

Special Thematic Section on "The Social Psychology of Citizenship, Participation and Social Exclusion"

The Active Follower: What Young Voters Look for in Political Leaders and Parties

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Abstract

A key aspect of citizenship lies in the way that ordinary citizens relate to leaders, and a key question has to do with whether active leadership and active citizenship can be complementary rather than contradictory. In this paper we draw upon a social identity model in order to address this question. We report a study of 28 young Italians who completed a diary before and after the Italian general election of 2006. The analysis focuses on the criteria used by respondents in order to evaluate leaders and their parties. The first part, an in-depth thematic investigation of two diaries, shows that the diarists do not passively accept the constructions used by politicians, but rather deliberate both over their own identities and the way that politicians relate to these identities. They focus on three dimensions of the leader-citizen relationship: whether leaders are ingroup members ('one of us'), whether they act in the group interest ('act for us') and whether they are effective in advancing group goals ('deliver for us'). The second part consists of a quantitative content analysis, examining whether, and how often, each respondent raises these three dimensions. It shows that they are widely used and that the predominant concern is whether leaders 'deliver for us'. We examine the implications of these findings for both leadership and citizenship research, arguing that both leaders and citizens can be actively involved in shaping definitions of identity and the extent to which identity based goals are realised by parties and their policies.

Keywords: citizenship, leadership, social identity, voting behaviour

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In 1994, Kymlicka and Norman wrote: "In 1978 it could be confidently stated that 'the concept of citizenship has gone out of fashion among political thinkers'... Fifteen years later, citizenship has become the 'buzz word' among thinkers on all points of the political spectrum" (p. 352). Since then, there has been a continuing and 'spectacular' growth in citizenship studies (Isin & Turner, 2002).

However, the shift since the 1990s is not just in the volume of work, but also in its focus. While the concept of citizenship as a balance of rights and obligations deriving from membership of a polity can be traced back as far

as Aristotle's *Politics*, modern citizenship studies are generally traced back to the end of World War 2, and to the work of Thomas Marshall (1965). Marshall argued that the traditional notion of citizenship as limited to civil rights and obligations (e.g. the right to vote) was far too narrow. He stressed the importance of social and economic rights if people are to be full members of society. But at the same time that Marshall broadened the domains that are relevant to citizenship, he came under criticism for a narrow focus on citizenship as a legal status. To put it slightly differently, citizenship was investigated in terms of what rights are conferred upon the individual, not on what the individual does to claim rights. It was this focus that was rejected from the 1990s. There was a shift from the notion of citizenship as passive entitlements to a "more active version of 'rights and responsibilities'" (Castle-Kanerova & Jordan, 2001, p. 123). As a number of scholars have argued (e.g. Haste, 2004; Isin, 2008, 2009) citizenship is not simply a status, it is not simply knowledge one has acquired, rather it is a 'praxis' – something one does and the claims one makes through what one does. Accordingly, the focus of study should be on 'acts of citizenship'.

For some, the contrast between a passive and an active notion of citizenship can be mapped onto a right/left political spectrum (e.g. Turner, 1990). Others see the shift to an activist position as more general, but as having both right and left variants. According to the right, then, the automatic conferral of rights encourages passivity amongst the poor and keeps them in a state of disadvantage. Hence one should only get certain rights if one fulfils certain obligations – 'workfare' (where getting unemployment benefits depends on doing some work) being a classic case in point. For the left, by contrast, rights should be guaranteed, but the nature and terms of those rights should not simply be decided from on high. Rather, people themselves should be empowered to make their own demands and agencies should be accountable to them (Pierson, 1991).

This focus on the active citizen necessarily brings a discussion of what skills, virtues and attitudes are necessary in order for people to exercise their citizenship. Many of these have been identified, such as the need for courage, open-mindedness, cooperation and social participation, a work ethic, self-restraint, respect for others and so on (e.g. Galston, 1991; Glendon, 1991; Oldfield, 1990). Clearly, the relative emphasis on these different virtues will be different for those of different ideological orientations. But one area that has been particularly fraught has been the way people should orient to authority and leadership.

On the one hand, it has been argued that leadership is essential for a 'good society' where people act rationally and virtually so as to sustain a fair democratic society. This position is advocated forcefully by Rousseau in his discussion of the role of the 'legislator' in book two of the *Social Contract* (Rousseau, 1762/2008). It is reflected in widespread concerns about the decline of trust in political leaders, the decline in political participation (especially among young people) and hence the need for citizenship education that can reverse this decline (e.g. Galston, 2001; Hahn, 1998; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001).

On the other hand, it has been argued that leaders are a threat to the active citizen and that 'top down' authority obliterates 'bottom up' citizenship. Contemporaneously with Rousseau, Tom Paine argued against the monarch and characterised any political authority not entirely rooted in the citizenship as tyranny. He famously began his pamphlet 'Common Sense' with a quote: "Man knows no Master save creating HEAVEN" (Paine, 1776/1997, p. 1, emphasis in the original) and in 'The American Crisis': "tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered" (Paine, 1776/n.d.). Such an approach is also reflected in the contemporary literature, as in versions of 'liberal virtue theory' which encourage a willingness to question authority (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). That is, if authorities and agencies are to be held to account, then people must not accept what they say at face value, but rather subject them to

critical scrutiny. To quote [Gutman \(1987\)](#): those who "are ruled only by habit and authority... are incapable of constituting a society of sovereign individuals" (cited in [Kymlicka & Norman, 1994](#), p. 267).

In sum, the relationship between leaders and citizens has always been a topic of key concern in the citizenship literature, but the relationship between the two has always been fraught. Should we embrace or fear the strong leader? Does leadership agency scaffold or obliterate the agency of followers? Is it possible to have both a strong leader and strong citizens? These are questions which remain unresolved. In order to address these questions, let us now turn to the literature on leadership.

Citizenship and Leadership

Work on citizenship and leadership research have developed side by side, with little interchange between the two. Yet both are structured around the same tension. In the period leading up to 1945 strong leaders were regarded as essential for society to cope with its problems. In an increasingly dull soulless and mechanised world, Weber, for instance, saw charismatic authority as the sole antidote to "the routinized economic cosmos" where the prospect was of "a polar night of icy hardness and darkness" (cited in [Lindholm, 1990](#), p. 27). The focus of research then, was what sorts of individual characteristics make for strong and effective leaders (for reviews see [Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991](#); [Mann, 1959](#)). Post war, however, after the period of the 'great dictators', the attitude towards leadership changed radically, with strong leaders being seen more in terms of pathology than salvation (e.g. [Bion, 1961](#); [Waite, 1977](#)). Likewise, the focus of research changed from the characteristics of individuals that make them effective to the characteristic of situations which make particular people come to the fore. Leaders became less masters of society than prisoners of context (see [Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011](#)).

Over the ensuing years, this flip-flopping between models that characterise leaders as creating the social and those which characterise leaders as being constrained by the social has continued. Indeed the contrast has become more explicitly focussed on how leaders relate to ordinary citizens (generally referred to as 'followers'). Thus, transactional models represent leadership as an economic exchange where followers will do a leader's bidding to the extent that they receive (or anticipate) rewards in return ([Hollander, 1985, 1995](#)). Essentially, then, leaders have very limited agency, being constrained by the pre-existing appetites and desires of followers. This limitation led to the development of transformational models according to which leadership is fundamentally concerned with shaping these appetites, desires and goals. The reinstatement of leadership agency in these models (at the expense of followers) coincides with a renewed interest in charisma as the quality which makes leaders transformational ([Bass, 1999](#); [Burns, 1978](#); [Conger & Kanungo, 1987](#)).

It might seem that leadership research reproduces rather than resolves the dilemmas of citizenship research concerning the relationship between leaders and citizens. The problem essentially has to do with the fact that leader agency and citizen agency are conceptualised in terms of a zero-sum game. The more one has of the one, the less one has of the other. However, in recent years a social identity approach to leadership has been formulated in order to challenge this traditional opposition.

The social identity approach conceptualises leadership as a social relationship between would-be leaders and members within a specific social group. That is, a leader is not just a leader, but a leader of a nation, a political party, a religion or whatever (for overviews see [Haslam et al., 2011](#); [Hogg, 2001](#)). Successful leadership then consists of being seen to act effectively for the group. This involves several dimensions (see [Steffens, Haslam, Reicher, et al., 2014](#), both for an analysis of the dimensions of social identity leadership and a tool to measure

them). First, the leader needs to establish that he or she is a prototypical group member who thereby understands the things that matter for group members. Second, the leader needs to be seen to be acting for the group interest rather than his own or (even worse) the interests of a rival group. Third, the leader needs to be seen to be effective in achieving group goals. That is, he or she needs to be effective in terms of marshalling group resources and deploying them to greatest effect.

But this is not the only way in which the leader is agentic. Leaders do not simply act on pre-existing understandings of groups and seek to represent them. Rather, and fourth, they actively construe group identities in order to make themselves and their proposals appear representative. Skilled leaders invoke categories that make their intended audiences cohere as members of a common group, they persuade audience members that own plans of action are an instantiation of group norms and values and also that the outcomes of action reflect the achievement of these values. In all these ways, leaders can be seen as 'entrepreneurs of identity' who actively define group identities, and who, by doing so effectively, mobilise the social forces which can then be deployed to shape social reality (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Where leadership is successful in all these respects – that is, where aspirants are able to constitute themselves as being of the group, acting on behalf of the group and delivering for the group – it can lead to an intense bond whereby each individual group member feels intimately attached and attracted to the leader (Steffens, Haslam, & Reicher, 2014). But this does not necessarily mean that the leader will always dominate the followers, especially when it comes to the key matter of determining the nature of group norms and values, and hence shaping the nature of group actions. As Reicher, Haslam, and Platow (2014) stress, the balance between leaders and group members in defining group identity can take different forms, which in turn underpin different forms of political system. Thus, democratic leadership involves the leader facilitating a dialogue amongst group members as to 'who we are' and the type of world we want to lead to. Hierarchical leadership still involves the participation of members in defining identity, but places them in a subordinate position to leaders who seek to essentialise the identity and define their version as the sole legitimate version of identity. Autocratic leadership seeks to exclude ordinary members from defining the identity and the direction of the group. Leaders claim to embody the group identity to the extent that anyone who challenges them ipso facto challenges the group and loses the right to speak.

The key point here is that, while it is acknowledged that leaders can use their agency to diminish that of other group members, this is not inherent in the nature of leadership (cf. Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). It thereby becomes all the more important to examine how members relate to leaders and leadership in order to facilitate the more participatory forms of group life which are at the core of contemporary understandings of citizenship.

Having said that, whatever a social identity model of leadership allows in theory, in practice research has almost completely ignored this issue. The work that has been done can be divided into two broad categories (see Haslam et al., 2011, for an overview). On the one hand there are experimental studies which examine how people rate and follow leaders who are more or less prototypical or else who act more or less in the group interest (e.g. Platow, Hoar, Reid, Harley, & Morrison, 1997; Platow, van Knippenberg, Haslam, van Knippenberg, & Spears, 2006). On the other hand, there are qualitative studies which examine how leaders actively construe group identity in order to render themselves, their proposals and their accomplishments as instantiations of that identity (e.g. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). So group members are either limited to evaluating the leader on the basis of predetermined features of leadership or else they disappear from the picture entirely. To date, though, social identity researchers have

paid no attention to what group members themselves look for in leaders, and, conversely, the voluminous literature of what people look for in leaders (e.g. [HeadsUp, 2009](#); [Kouzes & Posner, 2011](#); [White, Bruce, & Ritchie, 2000](#)) has paid little attention to social identity issues: are prototypicality, group interest and the achievement of group goals of any relevance and do group members simply absorb the constructions of identity handed to them by leaders, or do they themselves actively reconstrue identity? What is more, do people simply reconstrue how leaders relate to a given identity, or do they apply different identities as a framework of evaluation (for instance, considering the leader in terms of class or religion as opposed to nationality). These are the various gaps we seek to fill here.

The Present Study

Our study looks specifically at young people, not least because this is a group much neglected in the citizenship literature ([Haste, 2004](#); [Invernizzi & Williams, 2008](#); [Lister, 2008](#)). Moreover, when young people have been considered in this literature, then (at least up until fairly recently) they have been described in terms such as 'citizens in the making' and 'apprentice citizens'. In other words, young people have been regarded as not citizens quite yet, and even as passive subjects, waiting for the mantle of citizenship to be bestowed upon them ([Lister, 2005](#)). Lister gives a candid description of how she was savaged by Tom Burke, a 19 year old student when she herself employed 'citizens in the making'. He protested that such language "does not give young people their true credit as social actors in their own right nor does it recognise the contribution that young people are making to our society today... I am not a citizen in the making. I am a citizen today" ([2005](#), pp. 1-2).

Our sample fell into the same age bracket as Tom Burke. It consisted of young Italian voters aged between 18 and 20 who we followed during the general election of April 2006. For two weeks before the election dates of 9th/10th April, and for one week after, they were asked to complete a diary where they recorded all their thoughts and conversations about the election along with all the election materials they had been exposed to and their reaction to it.

The use of such a methodology was due to the fact that diaries provide an open format where people can continuously record data during, or at least shortly after, events occur ([Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003](#)), and where they can express their own interpretations of events ([Alaszewski, 2006](#)). They are therefore ideal for mapping everyday patterns of thought and behaviour ([Emler & Reicher, 1995](#); [Tennen, Affleck, & Armeli, 2005](#)) and for examining how people relate and respond to leaders as they encounter them in the world – something which is obviously particularly salient at election time when citizens have to choose amongst political parties and political representatives.

In particular, diaries have been used successfully with young people in order to keep track of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours (e.g. [Bhatia, Davila, Eubanks-Carter, & Burckell, 2013](#); [Emler & Reicher, 1995](#); [Pond, Kashdan, DeWall, Savostyanova, Lambert, & Fincham, 2012](#); [Schlagman, Kliegel, Schulz, & Kvavilashvili, 2009](#)). This is possibly because diaries have been and continue to be a form that is particularly widely used by this age group. Moreover, diaries are both suited to the type of material we aim to collect and are an ecologically valid means of doing so amongst our sample.

Through the diaries, we address two issues. The first is exploratory. It has to do with what people look for in their representatives, what grounds they use to evaluate them and to choose between them. Moreover, how do people relate to the positions as defined by these representatives themselves: do they passively accept them or else

actively evaluate and reformulate them? Linked to this, we are interested in how people organise their considerations and evaluations over time. Do they have a simple and consistent point of view, linked to the views of the representatives, which is stated and restated on different occasions? Or else do they have a more ambivalent position, deliberating over what they hear, bringing different considerations to bear at different times? These are qualitative questions necessitating a qualitative analysis. Moreover, insofar as we are interested in the temporal organisation of arguments within an account – and not simply the nature of the different arguments used across accounts – the first part of our analysis provides detailed thematic investigations of two diaries allowing us to see both the range of arguments used and the development of the argument across the three weeks during which it was filled in.

The second issue is confirmatory. Drawing on social identity models of leadership, we seek to examine the extent to which people are concerned with leaders as 'group champions'. More specifically, we analyse how often our participants evaluate leaders and their parties in terms of (a) being prototypical members of the ingroup (being 'one of us'); (b) acting in the interests of the group rather than their own interest or the interest of an outgroup ('act for us'); (c) being effective in terms of advancing group interests in practice ('deliver for us'). These are quantitative questions necessitating quantitative analysis. Accordingly, the second part of our analysis consists of a quantitative content analysis of all the diaries in our sample.

Method

Participants

The study involved 28 Italian young people who voted for the first time in the general election of April 2006. The participants (9 men and 19 women) were aged between 18 and 20 years. Of these, 16 were final year students at a high school in Bologna, 9 were members of a local group organised by a local parish Catholic Church in Bologna and 3 were first year students at the University of Bologna.

Permission to approach school students was first obtained through the Head Teacher of their High School. Once this had been obtained, the first author met with two classes with a total of 44 students, explained the nature of the study and asked for volunteers (the volunteering rate was 16 out of 44, 36%). Permission to approach the members of the Church group – the main activity of which was a weekly meeting where they could discuss their personal issues with the guidance of a tutor – was obtained through the group organiser. Again, once this had been obtained, the first author met with a group of 25 young people, explained the nature of the study and asked for volunteers (the volunteering rate was 9 out of 25, 36%). Finally, the university students were recruited via a snowball technique. This began with a student known to the researcher, who introduced her to two further students willing to participate in the study. All the participants lived in Bologna during the period of the study. In all cases, the decision to take part in the study was voluntary.

Materials

The diary instrument was a folder containing multiple copies of three different forms, each printed on paper of a different colour in order to facilitate recognition. The three forms were:

- a. *"I talked about politics with..."* (blue) – to be filled in every time the participants conversed about politics with others. This form had four sections. Section 1 asked for the name of the participant (or, rather, a

nickname made up by the participant in order to preserve anonymity), the date and location of the conversation. Section 2 asked for the ages of all interlocutors and their relationship to the participant. Section 3 asked for details of the discussion. Section 4 asked for comments about the topic of the conversation, the conversation itself or any ideas generated by the conversation.

- b. *"I gathered political information"* (green) – to be filled in every time participants gathered information about anything pertaining to the election, specifying the kind and source of information and how they had obtained it. This again had three sections. Section 1 was semi-structured. It asked for the nickname of the participant, the date on which the information was gathered, the source of information (newspaper, TV show, TV news, radio, other) and how it was found (suggested by someone else, actively sought out, encountered by chance). Section 2 asked for a description of the information itself. Section 3 asked participants to express their reactions, comments or thoughts generated by what they had seen, heard or read.
- c. *"My thoughts"* (yellow) – to be filled in every time participants thought about anything pertaining to the election. This had two sections. In section 1, respondents were asked to write their nickname, and the date. In section 2 they were asked to describe their thoughts.

Procedure

Having explained the nature of the study and what was required of participants, the researcher then handed the diary folder to each volunteer. As well as the forms previously described, each folder contained a set of instructions to help the participants fill in the diary correctly. The participants were required to keep a diary for three weeks (two weeks before and one week after the political Italian elections of 9th and 10th of April 2006). More specifically, they were asked to write in the diary every time they were involved in conversations, gathered information or thought about politics and elections. Participants were told that the diaries would only be read by the researchers. Further, to guarantee anonymity, they were asked to choose a nickname for themselves which they should use consistently throughout their diary. They were also asked to refer to others by a nickname. In the first week the researcher met the participants to make sure that they were using the forms correctly and, if necessary, to correct any misunderstandings or misuse. In the event, there were no problems of usage. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher collected the forms from all participants and gave them a full debriefing concerning the rationale and aims of the study.

Analytic Strategy

As already indicated, we conducted two types of analysis on the data. For the first, we read all the diaries and among them we chose two diaries – Dede and Bego's – to form the focus of our thematic investigation. These were not chosen on the basis of representativeness, but rather of richness. That is, in order to investigate both the range of considerations, and the way in which they are organised over time, we have selected two diaries which contain a particularly broad set of entries and which therefore allow us to examine issues of consistency or variability.

We then used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the data both because of its theoretical/methodological flexibility (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) and the way that it is suited to addressing how given populations conceptualise a given phenomenon (Joffe, 2011). As Braun and Clarke point out, there are many different shades of thematic analysis. One key distinction is between an inductive approach where coding is principally data led and a deductive approach whereby coding is principally guided by existing theoretical ideas.

However, as [Braun and Clarke \(2013\)](#) point out, this distinction is not rigid. Our approach is principally deductive or theory-guided: we are interested in how our participants evaluate political candidates, and, specifically, whether they do so in terms of the dimensions of the social identity model of leadership. However there is also an inductive element: we are also open to any other bases on which candidates are evaluated and we are interested in the ways different criteria are applied at different times by the same participant. This balance between deduction and induction is similar to that used by others such as [Abrams \(2003\)](#).

Accordingly, then, we first translated the diaries into English. Then we read them iteratively, developing codes for the way in which the diarists evaluated political leaders and parties. We continued this process until further readings did not develop the coding frame. We then reassembled these codes into a timeline for each diary, paying particular attention to the development of themes over the time when the diaries were completed: continuities and discontinuities over time, the introduction of new themes and tensions between themes at different time points. We present each diary separately, examining the nature and temporality of themes.

For the second analysis into the incidence of different relationships between leaders/parties and group memberships (are they 'one of us', do they 'act for the group', do they 'deliver for the group') we employed a quantitative content analysis ([Holsti, 1969](#)). This involved reading all 264 diary forms generated by our 28 participants, and then coding (a) whether each participant invoked, or did not invoke, each type of relationship at least once in their diary; and (b) the number of forms on which each respondent invoked each type of relationship in their diary. We will explain the frame for allocating instances to codes in more detail in the following section. However, given the data reduction involved, roughly a fifth (18.5%) of the diaries were read by a second coder (cf. [Ryan & Bernard, 2000](#)). Using, Holsti's method, inter-rater agreement was calculated as 93.8% which was deemed satisfactory to proceed with the analysis.

Findings

Thematic Investigation of Selected Diaries

Dede (F, 18, School Group)

Dede's first form followed a conversation with her teacher and classmates at school:

"We were talking about Moratti's new school reform and the teacher was giving us her opinion. It was a really good debate. At the end of it I was thinking about the Left's chances of winning the election. Probably, if we win the election, we will need to go on and maybe change again the Right's reform. I think that if we win, then the school system will have a good chance. All we know is that we care more about education" (27th March).

The repeated use of 'we' in the second half of this extract clearly positions her through a left identity and suggests a fairly straightforward approach to the political process: she will support left-wing politicians. But her next form, filled in the next day, complicates matters. Dede invokes a different identity – Catholic – and observes: *"It is true that, at the moment, a Catholic can't vote for the left or the centre left. It is also true that the other side isn't a good choice either"* (28th March). Dede's particular concern has to do with the support of the left wing coalition (l'Unione) for the rights of non-married couples. But more generally, she reflects on the effort required to reconcile identity

and voting: *"What is sure is that voting is now a hard struggle for us Christians, who are called to give our vote while not forgetting our Catholic values"* (28th March).

Dede went on to analyse the roots of this difficulty. For her, the problem lies in a lack of information, partly due to the media who prefer *"wrestling or talent shows"* to political analysis. It is also due to the politicians themselves. They are characterised as a distinct category who act in ways that are at odds with the needs of the electorate: *"The big problem with Italian politicians is they never say what they want to do but just what others haven't done. So you have to vote the one who has done less damage because you don't know anything about the rest"* (28th March).

A few days later Dede provided a powerful example to buttress the claim that politicians as a class are solely oriented to winning and to their own power. A baby had been kidnapped and murdered. Politicians commented on the story during the TV news: *"One of them said: it is centre right's fault because it didn't provide an adequate, safe system... Listening to it, I was shocked. How can people think only about their power? Was it necessary to transform a tragedy into a political issue?"* (2nd April).

On the same day, she returned to the more general dilemma. Dede relates how her friends had different opinions, but none were confident and: *"we were agreeing that, at the moment, it is very difficult to decide who to vote for. In the end, what I think is that it is a duty for us citizens to think about our society and what should be done in order to improve it. At the moment, probably, the most important duty we have is to decide which political coalition can improve our situation"* (2nd April). It is worth noting that while the sense of dilemma is something we have seen before, we can also see yet another shift in the nature of the identity involved: here the 'us' refers to (Italian) citizens rather than the Left or Catholics. Moreover the concern here is not so much with an alignment of values per se than in the practical ability to advance group interests (to 'improve our situation').

This amalgam of issues continued to characterise Dede's diary in the days leading up to the election on April 9th. On April 4th she commented favourably on a TV debate between the two candidates for Prime Minister, Prodi and Berlusconi: *"Finally they touched some problems that interest the electors. They talked about school, university, morality, excluding economy"*. But her positivity was tempered by irritation that Berlusconi kept his key announcement – the abolition of the tax on second homes – to the very end, which therefore stopped rather than enabled debate.

Also on April 4th, Dede commented negatively on political leaflets in general, and the contempt they seem to show for the electorate: *"I think the leaflets are very bad. Do they really think that if they fill your mail box you are seriously going to vote for them? Seriously, I hope not!"*

On the election day itself, Dede stressed that, if anything, the process of decision making actually gets harder when one enters the polling booth:

"Today I have voted!!! The first vote is hard! It is very hard when you enter in the polling booth, look at all the parties and put your X on one of these... You know that you can't change your mind and you know that if the person we have voted for wins, the responsibility is also yours. I didn't think this choice was so full of responsibility."

Finally, in her last entry on April 11th, Dede reflected on the results:

"The left is in power!... If I am honest, I don't know how long this new government is going to last (considering the small difference in votes with the right) but I truly hope it will do something good for us Italians and for our Country! We need it."

Ultimately, then, her concern returns to what the government will deliver for 'us', whether it will advance the collective interest. At this point, the reference is clearly to a national interest.

Bego (M, 19, Church Group)

If Dede started her diary by adopting a clear (left) position and then gradually introduced the complexities of her multiple positions (Catholic and Italian), Bego's dilemma was rather different. Throughout his diary, he positioned himself clearly as a Catholic. He consistently articulated an intention to vote on the basis of his Catholicism. At one point, for instance (April 7th) Bego states: *"it is a fundamental argument for me to be consistent in my choice about politics and religion"*. Moreover, as he continues, Bego indicates how he uses this principle in order to evaluate political alternatives: *"It was useful to understand how a party towards which I was already inclined wants to apply its proper political aim in accordance with Catholic faith"*. However, he also indicates that it is no easy matter to reconcile faith and politics. This is clear from Bego's very first diary entry on March 30th: *"How does a Catholic decide to vote? Is the ideology, left or right, closer to Catholic religion and the Church?"*

Bego (like Dede) was keen to root his decision in the evidence and hence his dilemma was compounded by the fact that good evidence (as opposed to mere hearsay) is hard to come by:

"The main problem I faced in this conversation was my inability to be supported by objective data when I presented my point of view. The desire to get more precise information increased because I realized that probably I reached conclusions without proper information, but just because of what I heard from others."

Bego looks to guidance from those in 'authoritative positions' but finds either that they are no more certain than he is (*"a lot of parish priests share my questions: 'how can the Church hold the hand of the right wing politicians, who are guided by the individualistic logic of increasing the differences between poor and rich and of anti-solidarity?'"*) or else that they are untrustworthy. Politicians, again viewed as a separate category, are particularly suspect. Thus, again on March 30th, Bego comments on a television debate between the two main candidates, Prodi on the left and Berlusconi on the right: *"the most difficult thing I had to face was to know who was telling the truth."*

The next day, March 31st, Bego reacts to a leaflet from the right-wing party the Alleanza Nazionale (AN), led by Gianfranco Fini, which has come through his letterbox:

"I had a positive opinion of Fini, but it would be very hard for me to vote for the Alleanza Nazionale. Today, when I received AN propaganda my relatively positive judgement became really negative for two reasons:
- Because it says that too much environmentalism can be bad and it represents communism as the devil in the world, as if Fascism was positive.
- There is a satirical cartoon of Prodi which is presented with an arrogance and pride that I can't stand."

This both restates and extends Bego's previously expressed concerns. First, it is a rejection of the AN because of the content of their politics – anti-environmentalist and implicitly pro-fascist. Second, however, it is a rejection of the AN because of the form of their politics. It is not just that what politicians say is untrustworthy, it is also that it contains more polemic than information. This is not only counter-normative (arrogant and proud) but also fails the voter in providing no grounds to make an informed decision.

It is worth stressing that Bego's concerns are less to do with the target of AN's polemic (criticism of the candidate he favours) than with the negativity per se. Later, on April 8th, Bego writes about an email he has received concerning the election: *"I found myself agreeing with all the things the email said, but I would have preferred the right to be less criticised"*. On the same day, he reflects more generally on the election campaign to date, making clear his disillusion with politicians, based on the judgement that their polemical disputes are more concerned with their own success than the interests of the electorate:

"I am really disappointed by politics because my first electoral campaign looked like uninterrupted telesales and insults against the opposition: it was like forgetting that politicians have the duty and the task of pursuing what is best for the Country. So I would have preferred objective and serious politicians, able to admit errors, to admit that the other side can have the right policies or program, and not uninterrupted criticism or denying of the evidence."

Going back a little, to April 6th, and returning to the issue of political content, Bego commented on a TV program where several politicians were interviewed. This, he found very helpful:

"The representatives of the political parties that best represent me were interviewed, so I had the chance to understand who is best for me. I was undecided between Green Party, Udeur and Ulivo. The Green Party gives me a good impression, but they pay little attention to the economy and to Catholic values. Udeur is very careful with values but it does not make me feel safe when it comes to the practical management of the country and it seems like, because that is what my parents and my friends said, it is a party that takes advantage, that changes political allies quite easily. Ulivo seems to me like a good compromise between the two parties above."

This entry is particularly rich and reveals the multiple (and potentially competing) dimensions along which parties/candidates are evaluated. It is important that they reflect 'our' (Catholic) values. It is important that they can be trusted to work for our advantage as opposed to their own. It is important that they are practical and able to deliver. It is no good to have good values but be unable to deliver on them. It is no good to be able to deliver, but not on the basis of good values. What counts is the best conjunction of these various dimensions.

This multidimensionality, combining principles and pragmatics, is equally clear in another entry written on the same day – the day before the election – where Bego sums up his final decision to vote for Prodi and his Ulivo party:

"I have decided to vote for Ulivo for different reasons:

- They do not focus on the elimination or reduction of taxes, but rather on creating the right levels taxation, which is high for the rich and low for the poor.*
- They want to restart the economy, reforming employment, paying attention to temporary work.*
- Concern for young people and schools, better than the reform by the right, that will cut school funding.*
- Immigration policy that does not regard an immigrant as a criminal who steals jobs from Italian workers, but as a potential resource for the country and a person who needs particular attention due to his or her unlucky situation.*
- Gives some rights and duties for couples that live together, both hetero- and homosexual, without putting gay and non-gay couples on the same level, and not allowing gay couples to have children. So this is consistent with Catholic beliefs.*

I also voted Ulivo to guarantee the stability of the left coalition, because this party should have the majority in the coalition. In this way I hope to avoid the fragmentation of the next government should they win."

Most of Bego's explanation is taken up with the issue of matching party policies and Catholic values, either implicitly or explicitly. Thus, he has earlier stressed that the Church is (or should) be associated with equality and social solidarity. Ulivo represents that in its economic, education and immigration policies. Equally, it shows compassion towards gay people without violating beliefs concerning the primacy of the family. But Bego's vote is also about ensuring that these values/policies are enacted. He chooses a party which can ensure a stable government that can deliver on its program.

Summary

Perhaps the clearest thing to emerge from these diaries is summed up in Dede's assertion that 'voting is now a hard struggle'. While both Dede and Bego root their decisions in their identities and in the prioritisation of collective values, this does not make life any easier for them. They cannot map identity onto the vote in any straightforward way. Their difficulties arise precisely out of the complexity of this mapping exercise. It is this that they deliberate over, and their deliberations occur on two levels.

To start with, they deliberate over which identities are relevant, over the key values/beliefs associated with those identities, and over the relationship between those values/beliefs and the politicians/parties they have to choose between. Dede more than Bego invokes different identities at different times, although Bego does occasionally talk of how policies will impact the country alongside his main focus on Catholicism. Both Dede and Bego talk of different values/beliefs associated with the same identity, notably varying at different times in the extent to which they invoke equality, compassion and family as Catholic beliefs. Most obviously, as already highlighted, they struggle over the way that party programs relate to these beliefs.

It is clear, then, that these young people don't simply or passively absorb the identity definitions and identity positions offered by politicians. They actively construe their own identities and hence the groups through which they relate to different parties and leaders – as Catholics, as Italians, as young people or whatever. However – and this takes us to the other area of deliberation – they also actively construe various different aspects of the way in which parties/leaders relate to any given group membership. We can discern three such aspects, which map on to the three dimensions identified by social identity models of leadership.

First, both diarists are concerned with whether politicians are part of the ingroup or else a group apart. To put it slightly differently, is a leader to be regarded as an exceptional instance of 'our' category or else an ordinary instance of an exceptional category? We see this, for instance, in Dede's comment: "*The big problem with Italian politicians is they never say what they want to do but just what others haven't done*". Here, all politicians of all parties are lumped together as a group which is not only outside the electorate but at odds with it. 'They' don't give us the information 'we' need. They all spend more time insulting the opposition than enlightening the voters. They all prefer to say what is expedient to what is true. In Bego's words: "*the most difficult thing I had to face was to know who was telling the truth*".

Second, both diarists are concerned with the question of whether, irrespective of their own group membership, politicians act in terms of 'our' group interest (however this is defined in the diary). That is, it is possible that the politician is ingroup but acts for their personal interest or equally possible that the politician is outgroup but still advances the ingroup interest. Sometimes this is exemplified in the discussion of values. Thus Bego does not

consider the left-wing Ulivo party or its leader Prodi to be Catholic, but his concern is whether its policies will advance or else compromise those things that he as a Catholic values: equality compassion and family in particular. Sometimes it is addressed in more generic terms, as when Bego observes that the campaign "*was like forgetting that politicians have the duty and the task of pursuing what is best for the Country.*" Sometimes, although it is more implied than stated explicitly in the cases we have just considered (for instance when Dede observes of the Prime Ministerial candidates that "*Finally they touched some problems that interest the electors*"), the diarists reflect on whether a politician (or politicians) put their own interests above or even against those of their ingroup.

Third, both diarists are concerned not simply with whether politicians act for their group, but whether they are capable of delivering for the group. Do they have the competence, the influence, the power to embed policies that promote the group interest? This is particularly obvious in Bego's diary when he plumps for Ulivo on the grounds that it is the best compromise between Catholic values and practical management skills, and when he again explains his decision on the basis of both value based policies and the ability to sustain a working government. But it is also there in Dede's desire for a coalition that can "*improve our situation.*" This requires both an orientation to the group interest and an ability to deliver results for the group – or rather, to use the language of the social identity model of leadership, to embed group interests and values in social reality.

It is important, however, to recall at this point that the two diaries we selected were not meant to be representative, but chosen precisely for their richness. They may point to the range of considerations that are invoked and to the fact that young voters *may* deliberate over these considerations. But they may well be the exception rather than the rule. In order to examine whether that is the case, we now turn to an analysis of all the diary forms and the extent to which each diarist addresses whether parties/leaders are 'one of us', 'act for us' and 'deliver for us'.

Content Analysis of all Diary Entries

Drawing on the thematic investigations above, we defined a series of general coding criteria and also a series of specific criteria for allocation of instances to our three analytic categories.

The general criteria were as follows:

- a. coding only referred to participants own deliberations, not their reports of those of others
- b. coding related to considerations of what party/leader to vote for, not whether to vote at all
- c. each form was coded for whether material falling into each of the analytic categories was present or not, not for how many instances were found.

The specific criteria were as follows:

- a. *are politicians ingroup or outgroup ('one of us')*?: this refers to instances where either politicians are referred to as a general category irrespective of specific party or ideology; where there is discussion of clear differences between the political category and the general population; or else where particular characteristics (often, but not always, negative, such as untrustworthiness or dishonesty) are attributed to politicians as a category.
- b. *do politicians act in the ingroup interest ('act for us')*?: this refers to instances where either there is discussion of the need for politicians to act in the group interest; where there is concern that they might not act for the group interest; or concern that they act for personal, party or other outgroup interest; or else where there

is consideration of whether policies/pronouncements are a reflection of ingroup values such that they promote or subvert what the group believes in.

- c. *do politicians deliver for the ingroup ('deliver for us')*?: this refers to instances where there is general reference to improving (or failing to improve or harming) the group position or else, more specifically, reference to embedding group values in the social world; where there is concern over whether the party/politician has practical abilities; or else where there is consideration of whether politicians have either the ability or the motivation to achieve practical outcomes.

Clearly, there is considerable potential for overlap between these categories. Thus, for instance, a statement of the form "politicians act in their own interests" addresses both categories (a) and (b): politicians are outgroup on the basis that they all fail to act for the group interest. Equally, statements of the form "this politician has improved our situation" addresses both categories (b) and (c): the person has acted for the ingroup and done so effectively. Where such cases of overlap occur in the diaries, we have proceeded in the following way. Where possible, and in order to avoid oversampling, we coded into only one category, using whichever category provided the focus of the statement (which was generally the higher order and more specific category; b over a, and c over b). For instance a statement like "politicians act in their own interests" would be coded as b, and "this politician has improved our situation" would be coded as c. Only in cases where a statement had two clearly separable clauses relating to the different categories would we double code. For instance "politicians are all the same and they all act in their own interests" we would code in both categories a and b. For the results of our analysis, see [Table 1](#).

As can be seen, 25 of the 28 respondents (89%) make mention of at least one of the three categories. What is more, these categories are mentioned on a total of 94 forms (an average of 3.4 mentions per participant).

Nine out of 28 participants (32%) mention the first category ('one of us') at least once in the whole diary, and, overall, there are mentions on 11 forms (an average of 0.4 mentions per participant). Twelve out of 28 participants (43%) mention the second category ('act for us') at least once in the whole diary, and, overall, there are mentions on 20 forms (an average of 0.7 mentions per participant). Twenty one out of 28 participants (75%) mention the third category ('deliver for us') at least once in the whole diary, and, overall, there are mentions on 63 forms (an average of 2.3 mentions per participant).

A Cochran's Q test shows that there is a significant difference in usage among the three categories, $Q(2) = 8.67$, $p = .013$. A pairwise comparison using a Bonferroni correction ($p = .017$) revealed that significantly more participants used the third category "deliver for us" than "one of us", $Q(1) = 8$, $p = .005$, and "act for us", $Q(1) = 6.23$, $p = .012$.

Table 1

Number of Forms on Which Each Participant Mentions the Three Aspects of the Relationship Between Party/Leader and Participant Group ('One of us', 'Act for us', 'Deliver for us')

Participants	'One of us'	'Act for us'	'Deliver for us'
University Group			
Alice		1	8
Zingara	1	1	4
Toki Toki		1	7
School Group			
Dede	2	1	3
Homer	2	3	7
Topo			2
Campanellino			4
Holly			
Guanciotte			
Silvietta	1		
L'Ale		1	
Ellex87			
Trillina		1	3
Pigruz			2
Biba			1
Tox			4
Mou	1		1
Angel			2
Elisa		4	4
Church Group			
Bego		3	3
Biribissi	1		1
Lord Byron			1
Giorgio Mastrota	1		
Napoleone		2	2
Dylan Portnoy	1	1	
Elefantino	1		1
Gabbo			2
Chiodo		1	1
TOTAL	11	20	63

Discussion

Summary of Findings

Perhaps the clearest thing to come out of our analysis is how thoughtful, deliberative and active these young voters were. Just as much as the candidates who sought to secure their vote, they were 'entrepreneurs of identity' – their own identity. From our thematic investigation, we see in detail how specific individuals construe their social identities and the various ways in which parties and their leaders relate to these identities – often using very different constructions of identity than those used by the parties and leaders themselves. As Dede puts it, this is a hard task. Not only does one have to define the key elements of one's identity (does being Catholic refer more to social equality or to the traditional family), one also has to decide how party policies impact on these elements and also whether one can trust what they say. There are multiple dimensions of uncertainty.

We also see how, over time, there is variation both in the nature of one's relevant identity and in the various dimensions by which politicians and their parties impact identity. Should one relate to the electoral process in terms of religious, generational, national, political or some other identity? Dede might be right that 'voting is now a hard struggle for us Christians' but it gets even harder when one layers on the additional complexity that one may be struggling as a Christian, a young person, an Italian, or a leftist at different terms and each of these changes the terms of the debate.

Moving on to the quantitative analysis, we see how the great majority of participants do indeed invoke the relationship between parties/leaders and social identities at least once in their diaries – indeed, on average they do so on between three and four of their diary forms. It might be argued that this is relatively rare in a diary that was kept for three weeks and where participants were asked to record all their conversations, all the electoral information they encountered and all the thoughts they had. However, it is worth noting that, on average, participants only completed roughly nine forms in total. Moreover, many of these forms were only descriptive and did not address their voting intentions (recall that we only coded instances where participants were addressing their own considerations regarding voting for a particular candidate), or when they did were often addressed to the validity and credibility of the information they received. It could be argued that such considerations imply a distrust of politicians and hence fit into our first analytic category – are parties/leaders seen as 'one of us'. However, as we have explained, we were conservative in our coding procedures and only included instances where categorical inclusion was unambiguous.

These points are illustrated by considering the three cases (out of 28) where participants were not coded as invoking any of our three analytic categories. All three (Holly, Guanciotte and Ellex77) focus principally on their lack of knowledge and their need to obtain more information. This is particularly clear in the case of Ellex77 who repeatedly reflects on the state of her knowledge: "I gained more knowledge about the topic"; "our knowledge is very limited and we need more information"; "we checked our knowledge about politics"; "I already knew the main things". Additionally, they do sometimes comment on whether they like or dislike a particular policy (Holly, for instance, expresses her worries about civil unions and that they might lead to gay adoption) but without explaining the grounds of their attitude.

Overall, what is striking in these cases is that they avoid mention of the factors determining how people vote rather than provide alternative criteria for determining the vote. What is particularly striking is the absence of criteria

based on individual (as opposed to collective) self-interest. Where people choose politicians and parties it is more to do with what they mean for 'us' as Catholics, Italians or whatever, than what they mean for 'me'. In all the 264 forms, there are just a couple of exceptions to this. In one Homer states "as far as I am concerned, I care about what involves me directly" and he goes on to refer to school reform, rising prices and the little money he has left at the end of the month. In another Zingara starts off by saying "I would like to be economically independent and this will be possible only if I find a stable and well paid job". But she then goes on to state: "I don't think this government has done anything for me and us, and being 19 I don't want to lose hope that something can change!". Even when individual interests are invoked, they are quickly tied to collective experiences, collective identities and collective interests. Zingara's plight is the plight of young people. The interest she invokes is one that is generational rather than personal.

All in all, to the extent that participants do deliberate over who to vote for, they do so primarily in terms of whether candidates and parties represent, act for and deliver for a social category with which they identify.

Limitations of the Study

Before discussing the implications of these findings for leadership, citizenship, and the relationship between them, it is first necessary to be clear about a number of qualifications to our analysis. This study involved young Italians who volunteered to take part in a diary study of a general election. Each of these specificities places some limits upon the conclusions we can draw.

First, consider the issue of youth. We explained the value of such a sample in terms of the way that it had been ignored in traditional citizenship studies and that, even when addressed, this had generally been in terms of passivity. There is therefore a particular value in showing the active and deliberative ways in which young people relate to leadership. If even they do so, one might argue, then anyone will. But one could invoke contrary logics. It could be, for instance, that precisely because they are new to the voting process and that they are having to choose between candidates for the first time, young people deliberate in ways that more seasoned (or jaded) voters might not.

But our sample wasn't just young. It was a very particular and unrepresentative set of young people. Notably, around a third of them (9 out of 28) were drawn from a Catholic group. This clearly relates to the nature of the identities which figured in the diaries (where religious and generational definitions appear very prominently). So we cannot easily generalise from the level of deliberation found in the diaries. Nor can we generalise from the types of identity that figure in the diaries. But neither of the considerations we have invoked about the sample can account for the fact that such deliberations as do occur centre on issues of identity and that they do so along the dimensions invoked by the social identity model of leadership.

Moving on, and leaving aside the issue of nationality (it could conceivably be that Italians deliberate on politics than any other nationality, and in different ways to any other nationality, but without invoking crude national stereotypes there are no particular reasons why this might be so), we come, second, to the issue of volunteering. Those who do agree to take part in such an onerous study (and, roughly, only a third of the populations that we appealed to did so) could reasonably be assumed to be those who are more interested in the topic of politics, who think about politics more than others and who deliberate more about politics than others. Again, we can only acknowledge the validity of such concerns, the need for more study, but at the same time insist that the fact that

participants were volunteers may relate to the degree of deliberation we uncovered, but is less obviously related to the fact that this deliberation centred on social identity concerns.

These concerns about volunteering are likely to be compounded by the third issue – our use of diaries for data collection. Diary methodology requires participants to reflect continuously on the topic of concern (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005; Thomson & Holland, 2005). It leads us to question what otherwise might be neglected or taken for granted, and may thereby further increase the level (if not the content) of deliberation. More specifically, though, it is equally important to interrogate the particular form of diary that people used. Who was the intended audience, and how did this affect what was written? Unlike conventional diaries, these were not written for the future self but rather for ourselves as psychological researchers. Once again this might be expected to lead participants to present themselves as rational deliberative subjects who are devoid of prejudice and who come to reasoned conclusions. Yet again, this serves as a possible influence that might affect the level of deliberation in the diaries.

Fourth and last, we come to the issue of the election. The relationship of voting to citizenship – particularly young peoples' citizenship – is a fraught issue. On the one hand, if one treats citizenship as a matter of rights (Marshall, 1965), then voting is an essential (albeit not the only) element in the making of a citizen. This is, of course, particularly relevant for young people, when the acquisition of voting rights could be seen as the moment where one acquires full citizenship. But as against that, various studies show that the vote is not particularly important to how young people view citizenship (Haste, 2004; Lister, 2008). Indeed Haste cites a range of research which shows that such samples have little interest in voting for or being party of political parties and are much more likely to endorse more direct forms of social participation such as collecting petitions or attending protests. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the way that young people orient to leaders of traditional political parties might be different to their orientation to leaders in other domains – though exactly how is hard to say. One could argue both that they would deliberate less (because they care less) about the party leaders and that they would deliberate more (because they have less information and less settled views). When it comes to what they deliberate over, it is even harder to make predictions.

Taking all four points together, then, a clear pattern of argument emerges. Most obviously, we need to exercise extreme caution in extrapolating from our results when it comes to the degree to which people actively deliberate over leaders and the positions they express. The fact that we have found critical scrutiny rather than uncritical acceptance – in other words, that we have uncovered active followership – may be a function of the method we used, the sample we selected, the way we chose people or the topic we asked them to consider. Clearly, as we have repeatedly stressed, ours is just an initial pinprick into a whole field of possibilities which remain to be explored. However it is important to stress that our principal interest is not so much in the *degree* of active followership as in its *possibility*. We readily acknowledge that followership can be passive and uncritical. What we have set out to dispute is the idea that such characteristics are inherent in the very nature of followership. For that, it is sufficient, as we have done, to provide an in-depth case study of active followers.

What is more, as well as being interested in the possibility of active followership, it should be clear that we have also been interested in the forms that such activity takes – and, more concretely, whether followers on the dimensions of a social identity analysis of leadership. While it is certainly possible that the fact this latter question has been answered in the affirmative comes down to the specificities of our study, there is no obvious reason why this should be so. As with any initial study, further confirmatory research is needed, but that does not undermine the significance of our findings. In sum, then, taking into account the various limitations of our study, we can still

state with some confidence that followership *can* be active and deliberative and that followers *do* deliberate over precisely the dimensions of identity through which leaders seek to influence them: are leaders one of 'us', do they act for 'us', and do they deliver for 'us'. They also deliberate over which identities are relevant and therefore who this 'us' actually is.

General Implications

What, then, are the broader implications of our findings? In terms of leadership, the diaries provide convergent evidence for a social identity analysis of leadership. In addition to qualitative studies which show how leaders, as 'entrepreneurs of identity' construct self categories as a means of mobilising support (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) and quantitative studies which show how manipulations of self categories affect support for leaders (Haslam et al., 2011), here we provide qualitative and quantitative evidence showing that ordinary people spontaneously orient to social identity issues when considering who to support. This serves to underline the point that leadership is – or at least has the potential to be – a genuine conversation about identity.

However, the findings extend as well as consolidate a social identity analysis. First, social identity approaches to leadership initially concentrated on the perceived prototypicality of leaders (are they 'one of us' and do they represent in themselves what makes 'us' distinctive from other groups – see, for instance, Hogg (2001). More recently, other aspects of the leader-group relationship have been addressed, such as acting for the group interest and achieving group goals ('acting for us' and 'delivering for us' in the terms we have used here – see Haslam et al., 2011; see also Steffens, Haslam, Reicher, et al., 2014). Our findings develop this further by suggesting that 'delivering for us' may be more important than other considerations in determining support for a leader. That is, people may not be so concerned with whether the leader is a prototypical ingroup member or indeed an ingroup member at all – many politicians are clearly seen as 'them', a separate category by their very leadership status. Nor are they so bothered with whether the leader is motivated by group concerns or not. What concerns them is whether the leader is able to deliver what the group values.

We need to hedge this conclusion in a couple of ways, however. On the one hand, as we argue above, being 'one of us' and 'acting for us' may be important precursors of 'delivering for us'. That is, sharing our identity and knowing what we value, along with aiming to deliver what we value, make it more likely that a leader can deliver what we value (even if they are not absolutely necessary). They are generally implicated in the act of delivering, but they are not sufficient on their own. So we are not suggesting that prototypicality and motivation are irrelevant, more that they are components of leadership rather than the proximate determinates of support.

On the other hand, it is possible that the relative under-emphasis on prototypicality and the perceived motivation of leaders may be a specific feature of contemporary politics rather than a general feature of leadership. As has been observed many times, trust in politicians has declined markedly in recent years (cf. Seldon, 2009). Politicians have come to be seen as part of a separate 'political class' who are all the same rather than as representatives of our various political and social groups. We don't expect them to be ingroup. We do expect them to pursue their own interests (money and power), so the most we can ask is that they advance our collective interests alongside advancing their own. The emphasis on 'delivering', then, may reflect a contemporary political cynicism. But, at the very least, it shows that prototypicality is not necessarily the core of leadership appeal, and that other aspects of the leader/group member relationship can take precedence.

Secondly, this work extends a social identity account of leadership – which has stressed that leaders actively construe identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) – by showing that group members too actively and creatively construe social identities. Our respondents did not simply 'receive' the constructions offered by politicians. They weigh what they hear, they appropriate and adapt what is put to them, they use it to their own ends. They discuss it and debate it with others. It is evident that the way that leaders relate to their intended audience is a two-way process. It is clear in practice, as well as in principle, that, from a social identity perspective on leadership, the agency of the two parties is not a zero-sum game. It is possible to have strong leaders and strong group members.

This then takes us back to the overarching topic of citizenship. We noted in the introduction that contemporary scholarship regards citizenship less as a matter of formal rights and responsibilities that are conferred on the individual and more as a matter of actively asserting rights and responsibilities. As we put it, citizenship denotes claims making. We also noted that this approach puts citizenship, as a 'bottom up' social process, in tension with leadership, seen as a 'top down' process.

We can now elaborate this tension a little further. As many scholars in many disciplines have noted over the years (e.g. Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Kostakopoulou, 2001; Shotter, 1993; Tilly, 1995) issues of citizenship and identity are intimately intertwined. On the one hand, identities are at the root of claims to entitlement and rights. On the other hand it is a fundamental entitlement to participate fully in society without having to compromise one's identity. Our approach to leadership places a similar emphasis on identity: effective leadership is rooted in a 'we' relationship between leaders and their audience, the act of leadership is therefore an act of social identity management (Haslam et al., 2011). This being the case, we can restate the tension between citizenship and leadership as a tension over who gets to define identity: who are 'we'; who is 'one of us' and can claim the rights associated with membership; what precisely does it mean to be 'one of us' and hence what are the actual rights and responsibilities associated with membership? Most fundamentally, does an emphasis of the role of leaders in defining identity detract from the ability of people, as citizens, to define their own identities?

The whole thrust of this paper can be encapsulated as an attempt to answer in the negative: no, leadership definitions of who we are and what we should do are not inherently at odds with citizens' definitions of these same questions, and hence their embrace or rejection of these leaders. This is certainly true in a liberal democratic system like contemporary Italy, but there is some evidence that even in the most unpropitious circumstances, people still appropriate, manipulate and contest the leaders words rather than simply absorb them. For instance, Eberle and Harris (2012) analyse letters written to Hitler and show how many of these seek to challenge and redraw the boundaries of who is a member of the national community and a good citizen. Even Jewish citizens and Jewish organisations (at least before they were destroyed) sought to appropriate racialised notions of Germanness and reconfigure them for their own ends (Kaplan, 2011). Sometimes this was a matter of claiming inclusion (based, say, on service in the First World War or 'mixed' descent). At other times, the notion of a 'volk', shorn of its supremacist trappings, was used to justify a Jewish homeland. Even at the extreme, then, leadership cannot entirely eliminate the agency of ordinary people.

In concluding, however, we want to take the discussion a little further. Once we acknowledge that leadership agency and citizenship agency are not *necessarily* mutually exclusive, we open up two crucial questions. First, what forms of leadership facilitate rather than constrain active citizenship – that is, the ability of people to define who they are, what their entitlements are, and hence to claim these entitlements? Second, how can citizens identify and challenge the forms of leadership which constrain them and which limit their ability to define identity

and to both identity and claim entitlements? Our hope is that a social identity approach to leadership not only puts these questions on the table but also provides the basis for addressing them. Our fear is that, if we fail to address these questions, we become less able to develop forms of active leadership that facilitate active citizenship.

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