to another while leaving their relationship unchanged; rather, by using communication media, individuals create new forms of action and interaction which have their own distinctive properties (p.32).

YouTube is one of the most prominent recent examples of a new communication medium creating and encouraging new types of individual action and interaction with visual political content (Kellner & Kim, 2010). Unlike television audiences of the past, YouTube audiences need no longer be passive consumers of content. They can create their own content, re-appropriate and reframe mass media content, share this content through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, comment on content produced by other users, and can ultimately determine what types of content they watch. Some voice hopes that these new types of interaction will lead to a more democratised discourse around political issues (May, 2010; McKinney & Rill, 2009; Dempsey, 2010; Kellner & Kim 2010), one in which the audience are empowered to challenge the hegemonic positions of the mass media. However, such hopes would appear to be inherently tied to the idea of YouTube users applying a different set of logics to those of traditional broadcast media gatekeepers. This project analyses the intersection of political and entertainment logics that is the transnational YouTube representation of Berlusconi, and attempts to find indicators of these logics' comparative prevalence within the discourse.

1.2: The Celebrification of Politics and Celebrity Politician Typologies

A *Brave New World* draws on an idea that dates back to the time of the Roman Empire circuses: that 'entertainment' (or 'recreation' in Huxley's world) can serve as an effective means of societal control. The circuses are evidence that the logics of

entertainment and politics have been linked to some extent for millennia. But what has emerged more recently is a phenomenon that has seen political leaders become entertainers, and entertainers become politicians, where distinctions between the two can appear increasingly blurred. This phenomenon has become commonly described as 'the celebrification of politics' (West & Orman, 2002: Street, 2004: Marshall, 1997). Commenting specifically on the U.S., West and Orman argue that:

The American political system has changed into a celebrity regime where politicians are subjected to Hollywood-style tabloid coverage and celebrities are treated as political actors. It is all part of the entertaining of America. No longer does the argument of whether pop culture influences political change or vice versa matter: politics is pop culture. (2002, p. x)

The presidency of Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan became popularly emblematic of the merging of the spheres of entertainment and politics in the 1980s. Long before winning such high office, Reagan had once famously quipped that 'politics is just like show business' (Drew 1981. p. 263). It was in this context that Postman formulated his thesis. Primarily through its visuality, Postman argued that television had long since triumphed over prior mediums of public discourse, such as in-person conversations, typography and radio, to become the dominant discursive platform of Western democratic societies. That America should have elected a figure such as Reagan as an apparent 'entertainer and chief' appeared to be the 'natural' outcome of television's creation of 'a conversation conducted in images' (Postman 1986. p. 7).

Drake and Miah (2010) suggest that 'celebrities' have become a 'ubiquitous aspect of contemporary Western culture' (p. 49). Postman's argument attributed this type of cultural and discursive convergence largely to the 'supra-ideology of entertainment' colonising all mediated domains of the public sphere. This is to suggest that formerly autonomous domains of distinction adapt their processes, and their presentation of themselves, to the logics of the medium on which they rely upon to transmit their messages. With this supra-logic of entertainment, the associated logics of celebrity also colonise the domains that interact with the medium. This interpretation helps account for both the ubiquity of celebrity, and its potential usage as a transcendental system for the validation of personas from various domains of distinction (Marshall 1997).

To understand what the celebrification of politics means in conceptual and empirical terms, it is helpful to look at two sets of typologies of 'celebrity politicians' proposed by different scholars. West & Orman (2002) identified five types of celebrity politician: 1) '*political newsworthies*', who are figures they relate to a 'classical' conception of a political celebrity - that is people who rise to public prominence on account of advocating political positions, such as Jesse Jackson or Ralph Nader; 2) '*legacies*', figures who have name recognition on account of being members of famous political families such as the Kennedys and the Bushes; 3) '*famed non-politicos (elected officials)*', people who were already famous within another domain of distinction before seeking elected office, such as Jesse Ventura and Arnold Schwarzenegger; 4) '*famed non-politicos (lobbyists)*', the celebrity proclaimers such as singer Bono and actor George Clooney; And, 5) '*event celebrities*', figures such as 'Joe the Plumber' and Monica Lewinsky, essentially 'normal' people who became famous on account of their participation in a specific media and political event.

Street (2004. p. 437) offered two broader celebrity politician typologies: '*the CP1*', which is either a 'CP1 A - an elected official with a background in entertainment', such as Ventura and Schwarzenegger, or a 'CP1 B - an elected official who employs the trappings of celebrity', such as Tony Blair or Barack Obama; and '*the CP2, a celebrity who lobbies in favour of political positions*', such as Bono or Clooney.

While neither author(s) suggests their categorisations systems are faultless, or that celebrity politicians cannot fall into more than one category, these typologies offer useful reference points for this project's assessment of how political celebrity can manifest itself in the public sphere. These typologies are supplemented by Kenneth Burke's (1950) ideas about the modes of identification through which individuals come to 'identify' or 'disidentify with one another. These modes can be summarised as 'identification through perception of similarity', 'disidentification through perception of dissimilarity', 'identification through perception of mutual enemies', 'disidentification through perception of identification with an enemy', and 'unconscious' identification which takes a similar form, whether the results enact identification or disidentification (Burke, 1950). This project assesses how these modes of identification/disidentification are articulated by the YouTube audience in representations of Former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. It also examines how the themes around which identification or disidentification is being established

might be related to the celebrity politician types offered by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004).

1.3: Silvio Berlusconi: An exemplary Celebrity Politician

As one of Italy's richest men, its largest media owner, and three-time Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi is both a media magnate and a media magnet. His three terms in office were coloured by an internationally renowned series of gaffes and scandalous behaviour, sexual, financial and legal, along with persistent allegations of connections to organised crime (Ginsborg, 2005), and legislative impotence (Pasquino, 2007). Many of these gaffes and controversies might well have been expected to derail a conventional European political career. Yet Berlusconi not only survived, he went on to become Italy's longest serving Prime Minister and, in spite of fierce opposition from segments of the Italian political establishment (in particular the judiciary) (Shin & Agnew 2008) (Stille 2006), and his recent resignation as Prime Minister, the man known to supporters as 'Il Cavaliere' (The Knight) still shows no signs of exiting Italian political life.

Scholars such as Hibberd (2008) and Stille (2006), among others, have suggested that Berlusconi's high degree of media control has been key to maintaining his grip on Italian politics. As Italy's largest media owner, Berlusconi has throughout his career relied on the properties of the type of television that Postman (1986) described to convey his desired image to the Italian people (Paolucci 2006: Hibberd 2008: Stille 2006: Ginsborg, 2005: etc). This project decontextualises the question of Berlusconi's discursive representation from the Italian political and media environment by focusing on the English language representation of him, thereby assessing how the transnational audience for political content on YouTube engage with him as a celebrity politician, or as an entertainer, whose primary domain of distinction is politics. This research assesses what types of footage of Berlusconi attract the most attention on YouTube, and what this might tell us about the prevalence of the logics of entertainment and celebrification within the medium. It also examines some of the ways in which the YouTube audience identify (Burke, 1950) and disidentify with him as an international celebrity politician.

1.4: Overview of Study

The earlier discussion of Postman and Huxley sought to highlight the potential threat to the quality of democracy that may be posed when the mass mediums of communication become orientated towards the logics of entertainment. The key concept borrowed from Postman was that a medium could become dominated by a 'supra-ideology of entertainment'. This concept has been expanded through the concept of discursively related social logics (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) into a 'supra-logic of entertainment' that can be applied to analysing political content presented on YouTube.

This research is not specifically focused on condemning nor praising the controversial figure of Berlusconi, as a politician, nor as a celebrity. This project's interest instead lies in analysing the nature of Berlusconi's celebrity on YouTube and in exploring how audiences identify or disidentify with 'Berlusconi the celebrity politician', in a Burkean sense (Burke, 1950) (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2002), within a medium hypothetically dominated by the entertainment supra-logic. At the same time, the choice of Berlusconi as a case study has been inspired by his record of political survival, and his seeming ability to accrue a kind of popularity, maybe even a peculiar kind of likeability, from his notoriety. While it goes beyond the scope of this project to formally prove or disprove a hypothesis about the precise nature of Berlusconi's 'likeability' (or the precise motivations behind why people identify with him), the study is guided by an underlying assumption that some audiences may be willing to overlook Berlusconi's failures as a politician on account of his successes as an entertainer.

Similarly, as this project's central research concerns are in understanding identificatory dynamics within the supra-logic of entertainment, it does not seek to explicitly take sides within the normative debates about the celebrification of politics. However, as this work takes inspiration from Postman's (1986) normative critique, there is obviously an implicit concern with the effects of celebrified discourses on the quality of democracy. At the same time, this comes with an acknowledgment that in spite of the general gist of concerns about such trends, different, legitimate kinds of rationality and modes of political engagement can often exist alongside each other in overlapping contexts (Marshall 1997; Thompson 2005).

It is this combination of interests in exploring the discursive links between entertainment, celebrity, politics and identification that led to the formulation of the research questions posed below:

- **Primary Research Questions:** What discourses about politics, celebrity and the supra-logic of entertainment are articulated through the types of footage of Silvio Berlusconi attracting viewership on YouTube, and in the comments resultant from that viewership? And to what extent are the transnational popular discourses on YouTube about Berlusconi indicative of 'celebrity politics' and the 'supra-logic of entertainment'?
- **Secondary Research Questions:** How comfortably does Berlusconi reside within the theoretical frameworks offered by either of the 'celebrity politician' typologies proposed by Street (2004) and West & Orman (2002)? And how might this study's use of Postman's supra-logic of entertainment and the theoretical framework of Burkean identification help extend the existing typologies?

Reflective of these interests, chapter 2, the literature review, is structured around three major sub-sections. In the first of these 'The Celebrification of Politics', the supra-logic of entertainment is developed and contextualised with reference to the related body of scholarly literature investigating the celebrification of politics that has emerged post-Postman. Particular guidance is taken from the typologies of celebrity politicians offered by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004), along with Marshall's (1997) argument about the existence of a 'celebrity system' of meaning making that 'transcends domains of distinction'. Different perspectives on the implications of celebrified politics are presented. The second major sub-section, 'YouTube' discusses the medium for political discourse created by the emergence of YouTube as a part of the media mainstream (Burgess & Greene, 2009) It addresses the hope that YouTube can facilitate new, and potentially democratising (Kellner & Kim, 2010), forms of communication, along with the economic and cultural challenges to the realisation of these hopes. The final sub-section 'Silvio Berlusconi' elaborates on the choice of the English language YouTube discourse surrounding former Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi as a case study, primarily with reference to his status as a long-serving celebrity and televisual politician.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology, presenting a historical overview of the development of the content analysis approach. It discusses the differences associated between quantitative and qualitative approaches, before explaining how this study's use of Krippendorff's (2004) content analysis framework transcends these traditional distinctions. This framework is described in relation to how it is specifically formulated towards addressing the concerns of this project. The two key analytical constructs, or 'the network of correlations that are assumed to explain how the texts have been connected to the answers' (Krippendorff 2004, p.35), grounding this study are discussed. Krippendorff (2004) uses the term analytical constructs to describe the process through which a content analyst operationalises what they know, assume or suspect about the context of a text, and the procedures through which they account for drawing inferences from it (p. 171). This project's primary analytical constructs are based around an assumption that observations about the social existence of a supra-logic of entertainment are valid, and that a system in which politicians become entertainers and entertainers become politicians (i.e. the celebrification of politics) may be viewed as one manifestation of this supra-logic's prevalence. This is not to assert a strict causal relationship between the supra logic of entertainment and the logics of celebrification, as if the latter is a discrete "thing" caused by the former. Rather, the relationship assumed is one in which the supra-logic of entertainment and the logics driving the celebrification of politics are discursively linked (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Working within this conception of discursively linked logics, also linked to similar social phenomena such as 'sensationalism' (Mancini & Swanson, 1996), 'Newzak' (Franklin, 1997), and 'infotainment' (Delli Carpini & Williams 2001), the 'celebrification politics' might therefore be considered as a constitutive social logic in the reproduction of an entertainment supra-logic. The concept of Burkean identification (Burke, 1950) (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2002) is the other main analytical construct, and is presented as a potential supplement to our understanding of how audiences relate to a political figure with reference to the celebrity politician typologies offered by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004). Reflective of its use of Krippendorff's (2004) framework, this research utilises a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse the viewership and other statistical data relating to Berlusconi's representations in YouTube clips, along with the comments left about them. The practical aspects of this project's implementation are discussed under the heading 'Design and

Construction of Research'. The methodology chapter concludes with a discussion of 'Ethical Concerns and The Presentation of Research Data'.

Chapter 4, Empirical Results, is structured around the top ten most frequently viewed content themes to emerge from within the sample. After a presentation of statistical information gleaned from the study's quantitative measures, each content theme is qualitatively described and analysed with reference to what it tells us about the prevalence of celebrification and entertainment logics within discussions surrounding Berlusconi on YouTube. Illustrative examples of the comments left by members of the YouTube audience in response to the clip themes are presented and analysed with reference to this project's interest in the dynamics of identification/disidentification.

Chapter 5, Discussion, begins by briefly contextualising the importance of this project's results within the broader concerns of the likes of Postman. It then attempts to answer its first research question relating to the prevalence of the logics of celebrification and entertainment within the sample. This is done under the headings of 'The Absence of Big 'P' Politics', which addresses the types of political content within the sample; ' Audience Re-Appropriation and the Amplification of Performative Aspects: Politics as an elite situation comedy', which discusses how the audience/authors frame and engage with the content; and 'Humour and the 'Good Celebrity Villain'', which assesses how Berlusconi appears to be cast by some in a role that is relatively common in the narratives of pop culture-derived entertainment. The second research question relating to the celebrity politician typologies, and their potential expansion via Burke's conception of identification, is addressed under the headings of 'Applying the Celebrity Politician Typologies to Berlusconi', in which Berlusconi's career, and representation on YouTube, are compared to West and Orman's (2002) and Street's (2004) offerings; and 'Identification as a Supplement to the Celebrity Politician Typologies' in which a Burke (1958) inspired 'identification/disidentification' analytical couplet is applied to the results gleaned from applying the typologies to Berlusconi.

Chapter 7, Conclusions, reviews the key findings of the study. The main conclusions relating to each of the research questions are summarised, before the possible wider implications of the study are discussed. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of potential future research questions raised by this project's findings.

1.5: Conclusion

This introduction has sought to explain how this project attempts to broadly transpose Postman's entertainment supra-logic oriented critique of television to online video giant YouTube. Recognising its increasing significance as a part of the media mainstream (Burgess & Greene, 2009) (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009), it looks at a sample of YouTube political discourse, relating to Silvio Berlusconi, and examines some of the ways in which the celebrification of politics may manifest themselves within the medium. The focus of analysis is primarily on the supra-logic of entertainment, but it also utilises two celebrity politician categorisation systems (West & Orman, 2002) (Street, 2004) within its analytical constructs. As the logics of celebrification and entertainment are discursively inter-linked, such typologies serve as a practical means of comparing the subject of this particular case study to other celebrified political figures. Burke's account of identification (Burke, 1950) (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2002) is used as a supplementary analytical construct in the hope that it might add clarity to how audience members are identifying/disidentifying with Berlusconi. The contents of each of the following chapters have been laid out, and the rationale behind the decision to present quantitative and qualitative results alongside each other have been introduced. Attention now turns to the bodies of scholarly literature that provide the theoretical context in which this project is conceived.

2: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

This literature review lays out the theoretical landscape of this thesis. In the broadest terms, the interests of this project lie in examining the impact of mediums on messages and meaning making. It explores how the modes of communication facilitated by modern visual communication mediums, such as internet video sites, working in conjunction with broader structural forces, may orient themselves to the dominance of a supra-logic of entertainment within the medium of YouTube.

YouTube has been chosen as the specific online medium due to its dominant position within the rapidly expanding market for online video (Nielsenwire, 2010). The YouTube political discourse analysed is that concerning former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Berlusconi was chosen on account of this study's interest in examining how his 'celebrity politician' persona, one that may be considered highly emblematic of a political persona developed for television (Ginsberg, 2004; Stille, 2006), is articulated and constructed by audiences in the new media environment of YouTube.

This literature review comprises of three distinct sections. Section 2.2 'The Celebrification of Politics' examines the celebrification of politics that occurs across mediums. The section begins with a brief examination of how today's 'celebrity' culture differs from the 'fame' of the past (Braudy, 1986), and assesses the claim that this is largely on account of a commercialised media system that constructs celebrity phenomena because of the profit motive. These arguments place the celebrification of politics within a broader system of celebrity that serves to validate consumer capitalism by extending its logics to individuals, who within a celebrity system, become marketable commodities (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972; Marshall, 1997; Guthey, Clarke & Jackson, 2009). The section examines the application of this broad celebrity system to the political sphere, and discusses the claims of a consequent shift in the criteria through which political competence is assessed in a media environment where political personas are presented alongside, and interchangeably with entertainment personas (Postman, 1986; Corner, 2000; West & Orman, 2002; Higgins, 2011). Section 2.2.2 discusses the 'celebrity politician typologies' developed by West and Orman (2002), and Street (2004). These offer interesting frameworks for

thinking about the celebrification of politicians, particularly a figure such as Berlusconi, who has been characterised as a politician who prospers in a climate of celebrified, or heavily mediatised, discourse (Ginsberg, 2004; Stille, 2006; Paolucci, 2006). Section 2.2.3 reviews the arguments for and against the celebrification of politics. These arguments are largely rooted in different ideas about what it means to be 'representative' in a representative democracy. The primary argument against the celebrification of politics sees the promotion of entertainment-driven logics as leading to a trivialised personality-driven politics, and a marginalisation of rational political discourse (Postman 1986). While the primary argument voiced in defence of celebrity politics is one that emphasises its potential to provide symbolic representation for those who could be considered marginalised by, or disassociated from, traditional politics (Coleman 2003; Harrington 2010; Street 2004, 2005).

Section 2.3: 'YouTube' examines the specifics of YouTube. Section 2.3.1 'YouTube as a Medium' begins with a discussion of the site's rise to dominance in the internet video sharing market. Section 2.3.2 reviews the claim that YouTube offers a potential environment for the realisation of Habermas's ideal 'public sphere' (1974), a universal speech situation, or an open domain of communicative rationality. Section 2.3.3 looks at the challenges to the more utopian claims about the site's democratising potential. These challenges come not only from the consolidation, or maturation, of YouTube's relationship with the traditional broadcast media industry (May, 2010: Burgess & Greene, 2010), but also from the viewership and antagonistic cultural practices that have been cited as prevalent among users of the site (Moor, Heuvelman & Verleur, 2010: Kellner & Kim, 2010). The discussion of these viewership and cultural practices is then tied back to Postman's (1986) observations on how the nature of a medium affects the nature of content it conveys. Finally, this section looks at the literature on the presentation of politics on YouTube, and the types of 'political' content that other researchers have suggested generate the greatest levels of interest amongst viewers.

Section 2.4: 'Silvio Berlusconi' provides an overview of Berlusconi's long, and intertwined, careers in business and politics. Section 2.4.1 chronicles his rise to becoming Italy's richest man and largest media owner, and contextualises the circumstances that saw Berlusconi enter into the political fray. The ups and downs of his political career are briefly detailed. Section 2.4.2 focuses on the nature of

Berlusconi's political 'product', and how he has used his understanding of, and influence over, the Italian media landscape to manufacture a political vehicle with popular appeal to a television audience (Paolucci 2006; Stille 2006). Critical perspectives regarding his use of the media are discussed with reference to broader concerns about the mediatisation of politics that some see embodied in Berlusconi (Paolucci, 2006). Finally, section 2.4 explains how the frequent citation of Berlusconi's domestic media dominance as being key to his success and longevity in the political sphere (Hibberd, 2007, 2008; Stille, 2006; Andrews 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2009; Ginsberg, 2005; etc) informs the choice of Berlusconi as a case study. By looking at the English language representations of him on YouTube, it is assumed that those commenting on footage of him are less likely to have been directly exposed to media controlled by him in Italy. This coincides with this project's interest in examining how those less likely to be directly affected by Berlusconi's governance assess him as a celebrity politician (or an entertainment figure), of the type described by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004), and within the criteria for validation afforded within the celebrity system as described by Marshall (1997).

In short, the primary aims of this literature review are threefold; to describe the process known as celebrification as it relates to politics; to transmit a working understanding of the nature and culture of YouTube; and to provide a background overview of Silvio Berlusconi as a celebrity politician. Ultimately though, the literature is situated with reference to the over-arching theme of the project: the impact of the supra-logic of entertainment on the mediated political discourse articulated on YouTube.

2.2: The Celebrification of Politics

2.2.1: Politics and the Celebrity System

The phenomenon of celebrity is hardly a new one – famous and celebrated individuals have been a part of society for millennia. However, many argue that the celebrity of today differs to the fame of the past largely because of the criteria and modes through which such status is ascribed, along with its centrality to the logic of

the mainstream media system (Braudy, 1986; Drake & Miah, 2010; Guthey, Clarke & Jackson, 2009; Rojek, 2001; Holmes & Redmond, 2006).

Presenting an anthology of fame that extends back to Alexander The Great, Braudy (1986) described how the historical changes in the ways in which 'fame' is now manifest bear little resemblance to that of the past. Braudy argued that 'the increasing number and sophistication of the ways information is brought to us have enormously expanded the ways of being known', and that 'in the process the concept of fame has been grotesquely distended' (p. 3). Commenting specifically on politics, Corner (2000) suggests that 'although varieties of performance are ancient requirements of political elites... it is widely noted that the introduction of technologies of media has radically changed their nature' (p. 67). Reflecting the increasing importance of the greater role of mediation processes to the construction of celebrity personas, Drake and Miah (2010) suggest the need for an updated definition of celebrity distinct from its historical associations. They define 'celebrity as a mediated public persona, to be differentiated from the actual, unmediated person who is almost always unknown to audiences' (p. 52). They suggest that this definition 'recognizes the mediation of a personality's identity prior to reception by an audience and the importance of this process to contemporary celebrity' (ibid).

Marshall suggests that the application of these mediation processes to a 'real' person creates a 'tension between authentic and false cultural value' (Marshall, 1997, p. xi). To him celebrity represents the 'simultaneous embodiment of media construction, audience construction, and the real, living and breathing human being', Reflective of this dialectal interplay, he suggests that 'celebrity' must 'negotiate the competing and contradictory definitions of its own significance' (ibid). Rather than attempting to describe what makes a person a 'celebrity', following Baudrillard's (1983) claim that celebrity is unattached to an individual, Drake and Miah (2010) suggest that 'celebrity' might more usefully be understood as 'a way of perceiving famous individuals, a mediating frame (a "fame frame") than as a formal delineation of their qualities' (p. 52). With echoes of Horkheimer and Adorno (1972), they contend that rather than being assessed as exceptional individuals, celebrities should be considered as an 'inherent part of consumer capitalism, driven by the interlocking media and publicity industries' (Drake & Miah 2010, p. 52). Marshall (1997) also discusses the cultural impact of public relations and entertainment logics in the media:

The integration of press agents and public relations into political discourse identifies the dissipation of the disciplinary boundaries among various domains of the public sphere. The entertainment sphere operates on as an originary source for methods of shaping public interest in other industries and politics. (Marshall, 1997, p.209).

Guthey, Clark and Jackson echo Marshall's position (2009, p. 1). Drawing a distinction between 'fame' and 'celebrity', they draw on Rojek, (2001, p. 187) who defined fame as 'the informal attribution of distinction on an individual within a given social network'. Guthey et al argue that 'celebrity occurs only when fame becomes a commodity produced and consumed via the commercial media'. In their summation 'while fame has existed for centuries, celebrity did not occur until fame became big business' (Guthey, Clark & Jackson 2009, p. 11).

Within all of these positions, the centrality of commercialised mediation processes to the elevation of individual figures appears to be considered the defining trait of the modern celebrity. As a 'celebrity politician', who is himself a media magnate, this suggests that Berlusconi's celebrity is constituted through a complex discursive interplay. The 'real' Berlusconi is an owner of the type of media networks that facilitate the celebrity system, while the 'Berlusconi persona' could be considered emblematic of that system's product.

The celebrification of politics is only one manifestation of the commercially driven supra-logic of entertainment many see as colonising the public sphere (Meyer, 2002: West & Orman, 2002: Postman, 1986: etc). If the construction of celebrity is more closely associated with mediatisation processes rather than any specific set of personality traits (Drake & Miah, 2010), this would support Marshall's (1997) argument that the power of celebrity should transcend not only mediums, but also 'domains of distinction'. This is to say that political celebrities on YouTube, as on any other medium, need to be considered within the prevailing logics of the broader media, economic, and political systems that provide the structural context in which celebrity is articulated. Therefore Berlusconi's ability to establish a 'business celebrity' identity, that was later transferred into the political arena, would appear to support these understandings of the construction and transferability of celebrity. Figures like Ronald Reagan, Sonny Bono, Scott Glen, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jesse

Ventura, all of whom 'transferred' their celebrity from other 'domains of distinction' into successful political careers, might similarly be considered emblematic of the phenomenon.

Marshall (1997) suggests that whatever the medium, 'to categorise politicians as celebrities is to include their activities in a more generalisable project of constructing public subjectivities to house the popular will' (p. 204). Therefore the mediated celebrity personas adopted by politicians become symbols through which the audiences' ideas about society might be made manifest; embodied in the persona of a politician representatively attached to an idea or emotion. The heightened media focus around party leaders, while party activist and membership numbers are in decline (Meyer, 2002, p 100; Paolucci, 2006), makes the role of the leader as a celebrity embodiment of their party, and its policies, all the more important.

West and Orman (2002) argue that along with politicians adopting the trappings of celebrity, traditional types of celebrity involvement - i.e. movie, television, sports and music stars - in political activities blurs the distinction between 'Washington and Hollywood'. Corner (2000) makes a similar point: 'an engagement with the terms of mediated persona is central to the understanding of contemporary political culture... the nature of modern political sentiment and with the various articulations of the political within the popular'. This position is reflective of the inter-textuality of celebrity status. Like Braudy (1986), Drake and Miah (2010) contend that new mediums 'have facilitated a dramatic expansion of the sites in which famous individuals can be consumed by audiences' (p.58). This applies to celebrified political leaders also, and is reflected in their ever more frequent appearances in what might have formerly been considered non-political media contexts (Higgins, 2011).

The frequent personalisation of politics around 'the leader' as 'a celebrity' was addressed by Thompson (2005) who suggested that we have become 'a society of self-disclosure'. To Thompson this is a society in which it is common for 'political leaders to appear before distant audiences and lay bare some aspect of their self or their personal life' (p. 38), essentially presenting themselves in the modes of 'human interest' stories. He suggests that what a politician gains from this is the 'the capacity to speak directly to one's subjects, to appear before them as flesh-and-blood human beings with whom they could empathize and even sympathize... to present

themselves as 'one of us' (ibid).¹ On the other hand, as a consequence of this shift, he contends that politicians have 'lost some of their aura of 'greatness', that surrounded political leaders and institutions in the past, which was sustained in part by the aloofness of leaders and the distance they maintained from the individuals over whom they ruled (ibid).

Regardless of the extent to which one believes politics has been 'transformed' (Street, 2005) by processes of mediation and celebrified logics, the movement of formal politicians into the field of celebrity coupled with an increasing involvement in traditional politics by traditionally non-political celebrities has facilitated a significantly heightened convergence between the spheres of politics and entertainment within contemporary commercial media systems (Postman, 1986; Marshall, 1997; West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004; Meyer, 2002; etc).

2.2.2: Celebrity Politician Typologies

Given this project's interests, and the complexities in categorisation arising from the diverse and discursively constituted nature of the phenomena of celebrity politics, reference to the two sets of typologies of 'celebrity politicians' proposed by scholars appears a helpful starting point for analysing a figure such as Berlusconi's representation on YouTube.

As was discussed in the introduction, West & Orman (2002) identified five types of celebrity politician: 'political newsworthies; 'legacies', 'famed non-politicos (elected officials)', 'famed non-politicos (lobbyists)', and 'event celebrities', (p.2). Street (2004, p. 437) offered two broader typologies: *'the CP1'*, which is either a 'CP1 A - an elected official with a background in entertainment', or a 'CP1 B - an elected official who employs the trappings of celebrity', and *'the CP2'*, a celebrity who lobbies in favour of political positions'.

While neither author(s) suggests their categorisations systems are faultless, or that celebrity politicians cannot fall into more than one category, these typologies offer some guidance when assessing how political celebrity can manifest itself in the public sphere. These typologies are intended to describe the methods through which one might gain, or enact, political celebrity (West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004).

These celebrity politician typologies are applied to the career and YouTube representation of Berlusconi in the discussion chapter. It is proposed that the application of these typologies might be supplemented through the use of Burke's concept of identification (1958). This concept, and its link to the typologies, is further discussed as an 'analytical construct' in section 3.3.5 of the 'Methodology' chapter.

2.2.3: Perspectives on the Celebrification of Politics

This section reviews some of the normative debates in the celebrity politics literature. Accounts 'for' and 'against' the celebrification of politics are largely rooted in different ideas about what 'representative' democracy means. The traditional concept of parliamentary democracy can essentially be characterised as one associated with formal political processes, in which representatives are elected on account of their ability to represent the interests of their electorate. Those alarmed by the convergence between the spheres of politics and entertainment (Postman, 1986; Putnam, 2000; Franklin, 1997; Meyer, 2002: etc), feel that the presentation of politics as entertainment favours those who are most adept at presenting themselves to the media over those more capable of fulfilling the traditional expectations of politicians. The latter includes the rational presentation of a cohesive ideological position and a command of policy detail - skills traditionally associated with a big 'P' conception of politics. The primary argument against the celebrification of politics could therefore be characterised as one that sees the promotion and normalisation of entertainment logics as leading to a trivialised personality-driven politics, and a marginalisation of rational political discourse in the public sphere (Postman, 1986: Meyrowitz, 1985: Zolo. 1992: Marshall, 1997: etc)

Criticisms of celebrified politics often relate to criticisms of celebrities' representative claim (Street, 2004, p. 440). West and Orman (2002, p. 112) argue that the celebrification of politics has seen the displacement of traditional political skills, such as bargaining and compromise, and their replacement by those of media management and fundraising. They go on to suggest that 'the qualities of the celebrity politician are ill-suited to the duties of statecraft which representatives owe their constituents' (ibid, p. 118). Meyrowitz (1985) argues that the predominance of television as the medium for political discourse alters the 'criteria by which politicians are judged', and that this, in turn, 'shifts the criteria by which they operate'.

Meyroritz's argument is essentially that through television's 'intimacy', its use of close-ups and one-to-one conversations, it focuses attention more on politicians' 'human' qualities over their traditional political skills. In such an environment, critics fear, either political leaders learn the skills of the medium or those already skilled in it (celebrity) come to dominate it. Thus those who the media frame as the best 'celebrity politicians' will also appear to be the best politicians, period. The concern is, essentially, that 'telegenicity' becomes the determinant of 'representativeness' (Zolo 1992, p. 162).

Within the celebrified system, what these scholars (Postman, 1986; Meyrowitz, 1985; Zolo. 1992; Marshall, 1997: etc) fear is that reasoned political arguments are not what primarily determines voter's' electoral preferences, but rather the candidate/leader's perceived competence as a celebrity. In other words, 'how they [the politicians] look, fix their gaze, smile, and deliver one-liners' (Postman 1987, p. 100) takes precedence over the quality of their ideas. Corner (2009) characterises such concerns as a concern about the popular dominating the rational. 'Historically, the 'popular' can be seen as bad from a perspective which is disturbed by the possibilities for political unrest or for faulty cultural judgement (the misrecognition of 'quality') that might follow from an increase in its prominence'. When related to Drake and Miah's (2010) and Guthey, Clarke & Jackson's (2009) definitions of celebrity, this fear of misrecognition of quality might be rediscrbed as the fear that the public will fail to recognise that 'the good celebrity' is merely a result of a positive mediating frame, and will mistake those framed in such a way as also being good political representatives.

The rise of a more 'affective' or emotive politics has been attributed to the increasing focus on political 'personalities' over policy (Marshall, 1997). Marshall's conception of political affect as a threat to rational deliberation and informed political decision making would be challenged by scholars such as Mouffe (2000). She criticises the rationalist models of political deliberation advanced by Habermas and others, arguing that 'affect' or 'passion' are in fact an intrinsic part of democratic politics in the political sphere. But to the likes of Marshall and Postman (1986), if politics is to be presented through a commercially driven media supra-logic of entertainment, it would follow that the politicians best adept at entertaining will appear to be the most competent within such a framework. Succinctly put, the fear is that while Aristotle

suggested that the qualities people once sought in leadership were 'character and competencies', in a system framed by the logics of the entertainment industry, people may now articulate identification with those leaders who are 'competent within their character', provided that that character conforms with the media's logic of what constitutes an entertaining persona.

However, assessments of the representative forms associated with the celebrification of politics are not always inherently negative (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Coleman, 2003; Scammell, 1995; Harrington, 2010; Delli, Carpini & Williams, 2001: etc). Several arguments have been put forward in defence of the celebrification of politics.

Writing from a political marketing perspective Lees-Marshment (2001) argues that politicians adopting the trappings of the inter-related media, public relations and advertising industries could potentially be beneficial to democracy, as it may lead to political parties designing their behaviour in ways that better satisfy voter's needs and wants - in the same way businesses design 'products' to please their consumers. Street summarised this argument as 'politics is marketing', suggesting that the logics of marketing 'taking hold' in politics would 'necessarily shape the concept of representation' (2004, p. 441). Rather than focussing on the potential representative benefits of political marketing (Lees-Marshment, 2001), Marshall (1997, pg. 205) cites the research of Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1990) to lament how 'there has been an expansion in the use of irrational and emotionally charged imagery in display advertising, and a diminution of rational argumentation', and that this has been transferred to the presentation of politics via the logics of marketing and entertainment.

Another line of defence of the celebrification of politics emphasises its potential to provide representation for those who could be considered marginalised by, or disassociated, from traditional politics; those more comfortable housing their subjectivities within a celebrity, or entertainment driven, media system (Coleman, 2003; Harrington, 2010). Coleman (2003) compares the British House of Parliament to the house on 'reality' TV show 'Big Brother'. Noting how more people voted on Big Brother than in UK local body elections, Coleman suggests that much of its popularity was due to the contestants being seen as 'representative' of 'normal' people. He also suggests 'Big Brother contestants are scrutinised by their audience in respect of their

authenticity, itself a measure of integrity and trustworthiness, and in so doing they establish criteria of representativeness that could be applied to politics' (2003, p. 32). His argument is essentially that popular culture can resonate with sections of society who have tuned out from traditional politics. This line of argument is broadly supportive of the representative form associated with the personalisation of politics described in Thompson's (2005) 'society of disclosure' thesis, where 'human' traits and the ability to connect with voters on a personal level can supersede the value that the audience place on a grasp of political issues or ideological coherency.

What is perhaps not thoroughly addressed in Coleman's work is the role the producers play in structuring and prefabricating the 'reality' transmitted on the screen (Couldry, 2003). In pursuit of entertainment value, a common approach from producers of 'reality' TV shows is to, along with the inclusion of some appealing and empathetic characters, deliberately choose contestants with penchants for antagonism and outrageous behaviour. This practice is pursued largely on account of logics similar to those which see 'conflict' favoured within dominant news values (McGregor, 2002) and see 'flaming' viewed as normal discursive practice on YouTube (Moor, Heuvelman & Verleur 2010). This is simply to suggest that 'conflict' can be entertaining, and to entertain is to increase the likelihood of profit. Applied to politics, the suggestion would be that to entertain is to increase the likelihood being elected.

Coleman's (2003) optimistic assessment of 'Big Brother' has parallels in Harrington's (2010) argument that political journalists might learn how to engage an audience from BBC's automotive themed ratings juggernaut 'Top Gear'. Harrington suggests that 'Top Gear' draws an audience who are not particularly interested in the details of cars. 'Although covering very similar subject matter to conventional car shows, Top Gear's immense success suggests that it presents information about the topic in ways that are more interesting, more engaging and more entertaining for a wider audience than more orthodox formats' (Harrington, 2010, p. 934). Its attention to 'aesthetics and entertainment' (Fox 2010) means it can 'cover the very same subject matter in a way which is much more conducive to audience engagement' (Harrington, 2010, p. 934). Harrington notes that 'Top Gear' is a car 'themed' programme, rather than a programme 'about' cars (ibid). This modality of presentation is paralleled in

much of the popular political content on YouTube, which might be better described as 'politics themed' rather than 'about politics' in a substantive sense.

Coleman's (2003) argument in favour of a form of 'celebrified resemblance representation' has been characterised as similar (Street, 2004) to the position offered by John Keane (2002, pg.13). Keane argues that 'the success of maverick political figures (like Ross Perot, Ralph Nader, Pauline Hanson, Martin Bell and Pim Fortuyn) owed something to their 'claim to champion the interests of the unrepresented, all those who don't identify with politicians'.

Essentially, the question that determines what one feels about such matters of representation is subjective; what should be prioritised, the capacities and skills of the representative, or their degree of imagined resemblance to those that they represent? Street (2004, p. 442) suggests that this is 'a familiar divide, captured in A. H. Birch's (1964, 16) tripartite distinction between representation by activity, selection or personal characteristics, or in Hanna Pitkin's (1967) distinction between 'standing for' and 'acting for'. Arguments like Coleman's (2003), Keane's (2002) and Harrington's (2010) appear to favour a form of a representation that is established through perceived resemblance. To relate these arguments to the empirical focus of this thesis, the frequent disclosure of Berlusconi's 'human faults', coupled to his billionaire businessman/playboy status creates an unusual discursive interplay between 'everyman' and 'elite' aspects of his persona that may not normally be considered as constitutive components of a politics of resemblance. However, the variety of representative resemblance claims is acknowledged by Daloz (2003), who has argued that 'representation in any of its forms exists as a symbolic relationship that negotiates principles of identification and of distinction'. Similarly, Saward (2003a) articulates the position that representation is always symbolically evoked. Within these positions representation inherently involves 'appearance' and claims to 'represent' emerge in various contexts and can be validated in various ways. Thus even within a system that is normatively 'celebrified', different uses of the trappings of celebrity may be evoked by different politicians in order to validate differing representative modes. This project seeks to identify some of the representative modes articulated by the YouTube audience in regards to Berlusconi.

Another interesting strand to the defence of the celebrification of politics questions the assumption that a distinctly alternative form of politics can exist in the current mediascape. Street (2005) notes that what an 'uncelebrified/mediatised politics' is constituted of is less often discussed than the type of mediatised politics being critiqued. Like Street (2005), Delli Carpini & Williams (2001, pg. 161) question critics ability to define a politics that is distinct from 'trivial' forms of media culture. Dell Carpini et al argue that politics 'exists in', and is partly constituted by media culture. Dahlgren (2001, pg. 85) goes further, suggesting that 'politics is increasingly organised as a media phenomenon, planned and executed with the cooperation of the media'. Mancini and Swanson (1996) frame the position within a broad societal context, suggesting that:

The breakdown of traditional social structures under the strains of modernisation have created the need for a form of political communication in which new 'symbolic realities' have to be created, containing 'symbolic templates of heroes and villains, honoured values and aspirations, histories, mythologies, and self-definition. In such a world, the focus shifts on to individual politicians and, with this, politics is 'personalised'. This trend is accentuated by a mass media whose generic conventions favour this form of politics' (Mancini and Swanson 1996, p. 13).

Reflective of the validity of such descriptions, Meyer (2002) contends that it is 'illusory and counterproductive to restrict analysis to the condemnation of this new reality by striving for a rationalist mode' of the type suggested by Habermas (1974). Although a critic of celebrification and what he perceives as 'the media's colonisation of politics', Meyer suggests that the media's political 'stage-management techniques do not raise insuperable barriers to depicting political issues appropriately, i.e. with a reasonable level of information and editorial commentary' (Meyer 2002, p. 129).

The follow sub-section addresses YouTube as a medium. The discussion focuses around the hopes that YouTube may emerge as an 'ideal public sphere' (Habermas, 1974), and the obstacles that could impede its realisation.

2.3: YouTube

2.3.1: YouTube as a Medium

YouTube - the medium investigated in this thesis - 'is a site of participatory culture' (Burgess & Greene, 2009, p. vii). The communication medium made possible by the technological platform that broadband internet provides have changed the nature and scope of interactions between producers of content and audiences, allowing for forms of 'bottom-up' or 'grassroots' mass communication that were impossible during the broadcast television era. Many broadcast television companies are now using the internet to deliver content on demand. Yet, in-general, the 'old media' broadcasting companies were initially troubled as to how to best profit from the medium (May, 2010). A culture of video sharing websites emerged, which, along with empowering and encouraging web-users to 'broadcast themselves', challenged the traditional concepts of copyright and image ownership, and challenged our understanding of what constitutes television. Since 2005 the largest of these video sharing websites has been YouTube. Purchased by internet search giant Google in 2006 for \$1.65 billion (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009), as of 2010 YouTube had an audience greater than those of its six nearest online competitors combined (Nielsenwire, 2010), with viewership levels double those of the cumulative prime time audience of the three major US television networks (Chapman 2010).

Burgess and Greene (2009, p. vii) recognise the significance of YouTube's status, and summarise much of its appeal from a researcher's perspective. They suggest that YouTube has established itself as amongst the mainstream media landscape, claiming that 'YouTube's rapid rise, diverse range of content, and public prominence in the Western, English speaking world make it useful for understanding the evolving relationships between new media technologies, the creative industries, and the politics of popular culture'. Furthermore, as May (2010) argues, the nature of YouTube's audience heightens its significance as 'the future prospects of online video in the news and political realm have significant implications... TubeMogul estimates that about 80% of YouTube users are less than thirty years old' (p. 508). Not only is the site immensely popular with the younger web users whose online preferences will significantly contribute to determining the web culture of the future, but, according to Hayles (2007) 'younger people have a tendency, to use YouTube

as a search engine, i.e. to view the content of the web only from the video angle... For them, a large part of their experience of the web ends with the videos they find'. While the internet users Hayles describes may well not be a wider demographic norm, there can be little doubt, that in combination with social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, the site has become a predominant part of users' web experience today.

YouTube has come to occupy an institutional role on the internet as a platform for the storage and distribution of content produced by others (Gillespie, 2010). Unlike traditional media businesses, video sharing sites such as YouTube do not produce any content of their own. 'As a media company, YouTube is a platform for, and an aggregator of, content' (Burgess & Greene, 2009, p. 4). As such, it is what has been described as a 'meta-business', or a business that exists through gathering data from other business (Weinberger, 2007). The role of YouTube as a platform and aggregator is evident in the way the site has become almost a 'standard format' for hosting and sharing video content across social media sites. Many views of YouTube videos occur through them being accessed while 'embedded' on other sites (such as Facebook and Twitter), without the viewer ever visiting the YouTube site itself. Furthermore, as television networks offer more 'on demand' viewing options, their presentation of content becomes more akin to that of YouTube than that of their traditional broadcasting roots (Bennett and Strange, 2011). So it may well be that the cultures established around sites such as YouTube transfer to traditional media's attempts to capitalise on the online environment, in turn, having a reconstituting effect on traditional broadcasting cultures.

YouTube can be evaluated in a variety of ways, some optimistic, others less so. While on the one hand it can be used as a platform upon which the products of traditional media companies can be distributed to a more geographically dispersed audience (May, 2010), it also allows for, as Kellner and Kim (2010) put it, 'conventional relationships between the producers and the consumers of knowledge to be productively challenged' (p. 5). YouTube as a medium has allowed user generated, or independently produced content, to challenge the monopoly of audience attention that traditional broadcasters once enjoyed (Uricchio, in Snickars & Vonderau, 2009). The relationships between these groupings of content generators and authors are further complicated by the ways in which they fed off one another,

appropriating, re-framing, and redistributing one another's content. Hartley (2008a) suggests this changed relationship is having profound results, suggesting that 'the origin of meaning has migrated along the 'value chain' of cultural industries, from the 'author' the 'producer', and the text, to the 'citizen-consumer' so that 'consumption' is a source of value creation, and not only its destination'. Burgess & Greene (2009) consider media consumption under such a model to have 'moved away from being a 'read-only' activity to becoming a 'read-write' one'. All of these positions are indicative of the broadly democratising and citizen empowering hopes held for the medium.

2.3.2: YouTube as a Public Sphere?

The internet's great potential for the relational changes discussed in the previous section has led to an optimistic position that 'new mediums' such as YouTube, and those other social networking opportunities afforded to citizens by the internet, and 'web 2.0', will reinvigorate political discourse, as they allow for opinions to be expressed that may not be able to be given voice within traditional media outlets' commercial/entertainment driven logics. Although written before the emergence of YouTube, Meyer (2002, 118) articulates these hopes for the internet, suggesting that it may one day be 'engaged to revive a version of the direct democracy characteristic of the ancient Athenian polis', and that a 'new public sphere may encourage each and every citizen to take part in discussion meant to educate public opinion and guide public choice'. To Barry (2006) the Internet is now central to civic engagement. 'Interactive and networked technologies have come to be seen as a key resource in the making up of citizens. New technology is reckoned by many to play a critical part in the revitalization of democracy... Interactive technology is expected to produce active citizens' (p. 163). Burgess & Greene (2009), Kellner and Kim (2010), Carlson and Strandberg (2008), and many others, have invoked the parallel between YouTube and Habermas's (1989) influential concept of the public sphere, summarised by Hauser as 'a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment' (1998, p.86), to theorise the potential benefits of YouTube as a platform for the democratisation of discourse. Habermas (1989) had suggested that three conditions would be required for an 'ideal public sphere', or 'universal speech

situation', to emerge. These are; a disregard of status; a domain of common concern; and inclusivity (p. 36). Through ease of access and challenging traditional producer/consumer communication model, sites like YouTube can appear to fulfil these conditions. Kellner and Kim (2010) also cite YouTube as potentially reflective of Dewey's (1916) conception of democracy as a 'mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience' in which the quality of a society's communication and the quality of its democracy are intertwined. Carlson and Strandberg (2008) describe their hope for YouTube in terms that bear resemblance to Habermas' and Dewey's notions. In emphasising the social aspects of the medium, they regard Web 2.0 as a shift from the Web as a publishing medium to a platform for social participation and interaction based around social networking activities and emphasizing online collaboration, communication, and sharing among users' (Carlson & Strandberg, 2008, p. 160). Stiegler (in Snickars & Vonderau, 2009, p. 40) summarises these hopes for the medium's possibilities in the title of his chapter, *'The Carnival of the New Screen: From Hegemony to Isonomy'*, through evoking the ancient Greek conception of *isonomia*, or equality of political rights. The hope encapsulated in all of these positions is that YouTube, through facilitating new forms of open and democratic communication, will create a better informed and more equitable and diverse environment for rational political discussion.

However, as Burgess and Greene (2009) note, unlike the localised communities (the Enlightenment coffee houses) that guided Habermas's (1989) original account of the public sphere, on YouTube there is also the issue of 'the relationship between the individual and the 'community' in the face of globalisation and cultural difference.' Citing Gandy (2002, p. 458) they suggest that rather than issues of access to, or willingness to use, new media platforms, 'the 'real digital divide' is the result of a social shaping of new media toward the interests of already powerful social groups, marked by class-specific characteristics, including profound individualisation'. The argument they articulate is essentially that whilst access to communicative technologies may appear to offer the opportunity for a more democratic public sphere, there are broader social and cultural forces that may offer barriers to its realisation. While not without some optimistic hopes for YouTube, as Kellner (1995, 2) puts it, 'we must conceptualize the Internet and new media in terms of their embeddedness in the political economy, social relations, and political environment

within which they are produced, circulated, and received for a more correct understanding about its socio-political potential as well as its limitations' (cited in Kellner & Kim, 2010, p. 6) . Tracey (1998, p 263) suggests that this societal shaping has created a mediated social world that is 'profoundly individualistic and definitely not collective, public, shared, or coherent'. In summarising such assessments of YouTube in the face of such atomisation, Burgess and Greene (2009, p. 79) likewise contend that 'infinite customisation and the proliferation of 'niche markets' do not necessarily result in a more democratic participatory culture, regardless of whether the culture is produced by individuals or corporations'.

Furthermore, in spite of YouTube's 'bottom-up' 'broadcast yourself' origins, and the initial challenges its culture presented to the traditional media industry, as it has grown, so too have its commercial relationships with more traditional media outlets. Usually these relationships consist of agreeing to share revenue from the advertisements sold by YouTube that are embedded in and surrounding the content provided by the traditional media company. Corporate media companies such as Sony, BBC, CBS, and Universal have done deals with YouTube to include their content on the site (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009, p. 28). While YouTube still provides a platform for independent voices to offer political news and commentary, as May's (2010) research study 'WhoTube' demonstrated, the balance of power on YouTube appears to be shifting towards the established media organisations, particularly in regards to the presentation of 'news'.

Corporate media as a group, driven largely by the Associated Press, have steadily increased their share of the YouTube audience, encouraged by YouTube's pursuit of partnerships with established news organizations... AP content covers the gamut of news, but it has drawn the biggest audiences to videos that fit the culture of YouTube, which means attention to celebrity, technology, sports, and strange occurrences caught in raw videos like surveillance cameras. (May, 2010, p. 501)

In summarising the results of his study, May (2010) suggests that as YouTube becomes ever more integrated with the established media market 'more information is being sifted through the hands of the old information referees'. But he also suggests that the old 'referees are adjusting well to the tastes of YouTube users who want the information unfiltered, including information relating to serious news and

politics', contending that this is reflected in 'corporate content moving towards lighter 'non-political' fare'.

This perception of a preference towards this 'lighter fare' is reflected in figures from Digital Ethnography which show that 'the majority of YouTube videos are based on the dominant categories of corporate media productions; music (19.8%), entertainment (19.0%), comedy (13.4%), and sports (6.9%) (Digital Ethnography, 2008). Likewise, Time magazine's "Top 10 Viral Videos" also reveal that most of the videos in the list involve comedy, parody, spoof, music video, celebrity, or sensational materials that mostly recirculate the dominant corporate media spectacles' (Kellner & Kim, 2010, p. 25).

While not dismissing the democratising potential of the medium, these figures would appear to support the idea that the supra-logic of entertainment has been extended from television to YouTube, at least partly because it is being reproduced in the form of an internalisation of consumerist assumptions and practices among the bottom-up YouTube audience. Schroter (in Snickars & Vonderau, 2009, p.342) suggests that the appearance of 'democratisation' on YouTube actually has more to do with corporate culture and marketing than concepts of 'universal speech'.

YouTube is as participatory as market research, and as democratic as public opinion polls. The site is a machine for market research and opinion polls driven by various scopophilic and invocatory drives of its users. Hence, it does not transcend the given capitalist logic of competition and attention. (Schroter, in Snickars & Vonderau, 2009, p.342)

Another challenge to the idea of YouTube as a platform for a 'universal speech situation' comes from the culture of often hostile comments that have become associated with discussions on YouTube (Moor, Heuvelman & Verleur, 2010). This type of behaviour is generally known as 'flaming'. The term has its origins in the early computing community, with The Hacker's Dictionary (Steele et al., 1983) defining it as 'speaking rabidly or incessantly on an uninteresting topic or with a patently ridiculous attitude' (p. 158). Early researchers on computer mediated communication adopted the term, and have used it to indicate different kinds of uninhibited behaviours, such as 'expressing oneself more strongly on the computer than one would in other communication settings' (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984, p. 1130)

and 'the expression of strong and inflammatory opinions' (Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & McGuire, 1986, p. 161). Moor, Heuvelman & Verleur (2010) found that flaming is perceived as a prevalent communicative norm within YouTube discussions, with 38% of their survey respondents showing strong agreement, and 26.8% slightly agreeing with their question 'Is flaming common on YouTube?' Only 19.6% of respondents disagreed (p. 1540). Furthermore, the qualitative aspect of their research found that rather than being universally condemned, there is actually considerable support for flaming behaviours on YouTube. 'While some participants argued that it is a negative phenomenon, others explained that it is a funny way of interacting that is not to be taken too seriously or that it is a necessary side effect of vivid debate and freedom of speech' (Moor, Heuvelman & Verleur, 2010, p. 1543). It is important to take the 'normalisation' of this 'flaming culture' into account when conducting content analysis of YouTube discussions, as comments that may be considered highly offensive if posted on more traditional media sites have their intensity somewhat mitigated by their placement within a culture that, in some cases at least, views such modes of expression as legitimate, or even funny.

While the *technological platform* that underpins YouTube offers the possibility of an environment suitable for the realisation of Habermas's ideal 'public sphere' (1974), a universal speech situation, or an open domain of communicative rationality, it is questionable whether same can be said of YouTube as a *medium*. The challenges to the site's democratising potential come not only from the consolidation, or maturation, of YouTube's relationships with the traditional broadcast media industry, but also from the entertainment-orientated viewership decisions and often hostile cultural practices that have become prevalent amongst the YouTube audience.

2.3.3: Politics on YouTube

The 'freedom of speech' afforded to YouTube users coupled with the prevalence of a culture of flaming and negative comment (Moor, Heuvelman & Verleur, 2010), make it a potentially dangerous environment for politicians wishing to utilise it as a platform for advancing their political positions and campaigning goals. However, its subsumption and integration into the mainstream media has also made it a platform upon which many politicians feel they should have a presence (McKinney & Rill,

2009). While there have yet to be any 'broad sample' studies of an individual's political persona on YouTube, and the corpus of literature relating to politics on YouTube is still relatively limited (Church, 2010), there have been a number of studies focused on YouTube coverage of specific political events (Ward, 2008; Carlson & Strandberg, 2008; Church, 2010; Towner and Dulio, 2011; McKinney & Rill, 2009: etc). The results of these studies not only support the increasing role of YouTube in political discourse, but also appear to offer some support for this project's concern regarding the prevalence of the supra-logic of entertainment's role in the medium's representation of politics.

May (2010) suggests that while 'YouTube and the other online video providers are media largely focused on entertainment or lifestyle, during an election season they have shown the ability to serve as a viable political communication channel' (p. 508). English, Sweetser & Ancu (2011) suggest that watching YouTube videos was amongst the three most popular online activities during the 2008 US election campaign. Viewership figures produced during election season indicated that '35% of adult Web users had watched some form of political online videos as of June 15, 2008 (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2008) and 'more than 146 million people watched an average of 86 videos' during September 2008 (Eisenberg 2008).

However, this apparent level of interest in politics online could be considered somewhat misleading when one examines the types of political content being viewed. In their assessment of U.S. and Finnish election campaigns on YouTube, Carlson and Strandberg (2008) note that 'online videos have more leverage if they feature gaffes or similarly negative discrediting content rather than positive self-promotion content'. This was exemplified by the most popular video relating to the Finnish election involving a politician unwittingly being recorded making a racial slur. Similarly, in his assessment of the role of YouTube in the 2007 Australian elections, Ward (2008) found that the most viewed political content was not produced by political parties or broadcast media, but was amateur satirical clips, the most popular of which, produced by a Sydney student, depicted Labor Leader Kevin Rudd in the style of Mao Zedong in Chinese propaganda films. He also found that of the 64 videos uploaded on Labor's official YouTube 'channel' during the campaign, just one clip received more than 100,000 views before the end of the campaign' (ibid). This contrasted with 'Chairman Rudd' getting over 200,000 views.

In assessing the type of political content which draws an audience on YouTube, Burgess and Greene (2009) conclude that the modes of political engagement displayed in the types of 'political' videos that are popular on YouTube 'have as much to do with celebrity culture as they do with capital-P political culture'. They suggest that this is reflective of 'the tabloid media focus on individual candidates as media personalities' (ibid). This assessment is supported by Church (2010), who, in summarising the results of his content analysis of YouTube's 'Youchoose' 2008 US election channel (a 'channel' that grouped together election related content from various official and unofficial sources), suggests that "Youchoose' videos favour the candidate's character over political experience and explores the possibility that the medium promotes passive (rather than active) political engagement on the part of the user' (p. 124). In studying the effects of 'Youchoose' on young adults, Towner and Dulio (2011) found that those exposed to it exhibited heightened cynicism towards the government, yet expressed no change in attitudes towards individual candidates.

All of these findings suggest support for this project's assumption that within a medium dominated by a supra-logic of entertainment, clips containing policy speeches, investigative journalism and debates about ideas are unlikely to 'rate' highly on YouTube. What is more likely to rate are the types of 'gaffes' and 'personal controversies' that are often mainstays of the televised presentations of politics that Postman (1986) criticised. Unlike traditional media, where the portion of the broadcast/broadsheet which can be allocated to such themes is somewhat limited by the need for a balance of content within a bulletin - what Galtung and Ruge (1965) characterise as the news value of 'composition - the political content available to the audience on YouTube is not bound by any such constraints. Thus, unchecked, an internalisation, or even an amplification, of the most sensational mainstream media logics may come to dominate the political discourse on YouTube, in the process drowning out the more nuanced and thoughtful positions that the web 2.0 optimists hoped would find voice.

2.4: Silvio Berlusconi

2.4.1: Berlusconi's Identity and Career

Born into a middle class Milanese family in 1936, Silvio Berlusconi's career path began with the study of law and various jobs as a musician, including a much publicised stint as a cruise ship crooner (Stille, 2005). His rise to prominence began with his entry into the construction industry in the early 1960s. However, it was a side-effect of his success in construction that set him on the path to becoming a media mogul. After developing the 10,000+ apartment complex Milano 2, Berlusconi began a small channel to broadcast to its residents in 1973. In 1977 he relocated the station to central Milan and began broadcasting to the general public. In 1978 Berlusconi formed the Fininvest media group, and began purchasing regional channels, and running similar programming on all of them, in effect creating a private national broadcast network. This was illegal in Italy at the time. In 1984, via an emergency degree provided by Berlusconi's friend, later convicted of corruption, the then Italian Socialist Party leader, Benito Craxi (Ginsborg, 2005), Berlusconi's holdings were nominally legalised. Legal issues still surrounded the status of his channels, however, and they were not granted full rights, such as permission to produce news content, until 1990, breaking a monopoly that until then been held by state broadcaster RAI (Hibberd, 2007).

Berlusconi's entrance into politics followed not long after, with the emergence of an opportunity created by what has become known as the 'clean hands' period. Beginning in 1992, campaigning Milanese judges shook the traditional Italian political system to its core, with a series of trials resulting in the convictions of many prominent politicians, in the process destroying the credibility of the political parties that had traditionally dominated Italian politics. Up until this point Ginsborg suggests that Berlusconi was content to occupy the traditional role of a media tycoon:

The 'normal' relationship in a neoliberal democracy between the media tycoon and sympathetic politicians was in full swing. Each had its own sphere of operations. The media tycoon lurks behind the politics, but is not in politics. He derives advantage from the actions of sympathetic politicians, he repays it with conspicuous and benevolent treatment of the same. (Ginsborg, 2005, p. 57)

The 'clean hands' campaign would destroy this cosy relationship for Berlusconi, by removing many of his client/patron politicians from the established political scene. On the other hand, the raft of prosecutions that destroyed the credibility of the major parties created a void at the political centre. It was a void into which Berlusconi would thrust himself. Already well known to the Italian public through his roles as media magnate, lobbyist for media reform, and as owner of the successful AC Milan football team, Berlusconi described the political scene in the Italy of 1993, using the terminology of football: 'I heard that the game was getting dangerous, and that it was all being played in the penalty areas, with the midfield being left desolately empty' (Semino and Masci, 1996). Berlusconi's put his media experience into action in the creation of new party named Forza Italia, meaning 'forward Italy', a phrase synonymous with support for the national football team. Citing Riotta (1994) and McCarthy (1996), Ginsborg (2005) argues that 'in order to choose the name and image of the new political party, he employed all of the considerable marketing, advertising and polling techniques of his organisation. Never in Italy had a political force been studied so minutely and scientifically, and never before had it assumed the form of a party so closely linked to a single business enterprise' (p. 65). Berlusconi announced his official entry into politics in January of 1994 by sending a video cassette of a speech recorded at his villa to RAI, his own channels and Reuters. In his speech he announced:

Italy is the country I love. Here I have my roots, my hopes, my horizons. Here I have learned, from my father and from life, how to be an entrepreneur. Here I have acquired my passion for liberty... Never as in this moment does Italy need people of a certain experience, with their heads on their shoulders, able to give the country a helping hand and to make the state function... If the political system is to work, it is essential that there emerges a 'pole of liberty' in opposition to the left-wing cartel, a pole which is capable of attracting to it the best of Italy which is honest, reasonable, modern.'

Silvio Berlusconi – quoted in Ginsborg, (2005, p. 66)

In essence, if viewed through the lenses of Marshall's celebrity system (1997), with the use of such references as 'entrepreneur', and 'people of a certain experience', and through the offer to '*give the country a helping hand*', this speech appears to

have been designed to facilitate his distinction as a 'celebrity businessman' being used as the criteria of validation within his new domain, a domain Berlusconi himself referred to as the 'small theatre of politics' (Pasquino, 2008. p. 346). Citing Berlusconi's own understanding of celebrity's ability to transfer across domains, Stille (2006, p. 291) suggests that in spite of being Italy's richest man, Berlusconi's has used his status as a 'soccer mogul' to confer upon himself a 'working-class appeal', presenting himself as 'a regular guy the average Italian male would love to buy a beer for in exchange for hearing about the sexual exploits of their favourite soccer star'.

Berlusconi's centre-right coalition was victorious, having won with what Ginsborg (2005, p. 67) describes as a quintessentially American campaign, 'personalised and glamorous'. Cheles (2006) goes significantly further, referring to the degree of personalisation in Berlusconi's campaign as rendering it a 'megalomaniac, omnipresent and self-centred campaign—a campaign that was styled on commercial advertising', and suggesting that the last time Italy had seen such a degree of personalisation in a political campaign was under the fascist dictator Mussolini, and that Berlusconi's 'propaganda' has a 'a pervasiveness and intensity unequalled in a Western democracy' (p. 41).

In spite of his resounding victory, Berlusconi's first term as Prime Minister was short lived, with his government falling to internal divisions within the year. Rather than disappearing from the political scene, Berlusconi remained in politics in opposition, awaiting another opportunity to win power. This occurred in 2001 when his block won power in elections with the largest majority in Italy's democratic history (Donovan, 2001). This time around, he saw out his term, and won a second, before being defeated by leftist candidate Romano Prodi in 2006. Again, Berlusconi was undeterred, and after Prodi's 'Olive coalition' crumbled in 2008, he was able to win the subsequent general election, again becoming Prime Minister, a position he occupied until late 2011. Donovan (2001) suggests that substantive policy issues have been marginalised in these campaigns, characterising Italian elections since 1994 as essentially being 'referendums pro – or anti-Berlusconi', thus, even in victory, having failed to gain a mandate to enact policies.

2.4.2: Berlusconi as a Mediatized Political Product

Central to many critics' concerns about Berlusconi is his possession of what is widely considered to be an unusually high level of mainstream media control for a leader of a Western democratic state (Andrews 2009). Hibberd (2007) argues that Berlusconi directly, or indirectly, controls up to 85 per cent of the broadcast media within Italy, and that media freedom has gone backwards during his tenures as Prime Minister, with Berlusconi legislating in favour of his own media and political interests. Donovan (2001) suggests that Berlusconi's amassing of such political, media, and economic power 'represents a challenge to Italian democracy itself'. Hibberd (2007) also makes the point that, whilst many large media firms seek to influence politics through lobbying and public opinion shaping, Berlusconi is unique in Western democracies in that he has decided to 'lead the country from the front' (ibid). Furthermore Stille (2006) contends that it was Berlusconi's Mediaset who 'invented a loud, highly partisan, bullying style of television news that in many ways anticipated Fox news and others' (p. 38). Reflective of this assessment of the Italian media environment, Andrews (2009) suggests that 'the country is at present dominated by intolerant public discourses and veering towards authoritarian solutions', and attributes this situation largely to Berlusconi controlled media. Offering an indictment of Berlusconi's use of journalism as 'a mere political weapon', Stille (2006) also suggests that Berlusconi's manipulation of journalists and editors offers a new 'power paradigm' that is now being 'echoed in America and elsewhere' (p. 33), concluding that whilst Berlusconi may be a uniquely Italian figure, his approach to governance and the media control may become a more internationally replicated model in the future. Gilbert (2006) suggests that it has been since the mid-90s that 'Berlusconi has pioneered a meretricious, media driven, postmodern brand of politics that accentuates his image, glosses over inconvenient facts, focuses attention on his personality, rather than the traditions and programme of the party he leads'. While focussing on different aspects of Berlusconi's media control, all of these critics view it as the central component of his political rise and electoral successes.

It is within this political and media environment that Berlusconi has been able to deploy what Ginsberg (2005) describes as 'his profound experience of the modern techniques of communication' (p. 102), to create a celebrity persona that has clearly provided a sense of representation to a number of Italians during his near twenty

years in public political life. He describes the persona that Berlusconi has developed as being one which 'through his joke-telling and clowning at international meetings, his perpetual smile and expansive body language (right arm draped paternally around the shoulders of a colleague or friend), tries to foster an image of himself, reassuring and dynamic at the same time'(ibid). Stille (2006) suggests that he projected an image with the same contagious optimism as Ronald Reagan (pg. 36).

In trying to get a handle on Berlusconi the political figure, Pasquino (2007) contends that a separate assessment of each of the five most important roles that Berlusconi has played, which he describes as 'the five faces of Berlusconi', is the best way to understand his impact on Italian politics. The roles he identifies are those of 'party builder, coalition maker, institution builder, Prime Minister, and opinion leader', suggesting that his real strengths lie in the four categories other than that of Prime Minister, citing a prominence of 'Berlusconi the politician' over 'Berlusconi the premier' (ibid). This assessment could be equated to suggesting that the image of Berlusconi often takes precedence over his role as Prime Minister. This type of assessment is of particular interest given this project's attempt to relate Berlusconi to celebrity politician typologies. Pasquino's position is supported by Roncarlo (2007) who suggests that 'there is a weak link between Berlusconi's drive for personal popularity and building support for government policy'. In the language of marketing, Pasquino (2007) describes Berlusconi as 'a true political entrepreneur' in that, through himself and his party, he created a new political product and brought it to market (2007, p. 41).

Paolucci (2006) further expands the investigation of Berlusconi's 'political product', focussing on the formation of his original political vehicle Forza Italia. She contends that Berlusconi 'has seemingly introduced fundamental innovations in many fields of politics: new campaign methods, a new leadership style and language, new coalition strategies and ideological contents' (p. 163). She suggests that these developments have 'had a considerable impact on the party and the political system, political communication, party platforms and governmental programmes, the contents of legislative output and, arguably, also the quality of Italian democracy' (ibid)'. Paolucci (2006) places the rise of Forza Italia within a theory originally suggested by Kirchheimer (1966) who anticipated a transition from 'mass political parties' of the earlier 20th Century, towards 'catch-all political parties' in post-war Europe. Paolucci

(2006) defines 'catch-all parties', like Berlusconi's Forza Italia creation, as having their main organisational characteristics as; 'a distancing from ideology; leadership centrality; organisational centralisation; lack of bureaucratic structures; fewer members and activists; financing through external sources; use of the media to reach out to the electorate, and greater professionalism of party functions' (p. 163). In support of this assessment, Mancini (2000) holds up Forza Italia as exemplifying the way in which 'the old and new political parties increasingly have left to the mass media the communication functions that the parties formerly carried out through their far-reaching and multi-layered organizational structures of thousands of activists and supporters who constituted a close and diffused network of interpersonal communications' (p. 321). Reliant on such high levels of mediation for their success, it may be argued that these parties are amongst the purest manifestations of a politics which has the entertainment industry derived logics of marketing and public relations as their ordinary source. That is say that a party like Forza Italia is the embodiment of what Street (2004) emphasises when he characterises 'political marketing' as 'politics is marketing', and that Berlusconi embodies the figure of the 'personalised' political leader. Paolucci (2006) also states that 'the consequences of the predominance of this party type are unanimously considered to be quite negative' (p. 163). Like Mancini (2000), she suggests that Forza Italia can be understood as an arch-proponent of the marketing-driven mediated political organisational model.

It is Berlusconi's status as a politician with substantial domestic media control through television, who arguably exemplifies general trends in a mediatised/image based celebrified politics, that make his representation by others on a new medium such as YouTube an appealing case study to analyse. The interest lies in assessing how Berlusconi's televisual persona plays with an audience that is supposedly freed from the top-down narratives associated with the traditional broadcast mediums for which his persona has arguably been constructed.

2.5: Conclusion

This literature review has sought to describe the relationship between the discursively interlinked logics of entertainment and the celebrification of politics, proposing that the celebrification of politics may be considered as indicative of the

supra-logic of entertainment, of which celebrification may be considered a constituent and inter-related element. 'Celebrities politician typologies' were introduced, and perspectives 'for' and 'against' the celebrification of politics were reviewed. The rise of YouTube was discussed with reference to the hope that it may come to empower the public sphere, and the challenges that both the viewership culture of the site and its expanding relationships with traditional broadcast media pose to the more optimistic analyses. Finally, the review offered a summary of Silvio Berlusconi's political career, and detailed his unusually close association to the logics of television, an association that could see him considered emblematic of these logics. With Berlusconi chosen as a suitable case study for analysing how politics is represented on YouTube, the next chapter will discuss the methodology that will be used to carry out this empirical investigation.

3: Methodology

3.1: Introduction

This overview introduces some of the key concepts associated with this project's use of a content analysis methodology. Rosengren (1981) describes content analysis as a 'family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses' (p. 9). Diefenbach (2001) suggests that the purpose of a content analysis methodology 'is ultimately about making inferences from documents to tell us something about individuals, societies, and cultures' (p. 37).

This chapter is organised into four core sections. Section 3.2, 'Quantitative vs. Qualitative: The Historical Development of Content Analysis', offers a brief historical overview of the research tradition within which this project is situated. In particular it discusses the rigid 'quantitative vs. qualitative' dichotomy that has come to characterise methodological approaches within the field (Bruhn Jensen, 2002). Representative of a traditional quantitative focus, Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications' (p. 74). Krippendorff (2004, p. 19) suggests that contemporary definitions of content analysis essentially take three forms: '1) Definitions that take content to be inherent to a text, 2) definitions that take content to be a property of the source of a text, and 3) definitions that take content to emerge in the process of a researcher analysing a text relative to a particular context'. Like Krippendorff (ibid), this project identifies most closely with the third definition. As many of the clips on YouTube are, or have been, transmitted on other mediums, its rejection of the ideas the content is inherent to a text, or lies with its author, are particularly relevant. These earlier definitions would suggest that a television 'news' clip, posted to YouTube, would have the same meaning to a, temporally and spatially removed, YouTube audience as it would have for those watching it in an original television news bulletin. As such, these definitions are incompatible with conceptions of mediums (McLuhan, 1964; Postman, 1986) that this project takes inspiration from.

As was foreshadowed in the introductory chapter, the methodological inspiration for this project comes largely from Krippendorff's (2004) content analysis framework; a framework which attempts to transcend the traditional distinctions between quantitative and qualitative analysis. Similarly, Bruhn Jensen (2002, p. 254) argues that quantitative and qualitative methods have 'complementarity', with 'both mainstreams [quantitatively and qualitatively focussed research] having different strengths, that might proceed in parallel'. However, rather than suggesting that 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' content analysis represent fundamentally different approaches, Krippendorff questions the usefulness of this traditional methodological distinction, asserting that 'ultimately all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of texts are latter converted into numbers' (2004, p. 16). This position suggests that even through things like the establishment of what categories to quantitatively record, a certain degree of qualitative input is going to guide the construction of those analyses. Krippendorff (2004) states that his framework is intended to serve three purposes: 'to guide the conceptualisation and design of practical content analytic research; to facilitate the critical examination and comparison of the published content analyses; and to point to performance criteria and precautionary standards that researchers can apply in evaluating on-going content analyses' (p. 29).

Section 3.3, 'Design and Construction of Research' discusses the technical details of how this study was constructed with reference to Krippendorff's guidelines. The criteria through which the 51 clip sample of Silvio Berlusconi related discourse was produced is described, and the rationale behind its formulation explained. The choice of a 'top ten clip themes' structure to organise this study's results and findings is also discussed and explained. Similarly, issues regarding the nature of this study's 'inferential logic', and the 'validity' of its results are addressed. The sub-section 'Analytical Constructs Guiding this Study' describes the two key analytical constructs that have been applied. Following the concerns of the literature review, the study's search for discursively interlinked (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) quantitative and qualitative 'markers' of the logics of entertainment (Postman, 1986) and celebrification of politics (Marshall, 1997; West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004) is discussed and explained. This section focuses predominantly on this project's application of Burkean identification (Burke, 1950), as a supplement to the celebrity

politician typologies, in addressing the question of how audiences come to identify and disidentify with Berlusconi. The use of this identification/disidentification dialectal couplet is explained and discussed, and Burke's individual modes for discerning the practices of identification and disidentification are introduced. Finally, this section explains the analytical rationale for the headings utilised in the Discussion chapter.

Section 3.4, 'Ethical Concerns and The Presentation of research Data', addresses ethical concerns relating to protecting YouTube users' privacy during the collection and presentation of research data. Issues arising from the frequent use of potentially offensive language in YouTube discussions are also discussed.

3.2: Quantitative vs. Qualitative: The Development of Content Analysis

Content analysis is the statistical semantics of political discourse. (Kaplan, 1943, p. 230)

This section describes the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis, and offers a brief historical overview of the development of content analysis, concluding with Krippendorff's (2004) assessment of the field today.

Quantitative content analysis involves organising text data into explicit categories described using statistics (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As such, quantitative research methodologies are well suited to establishing the frequency of 'events or objects' (Bruhn Jensen, 2002, p. 255). Morgan (1993) characterises this approach as a quantitative analysis of qualitative data. Qualitative content analysis, in contrast, has traditionally focused more on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967; Lindkvist, 1981; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Bruhn Jensen (2002, p. 255) describes qualitative approaches as 'exploring the *occurrence* of meaningful phenomena, but with reference to their full context' (emphasis in original).

Early content analysts were spurred into research by the dominant medium of their time: newspapers. Diefenbach (2001) suggests that early content analyses were

'driven by two research questions: (1) are market forces responsible for a decline in the quality of the American press; (2) are press portrayals distortions of reality?' (p. 16). One of the earliest formal exercises in what might be retrospectively considered content analysis (the actual term was coined by Waples & Berelson (1941)) was Speed's (1893) 'newspaper analysis' research entitled '*Do newspapers give you the news?*' Speed recorded the thematic contents of New York newspapers between 1891 and 1893, finding that they had dropped their coverage of religious, scientific and literary matters in favour of, gossip, sports and scandal. Similar studies into the 'decline of the press' were also undertaken by Mathews (1910) Street (1909) and Wilcox (1900). By measuring the column inches that newspapers devoted to particular subject matters, early researchers attempted to 'reveal the truth about newspapers' (Street, 1909). This initial 'measurement' approach can be largely attributed to the respect that a classic social scientific tradition has for quantitative methods (Diefenbach, 2001; Krippendorff, 2004). However, even in these 'quantitative' studies, specific content within the empirical object being examined was highlighted in order to demonstrate instances of 'yellow journalism' (or what might now be referred to as sensationalised tabloid reporting), thus arguably demonstrating a qualitative element. To address concerns about press distortions of reality, a more explicitly qualitatively oriented methodology was developed by Lippmann and Merz (1920), who compared the *New York Times* coverage of events on the Russian Front during World War 1 to undisputed facts uncovered after the war, concluding that 'the Time's coverage was inadequate and misleading'. This type of approach might be considered to have foreshadowed the increasing role that qualitative approaches to content analysis would play in the field during World War 2.

World War 2 saw the Broadcast Intelligence Service of the U.S. Federal Communication Commission (the FCC), headed by Hans Speier, and the Experimental Division for Wartime Communications of the U.S. Library of Congress headed by Harold D. Lasswell, undertake large-scale assessments of Axis media and propaganda materials (Diefenbach, 2001; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 9). The FCC group's focus was on the social and political context surrounding the production and reception of messages. As such, it used a looser set of qualitative methods to 'analyse domestic enemy broadcasts and surrounding conditions to understand and predict events within Nazi Germany and other Axis countries, and to estimate the

effects of Allied military action on the war mood of enemy populations' (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 9). In examining the processes and findings of the FCC group following the war, George (1959 p. 264) found through referencing the FCC's records against Nazi and Italian Fascist archives, that 85% of the FCC's inferences were correct. Krippendorff (2004) suggests that, in spite of the FCC's successes, Lasswell and others continued to believe that 'quantification was the sole basis of scientific insights', in spite of his quantitative focussed approach to propaganda analysis producing 'very few tangible results compared with the work of the FCC group of scholars' (p. 11). Likewise, Berelson (1952) continued to claim that content resides within a text, and that non-manifest content (or latent content; a text's underlying or implicit meaning) is not identifiable and so cannot be studied scientifically. Krippendorff does not support this manifest/latent dichotomy because he views reading as a 'fundamentally qualitative process', and suggests that definitions focussing on manifest content 'exclude reading between the lines. This perspective is reflected in this project's approach. However, for purposes of definition, Hair et al (1998) describe latent content as consisting of 'unobserved concepts that cannot be measured directly but can be represented or measured by one or more indicators' (p. 558) (cited in Neuendorf, 2002, p. 23). Thus, from this perspective, the articulation of a supra-logic of entertainment would be seen as an inherently latent concept that cannot be simply be read in some "manifest" or "quantitative" way.

In the post war period content analysis techniques were adopted by researchers from disciplines ranging from history and anthropology to political science and psychology (Diefenbach, 2001). Recognising these expanding usages, an interdisciplinary conference was held 1955 to bring together the expanding knowledge of the method. The results of the conference were published in '*Trends in content analysis*' (Pool, 1959a). Pool noted that there was a distinct convergence of ideas from the participants in regards to two areas:

'They exhibited (a) a shift from analysing 'content' to drawing inferences about the antecedent conditions of communications, and (b) an accompanying shift from measuring volumes of subject matter to counting simple frequencies of symbols, and then relying on contingencies (co-occurrences) (Pool, 1959, p. 2).

These findings acknowledged the important role of qualitative analysis, and its value in extrapolating information from the quantitative base upon which traditional content analysis research (Berelson, Lasswell, etc) was built. This is to say that, post-war, an increased focus has been placed on the context surrounding the production and consumption of the meaning of messages, as opposed to the focus being placed squarely on the quantifiable content of the message itself. This contributed to content analysis developing into an appealing, and flexible, methodology for researchers in fields as diverse as semiotics (Metz, 1974), discourse analysis (Phelan, 2009) and narrative analysis (Propp, 1968), amongst others. That said, not everybody agrees with a move towards more qualitatively orientated approaches, with the likes of Neuendorf (2002) still defining content analysis in terms of quantification.

In summarising the state of content analysis today, Krippendorff (2004, pg 17) suggests that 'content analysis has evolved into a repertoire of methods of research that promise to yield inference from all kinds of verbal, pictorial, symbolic and communication data'. He defines it as 'a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use'. This position as to the nature of content analysis is well summarised by Ford (2004), 'The conception of content has evolved from an inherent property of text, through a property of text authors, to the modern perspective that content is always analysed from a particular perspective in a specific context.' (p. 1111)

3.3: Design and Construction of Empirical Research Object

This section addresses how the texts upon which this study is empirically based were selected, how its methodology has been conceptualised within Krippendorff's framework (2004), and how its findings have been organised for analysis and presentation in the results and discussion chapters.

Working from a position of general agreement with Bruhn Jensen (2002) and Krippendorff (2004) as to the complementary nature of the relationship between content analysis's quantitative and qualitative aspects, it was a pragmatic decision to take guidance from Krippendorff's 'content analysis framework'. The framework he

proposes accommodates both a quantitative focus on the statistical aspects of the YouTube data and a qualitative examination of the prevalence of the entertainment supra-logic, and when considered as a supplement to the celebrity politician typologies (West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004), what Burkean modes of identification and disidentification (1950) with Berlusconi, are present within the sample.

'Texts, research questions, context, analytical constructs, inferences, and validating evidence' are the 'six elements' which Krippendorff (2004, p. 29) believes must be addressed in the formulation of any content analysis project in order to successfully utilise the method. Which the exception of the project's context, which has been outlined in the introduction and literature review chapters, the remaining methodological elements are discussed in the passages below.

3.3.1: Sample Texts

The criteria for a clip's inclusion amongst the sample texts were as follows; A) that the clip resulted from the search term 'Silvio Berlusconi', B) that the majority of the discussion resultant from the clip was in English, and C) that the clip had been viewed in excess of 10,000 times. As of September 5th 2010, a total of 51 clips met these criteria.

To determine whether clips had majority English language discussion, all clips resulting from the search query were clicked on and viewed. The 'view all comments' option was then utilised. 'Google Toolbar's' language settings were set to display a 'translate' option if English was not the majority language on the page. Clips with discussions that triggered the 'translate' option were excluded from the study. The 10,000 view cut-off for a clip's inclusion was added as a criterion during the data harvesting process with the realisation that, with the most viewed clip having received 687,497 views, the 51st clip recorded, having received only 10,186 views, had a viewership less than 1.5% of that of the most viewed clip. As the aim of this project was to assess a sample of the 'mass' YouTube English language discourse about Berlusconi, it was determined that little would be added to the study simply by adding more clips, as additional clip's viewership became ever less 'mass'.

Combined, these clips had been viewed 4,803,799 times, and 14,490 comments had been offered in response to them. Although only 5803 users utilised YouTube's 'like/dislike' function, this function is of interest. If YouTube is to be considered primarily as a platform for entertainment, then the 'like/dislike' question might fairly be considered the equivalent of 'did this clip entertain you?/did this clip fail to entertain you?'. Comparing these types of engagement to the total viewership of clips allowed for percentages reflecting levels of audience interactions to be established, making for easy assessment of the comparative frequency of statistical reactions to various clips, regardless of their level of viewership. The viewership levels of the clips and the numbers of comments, 'likes' and 'dislikes', made about them offer one set of this project's quantitative results. There are thus three main types of interrelated texts being analysed within this sample: the YouTube clips themselves, their related viewership data, and the comments that are posted by users in relation to the clips.

Another set of quantitative results comes in the form of a word frequency list derived from running Oxford Wordsmith linguistic analysis software on a corpus of comments consisting of all those left in response to the clips in the sample. While this programme allows for more sophisticated corpus linguistic applications (Baker et al, 2008), in this case, the list was used only to establish how frequently other politicians were cited in the clips, and to give a basic quantitative measure of words that appeared prominent, or were relevant to themes of interest, during the qualitative analysis of comments - words like 'Mafia' and 'media'. That the word 'Mafia' appears 398 times, compared to 'media' appearing only 216 times, offers a very basic 'face' indicator as to the respective frequencies of these themes.

In a pragmatic procedural sense, rather than attempting to analyse all 51 clips individually, the primary analytical focus of this study falls on the ten most frequently viewed interactions and events. These are referred to within the results section as 'clip themes'. Clips relating to the same incident, or that have closely related thematic content, have been grouped together for analytical purposes. An example of an 'incident' based clip theme is 'The attack on Berlusconi'. All 13 clips in the sample that relate to the attack have been grouped together, regardless of different framings, or emphases within their content. 'Bush Press Ops' is an example of grouping by similar thematic content. There are three clips in the sample in which Berlusconi and Bush appear together in orchestrated press opportunities. Two of the clips depict the

same press opportunity, while the third depicts another press opportunity from the same trip. They have been grouped together as, although the clips' content is different, the basic theme, the combination of Berlusconi and Bush remains the same. A similar logic has been applied with the themes 'Putin press Ops' and 'Gaddafi Meetings' which are organised around different Berlusconi interactions with both Putin and Gaddafi.

Of the 51 clips that met the selection criteria, 37 are representations of these 'top ten clip themes'. Views of these ten clip themes account for 91.97% of the total viewership of clips contained within the study. Comments made in response to these clip themes account for 95.18% of the total comments contained within the corpus. Approaching the sample in this manner allowed the vast majority of clip content to be covered, whilst also preventing the study from becoming too unwieldy. Sometimes, however, the rankings attained by individual clips are mentioned. This is not intended to confuse the reader. Rather, it is sometimes necessary in order to highlight how 'entertaining' framings/ of clips can influence their level of viewership when compared to less colourful representations of the same events.

While some of the clips that have been included in the corpus originate from traditional television spaces (for instance 'Italian Leader Calls Obama 'Tanned)'), on YouTube they have been removed from this context both temporally and spatially. They are no longer a part of any 'current' news bulletin. Yet perhaps the more important change in context, in regards to this project, is that the audience reacting to the clips, which is hypothetically an audience largely outside of Italy, should not have been as directly influenced by any media attempts by Berlusconi to shape their opinions of him. As those outside Italy are unlikely to be directly affected by Berlusconi's government's actions, this removal of the Italian media's influence on the audience, should in theory lead to a less 'polluted' audience than one might find were you to assess only Italians' reactions to the clips. As Berlusconi's sphere of direct political and media influence has likely less concrete effects on much of this transnational audience, their comments about him are likely to be less influenced by the real consequences of formal Italian politics than those from Italians, and therefore it can be presumed that they are as likely to be reacting to 'Berlusconi the celebrity' as 'Berlusconi their Prime Minister'. It is these forms of celebrified political identification and disidentification that this project looks to analyse.

3.3.2: Research Questions

As discussed in the introduction chapter, and elaborated on in the literature review, it is this combination of interests in exploring the discursive links between entertainment, celebrity, politics and identification within these texts that led to the formulation of the research questions posed below. The primary research questions look to identify the types of celebrified discourses evident within the sample, and the extent to which they are present. The second question seeks to link Berlusconi to existing celebrity politician typologies, and use Burkean identification (1950) to assess how audience articulations of support for Berlusconi may be associated with the various celebrity politician types.

Primary Research Questions: What discourses about politics, celebrity and the supra-logic of entertainment are articulated through the types of footage of Silvio Berlusconi attracting viewership on YouTube, and in the comments resultant from that viewership? And to what extent are the transnational popular discourses on YouTube about Berlusconi indicative of ‘celebrity politics’ and the ‘supra-logic of entertainment’?

Secondary Research Questions: How comfortably does Berlusconi reside within the theoretical frameworks offered by either of the ‘celebrity politician’ typologies proposed by Street (2004) and West & Orman (2002)? And how might this study’s use of Postman’s supra-logic of entertainment and the theoretical framework of Burkean identification help extend the existing typologies?

3.3.3: Inferences

The answers reached through qualitative content analysis are inherently inferential in nature (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 36). Inferential logic involves deriving logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true. Krippendorff (2004) identifies three types of inferential logic; deductive, inductive, and abductive, citing abductive inferences as the type utilised within the content analysis framework he prescribes. ‘Abductive inferences proceed across logically distinct domains, from particulars of one kind to particulars of another’ (p. 36). Krippendorff cites Toulmin’s (1958) theory of argumentation, ‘Data + Warrant with Backing = Qualification and

Conclusion', to describe how one supports abductive claims resulting from an analysis. Essentially, this analysis uses the YouTube clips, their associated statistics, the comments made about them, and a corpus of comments as 'data'. The analytical constructs, that operationalise the body of literature that inspired them, act as the 'warrant with backing', and offer 'qualification' to conclusions as they are inferred within the subsequent discussion.

3.3.4: Validating Evidence:

According to Krippendorff (2004), 'a content analysis is valid if the inferences drawn from the available texts withstand the test of independently available evidence, of new observations, of competing theories or interpretations, or of being able to inform successful actions' (p. 313). He also suggests that content analysis should be validatable in principle, but 'because the *raison d'être* of content analysis is the absence of direct observational evidence, validation may be difficult or infeasible, if not impossible, in practice' (p. 39). In the case of this project's results and conclusions, some of this 'ex post facto' validation can be found in the form of quantitative research conducted by organisations such as TubeMogul, Digital Ethnography and Nielsenwire regarding YouTube's clip content and commonly used tags, that align with this project's supposition and findings about the prevalence of entertainment related themes on YouTube. Likewise, this project's results also have a strong qualitative correlation to the assessments of what types of political content attracts YouTube audiences provided by the likes of May (2010), Ward (2008), Carlson and Strandberg (2008), Church (2010) and others. That these findings of others are largely congruent with the results of this project lends a degree of confidence to the findings presented in the following chapters.

3.3.5: Analytical Constructs Guiding this Study

The two main analytical constructs that 'operationalise the theoretical context informing this study', and provide 'the network of correlations that are assumed to explain how the texts have been connected to the answers' (Krippendorff 2004, p.35) that have been used to assess the sample are the supra-logic of entertainment and

the discursively inter-linked logics of celebrification, and Burkean identification (1950). The disproportionate coverage given to them here is reflective of entertainment/celebrification having already been addressed in the introduction and literature review chapters, whilst Burkean identification, and its modes, are only fully introduced and described with regards to their application and possible relationship to the celebrity politician typologies, here.

The first analytical construct ties the logics of the celebrification of politics into the broader system of celebrity, and the political economic aspects of media systems in which the concept of celebrity is housed. The celebrification of politics might be considered discursively interlinked with the supra-logic of entertainment, meaning that clips and comments that respectively display logics associated with entertainment values may also be equated with the processes of celebrification with which this project is concerned. Likewise, articulations of humour, or audience interactions indicating that content has been enjoyed, might also be interpreted as having a discursively intertwined relationship with these entertainment values. Another key assumption is that within the medium of YouTube, 'entertainment' might be considered a supra-logic, meaning that outside of the profit motive, entertainment is one of the key reasons for YouTube's existence. Taking this into account, it is presumed that fulfilment of this entertainment value plays a central role in how audiences construct identification with the content they are engaging with.

The other key analytical construct employed is derived from Burkean rhetoric (1950). Burke expands traditional conceptions of rhetoric as 'persuasion' through the addition of his central concept of 'identification', arguing that persuasion is only possible in so much as the audience might identify with the rhetorical agent. In Burke's conception, this makes 'identification' the master term of rhetoric, 'for persuasion is the result of identification' (Burke, 1950, p. 46).

Burke views identification as synonymous with 'consubstantiality', using the terms interchangeably in his writing. To Burke consubstantiality occurs when 'A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so' (Burke, 1950, p. 20). Burke not only describes how identification can occur, but also recognises through his

acknowledgement of the self as dynamic and socially constituted (Burke, 1950, p 23), that any sense of identification established around a perception of some shared interest with another is shifting and contextual. His position also acknowledges that identification (and its antithesis – disidentification) can potentially be false and illusory, or work unconsciously. This project investigates how some members of the YouTube audience articulate a sense of consubstantiality with Berlusconi, and the discursive themes around which this consubstantiality appears to be most commonly established. If Berlusconi may be associated strongly with particular celebrity politician typologies, then the appeal of figures of that typology might be related to certain modes of Burkean identification; or the pathways to consubstantiality.

Within Burke's conception of rhetoric, people simultaneously define themselves not only through consubstantiality with those people or things that they identify with, but also through separating themselves from those people or things with which they choose not to identify. These ideas have been embraced and developed by the likes of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) and Phelan (2010) who suggested identities are constituted through 'simultaneous moments of identification and disidentification' (p. 220). Within this project, the term 'disidentification' has been added to the vocabulary used for discussing Burke's 'separation'. The choice of an 'identification/disidentification dialectical couplet is a recognition of 'identification' transcending the idea of 'separation' in so much as consubstantiality interrogates the idea of two wholly distinct substances. Within Burke's conception, the master term of 'identification' incorporates separation. However, within many of the comments in the sample, little clue is offered as to what those making the comments identify with. In such instances, the dominant component of the identity being displayed is enacted through a wish to separate themselves from Berlusconi. What the users are 'consubstantial' with is less evident than what they are 'separate' from. In these instances, it would make little sense to reduce analysis of their motives to, an at best vague, 'identification', when it is only their display of 'disidentification' that one has to go on. Burke himself used a variety of terms such as 'division' 'alienation' and 'dissociation' to discuss the act of separation (Burke, 1950). The suggestion is that in the context of a YouTube discussion, where presentation of identity is limited by form, 'separation' can be presented in the absence of identifiable consubstantiality. So from an analytical standpoint, it seems more practical and consistent, to adopt an

'identification/disidentification' couplet as the master terminology in describing the locus of motives apparent when analysing certain users comments.

In applying the Burkean conception of rhetoric to the analysis of an object, text, or persona, identification can, in Burke's (1950) account, take on one of, or a combination, of three forms. Within this project these are referred to as the 'three modes of identification', and juxtaposed against 'three modes of disidentification' which represent an inversion of Burke's three forms. The first two modes identification/disidentification are interrelated and reflective of the couplet of 'the self' and 'the other'. The third mode, unconscious identification, is perhaps the most complex, and might be suggested to operate in much the same way regardless of whether the outcome of its articulation be identification or disidentification.

The first mode of identification is that of consubstantiality with another through the perception of similarity or shared interests. Within a discussion of a political figure, this might be reduced to the form of 'X is like me – therefore I identify with X'. The disidentification inversion of this mode takes the form of 'X is not like me – therefore I disidentify with X'.

The second mode of identification involves the creation of consubstantiality through an antithesis, where one identifies with another through the perception of sharing mutual enemies. This mode of identification can itself take on two distinct forms; firstly, 'Y is my enemy – Y is also the enemy of X – therefore I identify with X', and secondly, 'Y is the enemy of X – I identify with X – therefore Y is also my enemy'. The second mode of disidentification takes the form of separating one's self from another on account of who they are perceived to identify with. A practical example of how this works in the context of YouTube would be a user who watches footage of Berlusconi displaying identification with a better known political figure such as George Bush or Vladimir Putin. The user knows little of Berlusconi, but has already determined themselves to disidentify with the better known figure, so extends this disidentification to those that the familiar figure appears consubstantial with (in this case Berlusconi). This mode of disidentification might be reduced to the form of 'X is a friend of my enemy Y – therefore X is my enemy'. It is the absence of any display of consubstantiality, or identification with another, within this logical form that prompts

the characterisation of it in the stronger terms of 'disidentification', as opposed to those who are merely 'separated' from a represented 'self'.

The third mode of Burkean identification/disidentification is perhaps the most powerful, and can evoke persuasion on an unconscious level, where individuals may consciously disavow the identifications they are making. Burke suggests that unconscious identification 'derives from situations in which it goes unnoticed' (Burke, 1972, p 58). In the context of this project, unconscious identification might be suggested to occur through the audiences' unwitting internalisation of the logics that are shaping their viewing choices on YouTube, despite their often explicit critiques of these logics. Take for instance the supra-logic of entertainment and Marshall's (1997) suggestion of celebrity as a system of validation that transcends domains of distinction. A YouTube user may make a comment in which they strongly condemn Berlusconi's actions within a clip in big 'P' political terms, but then say words to the effect of 'but it did make for an entertaining spectacle'. Whilst they may be separating themselves from Berlusconi as a politician, they are simultaneously displaying a kind of identification with him as an entertainer. For instance; of the type West & Orman characterise as a 'famed non-politico'. To somebody reading the comment that has internalised a celebrity system of validation, the acknowledgement of Berlusconi's entertainment value, may hypothetically supersede any cognitive condemnation that prefaces it. Likewise, those praising Berlusconi as a political figure can sometimes hint at unconscious aspects of disidentification with him. This can take forms such as users particularly supporting Berlusconi on an issue of policy, yet only citing his entertainment value in support of their position. While their intent may be to praise, the logics displayed by the form this praise takes serves only to convey the message that they are unable to validate Berlusconi's behaviour in any reasoned political terms.

This type of unconscious identification/disidentification differs from traditional rhetoric in that it does not require the conscious action of an agent of persuasion outside of one's self:

Classical rhetoric stresses the element of explicit design in rhetorical enterprise. But one can systematically extend the range of rhetoric, if one studies persuasiveness of false or inadequate terms which may not be directly imposed

upon us from without by some skilful speaker, but which we impose upon ourselves, in varying degrees of deliberateness and unawareness, through motives indeterminately self-protective and/or suicidal" (Burke, 1950, p 35).

This suggestion that an individual might cognitively disidentify with another, while unconsciously reproducing a mode of identification with them, reflects Burke's (1950) contention that within an individual, rival factions of the self confront one another in a 'parry and thrust', yet may be said to 'cooperate in the building of an over-all form'. The existence of unconscious identification and disidentification in users' comments could therefore be equated to the individual's lack of self-recognition of the contradictory logics 'parrying and thrusting' for dominance in their over-all construction of self.

The analysis of user comments, presented in both the results and discussion sections respectively, takes the form of unpacking user comments that are illustrative of what appear to be the more frequently articulated positions within the discussion. Comments are analysed with reference to the modes of identification and disidentification discussed above. These modes can be most concisely summarised as 'identification through perception of similarity', 'disidentification through perception of dissimilarity', 'identification through perception of mutual enemies', 'disidentification through perception of identification with an enemy', and the 'unconscious', which takes a similar form, whether the results be identification or disidentification.

While this study looks at how the YouTube audience both identify and disidentify with Berlusconi, the majority of the analysis is dedicated to those comments that display identification with Berlusconi. This is not to suggest that comments criticising/disidentifying with Berlusconi have received less attention. Rather, it would seem more illuminating to focus on what is perhaps the less understood of the two positions towards him. As was covered in the earlier chapters, there are plentiful negative critiques of Berlusconi, from academics (Ginsborg, 2005; Pozzoli, 2005; Stille, 2006; Hibberd, 2007; etc) and media sources alike. In choosing to look more closely at those who identify with Berlusconi, the hope is to better understand why a section of the audience reject, or choose to overlook, the criticisms commonly directed at him.

Reflecting these interests, in political celebrification and identification, the discussion chapter is organised around the two main research questions guiding this study. The primary research question relating to the prevalence of the logics of celebrification are addressed under the headings 'The Absence of Big 'P' Politics', 'Audience Re-Appropriation and the Amplification of Performative Aspects: Politics as an Elite Situation Comedy', and 'Humour and the 'Good Celebrity Villain'. During the analysis process, these headings emerged as a seemingly logical structure through which the empirical sample, and some of the main themes evident in the sample, could be concisely covered. These broad headings were also chosen as they allow for coverage of the sample content that is not included within the 'top ten clip themes' structure of the 'Empirical Results' chapter to be discussed alongside coverage of the content that is. 'The Absence of Big 'P' Politics', and 'Audience Re-Appropriation and the Amplification of Performative Aspects: Politics as an Elite Situation Comedy', qualitatively describe the nature of the sample's thematic content, and modes in which presented/authored on YouTube respectively. 'Humour and the 'Good Celebrity Villain' focuses on how some audience members are articulating a paradoxical form of identification with Berlusconi, and how this might be related to the normalisation of such figures in other types of media narrative. The second question is addressed under headings that reflect its two part nature. 'Applying the Celebrity Politician Typologies to Berlusconi' assesses how different aspects of Berlusconi's representation might be related to the different typologies proposed by West and Orman (2002) and Street (2004). Drawing on this attempt 'match' Berlusconi to specific typologies, 'Identification as a Supplement to the Celebrity Politician Typologies' assesses how different modes of Burkean identification (1958) articulated in the sample might be related to specific celebrity politician types. These headings have been chosen in the hope that they might allow for a clear and concise discussion of the key issues raised by this project's empirical results.

3.4: Ethical Concerns and the Presentation of Research Data

The results and discussion chapters that follow are punctuated with comments left by YouTube users in response to clips. Those who have posted comments, while doing so in a public forum, have not offered explicit consent for their comments to be used in an academic study. To avoid any ethical issues regarding the use of these

comments, the user names of those posting the comments included in the study have been withheld. It would not be possible to fully protect the identities of those making comments, as by reading through the discussions from which the quotes are taken, one need only find the quote to find the user who posted it. While ethical concerns led to the decision to remove names, this does have an unfortunate consequence, as in some instances the nature of users' avatars (YouTube names) do offer clues to their broader political outlook, or other things they identify with. Asterisks are common in the results sections for another reason; the prevalence of extensive profanity within YouTube discussions. As with user names, the more virulent swear words that feature are broken up with asterisks. Grammatical and spelling errors are common in user comments. These errors were not corrected here on the basis that leaving the comments 'as is' would give the reader a more accurate indication of the tone in which the comments were made.

3.5: Chapter Summary

This chapter has sought to describe this project's Krippendorff (2004) inspired methodological approach. Having reviewed the field of content analysis's quantitative origins, it detailed the adoption of a conception of content analysis which is organised around a combination of quantitative and qualitative elements. The selection of texts, along with how they have been organised for analysis was then explained. Likewise, the analytical constructs pertaining to the supra-logic of entertainment/celebrification and Burkean identification (1958), through which the theoretical context surrounding the sample has been operationalised, have been discussed. Finally, ethical issues raised by undertaking this project have been addressed. The following 'Results' chapter presents the empirical object resulting from this methodology's text selection criteria. In this, and subsequent chapters, the analytical constructs described above are operationally applied to interpret the sample of Berlusconi related discourse on YouTube.

Chapter 4: Empirical Results: Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of YouTube Clips

4.1: Overview

This chapter offers a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the YouTube sample. It offers illustrative comments from users that offer indications of how sections of the YouTube audience are identifying or disidentifying with Berlusconi. Following a statistical summary, the chapter is constructed around a presentation of the 'top ten clip themes' as they rank within the numerical measures afforded by YouTube. The content of each of these top ten clip themes is then individually described, with certain points of interest pertaining to the roles of the logics of celebrification and entertainment highlighted. Selected user comments that are indicative of some of the more common modes of identification and disidentification with Berlusconi are presented individually, and subjected to an analysis inspired by Burke's (1950) conception of identification as a master category of rhetorical analysis. This presentation of quantitative and qualitative results alongside each other is reflective of this project's use of Krippendorff's (2004) framework, which proposes that the two are inseparable.

It would be impossible to provide a full analysis of all of the celebrification/entertainment and identification/disidentification issues raised by each individual clip theme. However the hope is that the individual examples chosen in relation to each clip, when taken as a whole, will offer a fair representative sample of how these issues manifest themselves across the wider empirical sample. Further discussion of some of the key themes that emerge through these results is provided in the discussion chapter.

4.2: Quantitative Overview of Sample

The following table gives a basic quantitative overview of the sample:

Table 1:

Total number of clips meeting search parameters:	51
Total number of views across all clips:	4803799
Total number of words in corpus:	434991
Total number of comments made about all clips:	14490
Percentage of views resulting in comments:	0.3%
Average comment length:	30.02 words
Total number of 'likes':	4919 (84.77%)
Total number of 'dislikes':	884 (15.23%)
Percentage of views resulting in a 'like' or 'dislike':	0.12%

4.3: Top ten clip themes

Of the 51 clips that met the selection criteria 37 are representations of these 'top ten' themes. As discussed in the methodology chapter, in this study clips relating to the same incidents, or closely related thematic content, have been grouped together for analytical purposes. Where themes have been depicted in the same number of clips, those more frequently viewed have been assigned the higher ranking. Views of these clip themes account for 91.97% of the total views of the clips contained within the study. Comments made in response to them account for 95.18% of the total comments contained within the corpus. 'Likes' offered in response account for 93.22% of total 'likes' offered. 'Dislikes' offered in response account for 92.63% of total 'dislikes' offered. The full statistical data pertaining to each of these top ten clip themes, a description of the contents, along with comment on issues of celebrification/entertainment and illustrative examples of comments displaying identification and disidentification now follows.

4.3.1: Top Ten Clip Themes: Viewership Statistics

Table 1: Top ten clip themes as ranked by the percentage of total clip views they represent:

This table offers a quick overview of the respective levels of viewership achieved by the top ten clips themes. Full statistical summaries of clip themes (likes/dislikes, number of comments etc) prefix the individual discussions of the themes.

Table 2:

1: Impersonator Harasses Parking Warden	26.94% of total views
2: Bush Press Opportunities	15.72% of total views
3: The Attack on Berlusconi	12.97% of total views
4: Queen Annoyed	10.74% of total views
5: Merkel Left Waiting	9.79% of total views
6: G - 8 Photo Opportunity	5.16% of total views
7: Mocking Schulz	4.47% of total views
8: Putin Press Opportunities	2.4% of total views
9: Obama 'tanned' comments	2.25% of total views
10: Gaddafi meetings	1.53% of total views

4.3.2: Top ten clip themes described and discussed

This section presents the top ten clips themes individually. Firstly, a statistical overview of the theme is presented. This is followed by a description of the clip theme, and a discussion of what selected points pertaining to the clip may indicate in regards to the manifestation of entertainment logics on YouTube. User's comments that are illustrative of positions articulated in discussions associated with the themes are presented and discussed with reference to Burkean identification.

1) Impersonator Harasses Parking Warden:

4 depictions

Clips Ranked: 2, 3, 7, 11

Total Views: 1293927 (26.94% of total views)

Total Comments: 2000 (13.8% of total comments)

Total 'likes': 1441 / 89.67% (29.29% of total likes)

Total 'dislikes': 166 / 10.33% (18.78% of total dislikes)

Description

The clips titled 'Berlusconi' (ranked 2nd), 'Berlusconi dampens sexist rumours' (ranked 3rd), 'Silvio Berlusconi' (ranked 7th) and 'Italian Prime Minister' (ranked 11th) contain the exact same footage, uploaded by different users, and given different titles. The footage comes from a 2005 German independent film '*Bye Bye Berlusconi!*'. Playing the role of Berlusconi is an actor named Maurizio Antonini. While masquerading as Berlusconi, Antonini approaches a large black car accompanied by a supposed security detail, but then diverts from his path in order to simulate a sex act behind what appears to be a female parking warden or police officer as she places a ticket on another car's windshield. He then gets into his car, smiles towards the camera, and is driven away.

The total combined 'views' of the 'incident' depicted in these four clips is 1293927, or 26.94% of the total views, thus making it the 'most viewed' 'Berlusconi related incident' in the sample. It also received 2000 comments, or 13.8% of the total comments, and 29.29% of total 'likes' offered. Combining these results, it can be concluded that this is amongst the 'Berlusconi related incidents' most widely engaged with by an English speaking audience on YouTube.

It could perhaps be considered significant that in spite of his proficiency for creating 'real' sex scandals, the piece of behaviour that attracts the most attention on YouTube does not feature the actual Berlusconi, but rather an actor playing the role of what could be considered an amplification of the Berlusconi character. The comparative absence of viewership of footage pertaining to the topic of his 'real' sex scandals (clips ranked 33rd, 44th, and 49th, drawing only 48030 combined views or 0.9998% of total views) might be interpreted to indicate that these entertainment derived/movie excerpt clips are better catering to audiences looking for this type of

Berlusconi behaviour than any recorded behaviour of the 'real' Berlusconi. The behaviour that the actor depicts is on the one hand outrageous, yet on the other consistent with the 'real' Berlusconi 'character' whose sexual exploits/improprieties have been highlighted in traditional broadcast media.

The three YouTube search engine friendly titles of the clips; 'Berlusconi', 'Silvio Berlusconi' and 'Italian Prime Minister', none of which hint at the behaviour contained within, serve only to reinforce the normality of the linkage between Berlusconi and sexually themed entertainment. They imply, through the omission of sensationalised titles, that the behaviour depicted is simply behaviour as usual for 'Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi'. While impossible to be certain about the motivations of those posting/framing these clips, it is possible that it was their intent to reinforce this type of character association. If so, the level of viewership attained, and some of the comments offered, many of which suggest that the commenter assumes that they are viewing the 'real' Berlusconi, indicate they may well have achieved a degree of success. Based upon many of the comments posted, a significant number of viewers are sufficiently convinced by the continuity of the behaviour with their expectations of the character as to cling to the belief that it is the 'real' Berlusconi. This is in spite of the quite obvious visual dissimilarities between the protagonist in the video and Berlusconi, and the plentiful explanations for the footage's creation offered by other users.

This clip theme is the most 'liked' of those represented in this study, with 'likes' offered in response to it amounting to a disproportionately high 29.29% of total 'likes' offered in response to the sample. Likewise, its 89.67% 'likes' to 10.33% 'dislikes' was also higher than the average ratio. The next most 'liked' theme is Berlusconi's press opportunities with Bush, which garnered a much smaller 12.95% of total 'likes'. This theme's dominance amongst 'likes' could perhaps be interpreted as an indicator that the audience most 'like' viewing 'Berlusconi' when the footage most complies with amplified expectations of his persona, even if those expectations and associated behavioural assumptions may be considered by some to be outrageous or negative. In short, if audience members were looking for entertainment via the theme of Berlusconi's sexual conduct, then these clips deliver that entertainment value plentifully. Whether or not the clips are real appears to be of considerably lesser significance to much of the audience.

Impersonator Harasses Parking Warden: Identification and Disidentification

The first mode of Burkean identification, consubstantiality through perception of shared interests, appears to take on two main forms within this discussion. Firstly, there are comments that essentially take the form of 'Berlusconi is like me, an ordinary person, with ordinary urges, and therefore I like him'. This can lead in turn to the second type of identification, consubstantiality through a mutual enemy, in the form of opposition to politicians who are not 'ordinary people'. This is most clearly illustrated in two of the comments below suggesting that there is no grounds for comparison between Berlusconi and 'spineless European' leaders, and that 'other Presidents are boring cowards'. Here Berlusconi's 'informality' is being juxtaposed against 'disconnected', 'stuffy', and more traditional European politicians. This emerges as a strong theme in several discussions.

He is simply the best. :) He is acting like every day person (having fun) and not like some politicly correct old fool.” (Clip: Berlusconi)

Italy is lucky to have a politician with personality and humor. Other presidents are just boring cowards!” (Clip: Silvio Berlusconi)

*“Viva Berlusconi!!! The man in the true sense of a word! The man with good humor and BALLS! Comparing him to the spineless europeans, who r afraid of anything and everyone, he is the the true LEADER! So what, he jocked about f*cking the parking made, who writes tickets!!! Don't we ALL want to f*ck them when we see a ticket on our windshield? Viva duce Berlusconi! From Russia with love!” (Clip: Italian Prime Minister)*

Secondly, there are comments that take the form that could perhaps best be characterised as 'I would like to be like Berlusconi, therefore I like that he exists'. This type of comment could be suggested to indicate that the user aspires to sharing a set of interests with Berlusconi. Some of these comments can also imply that the user may be identifying with Berlusconi as a 'success symbol' for male dominance and aggressive, macho sexuality. Illustrative examples of this type of comment include:

*“awesome,go sexual harassment on the cow,you are her boss.what a f*ckin legendary prime minister.” (Clip: Berlusconi dampens sexist rumours)*

*“he is the best....drugs, b*tches, mafia, money, power... and anyone can do anything.... something better ??” (Clip: Berlusconi dampens sexist rumours)*

While the footage in these clips is obviously fake, there is also a distinct 'if Berlusconi' is made to look bad, then it is due to the conspiracies of 'communists'

theme that runs through not only this discussion, but also the broader sample of YouTube discourse relating to him. This is coherent with the nature of some of the support he appears to receive from a domestic policy standpoint, and also aligns with his own campaigning narrative, that he ‘protects’ Italy from the instability, and economic ineptitude of Italian ‘Communist’ governments (Stille, 2006: Ginsborg, 2005). Congruently, left-leaning domestic publications and online news outlets are accused by some users of spreading false information in order to advance propaganda campaigns against him. A co-constituent group that some perceive to be conspiring against Berlusconi within Italy are non-Berlusconi owned Italian newspapers and media outlets. The comments below combine this sentiment with another sentiment expressed in certain comments which appears to perceive criticism of ‘Berlusconi’s’ ‘macho’ sexual conduct as indicative of the homosexuality or feminisation of such critics.

FAKE! those sick COMMUNIST made this up!” (Clip: Italian Prime Minister)

*“Silvio is GOD.....f*ck the gay establishment in italian papers.....”* (Clip: Silvio Berlusconi)

The following comment touches on what proves to be a reoccurring theme around which identification with Berlusconi is established; that his Italian owned media holdings make him something of a bulwark against, and target for, ‘Globalists’, in this case encapsulated by Rupert Murdoch. The consubstantiality with Berlusconi established around any of these themes is most strongly associated with Burke’s second type; the perception of mutual enemies:

“Silvio rocks. No wonder most Italian men want to be like Silvio and most Italian women want to be with him. Rupert Murdoch is on his case for raising taxes on his Italian pay TV interests. He’s turned his global media power to cut Silvio down to size. As to the critics who say Silvio owns all the media. Nonsense. Mr. New World Order Rupert Murdoch owns wants Silvio’s interests, but Silvio aint’ selling.” (Clip: Silvio Berlusconi)

There are other users who view Berlusconi very differently and wish to display their disidentification with him accordingly. In some of the comments it is clear that the user posting them has believed the clip to be real. While in other comments this is harder to ascertain, and the user may well be aware that the footage is fake, in both kinds of comment the users have chosen to use the discussion as a platform to

express their broader anti-Berlusconi sentiments. The following comment displays the flipside of the theme of identification that sees Berlusconi as a victim of the international media:

“berlusconi is the master of truth in Italy, he can act at will and do whatever he likes because his media give his lies wide coverage so he can overvoice everybody. the blowjob minister m.carfagna went to national TV and said shamelessly that Berlusconi IS ALLOWED TO ACT AS HE LIKES, in other words she said clearly that he is or thinks to be our master. where the illusion falls is on the international press. the comparison between home and foreign press on mr. B. is bewildering.” (Clip: Silvio Berlusconi)

This type of comment appears to be a common feature in many of the clips' discussions. Berlusconi's perceived degree of control over the Italian media offers an obvious nodal point around which users' broader anti-Berlusconi arguments, and explanations for Berlusconi's rise to, and longevity, in office can be constructed. Comments such as these, seemingly posted by an Italian, often seem to be prompted by comments from non-Italian users who praise Berlusconi, or ask questions to the effect of 'why do Italians vote for him?' This one also touches on the theme of macho sexuality through its reference to former show-girl turned Minister of Equal Opportunities under Berlusconi Maria Carfagna.

As proves to be quite common throughout the comments in the sample, there are also users who make comments that appear to disidentify with Berlusconi on a cognitive level (in their assessments of him as a politician), while also displaying a sentiment that might be equated to Burke's third type; 'unconscious' identification. These comments take the form of 'I dislike Berlusconi, but he does entertain me'. The comment below displays that a more qualified form of consubstantiality is being established around the logic of humour and entertainment.

“this makes me embarrassed to be italian. on the other hand at least he has a good sense of humor, lol.” (clip: Berlusconi)

2) Bush Press Opportunities:

3 depictions

Clips Ranked: 1, 20, 46

Total Views: 755191 (15.72% of total views)

Total Comments: 2673 (18.44% of total comments)

Total 'likes': 637 / 81.98% (12.95% of total likes)

Total 'dislikes': 140 / 18.02% (15.84 of total dislikes)

Description

The clip theme of Berlusconi's press opportunities with Bush contains the singularly most viewed individual English language clip of Berlusconi on YouTube. 'Berlusconi Stupid', with 687497 views, or 14.31% of total views across all clips. It features Berlusconi beside Bush (ranked the third most prominent leader within the corpus with 574 mentions) at Camp David. Berlusconi briefly praises the American flag as a 'symbol of freedom' in broken English. Bush then says, "His English is good!" The less pejoratively titled clip 'Berlusconi at Camp David' ranks 20th on the most viewed list, with 55789 views, or 1.16% of total views of all clips included, and contains exactly the same footage as 'Berlusconi Stupid'. The only depiction of Berlusconi meeting with Bush that actually contains the name 'Bush' in the title is 'Berlusconi – Bush dinner takes turn to the silly', ranked 46th amongst the clips included with 11905 views, or 0.25% of total views of all clips included. This clip features Berlusconi offering a toast to George W Bush during a press opportunity staged at a White House dinner. Again, Berlusconi speaks in fumbling English. The uploader/author has added balloons to the footage, presumably to enhance the 'silliness'. The absence of the word 'Bush' from the titles of the more popular clips clearly indicates that they are being viewed as a result of 'Berlusconi', rather than 'Bush' search terminology.

There is little that could be deemed as traditional or formal political content in any of these clips, in spite of their semi-formal (Camp David) and decidedly formal (The White House) settings. However, with 2673, or 18.44% of the total comments being made about these clips, the highest number of comments offered in response to any of the clip themes, there are different forms of political engagement evident within the positions articulated in the comments section. Along with general criticisms of Berlusconi's performance, and the odd celebrified comedic comment, such as "A/

Capone next to John Wayne. Howdie!!!", the clip 'Berlusconi Stupid' does actually provoke some degree of substantive debate about a 'real' political issue, namely whether Italy's foreign policy should be 'pro-American'. With the title of the clip being 'Berlusconi Stupid', the author appears to be inviting ridicule of Berlusconi's delivery and performance. However, it can also be interpreted that for a sizable segment of the audience commenting, the distinctly American idiom of 'stupid' also comes from the pro-American sentiments he is trying to convey. These interpretations are reflected separately in some comments, while others combine the two, condemning both his pro-American sentiments and his fumbling performance in delivering them. While it is impossible to accurately determine why somebody might choose to watch a clip, it is certainly of interest that when titled with the highly subjective 'Berlusconi Stupid', a piece of footage can become the most English language discussed Berlusconi related clip on YouTube. But when more objectively titled as "Berlusconi at Camp David' the same footage can receive what is in comparison only limited attention. One possible interpretation of this might be that the international audience expect 'stupid' or 'gaffe prone' behaviour from Berlusconi, and therefore opt to view a clip with a title promising this type of 'entertaining' behaviour over the potentially 'formal behaviour' that the title 'Berlusconi at Camp David' might imply.

Bush Press Opportunities: Identification and Disidentification

"Bush and Berlusconi. Both Legends" (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

"dumb and dumber" (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

"Jim Carrey & Jeff Daniels" (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

"Berlusconi+Bush(IQ)=10 ...When they try hard!" (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

The first of the quotes above displays a strong sense of identification with both Berlusconi and George Bush. To those familiar with Bush, but lesser so Berlusconi, the fact that this user considers there to be consubstantiality between the two may provide a Bush-centric frame of reference through which to assess Berlusconi. This may prompt other users who disidentify with Bush to extend that disidentification to Berlusconi. The second quote uses a celebrified frame of reference related to a

Hollywood movie about a pair of bumbling simpletons called 'Dumb and Dumber', which stars the actors referenced in the third quote, in order to transmit the meaning offered humorously in the fourth.

"I think bush was elected to entertain the world not to run the country" (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

As is indicated by the preceding comment, clearly Berlusconi is not the only politician being sought out on YouTube on account of his entertainment value. Again, comments like this hint that a segment of the YouTube audience are willing to overlook their conscious concerns about politicians suitability for office on account of identifying with the entertainment value they may offer, a position that may be equated to Burke's notion of unconscious identification. The following comments echo this framing, and extend it to Berlusconi:

"id love to of had a drink with silvio and george awful leaders of the free world but very entertaining im sure." (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

*"lol these guys deserve each other i dont know which one is more stupid but berlusconi is much more fun that's more sure god i wish he remains PM of italy forever he's the most f*cked up 75 years dude i have ever seen"* (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

"hahahahaha HE IS A SHAME TO ITALY BUT A FKN FUNNY BASTARD TO EVERYONE ELSE" (Clip: Berlusconi Stupid)

3) The Attack on Berlusconi:

13 depictions

Clips Ranked:	9, 16, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 38, 40, 51
Total Views:	623093 (12.97% of total views)
Total Comments:	1922 (13.26% of total comments)
Total 'likes':	556 / 91.3% (11.3% of total likes)
Total 'dislikes':	53 / 8.7% (5.99% of total dislikes)

Description

With 13 separate representations, 'The attack on Berlusconi' is the most commonly uploaded event among the top ten most depicted clip themes. The relevant attack occurred in December 2009 while Berlusconi was attending a political rally in his home town of Milan. A man, later determined to be mentally ill, steps forward from the crowd, and appears to punch Berlusconi in the face. It was later officially

determined that he had in fact thrown a miniature of the Milan Cathedral into Berlusconi's face from point blank range (Hooper, 2009). After initially being bundled into his car by security, Berlusconi then emerges and waves to the crowd, his face still bloodied.

The 13 clips related to this incident show the attack from different angles, and present the footage with attractive framings (usually via the naming of the clip) ranging from the neutral to the sensational and polemical – this later type being mainly in support of the attack. Although only one representation of this event makes it into the top ten most viewed individual clips, 'Raw Video: Italian Leader Punch in the Face' (ranked 9th), the 13 clips depicting this incident have been viewed a combined 623093 times, receiving 12.97% of total views. This makes 'The attack on Berlusconi' the third 'most viewed' 'Berlusconi incident' in the themed sample.

Of the top ten clip themes, this is probably the one that best conforms with traditional conceptions of news values as employed in print and television (Galtung & Ruge, 1969; McGregor, 2002), with the values of negativity, unexpectedness, unambiguity, personalisation, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, and conflict all present. The degree of viscosity that can be associated with these clips also translates across language barriers, perhaps increasing its appeal to the diverse international audiences. Coupled to postings of this event by 'traditional' news outlets (such as Associated Press), and taking the ability of the audience to internalise these news values into account, we should probably not be surprised that so many users have chosen to re-appropriate and upload footage of this event themselves, in some cases ascribing particularly 'newsworthy' sounding titles such as "*Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi bloodied by punch in the face*" to the clips. The use of these types of titles could perhaps be considered an indicator of an internalisation of mainstream news values and media framing practices amongst the 'bottom-up' YouTube audience. What is perhaps more surprising is that it has been outranked in terms of views by two clip themes whose traditional media news values are considerably less obvious. The most viewed incident, 'Impersonator harasses parking warden', was never actually reported in the mainstream international media, primarily due to the fact that as it does not actually feature a prominent person misbehaving, making it all but devoid of 'traditional' news value. While the events contained within 'Bush press ops' were depicted within the mainstream media, they were largely

depicted as a conventional 'international leaders meet' story rather than as depictions of a 'gaffe' (ITN, 2002).

The Attack on Berlusconi: Identification and Disidentification

As with the footage included in the clip theme 'Impersonator harasses parking warden', there is a significant division amongst the audience as to the validity of the footage contained within these clips. Generally speaking, those who identify with Berlusconi appear to believe in the validity of the attack, and condemn (often with vitriol towards Berlusconi's perceived enemies, such as 'Communists') both the attack and those who they believe to support the attack;

"cavaliere get well soon ! and when you get well throw all comunists in the garbidge , they are a desease" (Clip: Raw Video: Italian Leader Punch in the Face)

Interestingly, some of those defending Berlusconi appeared to make greater use of cogitative, rather than personality/entertainment based, arguments in response to this incident, than when compared to defences of him in discussions related to 'gaffe' focussed clip themes. An illustrative example of this kind of comment follows:

"how would you know he's the worst prime-minister on Earth from your Singapore? i think you are inventing things; he does nothing outrageous, Italy is in relatively good shape despite the crisis, Italy has no conflicts with no country in the world. The opposite, Italy keeps good relations with all big countries: european , US, China and Russia. possibly you do not like the latter. on the contrary to US, Italy is peaceful, friendly country to any other state on the planet." (Clip: Raw Video: Italian Leader Punch in the Face)

Conversely, those who disidentify with him appear to be split between those who consider the attack to be a political stunt/distraction from 'real' political events, and condemn Berlusconi for it, and those who believe the attack was real, and commend the attacker for his actions.

"I bet this is a total set up by the Berlusconi camp. Fake assassinations have be tried before and I wouldn't be surprised if this low brow theatre was staged for sympathy. Distraction, Distraction, Distraction!!!!" (Clip: Raw Video: Italian Leader Punch in the Face)

"Raise a statue in honour of the man who throwed it !" (Clip: Berlusconi Attacked)

Rather than displaying any distinct themes around which identification or disidentification with this performance of Berlusconi's identity might be established, the discussions flowing from these clips appear largely to be based around articulating previously held pro or anti Berlusconi positions. What is perhaps distinct about these discussions is the comparative absence of overt popular culture references. It is of interest that the clip theme with contents best correlating to traditional, less-celebrified, broadcast new values should appear to provoke a discussion that is less entertainment focussed, in terms of discussion themes, and types of identification displayed, than is the case with clip themes relating to 'gaffes' and comedic incidents.

4) Queen Annoyed:

3 depictions

Clips Ranked: 4, 12, 39

Total Views: 516015 (10.74% of total views)

Total Comments: 2470 (17.05% of total comments)

Total 'likes': 593 / 79.81% (12.06% of total likes)

Total 'dislikes': 150 / 20.19% (16.97% of total dislikes)

Description

These clips relate to an 'incident' in which Berlusconi was allegedly 'told off' by a supposedly irritated Queen Elizabeth during a photo op for G20 leaders at Buckingham Palace. After the photo is taken, Berlusconi can be heard to say 'Hey Obama', the Queen can then be heard to mutter something, allegedly words to the effect of 'why does he always have to be so loud?' The Palace categorically denied that she had made any such remark.

Combined, these clips have received 516015 views (or 10.74% of total views). With 17.05% of total comments included in the corpus being made in response to this incident. This places it second when ranked by number of comments.

While these clips did attract comment from a large number of users, this high comment ranking is made somewhat deceiving by the fact that an individual user posted over 200 hundred comments in response to the clip 'Queen tells off Berlusconi'. The comments were largely in the form of 'New World Order' allegations

against Queen Elizabeth, rather than being about Berlusconi. This behaviour prompted antagonistic responses from those wishing to defend the Queen. This individual clip attracted 2171 of the 2470 comments made in response to all clips about the theme. While the discussions sometimes overlapped, it would be fair to suggest that there were two parallel discussions occurring in response to the clip: one about the Queen, and one about Berlusconi. It is this particular discussion about the Queen that sees her mentioned 644 times, becoming the second most mentioned figure within the overall sample. As such her high statistical ranking should be understood as an outlier when compared to figures such as George Bush, Vladimir Putin, Angela Merkel and Barack Obama, who are frequently mentioned across various clips, whether they are manifestly present within them or not.

Queen Annoyed: Identification and Disidentification

While the persona of the Queen is discursively associated with political tradition and protocol, many of the defences of Berlusconi hint at an international strand of identification with the 'political outsider/everyman' persona, that Berlusconi has leveraged off effectively in Italy (Ginsberg, 2005). One of the more interesting features of the discussion is the debate regarding whether or not the Queen has any right to be in a photo of democratically elected leaders. It is argued by some that the Queen is a stuffy anachronism, representative of the politics of class and the past, whereas Berlusconi, more so than the other leaders present, represents modernity, informality and social mobility. This type of identification could best be equated to Burke's first type, consubstantiality through perceived similarity with Berlusconi, which in turn leads to antagonism towards those juxtaposed against him. Some comments simultaneously extend disidentification with the traditional political figure of the Queen, to the other 'traditional' politicians present. The following comments offer illustrative examples of these positions:

*"relax bambino, he is just not a double face politician like most these days. He is natural, sincere with his feelings. Anyhow, the italians don't give a sh*t about what the old woman of england says or thinks".* (Clip: Queen tells off Berlusconi)

"Silvio Berlusconi should tell that old hag, they were all elected except for her." (Clip: Queen tells off Berlusconi)

Many of those displaying disidentification with Berlusconi also appear to view his performance as representative of an 'everyman', although rather than viewing this as positive, it is frequently represented as emblematic of his 'lack of class'. In some instances commenters invoke Italian stereotypes to extend this perception of Berlusconi to Italians in general. Alternately, some of those displaying cognitive disidentification with him appear particularly exasperated by other commenters favourable characterisation of Berlusconi as emblematic of a more representative democracy. The following comment is emblematic of those disidentifying with him on account of his 'everyman' performance. Rather than viewing his 'commonality' as favourable, it is associated with negative Italian stereotypes:

"Imagine the worst stereotypical Italian male that you can. Misogynistic, racist, greasy and overly concerned about his hair. That's what Berlusconi is like in real life." (Clip: Queen tells off Berlusconi)

The following two comments offer illustrative examples of cognitive attempts to challenge the notion of Berlusconi as a representative 'everyman' through articulating discursive associations between Berlusconi and authoritarianism, corruption, nepotism, media power and sexual deviance.

"It surely is interesting. He managed to turn the Italian democracy into an kind of authoritarian state. Berlusconi and his family control 5 out of six national tv channels and the majority of newspapers. He convinced the politicians in parliament to make an enormous number of laws that helped him avoid having trials and go to jail. He had sex with whores and with a 17 year old girl, and he elected unexperienced showgirls as ministers of his government." (Clip: Queen tells off Berlusconi)

"He also owns the Milan A.C. football team, and many supermarkets. He is suspected of having relations with the Italian Mafia, he has trials for corruption and fraud. Please tell everyone that the Italian people is not free, our country is seriously menaced by this stupid dictator-wannabe." (Clip: Queen tells off Berlusconi)

5) Merkel Left Waiting:

3 depictions

Clips Ranked: 5, 6, 48

Total Views: 470451 (9.79% of total views)

Total Comments: 1480 (10.21% of total comments)

Total 'likes': 591 / 93.22% (12.01% of total likes)

Total 'dislikes': 43 / 6.78% (4.86% of total dislikes)

Description

The clip title 'Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking phone call at NATO summit' offers a fairly accurate description of what occurs in the footage these clips contain. Chancellor Merkel (the 5th most prominent leader in the sample with 162 mentions) is greeting a formal procession of arriving leaders outside the venue for the summit as they disembark from their limousines. A parade ground style entrance area, a military honour guard, other NATO and German dignitaries in the welcoming party, along with a large international media contingent, serve to further formalise the situation. Berlusconi is conducting a phone conversation as his car arrives at the point of disembarkation. He exits the limousine still talking on the phone. Rather than heading up the red carpet towards the waiting Merkel, Berlusconi casually wanders off in the opposite direction, towards a lake. As he continues his conversation, Merkel continues to wait for him, while the other leaders' limousines line up behind Berlusconi's vehicle. Eventually Berlusconi's limousine moves on, allowing the other leaders to be greeted by Merkel. Berlusconi leisurely continues his conversation. This incident could perhaps best be summarised as Berlusconi appearing to act very casually in a very formal setting.

Aside from 'impersonator harasses parking warden', 'Merkel left waiting' is the only other clip theme with more than one representation among the top ten most viewed individual clips. 'Silvio Berlusconi on Phone at NATO Summit' ranks 5th with 259560 views (or 5.4% of total views), and 'Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking phone call at NATO summit' ranks 6th with 199734 views (or 4.16% of total views). This makes it the most viewed mass media reported (BBC, 2009) Berlusconi 'gaffe' on YouTube.

Interestingly this incident has the highest 'like' to 'dislike' ratio of any of the top ten clip themes, with 93.22% 'liking' versus only 6.78% 'disliking' it. Combined, this amounts to 16.87% of total usages of the 'like/dislike' function made in relation to all 51 clips included in the study, even though these three depictions of this incident commanded only 9.79% percent of total viewership.

Merkel Left Waiting: Identification and Disidentification

*"bravo mr berlusconi happy to see that angela merkel is not so interesting. F*cking g8. its better to have telefonsex with his sweetheart". (Clip: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking phone call at NATO summit)*

This comment is representative of a number of comments made in response to these clips that may offer an indication as to what might have inspired this 'highly liked' result. As was evident in the discussion surrounding the 'Queen Annoyed' theme, a section of the audience clearly identify with Berlusconi on account of his informal style amongst other leaders, many of whom appear to be considered 'stuffy' or 'boring' by those who appear to be interpreting Berlusconi's 'entertainment value' as a measure of his merit. Juxtaposed against Berlusconi, Merkel is represented by many participating within this discussion as an exemplar of a traditional 'stuffy' politician, and hence receives a significant degree of disidentification on account of her not being a good entertainer, unlike the figure they have established consubstantiality with. Thus, among some viewers, Berlusconi's informality in her presence serves to amplify his persona of the 'everyman', a politician who is 'not a politician' status (Stille, 2006; Ginsborg, 2005). This theme of identification is succinctly encapsulated in the comment *"hahahaha, that's my PM, we are so proud of him, he doesn't give a sh*t"*.

Berlusconi could be considered in this instance to benefit from the discursive associations that West & Orman (2002) cite as associated with "famed non-politicos", in that his discursive power is not seen as beholden to the rigid conventions and protocol of the traditional political system. This 'political outsider' interpretation, as a basis of identification with Berlusconi, was also evident in the comments pertaining to his encounters with Queen Elizabeth and Martin Shulz (see below).

Beyond this dichotomy of 'fun politicians' versus 'solemn politicians', some comments offered also articulate a contextually shifting sense of identification within the theme of politics as fun vis-à-vis Berlusconi's association with other leaders. An instance of this follows:

"Im not a fan of merkel, but she was funny in this situation :D" (Clip: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking phone call at NATO summit)

This quote displays a conscious disidentification with Chancellor Merkel, yet suggests that this has been contextually altered by her role in an amusing incident. It appears that she is being identified with solely on account of her role as a comedic adjunct to the entertaining spectacle of Berlusconi's behaviour. In this interpretation, Merkel becomes in some sense consubstantial with Berlusconi, only if they are made one via their performance being viewed as that of a cast within a single piece of entertainment. It would appear most likely that this user is identifying with Berlusconi through the first of the Burkean types, perception of similarity, and that this identification is being contextually extended to Merkel. That a humorous performance can contextually override an established sense of disidentification could be suggested to be a strong indicator of the centrality of the super-logic of entertainment to the subjectivities of YouTube users more generally.

As would be expected, however, other users describe the same figures and incident very differently, as the following comment from a German user indicates:

"Merkel is well known for her sense of humour. I bet she often jokes with Cameron and Sarkozy about stupid Berlusconi behind closed doors, but one thing is for sure, as a German I will immediately end my personal diplomatic relations to Italy if you Italians vote this idiot for president again. Lol Berlusconi is a shame for beautiful Italy! Greetings from Germany" (Clip: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking phone call at NATO summit)

In this quote Merkel is not been viewed as a comedic adjunct to Berlusconi's behaviour – rather she is being identified with, and defended, on account of her also possessing the ability to be funny, or entertaining. Furthermore, in order to show disidentification with Berlusconi, it is suggested that the leaders of Germany, France and Britain, the major EU powers, identify with one another in so much as they derive humour at Berlusconi's expense. This user is not only demonstrating their own internalisation of entertainment logics, but is also suggesting that other international leaders apply them to their own derisive assessments of Berlusconi.

6) G - 8 Photo Opportunity:

2 depictions

Clips Ranked:	8, 17	
Total Views:	248042	(5.16% of total views)
Total Comments:	485	(3.35% of total comments)
Total 'likes':	121 / 40.19%	(2.46% of total likes)
Total 'dislikes':	180* / 59.8%	(20.36% of total dislikes)

Description

'Was Russian President Medvedev Drunk at G – 8?' ranked 8th of the 51 clips included, with 182068 views (or 3.79% of total views), and 'Italian G – 8: Group Photo With Berlusconi, Obama, Merkel, Sarkozy, Others', ranked 17th amongst the clips included, with 65974 views (or 1.37% of total views). Both are uploaded from the same source (user EUXTV), but depict the same event very differently. The clips show leaders leaving the G-8 summit hosted by Berlusconi in 2009. The less colourfully named, and more lowly ranked, of the clips shows the leaders making their way out of a building en masse, heading towards the stage assembled for the photo op. Medvedev is talking to Sarkozy and appears to wobble briefly. Berlusconi puts his hand on Medvedev's shoulder and directs him towards the stage. Medvedev waves to the press corps, and the clip plays out with the leaders having their photo taken without incident. On the other hand, the subsequently posted, and more viewed 'Was Russian President Medvedev Drunk at G – 8?' shows the same scene only with Medvedev's 'wobble' repeated, and slowed down, with the words 'Thanks to the alert Russian viewers who pointed this out' superimposed upon the footage.

G - 8 Photo Opportunity: Identification and Disidentification

Amongst the top ten clip themes, this one has a disproportionately high ratio of dislikes to likes, with these clips contributing 20.36% of the total dislikes offered in response to all 51 clips, in spite of receiving just 5.16% of total views. Comments such as *'Medvedev is NOT drunk. Don't get what the fuss is all about. Seems fine to me as everyone else there. This is how gossips and lies are born... some idiots said he was 'drunk' and everyone jumped at it, whatever'* are indicative of one strand of

apparent 'dislike' for the clip; objection to it being a distorted and sensationalised representation of events. The disproportionately high number of dislikes could perhaps also be a result of Russian viewers being unhappy with the framing of their President as a drunkard, in which case the response cannot be considered a reflection of the audience's response to Berlusconi's performance within the clip. The majority of comments in the discussion relating to this clip focus primarily on Russian, rather than Italian, politics, which may again offer an indicator that the 'dislikes' were not left in response to Berlusconi.

There are those for whom Medvedev 'being drunk' is not a motive for disidentification with either those posting the clip or Medvedev himself. In some instances users even display identification with Berlusconi on account of what they view as his good management of his 'drunken' colleague. This kind of identification with Berlusconi could be most closely associated with Burke's first type, a perception of similarity, in this case enacted by Berlusconi's human gesture of 'showing concern for a drunken friend'.

Hes not drunk, hes Russian, and if he was, it was nice of the Italian leader to try to help him keep walking. (Clip: G8: Was Russian President Medvedev Drunk?)

Cool vid! I think he was drunk, considering that Berlusconi weaves him away from the crowd and back inside, trying to avoid a "difficult" situation. Russian leaders have a history of being drunk, but that is okay every now and that considering their vodka-culture. (Clip: G8: Was Russian President Medvedev Drunk?)

7) Mocking Schulz:

2 depictions

Clips Ranked:	10, 14	
Total Views:	214871	(4.47% of total views)
Total Comments:	1324	(9.14% of total comments)
Total 'likes':	326 / 89.07%	(6.63% of total likes)
Total 'dislikes':	40 / 10.93%	(4.52% of total dislikes)

Description

Two clips depicting Berlusconi's controversial remarks about German MEP Martin Schulz are included in the sample. Combined 'Silvio Berlusconi vs. MEP Martin Schulz; relive the moment' ranked 10th and 'Berlusconi vs. Schulz European

Parliament' ranked 14th have received 214871 views or 4.47% of total views of all clips included. With 9.14% of total comments offered being made about these clips, they have a disproportionately high comment to view ratio. The clips also have a disproportionately high 'like' ratio, having attracted 6.63% of the total 'likes' left in response to the corpus.

The incident depicted is one of Berlusconi's more famous 'gaffes', in that it was covered by the international media at the time of its occurrence (BBC, 2003). While acting President of the European Union, Berlusconi took umbrage to comments made by German MEP Schulz in the European Parliament, and responded by informing Schulz that 'he had a friend who was directing a film about the war, and that he would recommend Schulz for the role of concentration camp guard'. This Second World War theme appears to be a major contributing factor to how these clips may have attained a disproportionately high number of comments.

Mocking Schulz: Identification and disidentification

The nature of Berlusconi's comments appears to have resonated with those who view Berlusconi through the frame of Italy's fascist past. Without mention of the clips' content, one user quotes Reuters as reporting "*Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi quoted fascist dictator Benito Mussolini Thursday as he lamented what he said was his lack of real power as head of the government*". Another user also touches on the past, offering a similarly loaded response to the footage, writing "*Nazi vs Nazi... No need to take sides*"

The high number of 'likes' that these clips attracted would indicate that Berlusconi's attack on Schulz was not without those who enjoyed it. There are plentiful comments articulating identification with him around the reoccurring themes of both his opposition to communism and his perceived 'outsider' status within the EU. These types of support might be mostly strongly equated with Burke's second type of identification, that being the establishment of mutual enemies. The following comments offer illustrative examples:

"I haven't a clue what he is saying but it sounds like he's giving that German commie schmuck a good spanking! Bellissimo!" (Clip: Silvio Berlusconi vs MEP Martin Schulz; relive the moment)

"Berlusconi is his own man . I like him. His corruption is Italys problem but the bureaucrats corruption is everyones" (Clip: Silvio Berlusconi vs MEP Martin Schulz; relive the moment)

These clips have provoked a number of Italians opposed to Berlusconi to attempt to separate themselves, and Italy, from Berlusconi's behaviour. In the following comments anti-Berlusconi Italians align Berlusconi to the mafia, thus offering a mitigating explanation for his success, and framing him as a representative of an entity other than the Italian state:

*"YES, be sure: we're such ashamed by this "man" whom govern us!! I can't stand to see all the other laughin' at our president 'cause I feel so ashamed by his words, his politic, his persona...I hope Europe and the rest of the world understand and still believe that we're so tired and ashamed. He's just a motherf*ckin' sh*tty mafious asshole!"* (Silvio Berlusconi vs MEP Martin Schulz; relive the moment)

*"he's a mafious and a piece of sh*t, you can imagine that he said stupid and ridicolous things...but please don't think that everyone in Italy is like him :)"* (Clip: MEP Martin Schulz; relive the moment)

"I'm Italian... but he is not. Don't call him Italian. Please. Just call him mafious, racist, sexist, luxurious, politician bastard. Not Italian." (Clip: MEP Martin Schulz; relive the moment)

8) Putin Press Opportunities:

2 depictions

Clips Ranked:	13, 29	
Total Views:	115299	(2.4% of total views)
Total Comments:	213	(1.47% of total comments)
Total 'likes':	157 / 93.45%	(3.19% of total likes)
Total 'dislikes':	11 / 6.55%	(1.24% of total dislikes)

Description

Along with the clip theme 'Gaddafi meetings', 'Putin press ops' would have unlikely attracted a thematic analysis were the criteria for inclusion not affected by the number of depictions this theme received. However, unlike Gaddafi, who is a bit player within the sample, with only 11 mentions across the entire corpus, Putin is the 8th most cited figure across the corpus with 85 mentions.

'Rescue Rangers: Putin and Berlusconi fly emergency plane', ranked 13th within the 51 clips included, is a Russia Today (RT) story depicting Putin showing Berlusconi a Russian-built jet powered flying boat. The leaders pose on a pier before boarding and

taking off. The photo op goes to plan. While there is no hint of controversy or 'gaffe', this clip was 'liked' by 92.59% of those who chose to use this function, returning a result higher than the average of 84.77% 'likes' across the sample. A possible interpretation of this could be that the audience simply 'like' viewing this combination of leaders giving a polished performance in a press op. Viewer comments such as *"Berlusconi is good, likes adventures! Like Putin. lol"* and *"aahahahha, putin and Silvio the best"* are indicative of what appears to be quite a common mode of establishing identification with the pairing, that being that they make for an entertaining duo. 'Putin denies secret marriage to Russian renowned sportswoman' ranked 29th in the sample, is another story from Russia Today. It features footage of the Russian Prime Minister refuting an allegation, contained within a journalist's question about an affair/secret marriage to a former Russian gymnast and current member of the Russian Duma, at a press conference with Berlusconi in Italy. After an initially gruff denial, Putin offers his musings on the respective qualities of Russian and Italian women. While the casual sexism and machismo of the clip may be considered indicative of a 'gaffe' in itself, what is missing from this RT version of the press conference is Berlusconi controversially making a 'shooting' gesture at the journalist who asked Putin the question. This was interpreted by some members of the media present as a reference to the death of Russian 'journalist' and ardent Putin critic Anna Politkovskaya. This behaviour was reported as a 'gaffe' by sections of the Italian media, and received some coverage in the international media (Pisa, 2010). That it has been omitted from the Russian Government owned RT's coverage could be taken to indicate that they also interpreted Berlusconi's behaviour as a possible source of embarrassment for Putin. While this incident is not included in the clip, its existence, and absence from the clip, is mentioned in some user comments.

Putin Press Opportunities: Identification and disidentification

This theme was 'liked' by 93.45% of those who choose to use this function. These 'likes' constitute 3.19% of total likes, in spite of 'Putin press ops' receiving only 2.4% of total views. When views received are factored into 'most liked' calculations, this result makes Berlusconi's press opportunities with Putin the 'most liked' proportionately of any of the clip themes. As with the 'dislikes' afforded to the 'G-8

Photo Op' clips featuring Medvedev, without analysing a broader sample, it is difficult to know whether or not this high level of 'likes' is related to the audiences' identification with Putin rather than their identification with Berlusconi. Comments like *"I gotta admit is very entertaining to watch Putin's speeches!"* and *"great putin Berlusconi is an arsehole"* would indicate this is a possibility.

Again, this clip theme seems to offer certain audience members information around which they can establish identification with Berlusconi as someone who is willing to pursue an independent policy stance. Those identifying with him in this way articulate admiration for the idea that he places Italy's interests ahead of the expectations of external powers.

"After Berlusconi showed INDEPENDENCE, after Berlusconi clearly demonstrated that he wants Italy to be really independent country, after Berlusconi started to pursue Italian own national interests and signed South Stream gas pipeline with Russia then suddenly media and EU bureaucrats in Brussels, controlled either directly or indirectly by the Anglo-American imperialists, started to yell about alleged love affairs of Mr. Berlusconi..." (Clip: Rescue Rangers)

His perceived personal warmth with the controversial figure of Putin appears to further reinforce his image as a politician unbowed by Italy's membership in the EU, and NATO. In the following comments both identification through perception of similar interests and perception of mutual enemies can be clearly detected.

"Its funny how people are attacking Berlusconi just because he prefers to befriend Russia than bow to America. PATHETIC" (Clip: Rescue Rangers)

"It's strange that we haven't seen that on the news in Germany! There you see how the media is controlled !!! Even in good old Germany! Probably because it would dismount the image of the united Europe story" (Clip Rescue Rangers)

These interpretations of Berlusconi as 'anti-American' are of particular interest when referenced against the discussions related to 'Bush Press Ops', in which Berlusconi displayed similar warmth with Bush, and received significant condemnation for what was perceived as a 'pro-American' stance.

There are also no shortage of comments that disidentify with the Berlusconi Putin combination. Although many comments express an outright hostility towards the pairing, comments like the following are not inherently bound to receiving negative

interpretation, again hinting that Burke's third type of unconscious identification may be taking place:

"Like an episode of the Sopranos." (Clip: Rescue Rangers)

"LOL. u have russian mafia discussing ways to whack people with italian mafia." (Clip: Rescue Rangers)

While conventional political logic might suggest that it would be a bad thing for a politician to be perceived as associated with the mafia, some of the comments offered by the YouTube audience suggest that this might not be the case if the audience is applying entertainment logics in response to the content they are viewing. Given the long history of mafia representations in the mainstream media conveying a sense of glamour and excitement, a little of their lustre appears to sometimes rub off, by association, on Berlusconi. Comments such as *'mafia was chic... even in USA in the 40s... I like mafia'* (clip: Putin denies secret marriage to Russian renowned sportswoman) serve to illustrate this point. Entertainment industry treatments of the mafia are often referenced in comments, with TV shows like the 'Sopranos' and movies like the 'Godfather' being frequently cited as reference points. One YouTube user even refers to him as *'Silvio Soprano Berlusconi, the real godfather'*, in comments left in response to several clips. In this regard the theme of 'the mafia' might be considered to offer one of the 'more celebrified' themes around which identification and disidentification is established within the broader discussion around Berlusconi.

One element that offers some indication as to whether associations with the mafia are being considered as grounds for identification or disidentification is whether or not the commenter views Berlusconi as beholden to the mafia or as 'the boss' of the mafia. Those who view him as 'The Boss' appear to often show him respect, and identify with him, as such, while those who appear to view him as beholden treat him with a considerably greater degree of contempt. Irrespective of how the term is articulated 'mafia' is a prominent noun in the corpus, receiving 398 mentions, in comparison to say the 'media' with 216.

9) Obama 'tanned' comments:

4 depictions

Clips Ranked: 23, 31, 35, 37

Total Views: 108163 (2.25% of total views)

Total Comments: 863 (5.96% of total comments)

Total 'likes': 122 / 86.52% (2.48% of total likes)

Total 'dislikes': 19 /14.48% (2.15% of total dislikes)

Description

Although Berlusconi's comments that American President Barack Obama 'is young, handsome, and tanned', are depicted in four clips included in this study, and were the subject of widespread international media attention, combined these clips have received only 108,163 views (or 2.25% of total views). Proportionately however, these clips have attracted more than their share of comments, provoking 5.96% of the total number of comments made about all clips. This demonstrates that a comment to view ratio of 0.8%, more than double 0.3% average across the study.

A possible explanation for the absence of viewership might be that the clips relate only to comments made in Italian by Berlusconi and therefore lack either the language, or the visual impact required to attract a larger English speaking audience. Likewise, as the comments were made in Italian, the English speaking audience are reliant on in clip translations, which serve to further mediate (and perhaps mitigate) the delivery of Berlusconi's remarks. That said, Obama is a very prominent political figure, who features highly among politicians discussed within the corpus (ranked 4th with 415 mentions). As such, one might have presumed that with his 'political star power' as an accessory within these clips, and their 'newsworthy' titles, they might have attracted more than 108,163 views (or 2.25% of total views). A comparison with the clips featuring George W Bush (ranked third with 574 mentions) is somewhat illuminating. The most viewed individual clip of all those contained within the study (Berlusconi Stupid, with 687497 or 14.31% of total views) features Berlusconi beside Bush at Camp David. Obviously, the name 'Bush' does not feature in the title, so the audience attraction cannot be simply ascribed to Bush's presence. However, what this clip does feature is Berlusconi commenting in English. While, as the title indicates, what Berlusconi had to say might well be considered 'stupid' depending on one's political views, it does not contain any substantial gaffes, or slights directed

against anyone, and could not be considered particularly controversial within a traditional view of a political controversy. What his comments do display is an element of incompetency in Berlusconi's performance, namely his poor grasp of English.

The three clips featuring Berlusconi's comments (interpreted by some as racial slights) about Obama feature no elemental failures in performance. When shown making the comments, Berlusconi appears confident in his (Italian) delivery, and comfortable in his surroundings. That he has committed a 'gaffe' is determined by the top-driven media narratives accompanying the clips, as opposed to his performance with Bush, where the 'gaffe' has been determined by the clip's uploader and the YouTube audience. The comparison between these clip themes hints that slightly different determinants to those of the traditional media about what constitutes a gaffe is perhaps being applied by the YouTube audience.

Obama 'tanned' comments: Identification and Disidentification

The clips seem to have struck a nerve with many of those who have viewed them. In spite of having only attracted 2.25% of total viewership, they have provoked 5.96% of total comments. Unsurprisingly, the debate is focussed strongly on themes of race and racism, and much of it is conducted in terms that are 'heated', even within the flaming culture of YouTube. While some Italian viewers disidentify with Berlusconi on account of perceiving his comments as racism (in some cases offering apologies for it), others argue that his comments were either not racist at all, or have been manipulated by his opponents in order to manufacture an incident. As in some of the other discussions related to Berlusconi's other 'gaffes', some of those identifying with him cite the hand of 'Communists' in this 'manipulation'. From the perspective of investigating the supra-logic of entertainment, an interesting theme touched on by some of those identifying with Berlusconi is the idea that what he said should not be interpreted as racist because Berlusconi 'is what he is'. This is almost to suggest that the users acknowledge that there was a racist element to Berlusconi's comments. However, they believe that this should be overlooked, on account of it being somehow less offensive because it is coming from a figure who is already identified

with as an entertaining leader, and not someone whose comments should be taken seriously. The following comments are indicative of this position:

Big f'in deal. Its like they are surprised at Berlusconi. He is what he is. Get over it. It's not like he called him the n-word. Nothing to get excited about here. (Clip: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned")

Berlusconi told " Obama is young, good-looking and sun tanned" do you really think it's an insult??? Berlusconi can often be naïve and childish when speaks but this wasn't mean to be an insult. The sad thing is that italian communists always look forward to manipulate Berlusconi's sentences to make you believe he's a monster. And by the way, where's the dictatorship when people can chose and vote among more than 50 parties? (Clip: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned")

haha if he was an american president he'd be under fire so bad he'd probably have to resign XD. he doesnt seem like a bad guy though...is he? (Clip: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned")

A number of users (whom one might presume are American) articulate their disidentification with Berlusconi on account of his being an Italian leader with the 'nerve' to 'insult' the President of the United States. It is difficult to interpret whether these users are offended by Berlusconi's allusion to Obama's race, or are just using it as validation to express their disidentification with Berlusconi, and often their own racist views against Italians. As in the discussions relating to the clip theme 'Queen Annoyed', Berlusconi's 'lack of class' is cited, and is again extended to Italians in general. As is indicated by the following comments, some of the attacks launched on Berlusconi are virulently racist in their own right, and stand out as some of the most aggressive rhetoric present in any of the discussions analysed:

What do you expect from a guinea? Class??? Guineas are only interested in one thing....pretending they are white. (Clip: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned")

How can we allow this moron, this absolute nobody, to insult the president of the United States? He must be killed. (Clip: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned")

*Shut the f*ck up you filthy mudskin pasta chimp. (Clip: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned")*

*as far as im concerned Italy is still a facist regime and we should nuke the spaghetti eating c*ck suckers (Clip: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned")*

10) Gaddafi meetings:

3 depictions

Clips Ranked: 22, 42, 43

Total Views: 73536 (1.53% of total views)

Total Comments: 363 (2,5% of total comments)

Total 'likes': 42 / 71.19% (0.85% of total likes)

Total 'dislikes': 17 / 28.81% (1.92% of total dislikes)

Description

'The Italian President, Silvio Berlusconi kissed Gaddafi's Hand!', ranked 22nd, features footage of Berlusconi kissing the hand of Colonel Gaddafi while being greeted by him at a Libyan hosted summit of the Arab league. The men hold arms briefly on stage, before Berlusconi bends down and quickly kisses the now former Libyan leader's hand in a manner not dissimilar to how one might kiss the hand of the Pope. 'Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi and Libyan Leader Muammar Gaddafi' ranked 42nd depicts Berlusconi entering the Libyan parliament to rapturous applause, arm and arm with Col Gaddafi. Berlusconi is then shown receiving standing ovations while addressing the parliament as Gaddafi looks on. 'Raw Video: Gaddafi Visits Italy for 1st Time' is an Associated Press posting depicting Gaddafi receiving a warm formal welcome from Berlusconi as he disembarks his plane. Gaddafi is then shown giving an address in a setting that cannot be determined from the 'raw' footage provided.

Gaddafi meetings: Identification and disidentification

While in no way highlighted in the framing provided by the uploaders of these clips, one of the most notable things about the discussions associated with them is the frequency of celebrified reference points offered in response to Gaddafi's unusual appearance. The uniform he wears is highly decorative, while his made-up face and unnatural looking hair could most generously be described as 'unorthodox' for any figure, let alone a political one. Many of the comments offered in response to this clip focus on these aesthetic elements of Gaddafi, with opinions on their merits being split. One user thinks "*He's one classy dude*", while another opines "*Best dressed*

*man I have ever seen. I'm serious about also". On the other hand another says "Geeze, he looks like sh*t! He's like a cross breed between the pearcher on Jerry Springer and Diego Maradona!" while one asks "Is that Mickey Rourke?" Also displaying celebrified points of reference is the more neutral, and 'most liked' comment left in reaction to this clip was, "Yeah, I can definitely see Michael Jackson wearing that outfit."*

These clips attracted a 71.19% 'like' to 28.81% 'dislike' ratio. This was considerably below the average of 84.77% 'likes' to 15.23% dislikes across the corpus, and makes it the second 'most disliked' clip theme depicted amongst the top ten.

Other leaders depicted with Berlusconi in the top ten most viewed clip themes, are largely who you would expect to see him with on the international stage, namely, leaders of other developed G-20 countries. Furthermore, some of the criticism directed at more popular clips, such as 'Berlusconi stupid', consist of users chastising Berlusconi on account of his pro-Americanism. It would also appear, from the limited reference to it in the discussions these clips provoke, that there is little knowledge of the historical colonial relationship between Italy and Libya amongst the international YouTube audience. For some users, Berlusconi's meeting with Gaddafi appears to represent something of a 'continuity lapse', or an apparent incongruity with prior knowledge of Berlusconi. This seems to provoke some users to concoct explanations for what they are watching that better conform to their own assumptions. The following example suggests not only that Berlusconi is under the control of the Vatican or the mafia, but that his 'unusual' behaviour on the international stage is being dictated by their conventions:

"in Italy that is regarded as an act of extreme submission reserved to the Pope or to mafia Padrini. maybe berlusconi wronged ghadafi for Ratzinger or for the boss of his mafia syndicate . also, in Italy no one has seen this so far on TV news , and internet users are a minority." (Clip: The Italian President, Silvio Berlusconi kissed Gaddafi's Hand!'

Unsurprisingly, given Gaddafi's reputation as a dictator, there are also many comments that condemn Berlusconi for keeping the company of '*the shameful tyrant of Libya*'. From a Burkean standpoint, in this instance, those disidentifying with Berlusconi would appear to be doing so based on a perceived consubstantiality between Berlusconi and Gaddafi - in the form of 'the friend of my enemy is my enemy'.

4.3: Chapter Summary

This chapter began by presenting the basic quantitative and statistical data relating to this project's empirical object. It then provided statistical details and qualitative descriptions of the top ten individual clip themes present within the sample. Following the descriptions of the clips' content, indicative points relating to what the popularity of these clips may tell us about the roles of celebrification and entertainment logics at work in the transnational YouTube discourse relating to Berlusconi were identified and discussed. User comments that were illustrative of some of the ways in which these clips were provoking the audiences to identify or disidentify with Berlusconi were also presented and discussed. While it would be impossible to offer a full coverage of an empirical sample that contains 14490 comments and 434991 words, it is hoped that some of the more common modes of identification and disidentification with Berlusconi have been outlined in this chapter. Further discussion of issues of celebrification and entertainment, along with identification and disidentification are now provided in the discussion chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1: Overview

This discussion chapter firstly considers the empirical results in terms of the primary research question relating to the articulation of the logics of celebrification and entertainment within the sample of Berlusconi related YouTube content. This discussion is conducted under three inter-related sub-headings. 5.2.1) 'The Absence of Big 'P' Politics', uses illustrative examples to look at the minimal representation of formal political information in the clips. 5.2.2) 'Audience Re-Appropriation and the Amplification of Performance Aspects: Politics as an elite situation comedy', also uses illustrative examples to examine the decontextualisation and re-appropriation into entertainment of formal political images by the YouTube audience. 5.2.3) 'Humour and the 'Good Celebrity Villain'', looks at how entertainment logics deployed in other mediated domains can serve to validate the narrative enactment of antagonistic behaviour by politicians such as Berlusconi.

The second research question examining how Berlusconi might be assessed in relation to the 'celebrity politician typologies' offered by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004) is addressed under two inter-related sub-headings. 5.3.1) 'Berlusconi and the Typologies', looks at how Berlusconi, and his representation within the sample, may be related to the individual typologies offered. While 5.3.2) 'Identification as a supplement to the celebrity politician typologies', looks at how the Burkean modes of identification (1958) might be related to the celebrity politician types.

The discussion of these questions is contextualised within the study's normative concerns about the impact of celebrification/entertainment logics on the quality of political discourse in the public sphere (Postman, 1986: Franklin, 1996: Marshall, 1997, West & Orman, 2002: Meyer, 2002: etc). However, it is also conducted with the acknowledgement that these processes are not entirely negative, in some instances encouraging engagement with politics (Coleman, 2003: Harrington, 2010), and providing legitimate modes of representation to those otherwise disassociated from politics (Keane, 2002: Street, 2004, 2005: Saward 2003a)

The chapter concludes with section 5.4), which offers a summary of the key points touched on in earlier sections.

5.2: Primary Questions:

The first of this project's research questions seeks to address that role of the supra-logic of entertainment in determining the nature of the clips included within the sample, and the modes of engagement through which the audience respond to them:

What discourses about politics, celebrity and the supra-logic of entertainment are articulated through the types of footage of Silvio Berlusconi attracting viewership on YouTube, and in the comments resultant from that viewership? And to what extent are the transnational popular discourses on YouTube about Berlusconi indicative of 'celebrity politics' and the 'supra-logic of entertainment'?

5.2.1: The Absence of Big 'P' Politics

The prevalence of parody, scandal, and gaffe related themes amongst the clips studied, and especially those represented within the top ten clip themes, points to a discourse displaying many of the focuses and traits that scholars have associated with both the celebrification of politics (Street 2004, West & Orman 2002, Thompson 2005, Marshall 1997 etc.), and the viewing culture of YouTube (Kellner & Kim 2010, May 2010, Burgess & Greene 2009, Snickars & Vonderau 2009 etc.). The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis points to the prevalence of the 'supra-logic of entertainment' (Postman, 1986) as the logic primarily defining the audience's mode of interest in engaging with Berlusconi related content on YouTube. This is supported statistically by the higher levels of audience engagement with entertainment focussed clips, and by the frequently entertainment orientated themes articulated in the framing of clips, and in comments posted in response to their viewing. It would then seem fair to suggest that this sample of the English language discourse relating to Berlusconi is a highly celebrified one, one representative of the broader celebrity turn in mediated political discourse.

Whether or not the discussion surrounding Berlusconi is celebrified in some exceptional way cannot be ascertained without undertaking comparative studies examining how other political leaders are represented on YouTube. However, one can certainly gain an insight into the degree of celebrification within the discourse by comparing the nature of the most viewed content (covered within the 'top ten clip themes') to that of some of the less frequently viewed content within the sample.

Of the 51 clips included in this study, 'President Obama Meets with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi' is the only one which depicts what might be conceived of as a 'traditional formal political spectacle', without any particularly entertaining adjuncts or 'gaffes', such as those at the NATO summit or G-8 photo op, or user attempts to frame the content as such, i.e. 'Berlusconi Stupid'. This clip was also the only one in the sample posted directly onto YouTube by a political source, specifically The White House's official YouTube user account. The clip 'President Obama Meets with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi', ranked 30th and was viewed a mere 29799 times (or 0.62% of total views). It depicts a 'gaffe-free' meeting staged purely for the cameras, following on from 'real political' discussions between the two leaders held in private. This clip was not included in the 'Obama Tanned' theme discussed in the previous chapter. Although it features that combination of leaders, there is no reference to race, or Berlusconi's prior comments, in the clip.

The clip essentially contains two formal political actors performing a highly orchestrated piece of conventional political theatre, primarily for the benefit of the mainstream traditional media. While it could be categorised as 'reflective of the communication of formal political information', or big 'P' politics, it may also be described as reflective of a more traditional form of 'televised celebrity politics'. This clip is demonstrative of the classical type of 'interaction between politicians, media, and the public' that West and Orman (2003, p. 17) cite as indicative of the 'celebrity political system', in which politicians apply media logics to stage manage the presentation of political events. While there are multiple examples of user comments relating to serious political themes, that, content wise, this is the most traditional big 'P' political clip amongst those included in the study, could be interpreted as a marker of the need to question what the definition 'formal politics' on YouTube should be. It appears viewership decisions relating to the political are being subsumed within the logics (and search functionalities) of a new medium which appears to be normally

dominated by entertainment logics. That this kind of pseudo-event assumes the mantle of having the most formal political content of any of clips included within this study might well be interpreted as a strong indicator of the extent to which the logics of celebrification and entertainment shape the environment for viewership of political leaders on YouTube.

While there are many clips containing political figures and political settings, the relative absence of a formal political focus is shown in the fact that amongst the 51 clips included in this sample there is not a single interview with Berlusconi. Moreover, there was only one example of 'investigative journalism' related to Berlusconi, a profile piece from Australia's ABC, 'Berlusconi's World - Italy', which had been viewed only 15,390 times. Likewise, with the exception of the clip 'Learn English with Silvio Berlusconi (UN English school)' (which is discussed in the following sub-section), there are no clips of Berlusconi speaking on issues of state or policy.

The unpopularity of clips offering big 'P' political information within the English language Silvio Berlusconi discourse on YouTube can obviously not be taken as evidence of a lack of interest in political information across the medium. Yet this study's findings are entirely congruent with Ward's (2008) and Carlson and Strandberg's (2008) findings on the type of entertainment-based or gaffe-focussed content that featured most prominently within the YouTube discourses surrounding candidates in the 2007 Australian and Finnish elections respectively.

There are clearly some attempts made by users, in comments, to engage with political issues broadly associated with the clips and the figures contained within them. Perhaps unsurprising, given the transnational audience, foreign policy debates, such as whether or not Italy's orientation should be 'pro or anti European Union', and or 'pro or anti American', along with discussion of what Berlusconi's position on these issues actually is, and 'should be', appeared to be amongst the most commonly discussed themes. Similarly, debates about whether Berlusconi's media holdings should be thought of as a 'bulwark against global media interests' or as 'Berlusconi's means of controlling Italy' were put forward with some regularity. However, these users' attempts at 'exchanges of ideas' appeared to struggle to gain traction in discussions that were largely dominated by celebrified logics, and the flaming practices associated with YouTube culture (Moor, Heuvelman, and Verleur 2010).

5.2.2: Audience Re-Appropriation and the Amplification of Performance Aspects: Politics as an Elite Situation comedy

To say that the landscape for political discourse on YouTube is highly celebrified and conducted largely within the logics of entertainment is not to say that the clips included in this study do not depict events occurring within formal political settings. Rather, as supported by the types of content outlined in the clip data results, it is to say that the events taking place within these settings, or how these events are framed by those uploading the clips, are not of a formal political nature or focus. Likewise, rather than suggesting that other international leaders represented in the sample alongside Berlusconi are treated as inherently trivial figures, it is the nature of the interactions amongst these leaders, their framing as comic adjuncts, and the nature of much of the audience comment, that serve to legitimise the broad characterisation of much of the sample as an 'elite political situation comedy'.

One important way in which the presentation of politics on YouTube differs from that of a television sit-com is that, through their uploading and search choices, the YouTube audience can determine how much screen time each character/leader gets. Within such a discourse, one could assume that the clip 'President Obama Meets with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi' might have ranked more highly within the sample had it been entitled something more along the lines of 'Berlusconi Stupid with Obama'.

Whilst not being one of the more frequently viewed themes in the study (and thus having not being covered in the top ten clips theme based results section), one example particularly emblematic of this audience decontextualisation and re-appropriation of formal political events for comedic purposes is the clip 'Learn English with Silvio Berlusconi (UN English school)', ranked 36th with 23631 views (or 0.49% of total views). This clip depicts Berlusconi addressing the United Nations General Assembly on such serious topics as global security and the economy. Somewhat unsurprisingly given the title, the discussion that follows on from the clip is focussed little on the substantive political content of his speech, but rather on his broken English delivery. The title ascribed to the clip clearly demonstrates that its author intended that Berlusconi's quality of delivery, rather than the political positions he was attempting to articulate, is what 'should' be assessed by the audience. Its

framing attempts to focus the viewer's attention squarely on Berlusconi's performance. This type of framing is not uncommon in the titles ascribed to clips within this study ('Berlusconi Stupid', 'Berlusconi picks his nose', 'Berlusconi dampens sexist rumours' etc) , and, as a user behaviour, it could be suggested to be indicative of an audience internalisation and normalisation (or perhaps even an amplification) of the media logics critiqued by scholars such as Zolo (1992, p. 162) who bemoaned that 'telegenicity' has become the measure of 'representativeness'. Likewise, the audiences application of such framings serves only to support Postman's (1986, p. 4) contention that 'cosmetics has replaced ideology as the field of expertise over which a politician must have competent control'.

This clip represents a typical example of how the titles assigned to clips serve to create something of a de-facto editorial framing on YouTube. Like the anchors of a news bulletin leading in to a story, they tell the audience what to look for within what they are about to look at. Taking this into account, it is interesting that the most viewed Berlusconi clip in the sample, with 687497 (or 14.31% of total views), is titled 'Berlusconi Stupid'. It features Berlusconi on the White House lawn with President George W, again speaking in broken English, so again 'failing' in this basic performative competency. While the likes of Postman (1986), Marshall, (1997) and Meyer (2002) have bemoaned television and print media's 'obsession' with an entertaining form of political fare, it is here that perhaps one of the biggest differences between celebrified politics in 'traditional' media and the amplified celebrified politics on YouTube is suggested. While on television, the performance aspects of politicians' activities may guide the selection of a particular story, they are rarely explicitly presented as having such a focus lest a major 'gaffe' be featured. Rather, although the media are attracted to 'gaffes', the 'shroud of rationality' (Marshall 1997, p. 204) that remains a part of television news' celebrified framing will generally see criticism of performative aspects attached to a specific political context or event. Traditional media may cover these types of 'gaffes', but they are unable to do this in quite such a one dimensional way for the reasons discussed above. This is not to say that 'marginal' performance gaffes are not covered on broadcast television. Rather, it is more likely that they would be covered in a satirical context such as 'The Daily Show' or 'The Colbert Report', as opposed to a mainstream news bulletin.

As is illustrated by the popularity of 'Berlusconi Stupid', the framing of content seems to influence the focus of the audiences' interpretation of it. In effect, this can create/determine, and publicise 'gaffes', where traditional media's subjugation to regulation, commercial interests, maintenance of a pretence of impartiality, and a concern for the "public interest", can, outside of satirical programming, somewhat constrain their ability to construct 'incidents' within footage, and explicitly state how they should be interpreted. Although internalising logics similar to those that see politicians' contextual blunders regularly reported on news bulletins, and through an amplified focus on politicians' performance traits, what constitutes a gaffe appears to be defined somewhat differently by the YouTube audience and the traditional media. For instance Berlusconi's comments about Barack Obama's 'tan' were widely reported on and treated as a political gaffe by the mainstream media (BBC, 2008). Berlusconi's meetings with Bush were generally not treated as gaffes by the mainstream media, and for the most part negative commentary was directed at the political aspects of the pairings' relationship, such as Italy's role in the war in Iraq (Time, 2008). But as this study suggests, the most viewed 'YouTube gaffe' to actually feature the "real" Berlusconi was simply Berlusconi speaking English in the company of Bush. The commentaries offered by those commenting on YouTube suggest that the 'gaffe' was defined mostly with reference to the performative aspects of the clip, rather than its political implications. That is to say that the 'gaffe' was the failure to transmit the image Berlusconi intended, a failure to be confident and competent within his character.

Perhaps nowhere is the value that the YouTube audience appears to place on celebrated political 'characters' adhering to their performative expectations more evident than within the clip theme 'Berlusconi harasses parking warden'. As discussed in the results section, this was the most viewed footage 'of Berlusconi' on YouTube, in spite of the footage not actually being of the actual Berlusconi. That said, when viewing the sample as an 'audience generated political situation comedy', it might be fair to suggest that the footage did contain the comedic and entertaining 'Berlusconi character' consistent with the audiences' expectations. That is to say that although the person presented in these clips was an actor, rather than Berlusconi himself, the behaviour displayed conformed to the 'sex mad' persona of Berlusconi often projected in the mainstream international media. Perhaps most importantly though, the behaviour clearly conformed with many of the audiences' expectations of

how Berlusconi might be considered entertaining. That this clip theme received the highest proportion of 'likes' to 'dislikes' would appear to indicate that this exaggerated performance of 'Berlusconi-like behaviour' did a better job of entertaining viewers than any footage containing the real Berlusconi, whose ability to entertain was somewhat constrained by his role as Prime Minister of Italy.

This result could be again be interpreted as emblematic of the extent to which political discourses on YouTube are celebrified and entertainment-focused. Within the environment of YouTube, even a figure considered as expert in constructing and projecting his own mediatised image as Berlusconi (Paolucci , 2006) cannot successfully compete for audience attention with an actor, separated from any 'real' political constraints, who appropriates and amplifies his celebrity character. This is congruent with Ward's (2008) findings regarding the 2007 Australian election campaign, in which the most viewed footage 'of' Kevin Rudd, was not of Rudd himself, but of a cartoon version of Rudd styled around the propaganda movies of Chairman Mao. In the cases of both Berlusconi and Rudd, the most viewed YouTube content relating of each of these figures are pieces of satire in which they are not present.

5.2.3: Humour and the 'Good Celebrity Villain'

"hahahahaha!!!!!! Silvio, the best comendant" Clip : Berlusconi Stupid

As was evident from the previous section, and those relating to identification presented in association with the clip themes, humour plays a significant role in how viewers identify with Berlusconi. This interpretation comes with some additional quantitative backing, with common YouTube expressions of humour such as 'LOL' and 'haha' appearing 519 and 142 times respectively within the corpus. However, overt expressions of amusement at, and identification with, Berlusconi's performances aside, humour also serves to play a significant role in how many people attempt to express their conscious disidentification with him. While vitriolic statements displaying an apparent hatred of Berlusconi's persona and politics, along with attempts to disassociate the Italian people from his government, appear

amongst the most common forms of comments displaying disidentification with him, comedic attempts at ridiculing him are at least as frequent an occurrence. However, placed in the context of a discussion space seemingly dominated by the logics of entertainment, it could be argued that this anti-Berlusconi humour may in fact be inadvertently, or unconsciously, identifying with crucial dimensions of his persona, as funny comments from critics merely serve to add to the over-all entertainment value of Berlusconi's YouTube representation. Working with the hypothesis, which is supported by this study's findings, that entertainment value, over desire for information on formal politics, is the dominant factor motivating viewership of YouTube clips featuring Berlusconi, anything entertaining posted in response to them, whether positive or negative, could be considered to be helping reinforce the association between Berlusconi and entertainment. Consequently, as 'political entertainment' could be fairly considered something of a Berlusconi forte, opponents who pursue humorous criticisms of him may in fact be amplifying the strength of entertainment supra-logics that may facilitate a common, and paradoxical mode of identification that can be associated with Burke's third type, unconscious (Burke, 1950). The following comment is emblematic of many taking this form:

'It's fun how Berlusconi pretends to understand what Obama's saying. Actually he doesn't understand a word. Maybe "Italy". Maybe lol'. Clip: President Obama Meets with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi

With the celebrity system seemingly transcending domains of distinction, we may gain an insight into the workings, and normalisation, of this type of unconscious identification by drawing a parallel to another field in which, as in politics, the projected personas are the result of calculated processes of mediation.

In professional wrestling the measure of a wrestler's success is determined largely by the strength of the emotive crowd reaction that their actions elicit. Whether the emotive reaction is positive or negative is very much of secondary concern (Foley, 2002). An emotive reaction to the wrestler/entertainer is an engagement through which the audience can become part of the narrative. High calibre villains frequently draw the strongest emotive reactions. While the crowd may morally and rationally condemn their actions, they appreciate the entertainment value of their comedic, and larger-than-life, villainy, and thus realise the centrality of their antagonistic behaviour to the production of an entertaining spectacle. People love to hate a good villain, and

the negative signs and chants offered by the live wrestling audience are actually an important component of the entertaining narrative presented on television, or the internet. The crowd enact a dialectical affirmation of their own 'goodness' through their display of disidentification with the 'good villain's' 'badness'. The role of the 'good villain' often occupies the same narrative centrality in television dramas and Hollywood movies. Luke Skywalker famously needed his inter-action with Darth Vader in order to construct his own identity.

In the online situation comedy of international politics as presented on YouTube, Berlusconi often appears to play the role of the 'entertaining villain', while his YouTube critics play the role of the live audience by providing an entertaining and negative, but in important respects complementary, narrative to the 'in ring' action, or in this case, the humorous content of the clip. This comparison is to suggest the structural normality of the idea that there should be a category of viewers, who, while to some extent implicitly cognitively disidentifying with Berlusconi the politician and the person (often though referencing themes like corruption, sleaze, and incompetence), are simultaneously demonstrating a form of paradoxical identification with Berlusconi the entertainer. Through referencing figures such as 'Denny Crane' and Benny Hill, personas that would normally be considered inappropriate to hold political office, their comments indicate that they do not necessarily 'like' Berlusconi's actions, but they do appreciate their entertainment. The following comments are indicative of this 'he is bad, but I like him' sentiment:

*"yes he is but are the others any diferent? all politicians are dirty and corupt if they have principles the others will destroy them. that is how it is man. but silvio is at least funny. he has it all money, pussy, power he is old and he knows it and he thinks what can you do to me? Like Danny Crane. he is well funny. stop being such a homo god damit. he is the man.the world is a boys club. grow the f*ck up"* Clip: Berlusconi dampens sexist rumours

"this dude is the benny hill of italy, he's got big balls to be the way he is on such an international scene...someone has his back." Clip: Berlusconi

It looks a mr Been's gag!" Clip: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking phone call at NATO summit

It is evident from the type of comments above, that not only is Berlusconi 'kind of' commended on his humour and the comedic qualities of his behaviour, but that as might be expected within a broadly celebrated discourse, he is also being considered with reference to 'good/likeable villains' from the entertainment industry, with regards

to both the tone and the execution of his 'humour'. This type of identification is again congruent with Marshall's (1997) claim that celebrity acts as a system of validation that transcends domains of distinction, and hints that a type of 'validation via the entertainment value of villainy' might also operate transcendently within this system. This hypothesis is congruent with Drake and Miah's (2010) contention that celebrity works as 'a way of perceiving famous individuals, a mediating frame (a "fame frame") rather than as a formal delineation of their qualities'. In this case the users appear to be applying a frame in assessing Berlusconi's behaviour that they may also apply to the antics of the irreverent, yet comedic, characters they reference in their comments.

The *'Benny Hill of Italy'* comment draws comparison between Berlusconi's persona and that projected by British comedian Benny Hill, who was known for skits involving him behaving lecherously, usually towards far younger women. The comment *'it looks like a mr Been's gag'*, left in response to footage of 'Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting at the G8', is a reference to the particularly awkward and cringe-worthy physical comedy of the character portrayed by Rowan Atkinson. The suggestion that Berlusconi is 'like Denny Crane' is a reference to the popular character played by William Shatner on American TV show 'Boston Legal'. As the comment suggests, Shatner's character was powerful, yet somewhat senile and prone to morally questionable behaviour, although these traits were normally portrayed sympathetically within the show, excused by their humour value and centrality to the narrative. In this case the commenter has implicitly acknowledged that they believe Berlusconi to be corrupt, but has then mounted a defence of him referencing his similarity to Crane as a reason why he is better than other corrupt politicians.

Another, and perhaps even more, paradoxical strand of identification with Berlusconi could be argued to be facilitated by comments that attack Berlusconi, but use figures from the sphere of entertainment as the reference points for the attack. For instance:

"This guy is like having Charlie Sheen as your prime minister. Man what a joke. He doesn't even seem real..." Clip: Berlusconi dampens sexist rumours

Even prior to his recent spike in notoriety, Charlie Sheen was well known as an actor/comedian and a party animal with a self-professed penchant for drugs and prostitutes. In spite of this, he became the highest paid actor on American television

(USA Today, 2010), on account of the revenue created by the large audiences attracted to his brand of morally questionable humour. When taken as a characterisation of a traditional Prime Minister, comparison to a figure such as Sheen might well be considered insulting. However, taking into account the positions of Marshall (1997) and Drake and Miah (2010), which conceive of celebrity as a system of validation that transcends domains of distinction, character associations with such a commercially popular figure as Sheen might in fact be considered complimentary and in some respects beneficial. The ratings Sheen's 'Two and a Half Men' programme achieved indicate that, at the very least, people like to watch him.

While the user making the comment was explicitly disidentifying with Berlusconi, reading comments like this may assist other users who like Sheen (or whoever else is being referenced) to establish a form of paradoxical consubstantiality with Berlusconi through identifying him with other popular characters (real and fictional) with similar character traits. The logic of this type of identification might work as follows: 'I like Charlie Sheen → Berlusconi is like Charlie Sheen → Therefore, I like Berlusconi'.

It is perhaps not surprising that what could broadly be characterised as 'empathy with Berlusconi the entertainer' should be found occurring within YouTube. Based on this study's findings, and those of others similar to it (Ward, 2008; Carlson & Strandberg, 2008; Church, 2010), were one to attempt to be as reductive as possible about the reasons why viewers search out political content on YouTube, one might deduce that the most likely possible motivations for doing so are; 1) being informed, 2) being entertained, and 3) being informed while being entertained – or being infotained. Analysis of the type of clips that have received the most significant levels of viewership within this sample would suggest that 'entertainment', rather than 'political information', or even 'infotainment' is the primary reason why people are choosing to view and engage with YouTube content relating to Silvio Berlusconi. This is congruent with the finding of others (Ward, 2008; Carlson & Strandberg, 2008; Church, 2010), who showed how similar types of 'entertainment themed' content were drawing the highest levels of viewership within politically themed YouTube discourses. Taking these quantitative and qualitative results into account, one could suggest that 'entertainment' might fairly be viewed as a supra-mode of engagement with Berlusconi on YouTube.

5.3: Secondary Research Questions:

The second of this project's research questions attempts to apply the 'celebrity politician typologies' to the figure of Berlusconi, and examine how the YouTube audience might identify/disidentify with reference to these models:

How comfortably does Berlusconi reside within the theoretical frameworks offered by either of the 'celebrity politician' typologies proposed by Street (2004) and West & Orman (2002)? And how might this study's use of Postman's supra-logic of entertainment and the theoretical framework of Burkean identification help extend the existing typologies?

5.3.1: Applying the Celebrity Politician Typologies to Berlusconi

While neither scholarly effort claims their categories to be mutually exclusive, were one forced to do so, it would be very difficult to determine which one of the celebrity typologies, purposed by either Street (2004) or West & Orman (2002), best describes Berlusconi. It is possible to find elements of most of the typologies offered in both scholarly efforts that might be associated with him. Similarly, in looking at comments left by users that display identification with Berlusconi, it is sometimes possible to detect that they may be identifying with him through modes that might be associated with the different celebrity types.

Within Street's (2004) system of 'Celebrity Politician1s', either CP1 As - 'elected officials with a background in entertainment', CP1 Bs - 'elected officials who employ the trappings of celebrity', or CP2s - 'celebrities who lobby in favour of political positions', it might be possible to argue that at various stages in his career, Berlusconi has been all three.

Prior to his official entry into politics, from his position as a well-known businessman and media owner, Berlusconi was able to lobby in favour of political positions from the 'outside'. This lobbying took the form of using direct contacts with politicians, along with utilising the discursive powers of his media networks, and his already well established reputation as a successful business celebrity within the public sphere, to lobby for more flexible and favourable media laws (Hibberd, 2008: Ginsborg, 2005:

Stille. 2006). During this period he fulfilled the criteria of the CP2. It might also be suggested that, in office, he is both a CP1 A and a CP1 B. With his background in the entertainment industry and his celebrity businessman status, he clearly fulfils the criteria of a CP1 A, although, after nearly 20 years on the political scene, it might be argued that, while they are aware that he acts in these capacities, many younger Italians would likely be mainly familiar with him in his role as a politician. This focus appears to be reflected in many of the interpretations of him articulated in user comments. Similarly, Berlusconi has ceased to occupy the role of a lobbyist for law media reform as his media holdings have become entrenched. As a politician, he has clearly used the trapping of celebrity in his image-making, campaigning, and arguably even in the formulation of his political product and his style of governance. These behaviours could all see him fairly categorised as a CP1 B. Thus, across the course of his career in public life, the nature of Berlusconi's celebrity may be considered to largely fulfil the requirements of all of the celebrity politician typologies Street (2004) offers.

As was evident in many of the user comments presented in the results, and earlier parts of this discussion section, common themes around which identification with Berlusconi is established include 'finding him entertaining' and perceiving him to be something of 'an everyman' amongst more traditional political figures. Identification with him as an 'entertaining political figure' might be best associated with CP1 Bs - 'elected officials who employ the trappings of celebrity', or politicians who go out of their way to present an 'entertaining' mediated persona. Identification with Berlusconi as a 'non-traditional politician' might be more closely associated with CP1 As 'elected officials with a background in entertainment', a category designed to house figures well known in domains outside of politics who choose to enter the political sphere. That Berlusconi made his name outside of politics allows him to present himself as uninfluenced by the traditional expectations of politicians, thus conveying a sense of informality that some YouTube audience members clearly identify with. Comments to this effect contribute to reproducing a YouTube discourse that casts Berlusconi as a figure outside of formal politics. This is particularly evident when he is juxtaposed against figures such as Merkel and Queen Elizabeth.

Of the celebrity politician typologies offered within West & Orman's (2002) categorisation system, there is only one typology in which Berlusconi's inclusion can

be categorically ruled out. This category is that of 'legacies', or those whose names confer a level of celebrified recognition on account of their family's reputation in the political, and broader public spheres. As Berlusconi comes from a middleclass family with no connection to politics or history of producing political leaders, he clearly has no connection to this category, and the discourse surrounding him reflects this. The 'famed non politicos (elected officials)' category West & Orman (2002) propose is for all intents and purposes approximate to Street's (2004) CP1 A category, as West and Orman's evocation of a 'fame' from outside the political sphere implicitly implies a prior association with the broader celebrity system, 'celebrity' or 'fame' being a commodity that is inherently produced and conveyed via the entertainment industry and its logics (Drake and Miah, 2010) (Guthey, Clark & Jackson, 2009). Given this similarity, Berlusconi again fulfils the criteria on account of his transfer of business celebrity status into a successful campaign for public office. This strong link between Berlusconi and business is frequently articulated in user comments, and serves as a theme of both identification and disidentification.

'Famed non-politicos (lobbyists)' is analogous to one of Street's other categories, in this case the CP2. So again, this was a role Berlusconi played prior to entering politics formally. This is reproduced in a YouTube discourse that see much of the audience contributing to it cast Berlusconi as a figure outside formal politics. West & Orman (2002, p. 3) explain their 'political newsworthies' category as being essentially the 'classical' political celebrities, or those who gain public attention through articulating political positions in the public sphere. Whilst it may be hard to conceive of Berlusconi in the terms of traditional political activism, as mentioned, during the 1980s he did find himself at the forefront of the debate surrounding the legal status of private broadcasters in Italy. As such, his voice was present in the public sphere, often via his own media, as an advocate for greater 'freedom' in the Italian media laws. He was therefore shown to the public, not only as a business celebrity, but also in the context as a non-politician protagonist and spokesman within a political debate, thus largely fulfilling the demands of the criteria. However, while Berlusconi's media holding were frequently mentioned, in none of the user comments analysed in this project was Berlusconi discussed with reference to this role as someone who lobbied against the state's national broadcasting monopoly. Rather, Berlusconi himself is more frequently represented as a figure who possesses a broadcasting monopoly in

Italy. A historical line of argument that could see Berlusconi cast as an 'event celebrity' is somewhat more tenuous, but nevertheless cannot be fully discounted. When the Italian government of the 1980s attempted to enforce broadcasting laws which prohibited private national television networks, Berlusconi was thrust into the centre of the national debate as to the future direction of the media in Italy. While his prominence within this discussion could be considered most closely associated with lobbying, nevertheless it was political events outside of his control that encouraged/forced him to take his lobbying into the public sphere. Thus, it can be considered that there was an externally constructed component of 'event celebrity' involved in his rise to prominence. However, while this characterisation may be historically accurate, references relating Berlusconi to this theme are absent from the comments included in the sample.

5.3.2) Identification as a Supplement to the Celebrity Politician Typologies

As discussed in the previous section, at various stages throughout his long career in Italian public life, Berlusconi has arguably fulfilled the criteria associated with all but one of the celebrity politician typologies offered by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004). The Burkean conception of identification (1958) may offer an analytical approach through which one might distil the audience appeals encapsulated in the individual typologies, offering the beginnings of a framework through which the various modes of identification/ disidentification might be associated with the various celebrity politician typologies.

As evident in this project's results, all three types of Burkean identification, along with their inversed disidentification types, can be widely detected in comments left in response to this sample of Berlusconi related YouTube discourse. While these types cannot be considered as wholly distinct, it appears from analysing the corpus of comments in the sample that consubstantiality is most frequently being established through the perception of a momentary sharing of a worldview or sensibility with Berlusconi. This often appears to be a shared worldview and sensibility rooted in the logics of entertainment. This consubstantiality can be most closely associated with Burke's first type of identification, that being associated with a perception of similarity.

A related theme around which the second type of identification, that of the anti-thesis or mutual enemies, can be established that flows on from the first type. Perceiving Berlusconi as a 'non-politico', or 'an everyman', he is routinely juxtaposed against those conceived of as traditional political figures, such as Merkel and Schulz, with whom the audience has not established consubstantiality on account of a lack of perceived similarity of interests. Both of these rhetorical pathways to consubstantiality may perhaps be best associated with West & Orman's (2002) categories of 'famed non politicos (elected officials)', 'political newsworthies' and 'event celebrities', while within Street's categories, Berlusconi appears to benefit from being identified with by the audience as both a 'CP1 A', an 'elected official with a background in entertainment', and as a 'CP1 B' an 'elected official who employs the trappings of celebrity'. All of these categories speak to Berlusconi's 'non-traditional politician' status, a theme around which much of the audience's identification with him appears to be established. Once the audience becomes consubstantial with Berlusconi in this way, the presence of a set of 'others' that are disidentified with serves to heighten their sense of 'self', and, by proxy, heightens their level of identification with those whom they consider 'the same' as 'themselves'.

As was demonstrated in the results section, many of these users identifying with Berlusconi as an entertaining, 'non-traditional' political celebrity appear to be assessing him squarely within the logics of the celebrity system, often with direct reference to other validatory traits of celebrities (or fictional characters) from other domains of distinction. Instances of this include the references to Charlie Sheen, Benny Hill, Mr Bean, and Denny Crane. The audiences' consubstantiality with Berlusconi appears to come about essentially through the 'shared interest' of 'having a laugh', or a sense of relishing his irreverence in the face of 'traditional politicians', that is the 'others' who they disidentify with. Many of these users appear to offer him support on account of this entertainment derived consubstantiality, frequently without any reference to his political platform.

Generally speaking, outside of those raising specific points of policy disagreement, those displaying disidentification with Berlusconi appear to mostly be doing so on account of their perceptions of him as a 'bad' politician or person. Many of these criticisms directly relate to the audience member's perception that Berlusconi is particularly emblematic of a mediatised, irrational, and personality driven type of

demagogic politics. In particular, it is his celebrified mode of politics that appears to especially grate with many of these users. To these users his very status as a celebrity politician, makes him dissimilar to them, and is viewed as a reason to disidentify with him. So, in this regard, his ability to transcend the different celebrity politician typologies means that along with benefitting from offering multiple ways that audiences might establish identification with him as a celebrity, he is simultaneously offering multiple ways in which audiences might establish disidentification with him. Some disidentify with Berlusconi as a Prime Minister, some as a media owner, some as a 'tabloid' figure, and so forth.

A third position, and perhaps the most intriguing in light of this project's interests, is displayed in comments from those who actively disidentify with Berlusconi and his political platform, while acknowledging, or even commending, the entertainment values of his performances. His ability to perform competently within the audiences' expectations of his celebrified character, or his ability to skilfully utilise the 'trappings of celebrity' as associated with Street's 'CP1 B' (2004), can provide the basis for the establishment of Burke's third type of identification, unconscious identification. This identification takes on a form in which audience members consciously disidentify with Berlusconi as a politician, yet simultaneously identify with him as an entertainer, meaning that an unconscious and paradoxical form of identification is sometimes taking place, and is being constructed through entertainment logics.

Identification through shared interests is established with Berlusconi through interpretations of his persona associated with all bar one of the celebrity politician typologies. Identification through the perception of mutual enemies is largely established through juxtaposing Berlusconi against 'less entertaining', or more traditional politicians, those that cannot be as easily associated with celebrity politician typologies. The third type of identification – unconscious – appears most associated with Street's (2004) CP1 B category, as those displaying identification of this type are sometimes consciously disidentifying with Berlusconi the political figure, while commending his performance within the logic of the celebrity system. There also are hints throughout the discussion that Berlusconi is not the only leader to benefit from this type of identification. This paradoxical form of identification is perhaps most neatly encapsulated in a comment left in response to the clip 'Berlusconi Stupid'. While it is not uncommon for politicians to attempt to convey an

image as somebody voters would like to 'have a drink with', the second clause in the following comment is revealing :

"id love to of had a drink with silvio and george (Bush) awful leaders of the free world but very entertaining im sure."

That Berlusconi appears able to frequently evoke all three kinds of identification amongst audience members, and not merely a neat identification/disidentification couplet, may possibly offer an indicator as to one of the factors that has contributed to his political longevity in the face of a turbulent and often controversial career. While the 'celebrity politician typologies' of West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004) offer useful guidance in assessing how political celebrity might be attained and enacted, this study proposes they might be supplemented by Burkean identification (1958) as a further analytical construct to analyse how the various celebrity politician types appeal to audiences.

5.4: Chapter Summary

This chapter began by attempting to answer the first of its research questions relating to the prevalence of the logics of celebrification and entertainment within this sample of Berlusconi discourse. It did this under the headings of 'The Absence of Big 'P' Politics', ' Audience Re-Appropriation and the Amplification of Performative Aspects: Politics as an elite situation comedy' and ' Humour and the 'Good Celebrity Villain'. The second research question relating to the celebrity politician typologies, and their potential expansion via Burke-inspired conceptions of identification, was addressed under the headings of 'Applying the Celebrity Politician Typologies to Berlusconi' and 'Identification as a Supplement to the Celebrity Politician Typologies'.

The final chapter, 'Conclusions', draws together quantitative and qualitative results and observations pertaining to the supra-logic of entertainment and identification within the sample of Berlusconi related YouTube discourse. It then offers the main conclusions reached in regards to the project's two key research questions. These findings are followed by a discussion of this research's possible wider implications. Finally, ideas for future research questions that emerged while undertaking the study are discussed.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1: Chapter Overview

This conclusion chapter begins with a brief overview of the whole study. It then specifically reflects on the two key research questions guiding this project, offering a summary of the study's key findings in regards to each. This is followed by a summary of the study's key findings, before going on to look at its wider implications. Potential future research questions inspired by the study are then discussed.

6.2: Overview of the Study

This thesis began by contextualising its concerns with reference to those of Huxley (1932) and Postman (1986) regarding the threat to the quality of democracy that may be posed when mass mediums of communication become orientated towards the logics of entertainment. The fear of Huxley was that the truth would be drowned beneath a sea of triviality (Huxley, 1958), a fear encapsulated in the title of Postman's book, 'Amusing Ourselves to Death'. The key concept borrowed from Postman was that a medium could become dominated by a 'supra-ideology of entertainment'. This concept was then expanded through the concept of discursive logics (Gynos & Howarth, 2007) into a 'supra-logic of entertainment' that could be applied to analysing the content presented on another medium.

This 'supra-logic of entertainment' analytical construct was developed and contextualised with reference to the related body of scholarly literature investigating the celebrification of politics. Particular guidance was taken from the typologies of celebrity politicians offered by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004), along with the idea encapsulated in Marshall's (1997) argument for the existence of a 'celebrity system' of meaning-making that 'transcends domains of distinction'. This theoretical framework was then discussed with reference to the medium created by YouTube. The choice of the English language YouTube discourse surrounding Italian Prime Minister Silvio as a case study was explained, primarily with reference to his status as a politician synonymous with televisual logics.

Situated within a historical overview of the development of content analysis methods, and the tensions between quantitative and qualitative approaches, the use of a methodology inspired by Krippendorff's (2004) distinction-transcending content analysis framework, was described in relation to how it could be formulated towards addressing the concerns of this project. The concept of Burkean identification was introduced to the analytical framework as a potential supplement to examining how audiences relate to a political figure with reference to the celebrity politician typologies. The creation of an empirical object in which this methodological framework could be applied was then detailed, and ethical issues relating to researching YouTube were discussed.

The results chapter was structured around the top ten most frequently viewed content themes to emerge in the sample. Anchored in a presentation of statistical information gleaned from the study's quantitative measures, each of the clip themes was described and discussed with reference to what its inclusion in the study might tell us about the prevalence of celebrification and entertainment logics in YouTube political discourse. Illustrative examples of the comments left by members of the YouTube audience in response to the clip themes were discussed with reference to this project's interest in how audiences identified and disidentified with Berlusconi.

The discussion chapter began by contextualising the project's results, before attempting to answer its first research question relating to the prevalence of the logics of celebrification and entertainment within the sample under the headings of 'The Absence of Big 'P' Politics', ' Audience Re-Appropriation and the Amplification of Performative Aspects: Politics as an elite situation comedy' and ' Humour and the 'Good Celebrity Villain'. The second research question relating to the celebrity politician typologies, and their potential expansion via Burke-inspired conceptions of identification, was addressed under the headings of 'Applying the Celebrity Politician Typologies to Berlusconi' and 'Identification as a Supplement to the Celebrity Politician Typologies'. This project's key findings will now be reviewed.

6.3: Summary of Key Findings

This section provides a summary of this project's key findings in relating to each of its research questions.

6.3.1: Primary Research Question

What discourses about politics, celebrity and the supra-logic of entertainment are articulated through the types of footage of Silvio Berlusconi attracting viewership on YouTube, and in the comments resultant from that viewership? And to what extent are the transnational popular discourses on YouTube about Berlusconi indicative of 'celebrity politics' and the 'supra-logic of entertainment'?

The most widely viewed clips within the sample are those offering content themes that are clearly more related to the logics of celebrification and entertainment than to those of political information, or even political infotainment. All of the quantitative and qualitative measures employed by this project indicate that 'entertainment' appears to be the supra-logic of this sample of a political content on YouTube. These findings are sufficiently strong as to appear to represent an amplification of concerns about the lack of representation of big 'P' political content on mediums such as television and tabloid newspapers (Postman, 1986; Franklin, 1996; Marshall, 1997; Meyer, 2002: etc). It would also amplify the concerns of those who have articulated qualified optimistic positions in regards to the future of YouTube as a public sphere for rational political discourse (Kellner & Kim, 2010; May, 2010; McKinney & Rill, 2009; etc).

Using a criteria designed to find the footage of Berlusconi that has been most engaged with by the transnational YouTube audience, the sample that was created was found to be almost bereft of content presented with a big 'P' political focus. Formal political figures acting in formal political contexts were present. However, the audience have re-appropriated the representations of these figures and settings, reconstructing them as an 'elite political situation comedy', in which the framings of the clips and the majority of the comments left in response to them focus on what might broadly be described as the performance aspects of the content. Within this discourse the competencies of political figures, and particularly Berlusconi, are largely framed within their ability to perform to the audiences' expectations of their characters. Performance gaffes are perceived and amplified by this logic. Gaffes

constructed in this manner represent the most viewed type of content within the sample. This is most strongly exemplified by the fact that the most viewed clip theme did not feature the "real Berlusconi", rather it featured an actor playing the role of an amplified Berlusconi, whose behaviour, while 'over the top', was consistent with the audience's expectations of the Berlusconi character. While some users have made comments that cognitively engage with big 'P' political themes, the content and comment themes that featured most prominently were largely of a type that could most closely be associated with the values and logics of celebrification and entertainment, as opposed to political information, or even political infotainment.

Analysis of this sample also serves to reinforce Street's (2005) and Delli Carpini & Williams (2001) observation regarding the difficulty that critics have in defining, and in the case of this study, finding, 'traditional/rational/formal/big 'P"' presentation of politics that might be viewed as an alternative to the celebrified and entertainment driven form of politics.

Conversely, the idea that celebrified politics can function as a mode of representation for those disinterested in traditional politics, encapsulated in Coleman's (2003) Street's (2004), and Harrington's (2010) arguments, appears to be borne out by the types of audience engagement prevalent within the comments included in the sample. While there are examples of users cognitively engaging with Berlusconi related content, with reference to big 'P' political issues, such as users referencing Italian foreign policies and economic issues, it appears that the bulk of YouTube users' engagement with Berlusconi comes largely through the identification/disidentification with informal aspects of the content; the personalised (Thompson, 2006), the sensationalised (Mancini & Swanson, 1996), the celebrified, and the entertainment driven. These are modes of engagement that require limited formal political knowledge in order to participate.

It is the conclusion of this study that the transnational popular discourses on YouTube about Berlusconi are highly indicative of the domination of 'celebrity politics' and the 'supra-logic of entertainment' within the sampled texts.

6.3.2: Secondary Research Question

How comfortably does Berlusconi reside within the theoretical frameworks offered by either of the 'celebrity politician' typologies proposed by Street (2004) and West & Orman (2002)? And how might this study's use of Postman's supra-logic of entertainment and the theoretical framework of Burkean identification help extend the existing typologies?

As discussed in chapter 5, although some of the roles Berlusconi has previously occupied are not referenced in the sample, throughout the course of his career in public life Berlusconi has arguably fulfilled the criteria of all but one of the celebrity politician typologies offered by West & Orman (2002) and Street (2004). Therefore perhaps a case can be made that Berlusconi could be regarded as a sort of transcendental political celebrity, in that he transcends the categorisations offered within either set of typologies. With the difficulty involved in categorising him with any one of the typologies, Burkean rhetoric can offer an analytical approach with the potential to distil the appeals encapsulated in individual typologies into the beginnings of a basis through which the appeal of celebrified politicians such as Berlusconi might be assessed. Utilising this approach, one might suggest that Berlusconi's 'supra-mode' of establishing identification with the transnational YouTube audience comes from his persona's ability to create consubstantiality with them through his association with 'outsider', and 'non-politico' celebrity typologies, while still presenting an image of a polished and entertaining 'political celebrity' character. Within a Burkean conception of identification, his 'outsider' status facilitates the first mode of identification, that of the audience perceiving similarity, or shared interests, between Berlusconi and themselves. The simultaneous effect of this type of identification is the second type, in which audience members identify with Berlusconi on account of a perception of sharing mutual enemies, often in the form of those figures perceived as emblematic of traditional politics, those not like the audience, or Berlusconi. His ability to perform competently within the audiences' expectations of his celebrified character, or his ability to utilise the 'trappings of celebrity' (Street, 2004), can provide the basis for the establishment of Burke's third type of identification, the unconscious. This takes on a form in which audience members can disidentify with him as a politician, yet simultaneously identify with him as an entertainer. That Berlusconi's category transcending status appears to

facilitate all three kinds of identification may offer an indicator as to one of the factors that has contributed to his political longevity in the face of a turbulent and often controversial career. The flipside of benefitting from an association with so many of the celebrity politician typologies is that those who object to the celebrification of politics find themselves with multiple themes around which to establish disidentification with him. Those displaying disidentification with Berlusconi often appear to be doing so on account of their negative perceptions of him as a celebrity political persona. They do not like the Berlusconi character. However, some of the criticisms levelled directly relate to the audience member's perception that Berlusconi is particularly emblematic of a mediatised, irrational, and personality driven type of demagogic politics, and that this has been facilitated by his 'control' of the Italian media. Likewise, although comparatively uncommon, there are instances of audience members attempting to critique Berlusconi on issues of policy. Generally however, these cognitive attempts at articulating disidentification with Berlusconi are normally drowned out by the multitude of vitriolic displays of disidentification that might be expected within YouTube's 'flaming culture'.

The role of humour appears to exert a considerable influence on how a significant percentage of the audience go about establishing identification with Berlusconi. This manifests itself in two main ways. Firstly, there are those who openly identify with, and support, Berlusconi as a politician, albeit often through a celebrified system of validation, within which he establishes a perception of political competency by virtue of displaying competency as an entertaining leader. This kind of identification might be most closely associated with Burke's first type of consubstantiality, through a perception of similarity or shared interests, and can naturally lead to the second type of Burkean identification with Berlusconi - that of perception of a mutual enemy – perhaps especially when he is juxtaposed against political figures that fail to entertain. Perhaps most interestingly though, there are those who actively disidentify with Berlusconi the politician, yet acknowledge either overtly, or tacitly, that they do identify with Berlusconi as an entertainment figure. Those viewing him in this way frequently reference the similarity of his humour to that of characters, both real and fictional, from the entertainment industry. This type of identification again supports Marshall's (1997) idea of celebrity as a transcendental system of validation, and

might be most closely associated with Burke's emphasis on the importance of unconscious forms of identification.

6.4: Wider Implications

While being cautious to avoid reading too much into one sample of YouTube discourse surrounding one political figure, nevertheless, this study does offer some interesting, albeit qualified, hints as to the wider implications of political figures/issues being presented via YouTube.

While YouTube can be considered as a distinct medium in its own right, its status within the mainstream media is somewhat unique, as it serves as an aggregator of content from various media sources around the world. Likewise, once content is posted to YouTube it can then be shared, or embedded on other sites (Burgess & Greene, 2009) (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009). Popularity for politicians on YouTube can therefore not always be assessed as a distinct or isolated phenomenon, contained simply within the context of YouTube. Rather, it comes about through a complex relationship between coverage of such figures from traditional media outlets, user-generated footage, and an online audience that can re-appropriate, re-contextualise, and re-distribute this content within and beyond the medium that YouTube creates, through sharing it on blogs, or through sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Thus, while this study focussed on Berlusconi's 'representation on YouTube', this sample cannot be considered as entirely distinct from Berlusconi's representation throughout the internet, or the broader media system. Therefore, while this project does not suggest that its findings regarding how people identify with Berlusconi on YouTube are directly transferable to other mediums, it would be a surprise if a study of his representation on another medium were to produce an entirely contradictory set of results.

While Berlusconi was chosen as a case study on account of the perception that he is a politician who might be considered particularly adept in transmitting his messages within the entertainment logics that Postman discussed with reference to television, the YouTube audiences' response to other politicians present in the study suggested that even political figures who are less commonly associated with a celebrified style

of politics, such as Merkel, are having their capabilities assessed with reference to these logics. While this study cannot reasonably claim to illuminate politics on YouTube beyond the sample of discourse upon which it is focussed, that this study's results are congruent with previous case studies involving political discourses on YouTube (Ward, 2008; Carlson & Strandberg, 2008) would appear to offer strong support to the claim that the types of political content that attract the most audience attention on YouTube are predominantly 'gaffe' or satire related. In other words, the types of content that might be strongly associated with the prevalence of a supra-logic of entertainment.

Few politicians may fulfil as many of the criteria of the individual celebrity typologies (West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004) as Berlusconi does, but within Marshall's (1997) conception of celebrity as a system that transcends domains of distinction, it should not be considered surprising that a celebrified political figure should seemingly be able to shift between typologies with such apparent freedom. However, the very idea of 'celebrity politician typologies' could be taken to imply that an alternative to a celebrified politics exists. Given that most high-profile western politicians operate within relatively similar media systems utilising a relatively similar mix of mediums, this implication could perhaps be considered problematic in a mediated and celebrified age. At the crux of the issue is the practical reality that a politician must engage with the media system in order to get elected. Thus they have no alternative but to become a mediated figure. It stands to reason that a mediated figure can only exist within the logics of the medium through which they are being mediated. If the supra-logic of a mass communication medium is entertainment, and the logics of entertainment can be associated with those of celebrification, it would follow that all successful modern mediated politicians are in fact 'celebrity politicians'.

Therefore, the results of this research could be considered to suggest that rather than being of a distinct use for identifying 'celebrity politicians', as if they are somehow distinct from 'non -celebrity politicians', the typologies offered best serve to describe the various pathways to renown that modern politicians have available to them, along with hinting at the types of identification that politicians that rise via each pathway may be likely to attract.

6.5: Future Research Questions

Outside of still forming ideas involving a further investigation of unconscious identification, two, more specific, ideas for research projects arose regularly during the course of completing this thesis. These are discussed in the following sub-sections:

6.5.1: Comparative Analyses

In analysing the Berlusconi related sample of YouTube discourse, particularly when looking at references being made to other leaders, one of the thoughts that frequently came to mind was how illuminating it could be to apply this project's clip selection criteria to creating samples of the YouTube content surrounding other leaders. These samples could then be analysed for a range of comparative purposes. By applying the 'majority English language' and 'minimum 10,000 view' criteria to other leaders of non-English speaking countries, and assessing the number of clips that met the criteria, and the total viewership they received, one could establish a picture of the comparative levels of attention these leaders are receiving from the transnational YouTube audience. Likewise, being able to compare levels of utilisation of YouTube's other modes of engagement, such as 'likes/dislikes' and number of comments, would create a method through which findings such as the high level of 'dislikes' for the footage of Berlusconi alongside Medvedev and Gaddafi, as opposed to high level of 'likes' recorded in response to the footage of Berlusconi in the company of Bush or Putin might be illuminated. The comments left in response to the clips contained within samples of YouTube discourse relating to various leaders could also offer corpuses that can be subjected to comparative analysis in programmes such as Oxford Wordsmith. Wordlists relating to key themes, such as the media or the economy, could be generated and compared, allowing the researcher the ability to gain some quantitative sense of the prevalence of such themes within each leader's sample, and in turn offer clues as to what themes may warrant further qualitative analyses. Applying this methodology to create further samples would allow for a broad range of quantitative and qualitative comparative

studies examining celebrification and entertainment logics roles in online political discourse.

6.5.2: What Constitutes Big 'P' Political Discussion on YouTube

Another reoccurring thought during the production of this thesis was the idea that while the sample of political discourse being analysed here was rather bereft of big 'P' politics, this should not necessarily be taken as an indicator of an absence of big 'P' political discussion on YouTube. While Berlusconi may well prove to be a leader who attracts a particularly celebrified and entertainment focussed type of audience engagement, if you had similar samples relating to other leaders, you could better ascertain just how celebrified and entertainment focussed the average YouTube discussions surrounding political figures are. In spite of the dearth of big 'P' material within this sample, browsing the site, one gets the impression that there are big 'P' discussions of big 'P' subject material occurring on YouTube. The question might also be raised of what constitutes big 'P' political discussion on YouTube. The sense one gets is that this happens when YouTube clips (clips outside the sample analysed here) feature coverage or comment on big 'P' issue, but do not contain well-known political figures, who often appear to bring the trappings of celebrity with them. The tentative hypothesis is that the presence of a leader whose persona is regularly transmitted by the celebrity focussed mainstream media leads to discussion that focuses on a celebrified criteria of validation, while the absence of the trappings and associations of celebrity can lead to a more focussed discussion of the ideas conveyed in the clip. This hypothesis could be tested by choosing an issue such as US healthcare reform, or an aspect of the economy, and comparing levels of audience focus on 'issues or entertainment' in discourses resulting from clips that do and don't feature political leaders engaging with the topic. The suspicion is that discourses stemming from clips without leaders' present would feature a considerably greater focus on issues.

6.6: Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the prevalence of entertainment and celebrification logics in a sample of political discourse on YouTube. Taking inspiration from Postman's (1986) account of entertainment's dominance of broadcast television, it attempted to transfer the essence of his critique to the medium of YouTube; a medium that has evoked comparisons with Habermas's (1974) conception of the 'ideal public sphere' (Kellner & Kim, 2010). Literature relating to celebrification, YouTube and former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was reviewed. Through employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods (Krippendorff, 2004), the study examined the extent to which entertainment logics structure representations of Berlusconi on YouTube. It drew on the concept of 'celebrity politician typologies' (West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004), in an attempt to evaluate Berlusconi's representation on YouTube through an established set of celebrity 'traits'. The idea of 'celebrity politician typologies' was supplemented through the use of Burke's (1958) concept of 'identification' (1958), in the hope of better understanding how audiences articulate identification or disidentification with the controversial figure of Berlusconi. This thesis found the YouTube representation of Silvio Berlusconi to be a discourse dominated by the logics of entertainment and celebrification. It also found that Berlusconi's celebrity appears to transcend the boundaries of the existing 'celebrity politician typologies'. The application of Burkean identification revealed that, for the most part, those YouTube users identifying with Berlusconi appear to be establishing consubstantiality with him through the perception that his 'informality' in traditionally formal political contexts is indicative of his status as an 'everyman', or a 'politician who is not a politician'. While many disidentify with him in an absolute manner, in some instances, Berlusconi appears to inspire a paradoxical form of identification; one in which YouTube users cognitively disidentify with him as a politician, yet display a degree of identification with him as an entertainer. In a discourse that could be characterised as an 'elite political situation comedy', when not the hero, Berlusconi is often cast in the role of the 'good' celebrity villain. This study concludes that Berlusconi's representation on YouTube is highly celebrified. Given the user-generated nature of YouTube discourses, these findings may demonstrate an audience internalisation, and even an amplification, of the entertainment logics that Postman (1986) claimed structured political discourses in the broadcast television era.

7: References

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8: Appendix

Total number of clips meeting search parameters: 51

Rank: 1
Video Title: Berlusconi Stupid
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVse7ezWACg&feature=related>
Uploaded by: secure
Date Uploaded: November 09, 2005
Number of comments: 2600
Number of views: 687497
Likes: 578
Dislikes: 89
Description: Berlusconi lavishly praises America in broken English while standing beside George W Bush at Camp David.

Rank: 2
Video Title: Berlusconi
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkDp-6t-keA>
Uploaded by: bsimpson
Date Uploaded: March 22, 2006
Number of comments: 675
Number of views: 580744
Likes: 429
Dislikes: 58
Description: A Berlusconi impersonator sexually harasses a female parking warden. The clip comes from a low budget German movie called 'Bye Bye Berlusconi'. Many of the people making comments believe it to be real.

Rank: 3
Video Title: Berlusconi dampens sexist rumours
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3k9pMtrccQ>
Uploaded by: mrholymoly
Date Uploaded: February 02, 07
Number of comments: 1071
Number of views: 507043
Likes: 756
Dislikes: 77
Description: A Berlusconi impersonator sexually harasses a female parking warden. The clip comes from a low budget German movie called 'Bye Bye Berlusconi'. Many of the people making comments believe it to be real.

Rank: 4
Video Title: Queen tells off Berlusconi
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFgCthVSUwo>
Uploaded by: FallahukNews
Date Uploaded: April 03, 2009
Number of comments: 2171
Number of views: 411769
Likes: 439
Dislikes: 71
Description: A news story about an incident at a G20 photo op in which the Queen was supposedly heard to speak ill of Berlusconi, on account of his lack of decorum in addressing Obama, and general rowdiness. All parties deny that he was 'told off' .

Rank: 5
Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi on Phone at NATO Summit
URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWgHDPxPf_A
Uploaded By: nocommenttv
Date Uploaded: April 04, 2009
Number of comments: 108
Number of views: 259560
Likes: 307
Dislikes: 29
Description: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking a phone call while arriving amongst a procession of dignitaries at a NATO summit. Berlusconi would later claim that the call came from Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who was at that point threatening to boycott the summit.

Rank: 6
Video Title: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking phone call at NATO summit
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5B3r7Py2h4&feature=related>
Uploaded by: EUXTV
Date Uploaded: April 04, 2009
Number of comments: 1302
Number of views: 199734
Likes: 276
Dislikes: 14
Description: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking a phone call while arriving amongst a procession of dignitaries at a NATO summit. Berlusconi would later claim that the call came from Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who was at that point threatening to boycott the summit.

Rank: 7
Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HD3lilnGiL8>
Uploaded By: Firestormpt
Date Uploaded: June 03, 2006
Number of comments: 214
Number of views: 196201
Likes: 167
Dislikes: 20
Description: A Berlusconi impersonator sexually harasses a female parking warden. The clip comes from a low budget German movie called 'Bye Bye Berlusconi'. Many of the people making comments believe it to be real.

Rank: 8
Video Title: Was Russian President Medvedev Drunk at G – 8?
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDYzqmBmkXU&feature=fvst>
Uploaded by: EUXTV
Date Uploaded: July 09, 2009
Number of comments: 438
Number of views: 182068 * (address why this appears in Berlusconi results)
Likes: 103
Dislikes: 175
Description: Medvedev looks 'groggy' and appears to stumble while leaving a G8 summit hosted by Berlusconi. Berlusconi and Sarkozy appear to support Medvedev. All parties deny that Medvedev had been drinking.

Rank: 9
Video Title: Raw Video: Italian Leader Punch in the Face
URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v78hZ62_uKE
Uploaded by: AssociatedPress
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 715
Number of views: 160989
Likes: 143
Dislikes: 17
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 10
Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi vs MEP Martin Schulz; relive the moment
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bPqaqGJ5Js>
Uploaded by: EUXTV
Date Uploaded: April 16, 2008
Number of comments: 1059
Number of views: 140933
Likes: 222
Dislikes: 24
Description: While addressing the European Parliament, Berlusconi suggests that German Green Party EMP Martin Schulz would be perfect for a role as a concentration camp guard in an upcoming movie.

Rank: 11
Video Title: Italian Prime Minister
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trfQVmcBYOA>
Uploaded by: maxmem
Date Uploaded: April 1st, 2006
Number of comments: 94
Number of views: 105213
Likes: 89
Dislikes: 11
Description: A Berlusconi impersonator sexually harasses a female parking warden. The clip comes from a low budget German movie called 'Bye Bye Berlusconi'. Many of the people making comments believe it to be real.

Rank: 12
Video Title: Headzup: Queen Elizabeth's Anger At Berlusconi
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHlyjWmM58o>
Uploaded by: Headzup
Date Uploaded: April 3, 2009
Number of comments: 252
Number of views: 87756
Likes: 136
Dislikes: 75
Description: A cartoon parody of the incident in which the Queen supposedly 'told off' Berlusconi.

Rank: 13
Video Title: Rescue Rangers: Putin and Berlusconi fly emergency plane
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8n10YVFmVQ>
Uploaded by: Russia Today
Date Uploaded: October 23, 2009
Number of comments: 126
Number of views: 82539
Likes: 100
Dislikes: 8
Description: A story from Russia Today depicting Putin showing Berlusconi a Russian-built jet powered flying boat. The men pose on a pier, before, boarding and taking off.

Rank: 14
Video Title: Berlusconi vs Schulz European Parliament
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HtmfCyVMbU>
Uploaded by: TarAntXon
Date Uploaded: January 28, 2007
Number of comments: 265
Number of views: 73938
Likes: 104
Dislikes: 16
Description: While addressing the European Parliament, Berlusconi suggests that German Green Party EMP Martin Schulz would be perfect for a role as a concentration camp guard in an upcoming movie.

Rank: 15
Video Title: Michelle Obama keeps Silvio Berlusconi at arm's length at G20
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sg2G46v8dc>
Uploaded By: giovannisenzaterra
Date Uploaded: September 28, 2009
Number of comments: 133
Number of views: 68638
Likes: 20
Dislikes: 1
Description: After receiving a hug from Barrack Obama, Michelle Obama shakes Berlusconi's hand, but does not hug him.

Rank: 16
Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi Punched
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7RFI7Ms3yl>
Uploaded by: nahsalnah
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 38
Number of views: 68225
Likes: 37
Dislikes: 0
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 17
Video Title: G-8 Italy: Group Photo With Berlusconi, Obama, Merkel, Sarkozy, Others
URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wT89D4O_54
Uploaded by: EUXTV
Date Uploaded: July 06, 2009
Number of comments: 47
Number of views: 65974
Likes: 18
Dislikes: 5
Description: Raw footage of leaders preparing for their G-8 group photo. Contained within this clip is the footage presented elsewhere as 'Was Russian President Medvedev Drunk at G – 8?'

Rank: 18
Video Title: Berlusconi Attacked at Milan Rally
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpBlt-cRqeY>
Uploaded by: EUXTV
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 248
Number of views: 65475
Likes: 54
Dislikes: 7
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 19
Video Title: Video of the actual attack on Silvio Berlusconi
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpRf1HCiF2Y>
Uploaded by: FixedNewsChannel
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 131
Number of views: 60066
Likes: 47
Dislikes: 2
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 20
Video Title: Berlusconi at Camp David
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipik0Y8SfLE>
Uploaded by: dotcoma
Date Uploaded: September 15, 2005
Number of comments: 63
Number of views: 55789
Likes: 58
Dislikes: 50
Description: Berlusconi praises America in broken English while standing beside George W Bush at Camp David.

Rank: 21
Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi picks his nose
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsTGScquEA8>
Uploaded by: Neekeri89
Date Uploaded: May 03, 2007
Number of comments: 58
Number of views: 46040
Likes: 39
Dislikes: 17
Description: More footage from the German film 'Bye Bye Berlusconi'. This time the impersonator picks his nose and eats his findings.

Rank: 22
Video Title: The Italian President, Silvio Berlusconi kissed Gaddafi's Hand!
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se79NO4ODP0>
Uploaded by: EmadKI2008
Date Uploaded: March 29th, 2010
Number of comments: 50
Number of views: 43941
Likes: 23
Dislikes: 5
Description: Prime Minister Berlusconi kisses Libyan leader Col Gaddafi's hand while been greeted at a summit of the Arab League.

Rank: 23
Video Title: Italian Leader Calls Obama 'tanned'
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNUHt2CIKuY>
Uploaded by: AssociatedPress
Date Uploaded: November 06, 2008
Number of comments: 258
Number of views: 41889
Likes: 29
Dislikes: 7
Description: An Associated Press story relaying Berlusconi's controversial "Young, handsome, and tanned" remakes about President Obama. These remakes were criticised in some quarters as racist, although Berlusconi maintains his remakes were intended as a compliment.

Rank: 24
Video Title: Bloody Politics: Berlusconi Attacked
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKVveST3-y8&feature=fvst>
Uploaded by: Russia Today
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 186
Number of views: 41889
Likes: 68
Dislikes: 3
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 25
Video Title: Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi hit in face
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnESym01mtY>
Uploaded by: MargBarAkhound
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 78
Number of views: 40637
Likes: 20
Dislikes: 2
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 26
Video Title: Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi bloodied by punch in the face
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz9pJus6Xg8>
Uploaded by: timesofearth
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 105
Number of views: 40519
Likes: 20
Dislikes: 2
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 27
Video Title: Italy's Berlusconi in hospital after attack
URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=600QuzzMw_U
Uploaded by: AFP
Date Uploaded: December 14, 2009
Number of comments: 88
Number of views: 38706
Likes: 10
Dislikes: 3
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 28
Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi Attack in Milan – Best Quality
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9dtp8UZ8F0>
Uploaded by: AsSorpresa
Date Uploaded: December 14, 2009
Number of comments: 103
Number of views: 38716
Likes: 36
Dislikes: 6
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 29
Video Title: Putin denies secret marriage to Russian renown sportswoman
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDvUloWb1ko>
Uploaded by: RussiaToday
Date Uploaded: April 18, 2008
Number of comments: 87
Number of views: 32760
Likes: 57
Dislikes: 3
Description: Footage of Russian Prime Minister Putin refuting a question asked about an affair / secret marriage at a press conference in Italy. He then offers his musings on the respective qualities of Russian and Italian women. Interesting, what is missing from this RT version of the press conference is Berlusconi controversially making a 'shooting' gesture at the journalist who asked the question.

Rank: 30
Video Title: President Obama Meets with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZJkFzmpkck>
Uploaded by: whitehouse
Date Uploaded: June 15, 2009
Number of comments: 230
Number of views: 29799
Likes: 102
Dislikes: 30
Description: 41 minutes of US Government released footage of a meeting taking place at the Whitehouse between Berlusconi and Obama. Nothing 'controversial' occurs.

Rank: 31
Video Title: Italian Leader Calls Obama 'tanned' *(video posted twice)
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajKNlvr2X14>
Uploaded by: AssociatedPress
Date Uploaded: November 06, 2008
Number of comments: 284
Number of views: 24787
Likes: 35
Dislikes: 5
Description: An Associated Press story relaying Berlusconi's controversial "Young, handsome, and tanned" remarks about President Obama. These remarks were criticised in some quarters as racist, although Berlusconi maintains his remarks were intended as a compliment.

Rank: 32
Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi Hit in the Face : Pt. 2. 13th 12th 09
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62TCR7uuAOI>
Uploaded by: dumbbell33
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 107
Number of views: 24426
Likes: 44
Dislikes: 2
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 33
Video Title: Berlusconi in escort allegations
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40qfdq3qsTg>
Uploaded by: ReutersVideo
Date Uploaded: June 18, 2009
Number of comments: 47
Number of views: 24136
Likes: Ratings disabled
Dislikes: Ratings disabled
Description: A Reuters story detailing allegations made by an escort about parties held by Berlusconi. The story offers a brief background of some of his other sex scandals.

Rank: 34

Video Title: When Italian Football Ruled – Galliani and Berlusconi vs. Nessun Dorma

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmT8yTp4cTA>

Uploaded by: metaphysicaljesus

Date Uploaded: June 21, 2009

Number of comments: 20

Number of views: 23746

Likes: 32

Dislikes: 3

Description: Footage of Berlusconi calmly watching his football team while the man beside him is overcome with emotion. The uploader has set the footage to operatic music.

Rank: 35

Video Title: Italian prime Minister "Obama tanned"

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19zIXR3TWzE>

Uploaded by: EduBeer

Date Uploaded: November 06, 2008

Number of comments: 191

Number of views: 23383

Likes: 30

Dislikes: 3

Description: Raw footage with subtitles of Berlusconi's controversial "Young, handsome, and tanned" remakes about President Obama. These remakes were criticised in some quarters as racist, although Berlusconi maintains his remakes were intended as a compliment.

Rank: 36

Video Title: Learn English with Silvio Berlusconi (UN English school)

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1Ny5CCHjks>

Uploaded by: LaPremiataDitta

Date Uploaded: March 30, 2009

Number of comments: 85

Number of views: 23631

Likes: 29

Dislikes: 1

Description: Berlusconi addresses the United Nations General Assembly in English. He offers his support for war with Iraq, but speech is silted, and he mispronounces a number of words.

Rank: 37

Video Title: Berlusconi's Latest gaffe Directed at Obamas

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eh2hlupW7I>

Uploaded by: AssociatedPress

Date Uploaded: September 28, 2009

Number of comments: 130

Number of views: 18104

Likes: 28

Dislikes: 4

Description: AP story about Berlusconi repeating his 'tanned' comment about Obama, this time at a political rally.

Rank: 38

Video Title: Berlusconi Attacked, Hospitalized in Milan

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-VipTURSgA>

Uploaded by: AssociatedPress

Date Uploaded: December 14, 2009

Number of comments: 60

Number of views: 17555

Likes: 24

Dislikes: 1

Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 39

Video Title: Queen pissed-off by Berlusconi shouting "Mr Obama!" G20

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryw6kAfzESo>

Uploaded by: ConigliMorti

Date Uploaded: April 04, 2009

Number of comments: 47

Number of views: 16490

Likes: 18

Dislikes: 4

Description: An un-credited news story about an incident at a G20 photo op in which the Queen was supposedly heard to speak ill of Berlusconi, on account of his lack of decorum in addressing Obama, and general rowdiness. All parties deny that he was 'told off'. Coverage of how the story was 'playing' in Italy is then offered.

Rank: 40
Video Title: Italy's PM Berlusconi Attacked Punched in Face
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQW5qKkoqi8>
Uploaded by: newnownews
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 37
Number of views: 15704
Likes: 8
Dislikes: 4
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.

Rank: 41
Video Title: Berlusconi's World - Italy
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YC3VOFCeFts>
Uploaded by: Journeymanpictures
Date Uploaded: February 20, 2008
Number of comments: 143
Number of views: 15390
Likes: 42
Dislikes: 4
Description: A 20 minute profile of Berlusconi political and business career produced by Australia's ABC. This is the only profile piece on him to meet the search criteria.

Rank: 42
Video Title: Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi and Libyan Leader Muammar Gaddafi
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWgW34BS6Gg>
Uploaded by: nocommenttv
Date Uploaded: March 04, 2009
Number of comments: 30
Number of views: 14879
Likes: 6
Dislikes: 8*
Description: Berlusconi meets with Gaddafi, and receives a standing ovation from the Libyan parliament.

Rank: 43

Video Title: Raw Video: Gaddafi Visits Italy for 1st Time

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKXRVDD0is8>

Uploaded by: AssociatedPress

Date Uploaded: June 10, 2009

Number of comments: 75

Number of views: 14716

Likes: 7

Dislikes: 4

Description: Raw footage from AP of Gaddafi arriving at an Italian airport, where he is met by Berlusconi. Footage of Gaddafi giving a speech in Italian follows.

Rank: 44

Video Title: Silvio Berlusconi with Veronica Lario and Noemi Divorce Italian Style

URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWjDpJmvApk>

Uploaded by: lowkeyname

Date Uploaded: May 12, 2009

Number of comments: 29

Number of views: 13438

Likes: 15

Dislikes: 5

Description: A home-made semi-animated parody of Berlusconi's divorce / young women scandals.

Rank: 45

Video Title: Mock The Week on Berlusconi (with subtitles)

URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i62C7r_q5tA

Uploaded by: chickensh1t

Date Uploaded: August 31, 2009

Number of comments: 30

Number of views: 12767

Likes: 63

Dislikes: 0

Description: A British comedy programme's panellists make fun of Berlusconi

Rank: 46
Video Title: Berlusconi – Bush dinner takes turn to the silly
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMw0T9uX9kM>
Uploaded by: AVDULAI
Date Uploaded: October 14, 2008
Number of comments: 10
Number of views: 11905
Likes: 1
Dislikes: 1
Description: Berlusconi offers a toast to George W Bush at a Whitehouse dinner. The uploader has added balloons to the footage.

Rank: 47
Video Title: Michael Jackson Discussed at G – 8 Summit
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZco5OMX434>
Uploaded by: EUXTV
Date Uploaded: July 08, 2009
Number of comments: 45
Number of views: 11692
Likes: 15
Dislikes: 4
Description: Berlusconi, Obama and Sarkosy discuss whether Michael Jackson was 'the best' or 'one of the best', on the sidelines of the G-8, following the death of the singer.

Rank: 48
Video Title: Berlusconi too busy on phone, skips NATO
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhFnd1FhDyk>
Uploaded by: FallahukNews
Date Uploaded: April 04, 2009
Number of comments: 70
Number of views: 11157
Likes: 8
Dislikes: 0
Description: Berlusconi keeps Merkel waiting by taking a phone call while arriving amongst a procession of dignitaries at a NATO summit. Berlusconi would later claim that the call came from Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who was at that point threatening to boycott the summit.

Rank: 49
Video Title: Berlusconi wants his girlfriend to lick me
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNWGjfKmpgg>
Uploaded by: zeusinsins
Date Uploaded: July 26, 2009
Number of comments: 5
Number of views: 10456
Likes: 31
Dislikes: 0
Description: A 'mash-up' of a supposed telephone conversation between Berlusconi and prostitute set to music.

Rank: 50
Video Title: G-8 l'Aquila: Obama, Berlusconi Inspect Earthquake Damage
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIDKEDhxe8g>
Uploaded by: EUXTV
Date Uploaded: July 08, 2009
Number of comments: 6
Number of views: 10204
Likes: 5
Dislikes: 2
Description: Raw footage without audio of Berlusconi showing Obama the earthquake ravaged city of L'Aquila.

Rank: 51
Video Title: Italy PM Berlusconi Bloodied in attack
URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnGolxa7Hq4>
Uploaded by: newnownews
Date Uploaded: December 13, 2009
Number of comments: 26
Number of views: 10186
Likes: 11
Dislikes: 4
Description: Footage of an incident in which a man, later determined 'mentally ill', hits Berlusconi in the face with a metal miniature of the Milan cathedral. Berlusconi appears bloodied after the attack. Many Berlusconi critics appear to believe that the incident was staged in order to generate sympathy for Berlusconi amongst the Italian electorate.