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Noland, Carey M., Marshall, P. David, Goodale, Greg G. and Schlecht, Hans P. 2009, An exploration of the impact of celebrity on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, *Journal of health & mass communication*, vol. 1, no. 3/4, Summer/Fall, pp. 194-210.

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF CELEBRITY ON THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC

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The framework we present in this article separates into three generations the celebrity/personality involvement in the AIDS movement that has been steadily building momentum over the past 25 years. We analyze the celebrification of HIV/AIDS and the role of the media in the process. We contend the relationship between celebrity, the public and HIV/AIDS is multipurpose: celebrities maintain a positive public presence between projects while allowing themselves and their supporting fans to feel good about taking on and affecting a meaningful cause. Celebrities are vehicles and embodiments of concern that act as proxies for their various audiences. And this is their power—celebrities are embodiments of their audiences. The awareness that celebrities have brought to the HIV/AIDS epidemic has resulted in better treatment for victims and increased government support for medical research, and yet has also distracted the public's attention from the scope of the epidemic. It is the third generation of celebrities who are refocusing efforts on worldwide prevention and a cure for HIV/AIDS.

Keywords: HIV, AIDS, celebrification, pandemic, AIDS movement, celebrity

The constellation of political and entertainment world stars drawn to the 2006 International AIDS Conference has drowned out the voices of the people living with AIDS, a group of activists complained Wednesday. "This has been a conference more about

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philanthropists and celebrities than people living with HIV/AIDS,” said Sipho Mthathi of the Treatment Action Campaign of South Africa. “Is this a Hollywood conference or an AIDS conference?” Where are the HIV-positive people?”

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has become one of the most serious health and development problems facing the world. To date, more than 65 million people worldwide have been infected with HIV and in 2006 nearly 40 million people were living with HIV/AIDS (CDC, 2005). Increasingly over the past 25 years celebrities have brought the public’s attention to this massive epidemic. The purpose of this paper is to develop a theoretical rather than quantitative analysis of the social construction of the HIV/AIDS epidemic that has evolved in such a manner that celebrity has become a fundamental component of the public’s understanding and conceptualization of the disease. Through a generational analysis, we explore the progression of the relationship between celebrity and HIV/AIDS. We demonstrate that the relationship between media, celebrity, the public, and HIV/AIDS is multipurpose where each derives mutual benefits from their longstanding and evolving relationship with the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

We adopt definitions of celebrity that incorporate parallels with religion, with celebrities taking on demigod-like powers to activate emulation and inspire imitation through the identification of audiences with their heroes (Frow, 1998; Rojek, 2001). Given that “celebrities are primarily for knowing about and talking about,” their activities — whether bad (i.e. a drunk driving arrest) or good (i.e. support for a cause) — are known and talked about in a manner that permits audiences to understand what is bad behavior and what is good behavior (Cowan, 2000). And while celebrities, as fictions created by the media, are no more real than demigods, their effects are significant and widespread; why else would so many corporations and charities want to have their brands associated with celebrities (Smart, 2005; Turner, 2004)? As Brown and Fraser have argued, audiences identify with celebrities and “a person who identifies with a celebrity attempts to adopt his or her values, beliefs, and behavior” (Brown & Fraser, 2004, p. 104). Thus celebrity messages have personalized the AIDS crisis, for example, through identification (Basil & Brown, 1997). Celebrities, and multiple celebrities in particular, make products and issues more believable and legitimate, enhance message recall, promote positive attitudes, induce active responses, provide emotional connections, and can create consensus while appealing to multiple audiences (Hsu & McDonald, 2002; Khatri, 2006; Saleem, 2007).

Unfortunately, there has been little analysis regarding the impact and phenomenon of seronegative celebrity involvement on HIV/AIDS. In other words, there has been little analysis of the impact of celebrity on the HIV/AIDS epidemic that has not centered on the personal disclosure of celebrities who are seropositive. The lack of research on HIV/AIDS and seronegative celebrity has to be seen in the wider context of how celebrities are deployed in relationship to health and disease and how they specifically are part of communication strategies and health communication more generally.

HEALTH COMMUNICATION, MEDIA, CELEBRITY AND DISEASE

The last decade has seen a growing literature on the study of celebrity from perspectives that have included the fields of psychology (Giles, 2001), sociology (Rojek, 2001), media and cultural studies (Marshall, 1997; Marshall, 2006; Redmond & Holmes, 2006; Turner, 2004; Turner, Bonner, & Marshall, 2000), film studies (Dyer, 2006; Stacey, 2006), political science (Corner & Pels, 2003; Street, 2006), advertising and marketing (Bardhan, 2002) and health communication (Casey, et.al., 2003; Beck, 2005).

The field of health communication is concerned with "the creation of shared meaning and the impact of messages on health and health care delivery" (Thompson, 2003, p.1). As Babrow and Mattson apply Craig's discussion of critical theory to health, inherent in any discourse about health issues are issues of power, wealth, freedom, equality, reason — the very social order that we consider rational and normal (Craig, 1999 cited in Babrow and Mattson, 2003). As we argue in this essay, celebrities have the wealth, the power, and ultimately the access to develop discourse — through media, corporate and governmental outlets — that those living with illness like HIV/AIDS do not. Again, "celebrities are primarily for knowing about and talking about" (Cowan, 2000, p. 9). The discourses surrounding celebrity promote emulation, infiltrate politics, and overcome cultural inertia. Like demigods, celebrities change the world, though only through the operations of those who believe in the celebrities.

Lerner's (2006) work on mapping how celebrities progressively changed the way medicine was viewed through the twentieth century is perhaps the best effort to understand the implication of a kind of celebrity-inflected health discourse. In his 12 case studies, Lerner investigates a series of high profile people who entered the public sphere as victims of illness and, in effect, transformed the knowledge and understanding of major diseases. The ur-text of this public face of illness was Lou Gehrig whose name quickly became the common eponym for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), and as Lerner intones was the first "modern patient" (Lerner, 2006, p. 15). Gehrig's battle with ALS was presented very publicly and represented the new reality of how public relations became a central part of information about diseases and the efforts to enlist support and draw funds to combat them. Lerner's further study of the Glaser family's trials in the late 80s and early 90s (Paul Michael Glaser was a television star of *Starsky and Hutch* fame as well as a producer) focused on how celebrities changed from private campaigning to a much more publicity, and public relations, driven effort to expand research (Lerner, 2006). Similarly, Arthur Ashe, the champion tennis player, once "outed" with AIDS, mounted a major publicity campaign about HIV/AIDS among African Americans.

Academic research has followed a similar direction in its study of the relation between disease and celebrity and has paralleled these popular celebrity discourses about disease that Lerner has documented. The dominant academic research trope began with celebrity

disclosure and followed with a study of the ensuing impact of celebrity illness on a disease. Thus studies emerged around the most famous celebrity illnesses such as Christopher Reeves (paralysis and stem cell research) (see Goggin and Newell, 2004), Michael J. Fox (Parkinson's disease and stem cell research) (see Beck, 2005) and of particular interest to this study, Earvin "Magic" Johnson (HIV/AIDS and awareness campaigns) the effects of whose celebrity has been previously described in numerous journal articles (e.g. Brown and Basil, 1995; Casey et al., 2003).

Susan McKay's and Frances Bonner's work on health communication in women's magazines is particularly relevant in understanding the influence of celebrity stories (McKay and Bonner, 2002). The exclusive celebrity disease disclosure story such as the singer Kylie Minogue's diagnosis of breast cancer became both a dominant way to sell magazines and a prevalent way to communicate health risks related to illnesses. Conversely, in early 2007, First Lady Laura Bush's reluctance to go public about a lump in her breast has been highly criticized in the popular media, particularly in distinction to Former First Lady Betty Ford. With specific reference to HIV/AIDS, both popular and academic literature have been drawn to prominent figures such as Magic Johnson, Arthur Ashe, and Rock Hudson and their disclosures as a channel through which information and communication about the disease has been promulgated. Popular press coverage and academic analysis of celebrity disclosure is unsurpassed in the case of Magic Johnson. In 1991 when he disclosed that he was seropositive, there was "an unprecedented volume of AIDS coverage by the media -- 259 stories focused on AIDS, compared with less than 100 stories within any other week analyzed" (Kohut, et al., 1996, p.3). Over 30 academic articles have been written on the issue of Magic Johnson's 1991 disclosure of his HIV serostatus (see Casey et al., 2003 for a metaanalysis). Therefore, while there are numerous academic articles addressing celebrity and AIDS there have been few that address the impact of seronegative celebrities and the media on HIV/AIDS. In addition, there has been considerable research published in the area of celebrity endorsement and identification (see Basil, 1996) — yet little has specifically examined the role of celebrity and media in the context of AIDS.

In a broad study, Davidson & Wallack (2004) completed a content analysis of coverage of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in U.S. newspapers, including coverage of HIV/AIDS, and found that only 19% of the articles in their sample contained "substantive reporting on STDs" (p.115), and overall, they concluded there was a lack of detailed press coverage of STDs. Content analyses of the U.S. media coverage of the AIDS epidemic shows that celebrity focused stories dominate press coverage. In a comprehensive content analysis of all media coverage of AIDS from 1985-1996 It was found that "over time, news stories about AIDS also became somewhat shorter in length, and more likely to be found in sports, lifestyle, or other soft news sections of the newspaper or broadcast; and the coverage became more celebrity driven" (Kohut, et al., 1996, p.2). In fact, celebrity activities became an "integral part of the [HIV] story" (p. 5). In fact, they found that

Celebrity-related activities, which had never scored more than 9% as a primary or secondary topic during Typical News Weeks from 1985-92, reached 18% in 1993; and 22% in 1995, the last full year of coverage analyzed. Underscoring the growing presence of celebrities in media coverage of AIDS, this group was the highest-ranking category of AIDS newsmakers these same two years. One in four (25%) AIDS-focused stories during Typical News Weeks in 1993 and 1995 featured celebrities as the Principal Newsmaker. The percentage of stories featuring members of the Scientific/Medical community, which stood at 29% in 1988, fell to 23% in 1989, and never again reached 15% for Typical News Weeks. (Kohut, et al., 1996, p. 5)

However, Bardhan (2002) in a content analysis of worldwide press coverage of AIDS in the 1990s of five transnational wire services (the Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, Reuters, Telegrafnoye Agenstvo Sovetskovo Soyuz, and Inter Press Service), found that only 4.7% of news stories were celebrity related compared to 20.5% for in the categories Medical-scientific and Socioeconomic-political-cultural-religious. Therefore, it seems that most domestic coverage (United States) is focused on celebrity, while worldwide more stories have been focused elsewhere. It is also possible to conclude that celebrity stories are chosen from the wire services to be featured in major US newspapers and television broadcasts. Additionally, these analyses also fail to account for the hundreds of millions of people who learn about AIDS not only from traditional "news" outlets, but also (and often rather) from the coverage of celebrities provided by entertainment media outlets like *People Magazine*, *Oprah*, and *Entertainment Tonight*.

The heightened and increasingly intense role of celebrities in HIV/AIDS campaigns is no longer tied to personal disclosure; rather it is from a different historical trajectory of celebrity "disease" advocacy by those who do not personally have the disease such as Bono or Angelina Jolie. In a very real sense, this kind of celebrity involvement can be linked to charity functions that have been part of American philanthropic culture for a long time. Formerly this level of charity work was attached to the elite classes and 'society' work in major American cities. One can think of the longstanding work by many people with cancer research as just one example. Creating and constructing black tie dinners with guest speakers was always about ensuring that the charity function had highly visible (and wealthy) people in attendance in order to attract donations and other potential givers. At the start of the twentieth century we witnessed a number of aristocratic Americans — many of whom were robber barons — reinventing their images through philanthropy. For example, the Carnegies transcended much of their infamy by establishing libraries around the country and engaging in other forms of charity work. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the charity function has been mediatized and perhaps democratized through that process. In that mediatization, celebrities have become the kinds of individuals who possess the public visibility that the rich elites traditionally fulfilled in the American philanthropic tradition. Jerry Lewis' mammoth televised telethons may have been one of the earliest celebrity

endorsers and platforms for other celebrities to appear and help "Jerry's kids" and fight MD. The first telethon aired in 1966 and was broadcast by only one network in New York City, raising approximately \$1 million (Multiple Dystrophy Association, 2008). What separates these past efforts and makes the current celebrity representations in HIV/AIDS unique and surpassing past efforts, particularly with reference to HIV/AIDS in Africa and other developing regions of the world, is the *level* of celebrity/personality involvement and their roles.

We have divided the HIV/AIDS epidemic into three distinct generations. Through this generational study of the interplay of HIV, media, and celebrity we identify the implications of the celebrification of HIV/AIDS. Generation I spans from 1981-1999, Generation II from 2000-2006 and Generation III emerged in 2006 and we predict it will continue well into future. We divided these generations based on numerous factors including the breadth and depth of celebrity involvement and press coverage, and the function of celebrity involvement, and describe in detail each generation in the pages that follow. In brief, the first generation is characterized by celebrities who have a personal connection to HIV/AIDS. These celebrities were either stricken or had friends who were stricken by the illness and focused on fundraising efforts and domestic educational efforts to allay fears. For example, Elizabeth Taylor and Elton John, both whom had close personal friends die from AIDS took on the issue of AIDS awareness and cure as a cause. The second generation demonstrates a shift where the focus became more pervasive and involves celebrities who disclosed no personal connections to People Living With AIDS (PLWA). This generation is linked to increases in corporate partnerships and personal media coverage that accompanied international and national celebrity educational and awareness raising 'tours'. These celebrities are typified by celebrities such as Claudia Schiffer and David Beckham whose relationships with charities are driven at least in part by the adherence of celebrities to popular trends and the desire of PR professionals to create a positive image for their celebrity clients. The third generation began to emerge in 2006, where *über* celebrities have surpassed awareness raising and are becoming true leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS. These *über* celebrities, including Bono and Bill Clinton, have returned to the commitment of Elizabeth Taylor and Elton John and are portrayed by the media and perceived by the general public as HIV/AIDS experts. They forward a cause rather than simply front a charity.

GENERATION I: THE EARLY YEARS OF HIV/AIDS AND CELEBRITY: 1981-1999

HIV/AIDS officially began on June 5, 1981 when the CDC issued a warning about a rare form of pneumonia that was affecting a small group of gay men in Los Angeles (CDC, 1981). This pneumonia turned out to be AIDS-related. Thus, when HIV/AIDS emerged onto

the health scene in the early 1980s, it was linked both to homosexual men and Los Angeles. Because of this and other reasons, one might argue that HIV/AIDS has had a clear link to Hollywood from the start. Some of the first people with HIV/AIDS to gain personalized media attention when they died were Rock Hudson and Liberace, people who embodied the entertainment industry. Not only was AIDS seen as a terminal illness that ravaged the gay community, it was similarly seen to be rife through the wider performing arts community that supported Hollywood and other entertainment capitals such as New York. Emblematic of this first generation was that celebrities were slow to disclose AIDS status (Rock Hudson only disclosed his status in the very last days of his life in 1985), partly because it was associated with homosexuality, shame, and it was not fashionable to be associated with HIV/AIDS, other than as a grieving celebrity friend. What resulted were shocking front-page media events when a celebrity of Rock Hudson's stature was first linked to the disease and again with his inevitable death. We could characterize this generation in terms of mediatization and celebrity relationship to be one modalized around fear: fear of HIV/AIDS' deadliness and possible contagion and fear to be associated publicly with something inextricably linked at this time to a marginalized lifestyle and sexual orientation.

The fear and panic surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic had incredible synergy and gained momentum quickly. General fear in the public was compounded by the alarmist media coverage of the epidemic and the overall lack of intervention and support from U.S. health policy in the 1980s. HIV/AIDS in the Reagan era is regarded in retrospect as a disaster of negligence by some and as intentional genocide by others (Dow, 1994; Cran & Simone, 2006). The complete lack of organized support was disastrous. In fact, Reagan only gave one public speech in his entire eight year term in office where he mentioned AIDS and was booed off the stage by HIV/AIDS activists for his uninformed and inflammatory words, when he declared that he would not want to send his child to school with a child who had contracted AIDS from blood transfusions (Cran & Simone, 2006).

Worldwide, HIV/AIDS programs were also slow to start, it was not until 1987 that the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a global program on HIV/AIDS. In 1988 the U.S. government rolled out a series of HIV/AIDS awareness public service announcements (PSAs) — without one celebrity appearance in the announcements (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006). Approximately \$30 million was spent and the ads used 'real people', focused on minorities and could not use the word condom because media conglomerates such as CBS refused to run PSAs that included the term (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006).

Early forms of celebrity advocacy for HIV awareness were limited to the AIDS stricken celebrities who eventually died and their close friends who became their 'personal' advocates. Early celebrity advocates Elton John and Elizabeth Taylor became involved in HIV promotion; and Elizabeth Taylor emerged as the leading celebrity voice and arguably the dominant HIV advocate at a time when there was a political vacuum in HIV leadership. In 1985, her support was instrumental in starting the American Foundation for AIDS

Research (amfAR), which has subsequently contributed approximately \$250 million to HIV/AIDS advocacy and research (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006). She testified before Congress numerous times and starred in public service announcements to heighten AIDS awareness — a full two years before the U.S. government ran its first HIV/AIDS public service announcements.

Popular attitudes began to shift with a notorious HIV/AIDS case at the end of the 1980s. Ryan White, a hemophiliac boy, contracted AIDS not from any lifestyle choice but rather from a blood transfusion. His relative innocence transformed the prevalent discourse of HIV/AIDS from a “gay plague” into something still deadly but that potentially could strike anyone. Political support widened with the life of Ryan White and the many media stories chronicling his bravery and his disposition in spite of the illness. Because Ryan White became a reluctant media personality; his very visible and public role was disseminated widely and in a supportive way by the media and the 1990 Ryan White CARE Act was passed. This was the first real action taken to combat HIV/AIDS in the United States. In fact, we contend the media was instrumental in reinventing HIV/AIDS from a “gay plague” to an “innocent children who received tainted blood transfusions” disease, thus enabling the cause to gain political and public support.

In acts of collective solidarity, we see the mainstreaming of both HIV/AIDS awareness and support, through mass celebrity support. Several events advanced the normalization of HIV/AIDS as not just a cause but a noble cause that helped define the public identity of any celebrity. As previously reviewed, basketball star, Magic Johnson disclosed on November 7, 1991 that he was HIV positive. Similarly, Arthur Ashe, the tennis star also revealed months before his death that he had contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion from heart surgery. And Michael Glaser, whose wife Elizabeth and daughter died from AIDS, allowed the issue to circulate with force into the charity circles associated with Hollywood. All of these events expanded the reach of HIV/AIDS as an epidemic that migrated seamlessly from sports icons to children to mothers. In recognition of this expanded centrality of HIV/AIDS, the red ribbon was introduced at the New York based Tony Awards in 1991 as an international symbol of HIV/AIDS awareness (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006). Throughout the 1990s celebrity support for HIV/AIDS awareness and support grew gradually, but with limitations. There remained throughout most of the 90s very little direct association with celebrities who had not personally disclosed that they were HIV positive. A 1995 Kaiser Family Foundation/Princeton Survey Research Associates survey found that celebrities Magic Johnson and Elizabeth Taylor were the two individuals most recognized by the public as national leaders (Kohut, et. al, 1996).

GENERATION II: THE 21ST CENTURY — BEING CONNECTED TO HIV/AIDS BECOMES COOL FOR CELEBRITIES: 2000-2006

Politically, in Generation II both the Clinton and G.W. Bush administrations increased HIV/AIDS national government initiatives. On May 16, 2003 the U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Act of 2003 (H.R. 1298) was passed. This act created new programs to combat HIV/AIDS; including a \$15 billion, five-year emergency plan for HIV/AIDS relief that President Bush heralded in his State of the Union address in January 2003. This program, The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, has sent money to 15 countries around the world. The program has covered prevention efforts, including voluntary testing and counseling, drugs and other treatment for people infected with HIV, and care of HIV-infected individuals. Overall, while PEPFAR has been an example of a successful policy act, it still falls short in terms of funding and political support in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In early 2008 PEPFAR came up for renewal and at the time of this publication it has passed in the House and is currently in discussion in the Senate. PEPFAR has been lauded as one of the Bush administration's most positive acts of foreign policy and appears likely to be approved in some form once the final budget is approved by the Congress. Although HIV/AIDS incidence in select areas of the globe appears to have stabilized, new crises within the pandemic continue to emerge, such as the intersection of extremely drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) with HIV/AIDS. There is no question that under the Clinton and Bush administrations significant improvements were made to combat HIV/AIDS, but the need has far outstripped these initiatives, which is one reason why Generation II is characterized by an expansion of celebrity involvement.

During Generation II celebrity advocacy moved from personal connections to one centered on universal human rights and the developing world. We contend that three factors contributed to the influx of celebrities into the HIV/AIDS arena during this period. First, there remained a vacuum of visible leadership to combat HIV/AIDS due to insufficient government involvement and also a brief waning of celebrity advocacy after Elizabeth Taylor reduced her involvement. Second, due to expanded media coverage, a growing sense of the epidemic's impact in the developing world became mainstream knowledge. Third, international donor organizations and health organizations, instead of relying strictly on member governments, actively recruited celebrity spokespersons so that HIV/AIDS messages were visible and were maintained as concerns of the public (Russell, 2007).

A domino effect began and it became fashionable to be a celebrity associated with HIV/AIDS. Several examples highlight this significant influx of celebrities in the HIV/AIDS arena. The United Nations gained the support of two key celebrities: musician Bono and actress Angelina Jolie. The United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) 2007-2008 campaign, "Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS," features many international celebrities including Claudia Schiffer, Ewan McGregor, Ralph Fiennes, and David Beckham.

Celebrities now regularly embark on HIV/AIDS educational tours both in the U.S. and abroad. For example, on World AIDS Day 2006 (December 1) the involvement of celebrities in the quest to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS America was impressive. Bono and actress Ashley Judd went on a bus tour of U.S. cities, musician Ludacris spoke at many U.S. university campuses and Matt Damon led a delegation from Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa (DATA) to Zambia. DATA, co-founded by Bono in 2002, helped found the ONE and RED campaigns to combat world poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Wedded to these celebrities is panoply of corporate endorsers of campaigns where celebrities and key retailing corporations work in concert to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS. For example, the ONE campaign began with the goal to eliminate poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa. It is supported by Bono, Brad Pitt, Tom Hanks, Pat Robertson, Kate Hudson, Rick Warren, Jamie Foxx, Jars of Clay, Penelope Cruz, Dave Matthews, Salma Hayek, George Clooney, and Bill and Melinda Gates to name a few. A part of the ONE campaign is the RED (footnote here) campaign, as described by Bono:

Where ONE takes on the bigger, longer-term beast of changing policy and influencing government, (RED) is, I guess, about a more instant kind of gratification. If you buy a (RED) product from GAP, Motorola, Armani, Converse or Apple, they will give up to 50% of their profit to buy AIDS drugs for mothers and children in Africa. (RED) is the consumer battalion gathering in the shopping malls. You buy the jeans, phones, iPods, shoes, sunglasses, and someone - somebody's mother, father, daughter or son - will live instead of dying in the poorest part of the world. It's a different kind of fashion statement. (One Campaign, n.d.)

Currently, there are numerous HIV/AIDS campaigns teaming non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, and celebrities. An advertising campaign themed "I Am African." launched on World AIDS Day 2006 (December 1) endeavored to call attention to the plight in Africa. This campaign featured Supermodel Iman and various other celebrities, including David Bowie, Elijah Wood, Alicia Keys, and Sting. The advertisements asked people to donate funds to buy HIV/AIDS drugs for African patients. A number of glossy international magazines ran the advertisements where celebrities were shown with painted faces. In a similar vein, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has devoted much time in its cultivation of celebrity representatives. As stated on their website:

UNICEF has a long history of high profile support from its Ambassadors and celebrity supporters, starting with Danny Kaye in the 1950s. They play a vital role in promoting UNICEF and advocating and fundraising on our behalf. UNICEF's high profile supporters are in a position to focus the world's attention on the needs of children. They help us to reach a wider audience, enabling us to further highlight the work we undertake to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children around the world. All of our Ambassadors have been appointed because they have already demonstrated a commitment to UNICEF's work. They dedicate time and energy to UNICEF in a variety of ways: visiting projects in the field

and emergency situations, speaking to the media about what they have seen, or lobbying and raising money on our behalf (United Nations Children's Fund, n.d.).

UNICEF's 2008 celebrity campaign is called "Unite for children, Unite against AIDS" and features a list of international celebrities including Claudia Schiffer, Ewan McGregor, Jemima Khan, Ralph Fiennes, Roger Moore, Rio Ferdinand, David Beckham, and Robbie Williams.

We conclude that in Generation II HIV/AIDS had become so mainstream (as compared to Generation I) that it allowed corporations to form these relationships with various HIV/AIDS causes/celebrities. These relationships profit corporations in two ways; they benefit from an association with an acceptable 'mainstream' charity cause and they are also associated with high profile celebrities at a minimum cost.

Generation II is the fruition of this different way in which HIV/AIDS is represented and advocated in full-force through celebrity and media. Celebrity tours of Africa have become a recognized pattern for raising awareness of the plight of African nations because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Celebrity-based organizations such as Live-Eight provide awareness of the international disparities and how HIV/AIDS is now an elemental part of the economic woes of African countries. This relationship to public personalities is a break from past mediated forms of communication that have been predominantly through celebrity disclosures and personal HIV narratives.

Celebrities are not medical experts and thus occupy a space of knowledge that indicates a clear affective investment in an issue rather than a completely rational and logical argument about an issue. They are vehicles and embodiments of concern that act as proxies for their various audiences. And this is their power — celebrities are embodiments of their audiences. Thus, celebrities are able to make media networks that are driven by maintaining audiences and advertising revenue follow their movements and their expressions of desire. With magazines, television and internet sources already trained on surveilling the activities of celebrities, one can see how celebrities are well-positioned to massage that coverage towards at least an oblique and continuous reference to something as important as HIV/AIDS.

One may also wonder what has made celebrities themselves much more visible in campaigns such as HIV/AIDS awareness or funding of drugs and education in Africa. There is no doubt that particular celebrities have taken strong positions as advocates and we do not doubt their motivation; but it should be said that celebrities have to maintain their public presence in some way. This particular moment of intensified coverage of celebrities is also related to the incredible flux in the value of different media forms in the developed world. There is a clear decline in the influence of television and film and perhaps a greater dispersion of what has become understood as the public sphere (Marshall, 2006). Our interests are less focused on particular television networks or particular films or book releases. What we are witnessing is that celebrities represent some of the last pockets of the

power of these media forms to focus attention. In a recursive structure, the media industries have more programs that show more and more what the various public personalities are doing rather than other types of television programs (Marshall, 2006). Augmenting this intensification of celebrities is the Internet's capacity to provide even further background and commentary, a kind of simulated closeness for an audience, on particular celebrities via web sites, blogs and internet-delivered videos.

In a New York Times article (March 9, 2008), *The Celebrity Solution*, Traub documents the shift in political advocacy and the power of celebrities. For example, Traub begins the article by interviewing Natalie Portman who at 22 years of age in 2004, testified before Congress on behalf of the Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA). She said, 'It seems totally nuts to me. It's the way it works, I guess. I'm not particularly proud that in our country I can get a meeting with a representative more easily than the head of a non-profit.' (§1) The article described how celebrities, those 'qualified' or not, have increasingly chosen to "become central players on deeply political issues" (§2). Celebrities have access to the highest ranking politicians and moguls, first because politicians are star struck like the rest of the general public, and second because politicians do not want any bad press from celebrities by offending them. Yet the commitment of some celebrities to their charitable work is suspect. For some, getting involved in an issue like AIDS is merely a matter of having something to talk about other than their romantic interests or fashion (Traub, 2008). One celebrity admitted to one of the authors of this study that he was only supporting the work of a health-related charitable organization because his PR person told him that it was good for his image.

GENERATION III: THE PRESENT/FUTURE POTENTIAL OF CELEBRITY

The current generation of celebrity HIV/AIDS endorsement — the third generation — is overwhelming in its breadth and depth. It has been built on the many Hollywood personalities that emerged in Generation II, a generation that is still active. However, in Generation III we see the emergence of the über celebrity HIV/AIDS advocates who do more than the 'awareness raising' of Generation II celebrities. These über celebrities have both affective *and* expert power over mainstream audiences.

The most notable and influential celebrities in this generation are Bono, Angelina Jolie, Bill and Melinda Gates and Bill Clinton. Together, they not only support HIV/AIDS prevention and cure, but fund many global health programs that improve the lives of those with HIV/AIDS or improve conditions to prevent the spread of the diseases. Many of these über celebrities have successfully established their own HIV/AIDS foundations. Through these foundations, such as DATA, the Gates Foundation, and the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative (CHAI) they have clearly surpassed the ranks of the majority of celebrity advocates.

What we are witnessing is an era of celebrity advocacy that is being employed because it works to maintain the primacy of an issue in an otherwise fickle media sphere. Celebrities occupy a different domain of the public sphere than politicians. As Bono and an out-of-office Bill Clinton have articulated, they can take greater liberties in how they address sensitive issues (Al Gore is having a similar effect on environmental awareness). Their positions may be political, but they are couched in a representation of the emotion of personal commitment and individuality. Celebrity advocacy in Generation III goes beyond the kind of celebrity endorsement or showing support and solidarity for a cause by wearing a ribbon. Celebrities such as Angelina Jolie are at the forefront of representation of HIV/AIDS and Africa as international issues.

In the Generation III celebrity world, über celebrities no longer have charities as in Generation I and II, rather they have causes (Traub, 2008), which are closely linked to global poverty, violence against women, and international health care rights. Celebrities have achieved remarkable and unexpected successes in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and will continue to be relied upon in the future for leadership. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, recently commented that he is looking for alternates to political leadership given that terms in office are relatively short, particularly in the developing world (Russell, 2007). Bono is credited with building the "superhighway between Africa and Hollywood" (¶14), where he has more than fame. He has built credibility by attending functions at the White House, the G-8, the World Bank, establishing DATA, and making connections with corporations and the super rich, such as Bill and Melinda Gates. He was instrumental in making celebrity cool in Generation II, and has transcended this to become a genuine leader in Generation III. Thus, superstar celebrities, such as Bono, Bill Clinton, and the Gates, may have the long-term leadership capabilities that politicians do not have. Pragmatically, celebrities may be the best hope for authentic, sustained leadership the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Celebrities ultimately are a kind of brand that circulates in contemporary culture. They become associated with certain narratives (for instance through a film role), certain constructions of personality (through perhaps popular music performance), and on occasion with a certain political stance or issue. International organizations have provided the template for celebrities to express their personality, their individuality further – in a sense another role or narrative that intersects with their public persona. As a brand, celebrities are very sophisticated forms of publicity that can be deployed for different purposes. Right now we are continuing to witness the proliferation and normalization of HIV/AIDS public education through celebrities. This has also translated into corporate linkages to these same campaigns.

We do not want to discount that there are problems associated with celebrity involvement in the AIDS epidemic. The most significant one is the inability of celebrity to directly implement governmental policies and to provide sufficient resources to bring about constructive change to combat the HIV/AIDS crisis. Nor can they change social norms and personal behaviors surrounding issues that affect the transmission of HIV. Celebrities have been criticized over the years for oversimplifying issues and stealing the spotlight from those truly qualified to speak by many including former UNAIDS Ambassador Stephen Lewis and rightly so. This was highlighted at the 2006 International AIDS conference held in Toronto, where one of the issues of celebrity involvement in the HIV/AIDS epidemic was brought to the forefront: a number of celebrities took center-stage while in a somewhat peculiar scenario HIV/AIDS sufferers, clinicians and researchers were in the shadow of stardom, drowned out by celebrities, and celebrity-chasing paparazzi. Also, it is impossible to accurately gauge how much money celebrities raise for AIDS, let alone how much of those funds go to directly to those in need, so an accurate cost-benefit analysis is unfeasible.

It seems that celebrities must partake in a mandatory rite of passage; a baptism in the fountain of charitable relations. To not be asked to represent a charity is akin, for celebrities, to the high school senior who is not asked to the prom. Every charity must have a celebrity; and every celebrity must have a charity. This co-dependency legitimizes both parties' importance through the media coverage of their relationship. But unfortunately, the charade sometimes harms real progress in preventing and curing AIDS because by their very nature celebrities divert attention while creating the illusion of action. This even as researchers and activists continue the decades-long struggle with the realities of AIDS. Very few celebrities have become expert at the same level as those who have spent years obtaining degrees in medicine, public health and/or policy, and years "on the ground" working first hand with PLWA.

In an ideal world, we would not have to rely on celebrity advocacy to combat HIV/AIDS, parroting rehearsed, oversimplified, sound bites. However, it has become clear that the media and the public much prefer these sound bites, couched between discussions of current gossip, their latest film/TV projects, and fashion tips. Nevertheless, given the current state of world affairs, we contend that celebrities — and specifically Generation III celebrities — may be the best alternative to make any sort of headway in global HIV prevention. With the notable failures of multiple techniques to facilitate prevention such as microbicides and multiple attempts at a vaccine, the medical-scientific world desperately needs the help.

There is hope. There is enough room on the stage for all parties to discuss the labor required to address the pandemic, to appreciate each others' vital contributions, and to share the glory of such meaningful work. The über celebrity advocacy, in particular, should not be taken for granted but rather lauded as it maintains the primacy of a crucial issue in otherwise fickle media and political spheres. It is that celebrity which brings attention not

to illusionary progress, but rather to realities of AIDS and the need for continued civil and political action.

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