Rojek, Chris. "Charisma Gulch." *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and Its Consequences*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. 58–77. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849661386.ch-004>>.

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4 Charisma Gulch

Celebrity newshounds and gossip columnists frequently trail the term ‘charisma’ to describe star power. The excitement and fervour generated at film premieres and pop concerts is described using terms like ‘charismatic glamour’ or ‘stellar events’. During elections and the post-election honeymoon, political leaders like Barack Obama and David Cameron are described as ‘bold’, ‘charismatic visionaries’ by the media bandwagon.

These phrases are applied willy-nilly in the media and fan networks, but seldom closely examined or explained. The purpose of this chapter is to consider if it is really valid to describe modern celebrities as charismatic. As we shall see, the term has quite a precise meaning as a quality of leadership in social transformation.

By definition, celebrities attract attention. Because of their self-evident force in stimulating media activity and drawing crowds, special powers are often attributed to them by fan clusters and the PR-Media hub. As figureheads, they can swing votes and win elections. In terms of sponsorship, they can make an event out of a non-event, hence their increasing prominence in charity fundraising activities. As fundraisers, the best of them have a reputation for being able to turn water into wine.

These qualities have not been lost on political strategists. Since the election of John Kennedy in the USA (1960), election campaigns and party rallies have adopted many of the mannerisms and razzmatazz of the Hollywood Oscar ceremonies. Ronald Reagan, Tony Blair, David Cameron and Barack Obama overtly used film-star devices and scripts to enhance their electoral appeal.

Doug Kellner has compared Barack Obama’s world tours to entertainment spectacles that are designed to produce a ‘rock star reception’ with thousands of people lining the streets to get a glimpse of him and his image dominating the media (Doug Kellner, 2009: 736).

Similarly, Jeff Alexander (2010a) has compared Obama’s presidential campaign and victory to a series of celebrity performances, using the same crowd-pleasing tactics and conveying the impression of monumentality.

Working on the principle of glamour by association, political strategists encourage endorsement from celebrities from film, television, popular music and sport to add lustre to electioneering. Stars humanize the fine print of election manifestos and bring the dry abstract principles of electioneering to life. Political parties, who depend upon the media to inform and, if possible, transfix the public,

are keenly aware of the importance of associational 'star factors' in fundraising and boosting votes. Political campaigns are organized on the principles of a Hollywood film set to produce a 'wow factor' to enlarge public enthusiasm. Wannabes can be transformed into serious contenders if they enlist the right big names to endorse them. Barack Obama's presidential campaign received support from a large group of film, rock and hip-hop stars, including Black Eyed Peas, John Legend, George Clooney, Jennifer Aniston, Will Smith, Jessica Biel and Jay-Z. His inauguration ball boasted a lineup including Bruce Springsteen, Bono, Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, Sheryl Crowe, Shakira, James Taylor, will.i.am and Stevie Wonder. The overwhelmingly affirmative intended message was 'the good from the entertainment world help the good in the rest of society'. For Manuel Castells this message was no accident:

Early on his campaign, he brought a number of people on board with experience in mobilizing the youth vote, such as Hans Reimert, of Rock the Vote, who coordinated Obama's youth voting initiative; and Chris Hughes, co-founder of Facebook with a significant pay cut to work full time for Obama's campaign, and is widely considered to be the main inspiration behind Obama's networking strategies. Obama's new media chief was Joe Rospars, who was writer and strategist for the Dean campaign before going on to found *Blue State Digital* (a multimedia firm that designs Web campaigns for Democratic candidates). (Manuel Castells, 2009: 394)

In short, Castells regards Obama's political campaign as astutely freeloading from resistant, oppositional and African-American youth cultures to increase receptivity to his campaign among the tranches of American popular culture that had seen themselves as disenfranchised under the years of George W. Bush.

In the United States, Alice Cooper, Clint Eastwood, Mel Gibson, M. C. Hammer, Sylvester Stallone, Magic Johnson, Mark McGwire and Sammy Hagar are well-publicized supporters of the Republican party; while Kevin Bacon, John Cusack, Sean Combs, Jackson Browne, Will Smith, Matt Damon, Kanye West and Nas are known Democrat supporters.

In the 2010 UK General Election campaign, all of the main parties ostentatiously paraded celebrity supporters. Labour endorsers included Ross Kemp, Bill Bailey, Prunella Scales, David Tennant, Eddie Izzard and Richard Wilson; Liberal Democrat star supporters included Colin Firth, Daniel Radcliffe, Chris Martin, Brian Eno and Floella Benjamin; and supporters of the Conservatives included Michael Caine, Carol Vorderman, Kirstie Allsopp, Frank Lampard, Darren Gough and William Roache.

For event planners and political-PR specialists the logic is simple: star charisma delivers publicity that may yield a rich harvest of votes. Glamour by association is characteristically recognized as an electoral asset. This carries over into wider

politics in the use of celebrities from the world of entertainment to support lobbyists, pressure groups and social movements. Stars from the world of entertainment are increasingly prominent in political event branding. *Prima facie*, the success of celebrity advocacy and celebrity diplomacy in fundraising and mobilizing political support reflects the inspirational qualities that are classically claimed by charismatic leaders and confirmed by their followers. But is it really legitimate to associate modern celebrity with the classical understanding of charisma?

To answer the question we must examine how the inspirational qualities of modern celebrity operate. This requires an assessment of the issues of celebrity advocacy and celebrity diplomacy. In contemporary society, achieved celebrities like George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom, Bono, Annie Lennox, Richard Branson, Al Gore, Michael Stipe and Bob Geldof have emerged as major players in expanding humanitarian consciousness and in fundraising. They are spokesmen for single-issue events like Tsunami Relief, Save Darfur and the Haiti Disaster Fund, and figureheads for a variety of voluntary sector human rights, welfare and environmental pressure groups. These modern celebrities act like 'big citizens', articulating and proselytizing issues on behalf of an implicitly grateful public. In doing this, they are often popularly regarded to be more sincere and relevant than officially elected representatives of the people. Before coming to consider this matter at greater length, a preliminary task must be accomplished, namely scrutiny of the meaning of the classical concept of charisma.

The meaning of charisma

Charisma refers to the heroic or extraordinary qualities, real or imagined, that an admired person is believed to possess. The term originated in early Christian thought where it was applied to refer to 'the gift of grace'. Mystical and metaphysical connotations abound. The charismatic individual is portrayed as a presence from another world or, less melodramatically, a different realm of custom and power; he or she has powers of healing and second sight; they can win wars, where others taste defeats; they have custody over inspirational gifts that produce major social changes in thought, emotions and spirit. Echoes of the religious connotation of divinely blessed, superhuman or supernatural power remain in the application of the term to modern celebrities by television presenters, journalists and laypeople.

In classical discussions, the concept of charisma is described as a revolutionary force because it enables the individual to exercise unreserved influence and inspire total devotion (Weber, 1948; Rieff, 2007).¹ Genuinely charismatic leadership is completely spellbinding and mould-breaking. No ethical rules apply. Charisma can mobilize behaviour that is attached to destructive as well as constructive ends. It can be a force for evil as well as good.

Genuine charisma irresistibly demands that believers follow the will of leaders regardless of personal considerations of well-being and safety. The leader is supported through thick and thin and against all odds. This is because the leader is understood to be divinely blessed and exalted with a unique command over powers of leadership. In terms of personality characteristics, charisma is an explosive force that demands ultimate passion, absolute faith and unqualified commitment from believers and total licence in the planning and execution of leadership. It is a magical force in human conduct. It brings delight and awe to some. To others it delivers fear and woe. It has a genuinely revolutionary quality. As such, it transforms the lives of those who fall under its spell.

This type of authority is usually contrasted with two other types of governance. Traditional authority is associated with ascribed celebrities and preliterate societies. It means a form of rule based upon custom and reverence for precedent. We follow the King or the Emperor because respect for dynasty is engrained in society, that is until a Cromwell or a Robespierre comes along to challenge the rule of custom and privilege.

The second form of rule is rational-legal authority. That is rule by democratically endorsed, transparent and accountable ways of going about things and achieving decisions. In rational-legal systems of rule we follow the dictates of a person by virtue of the position that the person occupies rather than the qualities of the individual.

These two types of rule differ from one another in many important respects. However, as systems of governance they share the characteristics of being stable, routine and dependable. Because of this, they are often associated with monotony, predictability and a general absence of passion. Compliance is achieved by the dead hand of custom, or the sheer administrative weight of the system, rather than the force of romantic, heroic power. The literature distinguishes between various types of charisma, of which the dominant forms are military, political, ethical, religious and artistic. In the classic use of the term, the most common examples of charismatic leaders are prophets and hero-warriors. The actions of the charismatic individual are seen as blessed and miraculous, whereas, for the ordinary man and woman, life is a chicken run.

Most discussions on charisma conclude that it is an unstable form of rule. Four reasons are usually adduced to support this proposition. Firstly, because it is volatile and passionate, it is also divisive. In modern democratic society that is organized around pluralism and respect for multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, charisma produces as many foes as followers.

Secondly, charisma requires the repetition of victories or triumphs to maintain its power. A charismatic warrior must consistently defeat his enemies in battle, or achieve miracles. The predictions of a prophet must be perpetually confirmed.

To say the least, in real life continuous success is elusive. While the causes of charisma are ultimately unfathomable, its credibility depends upon the repeated demonstration of personal fitness to rule. For this reason, the claim of charisma is particularly susceptible to the vagaries of history.

Thirdly, charismatic authority resists transfer to substitutes, nor can it be successfully passed on to others. In Ancient Rome the charisma of Augustus and Caesar proved to be a burden for their successors. Death does not extinguish the fame of a charismatic leader. But it is a hard act to follow. Charismatic rule aims to establish a footprint that changes the direction of human history in all walks of life. It is not restricted to this or that segment of society. The stamp of the charismatic rule is to personally transform the conditions in which we live.

Fourthly, in literate cultures the claim to achieve charismatic authority is often immediately associated with deception and subterfuge. This is reinforced by the media, who are flagrantly two-faced about charisma and celebrity. Although temperamentally sceptical of idolatry, they employ devices of communication that encourage idol-worship. The media collude with the interests of PR organizations to create larger-than-life public figures. But they also engage in celebrity muckraking and dirt-digging.

Celebrity and charisma today

For modern commentators, the attribution of the classical term charisma to modern forms of celebrity is a misnomer. Writing of the so-called 'charisma' attributed to popular entertainers in the arts, Wilson contends:

The manifestation of individual ecstasy and group frenzy at their performances perhaps outdo those at the reception of messianic leaders of the past. But such figures enjoy neither political significance nor enduring social regard. They make no specific claims for themselves: they are simply the recipients of extraordinary social acclaim, and the stimulators of extraordinary psychological responses. (Wilson, 1975: 124–5)

Modern celebrities may make the lives of some of their fans meaningful. Special powers are certainly attributed to them, and political candidates duly strive to make celebrity glamour rub off on their systems of organization and campaign messages. The talents and accomplishments of celebrities are widely celebrated as noteworthy. Semi-miraculous powers of entertainment and persuasion are claimed on their behalf. Compared with the monotony and routine of familiar life, they are celebrated as exalted. What is the glamour and meaning of your life compared with celebrity skyscrapers like Britney Spears, Beyoncé, Leonardo DiCaprio or Jay-Z?

Their deeds, for that matter, their entire lives are portrayed as more bold and eventful than the lives of ordinary men and women.

However, there are several reasons why Wilson's scepticism that modern celebrity is truly messianic is justified. Celebrity powers are not unfathomable or revolutionary. The principles for generating fame were laid down by Bernays, and the PR-Media hub are well versed in the choreography of celebrity. However, the powers or special qualities claimed on behalf of celebrities are typically understood to be strictly finite. The claims that modern celebrities possess divine powers and qualities of inspirational leadership do not survive scrutiny. The powers of Leonardo DiCaprio as a screen actor and Beyoncé as a pop star depend upon a team of cultural intermediaries to achieve impact factors and are not genuinely tenable beyond the entertainment sector. The fame of these celebrities may enable them to play the effective proxy role of 'big citizen', but they do not constitute a genuine, revolutionary force.

What the PR-Media hub calls 'charisma' today is really commodified magnetism. That is a formation of public influence based upon rational principles of public-relations image construction and brand management. It packs hustings rooms and is good box office, but it is not the manifestation of a genuinely revolutionary force.

In the arena of politics, recent leaders like Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Barack Obama and David Cameron were elected on the ticket of charismatic change-makers who offered a definitive and total break with the past. In each case, they enjoyed a honeymoon period before realpolitik transformed their fortunes and exposed the limitations of their leadership. Classical charisma means a convulsive, torrential force that sweeps through politics, religion, work, leisure, entertainment and all sectors of society. In contrast, celebrity magnetism is typically calculated, limited and compartmentalized.

The prospects that a big citizen may, in time, become a 'big brother' have fascinated writers and film-makers. The Orson Welles classic, *Citizen Kane* (1941), is dedicated to the proposition that celebrity humanitarianism can be turned into a vehicle of obtaining public office. In reality, the prospects are remote. Modern celebrities may support political parties and good causes. The phenomenon of celebrity diplomacy has certainly become more significant over the last half-century. Notwithstanding this, celebrities from the world of popular entertainment – figures who command the approval of the media and enthusiasm from the masses – seldom embrace the costs and responsibilities of political candidacy. As a general rule of modern celebrity culture, screen idols, pop music stars, literary giants and sports achievers do not make sound candidates as presidents or prime ministers.

Of course, there are exceptions. The Hollywood B-movie actor Ronald Reagan was indeed a two-term president; and Arnold Schwarzenegger grabbed one of Reagan's mantles when he was elected governor of California in 2003.

Schwarzenegger's campaign milked the tough guy image portrayed in his major film roles *Conan The Barbarian* (1982), *The Terminator* (1984) and *Total Recall* (1990) to launch a war against waste and crime; and Reagan certainly used his film-star career to convey the glamour and confidence of the silver screen in television broadcasts and the hustings of small-town America. However, in both cases it is stretching a point to maintain that either of these simply transferred prestige from the world of entertainment to the world of politics and achieved durable revolutionary transformations. Of course, the PR-Media hub presented them as beacons of transformative leadership, but actually they are in the shadow of money and power. It was in the interests of the establishment to portray Reagan and Schwarzenegger as figures of electricity, utterly transforming the landscape of politics, culture and psychology. Those who see a conspiracy of equals here between entertainment and political leaders, engage in a confederacy of dunces. Genuinely charismatic leaders remould business, the military and the media to make the world in their own image. In contrast, Reagan and Schwarzenegger are not masters, but slaves of the establishment. In both cases, their personalities and policies were openly and repeatedly described as flawed in the media and severe doubts were raised about their conduct of leadership, political judgement and personal probity.

In contrast, a genuinely charismatic leader who dismantles the opposition by the force of his personality and through his deeds stifles dissent.² It was the capacity of these two Republican leaders to dutifully articulate and protect the interests of business and the military that attracted them to the PR-Media hub. Commodified magnetism adopts the hyperbole of the PR-Media hub to create the public impression that figures like Reagan and Schwarzenegger are charismatic individuals. But hyperbole is not synonymous with a charismatic whirlwind. Genuine charismatic leadership overthrows established customs and beliefs in every aspect of life. Ronald Reagan's televisual sincerity in banging out the message that 'government is not the solution, government is the problem' slogan, above and beyond his capacity to draw on a reservoir of references from his movie past, made him a strictly finite electoral asset and leader for the Republican party. During his second term of office, when non-partisan sections of the media openly alleged that Reagan's behaviour betrayed symptoms of dementia, he was quickly rebranded as a liability. At his peak, he doubtless utilized training, and exploited public sympathies, from his film-star past. But it was the anti-government and pro-liberty message that caught the spirit of the times and made some sections of the media and numbers of the public regard him as inspirational. Moreover, these messages were not revolutionary in introducing new qualities into political culture and life politics. They were profoundly conservative and relied on the Bible and the old-time values of idealized small-town communities rather than the visionary inspiration of Christ or Mohammed.

Why is the misuse of the term so commonplace in celebrity culture today? The answer is that the press, public relations staff and laypeople describe charisma primarily as a personal endowment. Thus, Ronald Reagan is remembered by many as speaking the plain truth and Arnold Schwarzenegger is viewed as the epitome of daring and do.

The error here is that charisma does not refer to a quality of the individual, but to the relationship between believers and the *presentation* of a leader. Make no mistake, the presentation skills of the PR-Media hub are formidable. But they are not up to conjuring from thin air the miraculous, prophetic and divine qualities that are the requisites for being publicly anointed as a charismatic leader. The political literacy of the people may exasperate radical critics, but it is much greater than the general credulity of traditional societies. Preliterate societies were open to the claim of charisma because their populations were not educated in rationally accountable principles of argument and did not possess an independent media to scrutinize the words and deeds of idols. Salvation or supernatural intervention in human affairs was more readily trusted because deistic and metaphysical systems of belief were scarcely challenged. In modern Western society, which boasts freedom of the press, independent political parties and educates between 35 and 50 per cent of its population to university level, the incidence of blind faith among lay people is much lower. Today, from the start, the claim of charisma is therefore susceptible to being eroded as grandiose or overblown. It is more vulnerable to the condemnation of being finally seen as the product of excessive self-esteem, combined with the organized hyperbole of PR-Media ringmasters.

While the case that modern celebrity culture is rich in charismatic figures is weak, the media attribution of celebrity charisma is widespread. In contrast to Wilson (1975) this is not confined to the entertainment sphere. One of the striking and interesting facts about contemporary celebrity is that it is extending into non-government-based forms of problem-solving. The role of celebrities as figureheads for national and international charities has never been bigger. Celebrities take on the role of ambassadors for the poor, the starving and the powerless with a force and public presence that has never been rivaled. This represents an important extension of commodified magnetism. Celebrity Advocacy and Diplomacy are prominent features in the modern culture of fame and, as such, they require more detailed consideration.

Advocacy and diplomacy

Although advocacy and diplomacy are closely related, they are not synonymous. Advocacy refers to moulding public opinion and fund-awarding bodies to enhance

resource distribution for a good cause. Typical methods involving celebrities are celebrity donations, press meetings, field reports, public speaking and media campaigns.

Diplomacy refers to the total arts and practices of non-violent persuasion to achieve ends. Celebrities bring people together, build bridges over parties who are at loggerheads, expedite treaty formation and influence resource allocation.

Advocacy and diplomacy both rely heavily upon people skills, impression management and mass communications. The limitations of commodified magnetism are exposed in organized politics because real world decision-making requires more than media savviness and brand awareness. It demands attention to detail and immense concentrations of time in back-room organization to which most celebrities are not especially partial. These limitations do not apply to relations of advocacy or diplomacy because while the time input may be significant the primary undertaking is public performance. Celebrities provide the acceptable face of care for the cause. As figureheads and fundraisers, they carry over media skills and impression-management accomplishments that they have honed and perfected in the world of entertainment. Working a crowd in an entertainment context draws on the same skill set as persuading people to part with money for a good political or social cause.

There are other reasons why celebrities are well equipped to perform the roles of global advocates and diplomats. Psychologically speaking, narcissistic self-esteem does not simply mean regarding oneself as different from others; it is also associated with being viewed as blessed with the gifts of global empathy and nobility. As a psychological condition it is often manifest in acts of arrogance and entitlement. This superiority complex may go hand in hand with horribly egregious behaviour, but it is also linked to the genuine urge to do good on behalf of mankind.

Celebrity narcissism also goes along with connotations of lives packed with incident and emergency. The extremity of celebrity life parallels the dire situations that charities and relief agencies have to address. Hunger, natural catastrophe, homelessness and poverty are extreme social problems at the opposite end of the scale of the frontier existence in which many celebrities believe themselves to be living. Perhaps this is why so many stars are drawn to humanitarian, philanthropic work of debt relief and feeding the world. Because they see themselves living existences at the frontier of social life, they instinctively relate to those who do not have enough to feed themselves or afford medical care. But there is all the difference in the world between malnutrition in the Third World, watching your children die of malaria or diarrhea, and being stalked by the paparazzi and suffering for your art.

Woody Allen is only too well aware of the vanity of celebrities who complain that they suffer grievously for their art:

I've always felt that we give artists too much leeway, that we tolerate their cruelties and their narcissism and their temperament because they're artists, when in fact we shouldn't. This started in my life during the McCarthy era. We have a tendency to make allowances for artists because they're in some mystical realm. 'He's a terrible guy, but he can't create unless you give him leeway.' I don't believe we should excuse artists that way. I don't believe you should ever judge an artist's work by his life. I think you can be T. S. Eliot and be an anti-Semite and a great poet at the same time, but I don't think you should excuse artists in their life for being bad people just because they need to create, or claim they do. (Woody Allen in Berlin, 1996: 263–4)

Leaving aside the question of narcissism, celebrities have the time, money and access to influential social networks to activate a humanitarian sense of injustice and a commitment to make the world a better place. Achieved celebrities and celestoids often describe themselves as lucky. Their economic wealth and cultural prestige is the product of upward mobility. So it is no surprise that strong, emotional connections with 'the people' is characteristic of the achieved celebrity outlook. Giving back is a natural aspect of gratitude and a recognition of belonging (Belk, 2010). While there is a close correlation between narcissism and celebrity, it would be an error to suggest or infer that narcissism is at the root of all celebrity advocacy and diplomacy. In many cases it may be a substantial issue, but celebrities are perfectly capable of having and expressing motives of common or garden compassion and decency.

There are a variety of ways in which commodified glamour assists charity work. The simplest act is cash donations. Celebrities who dig into their own pockets to support the charity of their choice make a direct contribution to charity relief efforts. For example, in 2004 Elton John donated \$43 million to charities throughout the world; in 2006 Warren Buffett donated \$37 million to Bill Gates's charitable foundation; and in 2007 Oprah Winfrey donated \$58 million to the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy, Oprah's Angel Network and other groups. Bill Gates made the biggest celebrity charity donation to date in 2010, when he pledged \$10 billion to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop and distribute vaccines for children. Donations of this level make international headlines and raise public awareness.

Celanthropy

Celanthropy refers to the voluntary participation of celebrities in humanitarian fundraising, publicity awareness and charity building.³ Over the last twenty years

it has emerged as a high-profile adjunct of state, multilateral, corporate and private philanthropic aid programmes. In the case of global single issues such as fundraising to support relief efforts for natural disasters like floods, tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes and famines, star power is now regarded to be crucial. In 2010 Haiti Earthquake Disaster Relief Agencies publicized donations of \$3 million from Tiger Woods; \$1.5 million from Gisele Bündchen; \$1 million from Leonardo DiCaprio; \$1 million from Oprah Winfrey; \$1 million from Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie and \$1 million from George Clooney. These donations are significant, but the real value of celanthropy is the multiplier effect among the public. This takes the form of encouraging the public to make cash donations and participate in event resourcing. The *Haiti Now* (2010) celebrity benefit concert organized by George Clooney and Wyclef Jean, which featured performances from U2, Alicia Keys and Bruce Springsteen, raised \$57 million for organizations like Oxfam America, the Red Cross and UNICEF working to help victims of the January 2010 earthquake. Longer-established charities also seek to achieve this effect by enlisting celebrities as figureheads for their activities.

For example, after Christopher Reeve was paralysed in a horse-riding accident in 1995, he became publicly involved with the American Paralysis Association. His participation and endorsement is widely cited to have contributed to doubling the organization's revenue within three years.

The Elton John Aids Foundation (1992) has raised over \$55 million in 55 countries for programmes of HIV/AIDS education, the elimination of discrimination and prejudice and care services for people living with the disease. Elton John's annual 'White Tie and Tiara' ball and post-Grammy and Oscar parties are widely publicized vehicles of fundraising for the organization.

Mary Tyler Moore significantly raised the profile of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in the USA. Jerry Lewis has become a celebrity legend by hosting the annual telephone fundraising event for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Greenpeace has received support from Bono, Bryan Adams, Massive Attack, Michael Stipe and Pink. Annie Lennox set up the 'Sing' charity to promote awareness of and raise funds for the prevention of HIV and Aids in South Africa, which has one of the highest rates of HIV in the world. The 'Make Poverty History' campaign was founded by the celebrity screenwriter Richard Curtis, and supported by Alan Rickman, Al Pacino, Bill Nighy, Brad Pitt, Claudia Schiffer, Eddie Izzard, Ewan McGregor, George Clooney, Hugh Grant, Jude Law, Liam Neeson, Mike Myers and Scarlett Johansson. The Look to the Stars celebrity/charity website (www.looktothestars.org) provides an exhaustive list of global links between charities and stars.

In principle, the PR-Media hub supports celanthropy. It builds the celebrity brand by demonstrating that the star has a good heart, a commitment to activism and a social conscience. Celebrity donations and charity work have a halo effect, enhancing the prestige of the star as a responsible, caring citizen.

Forbes business magazine compiles an annual list of the top 100 Power celebrities. The ranking is based upon income, TV/radio impact factors, press ranks, Web ranks and social ranks. The 2010 top ten are listed below:

	Pay (\$mil)	Money Rank	TV/Radio Rank	Press Rank	Web Rank	Social Rank
1 Lady Gaga	90	8	3	2	1	1
2 Oprah Winfrey	290	1	1	7	13	13
3 Justin Bieber	53	4	4	8	2	3
4 U2	195	59	59	10	16	17
5 Elton John	100	18	18	19	28	54
6 Tiger Woods	75	6	6	5	40	38
7 Taylor Swift	45	14	14	45	6	6
8 Bon Jovi	125	63	63	49	44	12
9 Simon Cowell	90	22	22	17	62	74
10 LeBron James	48	29	2	6	27	20

Figure 2 Forbes Celebrity Power Top 10 (2011)

Source: <http://www.forbes.com/wealth/celebrities> [16.05.11]

Celanthropy before Live Aid

Most laypeople would date the rise of celanthropy with the *Live Aid* (1985) event, and Bob Geldof. In fact the history is longer. At this point, celanthropy shifted gear from campaigning to active planning and management. Since Live Aid was invented, organized and managed by stars it was qualitatively different from previous types of celebrity involvement in humanitarian work that generally had taken the form of endorsing or being a patron of non-government charity organizations.

Leaving aside interventions of stars between the 1920s and 1950s, which often went largely unrecorded by the media, the first United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) goodwill ambassador was Danny Kaye in 1954. Sir Peter Ustinov was also a prominent international charity worker who, from the 1950s, devoted considerable time and resources to international relief.

However, most authorities maintain that the template for the patron form of celanthropy was Audrey Hepburn in her role as goodwill ambassador for UNICEF (Cooper, 2008). Indeed her field missions in the 1980s and early 1990s in Ethiopia, Sudan, Vietnam and Somalia went beyond passive patronage. In effect, it set the bar for celebrity activism. She directly involved herself in administering care and relief to the distressed, sought out work leaders, forged connections between them, attended appropriate government subcommittee meetings on public-funding questions and the administration of relief, and participated tirelessly in public speaking. Other celebrities fell into the trap of allowing the media to insinuate that they were champagne humanitarians doing good from the trappings of privilege and luxury. Hepburn was careful to avoid this. She eschewed a grandiose attitude in favour of demonstrating empathy for the suffering and a determination to coax the affluent societies to find solutions. By acting as an ordinary citizen, concerned with problems of global powerlessness and compassionate about human suffering, Hepburn used her star status to make connections both with the disadvantaged and powerful elites in government, business and the military. She presented herself as a big citizen in the sense that she adapted her fame and publicity skills to the causes of the poor, the starving, the uneducated and the needy. She portrayed herself as being of the people, rather than above them. For her, fame was the servant of practical problem-solving on behalf of those who would otherwise be invisible or silent.

Live Aid (1985) provided the spur to the growth of campaigning celanthropy. Some of the most prominent celanthropists are explicitly critical of passive forms of celebrity patronage and cultivate humanitarian activism. For example, Bono, Bob Geldof, Richard Gere, George Clooney, Madonna, Johnny Depp, Mia Farrow, Naomi Watts, Shakira and Angelina Jolie are involved in managing and strategy formation rather than mere publicity exercises and fundraising. An important bifurcation in celebrity aid leadership roles has developed between celebrities who adopt an in-your-face approach and a more calculating, brokering role. Authorities cite Bob Geldof as the epitome of the first approach and Bono as the leading representative of the second (Cooper, 2008). However, in both cases the focus is upon using the commodified magnetism of stardom to loosen the brain blindfolds around the government and the public, that limit awareness of the realities of international want, suffering and misery.

The Balance Sheet of Celanthropy

In general, commentators characteristically assert a positive relationship between celanthropy and relief (Cooper, 2008). The PR-Media hub favours philanthropy as a positive characteristic of stardom. Founding a private charity foundation, making well-publicized cash donations, visiting the world's trouble spots and giving aid are good PR. Tiger Woods's donation of \$3 million to Haiti disaster relief in 2010 was laudable. That it occurred in the midst of a maelstrom of public disapproval and sponsorship rumbles about his declared marital infidelities must also be noted and weighed.

Celanthropy generates what might be termed philanthropic capital. Philanthropic capital has the virtue of raising funds for the dispossessed. By a happy but not altogether accidental parallel it also builds the celebrity brand. While public association with an established charity can deliver this dividend, the soundest strategy is creating a celebrity foundation. In doing so, celebrities can exercise maximum control over the activities of the charity and regulate the star brand. Celebrity foundations are tax-efficient ways of using income to build fame.

In the United States, as Burke and Barrett (2010) report, donations are tax deductible. A donation of \$1 million is eligible for a 100 per cent rate of tax deduction. Legally, foundations are obliged to distribute no more than 5 per cent of their assets to charity work every year. This relatively low percentage means that the accumulation of cash reserves can be significant. They may be used as a handy nest egg if the celebrity needs to burnish his or her public image in the future, when public disquiet about marital infidelities, grandstanding, prima donna behaviour, violence, alcohol dependencies and the like, may rock the celebrity boat.

Although the PR-Media hub sees a booster effect in philanthropic capital, unforeseen events can upset the appletart. There are four sets of negative loop issues that commonly affect celanthropic charities: bureaucratic inefficiency; association with controversial charities; corruption and embezzlement; and accusations of networking being a more important motive in celebrity activism than giving and problem-solving. Each of these issues constitutes serious threats to the reputation of celebrity figureheads or Foundation owners.

1. Bureaucratic inefficiency

Because celebrity foundations and charity relationships are not one-man bands, they carry risks of falling foul of charges of excessive administration costs, second-rate service and bureaucratic inefficiency. In essence, celebrities cede proxy control of the brand to workers, often voluntary staff, who have no background in celebrity culture. As a result, philanthropic capital may be significantly eroded by rumour and

bad press reports that celebrity foundations are the charities with which celebrities associate are imprudent or profligate.

Celebrity charity foundations that do not cover administration costs or that reveal a dramatic imbalance between costs and donations can damage the public image of stars. For example, tax returns for 2006 indicated that Tyra Banks's TZONE Foundation paid \$35,000 in salaries, while distributing a paltry \$32,000 in grants.

Similarly, in the same year the Justin Timberlake Foundation spent \$146,000 on operating costs (including \$10,000 on travel and loosely defined 'miscellaneous services'). It distributed income of \$32,500, of which \$30,000 went to the Jane Goodall Institute. An ineffective charity foundation can build the stereotype of dud celebrity in the public mind. Failure in the world of celanthropy may carry over into a waning of star power and economic value.

Research by Burke and Barrett (2010) into the tax returns of 175 non-profit organizations with strong celebrity links revealed a mixed picture. If the foundation is primarily run by the celebrity so that fundraising costs are negligible and if it operates no programmes and simply makes donations to other charities, then overheads can be insignificant. For example, David Letterman's American Foundation for Courtesy and Grooming distributed \$1.2 million to a wide range of charities and reported an overhead expense of just \$25. Similarly, Alec Baldwin's foundation gave away \$555,000 with overheads of only \$215; and Steve Martin's foundation disbursed \$399,000 with reported overhead costs of \$329.

At the other end of the spectrum, foundations associated with Jane Fonda, Hugh Hefner, Larry King, Phil McGraw and Michael Moore reported overhead costs in excess of 20 per cent of grant income received. In 2009 Rosie O'Donnell's For All Kids Foundation distributed \$2.9 million in grants, but carried an overhead cost of \$1.9 million, i.e. 64 cents in cost for every dollar of grants.

Even long-established and well-known charities sometimes have profit and loss accounts that make little financial sense. For example, Burke and Barrett (2010) refer to the annual Bob Hope Gold Classic tournament in California. On average it generates \$1.6 million for charities, but spends nearly five times that sum in expenses. In such circumstances, the media and public may understandably regard celebrities as engaging in grandstanding and glad-handing activity rather than genuine problem-solving. This can taint the public image of the star.

A charity that pays high salaries to executives and is too lax in monitoring overheads plays with fire. Even if celebrities play no role in the day-to-day issues of administration and management, they are guilty by association. The bureaucratic inefficiency of foundations and charities tarnish the public image of the star. It raises sensitive questions about the commitment, prudence and probity of the star, which can undo the positive PR impact factor that charity work brings to celebrity.

One way of tackling the issue is to expand the circle of cultural intermediaries around the celebrity to include advisers and regulators on charity involvement. But this has the effect of introducing another layer of bureaucracy between the celebrity and the public. Ultimately, it runs the hazard of building an image in the public mind of a cosseted celebrity who is out of touch with reality and basks in a reflecting pool of self-approval. This undermines the philanthropic capital of the celebrity and may create a debate among business leaders and the public about whether the celebrity merits the high prestige attributed to him or her.

2. Controversial charities

The identification of celebrities with some charitable voluntary organizations and pressure groups that are perceived by some sections of the media and public as controversial, may garner bad publicity. This is especially true if the organizations are involved in trading or proselytizing activities, services and commodities that are acknowledged to be potentially harmful to the public.

From 1998, until he resigned on grounds of ill health in 2003, Charlton Heston served in the role of President and chief spokesman for the National Rifle Association (NRA) in America. His appeal to the NRA lay in the Hollywood PR-Media portrayal of him and the resultant public perception in film roles like *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Ben-Hur* (1959) and *El Cid* (1961) as a hero of quasi-biblical proportions. Heston was employed to bring glamour and rectitude to a gun culture that supported hunting and the conviviality of the rifle range as well as unintentionally underwriting American gun crime by making access to weapons so easy. A cinema star of Heston's magnitude was judged by the NRA to make gun ownership acceptable to the general public. He was an accomplished performer in this task, riding the bad publicity of the Columbine massacre and other spree killings with such nonchalant aplomb that he provoked censure from George Clooney. Heston was attacked by Clooney for being out of touch with the anxieties of the majority of ordinary people, being indifferent to polarized opinions about gun ownership and irresponsible in lending his name to the gun lobby.

The tobacco industry has a long history of using movie stars to promote its products. The link between tobacco and premature mortality was conclusively established by the US Surgeon General's Report (1964). However, the risks of tobacco use were widely understood before then. Despite this, research has shown that the tobacco companies invested millions of dollars in Hollywood to achieve testimonials in favour of smoking from stars and product placement in movies. From the late 1930s to the late 1940s, two-thirds of the top box office stars participated in cigarette endorsement campaigns. In the 1950s, John Wayne was a poster boy for Camel cigarettes claiming that the brand offers a product that is milder than the competition and that smoking provides calm and is 'easy on the voice'.

Among others, actors Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Betty Grable and Al Jolson endorsed brands like Lucky Strike, Old Gold, Chesterfield and Camel (Lum *et al.*, 2008). For Wayne, who died of cancer in 1979, the close association with Camel cigarettes contributed to the public image of a naïve, irresponsible star who was obtuse about healthy lifestyle issues and gung-ho about personal liberty.

Between the early 1960s and early 1980s greater public knowledge of the health risks, partly achieved by the anti-smoking lobby, resulted in the decline of endorsements and product placement. However, new research implies that after the early 80s, marketing campaigns by Philip Morris, American Tobacco and the University of California digital collection of tobacco industry revived product placement practices to build strong positive images of smoking based around celebrity use of brands in film and television. R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company hired the public relations firm Rogers & Cowan to develop a 'relationship' of 'positive exposure' between the brand and the motion picture industry. Rogers & Cowan claim that they achieved positive product placement in mainstream movies like *The Jazz Singer* (1980) with Neil Diamond, *Back Roads* (1981) with Sally Field, *Cannonball Run* (1981) with Burt Reynolds, *Pennies from Heaven* (1981) with Steve Martin, and *Blowout* (1981) with John Travolta. They also targeted television shows like *The Tonight Show*, *The Merv Griffin Show* and *The Mike Douglas Show*. The methods they used included providing stars with free supplies of the brand (Maureen O'Sullivan, Rex Reed, Liv Ullman, Shelley Winters and Jerry Lewis are listed as recipients); encouraging stars to light up on talk shows; and placing positive stories of celebrity tobacco use in the press (Mekemson and Glantz, 2002).

For corporations, the value of using stars to endorse high-risk commodities is immense. The right celebrity gives the Midas touch to gun, tobacco and alcohol brands. To have Charlton Heston endorse responsible gun use is tantamount to persuading Moses to speak for your product.

The difficulty is that public knowledge of the risks involved in using potentially harmful products is much greater today. This is a disincentive for stars to participate in direct celebrity product endorsements for risky products. For A-list stars to provide testimonies for alcohol, guns or tobacco would be to enter a career minefield in which short-term gains would almost certainly be wiped out by a contraction in box office appeal.

3. Corruption and embezzlement

A positive public image of the relationship between celebrities and charities depends upon probity in business transactions. Public trust in a charity and a supporting celebrity will be impaired if voluntary donations are subject to charges of financial

irregularity or imprudent management. The formation of Band Aid and the 1985 Live Aid global concert marked a new era in celebrity fundraising. Celebrity advocacy on behalf of the excluded became direct and highly publicized. Nothing provided a bigger boost to the twinning of fame with caring in the public mind than star power. Bob Geldof emerged as the leading celebrity conscience and advocate for Africa. In 2005 he organized the Live 8 event, which committed to an ambitious programme of cancelling Third World debt, promoting 'fair trade' and meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals for minimum conditions of life. Geldof fronted Tony Blair's Commission for Africa and, with Bono, participated in the G8 Gleneagles Summit (2005) on world poverty. More than any other celebrity, he symbolized the 'can do' approach in celebrity fundraising and aid programmes. Justifiably, his demands for the affluent world to donate and get involved with the plight of the Third World have been widely applauded and supported.

Yet the era of celebrity fundraising for the Third World has also generated allegations about fraud, the misallocation of funds, and the exclusion of the Third World from decisions about fund distribution. Because of their high profile, the Live Aid and Live 8 events have been given concentrated media scrutiny. In 2010, the BBC reported that 95 per cent of the millions of dollars raised by Band Aid in 1985 were appropriated by Ethiopian rebels to buy arms. The basis of the allegations were interviews with two former senior commanders with the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) who claimed the money was used in the fight to overthrow the Ethiopian government.

The reports provoked a furious reaction from Bob Geldof. While he conceded that some money from Live Aid might have found its way into the hands of rebels, he rejected the figure of 95 per cent, insisted that money laundering had been miniscule, and wrathfully condemned the BBC for gross misreporting.

While the BBC subsequently retracted the allegations, it seems implausible to believe that Live Aid control over funds was watertight. John James, Band Aid's own field director in Ethiopia, is reported to have claimed that between 10 and 20 per cent of the funds were appropriated by rebels and some of the money was used to purchase arms (Gilligan, 2010).

Suzanne Franks (2010) is more scathing. She maintains that relief funds in Ethiopia were monopolized by the Communist government led by the tyrannical Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. The government diverted funds to a variety of military purposes designed to bolster the regime rather than finance relief. These included luring conscripts to the army and bankrolling a so-called 'villagization' programme designed to assist enforced population resettlement. According to Franks (2010: 55) the military appropriation of Live Aid funds prolonged the war between Mariam's forces and the counterinsurgents led by the Tigrayan People's

Liberation Front (TPLF). Of course, this was contrary to the intentions of Band Aid and the millions who supported them. Yet it also runs counter to Geldof's attempt to whitewash the organization.

The dispute exposed latent friction between professional aid workers in Africa and Geldof. This reflects wider tensions between the voluntary aid sector and celebrity suitors. Live Aid was criticized by professionals in the sector for misunderstanding relief needs in Africa, by putting supplying food and medical supplies at the top of the agenda. According to many professionals, the real focus should be upon education and transparent government. By implication, corrupt government in Africa is held to misappropriate funds for its own ends.

Professional aid workers are privately critical of celebrity oversimplification of aid issues. They have expressed concerns that celebrity suitors drive relief agendas on the basis of limited and partial knowledge of Third World problems. Celebrity attribution of what is needed in Africa, and other developing countries, is often a response to highly publicized media reports about famine and disease. While these issues are urgent and must be addressed, focusing narrowly and emotionally upon them obscures issues of political culture and economic infrastructure. These issues are, so to speak, beneath the surface of famine and disease yet, in reality, they are the root cause of the problems (Theroux, 2006).

In effect, celebrity suitors are impugned for unwittingly propagating a new type of colonialism. It derives from Western op-ed pieces, sound bites and TV documentaries, rather than prolonged fieldwork and sustained analysis of Third World political economy. Celebrity 'can do' attitudes have a proven track record in creating publicity and generating funds. But aid professionals raise thorny questions about the proper use of celebrity-propelled publicity and the most efficient distribution of star-induced funds.

It would be wrong to imply that all criticism about the era of celebrity fundraising is concentrated in the Live Aid and Live 8 projects. In 2001, War Child UK, which raises money for young victims of war around the world, was accused by the media of financial mismanagement. Specifically, following investigations by the *Guardian* and *Channel 4 News*, the charity was accused of accepting bribes and reckless spending on overheads. The bad publicity resulted in several celebrity patrons, notably Luciano Pavarotti, David Bowie, Tom Stoppard and Juliet Stevenson, withdrawing patronage and support.

We have already referred to the controversy over the mismanagement of Madonna's (2011) project to build an academy for underprivileged girls in Malawi. There are other examples to which one might refer, but in a book of this type there is no need to add to the list because the point has been made. Celebrity involvement in Third World Charity relief is laudable. However, it exposes celebrities

to the charges of grandstanding, naivety and viewing African and other Third World problems through a TV screen, rather than dedicated hands-on involvement.

4. Networking overshadows problem-solving

Private charity donations are significant. In 2006 more than 65 per cent of US households with annual incomes of less than \$100,000 made charitable donations (Ottinger, 2008). Most of these took the form of 'chequebook philanthropy'. While these donations reflect a genuine humanitarian impulse, they are also about networking and social positioning. Cash-rich celebrities may exploit celanthropy as a way of boosting their own careers. Donating cash and time to high-profile charities boosts star power because it makes celebrity humanitarianism transparently visible (Street, 2002). But chequebook celanthropy can do little to solve problems of inequality and relief unless the accumulation and distribution of funds is independently audited. If celebrities are seen as wearing their hearts on their sleeves and lecturing the public on humanitarian causes without ensuring that fundraising produces genuine relief they are likely to become victims of what we now colloquially call 'tall poppy syndrome'. That is certain sections of the media and the public will seek to cut them down on the grounds of being all mouth and no trousers.

These enumerated risks are not, in themselves, a basis for deterring celebrities from advocacy, diplomacy and celanthropy. Nor do they provide the pretext for dismissing celanthropy as intrinsically hypocritical or ineffectual. Prudent exposure management arrangements can pre-empt many of the problems, albeit at the cost of adding more rungs to the ladder between the celebrity, the public and the targets of relief. Even so, the discussion will have served its purpose if it alerts readers to the point that there is a trade-off between the good publicity attached to celebrity advocacy and diplomacy and public literacy about the limitations of the commodified magnetism of celebrity.

It goes without saying that this trade-off would not be an issue in cases where genuine charisma is manifest. The charismatic leader is beyond criticism. But today's celebrities are not genuinely charismatic. Although superstar celanthropists appear to have the power to move from the entertainment sector to wider forms of activism, they do not possess the revolutionary power to transform social, economic and cultural conditions. Hobnobbing with world political leaders and engaging in fieldwork in zones of distress is not the same as changing the world. The glamour and star power of superstar celanthropists is limited by competing career commitments and is subject to media scrutiny and public evaluation. Therefore, the application of charisma to the activities of modern celebrities is indeed a misnomer. Ours is an age of commodified magnetism, not charismatic rule.