

# Review of: "The Cost of Being a Celebrity on Mental Health"

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Review of Article: **The Cost of Being a Celebrity on Mental Health**

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## Overview:

It is an easy-read descriptive essay on the determinants of “tragedy” caused by celebrity. The essay is well documented, the references are quite diversified, and the overall coherence of ideas makes it an enjoyable paper to read. The abstract is a very clear reflection of the paper’s contents. So, from the get-go, the reader knows what and what not to expect.

## Comments:

**Introduction:** The author presents a listing of the determinants of the heavy toll on the mental well-being of celebrities, and in doing so, seems to hold us, the audience/fans of celebrity, responsible for the tragedies celebrities have to endure on their way to fame (and post-fame): “We create a glorious picture of fame” and “The reason most people hold this view boils down to the fact that they never were in a celebrity’s position to experience what they really go through in their lives”. We believe this is an important and interesting thesis upon which the author could build her entire argumentation; and this leads us to suggest to the author a change in their title in such a way as to emphasize that we, the audience/fans, contribute to the “cost” of celebrity on their mental health. The entire paper is really about how we look at celebrities (the author talks of our “escapism”) and this, in our opinion, is the core of the discussion that was somewhat overlooked by the author. Indeed, the author ends her introduction with a diminuendo of the argument’s tone when she writes: “This article explores the dark side and the challenges associated with celebrity status and how being a celebrity is indeed more of a tragedy than a pleasure”.

**Celebrity Status:** The author says, quoting Ward (2011), that celebrity culture actively invites us to form a view and make a judgment, allowing us to “live vicariously through celebrities”, adding a touch of fantasy to our own lives. Here again, the author is trying to emphasize the main argument (the sense of agency of the fans in their perception of celebrities and turning celebrity into tragedy), which was unfortunately not thoroughly elaborated in the rest of the paper. In other words, the reader feels that something is missing from the paper: a more in-depth psychological analysis of the whole phenomenon. In this regard, the author says: “Celebrity has long held the potential to be both liberating and constraining”. Where do the constraints come from? Who are the constraining agents?

**The Dark Side of Celebrity Life:** Here again, we note the same idea of holding the audience/fans responsible for making

and unmaking celebrities: “the bottomless appetite for new content, the escalating demands for authenticity” and a few lines later: “As constantly visible to the public, celebrities tend to be anxiously obsessive with negative comments about their appearance and actions, as if their mental health is at their fans’ hands”.

We ask the following questions: Is the author asking the right research question? Is the author simply trying to “explore the dark side and the challenges associated with celebrity status”, or is she trying to go beyond or behind or underneath those challenges?

**Celebrities and Suicide:** I would advise the author not to go into that discussion because it drastically deviates from the contents of the first two parts. Here the author is engaging in biological and psychiatric factors (a “unique brain chemistry”) leading up to severe depression and eventually suicide. Interestingly, even in the context of celebrity suicide, the author seems to involve the audience/fans; she writes: “Holding the view that material possession is the key to happiness, many people might find it hard to grasp how miserable a celebrity life can be”. So in other words, not only are the audience/fans a core contributor to the misery of celebrities (as demonstrated in the above 2 parts), but now they are blaming the celebrity for ending their life. This deserves an in-depth discussion that seems to be missing throughout the paper.

**Social Media Came to Help Celebrities?** The same argument is recaptured here. The author writes, emphasizing the sense of agency of audience/fans (in this case, fans on social media): “The constant scrutiny and pressure to maintain a curated online presence can take a toll on mental health”, and “the relentless scrutiny celebrities face on social media”, and “The constant judgment and commentary, often fueled by anonymity, can be emotionally taxing, leading to heightened stress levels and anxiety”. The author needs to be reminded that this is what social media does to everyone, even the most ordinary of ordinary people, not just to celebrities.

**Conclusion:** This is where the paper becomes analytical, and not just descriptive. We believe this should have been the starting point of the paper, not its conclusive statement. The paper describes what the audience/fans do to celebrities and why, in a very descriptive way, while much analysis (even a Lacanian analysis) was needed from the start. Furthermore, we would like to raise many questions that need answers:

- Has the author, based on her own experience or on the literature review she made, observed any cross-cultural differences in how celebrity is “manipulated,” or are we talking of universal trends that apply to all cultures?
- If there are differences, then what are those specific cultural factors that may explain those differences?
- What about those celebrities that did not end up tragically? Those whose celebrity did not become a toll on their well-being?
- What about celebrities like Brigitte Bardot, for example, who knew exactly when to withdraw from celebrity? How thin is the line between celebrity and tragedy? How can it be drawn? Has it been drawn by certain celebrities? What are the lessons to learn from those?