

"What's missing in our movies about childhood is that we may portray children, but we don't really show the world through children's eyes," says Mintz. He points to Ingmar Bergman's family saga *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), in which the child's viewpoint is one of discovery, as an exception to this rule. "A child can see a lot of things, but not have the categories to interpret them. So [to them] there may be many mysteries in the world."

What children in the movies are often trying to do, says Bronfen, is "bring something back to the parents – not innocence, but self-knowledge. In fairy tales, that's what children always have. They always know how to get out of the woods."

Part Three

DOES THE PATIENT
or the
PUBLIC NEED THERAPY?

By Laura Lallone and Kat Kehres

What's with celebrity couples? They get married too soon. They get divorced too easily. They're immature, irresponsible and b-a-d at relationships, right? Well, at least that's the illusion. There's a lot of evidence to support these claims, but then again, you'll usually find what you're looking for.

So, what is the truth? Could celebrity relationships simply be reflecting society at large? Look at divorce statistics. Half of all U.S. marriages end in divorce, and this rate rises when, like in Army marriages, couples are under high stress circumstances with emotional strain and time away from their families. Wait. Could the marriage and divorce rate in Hollywood be "normal"?

Who knows? When the "truth" comes from UFO-reporting tabloids, PR reps or even from exclusive insider interviews, outsiders will never know what really happens between two Hollywood stars.

The bigger question is, "Why does anyone really care?"

For better or worse, Hollywood couples have an impact. They're watched. They're modeled. They're American royalty, larger than life. And, believe it or not, the relationships of Hollywood couples are affected by all the attention. Yes, even the attention you give them from the privacy of your own home. This phenomenon, called the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, says that you can't observe something without changing what you're observing. And, boy, are these couples observed!

It's an intricate feedback loop set in motion when the entertainment industry was born. Hollywood impacts the public and shapes the culture. The public responds and impacts Hollywood. Celebrity couples – both revered and damned under the public microscope – are sandwiched in-between, floating in an illusion which makes them appear less like people and more like characters in a movie. The illusions of spectacular offscreen Hollywood romances and tragic, gut-wrenching break-ups are straight from the silver screen, complete with high conflict, action and suspense feeding the psychic addiction of a society living on the verge of dire boredom and desperate for some leadership.

Yes, we as a culture are addicted to drama. That's what the entertainment industry is about, right? And when the action in the movie stops, people still want more. The addiction feeds the loop. The high-drama craving impacts Hollywood and its couples, creating more drama – onscreen and off – which further feeds the addiction.

So, why don't people just "get a life" and stop obsessing over celebrities? Good question. The addiction is more than voyeuristic tendencies and living vicariously through celebrities. Underneath, there's a natural, primal fascination and curiosity that people have with the human condition and relationships. People learn from it, grow from it. This fascination keeps people buying movie tickets, lining up to watch stories unfold that help them see more of themselves.

What about celebrity couples that *have* figured it out? What does it take to make it when the stakes are raised and the pressure is on?

Like all relationships, it takes a strong foundation and ongoing attention to support a celebrity relationship, plus some serious privacy blinds. Look at the celebrity couples who have been married for years. They're not hanging out at the celebrity sighting spots or lining up to disclose their personal life in exclusive interviews. They are couples who go to lengths to maintain boundaries, both physically and figuratively. They create the space to work out their *stuff* in private, because all relationships have *stuff*.

Look to successful Hollywood couples for people who've learned the big importance of the little, low-drama moments in a relationship. Yes, like taking out the trash and leaving a note on the refrigerator. They know that falling in love isn't the high point of their relationship, but just the beginning. They don't buy into the illusion that they, equipped with star power, are destined to live some fairytale existence.

They know that the whole star thing is an illusion. They know the vulnerabilities of the entertainment industry. Head on, they face both the advantages and the dark side of their fantastic circumstances. They've turned the house lights on and look at each other and their relationship in a very normal way. They've learned from celebrity couples who have gone before them. They don't have the illusion that love is going to keep them together and that it will all "just work out." Knowing their celebrity pressures, they have rituals and clear communication about boundaries. They don't just leave their relationship up to chance.

Separately, these stars are strong individuals, not blended into a morphed coupling. Together, they create a separate entity with a purpose and focus bigger than their celebrity status. For some couples, this means raising their children; for other couples, it's political involvement or a collaborative work project.

Their relationship is what keeps these celebrity couples grounded and maintains their connection with who they really are, not their public personas. At the same time, these couples are realistic and know that, despite doing all the *right* things, sometimes relationships end. In those moments, they move on and don't hold themselves up to a bizarre "no break-up" standard created by the public.

The illusions of spectacular Hollywood romances and tragic break-ups feed the psychic addiction of a society living on the verge of dire boredom.

Sounds like a sappy, romantic film that wouldn't do all that well in the box office, huh? But we're talking real life here, not ratings.

Where are these couples? Well, it's a real paradox. If they put themselves out in the public too far, they risk blowing their boundaries and getting caught up in the drama. Remember, the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle will get them. So, they walk the line very carefully. It's a pity, because they sound like the role models the world is searching for.

But what would happen if we – all of us – focused less on the drama addiction and more on learning about the human condition? Maybe then the successful celebrity couples could be safe to reveal themselves a bit more. That might change the loop and shift the culture a bit.

And what if we rooted for Hollywood couples the way we did for characters in films, identifying with and investing in the couple's happiness because we knew that our own lives were impacted from the experience? What would happen to the feedback loop then?

As with any addiction, admission is the first step. After that, it's all about a change in perspective. - *MPM*