Northumbria Research Link

The Discursive Construction of Authenticity: The Case of Jeremy Corbyn

Abstract

In recent years there has been a yearning for a new, more authentic type of political leader: one who is more 'true', 'real' and 'honest'. In this paper, we analyse the discourse through which Jeremy Corbyn was framed as an 'authentic' leader in the British press during the 2015 Labour party leadership contest. We use an ethnomethodological approach to the study of media texts to investigate the methods used by journalists and commentators to establish authenticity. Our analysis uncovers three methods that were used to establish Corbyn's authenticity: consistency, atypicality and commitment to beliefs. We conclude by drawing implications from our findings for the search for authenticity in politics and society.

Key words: authenticity, authentic leadership, ethnomethodology, media discourse, political discourse

The Discursive Construction of Authenticity: The Case of Jeremy Corbyn

"The greatest crime of all in the modern media age is being inauthentic." (*The Guardian*, 3rd June 2009)[1]

"…a credible challenger to Corbyn must achieve that magical ingredient of authenticity that he seems to exude." (*The Observer*, 2nd August 2015)

Introduction

Jeremy Corbyn first came into the limelight in the UK during the 2015 Labour Party leadership contest, when he went from rank outsider to win a landslide victory in the space of less than four months. Corbyn was described, both by commentators and by his own campaign team, as a new type of "authentic" leader (Gilbert, 2016; Seymour, 2017; Nunns, 2018). The slogan that would later get used by Corbyn, emblazoned on the stage and podium while he spoke, was "STRAIGHT TALKING. HONEST POLITICS." Journalists and commentators also identified authenticity as a relevant frame for making sense of Corbyn's leadership election victory[2].

The aim of our paper is to investigate how members of society judge whether someone is being authentically 'true' to themselves. According to van Leuwen (2001: 397), the crucial question about authenticity is not only whether someone or something is judged as authentic, but also "on the basis of which cues were these judgments made." We therefore ask: how did journalists and commentators frame Jeremy Corbyn as authentic? We will answer this question by analysing if, and if so *how*, the British press framed Jeremy Corbyn as an authentic leader during the 2015 Labour Party leadership election.

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[1] Guardian, 03 June 2009, Richard Reeve, Director of Demos.

[2] "Jeremy Corbyn victory: How hard is it to be authentic?" Mark Mardell, *BBC The World This Weekend*, 15 September 2015.

Authenticity was also a key battleground in the 2017 UK general election (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019: 71). Corbyn's authenticity gained renewed traction during the election campaign when it was contrasted with the apparent *in*authenticity of Theresa May, who became referred to as the 'Maybot', a comedy character playfully combining the term 'May' and 'Robot' that became a running column in the *Guardian* (Crace, 2017). The 'Maybot' was characterised as pre-programmed, pre-scripted, and machine-like (e.g. *Guardian,* November 8, 2016; *Guardian,* November 16, 2016; Crace, 2017) – the very antithesis of Corbyn's 'authenticity'.

According to Wahl-Jorgensen (2018: 71), in contemporary politics, "winning the battle for hearts and minds increasingly means winning the battle for authenticity". While it is clear that authenticity has this appeal, it also comes with a particular kind of mundane problem for members. As Peterson (2005) argues, authenticity does not reside in the object but rather is "a claim that is made by or for someone, thing, or performance and either accepted or rejected by relevant others" (p. 1086). By implication, "authenticity cannot be seen as an objective feature of talk, or of any other form of sociocultural production" (van Leuwen, 2001: 396). Authenticity is therefore "an attribution – nothing more, nothing less" (Carroll, 2015: 3). Concluding that someone is being 'honest' and 'true to themselves' therefore relies on *judgements* about whether appearances people see on the 'outside' reflect the leader's beliefs and values on the 'inside'. It is precisely this 'mundane problem' of how to judge the authenticity of others without having access to the inner workings of their minds that provides the motivation for this paper.

Authenticity: A Brief History and Mundane Problem

The notion of authenticity, with its attendant desire to foreground the 'true self' of the individual, has been in circulation for centuries and can be traced back to the writings of J.J. Rousseau in the early 18th century (Trilling, 1972). Authenticity was viewed as a "radical rejection of things as they are" (Berman, 1970/2009: xxvii), combined with simply "being oneself" (p.xxiii) or the "freedom to be oneself"

(p.312). Van Leuwen (2001: 393) noted that something is called authentic because it is thought to be true to its essence. Were that essence is the 'self', rather than an object or experience, the self is understood as a "constant and unified 'character'", someone who remains 'true' to themselves and whose "internalized conscience or life-goal" is "never altered or compromised" (Van Leuwen, 2001: 393).

Historically, authenticity was associated with the removal or rejection of forms of social influence in favour of looking primarily inwards for inspiration, fulfilment and ethical guidance (Berman, 1970/2009). In the context of the late 1960s student revolts across the world, and the attendant re-assessment of the existing 'industrial state', there was a reawakening of authenticity as a cultural and political phenomenon (e.g. Adorno, 1973; Trilling, 1972; Berman, 1970/2009; Bendix, 2009).[3] In the modern context of 'mass-mediated authenticity', authenticity has been analysed in the context of the mass media of the radio in the 1930s (Enli, 2015: Ch.2), television (Enli, 2015: Ch.3, 4) and more recently social media (Enli, 2015: Ch.5). In a Special Issue of Discourse Studies (2001), authenticity has been analysed in a range of settings: Coupland (2001) analyzed authenticity in TV News reviews; Thornborrow (2001) examined how people constructed authentic positions from which to speak knowledgeably in radio phone-ins; and Tolson (2001) provides an analysis of authenticity in a behind-the-scenes documentary film. Most relevant to our purposes here is Scannell's (2001) examination of how politics is regarded by some as a theatre or spectacle and as such inherently inauthentic. The idea that politics had become inauthentic to its core was the backdrop through which Corbyn's appeal as a refreshingly different type of 'authentic' leader was positioned.

If authenticity is understood as a state of congruence between the inside and the outside of a person, then it is also complicated by the fact that we cannot look into the 'inside' of other persons (Coulter, 1989: Ch.1; Strauss, 1959/1997). Indeed, the accessibility of our own minds and inaccessibility of others' minds is a fundamental aspect of the everyday social 'lifeworld' investigated by phenomenological sociology (Schutz, 1932/67: 113, 183; Coulter, 1979: Ch.2). In daily life, we therefore face a

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[3] It is worth emphasizing that there is disagreement among left-wing academics who might view authenticity either as a liberating concept (Berman, 1970/2009), or as a conservative concept with potentially right-wing usages (Adorno, 1973).

mundane reasoning problem (Pollner, 1987): we are forced to rely on particular methods to ascertain, with varying degrees of certainty or success, what is happening 'on the inside' of the other person (Lynch & Bogen, 1996: 179, 186; Lynch & Bogen, 2005). As Edwards (1997) points out, despite not having access to the minds of others, people routinely do treat them and talk about them as having particular mental states. Our aim is to address the question posed by Edwards (1997: 281), namely, "how [is] the notion of a 'true self' discursively managed?" Ultimately, "while the audience can try to guess at the performer's real inner state of mind, it can only objectively analyse the visible elements of the performance." (Wodak, 2009: 8) We therefore rely on a set of *methods* for judging whether the people we encounter actually are as competent, sincere, honest, or authentic as they make out to be – as well as to project these qualities to those we encounter (Goffman, 1959: 56).

The approach we take in this paper is informed by ethnomethodological approaches to the study of journalists' methods of practical reasoning used in media texts (Jalbert, 1999). We propose that members of society employ a range of methods for establishing the authenticity of those they encounter. One way of methodically accessing these methods is to study articles written by journalists and the commentators they cite about people who are commonly regarded as authentic. In a mediated environment, judging authenticity also has to rely on mediated expressions and communications (Couldry & Hepp, 2018; Alexander, 2011: Ch.5-6; Wodak, 2009: Ch.1, 5; Hajer, 2009; Laux & Schütz, 1996). Political leadership is particularly interesting in this regard because our opinions of political leaders are rarely based on personal contact and more usually mediated by what we see or hear in the media, including the mainstream mass media and social media (Enli, 2015). Journalists, then, are positioned as one of the most important "arbiters of authenticity" (Peterson, 2005: 1090) for political leaders.

Methods for judging a political leader's authenticity are necessary both for those composing contributions to the mass media and for their audiences. For example, Laux and Schütz (1996) produced an early study of self-presentational strategies employed by German politicians: they distinguished between an 'ideal' projected

self-image and the 'real' self-image and analysed the methods used by interactants once a perceived gap is seen as growing 'too large'. Performances of avowedly authentic politicians are judged by audiences on the basis of their seeming spontaneity, their perceived intimacy and their perceived consistency (Enli, 2015: 111-3). Emotional displays are key to an authentic performance, according to Wahl-Jorgensen (2019: 70), who argues that "authenticity through emotionality is a guarantor of trustworthiness". Turning now to the setting for this study, we first need to understand how authenticity gained traction in British politics specifically.

British Politics, New Labour and the Search for Authenticity

Commentators have recognized a growing sense of disillusionment and cynicism towards politician's use of image management, spin doctors, PR advisors, scripts, soundbites and 'show business' (Kuhn, 2007; Seldon & Snowdon, 2015/6; Seymour, 2016; Rawnsley, 2010; Bale, 2011; Prince, 2016: 246). Postman (1987: 4, 129) had argued some time ago that politics was increasingly dominated by appearances and images, arguing that "we may have reached a point where cosmetics have replaced ideology as the field of expertise over which a politician must have competent control". Thirty years later, in contrast to Postman's prediction, it seems that authenticity, rather than cosmetics, is now one of the defining principles through which modern political campaigns would be fought. Other countries have also experienced a similar movement towards authenticity. Seifert (2012) has argued that authenticity has become central to U.S. presidential campaigns over the last few decades. Trump's apparent 'easy authenticity' and Clinton's so-called 'authenticity problem' in the 2016 U.S. election is a case in point[4]. Similarly, Enli (2015: 110) discusses Obama's successful campaigns and their ability "to construct an image of an authentic candidate."

Just as the meaning and salience of authenticity has changed over time in other spheres of life (Peterson, 2005: 1094), the meaning of authenticity in politics also has

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[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/magazine/what-makes-a-politician-authentic.html

changed and adapted over time (Seifert, 2012). Authenticity has variously been associated with notions of sincerity and honesty, speaking from the heart without preparation or scripts, and appearing as 'ordinary folk' and being considered 'one of us' (Seifert, 2012; Umbach & Humphrey, 2017). What it means to be 'authentic', and the extent to which being seen as 'authentic' matters, are both "moving targets" (Peterson, 2005: 1094) as different types of actors in the discursive field engage in claims and counter-claims about the nature and meaning of authenticity. We should therefore not be surprised to find that there does not exist any universal consensus or agreed upon taxonomy about who is authentic and what criteria they fulfil to render that judgement. Rather, the fuzzy, overlapping and continually shifting criteria and cues employed by different audiences to judge authenticity provide a ripe site for empirical study. Our aim is therefore not to start with a definition but rather to study the complexity of "meanings in use" (Carroll, 2015: 3), more specifically the "attributions about authenticity that are well recognized, widely used, and collectively agreed upon by sets of people" (ibid).

While critical scholars have been quick to dismiss authenticity as a manufactured and fabricated 'con' (Peterson, 1997; York, 2014), few disagree that it has become a defining principle of contemporary times in politics, popular culture and business alike (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018). It seems paradoxical, then, that at the same time as the concept of 'post-truth' politics was gaining traction, there has also been a desire for a more 'honest' and 'truthful' type of politics. Politicians from across the political spectrum in the UK have been lauded and applauded to various degrees for representing a new type of 'authentic' leader: from Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson on the right to Jeremy Corbyn on the left.

This erosion of trust in politics has been particularly pertinent for the British Labour Party since the creation of 'New Labour' in the 1990s. Some background might be useful for unfamiliar readers here. New Labour not only sought to bring the party into the political centre ground, but it also became associated with a new era of spin and inauthenticity (Kuhn, 2007; Gould, 2011). Cadres of PR advisors, spin doctors and communications officers sought to manage the image of the party and its leaders, with messages carefully managed and soundbites carefully chosen according

to the findings of focus groups and opinion polls (Rawnsley, 2010; Seymour, 2016). The appeal of Jeremy Corbyn's apparent authenticity was understandable given the cynicism generated by the New Labour era of spin and its new language that it seemed to have developed (Fairclough, 2002; Kuhn, 2007). For Corbyn supporters like Perryman (2017: 25), Corbyn's authenticity was seen as grounded in his deep-seated commitment to his political beliefs, something that spin doctors and communications advisors could never manufacture.

The criticism levied at both politicians and political parties for being driven by inauthentic 'spin' and 'image' was not unique to the Labour party. The same criticism has also been levied at David Cameron and the Conservative party (Bale, 2011; Ross & McTague, 2017). However, as Alexander (2011: 291) points out, "even as the media expose political efforts at managing the image, the hope and reality of political authenticity remains." In this context of disillusionment and distrust towards politicians in general, and the spin doctoring image of the Labour Party in particular, Jeremy Corbyn seemingly stood out as an 'authentic' leader. Our aim in this paper is to examine *how* judgements about Corbyn's authenticity were made by media commentators. We will now turn to the methododology employed in this study.

Methododology

The data set for this study was generated from the Nexis newspaper database based on a search for articles with 'Corbyn' in the headline and 'leader' or 'leadership' at the beginning of the article, from 2nd June 2015 (when Corbyn announced he was standing in the Labour Party leadership election) to 13th September 2015 (the day after his leadership election victory). The search was then refined to include only the most read UK national newspapers, as detailed in Table 1[5]. Table 2 gives an overview of the data set.

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[5] Based on readership figures from October 2014 to September 2015 in the National Readership Survey http://www.nrs.co.uk/downloads/pdf/newspapers_201509.pdf

--- Insert Table 1 here ---

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In this paper, we are interested in how the mainstream media framed Corbyn as authentic. We are mindful of Alexander's (2011: 13) 'cultural pragmatics' approach which views authenticity as "an interpretive category rather than an ontological stage." In following the principle of "ethnomethodological indifference" (Jalbert, 1999: 34), our analysis does not seek to lay any claim about whether Corbyn is (or is not) authentic. Rather, we study authenticity as a category employed by members themselves (Benwell & Stokoe, 2012; Stokoe, 2012; Stokoe & Attenborough, 2015; Eglin & Hester, 1999, 2003): in this case the members were the journalists and commentators writing in the news media. The ethnomethodological approach we adopted sought to identify the "common-sense reasoning" (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015: 3) employed by journalists and commentators to categorize Corbyn as an authentic politician. For example, ethnomethodological analyses of media texts have shown how headlines such as "KILLER NUNS" use common sense categorical reasoning to create a sense of intrigue and drama by putting together a category (nuns) and activity (killing) in an unexpected combination (McHoul, 2007: 460; Stokoe, 2012: 281). Studying reasoning about social categories, such as the categories 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' applied to leaders, requires analysis of not only *which* categories are applied and by *whom* and *when* in talk or text, but also *how* the categorisation is accomplished (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015). The focus of this study was on the 'how' question, by explicating the 'stock of knowledge-in-action' (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015: 8) how the media commentators proceeded to establish Corbyn's authenticity.

Our analysis was based on a close reading of the texts, not a key word search. We split the newspapers between the research team and first read the texts independently. We first identified passages of the text where Corbyn's authenticity was constructed, using common-sense understanding of the meaning of the term 'authenticity' and related synonyms such as 'true', 'real' and 'honest', which meant that not every passage necessarily used the word authenticity explicitly. Category

contrasts were also important in identifying passages to include, given the implicit contrasts that were made between Corbyn and the negative caricature of 'inauthentic' politicians, which were variously characterised as slippery, fake, flip-flopping, scripted, slick, careerist, strategic and power hungry.

The ethnomethodological approach we take does not start with a set of a priori criteria for ascertaining the authenticity of a person. Rather, we sought to identify how the journalists and commentators *themselves* made sense of Corbyn as authentic, even if that differed from 'textbook' definitions of authenticity. The aim was not to criticise the members for their imprecise and unscientific reasoning (for example by failing to agree upon a clear and precise set of criteria or characteristics that was universally accepted), but rather to examine how their reasoning worked. This reasoning often did not spell out explicitly the upshot of their discourse, for example by stating "he is authentic"[6]. Rather, the upshot was 'read' by the authors as part of their shared social knowledge about what makes someone seem 'real' and 'genuine' rather than 'false' or 'fake'.

Given our focus on the construction of Corbyn's authenticity, we excluded passages that discussed his campaign policies. For example, the term "Red Jeremy" was initially picked up during the analysis, but later disregarded, because it related more to Corbyn's political position (red being associated with socialism and the Labour party's anthem) than reasoning about his authenticity. For each passage identified for analysis, we made notes in the margins which were later shared with the whole research team. The research team met three times to share their notes and began collecting together similar passages into a single table; for example, by grouping together all passages discussing his appearance and those discussing the length of time he had held his political views. These groups of passages were eventually grouped into three methods for establishing authenticity, which we labelled as follows: consistency, atypicality and commitment to beliefs. However, it is important

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[6] A contemporary example of this implicit reasoning, where authenticity is implied rather than explicitly referenced, is where Boris Johnson (Prime Minister at the time of writing) is referenced as "just Boris being Boris" (The Guardian, 22/07/19, The Independent, 24/07/19, The Telegraph, 23/07/19). While they do not explicitly follow that up and say "therefore he is being authentic" we can see that they are following the common-sense reasoning about what makes someone 'true to themselves' - their public persona reflecting their 'true self' or 'inner essence'.

to note that overlap between the categories may be present and we do not claim that other ways of grouping the passages are not possible. We will now discuss these three methods in turn.

Consistency

The first method that journalists and commentators used to frame Corbyn's authenticity as a leader revolved around the question of consistency. The consistency method took two distinct but related forms: consistency over time and consistency across stages. We use the term 'stages' in a Goffmanian sense, noting how commentators drew on Goffmanian notions of the 'front-stage' and 'back-stage'. Table 3 displays all the examples of the consistency method that we uncovered in this study.

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The 'consistency over time' method involved reasoning about the length of time Corbyn had held, expressed and enacted his political principles as evidence of how 'true' he was being to himself. Newspapers pointed out how little his views had changed since he first became an MP in 1983, describing him as "a veteran socialist" (The Times, 22/07/15), a "long-time peace activist" (The Guardian, 11/09/15), and referring to his "long track record" (The Daily Mail, 22/08/15). His views were described as being held either "most of his life" (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15) or since "his early twenties" (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15), with an "all-consuming passion" (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15).

Alongside discussing Corbyn's consistency over time, the newspapers also made an explicit contrast with the image of politicians who 'flip-flop' their positions in line with whatever is most likely to appeal to particular sections of the electorate or what might currently be fashionable or popular at the time. 'Flip-flopping' was a term of derision targeted at rival Andy Burnham in particular, who was categorised as inauthentic. *The Independent* dedicated a whole article to Andy Burnham about the

"8 times he's contradicted himself" when flip-flopping between positions (02/09/15). In the absence of access to the inner dimensions of Corbyn's mind and character, the consistency method was taken as an indicator of authenticity based on the reasoning that consistency of expression of the same ideas and policies suggests congruence of expression with inner beliefs[7].

The 'consistency across stages' method sought to draw upon common-sense understandings of everyday life as consisting of a 'frontstage' and 'backstage' dimension. Here, comparisons were made between what Corbyn said or did in public, when consciously 'on display', and what he said or did in private, behind the scenes or in unguarded moments. We know that Goffman's theorising about backstage is commonly associated with authenticity and frontstage with inauthenticity (Ytreberg, 2002: 491). For example, the notion that the backstage reveals the real or true self is a known characteristic of genres such as chat-show formats and reality TV documentaries (Tolson, 2001). Similarly, journalists and commentators viewed the consistency between the two stages as an indicator of authenticity. In this context, Corbyn's personal commitment to his political principles, especially at high personal cost, was topicalised.

The one example discussed in the press was Corbyn's divorce from his second wife over his socialist political beliefs. Corbyn had been a long-time critic of private fee-paying schools and selective grammar schools, which he saw as advancing the class divisions in society he sought to eradicate. Corbyn's unshaking commitment to his political principles in his own private life was viewed by commentators as a key indicator of his commitment to being 'true to his values'. The frame applied to the divorce story attributed the divorce to the disagreement with his wife over his son's schooling, implying that Corbyn must really believe in the political principles he claims he believes in ("His views have affected his home life and he split with second wife", *The Sun*, 16/08/15; [based on his determination] "to send their boy to the local comprehensive", *The Independent*, 26/08/15).

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[7] Consistency over time can also be framed by commentators as an indicator of *inauthenticity* if the consistency is within a shorter time frame: the parody of Theresa May for consistently repeating the catchphrase 'strong and stable' in the 2017 UK general election (Crace, 2017) is a case in point.

Journalists also used interviews with his former wife to conclude that Corbyn's public face did indeed reflect his 'true self', with reasoning that followed the idiom 'what you see is what you get'. The reasoning followed the logic that if those with a potential motive to criticise or discredit him, such as an ex-wife, did not give a different back-stage account then his front stage persona must reflect his 'true self'. For example, *The Independent* (26/08/15) noted that his estranged wife "had nothing bad to say about him", meaning "he is as amiable as he looks." These methods of pointing to consistency between public and private settings framed Corbyn as someone who maintains his value commitments in his private life, even when this is difficult, unpleasant or personally disadvantageous. This reasoning procedure seemed to mirror the reasoning found in the idiom 'practice what you preach'. The authenticity frame applied to Corbyn can be contrasted to the inauthenticity frame levied against 'hypocritical' politicians who espouse one set of values but practice another, such as Tony Blair, Harriet Harman and more recently Diane Abbott, all Labour politicians who publicly denounced selective schools or private education, whilst sending their own children to one.

Atypicality

The second method employed to frame Corbyn as authentic operated through contrasts with what was regarded as the 'typical' politician. The 'typical politician' was described, or inferred through implicit contrast, as someone whose speech, behaviour and appearance were driven not by their inner values, personal preferences or natural style but, rather, by concerns about image management, spin and sound bites that were strategically crafted for political advantage. The two previous Labour Prime Ministers, Tony Blair and to a lesser extent Gordon Brown, and the most recent Conservative Prime Ministers David Cameron and Theresa May, were all to varying degrees associated with this negative caricature of a 'slippery', 'flip-flopping' and 'fake' politician.

In this context, even characteristics that normally would be of limited or dubious merit for a politician – mumbling speech or travelling by bicycle– were held up as evidence of Corbyn's authenticity. Table 4 displays the extracts, which discussed

Corbyn's personal appearance, his way of speaking and his lifestyle as indicators of authenticity.

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Starting with the discourse of appearance, Corbyn was described as more untidy, or more casually dressed, in contrast to the sharply dressed and suited 'typical' politician. The colour of his clothing was commented on as un-business-like, and he was noted as dressing in shades of "beige" or "muddy beige" (*The Guardian*, 05/08/15, 14/08/15, 19/08/15, 30/08/15; *The Observer*, 19/07/15), "yellow" (*The Observer*, 11/08/15), "pale yellow" (*The Observer*, 13/09/15), "fawn" and "non-committal shades of blah" (*The Guardian*, 19/08/15). The lack of a tie, and comments about the visibility of his trademark vests (*The Guardian*, 19/08/15, 11/09/15; *The Sun*, 13/08/15; *The Observer*, 11/08/15) were likewise used to generate an implicit contrast with the sharp suited ranks of New Labour and rival Conservative party politicians. Analogies to occupations such as lab assistants (through reference to "Lab technicians", *The Sun*, 13/08/15) and teachers (through references to the term "staffroom", *The Guardian*, 05/08/15 and "geography teacher", *The Observer*, 13/09/15) emphasised Corbyn's rejection of the typical 'suited and booted' look of other politicians. Thus, Corbyn was categorised as a category mis-fit: while ostensibly being a member of the category politician, he was characterised as having the appearance of other occupations, including lab assistant and teacher. Corbyn's beard was also frequently topicalised in the press, for example in the reference to "the hirsute Islingtonian" (*The Observer*, 19/07/15). In *The Guardian* (19/08/15), his beard was employed as a means of framing his 'likability'. The contrast between Corbyn's appearance and the 'typical' appearance of a politician was used to reason that Corbyn adopted the dress and style that reflects who he 'really is', rather than seek to fit into the image of a 'professional' politician

(most commonly associated with suits and a smart appearance) to improve his electoral appeal[8].

The second aspect of the contrast between Corbyn and the 'typical politician' was the idea of being 'straight talking' (Manual Cortes, quoted in *The Telegraph*, 31/07/15). Commentators noted that Corbyn had no special advisers to help him write his speeches and did not conduct focus groups in order to shape the content. Corbyn was described as someone who believes in what he says and only provides views and positions he has always held, rather than those chosen strategically to curry favour with particular groups of voters or follow the current zeitgeist. For example, *The Guardian* (06/08/15), in an article by Corbyn's advisor S Milne, described him as 'transparently honest and unspun, and so obviously not from the professional politician's mould' in 'a political landscape full of speaking-clock triangulators'. The term 'speaking-clock', a reference to an automated voice system, invoked the image of the *inauthentic* way of speaking typically associated with politicians, who robotically repeat soundbites and evade straight answers[9]. The use of the term 'triangulators' takes this further, referring to the practice of blending political views to generate electoral appeal. Corbyn's rivals in the leadership race were criticised for "shapeshifting", moving "from buzzword to meaningless buzzword" with soundbites that had been "tested and focus-grouped and carefully reworded until they all ended up flopping to the ground as featureless nubs", and having had their eccentricities "blasted away by a machine that requires them to be as slippery and faceless as possible at all times" (*The Guardian*, 05/08/15). In contrast to this image of the fake and slippery politician, *The Sun* (13/8/15) mentioned that Corbyn 'doesn't sound like other politicians' because he 'talks like a normal person'. *The Telegraph* (31/07/15) quoted one supporter who described Corbyn as "straight-talking" and criticised the "machine politicians who never give an answer". *The Guardian* (12/09/15) quoted Ken Livingstone who compared Corbyn to

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[8] Consider, for example, the more recent example when Boris Johnson's shorter haircut was considered by some commentators a sign that he was preparing to launch a leadership bid (*The Sun*, 20/06/19).

[9] The association with being 'robotic' that continued to haunt Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May (Crace, 2017).

the UKIP leader Nigel Farage whose appeal was also in appearing like "the kind of "ordinary guy" that people would like to talk to in the pub". A sub-category of politicians – the 'hard left' – was also invoked in order to portray Corbyn as someone who did not 'fit the mould' because he sounded reasonable and well-mannered, despite expectations of category incumbents "to be rude" *(Mail on Sunday*, 02/08/15).

A key element of authenticity centred on the apparent 'naturalness' of Corbyn's speeches. Corbyn was described by commentators as saying what he thinks, rather than what he has been told to say or what he thinks particular sections of the public want to hear. What could have appeared as unpolished or clumsily phrased is translated into a sign of authenticity, when held in contrast with the smooth and polished (and 'fake') typical politician. This reasoning created a contrast with the disingenuous spin doctoring associated with mainstream politics on both sides of the political spectrum, but especially in relation to *The Observer* (03/08/15), which quoted one young supporter who referred to the disenchantment with the "Blair era of Americanised politics and spin" and pointed to Corbyn's appeal because he "speaks his mind" and "answers questions clearly" without relying on focus groups.

Finally, Corbyn's apparently 'ordinary' lifestyle was singled out as being unusual for a political class normally associated with a lavish lifestyle. Corbyn was framed as someone who had refused to be changed by the power and privilege associated with political office. His preference for public transport and a bicycle (*The Guardian*, 24/07/15; *The Independent*, 07/08/15), and "no chauffeur-driven car" (*The Guardian*, 11/09/15), was commented upon in a number of newspapers. References to "the lowest expenses claims" (*The Guardian*, 01/08/15; *The Observer*, 03/08/15) and the absence of "any financial impropriety" (*The Times*, 18/07/15) tapped into the theme of a topical scandal in British politics a few years earlier. Corbyn was here presented as 'atypical' within the political classes: someone whose honesty and integrity makes him different from other politicians. His hobbies were also framed as 'ordinary' rather than elitist. His commitment to tending his allotment, especially

during the leadership campaign, received particular attention in the press[10]. *The Independent on Sunday* (08/08/15), *The Independent* (03/08/15), *The Observer* (13/09/15) and *The Sun* (16/09/15) all made reference to the time he spends on his allotment, with one article referring to the "crumpled character of Jeremy Corbyn, a pensioner happily pottering about his north London allotment" (*The Independent*, 03/08/15). Mode of transport was also made relevant to his 'ordinariness' and his rejection of the "flashy lifestyle" (*The Sun* 16/09/15) normally associated with the political elite. *The Guardian* (01/08/15; 11/09/15) commented that he took the "night bus (going) home" and *The Sun* (16/09/15) mentioned that he opts for "a bicycle instead [of] a car". Here, authenticity was related to being 'one of us' and an 'ordinary guy', in contrast to the image of an aloof, privileged member of the political elite.

It is important to note, however, that a mocking tone or critical stance was at times employed when characterising Corbyn's atypicality. For example, *The Observer* (19/07/15) commented:

> "We ought to give some credit for the Corbyn surge to the man himself. One of the reasons he is attracting support is because he comes over as authentic. His vivid positions and beige jackets (both circa 1983 in their vintage) add to that. The Bennite agenda he offers may be a route to the electoral wilderness, but he does have the advantage of sounding as if he really believes it would be the promised land."

Those adopting this more critical stance presented Corbyn as 'authentic', but also questioned the value of this 'authenticity' to the Labour Party in their search for electoral victory.

Commitment to beliefs

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[10] The cultural associations brought about by references to Corbyn's allotment are multi-faceted and left implicit by some of the commentators (e.g. Gilbert, 2016: 23). Keeping an allotment, as a category predicate, both potentially invokes images of an environmentalist with a commitment to food sustainability (something Corbyn was already associated with by virtue of his environmental campaigning), while also being associated with being a popular retirement past-time (a category Corbyn was already associated with by virtue of references to his age).

The third and final method used to establish Corbyn's authenticity relates to how his commitment to his beliefs were described in the context of different social and political influences. Extracts using these methods are shown in Table 5.

--- Insert Table 5 here ---

Corbyn was portrayed as 'non-careerist' and someone more interested in pursuing the political causes he believes in than pursuing his own political career and personal advancement. Two elements were brought into play within this discourse: rebelling against his party by defying the whip and being a reluctant leader. References to Corbyn defying the whip and voting against the party (*The Guardian*, 16/06/15; *The Observer*, 03/08/15) and his "record-beating history of rebellion against previous Labour leaders" (*The Observer*, 13/09/15) framed Corbyn as someone who was prepared to damage his own political career in order to vote with his moral conscience. Corbyn was also referred to as a 'reluctant' leader (*Sunday Times*, 26/07/15) and someone who was 'ambivalent' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 26/07/15) to the leadership role or 'as interested in tending to his allotment in Islington as he was in leading the Labour party' (*The Observer*, 13/09/15). He was framed as someone who did not have a desire for power or fame ("uninterested in personal self-advancement", *The Guardian*, 05/06/15), someone who was content sitting on the backbenches if that meant he could stay 'true' to his beliefs and values. The implicit contrast was with the image of a 'careerist' politician whose desire to 'climb the ladder' and 'thirst for power' made them prepared to say and do things they did not believe in to gain popularity within their party or with the electorate. In contrast, Corbyn was presented as someone who was willing to stand up for his values and beliefs even if that meant sacrificing his popularity, power or career advancement.

Corbyn was also presented as being driven by a deeply held commitment to his values and beliefs. Different elements were brought into play in this discourse. The causes he championed were described as "unfashionable" (*The Independent*, 18/08/15) and "otherwise ignored" (*The Guardian*, 05/06/15). These descriptions frame Corbyn's choice of social and environmental causes as genuinely reflecting his inner values, rather than inauthentically being strategically chosen to increase his

popularity. Phrases used in *The Observer* such as "unsung" (13/09/15) and "uncelebrated" (03/08/15) also played into this image of Corbyn as a man who would remain committed to moral causes even if they brought no recognition or reward.

References were again made to his 'backstage' private life. Here, the topic was not consistency with the front stage but the *intensity* of Corbyn's commitment to his political causes, which were said to have led to sacrifices in his personal life. Corbyn was framed as someone willing to 'pay the price' in his private life to further the social and environmental causes he believed in. He was described as neglecting his parenting duties and sacrificing "human activities" (*The Sunday Times*, 16/08/15) of leisure and pleasure as a result of his over-riding commitment to political causes.

Finally, the tension between popularity and sincerity was also used by commentators to establish his authenticity. Commentators claimed that Corbyn could have widened his appeal and increased his popularity by moving his policies towards a more moderate centre-left position, but his determination to remain "steadfast" (*Sunday Telegraph*, 13/09/15) in his political values gained him popularity for that very reason. Eschewing strategic opportunities, such as the opportunity to garner votes by shifting position, was central to this form of reasoning about authenticity.

Discussion

This paper asked the question: how did journalists and commentators frame Jeremy Corbyn as authentic? To view authenticity as socially constructed means that authenticity is assigned by relevant societal members to something in their discourse. We have proposed that members of society employ a range of practical methods for deciding what persons, actions or utterances are authentic and which are not. This means that we need to investigate what outward cues, signs, proxies, visible indicators or more subtle inferences do people use to establish that a person is, in fact, being authentically 'true to themselves'? Our study answers this question in one important domain of social life by revealing the methods used in the British media to establish the authenticity of a political leader in their commentary.

The study has shown that journalists and commentators employ reasoning about consistency as an indicator of Corbyn's authenticity. Like the media, political analysts have also identified consistency as something that marks Corbyn out as different from other politicians: "Corbyn's views are resolutely held and remain consistent – they do not change with the political weather." (Ross & McTague, 2017: 65) More specifically, our study has uncovered two types of reasoning about consistency: (a) consistency across stretches of time (i.e. across decades), (b) consistency across settings or stages (i.e. frontstage *and* backstage). Authenticity was here established through reasoning that the backstage is to be associated with what is more 'real' or 'true' about a person (Tolson, 2001; Ytreberg, 2002). Our findings suggest that these methods are also potentially additive: someone might be seen as highly authentic, because they not only 'practice' (on the backstage) 'what they preach' (on the frontstage), they have also held these positions for a long period of time and have not changed their position for opportunistic reasons.

The second method of reasoning about authenticity identified in our study contrasted Corbyn with an image of the politician 'type'. In this discourse, authenticity judgements about politicians worked in a different way to other spheres of the social world. The concept of 'type authenticity' has been used to describe judgements about something being deemed authentic because it is classified as *fitting into* a recognised 'type' or 'genre': for example, a Greek restaurant might be deemed authentic, because it fits into our expectations about what a Greek restaurant should look like (Carroll, 2015). In contrast, Corbyn's authenticity was judged according to the degree to which he *departed from, ignored or rejected* commonly known conventions around what a typical politician looks like, sounds like and acts like. Not 'fitting the mould' and appearing to maintain his personal preferences and idiosyncrasies, despite incumbency of the politician role, were central to this reasoning.

Three elements were brought into play in the discourse of atypicality: personal appearance, way of speaking and lifestyle. By contrasting Corbyn with a more negative and 'fake' image of a typical politician, media commentators reasoned that 'what you see is what you get': there was said to be no pretence or polish and no

pandering to focus groups or expectant audiences. Corbyn was presented as not succumbing to the temptation to manufacture his image, doctor his words or craft his lifestyle in ways that would appeal to the findings of focus groups or opinion polls. Instead, Corbyn was presented as ordinary, 'un-spun' and straight talking. This specific part of the discourse resonates with both Enli's (2017) argument that authenticity in politics is constructed by appearing to be spontaneous and "not staged, prepped, or obviously rehearsed" (p. 111) and also van Leuwen's (2001: 394) point that people privilege what they view as 'spontaneous' talk as more authentic and truthful than what is said after preparation and planning. Corbyn's lifestyle was also described as ordinary and his dealings were described as honest, used as indicators of his authenticity in contrast to typical members of the elite political class who were presented as succumbing to the trappings and opportunities of public office.

The final method we identified in this study was reference to Corbyn's commitment to his beliefs. Corbyn was presented as being driven by a clear sense of moral purpose grounded in deeply held political beliefs. Across the political leanings of the different newspapers, commentators certainly varied in their assessment of Corbyn's political position, but they nonetheless all concluded that his position authentically reflected his inner beliefs. The authenticity of Corbyn's beliefs was established by reference to his steadfast adherence to particular causes despite them being unfashionable or unpopular and despite the potential for personal loss (such as career advancement within the party or loss of votes from the electorate). Corbyn was presented as someone who pursues political ideals and moral causes that he truly believes in, not those that will gain him followers or raise his profile or popularity. The theme of loss was also present in the discussion of his losses and sacrifices in his personal life, which were attributed to the all-consuming strength of his beliefs and values.

This discourse of commitment to beliefs followed similar lines of argumentation to the scholarly discourse on 'moral authenticity', understood as when someone is judged to have "sincerely attempted to enact their true morals" (Carroll, 2015: 8). There was a strong connection between this discourse and notions of authenticity

used in the commercial arena. Restaurants that pursue ethical sourcing despite the dent in profits and blues musicians who appear to reject commercialism are deemed authentic because they are thought to be prepared to sacrifice or suffer losses for staying true to themselves or their beliefs (Carroll, 2015). Similarly, Corbyn was deemed authentic precisely because his beliefs were held to be damaging rather than advancing extrinsic rewards such as career, popularity or electability. Authenticity was here judged according to whether the political leader was viewed as 'willing to suffer', 'pay a sacrifice' or 'accept loss' for their beliefs, both in their public profile and private life.

Conclusion and Implications

Corbyn's unexpected win in the summer of 2015 can be viewed against the backdrop of "parliamentary democracy, and the traditionally dominant parties, […] slowly sliding into a crisis of legitimacy for some time" (Seymour, 2016: 10). Commentators have recognised the "widespread disaffection from parties and electoral politics" (Saward, 2009: 1) in recent years and have highlighted the appeal of a more 'authentic' leader in such contexts. Street (2004/10: 436) discusses the conundrum faced by politicians who, "acutely aware of their loss of credibility and trust, resort to new forms of political communication, but in so doing further damage the very credibility and trust that they sought to salvage." The media attention given to Corbyn's authenticity is not unexpected in the context of this crisis of trust in politics.

Political journalists and biographers have for a long time sensed that some politicians are perceived by the voting public to be more authentic. For example, Sandbrook (2012: 463) asserted about Jim Callaghan, the Labour Prime Minister 1976-79 well before the Blair ascendancy, that "Callaghan needed no spin-doctor to sell him as Labour's Baldwin; his moderation was unforced, his populism genuine." In contrast, once Blair was elected Labour party leader, previous party leader Neil Kinnock was privately "critical of what he thought was the party's emphasis on

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appearances." (Seldon, 2004/5: 115) Insiders to the Blair circle were also warning of the dangers of inauthenticity. For example, during Blair's first term as Prime Minister, his policy adviser Philip Gould wrote to him advising that "(s)pin must be killed … in favour of genuine substance" (Seldon, 2004/5: 430).

Authenticity remained a key issue in the years that followed the Blair era. During the scramble to succeed Ed Miliband, the frontrunner at the time Andy Burnham was widely perceived as inauthentic and criticised for flip-flopping (Prince, 2016: 218) and being strategic about whether to chase "the left-wing or the right-wing vote" in a bid to secure votes (Beckett & Seddon, 2018: 221; Eaton, 2017). In sharp contrast, a local Labour Party chair commented that "(w)e saw and heard Jeremy's appeal, and members liked it. They thought it was authentic." (Beckett & Seddon, 2018: 223) Beckett and Seddon (2018: 225) themselves concluded that Corbyn's authenticity was "not something anyone could create. It was real and organic."

It is important to note that Corbyn's authenticity has not been met with universal acclaim and admiration. Both at the time of the 2015 leadership election (see Iszatt-White et al., 2018), and in the years of his leadership since then, commentators from both the political left and the right have highlighted the problems and pitfalls of his authenticity. More recently, Corbyn has been criticised for his stance on a range of issues, including his seemingly lacklustre campaign for Remain during the EU referendum, accusations of a lack of robust action in tackling anti-Semitism in the Labour party and his apparent reluctance to back a second referendum in the wake of Brexit. Corbyn's authenticity was viewed as problematic in relation to these issues, with commentators suggesting that the problem was his inability or reluctance to depart from his long-held 'real' beliefs on the issues. 'Corbyn being Corbyn' was here framed as a liability rather than an asset for the party and its supporters.

To be clear, this paper does not seek to take sides in this debate. Our point is not to propose that Corbyn is more authentic than other politicians, nor do we seek to evaluate the benefits and pitfalls of authenticity as opposed to spin. We are mindful of Mel Pollner's warning not to "argue with the members" (Gubrium & Holstein,

2012). We are not suggesting that the journalists who categorised Corbyn as authentic were thereby "selling" authenticity as a political ideal. In fact, journalists both from left leaning and right leaning newspapers were both critical of Corbyn on a range of issues. Rather, the purpose of this paper was to identify the *specific methods* that media commentators employed to judge that Corbyn was, in fact, authentic. To this end, we have contributed to the body of knowledge of how authenticity is socially constructed by identifying the three methods through which Corbyn's authenticity was established: the consistency method, the atypicality method and the commitment to beliefs method.

Limitations and directions of future research

This paper is predicated on the notion of the mediated construction of reality (Tuchman, 1978; Couldry & Hepp, 2017). The frames constructed in the mass media are known to have a performative effect on the beliefs and behaviours of those who adopt these frames (Rein & Schon, 1983; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Newton, 2006; Reese, 2010). However, any assertion about the consequences of media framing must be undertaken with caution. Media frames can of course be discredited or dismissed by audiences or influential commentators: the 'fake news' label is one such discrediting device for rejecting the frames used in particular media outlets. Media organisations are also not homogenous and sometimes seek to discredit the frames used by other media outlets. Today, mass media organisations also compete with numerous social media platforms in the quest to define the dominant frame within which a political leader is to be understood. In the modern context of mediated communication, the performance of authenticity also relies on the management of mass media and social media simultaneously (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019: 68-9; Enli, 2015). Thus, we must exercise necessary caution when seeking to draw conclusions about the impact of the media texts we have studied on voter perceptions and the influence of the mass media in shaping the understanding of political leaders.

In particular, voters who are tired of the apparent political bias in the mass media have begun to turn to social media in a bid to search for more 'true' and 'unfiltered' commentary. Future research could begin to unpack these dynamics, by examining how the framing of political leaders as authentic in the mass media, is received by audiences on social media platforms. Social media is often viewed as a more 'authentic' platform for displaying the 'real' or 'true' self, something that political leaders like Trump work at crafting in order to appear authentic (Shane, 2018). Future research could investigate this further by conducting a comparative study of the framing of Corbyn (or indeed any political leader) as authentic in mass media outlets and on social media platforms.

Another direction for future research that arises from this study would be to explore how authenticity is discussed during election campaigns in different countries and in different historical periods. This is an important line of enquiry for future research because, as Carroll (2015: 3) points out, "attributions of authenticity are culturally contingent and historically situated". At the time of writing, authenticity remains a central frame through which contemporary British politics is being fought and headlines are still identifying authenticity as a key category through which political appeal is constructed[11]. However, it would also be useful for future studies to trace how authenticity has risen and fallen in salience over time in the political sphere. The authenticity phenomenon is also playing out in the political sphere around the world but potentially in different ways. The 2016 U.S. election was widely described as "the authenticity election" (Shane, 2018: 1). Even before the election, the charge of inauthenticity had haunted Hilary Clinton's political career, with media commentators drawing on gendered notions of authentic womanhood (Parry-Giles, 2014). Future studies could usefully identify how authenticity is understood in different national contexts and along lines of gender, age and ethnicity.

A final direction for future research would be a comparison of the methods used to establish authenticity in politics with other cultural spheres. As Fine (2003: 153)

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[11] See for example: "Mrs May is no longer winning the battle for authenticity – Mr Corbyn is" (The Telegraph, 2 June 2017). "Integrity, empathy, authenticity – what does Britain want in a leader?" (The Observer, 3 September 2017)

points out, "[t]he desire for authenticity now occupies a central position in contemporary culture. Whether in our search for selfhood, leisure experience, or in our material purchases, we search for the real, the genuine." Our paper has shown how the category 'authentic' was situated and defined by media commentators in relation to a political leader. It would be especially interesting for future studies to identify the methods that might be shared in common with other cultural fields, such as the fields of art studied by Fine (2003) or music studied by Peterson (1997). However, rather than asking the question of how audiences are 'duped' by the strategic 'staging' of authenticity and turned into "passive recipients of politicians' and advertisers' fabrications" (Ytreberg, 2002: 495), we would instead invite future research to identify the ethnomethods through which audiences make this distinction between 'real authenticity' and 'fabricated appearances of authenticity'.

This paper has looked at the authenticity frame as it was applied to Jeremy Corbyn in the British press. To conclude the article, we would like to highlight the importance of viewing the discursive construction of authenticity as an ongoing process of crediting and discrediting. Those laying claim to authenticity, or having authenticity ascribed to them, can also face discrediting claims that it is 'faked', 'manufactured' or 'fabricated' (see also Peterson, 1997). As Umbach and Humphrey (2017) point out, "for every claim to authenticity there emerges a parallel argument debunking it as a myth or mask for illegitimate power" (p. 1). Motives and ideologies are often brought into play in such discrediting acts, for example in claims that authenticity is 'faked' to support a particular ideology (see for example Adorno, 1973). We would anticipate that this phenomenon could operate in both directions of the political spectrum: the 'left' using such methods to discredit the 'right', and vice versa. It therefore remains to be seen, and for future research to trace, whether the politicians currently attracting the authenticity label – in British politics this includes Jeremy Corbyn on the left and Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson on the right – maintain their categorization as 'authentic leaders'.

Acknowledgement

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Newspaper (Sunday version in brackets)	Readership figures (Sunday version in brackets)
The Sun (The Sun on Sunday)	4,664,000 (3,889,000)
The Daily Mail (Mail on Sunday)	3,605,000 (3,791,000)
The Daily Telegraph (The Sunday Telegraph)	1,150,000 (1,154,000)
The Times (The Sunday Times)	1,014,000 (2,127,000)
The Guardian (The Observer)	793,000 (711,000)
The Independent (The Independent on Sunday)	270,000 (401,000)

Table 1 Readership of selected British newspapers

Newspaper	Articles	Pages of text
The Guardian/The Observer	227	476
The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph	76	114
The Times/The Sunday Times	75	115
The Independent/The Independent on Sunday	58	97
The Sun/The Sun on Sunday	39	42
The Daily Mail/The Mail on Sunday	23	30
TOTAL	**498**	**874**

Table 2 Overview of data-set

Consistency over time	Consistency across 'stages'
"Tim Holmes, 31, a student from London, said he was "elated" with the victory. "Jeremy is trusted. He's been **visible at every campaign event and every demonstration for as long as I can remember**."" (The Independent on Sunday, 13/09/15)	"**The ex-wives** say they remain on friendly terms with the MP. Ms Chapman … said: **"He's very principled, very honest, he doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke and you'd never find any financial impropriety. He is a genuinely nice guy."**" (The Times, 18/07/15)
"…a 66-year-old whose political **views haven't altered since 1983**." (The Times, 04/09/15)	"His views have **affected his home life** and he split with second wife Claudia Bracchitta, a Chilean exile, following a **row about their son's schooling**." (The Sun, 16/08/15)
"Jeremy's got **exactly the same views now as the day he got elected in 1983**… Corbyn's beard may have lost some of its lustre since then but **his views have stayed exactly the same**." (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15)	"He and his wife had an irreconcilable disagreement over their son's education. Islington's schools were, at the time, rated among the worst in the country and Corbyn's wife could not bear to send their boy to the local comprehensive, but not to do so would have **breached Jeremy's political principles**. So they reached an amiable compromise: they separated, and she decided that young Ben would go to a grammar school in Barnet." (The Independent, 26/08/15)
"Mr Corbyn, 66, is a **veteran** socialist and campaigner against austerity, nuclear weapons and the Iraq war." (The Times, 22/07/15)	
"A **long-time** peace activist and rebellious local politician … veteran leftist, the obsessive campaigner who has signed up to virtually any issue worth signing up to over the **past 40 years**" (The Guardian, 11/09/15)	"There is no malice in his make-up. I know that because when there was some bad stuff in the right-wing press about the state of Corbyn's marriage, in 1999, I interviewed him and his estranged wife. She had nothing bad to say about him, which I take as **reliable evidence that he is as amiable as he looks**." (The Independent, 26/08/15)
""Jeremy does have one great merit, which he shares with the late John Smith: he has held **broadly consistent views all his life**," Mullin said." (The Independent, 31/07/15)	
"Mr Corbyn has **a long track record** of opposing British and American military interventions around the world and is a campaigner for unilateral nuclear disarmament. "(The Daily Mail, 22/08/15)	"The veteran MP, himself a former grammar pupil, is known to vehemently object to the schools, and has admitted **his second marriage failed because he was opposed to sending their son to one.** He attended Adams' Grammar School in Shropshire, but divorced his wife of 12 years, left-wing Chilean campaigner Claudia Bracchitta, after she refused to send their son to a failing comprehensive school. The boy eventually attended Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Barnet, North London." (The Daily Mail, 07/09/15)
"Jeremy Corbyn **has gone on to epitomise Left-wing,** north London radical thinking, representing the Islington North constituency **since 1983** "(The Sunday Telegraph, 23/08/15)	
"If Mr Corbyn's speech sounded well rehearsed then it might be because **it is a speech he has been giving ever since he entered Parliament in 1983**." (The Sunday Telegraph, 13/09/15)	"…he has **never hidden what he believes in**." (The Sunday Telegraph, 13/09/15)
"Politics, and in particular the campaigns of the **hard left, has consumed Corbyn for most of his life.**" (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15)	
"As the shadow education secretary, Tristram Hunt, told us: "He's not	

| particularly interested in refreshing or developing his views. The politics is Bennism, pretty **traditional hard left, and it hasn't really changed.""** (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15) | |
| "Although he grew up in a smart market town in Shropshire and attended Adams' Grammar School, described to us by one former pupil as a "grammar school with public-school pretensions", taking an interest in Labour politics was a sign of familial conformity, not rebellion. **By his early twenties**, it was an all-consuming passion." (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15) | |

Table 3 Consistency method

Atypical appearance	Atypical way of speaking	Atypical lifestyle
"…**bearded** 66-year-old **dressed in shades of muddy beige…**" (The Guardian, 14/08/15) "…the **grey-bearded** man in the **knitted fawn-coloured jumper…**" (The Guardian, 11/09/15) "There are still the Corbyn touches - the **unruly hair, and shirts in non-committal shades of blah**. But alongside the **exposed vests** - bought, he said, at a market stall for £1.50 a pop - there are also the **Beckham baker caps, the colour-blocked sweatshirts and beige Harrington jackets**." (The Guardian, 11/09/15). "…**tatty old jackets**" and "**without a tie**" with "a **row of biros in his top pocket**". (The Observer, 13/09/15) "Labour leadership candidate Jeremy Corbyn has become an unlikely heartthrob. He's my style icon. Those **soft-form linen shirts with a**	"Manuel Cortes, the leader of the TSSA, said: "People are fed up of **machine politicians** who never give an answer. Jeremy is **straight-talking** and puts forward sensible policies which resonate with ordinary people."" (The Telegraph, 31/07/15) "He's **transparently honest and unspun**, and so obviously not from the professional politician's mould. In a political landscape full of **speaking-clock triangulators**, those qualities go a long way." (The Guardian, 06/08/15) "I have to say I'm becoming a bit of a fan. He **doesn't sound like other politicians** and that is what I think he has in his favour. He **talks like a normal person**, which is quite refreshing." (The Sun, 13/08/15) "A lot of young people have grown up in a **Blair era of Americanised politics and spin**. They	"The Corbyn Facebook account posted: "A photo can tell you a lot sometimes. This is Jeremy Corbyn **on the night bus** going home last night after another day of meetings and hustings. He has the **lowest expenses** of any parliamentarian." (The Guardian, 01/08/15) "Corbyn **has his own allotment** in East Finchley, north London. … At the moment, he is growing potatoes, beans, soft fruit and apples." (Independent on Sunday, 08/08/15) Centre stage is the crumpled character of Jeremy Corbyn, **a pensioner happily pottering about his north London allotment** who has suddenly discovered that his vintage leftism is strangely fashionable (Independent, 03/08/15). "I checked on the internet and **he has got the lowest expenses claims**." (The Observer,

little bit of vest poking out the top, a **fountain pen lounging in the chest pocket**. He really is committing to the **scientist's assistant look. Lab technician chic**. The look for the autumn is definitely The Corbyn." (The Sun, 13/08/15)

"Physically, he stands apart from his rivals - he is **older and shabbier**, **face covered with a scrub of beard** and **shirt pocket rammed with an entire staffroom's worth of biros**." (The Guardian, 05/08/15)

"I am very wary of mysterious "private polling", which allegedly puts **the hirsute Islingtonian** ahead in the race for first preferences ... "(The Observer, 19/07/15)

"…a previously unknown **bearded** MP from Islington…" (The Observer, 26/08/15)

One of the reasons he is attracting support is because he comes over as **authentic.** His vivid positions and **beige jackets (both circa 1983 in their vintage**) add to that. (The Observer, 19/07/15)

"Corbyn is greeted like Mick Jagger... **Jagger in a yellow shirt with vest peeping through and biros in his pocket**…" (The Observer, 11/08/15)

"…**the bedraggled figure** of the MP for Islington North… (The Observer, 13/09/15)

"Neither did the 66-year-old man with the **look of a geography teacher in retirement** speak in soundbites nor appear in slick suits. He turned out instead in the **same tatty old jackets and pale yellow shirts without a tie that he had**

respect the fact that Jeremy **speaks his mind**. He's unlike any other politicians. With them, you know what they're going to say before they've even turned up - it's just **the same thing over and over again**. He **answers questions clearly**, he **doesn't depend on focus groups** - he **says what he thinks**." (The Observer, 03/08/15)

"[Ken Livingstone] said that in some respects Corbyn was similar to Nigel Farage, because they were both the kind of **"ordinary guy" that people would like to talk to in the pub**." (The Guardian, 12/09/15)

"Corbyn also has **no special advisers on hand**, a fact which some credit as the reason behind his **clear lines on response in debates**." (The Independent, 07/08/15)

"I am 70 and am sick of politicians who have no policies, but simply **use focus groups to garner votes**." (The Observer, 30/08/15)

[26-year-old at a Corbyn rally] "My generation has been silenced. We're locked out. So many careers are dominated by a small elite of privately-educated people who can afford to do unpaid internships. We want a politician who's **honest**. That's all we want. And to have **politics that isn't being made by a focus group**. And that's why it's so exciting right now." (The Observer, 11/08/15)

"It doesn't matter that he's 66. It's not about celebrity. **He speaks our language** …" (The Observer, 11/08/15)

03/08/15)

"…as one Labour official put it, Corbyn may soon yearn for his former **life as a lonely, unsung rebel on the left**, who could **escape to his vegetable patch** when he had had it with Westminster." (The Observer, 13/09/15)

"He spends his **spare time on his allotment** and does[n't] have a flashy lifestyle, opting for **a bicycle instead [of] a car**." (The Sun, 16/08/15)

	"People expect hard Leftists to be rude and many of them duly oblige. But Mr Corbyn doesn't seem to bear grudges and, apart from one silly outburst on the Middle East, he's **sounded calm and reasonable** in interviews." (The Mail on Sunday, 02/08/15)	
had in his wardrobe for decades." (The Observer, 13/09/15)		
	"Farage and Corbyn may hail from opposite ends of the political spectrum, but they have two things in common. Both **share an easy authenticity: they are seen to say what they think**." (The Observer, 02/08/15)	

Table 4 Atypicality method

Non-careerism	Depth of beliefs
"Corbyn has been one of the most rebellious Labour MPs, **defying the whips 238 times**." (The Guardian, 16/06/15)	"Jeremy Corbyn has made a career out **championing unfashionable causes**." (The Independent, 18/08/15)
"He seems more genuine than the other candidates do. **He's voted against the party in the past - it shows that he goes with his heart**." (The Observer, 03/08/15)	"…[things that] clearly set him apart from his rivals: clarity, **moral oomph and an evident sense of purpose**." (The Guardian, 30/07/15)
"[Corbyn is] **uninterested in personal self-advancement**…" (The Guardian, 05/06/15)	"He is the very antithesis of the negative caricature of an MP: he's **defined by his principles and beliefs**, uninterested in personal self-advancement, and **determined to use his platform to further the interests of people and causes that are otherwise ignored**." (The Guardian, 05/06/15)
"…**career rebel…** Mr Corbyn's record-beating **history of rebellion** against previous Labour leaders" (The Observer, 13/09/15)	"the Islington **revolutionary…**" (Mail on Sunday, 02/08/15)
"His team has given the impression in the past that he is **ambivalent towards the job**." (Sunday Telegraph, 26/07/15)	"[Claudia Bracchitta] She complained at the time that Corbyn was **"first the politician and second the parent".**" (The Sunday Times, 16/08/15)
"Corbyn, who stood **only reluctantly…**" (Sunday Times, 26/07/15)	"…his victory in the Labour leadership contest looked implausible. He struggled even to get enough MPs' signatures to appear on the ballot. But
"Corbyn was **as interested in tending to his allotment in Islington as he was in leading the Labour party**." (The Observer, 13/09/15)	yesterday he won with more than 59 per cent of the vote - a landslide. It

	was a tribute to old-fashioned grass roots activism, but also to the man's consistency. In his victory speech, Mr Corbyn **could have announced that he wanted to embrace the middle ground - to appeal to moderates within Labour and out there in the wider country**. Instead, he **stuck to his guns** and promised to fight for socialism. **This steadfast commitment to his ideals is probably a big reason why he wo**n. "(The Sunday Telegraph, 13/09/15)
	"His first wife, Jane Chapman, told us their marriage broke down because Corbyn's political work left little time for a private life. "**He's a genuinely nice guy**," she explains. "The problem is**, his politics are to the exclusion of other kinds of human activities**, like spending longer going out for a meal, or going out to the cinema, buying clothes, watching EastEnders. It's the work-life balance." (Sunday Times, 16/08/15)
	"**…uncelebrated** leftwing rebel…" (The Observer, 03/08/15)
	"**…unsung** Corbyn…" (The Observer, 03/08/15)
	"Jeremy Corbyn may have become an unlikely sex symbol, but being married to him doesn't sound like a huge amount of fun. His **total fixation with politics was the root cause of his two divorces**. "(Sunday Times, 16/08/15)

Table 5 Commitment to beliefs method