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**CELEBRITIES, DRINKS, AND DRUGS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE  
ANALYSIS OF CELEBRITY SUBSTANCE ABUSE AS PORTRAYED IN  
THE NEW YORK TIMES**

Brent John Austin

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A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CELEBRITY SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
AS PORTRAYED IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Communication Studies

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by  
Brent John Austin  
September 2014

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Approved by:

Heather Hundley, Committee Chair, Communication Studies

Thomas Corrigan, Committee Member

Jo Anna Grant, Committee Member

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## ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the ideologies present in celebrity substance abuse news stories in *The New York Times* online from December 2012 to December 2013. I analyzed news stories by employing a critical discourse analysis to determine the dominant discourses in celebrity substance abuse news articles. Drawing from cultivation and framing theories, celebrity substance abuse stories in *The New York Times* are presented in a limited, individual fashion with relatively little effort when it comes to recovery. Rather than treating substance abuse as a serious social issue and a medical condition, it is presented as an individual, moral problem. Moreover, recovery from substance abuse is presented as a personal choice which involves very little to no assistance and is easy to acquire.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION: SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND  
CELEBRITY CULTURE

A staggering number of Americans are substance abusers. The 2010 National Survey on Drug Use Health (NSDUH), for example, estimates that 22.6 million Americans used illicit drugs that year. This represents 8.9 percent of the population 12 years of age and older. Even greater percentages are noticed in regards to alcohol as 58.6 million people reported participating in binge drinking (NSDUH, 2010). With such a large percentage of the population defined as substance abusers, social consequences abound.

In order to understand substance abuse, it is imperative to define what substances are abused and considered addictive. For example, in her study of addiction in the Finnish press, Hellman (2010) reported eight major categories findings: alcohol, drugs, substances, tobacco, eating, gambling, sexual behavior and other. It is clear, then, that substance abuse represents a much broader sense of addiction than what may be typically viewed as just drugs or alcohol. However, the NSDUH (2010) defined *illicit* substances as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, and the nonmedical use of pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and sedatives (psychotherapeutics). While substance abuse goes well beyond the boundaries of alcohol and illicit drugs to include

other addictions, such as food, sex and gambling, this study examined the mediated portrayals of drugs as defined by NSDUH (2010) as well as alcohol.

In order to define the term addiction, Orford (2001) uses the descriptor “excessive appetite” (p. 260). Orford (2001) states that in addition to becoming addicted and dependent on substances, individuals may also experience “excessive appetites” or addictions to objects and activities in specific social settings. However, similarities between addiction to drugs and alcohol and other forms of problematic behavior have been noted (Oksanen, 2012). In essence, “excessive appetite” or addiction is an “over attachment to a drug, object or activity” (Oksanen, 2012, p. 144). While Oksanen (2012) states that individuals can be addicted to drugs, alcohol, objects, or activities, this study focused specifically on excessive and addictive use of alcohol and/or legal or illegal drugs.

As evidenced, substance abuse is prolific in society. As a result, treatment options are available. The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2008) states that for every \$1 invested in substance abuse treatment programs there is a \$4 to \$7 reduction in the cost of drug-related crimes, a \$4 reduction in welfare and child welfare costs for women, and a \$7 increase in productivity in employment due to fewer absences and health claims. However, while 23.1 million people needed treatment in 2012 for substance abuse, only 2.6 million received treatment at a specialty facility, leaving 20.5 million substance abusers untreated (NSDUH, 2012). While treatment is available outside of specialty treatment

facilities, such as self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), the vast majority of active substance abusers (90%-95%) do not enter treatment or self-help groups (Landau, Garrett, Shea, Stanton, Brinkman-Sull, & Baciewicz, 2000).

A common way that society addresses substance abuse is through criminalization and imprisonment. For example, Carson and Sabol (2012) found that 17% of sentenced prisoners in 2011 were serving time for non-violent drug offenses. In addition, Mumola (1999) notes that half of all prisoners were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of their arrest. While treatment is often available in prison, typically in the form of self-help groups, only 1 in 8 state prisoners reported that they had participated in substance abuse treatment programs since entering prison (Mumola, 1999).

My interest in researching alcohol and drug use is a personal one. While I have been drug and alcohol free for many years, there was a time in my life when substance abuse interrupted my ability to reach goals and be a responsible, contributing member of society. During my time as a substance abuser, and my sober time since, the stigma around substance abuse is evidenced in my life. For example, in social settings where others are drinking, individuals often find it strange that I refrain. Furthermore, when individuals learn that I do not drink since I am an alcoholic, comments are commonly or frequently made regarding how one drink would not hurt anything and that I should be able to handle my liquor. While it may not be intentional, I perceive my peers as not

understanding the nature of addiction and I get the feeling that they believe it is my lack of self-control or willpower that keeps me from being able to drink responsibly. In essence, they see my addiction as a personal flaw rather than a disease. My personal experiences influence my scholarly endeavors. That is, as a media scholar, I am currently curious to learn how substance abuse is portrayed in non-fictional mediated stories. This research is one step in the process.

### Literature Review

While it is important to distinguish the broad range of addictions, this literature review focuses on the abuse of drugs, including alcohol. Clearly, not all individuals who use drugs and alcohol may be substance abusers or addicts (Rehm, Room, Graham, Monteiro, Gmel, & Sempos, 2003). The purpose of identifying and defining addiction as a concept functions as a means for culture to differentiate individuals who perform objectionable behaviors from those who do not (Davies, 1996). Since addiction is an objectionable behavior, it is difficult to determine definitions of normal, moderate, or excessive behaviors (Oksanen, 2012; Orford, 2001). However, the determinants of substance abuse often equate to the amount of conflict an individual experiences. For example, individuals who experience psychological or social conflicts as a result of using drugs may be classified as addicts; therefore, the difference between a

"troublesome appetite" and "normal appetite" is the amount or degree of conflict, rather than the amount of mere consumption.

Oksanen (2012) defines these conflicts ranging from "problems with self-control, nonobjective thinking, dissocialization, demoralization, and pressure to change" (p. 144). These conflicts often have the tendency to bring feelings of guilt, remorse and shame to the substance abuser, often compounding the feelings to keep the behavior secret (Corley & Schneider, 2002) or to justify one's substance abuse to one's self and others (Oksanen, 2012).

The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2008) notes the way that addicts are perceived is a changing landscape. The thought (often by professionals) that people addicted to drugs are morally flawed and lacking in willpower is changing to new understandings of addiction (NIDA, 2008). While most scientific approaches to addiction embrace the thought that substance abuse is a disease which affects the brain and behavior (Morphett & Meurk, 2013; NIDA, 2008), other researchers have criticized framing addiction as a disease and discussed other addiction approaches such as addiction occurring as a result of psychosocial factors, and that addiction is a byproduct of pharmacology (Heim, Davies, Cheyne, & Smallwood, 2001).

Three main themes exist in the conception of addiction (Heim et al., 2001). First, substance abuse is viewed in terms of disease. This approach states that addiction is a disease to which individuals are genetically predisposed to use substances compulsively. Second, addiction is a response to psychosocial

factors. For instance, psychosocial factors include the presence of a psychiatric disorder, such as schizophrenia, but also contain family and environmental influences. Third, that addiction is determined by pharmacology, which focuses on the chemical composition of substances and the way that they interact with the brain, which can vary for individuals. Regardless of the approach to understanding addiction, the commonality of attributing blame for undesirable behavior (individual or societal) is the locus; thereby allowing “drug consumption to be extracted from its social and political context and reduced to being the result of disease, pharmacology or personal circumstances and characteristics” (Heim et al., 2001, p. 57).

#### Substance Abuse and Society

Because of its financial, emotional, and cultural impacts, substance abuse is a detriment to society. Obviously the health of individuals, mentally and physically, is at the forefront of addiction’s role within society as 14 percent of patients admitted to hospitals have substance abuse disorders (NIDA, 2008). Substance abuse is positively correlated with poverty (Jayakody, Danziger, Seefeldt, & Pollack, 2004) and risky sexual behavior (Chen & Biswas, 2012). Furthermore, substance abuse has a large negative effect on mental disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder (Mueser, Bellack, & Blanchard, 1992). To highlight, “50% of adults with severe mental illness suffer from substance abuse disorders” (Alverson, Alverson, & Drake, 2000, p. 558) leading to a mountainous amount of research in dual disorders, diagnosis, and treatment.

Other social problems stemming from substance abuse include economics and crime. For example, nearly 20 percent of all Medicaid hospital costs and nearly 25% of Medicaid inpatient care is associated with substance abuse (NIDA, 2008). Furthermore, 17% of criminals report that they committed their offense in order to get money for drugs (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004) and 70% of individuals in state prisons and jails have used illegal drugs regularly (NIDA, 2008). Clearly, substance abuse impacts the mental, physical, safety and economics of contemporary society.

While comprehensive literature is available on substance abuse, the role the media play in portraying substance abuse is also an issue. A major topic of substance abuse research has been studying the way addictions are portrayed in the media (Acevedo, Warren, & Wray, 2009; Shaw, Whitehead, & Giles, 2010; Tiger, 2013). Mediated portrayals of addiction deliver insights on how addiction works as a cultural unit (Hellman, 2010). In other words, addiction is not only a medical concern, but also a social problem.

### Substance Abuse and Media

Substance abuse is evident in popular culture (Boothroyd, 2006) as fictional and non-fictional media often use drug and alcohol addiction and recovery as plot devices. For example, media such as Cheech and Chong films (e.g. *Up in Smoke*, *Cheech and Chong's Next Movie*, *Nice Dreams*, *Things are Tough All Over*, *Still Smokin'*) portray substance abuse, particularly smoking marijuana, as the main component of a plot. Furthermore, other media portray

substance abuse and recovery as a story line, such as Sandra Bullock's *28 Days*, and the CBS sitcom *Mom*, where the story revolves around a mother and daughter who are both in AA and often humorously reflect upon their past drug and alcohol abuse. Because of its ability to reach mass audiences, media serve an integral role in shaping public concern about social and cultural issues, including substance abuse (Hughes, Lancaster, & Spicer, 2011). As audiences encounter mediated portrayals of substance abuse, beliefs and attitudes regarding substance abuse are influenced (Roberts & Christenson, 2000). Furthermore, attitudes and behavior regarding substance abuse are impacted for better or worse, contingent upon the nature of the portrayal.

Research on substance abuse in media has focused on alcohol, primarily in the context of marketing or advertising (Nicholls, 2011). Some research has been conducted on the portrayal of alcohol within the media outside of the marketing and advertising scope (see, e.g., Ayres & Jewkes, 2012; Baillie, 1996; Connolly, Casswell, Zhang, & Silva, 1994). In her analysis of *Cheers*, for instance, Hundley (1995) states that television often naturalizes beer in that consuming it in large quantities has no side effects, as if it is water. Similarly, Hansen (2003) argues that news stories also naturalize alcohol consumption, thereby presenting alcohol as a normal, harmless aspect of everyday life. However, Nicholls (2011) posits that news reports "often accentuate the negative consequences of drinking" (p. 205) such as violence and anti-social behavior. Hence, media offer a bifurcated portrayal of alcohol. That is, media show that

alcohol consumption is a normal part of our everyday activity, but when consumed in abundance it frequently leads to social harm, a contradiction to Hundley's (1995) and Hansen's (2003) research.

Hersey (2005) also claims that not only is alcohol consumption naturalized, but so is the concept of recovery. After analyzing representations of recovery from substance abuse in film, Hersey (2005) asserts that a broad range in understanding the nature of addiction is ignored in film so that "the effect is to cut off dialogue and to construct only one possible view of addiction" (p. 489) - a view that demonstrates individuals struggling with addiction (primarily alcohol), followed by a prompt and easy recovery to continue a healthy and successful life. Hersey (2005) also notes that the media portray only one way to recover in film through Alcoholics Anonymous. Thus, society views all addicts and treatment efforts through one lens; however, this is not an accurate representation of the various kinds of substance abuse treatments such as other outpatient or inpatient treatment programs.

Other findings of media representations of substance abuse include creating a fear-based society (Taylor, 2008). By depicting substance abuse as an "epidemic" and "crisis," the growing threat that substance abusers have on society is emphasized (Blood, Williams, & McCallum, 2003). However, framing substance abuse in the media in this manner often contributes to moral panics (Taylor, 2008). This fear-based approach is often noticed in news media and highlights the deviant behavior associated with substance abuse.

Hughes et al. (2011) portend that substance abuse issues tend to emerge in the media in relation to deviance. For example, media representations of substance abuse appear in relation to crime, and those crimes are frequently committed by “rebellious people, gangs, or by people that deserve punishment (not help)” (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 286). As a result, the media portray punishment as a solution to substance abuse, thereby “reducing drug use to a narrow range of topics and interpretive framework” (Taylor, 2008, p. 242) which neglects other possible causes of substance abuse and courses of action.

Hellman (2010) acknowledges that substance abuse is often sensationalized within the media. In essence, media portrayals of substance abuse “perpetuate distorted and stereotypical preconceptions on the most extreme cases” (Ayers & Jewkes, 2012, p. 328). Accordingly, Sparks and Tulloch (2000) concur that media often depict stories of substance abuse in which audiences can easily relate. This depiction is accomplished by sensationalizing stories of substance abuse, a trend known as “tabloidization” (Sparks & Tulloch, 2000, p. 10), where priorities move towards entertainment and away from news and information.

One potential outcome of sensationalizing portrayals of substance abuse is that cultural associations can be made between addiction, glamour and celebrity (Furedi, 2004). Mass media stories regarding substance abuse and addiction revolve around celebrities. For example, Nicholls (2011) asserts that newspaper coverage of alcohol demonstrated a “fascination with celebrity” (p.

203). Therefore, the focus of this research was to examine substance abuse in the media and, more particularly, in news. It seems, the most recent celebrity relapse or mishap (e.g., Lindsay Lohan or Justin Bieber) often appears in headlines and dominates message boards. Since this research focused on celebrity substance abuse as portrayed in news media, it is important to distinguish the role of celebrity.

### Celebrity

Celebrity and celebrity culture is a growing area of research in the social sciences (Turner, 2010). Celebrity culture is a preoccupation with the famous; the site of this preoccupation takes place when celebrities are part of a collective world connected by media (Cashmore, 2006; Couldry & Markham, 2007; Epstein, 2005). Defining celebrity is increasingly problematic, as numerous connotations may emerge. At one point, scholars used the word "star" to define celebrities (Dyer, 1979; Ellis, 1982); however, the term "celebrity" is now used to "indicate a broad category which is defined as the contemporary state of being famous" (Holmes & Redmond, 2010, p. 4). In essence, a celebrity is anyone who repeatedly appears in the news (as a result of career or "private life") or is portrayed by media for means of consumption. Rojek (2001) states that celebrity equates to an "impact of public consciousness" (p. 10); demonstrating that celebrities are alluring and fascinating to many people; a fascination which has become so prolific as to be called a "culture." The starting point of celebrity culture is when celebrities are so abundant in the media (Rojek, 2001; Turner,

2004) they develop in individuals' everyday talk, resulting in celebrities becoming a social topic of discussion in many settings and conversations (Couldry & Markham, 2007).

While not all people are captivated by celebrity gossip and news, they are still a target to the copious amount of celebrity stories within the media as evidenced by the seemingly countless celebrity-centered websites, television programs, news stories, and bombardment of magazines and tabloids at the grocery store checkout line. Couldry and Markham (2007) proffer that while many individuals are attracted to celebrity stories; others feel celebrity stories are something they need to escape. However, with an increasing amount of sensationalism and celebrity reporting in the media, celebrity stories and images are part of our everyday fabric (Fowler, 2006).

Furthermore, celebrity culture has a "pervasive presence in our everyday lives--perhaps more so than ever before" (Holmes & Redmond, 2006, p. 6). Parnaby and Sacco (2004) state that fame and celebrity status have become virtues that have been entrenched in our mass mediated society and Americans' desire to be famous rivals the desire of achieving personal economic success.

The duality of celebrities being supremely unique while simultaneously being ordinary (Dyer, 1979) is the site of much celebrity research (Holmes & Redmond, 2010; Lofton, 2011; Nayar, 2008). Celebrities are seen as completely ordinary people, experiencing some of the same problems (weight, divorce, addiction, etc.) as other individuals. The concept of celebrity is portrayed within

the media as unique, yet attainable; however, in order for celebrities to maintain a level of social interest, they must remain a “rare phenomenon” (Parnaby & Sacco, 2004, p. 9), while concurrently staying ordinary and attainable enough that audiences can identify with them. Celebrities are captivating to many audiences (Cashmore, 2006) as they combine the spectacular with the ordinary - something that is inherent within American values (Holmes & Redmond, 2006). The ability to promote celebrities as unique personalities and attractive individuals while simultaneously acknowledging them as regular people going through typical day-to-day problems, allows the media of celebrity culture to create an “illusion of intimacy” between the tabloids, celebrity, and audience (Meyers, 2005, p. 896).

This illusion of intimacy enhances identity construction of celebrity culture consumers (Wilson, 2010). The ability to “transform the powerful and the well-known into intimate and familiar figures” (Furedi, 2010, p. 495) allows for audiences to “develop relationships with mythic characters” (Fraser & Brown, 2002, p. 185). These mythic characters were once based on heroes (e.g., Osiris, Odysseus, Gautama Buddha [Campbell, 1949]) but today are primarily celebrities (e.g., Brad Pitt, Beyoncé, and Hugh Jackman). Cathcart (1994) avers that heroes turn to celebrity status as a result of mass media; as media’s ability to increase visibility and fame is commonly linked with the creation of celebrity.

As a result of audiences developing “parasocial relationships” with mediated celebrities, celebrity culture enables audiences to identify with

celebrities and the characters they portray (Furedi, 2010). This identification may lead audiences to participate and negotiate in identification and “invest in the emotional capital of celebrities” (Furedi, 2010, p. 496). Such parasocial relationships with celebrities may affect audience identity as well as the audience’s understandings of celebrity-related topics such as fashion, food, addiction and others often juxtaposed with celebrities. Celebrity culture shapes the audiences’ interpretations and abilities to make sense of the world. This is accomplished by either accepting or rejecting the values and personalities that celebrities and celebrity culture endorses. The ability for celebrities and celebrity culture to facilitate identity creation and knowledge on particular topics lends way to the belief that celebrities have a social function.

News stories frequently report on celebrities’ actions, opinions, and norms. Whether directly or indirectly, celebrity news “emphasizes the fact that the portrayal of stars conveys what can and what cannot be imitated, thereby touching on values” (Gorin & Dubied, 2011, p. 600). Nayar (2008) continues the notion that celebrities are integrated into society as their successes and failures serve as moral compasses of how people should live their lives. Burke (1973) refers to this as “equipment for living.” Therefore, celebrities are cultural units that act as guides for individuals’ attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, celebrities are paramount to society since they are important figures within modern life and social interactions (Marshall, 1997).

One manifestation of celebrity culture is celebrity worship. Celebrity worship contains rituals and idolizes celebrities to the extent that a “religion of American celebrity emerges” (Lofton, 2011, p. 349). The link between celebrity culture and religion is notable. Rituals within celebrity worship such as flocking to see celebrities, movies, and celebrity culture destinations (e.g., Hollywood, Dollywood, Graceland) parallel many religious rituals like flocking to religious sites such as Mecca or Jerusalem. Other rituals captivating the aura and power of celebrities include holding Oscar parties, reading tabloids, and focusing exclusively on an individual celebrity (Maltby, Houran, Lange, Ashe, & McCutcheon, 2002).

While these rituals are examples of how celebrity worship is similar to religious worship. Other examples of how celebrities are seen as divine entities include feeling personal connections to celebrities or immersing oneself in a particular celebrity’s lifestyle and career by knowing a plethora of information regarding that celebrity and consuming every medium that portrays them (Lofton, 2011; Rojek, 2001). Furthermore, Maltby et al. (2002) offer an example of divinity that stars hold by demonstrating that questionable behavior performed by a celebrity is often forgiven, when similar behavior by a non-celebrity would not be.

However, not all behavior, particularly illicit behavior, is excused, and it seems that this deviance is often the focus of mass media attention. For example, Nunn and Biressi (2010) posit that celebrity scandal stories are cheap to reproduce, and stories of “abuse, guilt, vulnerability, and addiction” (p. 50)

appear in the reproduction of journalism. This provides an inexpensive, easy news format that often focuses on the best “bang for the buck” for readers. In other words, a celebrity scandal story is well suited to the political economy of commercial news media. This axis was the focus of this research by investigating how the media portrayed celebrity addiction.

### Celebrity and Substance Abuse

Since substance abuse does not discriminate, famous people and those with celebrity status are not exempt from substance abuse problems. As a result, an important aspect of media portrayals of substance abuse includes celebrities since they frequently get idolized and play a significant role in many media consumers lives. Celebrity substance abuse is more frequently covered by media, whereas non-celebrity substance abuse stories are often not covered. As such, celebrities often become synonymous with substance abuse. For example Amy Winehouse, Lindsay Lohan, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, and Philip Seymour Hoffman are all associated with substance abuse because of their celebrity status, drug and alcohol addictions, and the coverage they have received in the media.

Celebrity news stories are an important site for the construction of substance abuse, substance abuse behaviors, and treatment (Tiger, 2013). Tiger (2013) affirms that celebrities are not individuals but serve as a symbolic system as a whole, which represents dominant Western beliefs such as achieving the “American dream” of prosperity, success and upward social mobility. Marshall

(1997) articulates that audiences use celebrity to “construct norms of individuality” (p. 61), and meanings attributed to celebrity and addiction are a process of negotiation between the media and their audiences. As such, media coverage of celebrity addiction can have powerful implications in society. Nonetheless, because of the pervasive media and the potential impact of celebrity culture, the reporting and coverage of celebrity substance abuse can influence individuals’ values, attitudes, and behaviors. Therefore, discovering how substance abuse is framed by the media for the public is relevant.

Previous research shows that media practitioners feel celebrities have the power to connect with audiences, particularly within the realm of addiction. Tiger (2013), for instance, notes that a 2011 *New York Times* article in the health section pictured a large portrait of the deceased Amy Winehouse. Tiger (2013) makes clear that “the story had nothing to do with Amy Winehouse and her cause of death was then unknown. Celebrity served as a vehicle for the author to discuss a generalized theory about the brain’s malfunctioning in relation to addiction” (p. 14). This is just one example of how celebrity addiction is portrayed in the media and further acknowledges that celebrities play an important role in connecting with audiences.

Other scholars interested in celebrity substance abuse examined the media portrayals of celebrity DUIs. Smith, Twum, and Gielen (2009) were interested in how celebrity DUI events are presented as news worthy, particularly in relation to societal norms and expectations. They argue “that from a public

health standpoint, it is of concern that many celebrity news stories emphasize the episodic nature of the events rather than root social causes or preventative action” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 187). Therefore, while celebrity news stories and substance abuse news stories focus on substance abuse from the perspective of an individual, it is important for the media to focus on the nature of substance abuse in society as well.

The link between celebrity and substance abuse in the media is a process of naming a celebrity for deviant substance abuse behaviors, shaming the celebrity, deselecting the celebrity, and, finally, a potential resurrection of the celebrity (Acevedo, Warren, & Wray, 2009). This cycle serves to put certain individuals on a pedestal and then reveal their flaws as a way to “knock them down.” Once they are de-humanized they can be built back up, allowing new stories to unfold and keeping an individual in the media spotlight. Some scholars argue that the status of celebrity encourages such high achievement and success that the use of substances is almost instigated in order to maintain such status (Cavanaugh & Prasad, 1994). Regardless of the cause of addictions, it is clear that drug and alcohol abuse is prevalent in our culture, celebrities are no less exempt from such abuse, and celebrities can have an immense impact on the culture, potentially serving as role models. Thus, it is important to understand how celebrity substance abuse is portrayed in news media.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONDUCTING THE STUDY: METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

#### Statement of Purpose

Given its prevalence and detrimental impact on society, more substance abuse and addiction research is needed. Furthermore, examining the way that the media portray substance abuse is pertinent since media play a key role in building the public and political agenda as well as framing the public conversation about substance abuse (Nicholls, 2011). While one of the ways individuals learn about the effects of drugs and alcohol is through direct experience, one of the most profound influences in learning about substance abuse is the portrayal of drug and alcohol use in the media (Cape, 2003). Moreover, a number of researchers have rising concerns regarding the degree in which the media legitimize and glamorize risky behaviors related to health, such as substance abuse (Roberts & Christenson, 2000). More generally, research concurs that mass media rank among the most important socialization agents influencing youth (Arnett, 1995; Roberts, Foehr, Rideout & Brodie, 1999), so the way the media portray substance abuse is salient.

The importance of researching popular culture has been highlighted by intellectuals, and while what is popular is portrayed by the mass media, popular culture in media is a byproduct of the media's ability to serve customer desires.

Therefore, popular culture “bears the interests of the people” (Fiske, 1989, p. 24). Scholars are increasingly examining the portrayals of celebrities, demonstrating that celebrities have a potentially profound effect on knowledge, power, and representation (Holmes & Redmond, 2010). Thus, it is imperative to discover how celebrities are portrayed in media, not as individuals, but as cultural and social markers.

Celebrity influence is prevalent and over 75% of young people report a strong attraction to a celebrity at some point in their lives (Giles & Maltby, 2004). As a result, the lives of celebrities along with mediated portrayals of celebrities in regards to substance abuse are of concern. If media shape the public agenda, which may include the topic of substance abuse, then the injection of celebrity in media increases the likelihood stories will be retold and modeled (Smith et al., 2009). As evident in Chapter One, currently, there is very limited research on the intersection of substance abuse and celebrity. Furthermore, discovering how celebrity substance abuse is framed within news media allows audiences to broaden our understanding of how addiction is defined, how it is managed, and what the potential responses should be in terms of prevention and recovery. As such, the following research questions are posited:

RQ1: What frames and themes are used in print news media to portray celebrity substance abuse?

RQ2: What consequences of celebrity substance abuse are portrayed in print news?

## Methodological Approach: Critical Discourse Analysis

In order to answer these questions, I methodologically employed critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1993, 1996). Critical discourse analysis emerged from critical linguistics and semiotics as a general label for studying text and talk (van Dijk, 1995a). However, critical discourse analysis differs from other forms of analysis (e.g., conversational analysis, narrative analysis) in that it provides a focus on power to identify ideologies. For example, since ideology is transmitted, enacted, and reproduced through language (Foucault, 1972), analyzing discursive strategies will lead to discovering ideologies and the social meaning expressed in discourse. Discourse, essentially, is “language in real contexts of use” (Machin & Mayr, 2013, p. 20) -- meaning that discourse is the language which is chosen in order to comprehend and understand given situations and the world. While discourses include the language chosen, it is the construction of language which comprises topics. Fiske (1984) identifies discourse as “both a topic and a coded set of signs through which that topic is organized” (p.169). For example, while substance abuse is a topic within news stories, signs such as headlines, related articles, and images organize and construct the discourses presented. In this study, critical discourse analysis was used to understand the mediated discourse of substance abuse.

Because of space and time constraints in news, such as the limited number of column inches and meeting deadlines, it is important to note that in

the media, certain conversations are highlighted; thereby, leaving certain discussions marginalized. With this understanding, discourse implies and is laden with ideological assumptions. In essence, discourse not only reflects society but also affirms existing social structures (Teo, 2000). Therefore, scholars using critical discourse analysis are interested in understanding ideological structures such as the unequal distribution of power.

Typically, such ideologies are naturalized in that they are presented as common sense and made to appear natural, thereby making them implicit and difficult to critique. It is this naturalized ideology that enables media to attain hegemonic dominance. Critical discourse analysis attempts to unlock the ideological underpinnings of discourse in order to better articulate and understand how discourse works in society (van Dijk, 1995b).

Researchers using critical discourse analysis attempt to discover patterns of dominance often by examining texts relating to social problems and issues. Those who use this methodology are interested in answering the question of how these social problems and issues are expressed, enacted and reproduced in texts (van Dijk, 1995a). The need for such an analysis, specifically with mediated texts, is imperative because texts shape how we understand and address social issues, as media elites and journalists control mass media discourses and determine what news topics will be covered (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992; Gans, 1979; van Dijk, 1995a).

Ideological assumptions are embedded in texts and oral speech in attempt to gain or control power (Fairclough, 1989). The power that dominant groups have in controlling mediated topics and content depict a relationship between discourse and power. As a result, critical discourse analysis is engaged by scholars who attempt to uncover how media discourses exercise power, thereby making the social and power structures of society more visible.

Those who use critical discourse analysis acknowledge that discourse is enacted through language, which is used as a social practice to “establish identity, social relationships, knowledge and beliefs” (Tupper, 2008, p. 224). This notion is represented by Fairclough’s (2002) three tenets of discourse. First, discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure. Second, discourse is shaped by culture. Lastly, discourse shapes our identities, relationships and knowledge. Therefore, by critically analyzing news media discourse of celebrity substance abuse, a picture of how media establish ideologies of celebrity and substance abuse in terms of identity and knowledge should emerge. However, in order to employ a critical discourse analysis accurately, it is salient to know the levels of analysis of critical discourse.

Levels of analysis within critical discourse attempt to define meaning and relationships “between the actual text, the discursive practices (rules and norms used to produce, receive or interpret the message) and the larger social context that bears upon the text and discursive practices” (McGregor, 2003, Understanding the theory section, para. 4). As a result, critical discourse analysis

is a method in which scholars seek to examine both micro level and macro level understandings (Thompson, 2002; van Dijk, 2001). In other words, critical discourse analysis is used to not only explain the text in terms of language use, discourse, and verbal interaction (micro level), but also to reveal the relationship between the text (such as print news articles), societal issues (such as substance abuse), and power structures (such as dominance and inequality at the macro level).

While discourse analysis is relevant for the study of mediated texts (Day, Gough, & McFadden, 2004), critical approaches to discourse analysis typically concentrate specifically on texts such as news reporting (Teo, 2000). Van Dijk (1983) specifies some general characteristics of news discourse. First, news discourse has a functionality; meaning that discourses serve a purpose in respect to various aspects of social contexts. Second, news discourse is meaningful, thereby exhibiting local or global coherence. While local coherence refers to the relation of clauses and sentences, global coherence refers to larger parts of discourse such as topics or themes. Lastly, news discourses are goal-directed; meaning that news discourse is not arbitrary, but has some form of communicative goal. Van Dijk (1983) acknowledges that each discourse will manifest these principles in different ways, and that the goal of critical discourse analysis is to uncover these principles and implied meanings that represent ideological positions.

Many studies employing critical discourse analysis to news reporting provide examples. For instance, when examining newspaper representations of men, health and food, Gough (2007) found the way that media represent men and dieting is structured by hegemonic concepts of masculinity such as “men like meat” (p. 329) and “dieting is for girls” (p. 335). These findings were a result of Gough (2007) analyzing news articles line-by-line, paying attention to discursive strategies. By analyzing newspapers, Gough (2007) establishes that across the spectrum of news stories, “dieting is seen as unmasculine and women-centered, thereby explaining men’s reluctance to diet” (p. 335). This serves as one example that the media perpetuate gender differences through the use of stereotypes.

Another study conducted a discourse analysis to uncover the discursive construction of homelessness in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* (Pascale, 2005). Pascale (2005) piloted a critical discourse analysis by discovering patterns that were found across all three papers, focusing on what was not said. Findings of her study included that news stories used episodic frames to represent homelessness. News stories characterized homelessness around individuals, meaning that their poverty was attributed to personal characteristics (e.g., work ethic, enthusiasm, reliability) and choices. Pascale (2005) found that news stories identified homelessness in terms of individuals instead of a contextual social problem and, furthermore, that “a million people unable to afford basic housing in the United States has been

rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture” (p. 264). In other words, the social problem of homelessness was left unaddressed; instead the newspapers under investigation supported the ideology that homelessness is an individual problem, not a social one.

Teo (2000) explored news discourse critically in regards to racism in two Australian newspapers. First, he employed the method by examining broad characteristics of text, such as headlines and leads. Then a micro- and macro-structured examination of the two texts was undertaken. Discoveries included that a local Vietnamese gang was featured in news headlines as murderous, drug-dealing, fighters who engaged in other violent and unlawful activities. This is not surprising, but what was noticed is that these descriptions consistently referenced Vietnamese and Asian people. As a result, Teo (2000) concludes that the newspapers under analysis perpetuate dominance and social inequality.

Even though celebrity is a discursive event, and a genre of representation that provides “a rich body of discourses that fuel a dynamic culture of consumption” (Turner, 2010, p. 13), there are a limited amount of critical discourse analyses of celebrity in news media (see, e.g., Breeze, 2009; Hutchby, 1996; Legg, 2009). For example, Breeze (2009) examined the discourses of “tarnished” celebrities in the British tabloid press by looking at noun phrases, headlines, and narrative structures used in celebrity gossip publications. Results indicate that tabloids manage to offer their own definition of newsworthiness to the public by drawing on and evoking human emotions. However, upon closer

scrutiny, Breeze (2009) posits that while none of the positions of the tabloid are culturally critical, no one asks why the topics are newsworthy or why the individuals reported on are in the public eye. As a result, the ideologies and reconstruction of reality in tabloid discourse continually generate and maintain the myth of the star.

Another critical discourse analysis of newspaper articles studied how television represented scientists (Attenborough, 2011). The researcher examined four UK newspaper articles for both a male and female celebrity who played television scientists. Attenborough (2011) examined these newspapers under the assumption that language is constructive. Therefore, he examined the constructed words and structures to discover how the discourse is performative, thereby, how the language in the newspapers was active. Findings included that while both celebrities (male and female) had been sexualized, the way that they were sexualized (as a result of gender differences) was different. However, Attenborough (2011) viewed the process of sexualization as less obvious than that of advertising, but not less pervasive. Overall, conclusions show that regardless of the media portrayal, celebrities go through a process of sexualization; however, Attenborough (2011) noticed that representations of the idealized and sexualized are no longer limited to women's bodies.

Researchers have employed critical discourse analysis to study substance abuse as well. Despite the fact that this methodology is functional to mediated texts, Rodner (2005) applied it to interviews of 44 drug users. The premise of the

study was that the participants interviewed did not identify as drug abusers, but rather as drug users, making a distinction between the two labels. This was accomplished through examining interview transcripts by paying close attention to specific wording and grammar. Rodner (2005) investigated how the participants maintained their identity and self-presentation as drug users. Users did not identify as drug abusers as a result of (a) maintaining a permanent residence, (b) meeting daily obligations, and (c) having no contact with social authorities as a result of their usage. A critical discourse analysis was employed by coding the interviews into two categories: the representation of self and the representation of others. Discoveries included that individuals felt that they were not drug abusers by looking at the presentation of others. Therefore, their presentation of self was positive, basing these identity discourses on what they “were not” (drug abusers with home, job, and legal problems and consequences). The implications of Rodner’s (2005) critical discourse analysis are that individuals struggle through contradictory messages as they attempt to navigate through current drug policies and societal drug narratives.

Similar to Rodner’s (2005) study of drug users, critical discourse analysis has also been employed to examine the consumption of alcohol. Day, Gough, and McFadden (2003), for instance, conducted focus groups with 23 participants to inspect the way working class women speak, specifically in terms of drinking and fighting. Day et al. (2003) found that women take part in “traditional male activities” such as frequent public drinking. As a result, Day et al. (2003)

conducted their focus groups by investigating the role of aggression when women were out drinking in public. The focus groups were recorded, and then conversations were critically analyzed. Findings reveal that when out drinking, women often exhibit and take part in aggressive behavior. These behaviors exhibit themselves in either direct aggression (e.g., shouting) or indirect aggression (e.g., gossiping). Given the fact that women were publicly participating in a drinking culture while exhibiting aggression, Day et al. (2003) imply that the myth that women are not aggressive needs to be deconstructed. Furthermore, in public drinking contexts, women were presented as perpetrators of aggression, not just victims. As a result, between the drinking and aggressive behaviors, the authors suggest that the way gendered identities are constructed is important, as this discourse analysis found how women's drinking and aggression focuses on the construction of masculine identities. While Day et al. (2003) examined discourses of aggression in public drinking establishments through the use of focus groups; other areas of research include the effects of how women are perceived when drinking.

Analyzing British newspaper coverage of how women who drink are viewed in media, Day et al. (2004) continued to employ a critical discourse analysis. They examined 13 tabloid articles and 14 news articles which portrayed women in context of their drinking. The researchers employed a critical discourse analysis of these texts by examining multiplicity and complexity of single units of meaning, objectifications of women's alcohol use through visual imagery, and

ideological assumptions of women and alcohol evident in the media texts (Day et al., 2004). Some of the discourses which were located during the analysis were: aggression and violence, gender neutrality, sex and sexuality, as well as a focus on the feminine body. Ideological implications included an emphasis on alcohol consumption as a masculine activity by the media and the assertion of sexuality by women who drink in media discourses. Overall, the researchers found that the positioning of women drinking within news media is often reported on in problematic ways and that drinking (particularly for women) is a challenging leisure choice.

In summary, this review of literature engaging critical discourse analysis as a methodology demonstrates it has numerous applications and is an appropriate methodological approach to study celebrity substance abuse given the societal implications of substance abuse and the cultural impact of celebrities. The goal of critical discourse analysis is to determine textual, ideological underpinnings, including its relationship with power. Discovering these ideologies helps audiences be aware of the ideologies that elite media perpetuate, consciously or not. Thus, I used critical discourse analysis to demonstrate how media depict celebrity substance abuse and to examine what consequences are offered in such portrayals.

### Texts

To conduct this study, I collected data from the online version of *The New York Times*. This newspaper was used for analysis based on its large readership

and its elite position within the country and the world. In terms of circulation, *The New York Times* is the second most read newspaper in the United States, following the *Wall Street Journal* (Edmunds, Guskin, Mitchell & Jurkowitz, 2013). The *Wall Street Journal* reports on business news, while *The New York Times* reports on international, national, and popular news. Therefore, while *The New York Times* has the second largest circulation numbers for all the newspapers in the nation, it leads the popular news industry in circulation.

The second reason I chose to collect data from *The New York Times* is due to its presence as an elite newspaper. It has been called the American “newspaper of record” (Golan, 2006, p. 327) and is often cited as a single publication which may be successful in determining or shaping the news agenda (Golan, 2006; Jordan, 1993).

For this study, I first conducted a keyword search of *The New York Times* online for celebrity stories containing instances of substance abuse. However, news stories archived in *The New York Times* online were not organized by keywords, but instead the search identified all the times the keywords were on a given web page. For instance, in conducting a keyword search of “celebrity substance and abuse” the results revealed every time the word “celebrity” appeared in the newspaper, thereby producing articles which included celebrities but not substance abuse. As a result, many of the search hits were not relevant to celebrity substance abuse. Therefore, I searched for *The New York Times* stories on celebrity substance abuse using the LexisNexis database. The

keywords used for finding articles included: “celebrity” and “substance abuse,” “celebrity” and “addiction,” “celebrity” and “drugs,” and “celebrity” and “alcohol.” To obtain the most recent news articles and to have an appropriate sample size, I limited the search to all news stories regarding substance abuse within the past year (December 2012 – December 2013). From my search results, I eliminated all the articles that had to do with other addictions outside of drugs and alcohol, as well as stories collected not pertaining directly to celebrity use of substances. As a result, 31 news stories that reported on celebrity drug and alcohol substance abuse remained. Since LexisNexis results did not include images correlating with the news stories, I looked up the news article on *The New York Times* online version in order to gain access to these news stories’ images.

Once these 31 news reports were collected, I employed a critical discourse analysis to conduct my analysis. This was accomplished by examining all the visual images, headlines, bylines, and stories. These articles were scrutinized by looking at the kinds of word choices found in the articles and headlines and their significance (lexical analysis), in order to determine whether the news media identified celebrity substance abusers as having distinct traits. Furthermore, all the texts were studied for rhetorical strategies to examine semantic elements of discourse (van Dijk, 1983) such as metaphors, denotation, connotation, and syntax. However, “understanding sentences as part of a discourse is a different process from understanding sentences in isolation” (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983, p. 32). As a result, I conducted a large-scale study of

meaning across the texts as a whole to understand narratives and uncover ideologies regarding celebrities and substance abuse. This larger scale inquiry included looking at how celebrity news stories were framed, episodically or thematically, across the sample.

Furthermore, I examined the texts for word connotations and the use of quotes. I also paid attention to the nomination or functionalization of celebrities, attempting to determine if individuals were put into terms of who they are or what they do. Furthermore, my exploration was extended by inspecting images, or the iconography of the news stories. This was accomplished by deconstructing images in terms of their size, color, focus (referring to image clarity), closeness and shot type (headshot, close up, medium or long shot) of the images in order to determine their salience.

When conducting a qualitative textual analysis, it is important to note the role of the researcher as the instrument. Specifically, when conducting a critical discourse analysis, it was significant that I was aware of the set of expectations I brought to the text (before I even read/analyzed it). These expectations may inhibit the findings of interpretations within texts if I am not predisposed to them. However, the benefits of critically examining a text outweigh these limitations, particularly if attempting to identify intersections of power and ideology within news reporting. In fact, being aware of these limitations does not mean that they are negated, but means that I am more likely to be critical of the discourse analyzed, which is the premise of critical discourse analysis.

In order to avoid potential biases or misinterpretations of the texts, I examined the texts multiple times, always keeping an open mind to the surface level of meaning and the deeper frames located within the text; making sure I was discovering the ideologies located within the media and not maintaining preconceived ideologies that I may hold on my own. The goal of my textual analysis was to discover social markers, cultural assumptions, and ideologies present within celebrity news stories in order to understand how the news media portray substance abuse.

#### Theoretical Perspectives: Cultivation and Framing Theory

In order to examine how celebrity substance abuse is portrayed in news media, I relied upon the theoretical perspectives of cultivation and framing theories. I begin with cultivation theory which is comprehensive in nature and frequently used by media researchers (see e.g. Arendt, 2010, 2012; Bryant & Miron, 2004; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Roberts & Christenson, 2000).

Originally proposed by Gerbner (1969, 1977), cultivation theory posits that long term exposure to television, or “stories” according to Gerbner (1969), presents a version of mediated reality. This mediated world view is often inaccurate from “reality.” However, cultivation theory suggests that the more an individual is exposed to the media or mediated stories, the more likely one is to adopt and accept the mediated reality as an accurate and applicable framework

in which to view the world. Therefore, the focus of cultivation theory places more emphasis on the potential influence of media exposure over the course of time, rather than direct effects of isolated exposure to media content. Cultivation theory assumes that media enable the cultivation of ideologies for audiences through repeated exposure of messages. It is important to note that the emphasis is on message exposure over individual message interpretation (Gerbner 1977; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Therefore, the frequency in which a message occurs, or the frequency an ideology occurs within mediated discourse, the more likely individuals are to adopt that interpretation.

Cultivation theory was originally proposed to apply to television content, and operates under the hypothesis that heavy television viewers are more influenced by mediated messages than light television viewers (Gerbner, 1977; Gerbner et al., 2002). As a result, individuals who spend large amounts of time watching television are more likely to perceive the world and social reality in ways which reflect the dominant and most common messages in television. An important distinction of cultivation theory is that media (specifically television) viewing has long-term effects; while these effects are indirect, gradual, and minimal although they become collective and substantial over time.

Cultivation theorists demonstrate that while the range of learning which takes place from media is expansive, it can be distinguished as first-order effects or second-order effects (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). First-order effects refer to facts and general beliefs about the world which individuals may

learn as a result of time with media. These include, but are not limited to, the prevalence of occupational roles in society, crime rates, and demographics. On the other hand, second-order effects outline attitudes and judgments of which individuals may acquire through the media. Examples of second-order effects include beliefs regarding gender roles, perceptions of minorities, attitudes towards drugs and alcohol, and judgments regarding substance abusers.

The link between first- and second-order effects and how individuals make judgments about social reality are correlated to how individuals process media content. For example, Van den Bulck (2003) claims that processing media content takes place off-line (when individuals' recollections of previously viewed media content is involved in the decision making process) and on-line (when individuals think about media content as they are consuming it). Typically, first-order judgments and beliefs of facts are made off-line while second-order judgments and beliefs about attitudes are created during on-line processing. As a result, knowledge about society and the world is gained by considering previous media consumption, while beliefs about society and the world are constructed through reflecting on media content as it is consumed. Scholars employing cultivation theory acknowledge that both judgments are impacted via media exposure, but are mostly concerned with the relationship between media and second-order judgments.

Researchers employing cultivation theory have demonstrated the gradual, yet consistent link between repeated media exposure and viewing to conceptions

of social reality (Gerbner, 1998). As mentioned earlier, the large portion of cultivation research focuses on television. For example, Woo and Dominick (2001) examined television talk shows and discovered that individuals who were heavy television viewers held different beliefs about marriage infidelity and premarital sex than light viewers.

When applying this theory to celebrity substance abuse news stories, not all individuals who are exposed to media will have cultivation effects since textual meanings are polysemic. Therefore, discourses within a text can be interpreted a number of ways due to audience agency (Hall, 1980). However, while it is understood that news media about celebrity substance abuse would not carry the same meaning for all readers, it is acknowledged that there is a dominant ideology present, regardless of how a text is interpreted or read. The goal of this research was to discover the dominant level of meaning, thereby unlocking news ideologies pertaining to celebrity substance abuse. Nevertheless, according to cultivation theory, those individuals who spend more time consuming celebrity substance abuse stories may develop and adhere to ideological attitudes and beliefs espoused by the media.

### Cultivation Theory Literature

Much of the cultivation theory research revolves around heavy television viewers having a higher fear of crime than other individuals (Grabe & Drew, 2007; Nabi & Sullivan, 2001; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003; Van den Bulck, 2004; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004). This concept is often described as a “mean world

syndrome,” where individuals relate media content to reality and, in turn, develop beliefs regarding crime and safety in the real world. Many genres of television have been analyzed to support cultivation theory in relation to the fear of crime, including news stories and reality police shows. However, Van den Bulck (2004) demonstrated associations between the fear of crime and overall television viewing, regardless of genre of programs viewed. Despite the fact that cultivation theory research is largely focused on television, cultivation theory is applicable to many other forms of media.

Several studies have employed cultivation theory outside the scope of television. For example, research has been conducted applying cultivation theory and the internet (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006) and newspaper content (Arendt, 2010, 2012; Grabe & Drew, 2007; Lubbers, Scheepers, & Vergeer, 2000). Undoubtedly, both television and newspapers are an important source of information. When incorporating cultivation theory with print news, “it is assumed that the more people read a newspaper, the more their reality estimates and attitudes correspond to the most recurrent, stable, and overarching patterns of the newspaper’s content” (Arendt, 2010, p. 147).

Little research exists, to my knowledge, on cultivation theory and substance abuse; even less research exists on cultivation theory and celebrity. However, Beullens, Roe, and Van den Bulck (2012) examined the role music videos’ portrayals that “reckless” behaviors may have on youth in regards to driving after consuming alcohol. Thus, the only current research I found which

displays both variables of celebrity (music artists) and alcohol is Beullens et al. (2012) who assumed that exposure to frequent depictions of risky driving behavior, as depicted in music videos, may cultivate attitudes parallel to these depictions. Findings included that more music video viewing is associated with a more positive attitude toward risky driving, although the relationship was negligible.

Turning away from substance abuse but focusing on celebrities, Lewis and Shewmaker (2011) used cultivation theory in a content analysis regarding teen celebrity websites. Specifically, she analyzed sexualized content on teen celebrity websites and found that children who increasingly view media images on teen celebrity websites were exposed to the sexualization of women. As a result, this contact provided younger children with the opportunity to cultivate beliefs regarding women's primary source of power and worth -- sexual attractiveness.

This brief review of cultivation theory evinces it is applicable in examinations of many forms of media, including newspapers. As such, I used cultivation theory as the theoretical framework to conduct my analysis of print news media coverage of celebrity substance abuse. According to cultivation theory, by consuming media, individuals may learn how to interpret and make sense of substance abuse, particularly in a social realm. This learning may occur as a result of how media frames issues of substance abuse in news stories.

Hence, I merged cultivation theory with framing theory as underlying perspectives when I engaged in this research.

### Framing Theory

How an issue is characterized and portrayed in the media can influence how the issue is understood and interpreted by audiences. Specifically, Lawrence, Bammer, and Chapman (2000) state “the way in which media frame and thereby define issues for public consumption influences public perceptions” (p. 254). Moreover, the way media may influence audiences’ understanding is a result of individuals’ recall and beliefs stored in memory (Chong & Druckman, 2007). This notion was first identified in frame analysis, in which Goffman (1974) claims that individuals actively categorize and interpret life experiences in order to make sense of them. Goffman (1974) labels this process as “schemata of interpretation” (or frames) which enables individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” (p. 21) information and experiences.

The concept of framing has been developed even further by Gamson and Modigliani (1987) who identify frames as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning” (p. 143). It is through these frames that audiences create reality (Scheufele, 1999) relying on “personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from the mass media” (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 120). This reliance on previous experiences and media is known as framing effects (Chong & Druckman, 2007). However, in order for framing effects to occur, the experiences, information and issues need to be available and stored in

memory. As a result, media frames influence individuals' opinions and perceptions by making information readily available to audiences. The more appeal a story has to an audience, combined with the frequency in which the media frame is depicted for an issue, the more likely individuals will adopt media frames into their personal schema.

### Media Frames

“Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events” (Tuchman, 1978, p. ix). Through these frames, social problems are constructed. Furthermore, frames may define problems, causes, and solutions for social issues (Mastin & Choi, 2007). Media frames highlight certain aspects of an issue while other aspects may be omitted. It is important to note that frames are different than topics. Mass media topics are considerably more observable than frames. Frames are embedded “themes” within media and media topics. Bullock, Wyche, and Williams (2001) argue that frames are “powerful, but typically unnoticed, mechanisms that affect viewers’ judgments of responsibility and causality” (p. 233). Furthermore, Gamson et al. (1992) note the embedding of facts and images in frames allow media to coincide with social construction of reality. Therefore, the way in which the media frame issues relates to the way those issues are viewed, discussed, and solved in a social realm. In other words, the media determine ways that problems are defined, as well as causes and moral evaluations surrounding problems and issues, thereby influencing individuals’ opinions on relevant issues and personal

schema (Weaver, 2007). Entman (1993) suggests that media frames work by making particular events and pieces of information more salient to individuals, therefore allowing individuals to recall and draw on media frames to interpret and understand social issues.

A significant amount of research has examined frames, specifically in news reporting (see, e.g., Gorin & Dubied, 2011; Manning, 2006; Mastin & Choi, 2007; Vreese, 2005). For example, Vreese (2005) illustrates how framing defines and determines news through frame building. First, frame building takes place in a news room. Frame building explains how discourse about an issue is enacted in the news media. This happens with constant interaction between journalists and elites (Tuchman, 1978) and social movements.

This first stage is depicted as framing in the newsroom, where editorial policies and news values determine how journalists represent stories in the news. Then, these frames manifest in the text and become frames in the news. Lastly, framing effects (how media framing influences audiences) occurs as a result of individuals interacting with news frames. Framing effects include social learning, information processing, and attitudinal and behavioral effects. This framing process represents the relationship of how media elites' and journalists' views set frames in news with which individuals interact.

Furthermore, framing has been examined within the way news stories present issues and information. Iyengar (1991) identifies two types of frames that most news reports adopt: thematic frames and episodic frames. Thematic news

frames often are issue-oriented and often frame the news story or issue within a social context. Episodic frames focus more on specific or individual level frames; therefore, illustrating social problems with individual examples and often place responsibility on individuals (Mastin & Choi, 2007).

To further understand types of frames, researchers have studied the frequency in which these frames appear in news media. Kunkel, Smith, Suding, and Biely (2002) found that 89% of news stories used an episodic frame when analyzing news stories regarding children's issues. Furthermore, Kunkel et al. (2002) discovered that stories of youth crime and child abuse were less than 1% likely to report public policy or (thematic) contextual information. The common frame of news media is that newspapers do not generally provide context and statistical information.

This is further evidenced by Artwick and Gordon (1998) who revealed that out of eight daily newspapers in metropolitan cities, only 1/3 of the news was presented with contextual information regarding crimes. Episodic framing trends in news media were also revealed in a content analysis of domestic violence fatalities conducted by Bullock and Cubert (2002). Specifically, they contend that over 99% of the stories contained information cited as factual without attributing a source and that 90% of the articles presented murders as isolated incidents, rather than contextualizing the broader picture of domestic violence being a problem throughout society.

Framing plays a central role in the public understanding of issues. The same is true for news media regarding substance abuse. For example, Hansen and Gunter (2007) argue that “news reporting plays a key role in both the building of public and political agendas and in framing the terms of discussion around substance abuse” (p. 153). Furthermore, media can be a powerful role in supporting or opposing thoughts and policies on substance abuse (Lawrence, Bammer, & Chapman, 2000). However, even though societal understanding of substance abuse is culturally mediated (Becker, 1963; Grinspoon, 1971), little attention has been paid to this framework. Manning (2006) notes that little devotion has been given to the role of how media reproduce frameworks of substance abuse. It is important to analyze news stories about substance abuse given that media frames have the capability of directing attention and restricting the perspectives available to audiences (Hall, 1980) regarding social issues.

Vreese (2005) comments that it is through scholarly analysis that frames emerge from material. This thesis does not attempt to test how or why media theories work, as it is outside the scope of a qualitative textual analysis. Instead, I coupled the methodological approach of critical discourse analysis with cultivation theory and framing theory as theoretical perspectives to answer my research questions and discover how celebrity substance abuse is framed and its consequences are portrayed within print news media.

CHAPTER THREE  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES'* PORTRAYAL OF  
CELEBRITY SUBSTANCE ABUSE

At first glance, the discourse of celebrity substance abuse appears sensationalized in the news. For example, tabloids such as *TMZ*, *Access Hollywood*, and *Star* magazine exhibit a proliferation of celebrities in regards to relationship failures, financial problems, weight control issues and anything scandalous. For instance, stories regarding Lindsay Lohan making a list of celebrities she has slept with has premiered on many tabloid websites (eonline.com), magazines (*US Magazine*), and shows (*Access Hollywood*). Furthermore, Lohan is saying that this “sex list” surfaced while she was in a substance abuse rehabilitation center, and that the list was one part of the steps in the twelve step program for Alcoholics Anonymous. Moreover, Lohan’s sex list is being reported by major online news sites such as *Fox News*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Conversely, no articles on Lohan’s “sex list” have appeared in *The New York Times*. This may be a result of *The New York Times'* reputation, where people may expect the newspaper to contain articles covering the serious social issue of celebrity substance abuse but not debase themselves by reporting on something they may not deem newsworthy. Although, in this analysis, *The New York Times'* articles included topics that could be *perceived* as scandalous by

some readers. Such topics included legal problems and relationship loss evolving from substance abuse.

### Celebrities and Substances

In this analysis of 31 *The New York Times* articles, many types of celebrities were presented (n = 25, see Appendix A). For example, eight of the celebrity articles were about actors and actresses, eight about professional athletes, and seven were about music artists. The remaining articles in the sample consisted of two articles about fashion designers, two articles about a celebrity chef, one reporting on a politician's daughter, one about an artist, one about a news-cast anchor, and one about an individual who achieved celebrity status for his relationship with Liberace.

In terms of substances abused, seven articles mentioned drugs and alcohol without detailing specifics, six articles mentioned drugs without naming specific drugs, six articles reported on alcohol only, and the remaining 12 articles mentioned specific drugs; most commonly cocaine, heroin, and marijuana followed by methamphetamines, crack cocaine, and narcotic painkillers such as Vicodin and codeine (see Appendix B). Almost all the articles included quotes by the celebrity that the story revolved around, unless it was a story regarding an individual's death (although many of these stories included quotes from friends or family situating their addiction in context).

In addition, as evidenced in this analysis, no news stories acknowledged the amount or frequency of substances abused. For example, individuals took responsibility in acknowledging that substance abuse had disrupted and created conflict in their lives; however, none of the stories or celebrities described substance abuse explicitly in regards to how much or how often they consumed drugs or alcohol. As a result, readers are left to wonder as to what constitutes substance abuse or addiction, and that potentially frequency or amount of substance intake is extraneous.

The overarching view of celebrity substance abuse stories as portrayed in *The New York Times* is a dichotomy. *The New York Times*, overall, presents substance abuse as an individual problem in that the articles depict episodic frames, celebrities taking personal acceptance of their substance abuse, and stories primarily devoted to the individuals' achievement of sobriety. Finally, the ultimate paradox is evident when comparing the headlines and articles to the images presented. The written text reveals the tribulations of substance abuse whereas the images reveal happy and healthy celebrities managing their lives and careers despite having substance abuse issues.

#### Episodic and Thematic Frames

Of the 31 celebrity substance abuse news stories analyzed, 25 of them were in the context of episodic frames; meaning that substance abuse, consequences of substance abuse, and recovery from substance abuse were framed by concentrating on and placing responsibility on individuals (Mastin &

Choi, 2007). All of these articles focused on individual celebrity substance abuse instead of the larger, social issue of substance abuse. For example, mentions of substance abuse were limited to individual celebrities and never put into context of substance abuse being a larger scale, social problem.

Only five articles displayed substance abuse as a thematic issue, demonstrating that substance abuse is not isolated to celebrities or individuals but is a larger problem, with social and cultural implications. However, since the articles were about celebrity substance abuse, meaning that a celebrity was highlighted or mentioned, these articles also simultaneously demonstrated episodic frames. Although, in these five articles, episodic frames were used as a starting point or platform to introduce thematic frames.

For example, one article discussed a fundraiser headed by Eric Clapton in order to raise money for a substance abuse treatment facility in the Caribbean, a place where Clapton says “alcohol was still regarded as immoral or sinful behavior” instead of a medical problem or disease (McKinley Jr., 2013b, para. 7). Furthermore, the article continued to state how many individuals from the Caribbean and United States have received treatment at the facility. A second article included a news story about a Mayor-elect’s daughter, who posted a video on YouTube telling her story and experience with substance abuse (episodic) in hopes to help and encourage others to talk about and discuss their substance abuse issues (thematic) (Hernandez & Grynbaum, 2013). A third article briefly mentioned Elizabeth Vargas’ (a news anchor) substance abuse, but quotes the

celebrity as saying “like so many others, I am dealing with addiction” (Stelter, 2013, para. 12). While this quote did not highlight the social implications and impacts of substance abuse, it did acknowledge that addiction is an epidemic that affects many people. However, it is difficult to determine if Vargas put her addiction in the context of a problem that many others have in order to rationalize her own issues with addiction.

One article explicitly focused on framing substance abuse in a larger, social context. This article was written by Kristen Johnston (2013), the celebrity the article was about, and while it highlighted her addiction and sobriety, the focus of the article was how Johnston is involved in organizations to help other substance abusers. In fact, she said that most addicts are not celebrities and that “out of the hundreds of thousands of addicts I’ve spoken to at events or through social media, not a single one of them is famous” (Johnston, 2013, para. 14). This article continued to detail the larger implications of substance abuse by highlighting that substance abuse “is an epidemic that now claims more lives per year than car accidents or guns. Drugs are the number one cause of death in emergency rooms, yet there are no swanky benefits to raise funds to eradicate it” (Johnston, 2013, para. 15). The article illuminated the lack of treatment for addicts, the lack of insurance coverage for treatment, and the imprisonment of people whose only crime is being an addict. The goal of the article was to portray the impacts that substance abuse has on society in order to diminish individuals being “ostracized for being an addict” (Johnston, 2013, para. 16).

Another article demonstrated an episodic frame by focusing on Cory Monteith's death. However, the article moved to a thematic nature when the chairman of Fox said that *Glee*, the show which casted Monteith, will have an episode which "deals directly with the incident [drug overdose] involved in Cory's passing" (Carter, 2013, para. 2). Furthermore, the show was to also include public service announcements from the cast addressing the issue of addiction. However, a separate article published two months later said that while Monteith's death seemed like the ideal way to show a "cautionary tale to young viewers" (Stanley, 2013, para. 2), no mention of substance abuse or substance abuse public service announcements were present. In fact, there was no hint of how Monteith's character died in the *Glee* episode and there were "no elliptical references to the dangers of substance abuse – not even an Amy Winehouse song" (Stanley, 2013, para. 4). While the episodic nature of Monteith's death seemed like a way to depict the thematic nature of substance abuse, neither *The New York Times* nor *Glee* framed it in this manner. Instead, "the show's writers went out of their way to step around the obvious" (Stanley, 2013, para. 5), thereby narrowing the way that substance abuse is viewed socially and culturally.

#### It's Not You, It's Me: Taking Personal Acceptance

While some articles attributed other individuals and institutions for their substance abuse, many of the celebrities took responsibility for their substance abuse in news stories (n = 10, 32%). For example, in an article about professional football player Pat Summerall, he stated "I was behind bars, pointing

fingers at everybody but myself. I finally realized that I'm in charge, that it's me with the addiction" (Goldstein, 2013b, para. 15). This was a common finding of those who accept responsibility for their substance abuse. For most of the celebrities who accepted responsibility, it was a direct result of consequences they had experienced from substance abuse, such as being incarcerated.

Eight celebrities (32%) accepted ownership of their substance abuse by referring to their involvement with drugs and alcohol as a learning experience. For example, professional baseball player Josh Hamilton claimed, "I have learned from the drug stuff, I can't live in the past, because I can't change anything about it" (Kepner, 2013, para. 17) and Scott Thorson (a celebrity from association with Liberace) stated, "this experience has taught me and scared me straight, there comes a time when you have to stop lying to yourself and face your mistakes" (Segal, 2013, para. 10). Moreover, Steve Madden (a celebrity fashion shoe designer) stated "I can't drink and drug safely, so I choose not to now" (Holson, 2013, para. 9). Inherently, this quote demonstrates that some individuals can drink and take drugs "safely." This is an interesting word choice as all the articles but one displayed that alcohol and drugs are not safe when consumed or combined together.

In these news stories, taking ownership of substance abuse was a direct result of increasing conflict in one's life. This aligns with Oksanen's (2012) view of addicts, as he describes that the amount of conflict (psychological, physical, and/or social) that one experiences as a result of drugs and alcohol is a greater

indicator for substance abuse problems than the amount of consumption.

Furthermore, *The New York Times* exhibits that the celebrities reported on suffering from substance abuse, as the articles highlighted consequences and conflict and mentioned nothing about the amount of consumption.

### The Blame Game: Attributing External Fault

While all the articles under investigation portrayed celebrities admitting to substance abuse, not all of the articles demonstrated that they took personal responsibility for their addiction. Thus, some articles focused on blaming outside forces for their substance abuse. Furthermore, as evidenced by the texts, reporters took a neutral position and rarely made comments regarding blame or ownership of the celebrities' substance abuse.

Some celebrities portrayed substance abuse as the fault of the "other" rather than the actual user by utilizing language that exemplified external blame (n = 4, 13%). For example, one article noted that Nigella Lawson (a celebrity chef) blamed her drug use on her first husband, saying she first used cocaine with him since "it gave him some escape" when he was terminally ill with cancer (Erlanger, 2013, para. 6). This example accentuates that her drug use was a result of being the "good wife" and obliging her husband's request for relief through the use of drugs. However, while her drug use is attributed as meeting the requests of her first husband (who died of cancer), she continued to use drugs intermittently during her second marriage. During this marriage Nigella Lawson admitted that she used drugs, although the reason for doing so was

continually put into context of being married to a “brutal man” and feeling “isolated,” and “unhappy” (Erlanger, 2013, para. 8).

Furthermore, in another article regarding Lawson a reporter warranted her drug usage by saying “messing with drugs during a low period? Plenty of people would find these things defensible...” (Teeman, 2013, para. 11). This reaction demonstrates that while substance abuse is a questionable behavior, there are times when it may be justified and acceptable. Furthermore, it takes the focus of abusing substances away from the celebrity and puts it in relation to life’s situations.

While the articles demonstrated that Lawson blamed her two previous husbands for her substance abuse, two other articles pointed blame towards professional sports. Both of these articles depicted national sports organizations (National Football League and National Hockey League) as being the cause for athletes’ addictions. Both cases have current lawsuits, and one of the suits alleges “due to his ingestion of an inordinate amount of pain medications prescribed by the N.H.L. team physicians, he became addicted to opioids” (Branch, 2013, para. 18). It is important to reference that the substances mentioned in these articles were not the typical performance enhancing drugs that lead to the professional demise of other athletes such as Mark McGuire and Lance Armstrong, but rather were amphetamines, sedatives, and painkillers. Branch (2013) included that team doctors provided illicit prescriptions, and also

noted that some players become so addicted that they had to buy substances illegally.

These articles extolled that the national sports organizations are not liable for problems caused by addictions as it was the individuals' decisions to use the drugs. However, the articles provided examples of blaming the sporting institutions, such as Sweeney writing a memoir titled "Off Guard: The Story of the Earliest Drug Scandal in Professional Football..." (Slotnik, 2013a, para. 6). Furthermore, vivid examples demonstrate that the substances came from team physicians. For example, Sweeney stated "it was the San Diego Chargers trainers and doctors who gave me pregame amphetamines to rev me up, postgame sedatives to bring me down, painkillers as 'needed' and steroids" (Slotnik, 2013a, para. 5). Branch (2013) reported that hockey player Boogaard "was provided copious amounts of prescription pain medications, sleeping pills, and painkiller injections by N.H.L. teams' physicians, dentists, trainers, and staff" (para. 15). After reading these articles, it was hard to find fault with the individuals. Yet while claiming that Sweeney's "drug addiction is directly related to the game," a following paragraph noted that Sweeney was a hard drinker and had many drinking bouts well before playing professional sports (Slotnik, 2013a, para. 5). Moreover, the same article stated that after Sweeney's playing career, his substance abuse worsened.

Nonetheless, while the article continually reiterated the claim that the drug addiction was caused by the N.F.L., there were no questions or statements

regarding Sweeney's relationship with alcohol before he played, or if that was even a contributing factor. Furthermore, while the N.F.L. was continually berated and blamed for his substance abuse, there was no spotlight on his responsibility as an addict, particularly after his professional playing career and ties with the N.F.L. were over in 1975.

While these articles regarding celebrity substance abuse rarely used the word "blame," every time substance abuse was mentioned, it highlighted someone (other individuals) or something else (national sports organizations), rather than the actual celebrity. Furthermore, while blaming was evident in a small amount of the news stories and attribution for substance abuse ranged from individual's (ex-husbands), feelings of isolation and unhappiness (as evidenced previously by Lawson), and professional sports organizations; no person or organization assumed responsibility or liability for the substance abuse. The lack of ownership for substance abuse allows readers to negotiate their own conclusions.

#### Are You Sober Now? Recovery and Relapse

Almost one half (n = 14, 45%) of the articles highlighted that celebrities were either sober or recovering from substance abuse. However, the language used to describe the absence of alcohol in celebrities' lives was diverse. For example, McKinley Jr. (2013b) stated that an individual "beat" his alcoholism in the 1980s (para. 6), implying that alcoholism was a battle or challenge that was "won" and never had to be "fought" a second time. Another example

demonstrating this depicted a celebrity who “finally achieved sobriety” (Rhodes, 2013, para. 9). This word choice implies that sobriety was hard to get, but once achieved, it lasts forever. An additional article simply stated that a celebrity went “to prison in 1989, but then turned his life around” (Goldstein, 2013b, para. 3). No mention of how these individuals got sober exists; but that once they “turned their life around” they no longer had to deal with substance abuse issues. In contrast, research acknowledges that recovery from addiction is a lifelong process, not something that just happens once and last forever, never having to be confronted with again (Adams & Grieder, 2004; Laudet, 2007; Laudet, Savage, & Mahmood, 2002).

Many articles revealed celebrities who supposedly got sober instantly, and never had to think about substance abuse another time (n = 9, 29%). However, some presented the more realistic nature of substance abuse and identified the difficulty in getting and maintaining sobriety (n = 5, 16%). For example, Holson (2013) quoted Steve Madden who stated, “I chose not to drink or drug, but it is not easy” (para. 9). This quote demonstrates that the absence of drugs and alcohol is a choice; a decision that one just comes to and then acts on it. However, by claiming it is not easy, this choice is framed as being a difficult decision, not for just one day but many days to follow, as exemplified by other articles that quote “becoming sober is the hardest thing I have done” (Hernandez & Grynbaum, 2013, para. 12) and “I have been sober for 19 years, but I still have nightmares” (McKinley Jr., 2013b, para. 13). Using the semantics of “nightmare”

to describe substance abuse is particularly intriguing as it implies that there is a recurring reality of the past which no longer exists or that the “nightmare” of substance abuse is a fabrication of the mind, something that takes place outside of reality. Both of these implications take away from the everyday real choices, decisions, temptations and treatments which keep addicts sober. Furthermore, they negate the real possibility of relapse.

Many articles demonstrated the relationship and struggle between substance abuse and sobriety by example of relapse (n = 9, 29%). For instance, NIDA (2008) reports that relapses are prevalent in 40 – 60% substance abuse patients. One article highlighted an individual who had been sober for seven years but descended in a Vicodin addiction (Rhodes, 2013). Claiming current sobriety, however, seems to be an important element in substance abuse news stories. For instance, the aforementioned example was followed by mentioning that this individual is “no longer drinking, smoking or taking drugs” (Rhodes, 2013, para. 13).

Another article reporting an individual’s current sobriety noted that he had relapsed twice publicly (Kepner, 2013). Including the word “publicly” is unusual word choice here. The lexical choice of “publicly” assumes the position that relapses may be private. These relapses that the public was aware of are known, but private relapses may exist that were not reported. As a result, it may lead the audience to wonder if there were more than two relapses.

While the aforementioned articles focused on specific instances of relapse, one article exemplified how substance abuse and sobriety can be a lifelong effort. Segal (2013) wrote about Scott Thorson's (who reached celebrity status by being in a long term relationship with Liberace) long time struggle with methamphetamines, prescription drugs, and cocaine. This was the only story that illustrated continuous relapses over a span of 30 years. It depicted the celebrity of now wanting to "be sober for good" (Segal, 2013, para. 9), which is a vow that he has made numerous times. This embodies the skepticism that many individuals have towards substance abusers who have asserted change, but to no avail.

However, almost all the articles involving relapse focused on stints of substance abuse much more than periods of sobriety; meaning that the articles contained more information on substances abused and consequences than on the process of sobriety. Inherently this demonstrates that substance abuse stories are more newsworthy, entertaining, and hold more news value than sobriety stories. This focus on relapse and the amount of stories that included relapse demonstrates the skepticism in believing celebrities' sobriety.

The notion that *The New York Times* questioned a celebrity's sobriety is best illustrated in Goldman's (2013) article containing an interview with Dwight Gooden, a Major League Baseball player. The first question Goldman (2013) asked in the interview was "In your new book you proclaim your sobriety. But in 1999, you said you were sober in another memoir, and then wound up in jail

years later after testing positive for cocaine use. Why should we believe you now?" (para. 1). Gooden responded that he was not honest with himself, and that during the proclaimed sobriety he was still drinking, which he said was a direct link to drugs. This seems to be an acceptable answer, as the article did not discuss the topic further. Although the notion that the celebrity was not only dishonest with himself in regards to his sobriety, but also the public is not further examined or questioned. As a result, it seems that celebrities are responsible for acknowledging and being honest with themselves regarding substance abuse, but do not hold accountability to the public, despite being high profile public figures.

Ten other stories discussed the fact that celebrities are currently sober. However, the journalists in these stories were seemingly careful not to take a stance on the issue. For example, journalists wrote that an individual is "clean and sober now, by his own account" (Chinen, 2013, para. 4), and that a celebrity "claims to be sober now" (Holson, 2013, para. 9). This type of wording suggests that according to the celebrities, they are sober. Nevertheless, self-disclosure from a sober addict or alcoholic may leave doubt with the reader.

Almost all of the news stories revolved around the desires or attainment of sobriety. However, three articles depicted celebrities who either did not need or want to be sober. For instance, while Nigella Lawson admitted to marijuana and cocaine use, the article adamantly noted that she insists that "the idea that I am a drug addict is absolutely ridiculous" as regular users of cocaine "are a lot thinner

than I am” (Erlanger, 2013, para. 14). This article demonstrates that while Lawson used illicit substances (past tense as she states “I’m now drug-free,” but does not use terms such as sobriety or recovery), she is not an addict. In Lawson’s case, the amount or frequency of usage (or lack thereof) allows her to think of her substance abuse as a thing of the past and not something that interfered in her life or is problematic.

Furthermore, referring to the “thinness of cocaine users” solidifies typical stereotypes that often follow substance abusers. Therefore, using cocaine is acceptable if you are not “thin” because that is what regular users look like. Lawson says that she is not an addict or habitual substance abuser, yet she is sober now by her own account.

Still, not all articles depicted celebrities who wanted to be sober. This was evident in Caramanica’s (2013) article about Lil Wayne, a hip-hop artist. The article quoted that “Lil Wayne spoke about drugs not as an addict reformed but as someone wrongly separated from his tonic” (Caramanica, 2013, para. 2). In fact, referring to cough syrup with codeine, Lil Wayne admitted “I wish I could be back on it. I was on something the doctor prescribed. I was ill, and that was helping me” (Caramanica, 2013, para. 2). However, Lil Wayne agreed to regular drug tests as part of a plea agreement in a separate drug possession case. Lawson’s and Lil Wayne’s examples depict individuals who are sober as a result of external influences, but believe themselves to not be addicts although they both have a history of substance consumption.

In contrast, one article reported on rapper Juicy J (who is not sober or an addict) in which he claimed to be drinking and using drugs. Juicy J admitted in the interview that he was “still drunk” (Ryzik, 2013, para. 4). The author of the article mentioned that this was not said to apologize or boast, but just an acknowledgement. Juicy J claimed that his “whole life is not about strip clubs, drinking, and partying” (para. 9), rather, the focus of the article was about how hard he works. The article was contextualized in a way that the celebrity can drink and party while simultaneously function in society and the workplace. For example, Juicy J stated “I just got off the plane, I’m still intoxicated, but I’m doing an interview with you. I’m a business man at the end of the day” (Ryzik, 2013, para. 10). Although when asked what he was going to do next, Juicy J said “get me a mimosa and listen to Barry White” (Ryzik, 2013, para. 10). While most of the celebrities portrayed in *The New York Times’* articles exhibited the desire or attainment of sobriety, these were the only examples which exemplified substance abuse as a fun and safe activity.

#### Contradicting Headlines and Images

Analysis of the headlines of *The New York Times* articles clearly depicted what the articles are about -- celebrities. Of the 31 headlines, 18 (58%) of them included a celebrity’s name. Furthermore, of the 31 article headlines, only 6 (19%) of them mentioned anything about substance abuse. Most of the articles containing substance abuse references were in relation to a celebrity’s death. Examples included headlines such as: “Second Inquest Confirms Amy

Winehouse Died of Alcohol Poisoning” (McKinley Jr., 2013a) and “Drug Toxicity Caused Death of Cory Monteith” (Itzkoff, 2013a). Another headline proclaimed that the New York Mayor’s daughter “revealed” her substance abuse (Hernandez & Grynbaum, 2013). When conducting a critical discourse analysis of these headlines, it is apparent that making note of a celebrity’s substance abuse is newsworthy.

Almost all the articles under investigation had at least one correlating image. Out of the 31 articles analyzed, there were 35 images. Given the topic of substance abuse, I expected to see solemn and dark images that may reflect guilt, regret or remorse; something that resembled the images of other celebrities presented in the media (such as Whitney Houston, Lindsay Lohan, or Nick Nolte) where celebrities look disheveled, crazed, and “washed up.” However, only three images (8%) were present that depicted any form of solemnness.

One small, thumbnail image of Nigella Lawson showed a headshot of Lawson staring off camera, almost as if she was avoiding eye contact (Teeman, 2013). This image was also dark in color and the surroundings around Lawson were out of focus, making it difficult to interpret the context or location of the image. However, she appeared scared and worried, exhibiting facial features of a frown. While this image did not represent or demonstrate substance abuse in anyway, it was the only image that contained a dark background, out of focus shot, and an individual who appeared sad, scared, and concerned.

Another image of professional football player Walt Sweeney presented a black and white headshot of Sweeney (Slotnik, 2013a). In this image, Sweeney was not facing the camera, but looking at it from the side, with his eyes making direct contact with the camera. Furthermore, Sweeney's hand was resting on his face and his mouth was closed; not exhibiting happiness or sadness, but rather a look of solemnity. This image did not represent an individual who battled substance abuse (although the caption said "he entered a rehabilitation center in 1995" (Slotnik, 2013a), but instead posed Sweeney as a serious person in deep thought. While the image represented seriousness, and Sweeney appeared to be in contemplation, the image did not demonstrate a man who was out of control.

Lastly, in an article written by actress Kristen Johnston advocating recovery from substance abuse addiction, a large colorful image was presented. Surprisingly, the image was unrelated to Johnston's personal experience. Instead, the image showed a young man being held, hugged and comforted by two women. The young man's head was tilted down; allowing his hair to cover his eyes, but his facial expression was grave, almost as if showing remorse. Furthermore, the women's faces in the picture were not visible, as only the backs of their heads were shown. The caption read "Kristen Johnston says that even reality shows like 'Intervention' do little to educate viewers about addiction" (Johnston, 2013). Undoubtedly, the image was a generic still shot from the television show. However, despite the show being about substance abuse,

without the caption, a reader would not deduce that this image represented anything to do with substance abuse.

In contrast, every other image (n = 32, 91%) within the news stories depicted celebrities in a variety of roles. Most of the images came from archives such as the Associated Press or Getty Images. A large majority of the images showed celebrities in the positions or careers in which they gained recognition and stardom. For instance, Lil Wayne was featured rapping on a stage, athletes were represented with images of them in the game and wearing uniforms, sports broadcasters were pictured in the announcers booth, actors (such as Cory Monteith) were represented by images of him on the red carpet, and an image of Steve Madden (a fashion shoe designer) was photographed in an office surrounded by many pairs of shoes. All of these images were clear and brightly colored. When the images were not action shots (on a football field or fashion runway), individuals were facing the camera and appeared happy or comfortable. They did not appear to be the typical drug addict or alcoholic with dirty clothes, un-coiffed hair, and disheveled looks.

While a few of the news stories had to do explicitly with substance abuse, not one of the images present did. In fact, given how the stories themselves contextualized substance abuse around relapses, consequences, the difficulty and the overarching necessity to get sober, the images offered a bifurcated view of this. While many of the news stories portrayed consequences and struggles of substance abuse, the images represented happy, healthy, and successful

celebrities. Therefore, through this critical discourse analysis celebrities are represented as in control of their lives, despite having substance abuse issues. In turn, audiences may think that substance abuse has limited consequences on the physicality of individuals as the visual images diminish the impact that substance abuse has.

Essentially, the images displayed celebrities as happy, well-kept, successful, and able to manage their day-to-day responsibilities. Given the nature of the articles being represented with the image, it suggests that the celebrities were under the influence of substances when photographed. This notion further solidifies the notion that despite being substance abusers, these celebrities can function in society and continue performing their jobs. Furthermore, as the articles revealed that celebrities struggle with substance abuse, the images encouraged readers to believe that celebrities are immune to the consequences and effects of substance abuse.

### Conclusion: Stardom Trumps Substance Abuse

Being a celebrity was at the heart of every news story. When portraying substance abuse, it was often situated in the context of celebrity status. As described earlier, maintaining celebrity status required continuous relevancy and a position in the spotlight. A few of these news reports highlight this facet of stardom. For instance, one article stated that a celebrity's choice to share his addiction-recovery story with magazines was a "classic public relations managed

bid to reclaim a reputation” (Horyn, 2013, para. 2). Demonstrating that having substance abuse issues or stories to share may lead to continual recognition and fame, a theme frequently found in tabloid journalism (Meyers, 2005).

However, some celebrities blamed their substance abuse issues on celebrity careers and status. For example, an ex-football player stated that his “drug addiction is directly related to the game” (Slotnik, 2013a, para. 5). At first glance this does not have to do with being a celebrity, but it is the game that gave him celebrity status. This quote claimed that if it were not for “the game” this individual would not be a celebrity or a drug addict.

Another news story demonstrated the dichotomy that celebrity brings. For example, the article stated, “she survived a traumatic childhood, and an abusive first marriage. But she couldn’t survive success” (Rhodes, 2013, para. 7). Later, in the same article the celebrity was quoted “I’m not depressed, I’m famous” (as if they are mutually exclusive). These examples establish that while celebrities may use substance abuse stories to stay relevant, they are also substance abusers as a result of celebrity status. For instance, when talking about celebrity chefs, a magazine editor stated “you’re supposed to do cocaine and smoke pot, be a bad boy, work hard, party hard, party late, sleep late, go to work again” (Teeman, 2013, para. 4). This is how celebrity lifestyles are often portrayed, but celebrities are frequently under more scrutiny than the general public, and the articles investigated acknowledge this.

The role of celebrity is magnified in *The New York Times* in order to distinguish that celebrities are not "regular" or "average" individuals. "No one's going to raise an eyebrow about the average New Yorker going out and drinking and sometimes doing cocaine" says another magazine editor (Teeman, 2013, para. 5). However, if that someone is not average and instead, a celebrity, then behavior is heavily scrutinized; even celebrities see themselves as different from "others." This is further noted by a sober actress/comedian Brett Butler saying "I tend to think of alcoholism and depression as an illness in someone else and a moral failing in myself" (Rhodes, 2013, para. 15).

Of course all the articles mentioned celebrity substance abuse, but surprisingly few articles were about the discourse of substance abuse itself. Five articles (16%) reported directly about substance abuse and/or sobriety throughout their entirety. In addition, another four articles (13%) primarily focused on substance abuse, but only in relation to explain or clarify a celebrity's death. In these stories, the celebrity's death was the primary topic, with substance abuse merely mentioned as the contributing factor.

However, the majority of articles were on topics unrelated to substance abuse. Within these stories, the discourse of substance abuse was rarely mentioned, often with only a sentence or two. For example, three of them were news stories about celebrity deaths, and maybe mentioned one or two sentences about a struggle with alcohol or drugs during their early career, but the deaths themselves were not a result of substance (Fox, 2013; Goldstein, 2013b; Slotnik,

2013a). Another article was about the fashion industry and only carried one line referring to a designer's substance abuse and recovery (Horyn, 2013).

Overall, *The New York Times* demonstrates that celebrities have struggles and issues with substance abuse, but the lack of attention to substance abuse is obvious. Substance abuse is framed episodically, which is congruent with findings by other media scholars regarding other social issues such as homelessness and crime (Kunkel et al., 2002; Pascale, 2005). More emphasis is put on why the individuals are celebrities by highlighting their accomplishments, careers, successes, achievements, and deaths; rather than seriously engaging in a discussion about substance abuse, including its causes, and the process of sobriety. The common theme of this news media analysis is that *The New York Times* does not provide context and statistical information regarding substance abuse. On the other hand, many articles use the celebrities' names in the headlines, yet only six headlines (19%) mention anything about substance abuse or sobriety. The notion that celebrity status and name recognition is more of a story than the issue of substance abuse is clearly magnified when seeing the adjacent photographs.

CHAPTER FOUR  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES'* PORTRAYAL OF CELEBRITIES'  
CONSEQUENCES FROM SUBSTANCE ABUSE

As addressed in Chapter 3 *The New York Times* presents celebrity substance abuse as an individual rather than social issue. Furthermore, the prior chapter established that celebrity substance abuse in *The New York Times* demonstrates that while some celebrities get sober instantaneously, others struggle with sobriety and relapse. Also, the previous chapter exhibited that despite struggling with substance abuse, drugs and alcohol have no bearing on celebrities physically, as revealed in the images accompanying the news stories. While no celebrities appeared that they suffered any harmful or negative repercussions, in this chapter I address research question 2 examining what consequences of celebrity substance abuse are portrayed in the articles, headlines and photos.

Arrests from drinking and driving, jail time for possession of narcotics, and going to treatment centers as a result of family interventions are well known and typical consequences of substance abuse. Specifically, sensationalized tabloid media, such as *Access Hollywood* and *TMZ*, often report on celebrities' alcohol and drug-related mishaps, among others. For example, in recent tabloid news, many stories pertain to Justin Bieber's spectacle of drag racing while under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, tabloid (and prominent news) media

report that Bieber was arrested for his behavior of driving under the influence. This is exemplary of the struggles that people, including celebrities, have with substance abuse and the consequences they may face, such as drinking, driving, and getting arrested.

However, while NIDA (2008) acknowledges that substance abuse affects an individual's ability to make good judgments, allowing them to engage in risky behaviors (such as drinking and driving), NIDA (2008) primarily indicates that substance abuse typically leads to other medical problems such as cancer, heart disease, and mental illness. Although, as evidenced in this analysis, *The New York Times* predominantly reported three main consequences of substance abuse: death, going to jail, and going to a treatment center. However, the newspaper largely reported that apart from death, substance abuse has no other consequences on one's physical health. In essence, while substance abuse does indeed have health consequences, using drugs and alcohol also has the ability to create chaos (Mayes & Truman, 2002; Shaffer, 1997). This analysis determined that *The New York Times* reported more on the chaos that typically ensues from substance abuse rather than the effects drugs and alcohol usually have on a person's physical health. Therefore, as depicted in *The New York Times* celebrity substance abuse has health consequences, criminal penalties and material costs.

However, despite consequences of substance abuse, of the 31 articles analyzed, five (16%) of them presented no consequences whatsoever.

Furthermore, of these five news stories, one article about rapper Juicy J presented substance abuse as something that in fact *enhances* his life. This is clearly in direct conflict with what the medical community, substance abusers, and everyday people know about substance abuse consequences and reality.

### Health Consequences

Health consequences of substance abuse typically refer to the effect that consuming drugs or alcohol has on one's physical health, such as increased heart rate, brain seizures and increased risk of cancer (NIDA, 2008). However, very few articles reported on these forms of consequences. In this analysis articles that mentioned physical consequences (n = 23, 74%) provided classifications of substance abuse repercussions. These themes include: death, entering into a treatment facility, declining physical health, and psychological consequences.

#### Death

As expected, many articles (n = 9, 29%) mention a celebrity's death because of substance abuse. News stories reported on the topic of death factually rather than speculating in that they almost always referred to a toxicology or coroner's report. This primarily included stories on Cory Monteith and Amy Winehouse, although other celebrities were included such as Lisa Robin Kelly and Mindy McCready.

It is important to note that articles which reported on a celebrity's death and their substance abuse were not categorized here if the article noted that one was not a result of the other. So, for instance, one article reported on the death of professional football player and sports announcer Pat Summerall at the age of 82. While the article detailed Summerall's death, as well as his substance abuse problems, the two were not related as Summerall had been sober and healthy since 1992 (Goldstein, 2013a). Nevertheless, a total of nine articles referred to the death of a celebrity resulting from substance abuse.

Of these nine articles, four (13%) of them portrayed death as the only consequence of substance abuse. One of them confirmed that singer Amy Winehouse died as a result of consuming alcohol after a period of abstinence. Furthermore, this article reported that Winehouse "voluntarily consumed alcohol" and that her death was "unexpected" (McKinley Jr., 2013a, para. 3). Noting that Winehouse's alcohol consumption was voluntary and deliberate allows readers to believe that other celebrities or substance abusers may be consuming alcohol against their will. Potentially, this is to highlight the paradox of substance abuse, where individuals use substances despite their desire not to partake in them.

Winehouse's death was not the only one that was "unexpected." In an article reporting on actor Cory Monteith's death, the journalist also quoted that Monteith had an "unexpected death last month" (Carter, 2013, para. 1). While Monteith's death was a result of a "toxic combination of alcohol and heroin," it was strange that both of these deaths were "unexpected" given that both

Winehouse and Monteith were known to struggle with substance abuse (Carter, 2013, para. 3). Attributing these deaths as “unexpected” enables readers to believe that death is not a typical result or consequence of substance abuse, but rather an unanticipated side effect.

The notion that death from substance abuse is surprising continues as Kennedy (2013) reported that artist Jason Rhoades died from an “accidental overdose” (para. 1). In addition, hockey player Derek Boogaard “was found dead of an accidental overdose of prescription painkillers and alcohol” (Branch, 2013, para. 2). It is important to note that Branch (2013) referenced that Boogaard had become addicted to painkillers and was not taking them as prescribed. This implies that while these overdoses were not planned, there is a safe amount of substances that an individual can consume without the risk of death, overdose, or addiction.

The aforementioned examples demonstrate that substance abuse and death are correlated. However, all the articles exemplified mentioned substance abuse and death in passing, with no details. For example, while articles disclosed to readers that celebrities have died, and also mentioned why (such as overdosing on alcohol and heroin), no details regarding a celebrity’s physical health before he or she died is provided, such as a struggle with a heart condition, effects on memory loss and/or reliability, etc. The reader is almost left to believe that these individuals took substances and then, as a result, died peacefully, or in their sleep.

Only one article noted the turmoil and depression that substance abuse may bring by telling the story of country singer Mindy McCready. McCready, who had suffered from substance abuse most of her life was found dead on her front porch from what appeared to be “a self-inflicted gunshot wound” (Kleinfield, 2013, para. 4). It was noted that she also shot her boyfriend’s dog before taking her own life, both as a result of substance abuse, although the article did not report whether McCready was under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time. While the more graphic nature of her death was not the reported norm for substance abusers, as depicted by *The New York Times*, it serves as an example of the chaos that ensues from substance abuse (Shaffer, 1997).

#### Rehabilitation and Treatment

Substance abuse and addiction has significant impacts on an individual’s health. As a result, individuals enter into rehabilitation centers and treatment to get healthy. Treatment is a common option for substance abuse. Many forms of treatment exist for substance abuse such as self-help groups (Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12 step programs), outpatient treatment (where individuals live a normal day to day life at home and attend therapy sessions throughout the week), or inpatient treatment (where individuals reside at a rehabilitation or treatment center for a duration of time). NIDA (2011) reported that 2.6 million people entered into a substance abuse treatment facility in 2009. Furthermore, NIDA (2011) states that often the financial burden of a treatment facility limits the number of admissions. However, treatment centers are a common and viable

consequence for many celebrity and non-celebrity substance abusers. Despite differences in types of treatment, predominantly, *The New York Times* reported on inpatient treatment centers.

Many of the celebrities involved in substance abuse, according to *The New York Times*, had been to a rehabilitation center or involved in some form of treatment for their substance abuse. Ten articles (32%) highlighted participation in treatment for substance abuse. While entering into a rehabilitation center or partaking in treatment has both physical and emotional health costs, the articles demonstrated that “checking into” or “going to” a treatment center was emphasized, rather than the emotional or psychological work that often takes place during treatment.

Of the ten articles depicting celebrities participating in treatment, nine of them included inpatient rehabilitation centers where the substance abuser stayed at a residential treatment center for a duration of time. Of these rehabilitation centers, only one article specified which treatment center a celebrity went to -- the Betty Ford Center. Furthermore, a depiction of other forms of treatment existed in only one article, where Chiara de Blasio (a politician’s daughter) was involved in “group therapy at an outpatient treatment center” (Hernandez & Grynbaum, 2013, para. 6). While celebrities may want to maintain their privacy, mentioning specific treatment centers may help readers to understand where help is available, and make going to treatment less elusive.

The article about de Blasio and two articles about Monteith acknowledged that they were involved in treatment. These were the only three articles (10%) which noted that the celebrities went to treatment willingly. The idea that celebrities go to treatment on their own accord seemed to be important as *The New York Times* reported that Monteith “voluntarily checked himself into a rehabilitation facility” (Itzkoff, 2013b, para. 2), and that Monteith “sought rehabilitation” (Itzkoff, 2013a, para. 9). One article noted that actress Lisa Robin Kelly died in a treatment center, but whether she went to treatment willingly or not was not reported.

Surprisingly, the remaining articles (n = 7, 22%) noted that while celebrities entered into treatment, it was not necessarily voluntarily. For example, Pat Summerall (a professional football player and sports announcer) entered treatment at his family’s request. Goldstein (2103a) claimed that after Summerall “was confronted by family members, friends and associates during an intervention, he was persuaded to enter a substance-abuse clinic” (para. 8). The article also noted that Summerall “emerged” from treatment a sober man, and maintained that sobriety for 21 years until his passing.

As depicted in the news stories under investigation, treatment seemed to be the practical option when a celebrity was caught abusing substances or causing a spectacle as a result of substance abuse. For example, Green Day musician Billy Joe Armstrong entered treatment, but not until he “delivered a tirade at a music festival” (Chinen, 2013, para. 4). Furthermore, major league

baseball player Dwight Gooden was quoted as saying “I tested positive for cocaine, I gotta go to rehab” (Goldman, 2013, para. 4). This quote is especially intriguing, as it seems that if a celebrity athlete tests positive for drugs, then they automatically go to rehabilitation. Furthermore, it situated Gooden’s decision to go to rehab not as a result of using cocaine itself, but due to the fact that he got caught, thereby framing treatment as a penalty. The framing of entering treatment centers willingly or not portrays the assistance negatively as a punishment or positively as a step in the right direction,

In contrast, while Branch (2013) noted that hockey player Boogaard was “sent to drug rehabilitation a second time” (para. 13), Boogaard previously violated National Hockey League rules many times, “including failed drug tests,” yet he was “never disciplined or suspended” (para. 19). However, as noted, the National Hockey League eventually sent Boogaard to rehabilitation two times.

In summary, participating in rehabilitation and treatment centers is a viable option for substance abusers. Furthermore, while entering into treatment programs for substance abuse is a consequence that may have positive effects, only half of the individuals portrayed as doing so remained sober after treatment as reported in *The New York Times*; thereby emphasizing the difficulty of sobriety and the prevalence of relapse. This number is congruent with the number of individuals who are not celebrities that relapse after treatment, as 40 – 60% of people relapse after substance abuse treatment (NIDA, 2008). Additionally, while some individuals enter treatment willingly, it seems that a large portion of

celebrities depicted participated in treatment to satisfy other individuals (e.g. family and fans) or organizations (e.g. professional sports leagues).

### Physical Health

As mentioned, death from substance abuse and the inability to be an athlete at the professional level have to do with physical health. Although the way in which these themes were presented did not address the direct correlation that substance abuse has on the physical body. Instead, it seems that substance abuse has no physical consequences apart from death in this analysis. In contrast, most research depicts declining physical health (such as heart problems, liver cancer, and seizures) and deteriorating mental health (such as depression, suicides, and anxiety) as the primary consequence of substance abuse (NIDA, 2008; NSDUH, 2012).

However, only one article (3%) depicted some physical consequences that substance abuse had on a celebrity's health outside of death. Although, much like other consequences in *The New York Times*, it was mentioned in passing. Specifically, one line was devoted to explaining a book that actress Kristen Johnston wrote titled *Guts*, which is "mostly about the time my guts blew up in response to my lengthy love affair with booze and pills" (Johnston, 2013, para. 2). While this quote depicted the effect substance abuse may have on one's physical health, it appears that articles were much more focused on the link between substance abuse and death. For example, Johnston (2013) continued "this is an epidemic that now claims more lives per year than car accidents. It kills

more people per year than guns. Drugs are the No. 1 cause of deaths in emergency rooms” (para. 16). While death was continually underscored as a health consequence of substance abuse, any other physical health implications that arise from substance abuse were seemingly nonexistent; although a few articles highlighted the emotional toll substance abuse can have.

### Psychological Consequences

Unquestionably substance abuse has emotional and psychological consequences. Many of the physical consequences of substance abuse previously depicted also have emotional consequences. For instance, spending time in a rehabilitation center or jail contains psychological consequences of not having an individual’s typical freedoms, such as being deprived of family and friends. Furthermore, Kassel (2010) depicted that substance abuse can create devastating psychological damage. Psychological effects from substance abuse, for example, may include violent and paranoid behavior, loss of interest in friends and family, confusion, and loss of control. Yet, very few articles in the sample acknowledged the costs that substance abuse has psychologically. Of the 31 articles under investigation, only five (16%) presented any reference or examples of such emotional strain.

Alienating Friends and Family. Many of the articles which depicted emotional consequences of substance abuse did so in relation to celebrities’ families and friends. For example, Dwight Gooden (Goldman, 2013) described the effect his substance abuse had on his father. In an interview with Goldman

(2013), Goodman recalled his father's response after he told his father of his testing positive for cocaine. Gooden's father "never said a word. He just dropped his head. I'd never seen that look on my dad's face. I knew that I had just broken his heart" (Goldman, 2013, para. 4). In this example, Gooden demonstrated the emotional pain that he and his father experienced as a result of substance abuse.

As previously mentioned, Holson (2013) also noted that Madden estranged his family while in prison, although no emotional words or connections were used to explain or define this "loss." Another article demonstrated the loss of family as Goldstein (2013a) quoted professional football player Pat Summerall. Summerall said, "I was spending more and more time on the road just to be around the party scene, always to the detriment of my family. I had walked away from my marriage and alienated my three kids. They didn't deserve that treatment" (Goldstein, 2013a, para. 11). While the article did not mention the emotional pain the loss of the relationships had, it was put in the context of regret. However, the article did not mention how Summerall navigated through the emotional turmoil, regret, or reconciliation with his family despite him being sober from 1992 until his death in 2013.

Emotional and Mental Costs. Some articles provided more detail about of the wreckage that substance abuse may have on an individual's mental and emotional state. Madden recalled his past as being a "blur" as a result of the mind-altering substances, demonstrating that substance abuse has a negative

effect with memory (Holson, 2013, para. 18). Furthermore, Brett Butler acknowledged that a Vicodin addiction “made her unreliable, irrational and, at the end, unable to function” (Rhodes, 2013, para. 6). While previous articles emphasized Butler’s conclusion with examples of death, arrests, and loss of careers and homes, this was the first article to attach specific emotional words and ownership to these consequences of substance abuse.

One of the more explicit examples of substance abuse consequences on a user’s mental state was given by the now deceased football player Walt Sweeney (Slotnik, 2013a). Sweeney blamed the N.F.L. for his addiction and while he was able to have a long career as a professional athlete, it came with an expense. Sweeney quoted, “if a guy breaks his back in the N.F.L., they’ll pay him. That didn’t happen to me. Instead, these guys broke my mind” (Slotnik, 2013a, para. 18). While this example did not demonstrate Sweeney taking ownership for his substance abuse, it portrayed the psychological consequences that substance abuse had on him; although personal examples of how Sweeney’s mind was “broken” were nonexistent.

### Criminal Consequences

After health-related consequences, the second most prevalent theme found in this examination of *The New York Times* was legal consequences. Specifically, getting arrested is a common cost of substance abuse. Much like treatment centers, getting arrested and serving jail or prison time has physical as

well as emotional consequences. Many articles reported on the arrests and incarceration of celebrities who abused substances (n = 7, 23%). Emphasis within these articles was put on being physically away from family and other things, such as restaurants and privacy that individuals with freedom can access. Furthermore, many of the articles detailed the duration of time spent in jail or prison, unlike treatment centers where the length of time in treatment seemed irrelevant.

Seven articles depicted arrests, jail, or prison time as consequences of substance abuse. However, many of these articles did not go into detail regarding these arrests, and the actual legal consequences were only mentioned in passing. For example, Belson (2013) noted that professional football player Justin Blackmon “was arrested during a traffic stop...after the police said a breath test showed his blood-alcohol content to be three time the legal limit” (para. 4). Despite this arrest happening months prior to the publication of the article, nothing else regarding legal sentencing or legal consequences was mentioned.

Blackmon was not the only celebrity mentioned getting arrested for drunk driving, as Slotnik (2013b) reported that actress Lisa Robin Kelly was arrested “once for driving while intoxicated” (para. 6). Although, no details were provided such as expanding on length of arrests, financial costs, loss of a driver’s license or other typical consequences of driving intoxicated. The lack of details or expansion of legal consequences for celebrity substance abusers continued in an interview with professional baseball player Gooden. Instead, Goldman (2013)

only claimed that Gooden “wound up in jail after testing positive for cocaine use,” (para. 1) not saying anything else about Gooden’s jail sentence.

Another article discussing Scott Thorson’s long time struggle with substance abuse acknowledged that he had many encounters with the law. Segal (2013) reported that Thorson has faced “several stints in prison” (para. 11), and that he conducted the interview for the article with Thorson at the Washoe County Jail. While his current jail time was from a burglary, the article clearly put this crime in relation to Thorson’s substance abuse by continually demonstrating that Thorson squandered money to buy drugs, has numerous arrests for substance abuse, and struggled most of his life to get sober (Segal, 2013). Furthermore, the article detailed that Thorson plead guilty, asked to be placed in a treatment center and faced probation “with a suspended prison sentence of 2 to 30 years and combined fines of up to \$110,000” (para. 13). This was the only article referencing legal financial consequences. Surprisingly, none of the articles described any form of substance abuse treatment available in jail or prison. Not one celebrity who had been to prison or jail demonstrated that substance abuse treatment was available to them, leaving the reader to believe that it was not, or that incarceration was treatment itself. Furthermore, Thorson’s request to go to a treatment center solidified the absence of substance abuse treatment availability during incarceration.

While no articles depicted celebrities taking advantage of treatment programs while in jail or prison, two articles (6%) exemplified celebrities who

were sentenced to prison terms and emerged from that experience “reformed.” Thus, meaning they did not go back to a life of substance abuse. One focused on a professional football player, Chuck Muncie, who “was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison in 1989 after pleading guilty to intending to sell two ounces of cocaine to a friend” (Goldstein, 2013b, para. 12). Muncie was quoted as realizing that “he was the one with the problem” when he was “behind bars,” and that his time in prison served as a “turning point” (Goldstein, 2013b, para. 14).

Another individual, designer Steve Madden, served “two and a half years” in prison for stock fraud, which was “fueled by drugs, alcohol, and his love of money” (Holson, 2013, para. 5). However, it had been a decade since Madden’s prison sentence and he was now sober, married, and back to work in the fashion business. Additionally, as a result of his substance abuse, imprisonment, and a court-ordered alcohol rehabilitation program, Madden said that “money is no longer the important thing in his life” and he defined success as “having a nice family” (Holson, 2013, para. 48).

While all the articles listed above demonstrated consequences of substance abuse, Holson’s (2013) article about Madden was the only news story with detail about these consequences. For example, Madden stated that in prison “you have a different life. A spartan life” (Holson, 2013, para. 28). Madden depicted his time in prison as an experience that “gives you perspective” where all he thought about was “surviving” (Holson, 2013, para. 32). However, despite

his prison time being described as a hardened “spartan” life, where “surviving” consumed his thoughts, Holson (2013) claimed that “in prison, Mr. Madden softened” (para. 31). It was this “softening” that enabled Madden to change; from his prison time “Mr. Madden saw a longing for stability” (Holson, 2013, para. 32). While Madden’s time in prison demonstrated some of the emotional strains as a consequence of substance abuse, he primarily emphasized (as did other articles) the loss of his material possessions. While criminal consequences are imminent with substance abuse, news outlets are likely to exemplify and report on them since criminality has news value.

### Financial Consequences

Undoubtedly, substance abuse can often lead to the loss of material possessions; as such, it was the third most common theme found in this investigation. Seven articles (23%) in *The New York Times* reported on the financial costs of substance abuse. In this analysis, themes regarding loss of material possessions were represented. Articles either demonstrated a loss of material goods, or loss of career.

### Material Consequences

Only six articles (19%) reported directly on the loss of material possessions as a result of financial consequences. For example, Thorson continually stressed the accumulation of material possessions as a result of stardom. He said that he was “showered with gifts including mink coats and cars”

as well as “spending \$100,000 in about two months on cars and jewelry” (Segal, 2013, para. 15). However, the article repeatedly claimed that Thorson had lost those things long ago as a result of substance abuse. Furthermore, he was in jail when the article was written as he was arrested for burglary and using a stolen credit card (Segal, 2013, para. 7).

Further noting the loss of material possessions as a result of incarceration was Madden, who reported that in prison there were “no more restaurants or sex, good food or family” (Holson, 2013, para. 28). Assuming celebrities are accustomed to a high standard of living, articles depicted the loss of access to the luxuries of stardom and fame. While Madden quoted that he also alienated his family as a result of substance abuse, it seemed that the lack of “restaurants, sex, or good food” were just as much of a consequence (and equally important).

Losing a Home. Most of the articles that discussed the material losses from substance abuse did so in the context of losing a home. For example, Segal (2013) demonstrated that Thorson eventually “landed at a Christian-based homeless shelter” (para. 36) for a period of time. In addition, Goldstein (2013b) reported that athlete Chuck Muncie was “found unwashed and homeless outside Cal’s Memorial Stadium” (para. 12). The connection between homelessness and financial loss was best signified by Rhodes (2013) in an article about Brett Butler. Acknowledging that she could not “survive success” and was a substance abuser, Rhodes (2013) reported that “Ms. Butler lost what was left of her once-substantial resources last year. The farm went into foreclosure, and she was, for

a time, homeless. She was broke” (para. 17). From these examples, *The New York Times* understandably demonstrated that the ultimate financial consequence of substance abuse is the loss of a home.

### Career Consequences

Four articles (13%) depicted the loss of a job or career as a result of substance abuse. Surprisingly, all four articles were about professional athletes. This appears to demonstrate that professional sporting organizations may have stricter rules than careers in entertainment regarding substance abuse. That is, it is more difficult to maintain a physically demanding career than other celebrities whose careers are less physical. Furthermore, it is easier to make a comeback for other celebrities such as actors and actresses who are substance abusers as opposed to athletes who must condition their bodies to prepare for their work. However, one article demonstrated a comeback by baseball player Josh Hamilton who is sober and playing professional baseball after “drug addiction cost him three seasons in the minor leagues” (Kepner, 2013, para. 8).

Not all celebrities were so lucky. For example, one news story was published only to inform readers of an individual’s career loss. Belson (2013) reported that “Jacksonville Jaguars receiver Justin Blackmon was suspended indefinitely without pay on Friday for violating the N.F.L.’s substance-abuse policy” (para. 1). Blackmon was not the only professional athlete whose substance abuse cost him his career. Another professional football player, Chuck Muncie, also had a career that “was cut short by drug abuse” (Goldstein, 2013b,

para. 1). Undoubtedly, these examples show that substance abuse is an obstacle to maintaining a professional career. This is an idea that is solidified by the texts of the articles under analysis, but not by the images presented.

Lastly, professional football player Walt Sweeney was faced with an obstacle early in his career while playing college football. Slotnik (2013a) wrote that as result of a “drunken brawl, Sweeney said that he lost his scholarship” (para. 13). However, Sweeney’s talent superseded his consequences of substance abuse as a “wealthy alumnus paid the rest of his tuition” (Slotnik, 2013a, para. 13). While this enabled Sweeney to have a full football career, he continued to struggle with substance abuse his entire life. Furthermore, Sweeney blamed the N.F.L. for his drug addiction. This may make readers wonder that if an alumnus did not rescue him from the consequence of a lost scholarship and enable him to have a football career, then Sweeney may not have suffered a lifetime of substance abuse.

#### Conclusion: Substance Abuse has Physical, but not Emotional, Consequences

In summary, most of the articles (n = 26, 84%) demonstrated consequences of substance abuse. *The New York Times* predominantly reported on substance abuse consequences relating to health; specifically, death, sociological consequences such as going to treatment facilities, and psychological issues including alienating friends and family, emotional, and mental costs. Since the articles did not exhibit a relationship between substance

abuse and physical health (outside of death), they negated the impact that substance abuse has on the physical body. Consequences of substance abuse also included criminal activity, where celebrities were portrayed as criminals by either being arrested or going to jail for substance abuse. Lastly, *The New York Times* demonstrates that substance abuse has financial consequences, primarily losing a home or a career.

In conclusion, most articles (n = 25, 81%) presented consequences of substance abuse, but many of them did so in passing, without establishing the role or relationship that consequences had with substance abuse. Furthermore, of the 25 articles presented, despite varied consequences arising from substance abuse, less than half (n = 9, 29%) demonstrated celebrities as sober after they faced consequences. Ideally these consequences should inform readers that substance abuse is beyond one's choice or moral failure but rather an illness in which people need help in managing. However, ideologically, these portrayals inform readers that regardless of potential death, imprisonment or loss of material possessions or career, the majority of celebrities continue their substance abuse as if they are impenetrable of such consequences.

CHAPTER FIVE  
MARGINALIZING THE DISCOURSE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
AND MAGNIFYING THE ROLE OF CELEBRITY  
THROUGH INFOTAINMENT

Overall, this analysis reveals important ideological implications within the 31 texts under examination. This research is based on the fact that addiction is a problem which affects millions of individuals (NIDA, 2008; NSDUH, 2010). Furthermore, media play an integral role in shaping public concern about social issues, such as substance abuse (Hughes, Lancaster, & Spicer, 2011). Also, celebrities are a large part of the popular media landscape (Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004) and celebrity stories and images are part of our everyday fabric (Fowler, 2006). As a result, while celebrities are portrayed as elite individuals in media, they are also ordinary people and susceptible to addiction, therefore their addictions are newsworthy. Since substance abuse is a major issue in society and celebrities are cultural markers, this analysis discovered how media frames celebrity substance abuse and what consequences of celebrity substance abuse are portrayed in media.

In Chapter 3, I employed a critical discourse analysis to discover how *The New York Times* portrays celebrity substance abuse. While some articles did report on the discourse of sobriety, it was presented in a limited way. News stories report on celebrity substance abuse in an episodic rather than thematic

frame, thereby emphasizing substance abuse as an individual issue rather than a social one. More often than not, *The New York Times* glossed over the recovery aspect of addiction and simply reported that celebrities just became sober and their struggle with substance abuse merely ends. This presents a dichotomy between reality and news reporting. That is, in reality sobriety is hard to achieve and maintain. However, news reports suggest that sobriety is relatively easy to obtain, despite many *New York Times* articles acknowledging the magnitude of relapse among celebrity substance abusers. Lastly, when examining how celebrity substance abuse is portrayed in *The New York Times*, it is apparent that the role of being a celebrity is at the heart of the news stories by focusing more on celebrities' careers, achievements, and other positive topics rather than on their substance abuse. Furthermore, headlines focus on celebrities rather than substance abuse by naming celebrities and their careers rather than using substance abuse or related words, and images. By doing so, they reflect that celebrities are able to maintain their careers and happiness despite being substance abusers.

In Chapter 4, I employed a critical discourse analysis to discover how *The New York Times* portrays celebrity substance abuse *consequences*. In doing so, I discovered three overarching themes: health, criminal penalties, and material costs. However, when analyzing the news stories there were a limited range of topics presented within these themes. For example, despite health-related consequences being present, the focus of news stories was on death or entering

treatment or rehabilitation centers to become healthy. Surprisingly, the relationship between substance abuse and physical health issues (outside of death) and psychological health is almost completely neglected. Secondly, substance abuse was criminalized as many articles depicted the consequences of substance abuse as getting arrested or going to jail. Lastly, articles demonstrated financial consequences of substance abuse but did so by focusing on loss of material items, the loss of a home, and loss of a career. Furthermore, minimal headlines linked celebrity consequences to substance abuse, and the few that did, reported only on celebrities' deaths. In addition, none of the articles' images depicted consequences of celebrity substance abuse, but instead overarchingly demonstrated celebrities actively participating in their careers.

### Ideological Implications

From these findings, the way *The New York Times* reports on celebrity substance abuse has a myriad of implications pertaining to substance abuse, celebrities, and news worthiness. First, news stories limit the way in which substance abuse may be interpreted by readers due to the lack of information. Second, news stories emphasize that celebrity status supersedes substance abuse and exhibits an unrealistic portrayal of substance abuse as a result of celebrity status. Lastly, the portrayal of celebrity substance abuse in news stories exemplifies that celebrity status is more newsworthy than substance abuse, demonstrating a trend in news towards infotainment.

## Substance Abuse

Research demonstrates that media images construct meaning regarding social issues (Gamson et al., 1992), such as substance abuse, and suggest new meanings outside of the written text (Abraham & Appiah, 2006). This may lead to readers altering or reinforcing personal frames regarding substance abuse, such as believing substance abuse is a moral failing rather than a disease. Often, the media (particularly press) frame substance abuse issues as an “epidemic” or “crises” which contributes towards moral panics (Beckett, 1994; Denham, 2008; Homan, 2003; Taylor, 2008). However, the news reports under analysis do not exemplify this view. Hughes, Lancaster, and Spicer (2011) note that an absence of framing drugs as a crisis issue may lead to reporting on a less sensationalized view of illicit drug issues. While this analysis demonstrates a less sensationalized view of substance abuse, the way that substance abuse is portrayed is narrowly framed.

Substance Abusers as Criminals. While many news stories naturalize the consumption of alcohol, thereby underplaying negative outcomes (Hansen, 2003; Hundley, 1995; Strate, 1992), this analysis reveals that celebrity substance abuse is not naturalized because it is not exempt from negative consequences. However, apart from death, consequences exemplify the ideological notion that substance abuse is framed in relation to crime, deviance, and retribution (Blood, Williams, & McCallum, 2003; Watts, 2003). While framing substance abuse around crime, deviation, and retribution provides a depiction of a moral panic,

news stories contextualize substance abuse episodically, thereby demonstrating substance abuse as an issue isolated to a few individuals. This ideology is reified as consequences of substance abuse are twofold: (1) celebrities go to treatment as retribution; and (2) celebrities are portrayed as deviant because they are arrested and serve jail time. Specifically, many articles emphasize celebrities being punished for their indiscretions such as going to treatment against their will or being arrested and serving jail sentences. Thus, substance abusers are framed as individuals who deserve punishment, rather than help (Hughes, Lancaster, & Spicer, 2011; Teece & Makkai, 2000). This concept is further embodied in the articles where no mention of substance abuse treatment in jail or prison is presented. Framing substance abusers as transgressive individuals instead of people who need help has implications for the disease concept of substance abuse.

Instead of *The New York Times* depicting substance abusers as sick individuals, they are presented as individuals, who, while experiencing consequences, ultimately have “control” over their lives. Narrowing the discourse of substance abuse to an individual level provides a frame of reference for readers that substance abuse is not a disease; instead, it is something limited to certain persons who make bad choices. In essence, the newspaper implies that substance abusers need to stop using drugs and alcohol, but no treatment or method of doing so is presented. As a result, it is up to the individual to figure it out or just simply stop abusing substances.

Substance Abuse as a Disease. Heim et al. (2001) note that substance abuse is approached in terms of a disease, a response to psycho-social factors, or determined by pharmacology of substances. In addition, there are copious amounts of research supporting the concept of addiction as a disease (Hyman, 2005; Leshner, 1997; Volkow & Fowler, 2000). However, in this analysis substance abuse is not portrayed in this frame.

Instead of being identified as a disease, substance abuse is portrayed under the ideological assumption that it is an individual problem. This may contribute to news reports' lack of providing information on how to help people overcome substance abuse. While some stories did provide minimal details depicting how celebrities overcame substance abuse, many stories demonstrated that individuals were "struck sober." Substance abuse is a life-threatening disease, yet no article depicted celebrities "fighting for their lives." In this analysis, it is evident that news reports take the "disease model" of addiction for granted where no medical discourse is present.

The absence of medical discourse in terms of substance abuse has major implications on how substance abuse is viewed culturally. Hansen and Gunter (2007) aver that news stories play a vital role in building "public and political agendas" as well as framing "the terms of discussion around alcohol" and drugs (p. 153). Furthermore, the climate of opinion regarding alcohol and drugs is affected by how substance abuse is portrayed in news stories (Nicholls, 2011). However, "successful media advocacy depends on health advocates establishing

themselves as key sources for information on alcohol and drugs in the news” (Nicholls, 2011, p. 201). Nevertheless, in this analysis, no articles contained any reference to substance abuse in medical terms or as a disease. Furthermore, no health advocates, health experts, or addiction professionals were featured in news stories. Instead, the celebrities were portrayed as addiction professionals and served as key sources for information on alcohol and drugs; thus narrowing the way that substance abuse is portrayed in the news, diminishing the health aspects of substance abuse, and potentially upholding stigmas regarding substance abuse as a moral, individual failing rather than a disease (Palamar, Halkitis, & Kiang, 2013).

In fact, most articles under investigation emphasized and focused on the act of substance abuse over the act of attempting to overcome substance abuse. These findings concur with Nicholls’ (2011) idea that simply being a celebrity substance abuser is often sufficient enough to merit media coverage. However, Oksanen (2012) claims that being merely drunk is no longer authentic for stars, and instead, surviving addiction after a hitting rock bottom is. Despite Oksanen’s (2012) findings, stories of celebrities overcoming substance abuse are minimal. Furthermore, since substance abuse is not depicted as a disease in these news reports, the magnitude that substance abuse has in society is missing. Instead of focusing on the social and cultural issue of substance abuse, news reports focus on narrow, individual accounts and experiences and in doing so depict substance abuse in an episodic frame.

Smith et al. (2009) argue that representing the episodic nature of events over social causes and preventative action in regards to celebrity news stories is concerning. Representations of substance abuse in an episodic frame narrow the disease concept of addiction. Instead, the focal point is on the individual, consequently enabling readers to feel that substance abuse may be an individual or moral failing, particularly when stories demonstrate that some celebrities “decided” to be sober, and it was so. This supports Hersey’s (2005) findings where he concluded that the broad range in understanding the nature of addiction is ignored in film; thereby demonstrating a narrow understanding of addiction. A view that establishes individuals struggling with addiction only to be followed by a prompt recovery to continue a healthy life (Hersey, 2005).

Hellman (2010) states that trends of individualization in substance abuse stories allow readers to easily relate; however, by doing so it symbolically annihilates the social implications. Hence, the financial and psychological tolls on the culture are omitted. This analysis confirms that substance abuse is presented as an isolated and individual issue in regards to celebrities. However, substance abuse is not an individual and isolated unit, but a societal issue with large cultural implications. Focusing substance abuse stories in this fashion negates the impacts that substance abuse and consequences of substance abuse have on society.

Substance Abuse and Health. Indisputably, substance abuse has severe consequences to an individual’s physical health. While some articles

acknowledge this, it is done so primarily through portraying celebrity deaths. Oksanen (2012) claims that psychological and social conflicts are the distinguishing factors between individuals who are troublesome substance abusers from those can take drugs and alcohol without causing trouble. While *The New York Times* articles demonstrate some social conflicts such as arrests and losing a home or career, the impact that substance abuse has with psychological conflicts is substantially minimized.

This is problematic since research demonstrates a relationship between substance abuse and psychological health effects which typically include depression, paranoia, and anxiety (Drake, Mercer-McFadden, Mueser, McHugo, & Bond, 1998; NIDA, 2008, NSDUH, 2010; Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997). Furthermore, mental health and substance abuse do not operate independently of each other, but instead are interdependent. Since *The New York Times* reporting on celebrity substance abuse does not establish a connection between substance abuse and mental health, they are providing an inaccurate representation that can misinform readers. By doing so they are omitting a vital piece of knowledge regarding substance abuse.

Even further diminished is the impact that substance abuse has on one's physical health. While Nicholls (2011) found that health impacts are a significant frame in news reports for substance abuse, this analysis contradicts his research. Furthermore, Nicholls (2011) notes that long-term liver damage from alcohol was the dominant health-related frame; however, my research found only

one mention of physical health related problems, outside of death, in *The New York Times*. The differences between Nicholls (2011) research and this analysis may be in part that Nicholls (2011) examined UK news reports. However, since both analyses examined credible hard news sources, some congruency should be expected. In addition, the images presented show no impact of substance abuse on the celebrities' physical health. Instead, they are portrayed as happy and healthy people.

While some physical health consequences were present, they were limited to the narrow framing of death. Certainly, this is a vital aspect of substance abuse, although the ideology that no health implications arise from substance abuse before death as presented in this analysis undermines the relationship between substance abuse and the physical body. According to these news stories, it seems that death, having to go to treatment, and criminal penalties are the only consequences present, with no explanation of how substance abuse affects the mind and body. This is akin to showing someone who was diagnosed with cancer, for instance, and then showing them dead; these representations cut out the *process* of the disease. For example, focusing on the process of the disease would include examples, statistics, and stories on treatment and recovery from cancer. A process that is dynamic and daily, similar to the process of substance abuse recovery.

By limiting the view of substance abuse consequences on physical health to death and narrowing the relationship between substance abuse and mental

health, readers are not exposed to the reality of substance abuse. The reality is that substance abuse impacts every aspect of physical health including cardiovascular effects, respiratory effects, and gastrointestinal effects, among others. For example, alcohol abuse often leads to cirrhosis of the liver where an individual becomes weak and jaundiced due to the liver shutting down; cocaine abusers are often emaciated due to a diminished appetite and the reduction of the body's ability to store fat; or the notable tooth decay and loss of a methamphetamine abuser. Furthermore, consequences of mental health are diminished and stories do not expose readers to the realities of paranoia, depression, aggression, and possible hallucinations that can be caused by substance abuse (NIDA, 2008). As a result of this analysis, consequences of substance abuse on physical health, mental health, and career abilities may aid in constructing a belief that celebrities are above substance abuse consequences on their health and career.

### Celebrities

This analysis solidifies the fact that the practice of reporting on celebrities has pervaded even the most highly acclaimed news media (Gorin & Dubied, 2011; Turner, 2010). Furthermore, this examination of articles from *The New York Times* about celebrity substance abuse reveals other ideological assumptions and further highlights the power of celebrity status. Specifically, the duality of celebrities, distinctions between the types of celebrities, and the

importance of celebrities staying current and in the spotlight in order to maintain stardom are discerned in this study.

The Duality of Celebrities. Previous research demonstrates that there is a duality of stardom (Dyer, 1979; Furedi, 2010; Maltby et al., 2002). At the heart of this duality is how celebrities are viewed by audiences and portrayed in media. Mediated portrayals of stars demonstrate that celebrities are special and unique individuals while simultaneously being ordinary. Furedi (2010) notes that celebrities have “unique personalities and attractiveness” combined with an element of normalcy, as “normal” people doing “normal” things and experiencing problems and disappointments of day-to-day life (pp. 493–494). This has the ability to make powerful and elite celebrities into intimate and well-known figures for the audience (Furedi, 2010).

This research further reifies the notion that celebrities are ordinary and normal individuals, as news stories depict celebrities having substance abuse issues, financial problems, relationship difficulties and career problems. However, within the news stories present, it is near impossible to forget that the stories are about special and unique individuals. Essentially, if these articles were not about celebrities, they would be exempt from news selection.

Specifically, while the articles mention substance abuse issues, readers are never allowed to forget that the stories are about celebrities. In fact, with the application and references to celebrities’ names, careers, and successes consistently referenced in headlines, news stories, and images, readers are

constantly reminded that these are indeed “special” people. Furthermore, the images presented are ever reminding of the fact that the celebrities reported on live special and different lives apart from ordinary citizens.

While the news stories under analysis demonstrate that celebrities suffer from substance abuse and substance abuse consequences, much like everyday people, the images uphold the concept of celebrity duality. Images consistently portrayed celebrities as healthy and happy, often participating in career-related activities, giving the impression that substance abuse does not conflict with their ability to work. This contradiction does not seem out of place, thereby making the social construction of a special, yet normal, celebrity seem customary and natural.

Furthermore, Maltby et al. (2002) state that due to celebrity status, deviant behavior of some stars may be “forgiven or explained away when similar” (p. 1158). While this is not exemplified by a majority of the articles, it is still apparent in some of the news stories under investigation. For example, while consequences of substance abuse were presented in the news stories, such as loss of a home or being sent to jail, in many articles, consequences were not present. Some articles depicted individuals who had no consequences for testing positive for illicit drugs by athletic organizations, despite substance abuse being a violation of the organization’s policy. Other examples are present, such as a celebrity who lost a scholarship, only to be funded by individuals on account of

their athletic talent, and a celebrity using cocaine and marijuana, but the news story quotes individuals saying it is a normal behavior for celebrities.

This version of substance abuse is different than one that takes place in reality where individuals who test positive for workplace drug tests are subject to consequences such as being sent to treatment, being suspended or even terminated from the workplace (Carpenter, 2007). Moreover, when a non-celebrity is abusing substances, the likelihood of substance abuse being considered “normal,” “expected,” or “not a big deal” is significantly minimized. Instead, *The New York Times* presented some celebrities’ behavior and substance abuse as expected, thereby depicting them as special entities immune to the consequences of substance abuse as a result of status. Framing substance abuse in relation to celebrity and demonstrating unrealistic scenarios, where celebrity behavior is forgiven and explained away may alter the perception that audiences have on substance abuse.

Demonstrating substance abuse in this way allows audiences to use these mediated frames as references when trying to understand and converse about substance abuse in reality, where they are likely to discover that substance abuse behavior is not easily forgiven, understood, or explained. Framing celebrity substance abuse in an individual fashion, where celebrities may not suffer severe consequences and deviant behavior is expected or explained away may lead to a double standard, where we forgive celebrities or expect substance abuse from stars but not ordinary people.

Differences between Celebrities. While all celebrities were framed simultaneously as special and ordinary, some distinction between the types of celebrities is also evident. This analysis reveals that consequences of substance abuse differed for celebrities depending on their careers. Specifically, the newspaper reported that the impact of substance abuse differed between athletes and other celebrities such as actors/actresses, fashion designers, celebrity chefs. For example, substance abuse seemed to have the most effect on athletes' careers. While some actors/actresses suffered career loss, the majority of them were able to regain standing in their profession. However, news stories regarding celebrity athletes repeatedly had consequences affecting the length of an athletic career.

*The New York Times* reported that professional athletes' careers were shortened or suspended as a result of substance abuse. In essence, if a celebrity, such as an athlete, is involved in a highly physical line of work, then it is harder to be a substance abuser and maintain a career than those celebrities whose careers are less physical. Implications of these findings suggest that substance abuse is a larger interference to the life of an individual who has a physical career while others are essentially exempt from career loss as a result of substance abuse. This may be in part to sports teams having drug testing policies whereas other entertainment careers may not.

Portraying celebrity career differences in terms of substance abuse consequences do not demonstrate the dangers of substance abuse for all

addicts, but instead demonstrates that substance abuse may be more dangerous for some and safer for others. Furthermore, by continually highlighting celebrity careers, the focus and emphasis of substance abuse is shifted. It undermines the role of substance abuse, magnifies the role of celebrity status, and implies that substance abuse is portrayed as more acceptable if one is still able to perform workplace tasks.

Maintaining Celebrity Status. While implicitly stated, these news stories aid in maintaining celebrity status. Nunn and Biressi (2010) make reference that in today's news and celebrity market, celebrity narratives are not simply about fame and high achievement, but also about personal flaw, suffering, and dysfunction. Sharing celebrities' private lives and personal careers attract greater public interest than media accounts of their professional lives (Meyers, 2005). This "authentic" celebrity allows readers to develop intimacy with the individual behind the public persona, allowing celebrities to be "potent ideological symbols" (Meyers, 2005, p. 891). Often, these celebrity flaws are concealed, but once revealed to the public, can act as important markers in maintaining celebrity status.

Nunn and Biressi (2010) acknowledge that the celebrity flaw is often complicated by fame and media. Previous research (Cavanaugh & Prasad, 1994) argue that the pressure of high achievement and success that comes with stardom almost instigate substance abuse. While only a couple articles acknowledged that substance abuse was a direct result of celebrity status, the

fact that the articles were about the famous was emphasized. In this analysis of *The New York Times*, almost every article (unless reporting on the death of the celebrity) included the celebrities' opinions through interviews and quotes. This way, the celebrity has the ability to aid in the story, thereby, negotiating the meaning to the audience which they seem fit. While only one article acknowledged that revealing a substance abuse story may have been a public relations stunt (Horyn, 2013) telling the public of a difficult journey or flaw is "a means of attempted self-validation and often rehabilitation of the damaged celebrity persona" (Nunn & Biressi, 2010, p. 50). Therefore, even news stories of a celebrity's transgression or "bad press" is good, as it keeps them in the spotlight. The types of stories presented support Acevedo et al. (2009) acknowledge that deviant celebrity substance abusers are able to maintain the media spotlight by being 'knocked down' from a pedestal so that they may potentially be resurrected.

Essentially, celebrity confessionals invite readers to identify with the celebrity and develop empathy as they express their narratives of being a celebrity with emotions. It is these invitations which allow celebrity deviance and spectacle as reported in the news to maintain celebrity status. In fact, these stories of celebrity deviance are potentially stronger in connecting celebrities with the public, as their narratives and struggles have the ability to humanize the elite and powerful, allowing for continual consumption of celebrity status.

## News Media

Undoubtedly, this research holds implications regarding news media. Before discussing the implications celebrity substance abuse stories may have on news media, it is relevant to establish that news is not neutral (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 2013; Hodgkinson, 2011). While news is based on real events, it is constructed and manufactured, thereby, never unbiased. Furthermore, cultivation theory demonstrates that individuals exposed to media are more likely to adopt a mediated reality as a framework with which to view the world (Gerbner, 1969, 1977), hence establishing that news media play a critical role in the formation of public opinion (Hall et al., 2013). In addition, the way that media frame issues is a reference point that audiences use to interpret and discuss issues according to framing theory (Tuchman, 1978); therefore, audiences are likely to understand substance abuse from the frames that are highlighted within media. From this understanding, reporting on celebrities and substance abuse has implications regarding what news is. For that reason, it is important to address the tabloidization of news, where the lines between information and entertainment are blurred. Also, this research contains ideological implications regarding news values.

Infotainment of News. There is an observable transformation in what news is being reported, and the notion that there is a trend toward the “softening of news” is a consensus in research (Baum, 2002; Bennett, 2003; Schudson, 2003). In essence, “soft news refers to programs with low levels of public affairs

information and hard news refers to shows with high levels of public affairs information” (Hamilton, 2004, p. 15). In addition, soft news may not only refer to subject matter, but also how the news is reported (Baum, 2002). This softening of news is often considered infotainment; news which is somewhere between the boundaries of information and entertainment (Deuze, 2005).

Furthermore, the argument of tabloidization within the news media is evident as well (Connell, 1998). For example, stories on substance abuse would be public affairs information, while stories on celebrities are more likely to be human interest stories. This analysis discovers that almost all the headlines referred to a celebrity or celebrity career but gave no indication of substance abuse. This implies that these articles are not about substance abuse, but about celebrities. Dor (2003) establishes that headlines are “relevance optimizers: They are designed to optimize the relevance of their stories for their readers” (p. 696). Thus, since the headlines in *The New York Times* focus on celebrities and not substance abuse, it establishes that celebrities and celebrity status are more relevant to its audience than substance abuse and addiction. This solidifies Sparks and Tulloch’s (2000) notion that media exemplify a trend of tabloidization when reporting on substance abuse by sensationalizing media content by moving priorities towards entertainment (celebrities) and away from news and information.

*The New York Times* is a dominant news leader with the ability to set the news agenda for other news media (Denham, 2014; Golan, 2006). Furthermore,

*The New York Times* has demonstrated that it is also a major site for political news (Meraz, 2009); thereby it is viewed as a media outlet which delivers hard news. However, this analysis finds that *The New York Times* demonstrates a softening of news despite its reputation. Temple (2006) also notices a shift to an infotainment format in *The New York Times* where stories demonstrated that readers need to be not only informed about world events, but also they need to be entertained. In essence, the stories under analysis show that there is indeed a tabloidization of hard news.

*The New York Times'* reporting on soft news (such as individual accounts of crime, sports, and celebrities) is directly related to the recurrent episodic frames exhibited in the articles under analysis. For example, hard news stories regarding substance abuse would potentially focus on current substance abuse health policies, treatment availability and options, the availability and effect of treatment during incarcerations, the impact of substance abuse on political and financial economy, along with information from health professionals contextualizing the social problems of substance abuse.

Instead, this analysis demonstrates that news stories regarding substance abuse are presented in episodic frames highlighting individual experiences, death, going to treatment, getting arrested, and suffering personal financial and career losses. To further exemplify the softening of the news, stories under analysis are always reported on in relation to celebrities and celebrity experiences, never broadening the scope of discussion to current social

trends of substance abuse or economic implications. Instead of using celebrities to initiate a discussion of substance abuse in terms of social implications, the role of the celebrity is emphasized and used by *The New York Times* to narrow the discourse of substance abuse to individuals which is parallel to previous research findings of substance abuse in media (Hersey, 2005) and mediated portrayals of other social issues (Kunkel et al., 2002; Pascale, 2005).

Even a cursory search for articles on substance abuse but *not* celebrity in *The New York Times'* website reveals news stories investigating the social implications of substance abuse by reporting statistics and referring to previous research studies. It appears that *The New York Times* does report on substance abuse in social terms, but not if there is a presence of celebrity. However, since celebrities are important cultural icons, using them to introduce larger issues of substance abuse such as treatment versus criminalization would contribute to a better understanding of, and conversation about, the realities of substance abuse. While five stories demonstrated a thematic frame by using celebrity as a segue to discuss the broader implications of substance abuse, the majority of the articles presented substance abuse in a narrow, limiting framework. Instead, reporting on the social implications of substance abuse and celebrity substance abuse are distinctively different discourses whose paths do not intersect.

Potentially, the findings that *The New York Times'* ideology on celebrity substance abuse are ones that is limited to individual misfortune and poor decision making are a result of looking at online news stories. Tewksbury and

Althaus (2000) found that online readers are less likely to read international and political news stories than print readers. Furthermore, the articles presented on celebrity substance abuse are typically human interest stories. An exceeding amount of research has demonstrated that online news consumers are more focused on topics of personal interest with a reduced interest in public affairs (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002; Hamilton, 2004; Tewksbury, 2003). Clearly, this has implications for news media fulfilling readers' interests, and the perpetuation of news outlets to continue discursive trends which highlight soft news and stories of infotainment which often include scandal, sports, and entertainment (Deuze, 2005). Furthermore, delivering stories of infotainment about celebrities secures the political economy of the newspaper and its readership. Certainly, the aim of these articles is to aid in selling the newspaper, and focusing on celebrities and other human interest stories seems to solidify *The New York Times* in the newspaper market and stay parallel with readership demands.

In essence, media elites and journalists of *The New York Times* present celebrity substance abuse as an individual problem which should be easy to overcome. As a result, this ideology becomes naturalized. Stories on individual accounts of substance abuse have become the hegemonic discourse, and are common place within *The New York Times*. Marginalizing the social issues of substance abuse and highlighting stories of infotainment in regards to substance abuse enables *The New York Times* to remain dominant and demonstrates that *The New York Times* has the power to control topics and content. News stories

which entertain and contain celebrity scandal and deviance are cheap to reproduce and are easy for readers to digest (Nunn & Biressi, 2010), thereby aiding the political economy of *The New York Times*.

News Values. While differences exist between news providers, in terms of what stories are selected and how they will be covered, Galtung and Ruge (1965) outlined 12 news values that can be used as core criteria in the selection of news stories. These news values are story threshold, frequency, negativity, unexpectedness, unambiguity, audience personalization, audience meaningfulness, reference to elite nations, reference to elite persons, consonance, continuity, and composition. While this analysis did not focus on all news values, there are implications towards many of them. These news values do not operate independently of one another, but instead share a cumulative relationship.

For example, news values concerning clarity, elite people, and personalization are very interdependent, specifically when celebrities are involved in news stories. Hodkinson (2011) notes, for instance, that “celebrity stories are particularly valuable” as they incorporate wealth and power with “proximity and relevance to the lives of ordinary people” (p. 133). This certainly relates to the dualism of stardom. Furthermore, while this notion of elite people aid in making news stories, so do clarity and personification. When a news story is clear and encapsulates one major idea or one person, audiences have the ability to comprehend and utilize emotions towards individuals such as blame or

empathy (Hodkinson, 2011). Additionally, while clarity is a news value which frames stories, so is personification. So when a story focuses on one individual, they are more likely to be selected to be in the end news product. This is exemplified within this analysis as all news stories were human interest pieces, focusing on celebrities. This allows news stories to illustrate individual morals, decisions, and behavior, thus maintaining an episodic frame in news stories.

Negativity is a news value which influences story selection as well. Negative news story are likely to dominate the news agenda (Hodkinson, 2011). In essence, *The New York Times* decided to report on negative consequences of substance abuse and stories on addiction, rather than stories on recovery or sobriety, the more positive aspect of substance abuse. In essence, it is news values which link news stories to ideology. News stories derive from and represent reflected news values, thereby producing news stories which are constructed to reinforce an existing consensus, which is typically controlled by the powerful individuals in charge of producing the news.

The ideal news story would include these news values in order to make news and engage readers as stories must compete for space. However, apart from focusing on elite people, personalization, story clarity and negativity, they could also include statistical information regarding substance abuse and include substance abuse stories from non-celebrities. Furthermore, to make the stories more meaningful celebrity substance abuse news stories could include details on recovery and contain discourses which include medical professionals.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this research regarding celebrity substance abuse as portrayed in *The New York Times* possesses many implications. Specifically, the findings of this research reveals how *The New York Times* frames the discourse of substance abuse within a limited framework and presents ideological implications suggesting possible ways readers may think about substance abuse, celebrities, and news media in general.

First, while *The New York Times* does not naturalize substance abuse by demonstrating consequences of substance abuse, the framing of substance abuse is constricted. While many articles depict substance abusers going to treatment, many others emphasize substance abusers as deviants or criminals. Additionally, instead of focusing on how to help substance abusers overcome addictions, the emphasis was on personal substance abuse consequences. Focusing on personal, isolated cases through episodic frames and not including addiction experts or medical discourse in news stories further diminishes the disease concept of addiction and exploits the stigma that substance abuse is an individual, moral issue. This is further discerned by minimizing the impact that substance abuse has on users' physical health. Outside of death, articles rarely demonstrate that substance abuse has a negative impact on physical and mental health. Furthermore, images reify that substance abuse does not negatively impact physical or psychological health.

Second, news stories regarding celebrity substance abuse possess ideological implications for how celebrities are viewed. First, this analysis demonstrates that celebrity news stories maintain the duality of celebrities. Meaning that stories, including celebrity narratives about substance abuse, allow celebrities to be viewed as normal individuals, although the use of celebrity images, names, and careers continually cultivate the notion that they are unique and extraordinary. In addition, this analysis exemplifies that there are differences between celebrities, and the effect that substance abuse may have on a career is different for professional athletes versus other celebrity professions. While this may be a result of the role substance abuse has on the physical body, the idea that substance abuse impacts the physical health of celebrities is evaded. Despite these news stories containing accounts of celebrity deviance, they propel the consumption of a celebrity culture and allow readers to negotiate a level of intimacy or familiarity between themselves and the celebrity.

Lastly, since these news stories are human interest pieces which focus on individual celebrities, the notion that there is a tabloidization of the hard news market is confirmed. This analysis demonstrates that news stories are told in a way which bolsters the concept of infotainment. The news values which are being upheld encourage the continuance of isolated news stories focusing on elite individuals, rather than situating them within a social context.

In summary, while readers may be entertained by news stories which emphasize celebrities, spectacles and emotions, the largest implication is that

stories on celebrity substance abuse (and other infotainment pieces) are unlikely to offer any knowledge or usefulness of the social or political world of substance abuse. Instead of using celebrities as a bridge to inform and educate an audience on the social implications of substance abuse, such as the political economy of treating substance abuse in rehabilitation centers or through incarceration, celebrities are vessels used to narrow the discussion around substance abuse. They limit the scope of how substance abuse is viewed socially, and perpetuate stereotypes and stigmas of substance abusers. Instead of discovering causes, symptoms, or treatments of such health issues like substance abuse, individuals are distracted by the limited ideologies presented in print news media revolving around celebrity consumption and spectacle.

### Limitations

All research has limitations, and this thesis is no exception. I only analyzed celebrity substance abuse articles from one newspaper. Moreover, this analysis was limited to an online version of a newspaper, and restricted to a one year time span. An analysis of different newspapers, including print versions, and increasing the publication date of article may yield different results. Furthermore, while critical discourse analysis is a tool for critics to use to discover ideologies presented in media texts, it does not account for other interpretations or audience agency. Fiske (1987) suggests that texts are “open” and do not necessarily contain one, easily attainable meaning. Therefore, as a result of the polysemic

nature of texts, while my goal was to discover the dominant meaning, other interpretations are available.

In addition, while media are pervasive and have an influence on individuals' beliefs and attitudes, critics of cultivation theory have noticed a changing landscape (McQuail, 2000; Perse, Ferguson, & McLeod, 1994). For example, options for consuming media via internet and other technologies allow for audiences to have more control over media consumption. However, no media are free from ideology and while media selection may allow readers to choose media content which is more congruent with their current beliefs and values it does not negate the notion that media messages may have cultivation effects. In fact, even if the media consumed reinforces and strengthens a reader's ideological beliefs as a result of selection, then cultivation theory is equally applicable.

#### Future Research

Given these limitations, future research could expand upon this thesis by further examining celebrity substance abuse across different media. By looking at more than one newspaper or different news formats (online and print), a more comprehensive depiction of how celebrity substance abuse is portrayed will be available. Also, lengthening the time longer than the 2012 – 2013 year would yield a larger sample size and help develop the understanding of celebrity substance abuse in the media. Furthermore, researchers interested in mediated

portrayals of social health issues could examine how substance abuse is portrayed in news media (print and online) without being under the constraints of celebrities, thereby noting if the discourse around substance abuse changes.

Additionally, while this research provides a content representation of celebrity substance abuse stories in *The New York Times*, it does not account for potential interpretations by an active audience. Previous research (see, e.g., Morley, 1992; Radway, 1984) has demonstrated that audiences often interpret media different than critics. As a result, future research which could include audience work may lead to a more complete picture of the relationship between celebrity substance abuse and audiences. This may be accomplished by holding focus groups or using surveys in order to better comprehend audiences' interpretations and understandings of celebrity substance abuse texts.

Regardless of future research endeavors, this analysis maintains meaning for how print media portray celebrity substance abuse. Furthermore, celebrities work as cultural units and individuals learn from the media. Therefore, how celebrity substance abuse is portrayed in news media has a role in how audiences think about and discuss celebrities and substance abuse together, and as separate entities. As a result, the news stories presented in this analysis depict an unrealistic view on substance abuse and celebrity status; one which marginalizes the importance, conversation, and implications of substance abuse, and instead, highlights and reverses the role of celebrity.

APPENDIX A

TYPES OF CELEBRITIES PRESENTED IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

<b>Types of Celebrities</b>	<b>Number of Articles Representing Celebrity Types</b>
Actors/Actresses	8
Professional Athletes	8
Music Artists	7
Fashion Designers	2
Celebrity Chef	2
Politician's Daughter	1
Artist	1
News-cast Anchor	1
Celebrity Relationship	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31 Articles</b>

APPENDIX B

TYPES OF SUBSTANCES IDENTIFIED IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

<b>Types of Substances</b>	<b>Number of Articles Mentioning Substances</b>
Drugs and Alcohol (unspecified)	7
Drugs Only	6
Alcohol Only	6
Specified Drugs (including but not limited to cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamines and pain killers)	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>31 Articles</b>

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