



# MSc Research Methods

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Unpacking Royal Celebrity



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## ABSTRACT

Within CCT, past celebrity studies have 'unpacked' the celebrity brands of famous sports stars (Cashmore and Parker, 2003; Cashmore, 2006), music icons (Peñaloza, 2004; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010), artists (Schroeder, 2006; Kerrigan et al, 2011) and celebrity chefs (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; 2011; Hewer and Brownlie, 2009); whilst Royal Celebrity studies have focused on the BRFB in its entirety (Otnes and Maclaren, 2007; Otnes et al, 2010). In response to Hewer and Brownlie's (2009) ask for more studies that contribute to our nascent understandings of Consumer Culture Celebrity Theory (CCCT) from, as Turner (2004) and Hamilton and Hewer (2010) suggest, beneath an axiological approach, this study seeks to 'unpack' the social and cultural influence of the Royal Celebrity of a single member of the BRF - HRH Catherine Middleton the Duchess of Cambridge.

This thesis introduces a relatively new methodology to CCT, by conducting an interpretive content analysis (Ahuvia, 2000; Krippendorf, 2004; Mulvey and Stern, 2004) of the articles, images and text within a revolutionary, contemporary, popular women's monthly lifestyle magazine – Cosmopolitan UK. From March 2011-July 2012, 35 articles and 56 images of the Duchess of Cambridge are examined. This time frame incorporates the social, cultural, political and historical significance of the hype before Catherine and Williams fairy-tale wedding (April 2011), as well as Catherine's media portrayal in the lead up to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee (June 2012) and the London 2012 Olympics (July 2012).

Synonymous with Otnes et al's (2010) findings, Royal Celebrities seem to be 'above' the status of celebrity. This thesis extends this idea, and in terms of the appropriation of fashion discourse, illustrates how the BRFB (British Royal Family Brand) is managed "like a firm", by emphasising Kate Middleton's ascent from "normal" girl to Royal Celebrity through the fashions she adorns in fulfilling her different Royal Roles and responsibilities. Simmel (1904), Douglas and Isherwood (1970) and Barnard's (2002) depiction of 'hegemony' is overthrown, as Kate Middleton - a Royal Celebrity - wears high-street "normal" consumer brands and styles, which are emulated by celebrity. As Kate's fashion choices are largely affordable to the "normal" consumer, he/she is able to obtain part of their Royal Celebrity icon, through consumption – even if this consumption is of more affordable replicas, or old/recycled garments. In addition, this study exemplifies how the BRFB (British Royal Family Brand) is timeless (Balmer, 2011a), and as it evolves with the social, cultural and historical marketplace surroundings, it is therefore "like a firm" and consequently, managed "like a firm". BRF member roles remain the same, yet the monarchs who fulfil such roles come and go. Royal Celebrity acts as cultural agent to channel current marketplace consumer myths, tensions and ideologies. In doing so, a synthesised balance between the normative behaviours of BRF members and the extraordinary is disseminated through the marketplace, as BRF members illustrate, that in contemporary consumer culture, their roles are, as Balmer (2011a) suggests, ever as relevant.

This study has provided an insight into the management of the BRFB, which should prove to be useful for organisations who seek to advertise BRF members' voluntary, unpaid use of their products. It has also illustrated the BRFB's ability to re-launch unfamiliar or dying industries.

All considered, it is irrefutable that Royal Celebrity is a very different breed of celebrity. Within CCT, the Royal Celebrity of Catherine Middleton – Duchess of Cambridge inspires and influences the fashion discourse consumption of celebrities and “normal” consumers; whilst channelling contemporary, ideological consumer marketplace myths.

# DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This Dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Research Methods in the University of Strathclyde, and accords with the University Regulations for the programme as detailed in the University Calendar.

I declare that this document embodies the results of my own work and that it has been composed by myself. Following normal academic conventions, I have made due acknowledgement of the work of others.

I declare that this piece of work, in whole or in part, has not been submitted to two institutions simultaneously or submitted previously to another institution or institutions.

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction and Rationale

Celebrities have played a vital role in the moulding and advancement of cultures and civilisations bygone and existent (Henderson, 1992; Gabler, 1998; Rojek, 2008; Morgan 2010); from Socrates, to Jesus, to Beethoven, to Edison, to Bieber. Defining celebrity is a taxing task, as what constitutes celebrity is based on assumption; anyone and everyone has the aptitude to become “*well-known for [their] well-knownness*” or “*famous for being famous*” (Boorstin, 1962 p. 57; Henderson, 1992; Carter, 2006; Halpern, 2007; Kurzman et al, 2007; Beer and Penfold-Mounce, 2010). In the marketing and management literature, to date, celebrity studies are, for the most part, concerned with the transferal of celebrity personality traits to popular brands, products, services and experiences (Kahle and Homer, 1985; McCracken, 1989; Erdogan, 1999; Hsu and MacDonald 2002; Turner, 2004; Turner, 2010; Gurel-Atay and Kahle, 2010). A nascent body of literature has begun to investigate beyond the brand, exploring celebrity from beneath an axiological cultural approach, which reveals the social and cultural significance of the alluring, idyllic characteristics that celebrities possess (O’Guinn, 1991; Turner, 2004; Peñaloza, 2004; Schroeder, 2009; Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010; Kerrigan et al, 2011).

Contemporary consumer culture is besieged with fastidiously packaged celebrity products that contribute to the fashioning and management of our individual and group identities (Wicks et al, 2007); even so, as Hewer and

Brownlie (2009) note, there is still a dubious absence of celebrity studies within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). Studies which have, thus far, aimed to present the “*cultural meanings, sociohistoric influences, and social dynamics [of celebrity] that shape consumer experiences and identities in the myriad messy contexts of everyday life*” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005 p. 875) include, but are not exclusive to: O’Guinn’s (1991) study of the consumption of celebrity musician Barry Manilow; Schroeder’s (2005) exploration of the representation of celebrity artists Andy Warhol, Barbara Kruger, and Cindy Sherman as consumer brands; Brownlie and Hewer’s (2007) interpretation of the masculine discourses characterised in the visual images of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver’s contemporary cookbook; Hamilton and Hewer’s (2010) netnographic exploration of the Kylie consumer tribe; Brownlie and Hewer’s (2009: 2011) unpacking of discourses of femininity, escape and fantasy from the ‘*toils*’ and ‘*drudgery*’ of everyday life, offered by celebrity chef Nigella Lawson in her cookbook; and, Kerrigan et al’s (2011) elucidation of the ‘*celebritisation*’ of the Andy Warhol brand.

Within CCT, Otnes and Maclaren (2007) and Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren (2010), offer an alternative stream of celebrity thought. Otnes and Maclaren (2007) explore the consumption of the British Royal Family Brand (BRFB), whilst Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren (2010) investigate service providers’ views of British Royal Family (BRF) members, who they perceive to be ‘*above*’ the status of ‘*celebrity*’. Since the publication of these studies, substantial historical, cultural, and political changes have taken place. The wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011 - St.

Catherine's day - at London's Westminster Abbey, is once such event (Balmer, 2011b). International intrigue promoted live coverage of the fairy-tale union across the global mediascape: from the UK, where in excess of 24.5 million people tuned in (Quinn, 2011); to the People's Republic of China (Balmer, 2011b), and the rest of the estimated 2 billion viewers worldwide (Beckford, 2011). The Royal Wedding engendered fresh international interest in the "*rites, rituals and roles of the British Monarchy*" (Balmer, 2011b p. 519), as the newest member of the BRF – future Monarch, Her Royal Highness (HRH) Catherine Middleton Duchess of Cambridge, assumes centre-stage.

Catherine Middleton is establishing an unfathomable power of influence that takes most celebrities years and often, decades to accomplish. Although relatively new to the celebrity realm, making her media debut at a charity fashion show in 2002 at the University of St. Andrews (Bates, 2010), the Duchess has already become a prominent fashion role model in *Vogue* (Neel, 2012), and is honoured in her iconic, sapphire, Issa engagement dress alongside Prince William at Madame Tussauds' Royal Celebrity collection in London (Madame Tussauds, 2012). This is not only due to her mass consumer appeal and '*Midas Touch*' in increasing sales of whatever apparel brand, high-street or couture, that she wears (Hall, 2012; PR WEB UK, 2012); but also, because of her somewhat 'ordinary' and humble beginnings (Bates, 2010). David Yermack (2011) is now convinced that the Duchess' will surpass First Lady Michelle Obama to become the next global fashion icon. In spite of her reverent and, irrefutably influential consumer appeal, little is known about Kate Middleton as an individual (Lyll, 2011). Kate has only

spoken publicly at the formal announcement of her engagement to Prince William and at the East Anglia Children's Hospice in Ipswich (Lyall, 2011; Telegraph, 2012b). The public are fed just enough to be able to relate with Kate, but her mystery and allure - comparable to that of the iconic Hollywood starlet - continues to fuel public intrigue (Lyall, 2011).

The study of celebrity is often seen as '*decorative*' but it is of utmost social importance (Rojek and Turner, 2000). In response to Hewer and Brownlie's (2009) call for more studies to contribute to Consumer Culture Celebrity Theory (CCCT), and Turner's (2010 p. 17) request for celebrity research that considers "*celebrity culture as a cultural and social formation*"; this thesis proposes to advance understandings of celebrity from beneath an axiological cultural approach (Turner, 2004; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010) that considers the "*cultural meanings, sociohistoric influences, and social dynamics*" that shape consumers' consumption of the Royal Celebrity of HRH Catherine Middleton – Duchess of Cambridge (Arnould and Thompson, 2005 p. 875), to offer deeply enriched cultural insights into the conceptualisation and representation of Royal Celebrity in contemporary consumer culture.

## **1.2 Overall Aim and Objectives**

To extend current knowledge and understandings of Royal Celebrity within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)

1. To what extent is Kate Middleton's ascent to Royal Celebrity appropriated by fashion discourse?

- Is Kate Middleton above the status of celebrity as a Royal Celebrity?  
If so, why?
  - How does Kate Middleton's appropriation of fashion discourse, from March 2011-July 2012, illustrate her climb to celebrity and Royal Celebrity status? What impact does this have on consumer fashion trends?
2. How does Kate Middleton's Royal Celebrity reflect tensions in contemporary societal discourse?
- Is Kate Middleton a cultural agent? Which key societal tensions are channelled by the Duchesses' Royal Celebrity?

### 1.3 Research Approach

Synonymous with previous studies in the CCT tradition (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), this thesis examines sociocultural aspects of consumption through an interpretive lens. An interpretive content analysis (Ahuvia, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004) of popular, monthly, fashion lifestyle print magazine *Cosmopolitan UK*, and *Cosmopolitan UK* online articles, from March 2011 to July 2012, is proposed. This study seeks to “*capture the meanings, emphasis and themes of organization and process*” (Altheide, 1996 p. 33) that depict the Duchess of Cambridge as a Royal Celebrity and fashion icon in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Interpretive content analysis ensures that all individual elements of images, captions, consumer comments, and articles etc. within each issue, can be assessed throughout a particular period of time



(Philips and McQuarrie, 2002). It also permits new aspects of celebrity, not previously conceptualised in the literature to surface.

#### 1.4 Dissertation Structure

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

CHAPTER	SUMMARY
1- INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH RATIONALE	Celebrity culture is introduced and previous celebrity studies within CCT theory are discussed. Aims, objectives, contribution and methodology are presented.
2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE	The literature contiguous to: the definition of celebrity celebrities and endorsement beyond endorsement to consider branding celebrity appeal and, celebrities as cultural agents; is considered.
3 - INTRODUCING CATHERINE MIDDLETON DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE	A brief biography, of Catherine Middleton contextualises the Duchess' popular appeal in contemporary consumer culture. It includes the Duchesses' early life, schooling, her relationship with Prince William and her impact on the

	fashion industry - the “Kate Effect”.
4- METHODOLOGY	This chapter introduces the dominant philosophical, interpretivist standpoint within CCT, before considering the importance of textual and visual analysis tools in CCT research, and introducing the proposed methodology – an interpretive content analysis of Cosmopolitan UK magazine.
5- ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	The Royal Celebrity of the Duchess is unpacked, objective by objective. Objective 1 illustrates to what extent the Duchess is ‘above’ the status of celebrity, whilst tracking HRH’s transformation or ascent to Royal Celebrity through fashion discourse. Objective 2 considers the cultural and societal tensions channelled by the Duchesses’ Royal Celebrity.
6- CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	Conclusions, the contribution to research and recommendations for future research and industry are discussed.

## 2.0 Literature Review

This chapter will review the literature that seeks to define celebrity and the celebrity's role in endorsement before moving beyond, to consider the aesthetic attributes offered by celebrity brands in contemporary consumer culture. The chapter then introduces celebrities as cultural agents, and concludes by identifying the lack of Royal Celebrity studies within CCT.

### 2.1 Defining Celebrity

Scholars Pringle and Binet (2005) stipulate that there is, as yet, no unequivocal definition to capture the key characteristics that define celebrity in our modern world. Boorstin's (1962 p. 57) famous quote which insinuates that celebrities are individuals "*well-known for [their] well-knownness*", is still cited and discussed by contemporary scholars seeking to define celebrity (Pringle, 2004; Beer and Pencefold-Mounce, 2010; Turner, 2010). Warhol's (1979 p. 48) revised claim that "*In fifteen minutes everybody will be famous,*" holds equally, ever as relevant. A multitude of scholars have sought to form a fully encompassing classification of celebrity to encapsulate fundamental features possessed by different celebrities (Alberoni, 1972; Monaco, 1978; Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004; Pringle and Binet, 2005; Marshall, 2010). Alberoni (1972) devises a celebrity '*taxonomy*' which is based on the meanings generated by celebrities, the power they possess and, the political and social determinants of the celebrities' public persona. Alberoni (1972) contends that there are those who possess political, economic or religious power, whose decisions have an influence on the present and future fortunes of the

societies that they facilitate, such as the Pope, the Prime Minister and Queen; and, those whose institutional power is limited or non-existent, whose actions and lifestyle provoke a considerable amount of interest, of whom we regard more as celebrities – *'the powerless elite'*. Monaco (1978) extends Alberoni's (1972) thoughts by identifying three celebrity *'typologies'*: Heroes, Stars and Quasars. Heroes are perceived as being celebrities that accomplish or achieve a spectacular goal/achievement, in their field of endeavour, that commands consideration and commemoration – a classic example is Givenchy being acknowledged for the creation of women's tuxedo and power suits in the 1980's (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009); Stars are those who achieve prominence through the development of a public persona which overshadows their professional profile i.e. Coco Chanel being known for her temperament, *"troubled upbringing"*, usage of men and lies, above her apparel and design efforts (Madsen, 2009); and, Quasars are the accidental celebrity who have become the focus of attention through no fault of their own, and have very little control of their public persona such as Hills and The City popular reality TV star Olivia Palermo, who continuously graces the fashion magazines with her fashion triumphs and faux-pas. A more contemporary celebrity *'typology'* is offered by Rojek (2001) who posits that celebrity status is: Ascribed, Achieved and Attributed. Ascribed through blood relations i.e. within the Royal Family or The Kardashians; Achieved in open competition i.e. Britain's got Talent winners Pudsey and Ashley; or Attributed by the media i.e. Dj Chris Moyles.

Turner, Bonner and Marshall (2000) and Turner (2004) critique Alberoni (1972), Monaco (1978) and Rojek (2001) for positing a 'taxonomy', 'typology', definition of celebrity that underestimates the importance of the interests of society in the consumption of celebrity. Turner (2004) contends that celebrities are engrained in society and everyday life and play a central role in the formation of individual and cultural identities.

Morgan (2010) and Beer and Penfold-Mounce (2010), note that celebrities are a central fragment of society. Thanks to the media, fame now constitutes power in itself, and the attribution of celebrity can occur without considerable achievement (Turner, 2004). Pringle and Binet (2005) therefore identify two categories of 'quasar/attributed' celebrities: '*celetoids*' and '*celeactors*'. Carter (2006) and Halpern (2007) describe '*celetoids*' as celebrities whose fame, popularity, and influence, is fashioned by the media - like socialite heiress Paris Hilton who has received one of the largest numbers of hits online and is '*famous for being famous*'. '*Celetoids*' enjoy hyper-visibility at a cost and have an extremely short and unpredictable lifespan (Turner, 2004). Accidental celebrities '*quasars*', such as Jack Tweed Jade Goody's ex-husband, go from high visibility (Soccer AM) to invisibility, and vice-versa (Dancing on Ice), in a matter of weeks (Pringle and Binet, 2005). Thus, '*celetoid*' power and influence over contemporary consumers is restricted and exercised in short, sharp bursts. '*Celeactors*' are fictionally created characters or people who act like real celebrities in the public eye like Keith Lemon, or those who have been created to endorse a particular brand/product such as the EDF energy mascot, the Meerkat and the Andrex

Puppy (Turner, 2004; Pringle and Binet, 2005). The latter, however, differ from real celebrities, as they only possess values which are in sync with the brand that they represent, and are therefore, unlike the celebrity, moulded, manipulated, maintained and controlled (Pringle and Binet, 2005).

Deighton and Kornfeld (2010) and Marshall (2010) identify a new celebrity phenomenon which is becoming commonplace thanks to the emergence of innovative technologies, reality TV, and online social platforms. '*Ordinary Celebrities*', are ordinary people like the parents of Balloon Boy or Sarah Palin, who emerge as celebrities through happenstance, and are empowered as "*creators of content*", as they seek fame, distinctive social recognition, and/or wealth and influence, through the promotion and communication of elements of their private-self (Deighton and Kornfeld, 2010; Marshall, 2010). Deighton and Kornfeld (2010) argue that '*Ordinary Celebrities*' are made by us and made for us. Consumers are selective as to which celebrities they follow, and actively set out to access or avoid particular manufactured publicity ploys (Deighton and Kornfeld, 2010). Blogging, is perceived to be a medium through which '*Ordinary Celebrity*' is produced by Arsel and Zhao (2010). Average individuals strive to attain discursive influence - "*a voice above others*" (Marshall, 1997 p. x) in a largely overpopulated cyberspace, by blogging, for the most part, about everyday issues such as: 'what to cook for dinner' or, 'what to wear today' (Deighton and Kornfeld, 2010). Marshall (2010) and Turner (2010) however, emphasise that self-celebritisation is not a new concept, but instead, it is the mediums through which celebrity is communicated, and the way in which we interact, that has changed. For

instance, Kurzman et al (2007) argue that throughout time, celebrities whether known for a particular talent, skill, or otherwise have and continue to play with broadcasting vehicles to create, and sometimes, exaggerate their celebrity. Kurzman et al (2007 p. 352) use Alexander the Great King of Macedon, as an example of the first celebrity to do so, and contend that '*manipulation of publicity*' and '*global ambition*' contributed to his legendary notoriety.

Celebrity is a multifarious phenomenon, which is in a continual state of progression. As societies and cultures evolve; celebrity conceptualisations, personality traits and behaviours change. The media's influence in driving the evolution of celebrity is apparent, and, as the way in which we communicate changes, so does the way in which we create and consume celebrity.

### **2.1.1 Celebrity Power and Influence**

The power and influence of the celebrity is ever increasing, as modern celebrities increasingly play a significant influence in political, social, economic and religious decisions (Veer et al, 2010). The post 2008 US presidential elections are a prime example of the increasing power and influence that celebrities now possess as they shape the future of political institutions (Veer et al, 2010). Jay Z and Beyonce, through a series of unpaid promotional gigs, stunts and appearances encouraged and influenced society to vote for change, vote for the first black US president (Veer et al, 2010). The support illustrated throughout the campaign encouraged a surge of youthful voters to commit to politics. Obama's imminent success is only

one in a sea of examples which illustrate the power and influence of the celebrity over a consumer culture in which the celebrity holds no formerly institutionalised power (Alberoni, 1972; Turner, 2004; Veer et al, 2010).

### 2.1.2 Royal Celebrity - The British Royal Family Brand (BRFB)

In 1960, Hatch described the British Royal Family (BRF) as a type of 'celebrity': *"The distinguishing feature is the fact that the Royal Family [BRF] are celebrities, and unique among many celebrities. Unlike footballers or film stars or singers, they have not had to win their way to fame and popularity. They are not distinguished by peculiar qualities and achievements, and they wield less power than most politicians. They exist merely as celebrities. Their lives are endowed with an irrational importance, and an atmosphere of 'glamour', 'beauty', 'excitement', 'record breaking' and 'romance'"* (Hatch, 1960 p. 65). In the early 1960's, interest in the BRF was reverent (Hatch, 1960). Newspapers began to discuss and divulge commonplace aspects about the lives of the Royals, such as Princess Margret's engagement to *"The Jones boy"*, as the BRF came to be within public reach (Hatch, 1960). Today, Hatch's (1960) definition of Royal Celebrity resonates with many of the discourses that surround modern day reality TV personalities, as previously discussed (Beer and Penfold-Mounce, 2010).

Balmer (2011a: 2011b p. 1390) and, Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren's (2010) research indicates that, the BRF are, 'above' the status of 'celebrity'. Service providers, *"retailers, journalists and employees of royal palace museums"*, insist that the BRFB *"represents the heritage and history of others...most*



[BRF] *members deserve more respect and tolerance than “regular celebrities”*” (Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren, 2010). The BRFB engenders a sense of identity and belonging (Otnes and Maclaren, 2007; Balmer, 2011a). Indeed, Balmer’s (2007 p. 31) earlier work conveys this idea and discusses the mass consumer appeal of the British Monarchy, acknowledging that monarchical charm is enriched in a political, societal and economic culture that resonates from the extensive power and influence exercised by the Victorian Monarchy. Monarchies provoke substantial public curiosity, backing and belief on the global stage (Balmer, 2011b) - the funeral of Princess Diana attracted a global TV audience of approximately 2.5 billion (Balmer, 2011b). Often, the allure, etiquette and lifestyle of the BRFB is at the heart of media discussions, as the BRFB is extensively represented and disseminated in the mass media (Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren, 2010).

Balmer (2011a p. 1390) argues that a distinguishing feature of heritage identities, such as that of the BRF, is that they “*are the past, present and future*”, and remain relatively analogous throughout time. Balmer (2011a p. 1390) coins the concept of Relative Invariance, where “*heritage identities have different meanings in different times and in different places even though on certain dimensions they remain the same,*” to describe this phenomenon. The various roles and responsibilities fulfilled by the BRF have, and continue to emerge and evolve continuously “*in constitutional, cultural, emotional, legal, philanthropic...religious [and institutional] contexts*” (Balmer, 2011a p. 1388). Members of the BRF are attributed various roles which echo the past, are of the present, and imply what may come to pass in the future (Balmer,

2011a). Balmer (2011a) coins this process The Phenomenon of Institutional Role Identities. For example, Queen Elizabeth II's sixty year reign of the British Monarchy, commemorated by the June 2012 Diamond Jubilee celebrations, acknowledged HRHs' role and influence in the past, and simultaneously, celebrates her present influence in her role as Queen; whilst April 2011 saw the union of the Duchess and Duke of Cambridge, who are second in line to the throne, and the future of the BRFB – as the BRFB lives on (Balmer, 2011a; 2011b).

## **2.2 Celebrities and Endorsement**

In this section, traditional celebrity endorsement approaches are introduced, discussed and compared with that of the BRFB.

For centuries, employing well known, liked and admired persons to promote and sell products and services has been a widespread marketing phenomenon (McCracken, 1989; Keller, 1993; Pringle, 2004; Petty and D'Rozario, 2009). From Jesus' apostles spreading the word of God in biblical times (Evans, 2012); to Royalty endorsing patented medicines and dentures pre - 18<sup>th</sup> century (Goodrum and Dalrymple, 1990); to Michael Jordan's in excess of \$10billion endorsements of Gatorade, Nike and McDonalds from the late 90's (Erdogan et al, 2001; Kellner, 2001); to Andy Murray's Rado D-Star 200 watch worn throughout 2012, at Queens and Wimbledon (Watch Pro, 2012). Brand management teams view celebrities as a strategic tool, employing them to cut through advertising clutter, to dictate consumer trends and tastes and boost profits (Lim, 2005). Abbot (2001) contends that the

celebrity system brings a vitality that involves people and not inanimate objects. *“Celebrities can build, refresh and add new dimensions, what celebrities stand for enhances brands and they save valuable time in terms of creating the credibility a company has to create in order to build its brands by transferring the value to the brands.”* (Abbot et al, 2001 as cited in Bryne et al, 2003). Keller (1993) supports this view and believes that celebrities are, for the most part, credible, well-known, likeable, and, possess a rich set of potentially useful associations, judgements and feelings.

Kahle and Homer (1985), Hsu and McDonald (2002) and Ogunsiji (2012) contend that the effectiveness of a celebrity endorsement depends on the expertness, trustworthiness and attractiveness of the celebrity in relation to the product he/she is promoting. Empirical studies have illustrated that endorser-product congruity positively affects consumer perception of: spokesperson credibility, attitudes, recall recognition, purchase intention and willingness to pay a price premium (Hsu and McDonald, 2002). Gurel-Atay and Kahle (2010) found that when celebrity, product and consumer values all coincide, consumers have more preferential attitudes towards the brand, and higher purchasing intents. Gurel-Atay and Kahle (2010) revealed that even in a single advertisement, when all three values were aligned, this had a noticeable impact on advertising effectiveness. Celebrities can also voluntarily decide to wear particular brands. Catherine Middleton’s decision to wear a pair of diamond earrings, gifted to her by parents Michael and Carole Middleton, acts a contemporary illustration of the effectiveness of a single advertisement. The Duchesses decision to wear the £15, 000 diamond

earrings engraved with the Middleton Family Crest on her wedding day, allowed exclusive luxury jeweller Robinson Pelham to virtually triple profits in 2011 (Walker, 2012).

McCracken (1989), and Turner (2004), infer that public figures are often employed to transfer the cultural and symbolic meaning that resides within their celebrity persona, to the product and brand they endorse. McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model postulates, that once this meaning transfer is complete, consumers gain some of the celebrity endorsers' attributes through the consumption of the endorsed products in their own day-to-day lives (Amos et al, 2008). Emma Watson's endorsement of Lancôme products, such as the Trésor Midnight Rose fragrance and the Rouge in Love lipstick range, is extremely effective, and, a perfect illustration of an effective celebrity-product congruity endorsement. Thanks to her role as Hermione in the Harry Potter movies, Emma has a cult female following - the generation that has grown up with the actress. Now that Emma is taking her first steps into fandom beyond Harry Potter, she is finding her feet as a young actress and a blossoming young woman experiencing life, love and lust - and these attributes are transferred to revitalise the classic, timeless, luxury Lancôme brand. Lancôme is then able to command a price premium as Emma's celebrity equity is successfully transferred to the products within the Lancôme range. Successful meaning transfer can only occur if the celebrity persona and brand identity positively correlate. Therefore, the selection of a glamour model such as Jordan - Katie Price - would not be credible and fitting with the Lancôme brand.

Although the BRF, are habitually recognised and affiliated with certain products and brands, they do not officially engage in endorsement, and therefore, do not directly, receive financial reward for the choices and actions that they make in their day-to-day lives. Balmer et al (2006) infer that Monarchies invest in, and endorse, social and humanitarian welfare. For example, Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Enniskillen, Northern Ireland on the 26<sup>th</sup> June marks a momentous social and humanitarian triumph for the British Monarchy. Enniskillen is the scene of the 'Poppy Day Massacre' where eleven people died in the IRA bombing of a war memorial on Remembrance Sunday 1987 (Telegraph, 2011c). Since then, substantial efforts have been made to resolve the troubles there. The Queen shaking hands with Stormont deputy first minister Martin McGuinness - a former IRA commander, and being welcomed into a Catholic Church (Telegraph, 2011c); are the just rewards, and, acceptance, of the efforts of both parties, to signify the beginnings of the official end to an on-going religious war.

### **2.2.1 Multiple Celebrity Endorsement**

Multiple celebrity endorsers are often more zealous, motivating and appealing to 21<sup>st</sup> century consumers (Sayal, 2010). A group reaches wider consumer audiences and demographics, minimises audience boredom, and creates a profound belief in the product over time (Hsu and MacDonald, 2002; Sayal, 2010; Ogunsiyi, 2012). The group reassures and alleviates uncertainty. Pepsi and Capital FM, feature multiple A list stars such as Rihanna, to support the theme, cause and value of their products. Companies like Marks and Spenser also recognise that a known group of

celebrities speaking about their product is extremely effective, and feature an array of celebrities including: Myleene Class, Dani Minoque and, more recently, the illustrious Gary Barlow. Male and female members of the BRF from all different age-groups, in their various Royal roles and responsibilities, throughout time, echo this trend as they have and continue to promote a variety of cultural and societal interests. From Queen Elizabeth II, a revolutionary monarch responsible for vast societal changes such as granting consumers intimate access to her own coronation inside Westminster Abbey, which was broadcast live on mainstream TV on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1953 (The Diamond Queen, 2012); to Prince Harry's patronage of UK based charities Dolen Cymru, MapAction and WellChild (The Prince of Wales Press Release, 2007); to the Duchess of Cambridge's first formal Royal representative role, in March 2012, for the Ipswich Children's Hospice (Telegraph, 2012b). Consequently, the BRF can be represented in various and, perhaps, conflicting ways due to the multiplicity of BRF members, their different ages, and diverse interests.

### **2.2.2 Drawbacks of Celebrity Endorsement**

Rojek (2001) insists that, for all their positive and idealistic attributes, celebrities are human, and humans were born to make and learn from the mistakes they make (Rojek, 2001). For this reason, living celebrities can be extremely expensive and risky in terms of their continued good behaviour (Petty and D'Rozario, 2009). Amos et al (2008) revealed that the release of negative information about a particular celebrity has the utmost influence in determining the success and failure of celebrity endorsements. Public

celebrity meltdowns are not only damaging to the celebrity equity, but they can also have a negative impact on the brand equity of the organisations the celebrity endorses (Erdogan and Baker, 2000; Amos et al, 2008). For example, the media scandal surrounding former world number one professional golfer Tiger Wood's affairs, with a string of promiscuous women, damaged his clean-cut image as an honest, adoring husband, father and family man (Donnegan, 2009). In turn, this caused Accenture, as well as many other high profile sponsors, to drop him, as he no longer fitted with brand image and values (Donnegan, 2009). Within the BRF, Royal mistakes are notorious for damaging the status and reputation of not only those who make them, but also the identity of the British Monarchy (Greyser et al, 2006). Prince Charles twenty-five year affair with Camilla Parker Bowles, which was rekindled during his marriage to Princess Diana, scandalously eroded his Royal status and; even today, eighteen-years after Diana's death, still overshadows his public persona and paints the inner-workings of the British Monarchy and the BRF in a negative light (Wilson, 1994).

This said, at the same time, celebrity bad behaviour can often be overlooked by fans, who, due to their addiction and fascination with celebrity (Rojek, 2001; Kurzman et al, 2007; White et al, 2009; Lavoie, 2012); attribute less blame to their celebrity idol when he/she engages in any activity which could be potentially damaging to their image. The biggest celebrity consumer desire/appeal resides in the fact that celebrities get into trouble. This can, occasionally, positively contribute to their appeal and vitality (McCracken, 1989). This was the case for Kate Moss. Immediately after pictures emerged

of her snorting cocaine, she was dropped by several brands including H and M, Burberry and Chanel, as this activity did not fit with the image that they wished to convey (Thomson, 2005, O'Reilly, 2012). As time progresses, it is clear that the scandal has merely enhanced her bad gal celebrity image. Kate's annual revenue doubled from \$2 to £4million (Anon, 2010b). Equally, Prince Harry's admission to smoking cannabis and heavy drinking in 2002 (Barnett, 2002), only heightened interest in the behaviour of the young rebellious Prince who was told-off by his father - Prince Charles - and forced to visit the Featherstone rehabilitation clinic to re-familiarise himself with the perils of drug usage. It is therefore, evident, that addressing celebrity misbehaviour, in the appropriate way, immediately after the incident occurs, helps to maintain the celebrity image as well as the brand endorsed.

### **2.2.3 The BRF and Endorsement**

Celebrity endorsement is big business. Celebrities are employed to transfer their demographic, psychographic and sociocultural characteristics to products, brands and experiences (Keller, 1993; Abbot et al, 2001; Byrne et al, 2003; Pringle, 2004). This enables celebrities to cut through advertising clutter, penetrate the consumer market and, ultimately, generate capital (Lim, 2005) for both organisational and personal gain. What distinguishes the BRF members from most celebrities is that they do not formally engage in endorsements, or receive personal, financial remuneration. Instead, as Balmer et al (2006) argue, the British Monarchy invests in, and endorses, social and humanitarian welfare. The BRF members vary in gender and age-groups. Different BRF members therefore appeal to different consumer



demographics and psychographics. Like other celebrities, BRF members do not escape public critique for the mistakes they make, and therefore, at times, are viewed negatively as endorsers of the identity of British Monarchy, and the BRFB. If managed, and addressed quickly, and in the appropriate way, such mistakes do not significantly damage the celebrity persona, or erode the BRFB essence.

## 2.3 Branding Celebrity – Moving Beyond Endorsement

### 2.3.1 Branding Celebrity

We live in “a symbolic universe as defined by, in part, the brand identity” (Schroeder, 2009 p. 124). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century everything and anything can be branded, bought and sold, brands have become the culture (Klein, 2000). Branding celebrities is, essentially, the business of packaging and selling intangible hopes, dreams and aspirations in return for cold hard cash (Lim, 2005). Celebrity audiences are assembled (Marshall, 1997) and celebrity roles are entwined in a narrative cycle, which is instigated by a captivating personal account of the upcoming celebrity’s beginnings, fate of discovery, and the celebrity’s ascent from feat to feat as numerous difficulties emerge to be fastidiously overcome (Gabler, 2001). Celebrities are “*manufactured*” and “*produced to be consumed*” (Cashmore and Parker, 2003 p. 215; Hurst, 2005 p. 115-22). Celebrities engender a prodigious consumer yearning that resonates from their influential status as role models, figures of veneration and respect (Rojek, 2001; Kurzman et al, 2007). Consumers want to be like their icons (Kurzman et al, 2007; Sun and Wu, 2012). As Weber (1978) suggests, consumers are covetous of the elite, their existence, belongings, and acts of being, that are attainable, even when such items are manufactured as more affordable duplicates. Consumer obsession with celebrities resides in the fact, that it is extremely unlikely that the individual will ever know the celebrity personally, cross paths with them or attain the highly sought after celebrity lifestyle (Cashmore and Parker, 2003). The manufacture of celebrity brands and products helps consumers to access

and consume a slice of the, otherwise unattainable, celebrity 'dream' (Baudrillard, 1988 p. 56; Cashmore and Parker, 2003; Cashmore, 2006). The BRF are an exemplar of this phenomenon. Urde et al (2006) suggest that the Monarchy is managed, as Queen Elizabeth II herself acknowledges (Balmer et al, 2006 p. 903), "*a firm*". Visibility is managed through the tactful selection of "*events, ceremonies and speech venues, [which] constitute[s] a desirable way to promote the values and principal agenda of the Crown*" (Greyser et al, 2006 p. 905). Monarchs and their families are perceived by Urde et al (2007) to be symbols of the BRF, who act as brand ambassadors, and throughout their lifetime, exemplify and publicise BRF brand essence. The lives of the BRF is very much a reflection of the lives that many consumers aspire to achieve, wish for, or simply dream about; yet, at the same time, very much feel a part of (Otnes and Maclaren, 2007).

### 2.3.2 Celebrities and Desire

Rojek and Turner (2000) argue that although the study of celebrity is often perceived as 'decorative', it is of utmost social importance. Rojek (2001 p. 189) suggests that: "*Celebrity culture is one of the most important mechanisms for mobilizing abstract desire. It embodies desire in an animate object, which allows for deeper levels of attachment and identification than with inanimate commodities. Celebrities can be reinvented to renew desire, and because of this they are extremely efficient resources in the mobilization of global desire...[Celebrities] humanize desire.*" The emotional appeal celebrities command permits them to perform desire and make it real. In an era where rapid advances in technology and the convergence of global

cultures facilitate the '*unpacking*' of celebrity (Levitt, 1983; Pringle, 2004; Schwab, 2006; Kerrigan et al, 2011), Rojek (2001) argues that as the celebrities' personal life, background and achievements are revealed, they become real, they become just like us. Consumers, evidently, feel a closeness to, or seek to pursue a friendship with celebrities through their devoted following of their favourite personalities (Pringle, 2004; Rojek, 2008) - this is known as '*para-social interaction*' (Horton and Wohl, 1956). The British Royal Wedding is an example of the Royal Celebrity of Prince William and Catherine Middleton becoming real to consumers', who shared the wedding experience in real-time. In the 24 hours before, consumer interest and anticipation was such that, in the UK and America alone, 2.8 million people posted on Facebook and, as the service neared, 237 tweets per second made reference to the Royal Wedding (Beckford and Paton, 2011). The event broadcast live across the worldwide global mediascape for all to see, share, and experience (Quinn, 2011). A bank holiday day in Britain was granted to encourage public celebration; private garden, street and local community-centre parties took place; a special £5 coin was introduced; and, stamps were released across some of the Commonwealth countries (Balmer, 2011b).

### 2.3.3 "Celebrity Worship"

As consumers are engaging more frequently in consumer peer-to-peer exchanges both online and offline (Hamilton and Hewer, 2010), through their shared passion, belief and desire to be like their idolised celebrities, they congregate in sub-groups or tribes, in an almost cult-like manner (Cova and

Cova, 2001; Kozinets, 1997: 2001; Maffesoli, 2007; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010). O'Guinn's (1991) '*Touching Greatness Phenomenon*', where the consumption of popular figures is explored through the analysis of the behaviours of Barry Manilow fans, acts as an illustrative example. O'Guinn (1991) identified that the celebrity's ability to perform '*God like*' roles, is the leading pull for fans to become hooked on their idols, and follow them religiously. Barry Manilow fans describe Barry as: "...*someone more than a priest and someone less than son of God in a traditional Protestant Christian model...Clouds part when his plane lands: he supplies food in mysterious ways; and he possess[es] a special sense of knowing about his followers' lives that is clearly beyond mortal*" O'Guinn (1991 p. 110). The concept of celebrity as a religion has gained momentum in recent years. Peter Kline (2011) likened Lady Gaga's '*little monster*' fan base to sinners of God. Balmer (2011b p. 521) states that the BRF has "*engendered a religious-like loyalty owing to its quasi-sacred aura*" and Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren (2010) revealed that BRF service providers used terms such as: "*Saint,*" "*Savior*" and "*Hero/Heroine*", when referring to members of the BRF.

As well as positive, celebrity worship has also been known to have a significant and harmful effect on the psychological behaviour of certain consumer groups. Dr. Maltby defined the practice of excessive celebrity icon following of popular persons in the public eye - Celebrity Worship Syndrome (CWS) (Maltby et al, 2003). CWS is described as a '*psychological deficiency*' and is, therefore, a recognised medical illness. The study defines various forms of CWS: from '*mild affliction*' where the culprits are usually social

butterflies with a wide network of friends and acquaintances; to '*hard-core CWS sufferers*', where individuals are reclusive and compulsive with indifferent personalities (Maltby et al, 2003). Rojek (2008) argues that celebrity worship is often a one-way fan to celebrity emotional projection of affirmative feelings for idealised celebrities. The obsessed fan develops an emotional dependence with said celebrity and/or imagines closeness, which can in extreme cases take the place of real life relations, such as family, friends and work (Rojek, 2008). Closeness to celebrity is achieved via the vast dissemination of celebrity through the mass media: TV, radio, magazines, online social networking, Twitter, Facebook etc. Celebrities can be a powerful source of confirmation of belonging, recognition and, meaning of making sense of individual positioning in contemporary consumer culture for those who would perhaps otherwise be perceived as under-performers in some aspects of their lives, who lead anticlimactic lives, that border on the fringe of depression in depression prone civilisations (Rojek, 2008). This is illustrated by Wohlfeil and Whelan (2012) through a reflective narrative of the lived experience of Wohlfeil's consumption of, and 'personal relationship' with celebrity Jenna Malone. Jenna took the place of Wohlfeil's real life relationships as he came to know and relate to her as if she were a real personal friend, or, a lover.

Inevitably, the way in which celebrity is consumed varies from one individual to another. Celebrity consumption is like a drug; some people dip their toes in, and become light users, whilst others plunge, often sightlessly, into a fathomless pool of celebrity refuge.

#### 2.3.4 Celebrities and Escape

Hewer and Brownlie (2009) propose that celebrities are often used as a means of escape, and make it acceptable for consumers to behave in such a way that is out of sync with contemporary cultural ideals. In a world where the traditional role of the woman as nurturer is overshadowed by the “*grinding drudgery, exhaustion and denial, the time-starved, body-conscious, guilt-burdened, credit-shackled contemporary multi-tasking woman*”, celebrity chef Nigella delivers the perfect, seductive sexualisation of femininity cooking-up culinary delights in the 1950’s kitchen (Brownlie and Hewer, 2011 p. 5). The Nigella express transforms the kitchen into a magical, familial and social ‘*timeless realm*’ in which ‘*domestic toil*’ and ‘*drudgery*’ ceases to exist (Hewer and Brownlie, 2009; Brownlie and Hewer, 2011). Consumers are sold pleasure and liberation from the burdens of everyday life, as they are disillusioned by the natural, effortlessly perfect seductive image of femininity that Nigella personifies (Hewer and Brownlie, 2009; Brownlie and Hewer, 2011).

#### 2.3.5 Negative effect of Celebrity Appeal and Desire

The desire and appeal created by celebrities, as well as positive, has been known to have negative effects on consumer behaviour (Dittmar, 2007). Stack (1987; 2000) identified a relationship between celebrities taking their own lives, and the increase in suicide rates; and Harrison (1997), celebrity influence on consumer eating disorders. Celebrity influence has also contributed to a youth culture that favours fame as a career path (Choi and

Berger, 2009). A study in the Washington post found that 31% of US teens believe they will be famous in the future (Carter, 2006; Halpern, 2007); whilst 70% of UK primary and secondary school teachers believe that teens want to be famous for the sake of being famous (Cockcroft, 2008). Managing celebrity reputation is therefore imperative for consumer well-being. If ill-managed, the British Monarchy can have a negative impact on consumer culture (Greysen et al, 2006). Prince Andrew, British Trade Ambassador and fourth in line to the throne, is notorious for his alternative lifestyle choices (Klein, 2011). Some of which include: sexual relationships with a string of promiscuous women; Andrew's acquaintance with registered sex offender Jeffrey Epstein; and the Prince's interactions with well-known, contentious International and British businessmen, Mohamed Sakher El Materi – billionaire son-in-law of Tunisian Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and David "Spotty" Rowland – who contributed \$66, 000 to pay the excessive debts of former wife Sarah Ferguson (Klein, 2011). Prince Andrew continues to behave in a way that is not perceived to be bequeathing of a potential future monarch, and, as the British Monarchy continues to excuse and counter-act his actions (Klein, 2011), this is extremely damaging to the identity and reputation of the British Monarchy and the BRFB.

#### **2.3.6 Celebrities as Cultural Agents – dictating lifestyle and fashion trends**

Giddens (1991) suggests that identity has become, to some extent, an everlasting DIY mission in which contemporary consumers are in continual pursuit of the seamless self, as they seek to acquire cultural and symbolic goods as a source of influence and authority (Bourdieu, 1993; O'Reilly,



2005). Certainly, Hirschman (1990 p. 31) found that more affluent consumers achieve '*celebrity status*' through consumption. This said, today, freedom of choice in consumer good acquisition has put an end to many of the social structures and divisions previously associated with production (Bell and Hollows, 2005). This has granted consumers freedom to experiment with identity through consumption (Bell and Hollows, 2005). When class differentiations are not, necessarily, as distinctive or as pertinent, Powell and Prasad (2010) advocate that celebrities act as cultural intermediaries who transfer a particular social '*lifestyle*' into the lived experience of ordinary individuals through mass media advertising.

Brands have been known to act as a '*medium*' through which numerous cultural codes, that are crafted around common rituals and assigned meaning within the context of social relationships, exist and are transmitted within the marketplace (Lury, 2004; Holt, 2004). Celebrity brands are no different (Holt, 2004). Celebrities act as cultural agents who facilitate consumers' "*personality development and social identification*"; and assist individuals to identify where they feature, fit-in and/or differ from societal norms (O'Guinn, 1991 p. 104). Peñaloza (2004) emphasises the controversial, societal cultural codes reflected by Madonna – now a mother of four. Madonna's music, videos, dress, and conduct, throughout the years, stresses the vast differences between individuals and societies the world over (Peñaloza, 2004). From liberating and empowering discourses of femininity, as a woman masculinising sexuality, adorning underwear as outwear; to promoting and challenging stereotypes of interracial difference in '*Like a Prayer*' (Peñaloza,

2004 p. 185); to support of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community - amplified by the Britney Madonna kiss at the 20<sup>th</sup> MTV Annual Video Music Awards in 2003; to acknowledgement of the extensive economic differences within society - '*rags to riches*' (Peñaloza, 2004 p. 183). Madonna continues to channel controversy. The use of the swastika during the song "*Nobody Knows Me*" in Madonna's current 2012 world tour (McKinley, 2012), even depicts many high profile politicians and celebrities as fascists.

Celebrities also act as cultural agents in Brownlie and Hewer's (2007) study which explores the visual representations of masculinity disseminated throughout celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's contemporary lifestyle cookbook. Masculinity is deeply enrooted in conventional culinary culture; however, the activities affiliated with cooking i.e. shopping, are often visually represented as pursuits associated with female identity in consumer culture. Brownlie and Hewer (2007 p. 229) infer that the "*laddishness*", "*blokishness*" and "*untamed heterosexual masculinity*" of the images used to represent the Jamie Oliver Brand, arouse the blurring of gendered identity in contemporary culinary culture and consequently, present an emerging discourse of modern-day living.

Cultural codes such as the blurring of gendered identity in culinary culture illustrated by Jamie Oliver (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007) and the liberation of femininity, sexualisation and freedom of expression of difference channelled by Madonna (Peñaloza, 2004); are translated and interpreted in the media then disseminated to consumers, who act as active meaning makers as they

receive and re-shape the celebrity message, and ultimately, determine its impact on societal discourse (Peñaloza, 2004; Marshall, 2005).

### 2.3.7 Fashion, Celebrity and Consumption

Fashion plays a crucial role in contemporary consumer culture. Thompson and Haytko (1997) found that consumers adopt particular fashion discourses which often reflect labyrinthine, ideological myths of the disposition of individuals and society. Consumers play with fashion discourse, negotiating restrictive and emblematic social subgroupings “*to fit the circumstances of their immediate social settings and their sense of personal history, interests and life goals*” (Thompson and Haytko, 1997 p. 18). For this reason, individuals often borrow idyllic characteristics from the fashion world, which act as foundations for their hedonistic “*dreams of an envisioned good life*” that the imagined consumption of such goods might offer (Thompson and Haytko, 1997 p. 35). Social subgroupings often act as reference points, and aid understandings of much larger societal and cultural phenomena such as: differences in social-standing, gendered identity, and, tensions between personal independence and social reliance (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). For example, personal choices in fashion attire are indicative of uniqueness, distinctiveness and self-sufficiency in masculinized themed narratives and in feminized narratives, social belonging; whilst social class tensions are illustrated by glamourizing narratives that associate “*self-worth with symbols of attained social status and material affluence*”, and narratives of morality that criticize flamboyancy and “*self-aggrandizing acts of adornment*” (Thompson and Haytko, 1997 p. 37). MacRobbie (1998) and Barnard (2002)

contend that fashion and clothing are ways in which discriminations of social and economic position are made to seem correct and genuine, and consequently tolerable not only to those in positions of power and high class, but also those who are subservient and less-well off. This is known as 'hegemony', where the high-class continue to put up 'fences' as those in lower social standing build their 'bridges' (Simmel, 1904; Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; Barnard, 2002). Throughout the centuries, such fashion differences and distinctions between the upper and middle classes have been imminent (Simmel, 1904; Barnard, 2002). From the printed cottons worn by the richer classes in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, which were abandoned and replaced with plain white cotton patterns as they became more affordable to the lower working classes (Forty 1986); to today's premium fashion brands, i.e. Burberry, which are being snubbed by the upper-classes, as such brands become accessible, in their original form or as a cheaper alternative replicas, to the mass middle and lower classes (McCracken, 1985; Fay, 2006). Fashion and clothing are, therefore, often employed to challenge relative positions of power within this social fashion hierarchy (Barnard 2002).

Through their analysis of the popular *Sex and the City* films and TV series, Stevens and Maclaren (2012) offer an effective illustration of the relationship between femininity, carnality (hedonistic pleasure sought and achieved in consumption), and the symbolic consumption of goods in signifying power, affluence and economic superiority. This is illustrated primarily by the excessive consumption behaviours of Carrie Bradshaw, the main character; an empowered, independent, extremely successful female writer, with high

monetary means, who continuously consumes high spec luxury designer apparel as she constructs and reconstructs her identity throughout the relationship and work challenges that she faces (Stevens and Maclaren, 2012). Carrie Bradshaw's closet is the fashion haven, from Chanel to Dior to Westwood, which reinforces her power and economic affluence (Stevens and Maclaren, 2012). In one episode Carrie states "*I like my money where I can see it,*" when referring to her closet. This is indicative of the tensions between not only social standing and economic means, but also female identity, the body and the "*carnal female*" "*consummate consumer*", who obtains emancipation and hedonic gratification in the act of consumption (Stevens and Maclaren, 2008: 2012).

In consumer culture, cultural codes are widely disseminated through the fashion celebrities adorn (Barron, 2007). From the early 90's, Kate Moss symbolised a change in the discourses of the portrayal of femininity in modelling and advertising (Entwistle, 2002). Being somewhat ordinary in stature, with average facial characteristics, body measurements, and her casual sense of style, Kate Moss upheld "*her identity in a world of difference*" (White, 1994; Schroeder, 2000; Entwistle, 2002; Schroeder, 2006 p. 316). The illusion of the idealistic image of the perfect, healthy feminine form shifted towards a girlie '*grunge*' look, which consumers continuously strive to emulate (Soley-Beltran, 2006).

Celebrity identity is often constructed and reconstructed as time progresses (Barron, 2007). Kylie Minogue, throughout the years, has successfully formed

and refashioned her identity through the appropriation of fashion discourse and, in doing so, has championed seven different pop personas that reflect historical, cultural, societal tensions of the time: “*Cute Kylie,*’ *Sex Kylie,*’ *Dance Kylie,*’ *Gothic Kylie,*’ *Indie Kylie,*’ *Camp Kylie*’ and *Cyber-Kylie*” (Barron, 2008 p. 49). For example, from her emergence from soap to pop in the late 80’s as “*Cute*”, innocent, sweet and idealistic girl next door Kylie; to “*Sex Kylie*” as female form and sexuality is embraced and expressed vocally and visually when the star adopts a ‘less is more’ approach to clothing in the early 90’s - wearing short dresses, bra and hot pants etc.; to “*Camp Kylie*” in the naughties, where her sense of style focuses on “*actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis*’ and *apolitical frivolity*” (Robertson, 1996 p. 3 as cited in Barron, 2008 p. 57). In a similar vein, rising to fame as a fashionista after being photographed in a sexually revealing Versace gown held together by safety pins at the premier of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* in Cannes in 1994, Elizabeth Hurley challenged and redefined the discourses of conventional fashion (Pringle, 2004; Barron, 2007). This year, as Elizabeth renews her endorsement contract with Estée Lauder at the age of forty-five (Barron, 2007), a more mature woman, she now sets the example of femininity naturally and gracefully grown older (Barron, 2007). Moreover, Queen Elizabeth II herself is recognised for having done so throughout her six decade reign, as HRH continues to maintain perpetual poise and regal elegance, as she dresses to accommodate her Royal Roles (Lin, 2012).

Economic evidence of the impact of celebrity on identity and contemporary consumer fashion discourse is provided by David Yermack’s (2011) study of

First Lady Michelle Obama. A relationship between the apparel brands worn by Michelle was correlated with an increase of 1.7% in stock price, one week after high profile appearances and, 0.85% after routine events (Yermack, 2011). Michelle appeared on The Tonight Show dressed in J. Crew apparel in 2009. The First Lady was photographed again two months later clutching the Bible whilst donning a pair J. Crew gloves, and stock prices of J. Crew then soared (Yermack, 2011). Yermack (2011 p. 9) suggests that Michelle's widespread consumer appeal is due to the fact that she wears a mixture of high street and designer – which makes her apparel choices “*affordable* [and thus arguably replicable] *to nearly anyone*” and everyone. In spite of criticisms from definitive designers such as Oscar de la Renta for her fashion choices, Michelle is unswathed as she receives no financial gain from companies, and instead consumes that which she pleases (Yermack, 2011). It is this integrity which gains Michelle so much consumer admiration and respect. Betts (2011a) argues that the individuality and femininity Michelle displays in her way of dressing has helped liberate women from conventional, masculinising power dress. As Forbes' 8<sup>th</sup> most powerful women in 2011 (Forbes, 2011), her power and position as First Lady of America is ‘*celebritised*’ and made accessible to all through the consumption of mass-market apparel brands.

This section has illustrated how celebrities act as cultural agents to channel contemporary cultural tensions in lifestyle and fashion discourse. The influential impact that celebrity has on consumption is inestimable. Above all, it is clear that, without celebrity, fashion would inexorably cease to exist as

consumers buy an identity that is often pre-conditioned by celebrity (Tungate, 2004).

## 2.4 Literature Gap

Having now considered the various typologies of celebrity that exist, as Pringle and Binet (2005) suggest there is no unequivocal definition of celebrity. Although the BRF have been at the heart of public discussion for centuries, it is within recent times that the Royals are increasingly being characterised as 'celebrities' (Hatch, 1960; Otnes and Maclaren, 2007; Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren, 2010). 'Royal Celebrity', i.e. celebrity attributed and inherited through generations and/or marriage (Hatch, 1960; Rojek, 2001), is a somewhat incipient, under-theorised area within Consumer Culture Theory. And even more so, is the notion that Royals are '*above celebrities*' (Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren, 2010). Beyond the traditional endorsement approach to celebrity (Kahle and Homer 1985; McCracken 1989; Erdogan, 1999; Hsu and MacDonald 2002; Turner 2004; Turner 2010; Gurel-Atay and Kahle, 2010), it is clear that celebrities possess alluring, powerful, idealistic, intangible and influential characteristics that have a substantial and immeasurable impact on contemporary consumer culture (Marshall, 1997; O'Guinn, 1991; Rojek, 2001; Cashmore and Parker, 2003; Hurst, 2005; Dittmar, 2007; Kurzman et al, 2007; Rojek, 2008; Hewer and Brownlie, 2009; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010; Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren, 2010; Veer et al, 2010; Brownlie and Hewer, 2011; O'Reilly, 2012). Celebrities act as cultural agents to inform social and cultural archetypes



within society (O'Guinn, 1991; Peñaloza, 2004; Brownlie and Hower, 2007; Barron, 2007; Yermack, 2011), but again, within CCT, little is known about the role of Royal Celebrities in dictating consumer tastes and trends.

### **3.0 Introducing Catherine Middleton Duchess of Cambridge**

Gabler (2001) infers that celebrity roles are entwined in a narrative cycle. This cycle begins with a captivating personal account of the upcoming celebrity's beginnings, fate of discovery, and then describes the celebrity's ascent from feat to feat as numerous difficulties emerge, to be fastidiously overcome. This chapter, therefore, introduces Catherine Middleton and provides a biography of the Duchesses' humble origins, her relationship with Prince William, and, of course her impact on contemporary consumer fashion trends – "The Kate Effect".

#### **3.1 Meet Kate Middleton – The Beginnings**

Catherine Middleton, born on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1982, spent much of her early years living in Chapel Row, Bucklebury in Berkshire England (Telegraph, 2011a). The eldest of three children to former flight attendant Carole and flight despatcher Michael Middleton, HRH moved with her family to Amman, Jordan in 1984 - where she attended nursery school from the age of three (BMO, 2012). In September 1986, the family returned to the UK, and the Duchess attended St. Andrew's primary school in Pangbourne, Berkshire; and later, Marlborough College in Wiltshire, from August 1995-July 2000, where the Duchess represented her school in a wide-range of sporting activities such as: tennis, hockey, netball, and athletics (Bates, 2010; BMO, 2012). During her time at Marlborough, the Duchess accomplished the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award (BMO, 2012). Throughout her gap year, from 2000-2001: Kate studied the arts at the British Institute in Florence,

volunteered in Chile with Raleigh International, and crewed a Round the World Challenge boat in the Solent (Mount, 2011; BMO, 2012). The Duchess then attended the University of St. Andrews from 2001-2005, where she met future husband HRH Prince William, and achieved a 2.1 in the History of Art (BMO, 2012).

### 3.2 Kate and Wills

Although Kate had romances throughout her time at Marlborough College, her classmates admitted that she was fascinated and intrigued by Prince William, for this reason Kate was nick-named “*the Princess in Waiting*” (Bates, 2010). During their time at St. Andrews, the Royal Couple were roommates, and friends above everything else, with Kate counselling the young Prince to remain at the University after a troublesome, somewhat lonely first year (Bates, 2010). Kate first captured the public eye when modelling a dress that left little to the imagination at a charity fashion show, at which Prince William eagerly parted with £200 for a seat in the front-row (Bates, 2010). After leaving University, the Duchess worked as an accessory buyer for Jigsaw (Duncan, 2006), a luxurious yet affordable, quintessentially British fashion design house (Jigsaw, 2012).<sup>1</sup>In late 2007, Kate then left

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<sup>1</sup> Jigsaw is a privately owned company that was founded in 1972, by husband and wife, Belle and John Robinson - close family friends of Catherine Middleton (Duncan, 2006). Recent times have seen the company succeed in geographical expansion to the West coast of America in 2004, product line innovations in childrenswear in 1996, and menswear in 2012 (Jigsaw, 2012). British “*country living, irreverence and humour*” inspires Jigsaw’s brand essence (Jigsaw, 2012). Practicality is also a key component, as the brand strives to strike a balance between: establishing timeless fashion pieces with on trend colours and materials; with the creation and dissemination of high fashion seasonal pieces. The Duchess was considered a “*walking advert for Jigsaw*” throughout her time working there, and in the lead up to and during her time working there; she was often photographed wearing various cardigans, dresses and floral print skirts (Duncan, 2006).

Jigsaw to join her parents' family business "Party Pieces" (BMO, 2012) to focus on her passion for photography as a website designer and marketer (BBC, 2010; IMDB, 2011).

As Kate's twenty-fifth birthday party approached in January 2007, there were no obvious signs that the pair were to be betrothed, as sources revealed that the Prince was not ready to fully commit to their relationship (Bates, 2010; Mathews, 2010). Irrespective of the fact that the Duchess was in full-time employment, the media referred to her as "Waity *Katie*", criticising her lack of career ambition, and yearning to wed a future monarch (Bates, 2010). Having only attended one formal royal event with Prince William - his Passing Out Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, in December 2006 (BBC, 2010) - the couple suffered a minor setback as they separated whilst on holiday in Zermatt, Switzerland in April 2007 (BBC, 2007). Prince William retreated to Mahiki, a Polynesian-themed club with some friends, those who had often teased Kate because of her parents' former careers (Lyll, 2011). The Prince ran up an \$18,000 bill in a number of days whilst celebrating his newfound 'freedom' (Lyll, 2011). During this time, Kate Middleton was photographed frequenting night clubs, dressed illustriously, with friends and sister Pippa. In the years that followed, Prince William's pledges to Kate Middleton became clear, as the couple announced their engagement on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010 (Bates, 2010). In January 2011, Kate resigned from her role at "Party Pieces" to begin her full-time career to become a member of the British Royal Family (BRF) (Adams, 2011; IMDB, 2011), under the guidance of an intimate group of advisors that includes a former US

ambassador, an SAS commander and a press administrator who has made history by forming the Royal household's first civil partnership (Nikkah and Moreton, 2012). The young couple were later wed at Westminster Abbey on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

### 3.3 The “Kate Effect”

Subsequent to Kate's engagement to Prince William, and a series of public Royal appearances including: The Royal Wedding, The Canadian Tour, Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and the London 2012 Olympics, the newly attributed Duchesses' influence on consumer fashion trends has and continues to receive heightened recognition across the worldwide mediascape (Bergin, 2012; Neel, 2012). Not only because of HRH's mass consumer appeal, '*Midas touch*' in increasing sales of whatever apparel brand, high-street or couture, that she wears (Hall, 2012; PR WEB UK 2012); but also because of her somewhat ordinary and humble origins (Bates, 2010). "*Since her engagement to Prince William in November 2010,*" Yermack (2011 p. 26) observes that, "*Kate Middleton has been compared innumerable times to Michelle Obama and touted regularly as a candidate to supplant the First Lady as "the next fashion icon."*" Although relatively new to the celebrity realm, Kate has established a power of influence that takes celebrities years, and sometimes, decades to accomplish. For example, Kylie Minogue is a well-known international superstar and global icon. Having released her first single in 1982, it wasn't until January 2007 that the star was formally honoured for her talents and impact on consumer culture in

exhibitions such as: the 'Kylie Exhibition', that achieved record breaking residency status at Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Museum, and inaugurated at Madame Tussauds (Hamilton and Hewer, 2010; Kylie.com, 2012). Kate Middleton has already made headway in terms of establishing herself as the next iconic fashion Royal Celebrity of this generation. The Duchess is recognised in Vogue (Neel, 2012) and was recently honoured at Madame Tussauds Royal Celebrity collection in London alongside Prince William, where a figure of her wearing the iconic sapphire Issa engagement dress is displayed (Madame Tussauds, 2012).

The Duchesses' ability to go from sleek-chic in couture (Mulberry/Issa), to high-street dress (Reiss), to laid back classic in jeans and loafers (Topshop/Zara) and, her timeless style, sophistication, class, and popular appeal; fortify her iconic celebrity fashion status (Neel, 2012; Sieczkowski, 2012). In light of her irrefutably influential consumer appeal, Lyall (2011) argues that little is known about Kate Middleton as an individual, as she has only spoken publicly at the formal announcement of her engagement to Prince William, and at the East Anglia Children's Hospice in Ipswich - for which she is a royal patron (Telegraph, 2012b). The public are fed just enough to be able to relate with Kate but her mystery and allure - comparable to that of the old-time Hollywood starlet - continues to fuel public intrigue (Lyall, 2011). In 2012, Time acknowledged the Duchess and her younger sister Pippa Middleton, as being amongst the top 100 Most Influential People in the World (Time, 2012). Yet, in *"an age of bleating, tweeting, confessional celebrity, the middle-class Middletons show real class,"* as both sisters

remain silent, unresponsive to media praises and taunts (Mayer, 2012 p. 1). Both Kate and younger sister Pippa have not only inspired a cult fashion following, but by socialising 'above' their station, they have enthralled public interest for climbing the social rungs of society with a timeless air of sophistication and class (Mayer, 2012).

### 3.4 Conclusion

Catherine Middleton is, perhaps, one of the most influential personalities of this generation. As the newest member of the BRF, she is making headway and headlines not only for her highly influential, and in most circumstances, affordable fashion choices, but also because of her climb to Royalty (Mayer, 2012) and Royal Celebrity. Having secured a solid education to upper second-class honours degree level from the high admissions level, prestigious University of St. Andrews, completed a Gap Year studying arts at the British Institute in Florence, volunteered in Chile with Raleigh International, and crewed a Round the World Challenge boat in the Solent (Mount, 2011; BMO, 2012); the Duchess' is somewhat of a go-getter and highflier. This aspect of the Duchess' persona is attacked by the media who claim that Kate's stints at Jigsaw and "Party Pieces" - obtained through family connections (Duncan, 2006; Bates, 2010); was heartfelt, and merely a stepping stone towards marrying Prince William and securing Royal status (Adams, 2011). The real Kate Middleton remains secret (Lyll, 2011). In the era of '*megacelebrity*' (Lyll, 2011), '*bleating, tweeting, [and] confessional celebrity,*' (Mayer, 2012 p. 1), Kate Middleton's continued silence only

increases public interest, intensifying her widespread consumer allure and mystique.



## 4.0 Methodology

This section emphasises the lack of celebrity and Royal Celebrity literature within CCT, before revisiting the research aim and objectives. The context and philosophy of CCT theory and the significance of interpretive, textual and visual methodologies within CCT that are relevant to this study, are then discussed. Finally, the methodological approach of content analysis is considered and the approach taken by this study – an interpretive content analysis of Cosmopolitan magazine – is presented.

### 4.1 Addressing the literature gap

Although the study of celebrity is perceived by some to be '*decorative*', celebrity culture is, indubitably, of utmost social significance in our contemporary consumer culture (Rojek and Turner, 2000). The BRF have been a staple aspect of social, cultural, historical and societal changes (Balmer, 2007). Throughout time, these changes have resonated from the actions and behaviours of BRF members themselves (Hatch, 1960; Balmer, 2007). While, the BRF are portrayed as being '*above*' the status of celebrity, as "*Saint(s)*", "*Savior(s)*" and "*Hero/Heroine(s)*" (Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren's, 2010), it is necessary to define Royal Celebrity in the social and cultural contexts of contemporary consumer culture. To do so the celebrity status, of the newest BRF member, HRH Catherine Middleton – Duchess of Cambridge, will be explored. This study will therefore contribute to CCCT (Consumer Culture Celebrity Theory) (Hewer and Brownlie, 2009) and

answer Turner's (2010) plea for celebrity studies that examine the cultural and social creation of celebrity. The "*cultural meanings, sociohistoric influences, and social dynamics*" that shape consumers' consumption of the Royal Celebrity of Catherine Middleton will, therefore, be deliberated (Arnould and Thompson, 2005 p. 875).

#### 4.2 Research Aims and Objectives

To extend current knowledge and understandings of Royal Celebrity within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)

1. To what extent is Kate Middleton's ascent to Royal Celebrity appropriated by fashion discourse?

- Is Kate Middleton above the status of celebrity as a Royal Celebrity?  
If so, why?
- How does Kate Middleton's appropriation of fashion discourse, from March 2011-July 2012, illustrate her climb to celebrity and Royal Celebrity status? What impact does this have on consumer fashion trends?

2. How does Kate Middleton's Royal Celebrity reflect tensions in contemporary societal discourse?

- Is Kate Middleton a cultural agent? Which key societal tensions are channelled by the Duchesses' Royal Celebrity?

### 4.3 Interpretive Approach

Consumption is a fundamental indicator of culture (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) - *“the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape,”* (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, p. 57). The 2002-2007 ESRC and AHRC *“Cultures of Consumption”* research programme highlighted the importance of understanding the changing dynamics of consumption in contemporary societies. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) stipulates that, for the archetypal consumer, the axiomatic real world is neither unified, monolithic or transparently rational (Belk et al. 2003; Curasi, Price, and Arnould, 2004; Hirschman 1985; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). CCT explores the complexity of today’s complex, postmodern world where consumers build their lives and identities on the premise of multiple realities via the consumption of products and experiences linked to - fantasy, invocative desires, aesthetics and identity play - that differ from the norm (Belk and Costa, 1998; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 2002; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). In a review of twenty years’ worth of consumer research, Arnould and Thompson (2005), conclude that experiential and sociocultural aspects of consumption are best assessed through qualitative techniques. The interpretive nature of some of the ontological, axiological and epistemological suppositions of CCT theory, relevant to this study, are highlighted in the following table:

**Figure 1 - Interpretive CCT Ontology, Axiology, Epistemology and Research Approach – Adapted from Hudson and Ozanne (1988 p. 509).**

	<b>Interpretivist Assumptions</b>	<b>CCT Theory</b>
<b>Ontological:</b> Nature of Reality Nature of Social Beings	Socially Constructed, Multiple, Holistic, Contextual Voluntaristic, Proactive	CCT theory depicts consumer culture as a multifaceted, densely intertwined system of universal links and annexes through which native cultures are, increasingly, permeated and pervaded by the powers of transcontinental capital and the worldwide mediascape (Appadurai, 1990; Slater, 1997; Wilk, 1995). <i>“...people actively create and interact in order to shape their environment. They are not merely acted upon by outside influences.”</i> (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988:510)
<b>Axiological:</b> Overriding Goal	Understanding based	Emphasis on understanding - from an insider’s view point -

	on “Verstehen”	and not predicting the existence and interaction of cultural dynamics (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).
<b>Epistemological:</b>		Cultural dynamics are within a
Knowledge Generated	Ideographic, time-bound, context-dependent (Geertz, 1973)	constant and continual state of change (Denzin, 1984). Thus within CCT it is thought best practice to observe culture, in the context in which it occurs at a particular point in time; to obtain “ <i>thick [cultural] description</i> ” required to
View of Causality	Multiple, simultaneous, shaping (Rubinstein, 1981)	advance theory, (Geertz, 1973; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Arnould and Thompson, 2005).
Research Relationship	Interactive, cooperative, No privileged point of observation (equality between researcher and participant)	Culture is perceived as the actual foundation of experience, meaning and action (Geertz, 1973; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Thus, CCT theorists acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of the cultural groupings within the

	(Wallendorf 1987)	dense, tangled web of a multifaceted consumer culture (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). As Tadajewski (2006 p. 430) observes, the researcher approaches the phenomenon under investigation from the subjective, <i>“lived experience of the research co-participant”</i> .
<b>Research Approach</b>	Some a priori knowledge  Research approach emergent and adapted depending on the dynamics of the context being explored.  Qualitative methods	CCT is primarily concerned with identifying cultural and societal consumer influences – most CCT researchers have a degree of prior knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation. The interpretive approach is beneficial as it enables researchers to adapt methods accordingly, depending on situations/experiences encountered.  Tadajewski (2006 p. 430) acknowledges, that interpretive

		researchers “generally – although not exclusively – use qualitative methods”
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CCT theory fits well with the interpretive paradigm. For this reason this thesis, in CCT tradition, investigates the Royal Celebrity of Catherine Middleton through an interpretive lens.

#### 4.4 Interpretive textual and visual analysis in CCT

Within CCT research, interpretive textual and visual methods of analysis, delve beyond the surface, to consider the symbolic meaning and significance of: advertisements (Stern and Schroeder, 1994), photographs (Holbrook and Hirshman, 1993; Holbrook, 1995: 2005; Sunderland and Denny, 2006), cookbooks (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007: 2011; Hewer and Brownlie, 2009: 2011; Cappellini and Parsons, 2012), art (Schroeder, 1997; 2005); and magazines (Martens and Scott, 2005; Davis, 2012); to generate more profound and enriched understandings of the workings of contemporary consumer culture.

The analysis of photographs alone is a powerful qualitative tool. Subjective Personal Introspection (SPI) is derived from the self-reflection and interpretation of images from a family photo album (Holbrook, 1995). Holbrook (2005 p. 716) stresses “*the contribution that our understanding of consumption symbolism or marketing imagery can make to the semiotic interpretation or hermeneutic understanding of the arts, entertainment, and other cultural offerings*” (Holbrook, 1995; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993).

The analysis of visual imagery can, therefore, help consumer research reach new depths, to better understand the complexity of the consumption experience (Holbrook, 2005). Photographs are the principle method of analysis in Sunderland and Denny's (2006) subjective, participative researcher/consumer deconstruction of Cuban cultural and societal marketplace myths; whilst Brownlie and Hewer (2007) and Hewer and Brownlie (2009) and Brownlie and Hewer (2011) use visual analysis to identify discourses of masculinity and femininity that are channelled through photographs of celebrity images in contemporary, culinary celebrity cookbooks. Celebrity images act as a social agent to convey much larger cultural forces including the '*blurring of gendered identity*' (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007) and the desire to escape from the '*toil*' and '*drudgery*' of contemporary existence (Hewer and Brownlie, 2009; Brownlie and Hewer, 2011).

Stern and Schroeder (1994) stress that photographs and visual imagery is, as important as text, in conveying and understanding cultural meaning. *"Images are visual, generally speaking, often mediated – carried by the mass media – and they are connected to information, values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas people have. This connection is not a natural one, remember; we have to learn to interpret many signs and symbols, which are important component elements of images"* (Berger, 1989 p. 39 as cited in Stern and Schroeder, 1994). Stern and Schroeder (1994), therefore, employ interpretive techniques from art and critical literary theory, to exemplify the significance of the synchronisation of text and image in conveying consistent brand imagery and



meaning through channelled discourses of masculinity in a Paco Rabanne Pour Homme print advertisement. Indeed, much of Schroeder's work (1997: 2005) unpacks the branding of well-known artists Andy Warhol, Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman, and through literary and visual analysis of the arts, draws attention to complex cultural and societal matters that contribute to how brands function. In the same way, through their interpretive readings of text and images in British Italian cookbooks from 1954-2005, Cappellini and Parsons (2012) identify shifting discourses of gender roles in consumer culinary culture: from housewife (1954-1974), to working mother (1975-1986), to male/female role multiplicity (1987-2005), and describe the evolution of cultural, culinary preparation and consumption practices.

Together, interpretive, textual and visual analysis methods have complemented each other in the discourse analysis of well-known consumer magazines (Martens and Scott, 2005). A long standing, well vetted, reputable domestic consumer guide, founded in 1922, Good House Keeping serves to inform "*domestic practitioners on domestic matters*" (Martens and Scott, 2005 p. 383). Good House Keeping has enhanced understanding of domestic work throughout the early twentieth century (White, 1970; Horwood, 1997), and in our contemporary consumer culture (Warde, 1997; Martens and Scott, 2005). Martens and Scott (2005) examine the changing ways in which cleaning practices and products are portrayed in Good House Keeping UK magazine from 1951-2001. The authors highlight the important influence that women's magazines have had on the discourses of domestic and gendered identity throughout time. An on-going Leverhulme project has adopted a similar

methodological approach, but instead considers the representation and discourse of the family in *Good Housekeeping* (UK) and *Australian Women's Weekly* (Australia), between 1950 and 2010 (Davis, 2012). Initial findings illustrate consistencies and fluctuations in the discourses of motherhood, i.e. the role of the mother as "*caregiver, worker, independent, informed, and guardian*"; presented in the text and images in advertisements that are certified by experts, and prudently selected by magazine editors, to reflect and convey changing sociocultural trends.

Visual analysis is a powerful method for determining cultural meaning (Holbrook, 1995; 2005; Sunderland and Denny, 2006; Brownlie and Hewer, 2007:2011; and Hewer and Brownlie, 2009). This said, when employed together, visual and textual methods complement each other to provide a deeper understanding and more thorough deconstruction of the "*cultural meanings, sociohistoric influences, and social dynamics*" that shape contemporary consumer culture (Arnould and Thompson, 2005 p. 875).

#### 4.5 Content Analysis: Quantitative vs. Qualitative

Originally quantitative, content analysis emerged in the early 1950's (Ahuvia, 2000; White and Marsh, 2006). Essentially, the procedure involved the analysis of a number of preselected advertisements which were coded adhering to a set of pre-formulated rules, like for example the number of times a women appeared in a particular advertisement (Ahuvia, 2000). As the findings were collated, when the multiple coders strongly agreed on certain codes, this was indicative of successful coding and permitted trends to be identified and monitored over time (Ahuvia, 2000). Content analysis, the quantitative study of the visual and textual content of advertisements, was first introduced to consumer behaviour by Kassirjian (1977 p. 10): "*content analysis is a scientific, objective, systematic, quantitative, and generalizable description of communications content*".

Two different ways of analysing the content of advertisements include: manifest analysis – where the word-for-word meaning of text i.e. this dress is a size zero, is considered; and latent analysis – which investigates the subtle meanings, or interpretations of text: i.e. an advertisement positioning the dress as high-fashion, which would lead one to assume that the dress is small in size (Lasswell, 1941 p. 2; Ahuvia, 2000; Krippendorf, 2004). Both are methods of "*semantic*" analysis – that is "*interpretations of meanings and not physical ink on paper*" - Ahuvia (2000 p. 142). For this reason, content analysis opened-up to qualitative enquiry (Krippendorf 2004; Mulvey and Stern, 2004). The shift towards qualitative content analysis was heightened

**Comment [A1]:** +VE Good for ICR conference paper - Content analysis good way to gain access to data sets otherwise inaccessible (i.e. Royalty, particular sports entertainment stars etc.)

by the 1987 Consumer Odyssey, as qualitative analysis tools were introduced and applied across a variety of disciplines (Ahuvia, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004; Mulvey and Stern, 2004). Since then, content analysis has advanced significantly, not only in the ways in which such an analysis is, scientifically, conducted and acknowledged (Krippendorff, 2004; Mulvey and Stern, 2004); but also, in terms of the research terminologies that have emerged from this approach, and the contexts in which forms of this visual and textual method, can be applied. In consumer behaviour, interpretive content analysis techniques are employed to investigate experiential aspects of consumption and to categorise emerging cultural themes in advertising (Mulvey and Stern, 2004).

#### 4.6 An Interpretive Content Analysis

This study seeks to “*capture the meanings, emphasis and themes of organization and process*” (Altheide 1996 p. 33) that depict the Duchess of Cambridge as a Royal Celebrity and a fashion icon in Cosmopolitan magazine. An interpretive content analysis of popular, monthly, fashion lifestyle print magazine Cosmopolitan UK (Ahuvia 2000; Krippendorff 2004), and the Cosmopolitan UK online article archive, was conducted. Interpretive content analysis is advantageous, and, as there is no coding restriction, the wider sociocultural context can be fully taken into consideration (Ahuvia, 2000; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). A single researcher is adequate (Ahuvia 2000). Interpretive content analysis ensures that all individual elements of images, text, captions, consumer comments etc., within each

issue, can be assessed throughout a prolonged time period (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2002), and permits new themes, not previously conceptualised in the literature, to emerge.

## 4.7 Sample

### 4.7.1 Why Women's Magazines?

Department stores and women's magazines materialized in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and rapidly became a haven for female consumption (Nava, 1997). Fuelled by the blossoming consumerist culture, they presented new possibilities and opportunities that enabled women to 'just look', explore and consume goods in their pursuit of identity and actualisation (McCracken, 1993; Ang, 1996; Nava, 1997). Women's magazines continue to influence contemporary discourses of femininity and still act as a "*source book for desirable consumer goods, goods that may proffer a key to a better, fuller and more pleasant life*" (Stevens and Maclaren, 2005 p. 291). Women's magazines permit women to enter into a '*shared imaginary*' (Finnegan, 1997). This is, essentially, an envisaged female community wherein empathy with, and concern and care for others is expressed – better described as a "*sacred community or sisterhood embedded in 'feminine culture'*" (Stevens et al, 2007 p. 250). Readers of these magazines are active meaning makers who negotiate and renegotiate aspects of feminine existence sold to them in the advertising "*myths that reinforce deep-seated cultural meanings*" (Stevens and Maclaren, 2012 p. 63). Magazines not only grant female consumers' access to a 'dream world' in which consumer desire is feverishly

enticed (Stevens and Maclaren, 2005); they can also locate readers politically and theoretically in time and place (Beetham, 1996).

#### 4.7.2 Introducing Cosmopolitan Magazine

In 2011, Mintel revealed that interest-specific titles held a 43% share of the total UK periodical market. Cosmopolitan magazine is a fashion bible and a way of life. Liberating female sexuality since the 1970's (Stevens and Maclaren, 2012), today Cosmopolitan continues to inspire contemporary consumer trends. The best-selling magazine in woman's monthly fashion, beauty and lifestyle: "*Cosmo has 64 international editions, is published in 35 languages and is distributed in more than over 100 countries, making it one of the most dynamic brands on the planet*" (Cosmopolitan 2012). Cosmopolitan was selected, specifically, because of the diversity and dynamics of the magazine's intransigent, loyal, "*fun, fearless, [principally] female*" reader-base – which consists of young women, older women, working women, college students, mothers, and astute, ambitious professionals (Cosmopolitan 2012). The Generation Y 18-34 cohort, is the most prosperous and largest periodical reader demographic in the UK (Mintel, 2011), and with 58.7% of total readership falling into this category (Cosmopolitan, 2012), Cosmopolitan UK, is a natural choice.

#### 4.7.3 Sample Specifics

A chronological snapshot of print issues and online Cosmopolitan UK articles from March 2011 to July 2012 was considered, keeping in tradition with past studies that have explored the representations of discourse in popular magazines (Martens and Scott, 2005; Davis, 2012) and cookbooks (Brownlie

and Hewer, 2007: 2011; Hewer and Brownlie, 2009; Cappellini and Parsons, 2012). This time frame took into account the social, cultural, political and historical significance of the hype before Catherine and William's fairy-tale wedding in April 2011, incorporated Catherine's media portrayal in the lead up to the Queens' Diamond Jubilee in June 2012 and throughout the July 2012 London Olympics. As print copies of Cosmopolitan UK are published and consumed monthly, in order to obtain the richness, depth and breadth of understanding of the happenings and goings-on at, and around, momentous events; the habitually updated online article archive was also consulted.

#### **4.8 Data Collection**

For a number of weeks, extensive enquiry was made to locate print copies of Cosmopolitan UK magazine from March 2011 to July 2012: within local and national library archives, directly from Hearst International - publishers of the magazine, and through family, friends and colleagues. Due to the difficulty in obtaining recent copies of Cosmopolitan UK, some issues were purchased from a recognised, reputable online retailer in electronic format. Online articles were accessed and collected from the Hearst International Cosmopolitan UK online archive.

#### **4.9 Data Analysis**

This study does not claim to offer a comprehensive, accurate view of the meaning of text and images as intended by the original authors, and, as past studies that have examined media discourse in reputable magazines (Martens and Scott, 2005; Davis, 2012) and cookbooks (Brownlie and Hewer,

2007: 2011; Hewer and Brownlie, 2009; Cappellini and Parsons, 2012) have acknowledged, seeks to provide a unique interpretation to stimulate further thought and discussion on Royal Celebrity, within CCT. Drawing from Philips and Quarrie (2002) and Wester et al's (2004) approach, each monthly issue of *Cosmopolitan* was investigated sequentially, moving back and forth between issues, examining both text and images in articles and advertisements to identify particular events and emergent, thematic patterns. Online articles were analysed in the same way, via Glaser and Strauss' (1967) open-coding method. In total, 35 articles and 56 images of the Duchess of Cambridge were examined. Catherine Middleton appeared in 7 of the 13 print editions: four times in topical articles from March 2011 before the Royal Wedding until October 2011 after a series of Royal Events including the Canadian and US Royal Tour; and 3 times in 2012 i.e. the month of Kate's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday January 2012, the Golden Jubilee month June 2012, and in the Olympic build-up July 2012. From the online article archive, 28 articles and 51 images of the Duchess, in her different Royal Roles at particular events were analysed. Data was broken down and categorised into fundamental, recurring themes (Goulding, 2009 p. 383) which include: Royal Celebrity as being above the status of celebrity, Kate's ascent to Royal Celebrity through the appropriation of fashion discourse; and, Kate Middleton as a cultural agent, channelling the irrelevance of socio-economic difference and consumer longing for fairy-tale romance and real love – Cinderellatisation, contemporary symbols and tensions of femininity; and the modernity, normalisation and liberation of the next generation of the BRF.



#### **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has identified the lack of celebrity and Royal Celebrity studies within CCT and introduced the qualitative lens through which the Royal Celebrity of Catherine Middleton was assessed and analysed, in an interpretive content analysis of Cosmopolitan UK print magazine and online articles from March 2011 to July 2012.

## 5.0 Analysis and Findings

This chapter will present the analysis of the research findings and will be structured in terms of the research objectives, as each is considered autonomously. All of the photographs and quotes from the research findings are from Cosmopolitan print magazine and online articles (unless otherwise indicated), and will be inserted to draw attention to key themes where relevant. Afterwards a short summary will follow before we proceed to conclusions and recommendations.

### 5.1 Objective 1: To what extent is Kate Middleton's ascent to Royal Celebrity appropriated by fashion discourse?

#### 5.1.1. Above celebrity – Royal Celebrity

Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren (2010) found that members of the BRF were perceived to be 'above' the status of celebrity. Although this is also the case for Kate Middleton, at the same time, her Royal Celebrity is considerably different from that of other BRF members. Past celebrity studies have discussed the complex relationship between the celebrity and/or Royal Celebrity and the adoring, worshipping consumer (O'Guinn, 1991; Otnes and Maclaren, 2007; Rojek, 2008; Otnes, Crosby and Maclaren, 2010; Wohlfeil and Whelan, 2012). In this study, Kate Middleton is not only idolised and worshipped by "normal" consumers for her fashion discourse but by other extremely talented, famous celebrities and fashion 'Gods'. The findings suggest that the Duchess has made high-street style acceptable and fashionable for celebrity in the US by wearing Reiss, LK Bennett, Zara, and TopShop etc. - Kate Bosworth is currently seeking the advice of Nikki Pennie,

Kate's former Issa stylist. Multiple A list celebrities admire, adore, praise and emulate the Duchesses' idiosyncratic style:

<b>Celebrity</b>	<b>Well-Known For</b>	<b>Quote admiring Kate</b>
<b>Anne Hathaway</b>	A list Hollywood actress – Recent Role Cat Woman in Batman 2012.	<i>"Can I tell you how grateful I am to Kate Middleton? Because she is such an advocate for dressing like a lady...I'm just very grateful to Kate Middleton for making looking appropriate really fun again. So right now my fashion choices are all about Kate Middleton." (Cosmo Online August, 2011)</i>
<b>Victoria Beckham</b>	Posh Spice - fashion icon and designer/creator of VB designer fashion label.	<i>"She is a beautiful young girl, she has a wonderful figure and I think she wears clothes beautifully. I would be honoured if she were to wear my designs." (Cosmo Online March, 2011)</i>
<b>Christian Louboutin</b>	Luxury red sole shoe designer.	<i>"She has all the choice in the world... She's a very elegant young woman. I wouldn't give her any advice - she doesn't need it..." (Cosmo Online May, 2012)</i>

The analysis illustrates that Kate's public persona is a contradiction of the social and economic discourses that govern society. Her decision to dress in affordable high-street mass "normal" consumer brands, offsets Simmel (1904), Douglas and Isherwood (1970) and Barnard's (2002) idea of 'hegemony', as Kate Middleton a member of the BRF, does not try to dress differently from the public ("who are of a lower social standing"), but instead dresses the same as them. In essence, by doing so, the Duchess extends the bridge and accommodates the "normal" everyday consumer who could, essentially, emulate the Duchess by wearing the same garments and creating the same look, even with more affordable alternative apparel replications. At the same time, the Duchess also inspires and reassures multiple A list stars that high street is good enough for royalty, and thus, good enough for celebrity. The notion of 'hegemony' is therefore hazed, as differences in socio-economic standing are no longer as clear in fashion discourse. A synthesis of normality and conditioned Royalty, means that Kate's celebrity status is, to phrase using Rojek's (2001) terminology, both attributed, thanks to her Royal Marriage to Prince William; and ascribed, as the public's interest in her normality and being '*just like us*' allows her to take centre-stage as she evolves into a Royal Celebrity – which is, and will always be, to some extent, at least through fashion discourse, within public reach.

Kate Middleton's public persona is managed by an intimate team of advisors, who since January 2011 have helped her assume her new BRF role (Adams, 2011; IMDB, 2011; Nikkah and Moreton, 2012). The Duchesses' Royal Celebrity is, as Cashmore and Parker (2003) and Hurst (2005) have found to

be true of other celebrities, to some degree manufactured and packaged through fashion discourse, for popular consumption. Nevertheless, Kate Middleton continues to dress in a manner that is atypical of a late-twenty, early-thirty-something woman, adopting an array of high-street designer styles. Yet, at the same time, through the appropriation of 'the relevant' fashion discourse, Kate accommodates her Royal Role and Royal Duty. Analogous with Barron's (2008) "seven phases of Kyle Minogue", this thesis argues that from March 2011-July 2012 five principal transitions in fashion discourse emerge that are representative of Kate's transition from a 'normal girl' to a Royal Celebrity: "Girl Next Door Kate", "Fairy-tale Princess Kate", "Humble Kate", "Regal Kate" and "The People's Kate". The transitions are not chronological, but instead, are indicative of the different faces of Kate Middleton that occur simultaneously. Kate Middleton's influential impact on consumer fashion trends i.e. doubling Reiss profits in 2011, and increasing LK Bennett US sales 15% from July to December 2011 (Thomas-Bailey and Wood, 2012) - 'The Kate Effect'; is acknowledged at each stage.

### 5.1.2 Kate Middleton - 'normal girl' to Royal Celerity through fashion discourse: 5 key phases

#### 1. "Girl Next Door Kate"

From March 2011 up until the day of the Royal Wedding – St. Catherine's day, April 29<sup>th</sup> 2011 – Kate's apparel choices very much depict her as the cute, innocent, fun-loving girl next door.



For example, when Kate went to support Princes William and Harry play polo, she wore a soft, feminine, pastel, floaty chiffon dress (Figure 2). "Girl Next Door Kate" is laid-back and down to earth.

Figure 2 (Left) Kate's Polo Dress (Cosmo Online Kate's style CV July 2012)

The Duchess paid a personal visit to Warehouse, Kings Road, London where "she picked up this lace trim blouse (£55), feather print asymmetric dress (£45), tropical bird print sundress (£65) and bright bandeau frill frock (£45)" (Cosmo Online April, 2011) on her pre-honeymoon shopping trip. Kate's honeymoon clothes (Figure 3) were quaint, flirtatious and girly - staple pieces that any girl planning a holiday would no doubt purchase. This soft, feminine flirty way of dressing continued; and, as the Royal



Figure 3 (Above Right) Kate's Honeymoon Clothes Warehouse (Cosmo Online April, 2011)

Wedding drew nearer; Kate became a focal figure in the public sphere. Consumers began to reflect on the Duchesses' initial emergence as Prince

Williams's girlfriend and an advocate of innovative fashion. In March 2011,



the Charlotte Todd dress - which has so little fabric to it that it was originally intended as a skirt - worn by Kate in a fashion show at the University of St. Andrews (Bates, 2010) sold for £78, 000 (Figure 4). It is now a symbolic, historic artefact that represents the beginnings of Kate and Prince William's relationship; and,

Figure 4 (Above Left) Kate's First Public Appearance Dress (Cosmo Online March 2011)

Kate a young, innocent, relatively normal girl's emergence into the public eye, as a potential future monarch and highly influential, contemporary, fashion icon. The purchase of the dress marks the end of "Girl Next Door Kate" and the beginning of something much greater.

## 2. "Fairy-tale Princess Kate" – Queen of Fashion

The historical, social and cultural celebration of the wedding of Kate Middleton and Prince William, on April 29<sup>th</sup> 2011 St. Catherine's day, saw the sun-set on "Girl Next Door Kate" and the beginnings of "Fairy-tale Princess Kate". The wedding itself, marks the intersection of Kate as a 'normal girl' having her dream wedding with the man she loves; and, at the same time, Kate's ascription to Royal Princess and Royal Celebrity, as the whole world watched in eager anticipation of '*the KMiddy dress*'. On the day itself, the bride-to-be did not disappoint: "*When Kate Middleton got out of the car in that*

Figure 5 (Below Left) Fairytale Princess Wedding Kate (Cosmo Online April, 2011)



*Sarah Burton for Alexander McQueen wedding dress [Figure 5] the world gasped with sheer delight. She couldn't have looked more beautiful, not even if she tried" (Cosmo Online April, 2011)*

Remaining true to her British heritage and individualistic style, the Duchesses' gown "was demure but so stylish - with lace sleeves and a modest train...The

*2m70cm train, the lace appliqué sleeved bodice and the [1936 vintage] tiara-secured veil were all the right side of sexy and sophisticated." (Cosmo Online April, 2011).*

The birth of "Fairy-tale Princess Kate" had a dramatic impact on the British high-street: *"Kate Middleton's wedding frock was the lacy creation that launched a billion girls' dress dreams"*

(Cosmo Online June, 2011). Budget high-street retailer Peacocks was quick off the mark to offer an affordable Kate Middleton inspired dress (Figure 6): *"Since the royal wedding, we [Peacocks] have seen a new trend for sweetheart necklines and lace in our occasion wear. Catherine's dress had*



Figure 6 (Above Right) Fairytale Princess Kate Affordable Replica (Cosmo Online June, 2011)



*elements that translated well for our customers, the classic neckline with the overlay of lace, and full skirt, were not only classically beautiful but also flattering for a womanly figure” - Antonella Bettley Head of Peacocks Ladieswear (Cosmo Online June, 2011).*

At her first Royal engagement as the Duchess of Cambridge, the 10th annual Absolute Returns for Kids Gala dinner, London in early June 2011, the Duchess maintained her “Fairy-tale Princess Kate” image, and emerged in a shimmering, nude, beaded, sequin and diamanté embroidered figure-hugging Jenny Packham gown (Figure 7).

Figure 7 (Below Left) Blair Waldorf Princess Dress (Cosmo Online June, 2011)



Kate not only, indirectly endorsed British fashion, and British designers; but established herself as the “*ultimate queen of fashion*” by wearing the same dress as Blair Waldorf – the fashion queen of Upper East Side New York in the US drama *Gossip Girl*: “*Wow! Kate Middleton stole the show when she arrived wearing this Jenny Packham,*

*nude sequin dress. Gossip Girl's Blair Waldorf also wore it in the show - the ultimate princess dress” (Cosmo Online June, 2011).* Worn with Kate’s beautiful, gleaming pearly white smile, complemented with the aura of a content newlywed woman in love, Kate outshines *Gossip Girl*’s Queen Bee Blair. However, it is at the BAFTA “Brits to Watch” event in LA in July 2011, when Kate affirms her Celebrity Status, as Yermack (2011) predicted, to



Figure 8 (Left) BAFTA Brits to Watch Dress (Cosmo Online July, 2011)

become the next global fashion icon. Kate dazzled A list celebrity onlookers and paparazzi in the floaty, chiffon, pleated, Grecian lilac Alexander McQueen dress (Figure 8). Kate lit up the room, and shone brighter than many of the Hollywood starlets, as she kept the British McQueen Brand alive.

“Fairy-tale Princess Kate” emerges at other high profile events, such as on the eve of her thirtieth birthday at the Premier of War Horse in January 2012. Kate worked the red carpet in a couture Alice Temperley dress radiating regal elegance and glowing with celestial charm (Figure 9):

Figure 9 (Below Left) Temperley War Horse Premier Dress (Cosmo Online January, 2012)

Figure 10 (Below Right) Packham Olympics Concert dress (Cosmo Online July, 2012)



And, more recently, in July 2012 at the Olympics concert in London, in a Jenny Packham, teal, encrusted with Swarovski diamonds, lace-backed floor length gown (Figure 10).

### 3. “Humble Kate”

Post Royal Wedding, from June 2011, Kate returned to dressing as a “normal” late-twenty to early-thirty-something girl would, consulting and seeking inspiration from the British high-street. Prior to her first Royal engagement, the Royal Canadian Tour, *“Instead of calling on a dresser for her upcoming [Canadian and] US tour with Wills”, the Duchess “planned her travel wardrobe in advance, with collaboratively chosen pieces from Selfridges and Harvey Nichols.”* (Cosmo Online June, 2011). Some of the key outfits put together for this tour include Kate’s Stetson Cowgirl hat, jeans and Temperley blouse (£250) worn at the Canadian Royal Tour Annual Calgary Stampede in July 2011 (Figure 11); and, a deep purple Issa dress worn on Canada Day July 2011 (Figure 12).

Figure 11 (Below Left) Kate's Stetson Outfit (Cosmo Online June, 2011)

Figure 12 (Below Right) Canada Day Purple Issa Dress (Cosmo Online July, 2011)



Undoubtedly, the Duchesses’ most famous and “Humble Kate” piece of high-street attire for the Canadian and US Tour in July 2011 was the camel £175 Shola Reiss dress worn to meet Michelle Obama (Figure 13).

Figure 13 (Below Left) Camel Reiss Dress Meeting Michelle Obama (Cosmo Online May, 2011)



Michelle Obama is well-known for her effect on consumer fashion trends, and is often photographed wearing mass-market high street brands affordable to the people because she simply 'likes them' (Yermack, 2011). Acting as a UK Royal ambassador at such an important meeting, with a political leader of the US, a central and influential political and public

figure, and well-established fashionista (Yermack, 2011; Betts, 2011); Kate shocked the rest of the world by wearing a British mid-range, high-street designer. This meeting is significant, and symbolises a key moment in Kate's initiation, from 'normal girl' to Celebrity fashion icon. When the two influential fashion figures crossed paths, their fashion discourse was compared across the global mediascape, launching Kate into the 'spotlight' as a potential successor to Michelle's iconic fashion status.

"Humble Kate" continued to wear the mid-to-high range high-street brands that she adored, and in September 2011, the Duchess paid a personal visit to TopShop, Oxford Street. "Humble Kate" waited patiently in line, with other consumers, to pay for her



Figure 14 (Right) TopShop Trip (Cosmo Online September, 2011)

black polka dot teal, mid-length pencil skirt, cobalt blue velvet-trim boucle jacket (£65), and simple feather earrings (£8.50) (Figure 14). The Duchesses' normality was echoed further by her decision not to purchase a second pair of earrings that she abandoned at the till. Cosmopolitan describe this act as "*till-guilt*", which is expressed and often felt by consumers purchasing, beyond their means, an item that they have no utilitarian need or usage for.

As December 2011, approached, the Duchess remained an advocate of the British high-street, and shocked onlookers by wearing a cream and lace Zara mini-dress (£69.99) with a black Ralph Lauren jacket to the Prince's Trust charity concert hosted by Gary Barlow (Figure 15).

Figure 15 (Below) Kate Wears Zara to Gary Barlow Charity Event (Cosmo Online December, 2011)



Kate remained humble, and the '*same as the rest of us*' not only in the way she dressed, but also in her bargain beauty regime, as one week after the Royal Wedding, in June 2011, the Duchess was "*spotted...at the Boots on*

London's Kings Road buying a [NIVEA Pure and Natural Day Cream](#), which set her back just £5.10." (Cosmo Online June, 2011).

#### 4. "Regal Kate"

Remembrance Sunday November 2011, saw the emergence of "Regal Kate"



- a sophisticated, mature, tailored, high-fashion couture fashion discourse, which reflected the Duchesses' new Royal Celebrity Role.

Figure 16 (Left) Regal Kate Remembrance Sunday (Cosmo Online November, 2011)

As 2012 beckoned, with the Royal Jubilee, the Order of the Garter Royal Procession and the Olympics; the Duchess stepped up to dress the part for her new Royal Celebrity Role. At the Diamond Jubilee Pageant in June 2012, "Regal Kate" looked *"ravishing in red"* in a tailored, scarlet pleated Alexander McQueen dress, headpiece and nude heels (Figure 17); and, at the Order of the Garter Royal Procession (Figure 18) – the senior and oldest British order of chivalry founded by Edward III in 1348 (BMO, 2012) – in June 2012, Kate was very much a royal in a pale yellow Alexander McQueen dress coat *"and a regal looking hat by esteemed milliner Jane Corbett"* (Cosmo Online July, 2012).



Figure 17 (Below Left) Ravishing Red Diamond Jubilee McQueen Tailoring (Cosmo Online July, 2012)

Figure 18 (Below Right) Order of the Garter McQueen Tailoring (Cosmo Online July, 2012)



The sophisticated “Regal Kate” look combines talented couture British designers with elegant fashion forward headpieces crafted by skilled British milliners. Acting in her Royal Role, Kate’s decision to wear British Couture designer and local millinery pieces, has boosted the trade of artists, heritage and creative industries, as consumer fashion has “*moved on*” from fascinators “*to bigger headpieces and hats*” (Cosmo Print July 2012).

In July 2012, at the Olympics opening ceremony reception at Buckingham Palace, Kate Middleton maintained her “Regal Kate” look in a satin, platinum Christopher Kane smart suit dress (Figure 19).

Figure 19 (Below Left) Olympics Reception Regal Christopher Kane (Cosmo Online July, 2012)

Figure 20 (Below Right) Olympics Aiming High Exhibition (Cosmo Online July, 2012)



However, in the global spotlight “Regal Kate” was not only an advocate of British design, her Olympic inspired look at the Aiming High Exhibition in July 2012, mixed majestic French with contemporary British design. The Duchess stepped out in an electric blue Stella McCartney dress, teamed with an Olympic inspired £49, 000 Cartier, ringed necklace (Figure 20).

Through the assumption of fashion discourse at Royal Celebrations and high-profile events, “Regal Kate”, a Royal Celebrity and fashion icon is manufactured, maintained and consumed.

##### **5. “The People’s Kate”**

As Kate fulfils her Royal Role attending and endorsing social and cultural events (Balmer et al, 2006) throughout 2012, the Duchess dresses in particular mid to high level high-street fashion brands. From her role as ambassador for the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, to her charity



visit with children in the countryside, Kate dresses glamorously, and, arguably, in a way that is affordable to the average consumer. As the 'people' look up and aspire to be like their Royal Celebrity fashion idol, Kate's fashion discourse is, at least, attainable for many consumers.

Fulfilling her Royal Role as ambassador, in March 2012 Kate welcomed the Great Britain Olympic women's hockey team in London and revisited her schoolgirl days at Marlborough, as she played hockey in a grey hoodie, trainers and skinny, coral Zara jeans (Figure 21). Kate's fashion discourse represents her laid-back, friendly, sporting and within reach Royal Celebrity, as she breaks a sweat to score a goal against Olympic champions.



**Figure 21 (Above Right) Supporting GB Woman's Hockey Team (Cosmo Online July, 2012)**

HRH's sporting attire set off the 2012 spring coral jean trend. After being photographed wearing these Zara jeans, sales of Asda coral jeans increased 471% (Hall, 2012).

**Figure 22 (Below Left) Jubilee Visit to Leicester De Montfort University (Cosmo Online July, 2012)**



On Queen Elizabeth's first official visit to Leicester De Montfort University during the Jubilee Tour in March 2012, it was evident that Kate had dressed for the occasion, the setting and the audience (Figure 22). All eyes were on the Duchess in her mid-range high-street LK Bennett "*Jude*

*jacket and Davina dress*” (Cosmo Online July, 2012) in the high fashion peplum style. Having attended university, Kate was aware of the social dynamics and cultural significance of the Queens visit. By wearing a mid-end high street designer, the Duchesses’ fashion can be replicated by students, and at the same time, still reinforces her royal stature.

**Figure 23 (Below Right) Visit with Children in the Country (Cosmo Online July, 2012)**

Another key event, at which Kate dress for her audience ‘the people’ whilst maintaining her Royal Celebrity and Royal Role, was her charity visit with children in the countryside in June 2012 (Figure 23). Dressed in casual attire for the great outdoors, Kate combined luxury with high-street in a khaki Burberry shirt, Le Chameau £300 wellies, a Zara jumper, jeans



and a *“Really Wild leather waistcoat”* (Cosmo Online July, 2012). This is significant, as the children are, effectively, able to purchase the same jeans or jumper as Kate.

**Figure 24 (Below Left) Welcoming the Olympic Torch Relay (Cosmo Online July, 2012)**



Kate Middleton’s most recent item of fashion apparel that reaches out to the ‘people’ is, undoubtedly, the Hobbs dress, worn to welcome the Olympic torch relay in Tottenham (Figure 24). The dress retailed in the Hobbs sale for £35 and, like everything else the Duchess wears, was a

total sell-out.

Figure 25 (Below Left) First Public Speech Recycled Blue Issa Dress (Cosmo Online July, 2012)

“The People’s Kate”, “*like the rest of us*”, recycles staple fashion items. Kate Middleton is a champion of LK Bennett nude heels, as she appears in six of



the 56 photographs analysed throughout 2011-2012. The Duchess’ first, formal public speech at the East Anglia Children’s Hospice in Ipswich on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012 is probably her most well-known re-usage of an item of fashion apparel - a momentous and significant event, at which the Duchess finds her voice. In this moment the Duchesses’ decision to wear a royal blue Trina

style £139 Reiss dress (Figure 25), which was first worn in 2008, and then replicated by mum Carole at Royal Ascot in 2010, symbolises Kate as any normal girl, who wracked with nerves, seeks the comfort and security of a tried and tested fashion piece as approved by mum. By wearing this dress, Kate not only revisits her humble roots, but connects on a new level with the people, as she becomes to a certain extent, the same as them.

“The People’s Kate” has since recycled her blue Missoni coat (Figure 26), as she accompanied the Queen on a visit to Nottingham in June 2012; and her £900 Sarah Burton for McQueen dress (Figure 27), originally worn during the 2011 Canadian Tour, at the Wimbledon Murray vs. Ferrer quarter final on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Figure 26 (Below Left) Visiting Nottingham with the Queen (Cosmo Online July, 2012)

Figure 27 (Below Right) Wimbledon Quarter Final Recycling (Cosmo Online July, 2012)



The clutch bag that compliments Kate's outfit in both photos – *“Jaeger's aptly named 'Kate' bag”* - was reduced at £75 down from £150, and remains sold-out online. Not only does Kate combine high-street with couture designer fashion apparel making her fashion discourse affordable and within reach of the general public who adore her; “The People's Kate” BRF member and future monarch, is seen reusing a staple fashion items - something that normal consumers have to do daily, that a Princess would never be expected to do.

## 5.2 Objective 2: Does Kate Middleton's Royal Celebrity reflect tensions in contemporary societal discourse?

### 5.2.1 Kate Middleton – Cultural agent

Woman's magazines offer a catalogue of dreams and aspirations, and as Stevens and Maclaren's (2005: 2007) research illustrates; woman's magazines are also a private space where woman connect with each other to negotiate and re-negotiate cultural myths and tensions. In this study, this was found to be the case for Cosmopolitan magazine. As past studies have suggested, celebrities act as cultural agents who facilitate consumers' "*personality development and social identification*"; and assist individuals to identify where they feature, fit-in and/or differ from societal norms (O'Guinn, 1991 p. 104; Peñaloza, 2004; Brownlie and Hewer, 2007). Within the magazine space, like other celebrities, the findings suggest that Kate Middleton acts as a cultural agent, and channels current, widespread tensions in societal discourse such as: Cinderellatisation – the irrelevance of socio-economic difference and consumer longing for fairy-tale romance and real love; contemporary symbols and tensions of femininity; and the modernity, normalisation and liberation of the next generation of the BRF. At the same time, from the analysis it seems that Kate Middleton's Royal Role remains the same as that of those who have come before her - including Princess Diana - to promote the British Monarchy and the cultural and societal prosperity of the commonwealth. This echoes Balmer's (2011a p. 1390) theory of Relative Invariance, where "*heritage identities [such as the BRF] have different meanings in different times and in different places even though on certain dimensions they remain the same*".

### 5.2.2 Cinderellatisation

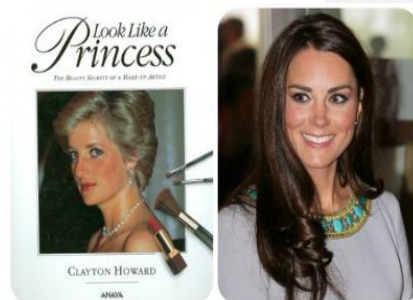
Kate Middleton's first contradiction or challenge of societal discourse is, undoubtedly, her ascent to Royal Celebrity, which contradicts the social-economic order, and supports Bell and Hollows (2005), and Powell and Prasad's (2010) conclusion that class differences are no longer as distinctive or as relevant in contemporary culture. Being, of a humble and modest origin, Kate is perceived to be a normal, average, late-twenty to early-thirty something girl. Consumers relate with her because in her, "we [they] *could see ourselves: a normal girl from a normal(ish) background who lucked out and married a prince she met at university*" (Cosmo Print January, 2012). Kate instigates intrigue from the outset. The analysis suggests that her celebrity story is littered with symbolic references to Walt Disney's Cinderella. A myth that is deeply entrenched in Western civilisation's idealistic view of the culmination of the popper to princess, a tale of the 'fairy-tale and they lived happily forever after'. On the Royal Wedding day, Prince William's red, gold, blue and black Royal Guards Uniform even paralleled with that of Prince Charming (Figures 28, 29).

Figure 28 (Below Left) Cinderella and Prince Charming (inserted by author to make comparasin)

Figure 29 (Below Right) Will and Kate on their Wedding Day (Cosmo Online April, 2011)



Cinderellatisation is not a new societal tension, and consumers have always idolised BRF members who have been transformed from 'normal' people to Royal Celebrities. Although throughout the analysis of Cosmopolitan magazine Princess Diana was only made reference to once, she is undoubtedly one of the most iconic transformations from 'normal' girl to Royal Celebrity. One online article by Cassie Powney (Cosmo Online July, 2012), reflected on Clayton Howard's "Look Like a Princess" book, and revealed that over the last twenty years, nothing has really changed. Even today, girls still desire to achieve the ultimate Princess looks so that they can obtain a part of their celebrity icon's regal look: "...people haven't changed that much in



*20 years, and still idolise the royals (even if it is just because they want their amazing hair!). With so many celebrities rocking a different hair colour or nail art design every day, it's great to know that when it all boils down to it, girls still just want to look like a Princess"* (Cosmo Online July, 2012). There are strong parallels between the Duchess and Diana. Both Royal Celebrities are from humble backgrounds, both have a desire and empathy to help raise the profile of causes in need, both underwent a transformation process in their ascent to Royal Celebrity, and both contradict conventional "fashion" discourse.

Brownlie and Hewer (2007) and Hewer and Brownlie's (2011) research found that celebrity provides escape from the harsh realities of twenty first century living, in the same way, the 'Cinderellatisation' of Kate Middleton offers a welcomed respite from the constraints, the mundane and the disintegration of relationships in a disjointed, depression prone society. Consumers are presented with a fervent, pre-packaged illusion of Kate Middleton's marriage and life with Prince William, as Kate's wholesome love for the Prince is, more often than not, exaggerated. From the language used to describe private moments between the young couple such as the intimate exchanges shared at the altar on their wedding day when *"once she [Kate] reached his side, Wills looked across and told her she looked beautiful. Aww!"* (Figure 30) (Cosmo Online April, 2011), to embracing in a private cuddle at a Polo match *"Aww, when the cameras are far away Kate and William seem to take every opportunity for a quiet cuddle, and were seen here being affectionate at a*



*distance, away from public attention, at Eton College.*” (Figure 31) (Cosmo Online April, 2011); exemplify this point.

Figure 30 Private Exchanges Royal Wedding (Cosmo Online April, 2011)

Figure 31 Private Embrace at Eton Polo Match (Cosmo Online April, 2011)



Indeed, the composition of the photographs and the couple's relaxed and complimentary body language alone illustrates their love for one another. The Cinderellatisation of Kate Middleton not only signifies the increasing irrelevance of social-economic difference, but also consumer yearning for real love in a fragmented, contemporary, depression prone society.

### 5.2.3 Femininity: Contemporary Symbols and Tensions

Kate Middleton reflects many of the paradoxical trends in discourses of femininity in British contemporary culture. Having already discussed how the Duchess does so through fashion, consideration is now given to other physical aspects of Kate Middleton's celebrity persona including Kate's application of self-tan, the '*KMiddy Blow-dry*' and Kate's wedding weight loss; as well as intangible, to consider the pressure on Kate to become a mother at the age of thirty.

### **“Queen of Self-Tan”**

In recent years, self-tan, and the act of obtaining an all-year-round bronzed



glow has become an extensively practiced beauty ritual, and a staple symbol of femininity in contemporary consumer culture. In Britain, the art of ‘tanning’ is amplified by the celebrity ‘wag’ culture (wag: term used to describe the girlfriends and wives of high-profile footballers in Britain).

Figure 32 (Above Left) Kate "Queen of Self-Tan" (Cosmo Online May, 2012)

Kate Middleton is now redefining the established dark, ‘bronzed’ glow: *“The royal’s year round glow is now the top choice for women looking for lovely luminous skin, so it’s time to ditch the Essex orange glow and opt for a more sun-kissed look instead. Girls, say hello to the Kate Middle-tan.”* (Cosmo Online May, 2012). The Duchesses’ enhanced natural glow, which simply lifts her pale English rose skin tone (Figure 32), has helped define HRH as a consumer role model. Consumer masses seek to emulate her natural glow: *“The Duchesses’ skin tone has it’s own nickname since her subtle colour became the most requested spray tan shade”* (Cosmo Online May, 2012). As she re-popularises natural glowing skin, the Duchess radiates class and sophistication.

### **Long luscious natural locks**

Another fundamental contemporary consumer trend, which is channelled by the Duchess, is a natural; long, thick, full-head of perfectly conditioned, styled

hair. Such a trend is driven by the glamour and stature of Hollywood A list celebrities, and, in the UK, by the celebrity 'wag' culture and popular reality TV stars like the cast of 'Towie' and 'Made in Chelsea'. Kate's natural luscious locks radiate an air of established, regal femininity, which steers consumers away from faking-it with hair extensions, wigs, weaves and other falsifications. A strong consumer desire to replicate Kate's iconic 'Chelsea Blow-dry' is channelled throughout the magazine, as HRH's hairstyle is appraised and admired: *"Her tumbling mane of shiny, bouncy curls are enough to make us weep at our own limp, lifeless locks – we need to master the Chelsea blow-dry, and pronto!"* (Cosmo Online March 2012).

Detailed step-by-step advice on how to replicate Kate's hairstyle is provided by her own, personal hairstylist Richard Ward. From preparation, to colouring, to homecare to styling: *"In order to recreate a similar colour to Kate's natural tone, you should ask your colourist to apply an organic vegetable colour to give gloss and shine as this will gradually fade over time. In the salon we use L'Oreal Symbio and Fuente Organic colour. Ask for a dark brunette shade with mahogany tones or if you're looking for a fuller depth you can ask the colourist to combine this with lowlights for a more natural look."* Colouring Advice (Cosmo Online March, 2012).

## Wedding Weight Loss

For most women, the day of their wedding is a significant, momentous, life-changing occasion, as they take centre-stage to profess true love and lifetime commitment to a cherished other. In western civilisations, the pressure to physically look your best (Lupton, 1996) is driven by an incessant need to be thin (Neighbors and Sobal, 2008). To be thin, is to be beautiful, and being beautiful is the ultimate result that brides crave (Neighbors and Sobal, 2008).

In the lead up to her own wedding, HRH Catherine Middleton was guilty of 'slimming herself' down for the big day (Figure 33).



Figure 33 (Right) Royal Wedding Weight Loss (Cosmo Online April, 2011)

*"Princess-to-be, Kate Middleton has had her iconic engagement ring (that formally sat on Diana's digits) taken in because her weight has plummeted. Ahead of Kate's big day she's slowly been shrinking in size and as a result of this she's asked for her sapphire ring to be fitted with two platinum beads to stop it slipping. While she still looks the epitome of elegance, recent pictures of her show her significantly slimmer. The press have reported several reasons for Kate's weight loss including fad diets and exercise programmes, but the most believable reason is nerves. As Kate prepares to wed the future King of England with the world watching she is no doubt stressed and nervous, something that would suppress even the most healthy of appetites"* (Cosmo Online April, 2011). However, unlike most other brides, the Duchesses' slimming regime is not depicted negatively

(Neighbors and Sobal, 2008). Instead, it is described in a normative light, assuming that wedding weight loss is the norm, and almost encourages “normal” consumers to follow Kate’s lead. The Duchesses’ weight loss accepts and highlights that wedding nerves is something that fazes all women, regardless of age, status, or financial means, as they prepare for the big day.

### **Pressure: Motherhood at 30**

Throughout time, the age at which it is thought most ‘appropriate’ to have children has changed quite significantly. Today, it is becoming increasingly more acceptable for women to have babies in their late thirties and forties (Gilbert et al, 1999; Liu et al, 2012).

**Figure 34 (Below Left) Pressure for Motherhood (Cosmo Online April, 2012)**

Since January 2012, Kate Middleton’s thirtieth birthday, the press have



continued to insinuate the potential pregnancy of the Duchess. In April 2012, as Kate and Will’s one year wedding anniversary drew near, Cosmopolitan defended Kate, which drew attention to the unnecessary pressure that this young, newly-wed girl now faces almost daily.

*“Kate and Wills were pictured cooing over three-week-old Hugo Vicary, the son of a soldier (Figure 34). Apparently this means they’re now desperate for one. Hmm, no it doesn’t. You’re meant to coo at babies, we even pretend sometimes...” “Don’t get us wrong, we love babies! Harper Beckham is one of our faves, closely followed by Blue Ivy -*

*obvs! But we wish everyone would stop with the baby dramarama concerning Kate Middleton - she's only thirty - can't we just let her strut her non-preggo stuff for a little while longer?"* (Cosmo Online April, 2012). The archetypal societal representation of the age at which to commence motherhood undergoes the process of evolution, as Kate's decision to wait instead of having children at 30 is justified.

#### **5.2.4 Modernity, Normalisation and perceived Liberation: The next generation of the BRFB**

Catherine and William are very much the present and future of the BRFB. The public persona of these modern Royal Celebrities is indicative of that of the societal archetype of their generation. With the couple studying and obtaining degrees from the prestigious University of St. Andrews, and Kate being the first royal to have completed a gap year abroad (BMO, 2012). The relatively normal behaviours and actions of Kate and William challenge the pre-established social distance between the average consumer and Royal Celebrity. From William's acceptance of the six-figure sum Kate's parents Carole and Michael Middleton contributed to the Royal Wedding; to Kate and Wills' exchange of smiles, smirks and kisses on their wedding day; to living with Prince Harry; to going to the cinema.

In most cultures, it is typically assumed that the bride's father will pay for the wedding. Astonishingly, this was also the case for Kate Middleton: *"It seems that Kate Middleton's parents are all about equality because they're reportedly handing over a six figure sum for this year's big matrimonial bash"* (Cosmo Online March, 2011). Regardless of the fact that Kate Middleton

married into a royal empire with substantial economic means, her parents, avowedly, necessitated that they finance part of their daughter's wedding. However, what is of surprise and a challenge to the potential "rags to riches" phenomenon is Prince William's acceptance of the gesture, which illustrated integrity, respect and gratitude.

**Figure 35 (Below Left) Will and Kate's Wedding Financiers (Cosmo Online March, 2011)**

This 'normality', and liberation from the mythical constrictions that consumers



believe that their Royal Role commands, reappeared on the day the couple wed on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012. "Sharing glances once their vows were done (Figure 35), Prince William and Princess Catherine sat down together at the side of the Abbey for the rest of the service. The couple

shared a number of smirks as the choir sang and readings were recited. Cute!" (Cosmo Online April, 2011).

**Figure 36 (Below Right) Royal Kisses - Breaking Convention (Cosmo Online April, 2011)**

The smiles, and exhilarating excitement shared by the couple, who quickly realise the significance of their recited vows, a youthful liberating euphoria, is a stark contrast from the standard austere royal look that consumers are accustomed to. Moreover, the couple's 'first kiss' challenged the traditional post-ceremonial cap of one kiss (Figure 36).



*“While it seemed to be a bit too much for a couple of the youngest bridesmaids, Wills and Kate gave the crowd what they wanted to see, with not just one, but TWO kisses!”* (Cosmo Online April, 2011). The double kiss of the ‘loved-up’ pair symbolises the next generation of the BRFB. This unique modern twist surprised the nation. A relaxed and content Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, in front of a global audience, step-up to accommodate their complementing Royal Roles.

Figure 37 (Below Left) Visit to the Local Cinema (Cosmo Online July, 2011)



Other instances of this modern normality include, Kate and William, initially, living as newlyweds with Prince Harry, *“The rooms aren’t particularly fancy but Catherine is used to them. She gets on brilliantly with Harry so it won’t be too much of a hardship shacking up with him for a while”* (Cosmo Online April, 2011); and trips to the cinema (Figure 37), *“Movie-goers in North Wales were surprised to see the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at their local cinema this weekend, as Prince William took Kate Middleton to see Bridesmaids!”* (Cosmo Online July, 2011). In a society where, for some time, the roles and responsibilities of the BRF have been not necessary perceived as being as relevant as in the past, (Balmer, 2011a), Kate and William re-define what it means to be royal. To be a Royal Celebrity, evidently necessitates that BRF member’s employ multiple façade’s to accommodate each of the very different roles that they are required to assume. However, when off duty, or not, at the end of the day, the BRF are *“just like the rest of us”*.



### **5.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, data collected from the primary research has been analysed and discussed in relation to the research objectives. Taking all of the above into consideration, both primary and secondary research will now be collated in the final conclusions and recommendations chapter, so as to provide a clear, contextual understanding of the Royal Celebrity of HRH Catherine Middleton.

## **6.0 Conclusions, Contributions and Recommendations**

The aim of this study was to extend current knowledge and understandings of Royal Celebrity within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) by investigating the newest member of the BRF – HRH Catherine Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge. Conclusions will now be drawn from the research findings offered in the previous chapter. Concluding from this, limitations and scope for future research will be delineated.

### **6.1 To what extent is Kate Middleton's ascent to Royal Celebrity appropriated by fashion discourse?**

Synonymous with Otnes et al's (2010) findings, this study illustrates that Royal Celebrities are indeed different from other celebrities. Royal Celebrities are 'above' the status of celebrity as they are worshipped by other celebrities who admire, respect and, often, attempt to emulate them. For example, fashion icons Victoria Beckham and Christian Louboutin admire, respect and sanction Kate's fashion choices, whilst actresses Anne Hathaway and Kate Bosworth actively set out to imitate the Duchesses' idiosyncratic sense of style. This study, however, extends Otnes et al's (2010) findings, as we see, in terms of the appropriation of fashion discourse, a hazy distinction between royalty, celebrity and the "normal" consumer. The notion of 'hegemony' (Simmel, 1904; Douglas and Isherwood, 1970; Barnard, 2002) is reversed, and as Royalty wear the same apparel garments as the "normal" consumer, the celebrity seeks to imitate royalty. Royal Celebrity is therefore 'above' the

status of celebrity and, at least in terms of fashion discourse, at the same time, within the “normal” consumer’s reach.

In this study, Urde et al (2006), Balmer et al (2006 p. 903) and Queen Elizabeth II’s claim that the BRF is managed like “*a firm*” is reinforced. This study, however, extends this concept by examining the management of Kate Middleton’s ascent to Royal Celebrity, particularly her transformation from a ‘normal’ girl to a Royal Celebrity, through the fashion she adorns at different stages in this process from March 2011-July 2012. Throughout each of the five overlapping stages: “Girl Next Door Kate”, “Fairy-tale Princess Kate”, “Humble Kate”, “Regal Kate” and “The People’s Kate”, the fashions Kate wears not only indicate different façades of Kate’s personality as well as the roles that she is required to fulfil i.e. boosting high-street and couture British designers (Reiss, Alexander McQueen etc.) and creative industries, such as millinery by wearing headpieces at Royal Events/Celebrations. These façade’s also illustrate Kate’s gradual struggle to become a BRF member, whilst maintaining her identity. Fashion, as Thompson and Haytko (1997) have suggested, and in this instance, reflects labyrinthine, ideological myths of the disposition of individuals and society. Irrefutably, Kate Middleton’s fashion discourse is a significant indicator of her transformation to Royal Celebrity. The Duchesses’ fashion choices also illustrates how “normal” consumers can achieve celebrity status, and obtain a part of Kate Middleton’s celebrity status by wearing the same fashion apparel as royalty - even if consumers wear a more affordable substitute, recycle older or second hand staple wardrobe pieces.

## **6.2 Objective 2: Does Kate Middleton's Royal Celebrity reflect tensions in contemporary societal discourse?**

In objective 1, we touched on how the BRF brand, and indeed how the Royal Celebrity of Kate Middleton is managed, at least through fashion discourse, "like a firm" (Urde et al, 2006; Balmer et al, 2006 p. 903). Like a firm, as Balmer (2011a) argues, the BRF brand is the past, present and the future as the BRFB lives on. The findings of this study support this view, and extend it. In contemporary consumer culture, the BRFB Royal Roles remain the same yet evolve with the cultural, social and historical context of the moment. The parallel between Princess Diana and Kate Middleton is a nice example of this phenomenon. As over the course of the past twenty years or so, nothing has really changed, as girls everywhere stills strive to create the perfect Princess look. Instead, only the focus has changed, and merely shifted from one Princess to another.

In the contemporary context, when class differentiations are no longer as distinctive or pertinent (Bell and Hollows, 2005), the celebrity acts as a cultural intermediary to transfer a particular social 'lifestyle' into the lived experience of ordinary individuals through the mass media (Powell and Prasad, 2010). In the same way, Royal Celebrity acts as cultural agent to reflect the contemporary cultural lifestyle myths and tensions that engulf society. The analysis suggests that this channelling of deeper cultural consumer and marketplace meaning is disseminated through, in the case of Royal Celebrity; a well communicated and enacted balance between

normality and the extraordinary. For example, the union between William and Kate is not only a normal, sacred rite of passage; but an extraordinary 'fairy-tale' event celebrated across the globe. This union is idolised by consumers, who buy into the cinderellatised story of a poor girl marrying her Prince to 'live happily forever after'. However, this story has far deeper marketplace meaning as it reflects consumers' desire and need to escape the harsh realities of the normality of a fragmented, depression prone society where the breakdown of relationships is, increasingly becoming commonplace. This momentous event, grants consumers hope, freedom and liberation as the extraordinary is exaggerated. On the day, the couple's decision to exchange two kisses not only transgressed convention and the normative, but acted as a symbolic indicator of things to come, and the modernisation of the BRFB. Other examples, of BRFB members breaking the convention of normative acts and transforming them to something extraordinary include: Kate and Will's decision to live with Prince Harry initially, as newlyweds; the couple's trip to their local cinema; Kate Middleton's self-tanning and hairstyle beauty regime; and Kate and William's decision to postpone parenthood at 30. All of the aforementioned acts are normative and commonplace for "normal" consumers, but extraordinary for Royal Celebrity, as it is not the norm for Royalty to behave in such a way. It is therefore, evident that the way in which the BRFB is being managed is changing alongside the social, cultural and historical context. As the BRFB and Royal Celebrity enters a new era, it is clear to see that the boundaries between Royalty and "normal" consumers

are lapsing, as Royalty is seen and perceived to act in the same way as the rest of us.

### 6.3 Overall Conclusion

Within CCT, past celebrity studies have 'unpacked' the celebrity brands of famous sports stars (Cashmore and Parker, 2003; Cashmore, 2006), music icons (Peñaloza, 2004; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010), artists (Schroeder, 2006; Kerrigan et al, 2011) and celebrity chefs (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; 2011; Hewer and Brownlie, 2009); whilst Royal Celebrity studies have focused on the BRFB in its entirety (Otnes and Maclaren, 2007; Otnes et al, 2010). In response to Hewer and Brownlie's (2009) ask for more studies that contribute to our nascent understandings of Consumer Culture Celebrity Theory (CCCT) from, as Turner (2004) and Hamilton and Hewer (2010) suggest, beneath an axiological approach; in this study, and for the first time within CCT, the social and cultural influence of the Royal Celebrity of a single BRFB member - HRH Catherine Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge - is assiduously unpacked.

This study has emphasised qualitatively, the significance of fashion discourse in the ascent to Royal Celebrity. A vital way in which the BRFB is managed "like a firm" (Balmer et al, 2006 p. 903) is revealed by Kate Middleton's appropriation of affordable high-street and couture fashion discourse as she fulfils her Royal Role and subsequent duties. The notion of 'hegemony' (Simmel, 1904; Douglas and Isherwood, 1970; Barnard, 2002) is reversed. As Royalty wears mid to high end high-street brands; 'normal' celebrity, inspired by Royal Celebrity does the same; and as celebrity and Royal

Celebrity, on the aspect of particular apparel items, levels with the 'normal' consumer, he/she continues to buy high-street brands to imitate Royalty. This study has thus identified a new Royal Celebrity/celebrity/consumer fashion consumption sequence.

Furthermore, this study exemplifies how the BRFB is timeless (Balmer, 2011a), as it evolves with the social, cultural and historic marketplace surroundings, and is therefore "like a firm" and consequently, managed "*like a firm*". BRF member roles remain the same, yet the monarchs who fulfil such roles come and go. Royal Celebrity acts as cultural agent to channel current marketplace consumer myths, tensions and ideologies. In doing so, a synthesised balance between the normative behaviours of BRF members and the extraordinary is disseminated through the marketplace, as BRF members illustrate, that in contemporary consumer culture, their roles are, as Balmer (2011a) suggests, ever as relevant.

#### **6.4 Methodological Contribution**

This thesis introduced a relatively under theorised (Mulvey and Stern, 2004) and underused method within CCT - that of Interpretive Content Analysis (Ahuvia, 2000; Krippendorf, 2004); and applied this method not to analyse advertisements as traditionally the case, but instead to analyse the articles, images, and content within a liberating, revolutionary, popular, contemporary women's lifestyle magazine – Cosmopolitan UK. Applying this new methodology to the analysis of a contemporary women's magazine, has reiterated and supported Stevens and Maclarens (2005: 2007) research, which

suggests that magazines are an effective source for understanding female consumers, and as Beetham (1996) states, locating consumer behaviours in time and place. Particularly, the analysis of both the monthly print magazine, as well as the online articles - which are consistently updated - assisted our understanding of the day-to-day consistent packaging of Royal Celebrity in Cosmopolitan UK magazine for the complex, contemporary consumer marketplace.

### **6.5 Limitations**

Similar to past studies that have examined media discourse in popular, reputable magazines (Martens and Scott, 2005; Davis, 2012) and cookbooks (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007: 2011; Hewer and Brownlie, 2009; Cappellini and Parsons, 2012), the findings of this study do not claim to be the absolute accurate meaning as intended by the original authors of Cosmopolitan magazine, but instead, act as a unique interpretation to stimulate further discussions and further research on Royal Celebrity within CCT. Due to time constraints, this study has only scratched the surface on the definition, meanings, and context of the contemporary Royal Celebrity within CCT.

### **6.6 Future Research**

Future research that explores the fashion discourse of Royal Celebrity could explore additional fashion parallels between the Duchess of Cambridge and the late Princess Diana; to better understand how the BRFB has evolved throughout time whilst the Royal Roles of BRF members have remained the same.



As this study is the first to examine Royal Celebrity as a single case study, it is recommended that further research should begin to explore the Royal Celebrity of individual BRF member personalities. In particular, how individual BRF members as individuals i.e. of different generations and personalities and, as a whole, contribute to the BRFB essence. In doing so it is not only essential to understand the BRF impact on the direct endorsement of cultural societal welfare, and also the indirect endorsement of products/brands. Understanding both the positive and negative behaviours of the BRF could prove fruitful for further exploration, to understand how the BRFB functions “*like a firm*” (Urde et al, 2006) in addressing conflict and controversy.

### **6.7 Industry Implications**

This study has provided an insight into the management of the BRFB, which should prove to be useful for organisations who seek to advertise BRF members’ voluntary, unpaid use of their products. Organisations in this position, for advertising and promotional purposes could highlight the fact that their brand/product is genuinely good enough for Royalty. By doing so, this would allow them to reach a large proportion of their consumer demographic, and perhaps not only reach the “normal” consumer, but the celebrity consumer. Royal Celebrity endorsement has the power, to not only re-launch declining trades and industries such as millinery and individual jewellers, but also to boost sales and organisational share prices.

## 6.8 Final Note

All considered, it is irrefutable that Royal Celebrity is a very different breed of celebrity. Within CCT, the Royal Celebrity of Catherine Middleton – Duchess of Cambridge inspires and influences the fashion discourse consumption of celebrities and “normal” consumers; whilst channelling contemporary, ideological consumer marketplace myths.

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