Celebrities & Celebrity Culture: Role Models for High-Risk Behaviour or Sources of Credibility?

Dr Yvette Morey
Professor Lynne Eagle
Dr Gillian Kemp
Simon Jones
Dr Julia Verne
Celebrity participates in our lives as an ever-present current of narratives, discourses & images (Holmes, 2005: 22)
Representations & Role Models

Media images & representations:
• Substantive work on media reps  
  → ‘media images’, ‘stereotypes’, ‘ideals’
• Quantitative, causal relationships but:
  – how are images consumed, meaningful?
  – How do they translate into practice
  – Social networks & friendships

Role Models:
• Commonplace but “unclear ... in a psychological sense how ‘role modelling’ might actually work” (Gauntlett, 2008)
  – How do role models become meaningful to people?
  – Social or Individual function?
  – One or more role models depending on contexts/behaviours (tensions?)
Contemporary celebrity culture

- Historic, current configuration in 80s (Cashmore, 2006)
- Dominates media content across formats (tabloidization of news)
- Becoming/being a celebrity – accelerated, visible process
- Reality TV (X Factor, Britain’s Got Talent, Big Brother)
- Extraordinary Ordinariness, ‘willabees’
- Taylor Herring: top 3 career aspirations
- Not achievable by all, except through:
  - **Consumption**: consuming, living, behaving like a celebrity
  - **Self-promotion**: technology enables us to construct ourselves as media
• Content & narrative analysis
  – heat, Closer, OK!, New!
  – Highest ABC circulation figures for 18 – 24yr olds (most likely to participate in high-risk behaviours)
  – Examine contexts & narratives about celebrity (textual & visual)

• Readership survey – how is celeb content consumed in magazines?
• Interviews & focus groups – how celebrity/ies are meaningful to readers?
Initial findings

• Recycling of key, dominant narratives/stories:
  – Appearance (transformation: weight, cosmetic surgery, addiction)
  – Relationships (marriage/divorce etc.)
  – Pregnancy (attempts/miscarriage/adoption)
  – Mental/health breakdowns (mad-bad to recovering-good)
→ Katie Price, Kerry Katona, Cheryl Cole, Charlotte Church & Victoria Beckham – ongoing process of managing, repudiating, creating scandals that afford media attention

• Celebrities routinely shown engaging in high-risk behaviours, simultaneously depicted as shameful & aspirational

• Alongside ‘advertorial’ content – weight-loss, tanning, cosmetic, leisure, fitness, spiritual products
STARS ON THE

HEIDI: ‘I’m in so much pain’

Heidi Montag’s friends fear she’s heading for a meltdown as she battles post-surgery pain and mental strife.

Stylist and PR guru Niels van Deuren, who has been helping Heidi with her post-surgery transition, fears the model is on the verge of total breakdown. ‘She’s in so much pain and she’s losing weight and I think she’s on the verge of a mental disaster,’ he said.

“She’s palsied and everything hurts and all the surgery is just too much. A lot of people are concerned that she’s not taking it well and she is definitely struggling,” he added.

In need of a break, Niels is sending Heidi on a luxury retreat to Paris so that she can recover away from the pressures of reality TV and the public eye.

“Paris is the perfect place for her to get away from everything and sort things out,” he said.

EMMA CROSBY:

‘Early starts are hard, bring on the Botox!’

GMBT’s Emma Crosby reveals why she’s embarked on a new fitness regime to turn back the clock.

Emma Crosby is desperate to turn back the clock. The presenter, who is just 39, is keen to look younger and fitter and has already embarked on a strict new fitness regime.

“I’ve been working out three times a week and I’m doing a lot of squatting and lifting weights,” she said.

“I’m really enjoying it and it’s helping me feel a lot better. I think I’m looking younger too.”

But Emma isn’t just focusing on her looks. She’s also been working on her mental health and has been doing a lot of yoga and meditation.

“I really enjoy it and it’s helping me feel more relaxed,” she said.

“I’m getting into a new routine and I’m feeling a lot better.”
‘Charli’s smoking 30 fags a day to stay skinny,’ say pals

Friends and family fear Charlotte Church is taking her weight loss too far by banning treats and smoking heavily.

She recently supported a cause which is her latest PR stunt as a solo artist, but Charlotte Church appears to be hitting a new low when she supports her next PR stunt. She told lookalike this is the secret to her weight loss, revealing that she fasts and smokes up to 30 fags a day.

A source told Closer: “Charlotte is smoking as many cigarettes as she can fit her slimline figure." She’s always populating for a cigarette during filming and just gets away with it. She’s hardly ever been seen without a cigarette in her hand, but she’s hardly weighed herself on the scale. She just doesn’t seem to mind. She’s the best thing she can do to stay slim.”

Charlotte has been linked to a whole host of men, and is feeling better than ever. It’s highly unlikely she has a secret relationship with anyone, but she’s been spending a lot of time with her mother and her boyfriend, who is known to be a smoker. She’s also been seen out with a group of friends, but it’s unclear if they’re all part of the same circle. She’s been following a strict diet and exercise routine, and is said to be feeling great.

The TV presenter told Closer how she keeps her weight under control and how leaving GMTV will be heartbreaking.

She said: “I’m so pleased with my dramatic weight loss. It’s not about being skinny, but about feeling good. It’s all about eating healthy and exercising regularly. I’ve been doing it for a few years now and it’s really paying off. I feel better than ever.”

The source added: “She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying off. She’s been doing it for a while now and it’s paying o
Blitz your body like Coleen!

Get in shape like Coleen on our 1,200-calorie plan. Like her diet, it’s low in starchy carbs and added sugar—you could lose a stone in six weeks!

**BREAKFASTS**

- **Lunches**
  - 350 CALORIES
  - Fruit salad: 1 slice melon, 1 grapefruit, 1 strawberry, and 1 banana with a few yogurt and 2x10g nuts.
  - 2a: A fried breakfast: hash browns, 2 eggs, and 10g of avocado.
  - 2a: Grilled eggs with 1 slice of toast and 1 smoothie.
  - Continental breakfast: toast, jam, and 1 boiled egg.
  - 10g of spinach with 10g of salmon and 2 slices of wholemeal bread.

**Lunches**

- 2 smoothies with 1 banana and 1 smoothie.
- 10g of chia seeds with 10g of avocado.
- 10g of herring with 1 banana.
- 10g of sardines with 1 banana.
- 10g of salmon with 1 banana.
- 10g of tuna with 1 banana.
- 10g of sardines with 1 banana.
- 10g of salmon with 1 banana.
- 10g of tuna with 1 banana.

**Dinners**

- 100 CALORIES
  - Grilled salmon with 1 banana.
  - Grilled chicken with 1 banana.
  - Grilled beef with 1 banana.
  - Grilled tuna with 1 banana.
  - Grilled sardines with 1 banana.
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  - Grilled chicken with 1 banana.
  - Grilled beef with 1 banana.
  - Grilled tuna with 1 banana.
  - Grilled sardines with 1 banana.

**Snacks**

- 100 CALORIES
  - 10g of nuts and 1 banana.
  - 10g of cheese and 1 banana.
  - 10g of meat and 1 banana.
  - 10g of fish and 1 banana.
  - 10g of vegetables and 1 banana.
  - 10g of fruits and 1 banana.
  - 10g of bread and 1 banana.
  - 10g of rice and 1 banana.
  - 10g of pasta and 1 banana.
  - 10g of noodles and 1 banana.
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Ideological function of celebrity magazines - *deconstruction* & *reconstruction* of celebrity & celebrities
Implications for Social Marketing

• Celebrities engage in high-risk behaviours shown as shameful and aspirational – how do young people engage with this?
• Becoming a celebrity - aspirational identity narrative available to young people – what does this mean to them, what does it entail?
• Does the ideological tension of reconstruction/deconstruction invalidate celebrities as credible sources for soc mark interventions? OR does this mirror the lives of young people in an authentic manner?

→ Critical need to qualitatively expand our understanding of representations and role models
→ Downstream – we need to understand what role these dominant narratives perform for any intervention to be effective
→ Upstream – whose interests are served?

Celebrity is not an impartial declaration of merit or talent; it is an economic mechanism designed to keep consumers from asking questions about media ownership, control, and taste-making.