

1 Article

2 “Once a junkie, always a junkie”: a narrative analysis 3 of cinematic representations of the attribution of 4 criminality and deviancy to heroin users

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10 **Abstract:** This article responds to an identified and significant gap in the existing scholarly canon to
11 consider the extent to which cinematic representations construct heroin users - the ‘junkie’ - as a
12 criminalised ‘Other’ which confer legitimacy on the notion that such are criminogenic and deviant.
13 Positioned within the disciplinary bounds of cultural criminology, this article focuses on five films
14 - Sid and Nancy (1986); The Basketball Diaries (1995); Trainspotting (1996); Requiem for a Dream
15 (2000); and, T2 Trainspotting (2017). Drawing together Hall’s (1997) theories of representation and
16 Hjelm’s (2014) theories of social constructionism, the findings from a narrative analysis of each of
17 the films – individually and comparatively – explores the following themes, junkies: as
18 criminogenic; as dangerous underclass; as embodying decay and depravity; and in relation to
19 female junkies, as junkie whores. In doing so, this article elucidates new thinking and ideas about
20 cinematic representations of junkies and how this shapes and influences social norms and mores.

21 **Keywords:** heroin users; junkies; cinematic representations; social constructionism; cultural
22 criminology

23

24 1. Introduction

25 Since the genesis of cinema, narratives and plotlines about drugs, users, addicts, dealers and their
26 subsequent criminalisation have been a mainstay of the film industry (Boyd, 2008). Simultaneous to this
27 has been the development of abstinence-based policies around drug consumption, both of which have
28 had interesting intersections and crossovers throughout their respective histories. Take for instance
29 silent films such as *The Chinese Opium Den*. Released in 1894, the film showed explicit examples of
30 drugs, drug usage, drug addicts and their alleged criminality. More importantly for Boyd (2008), the
31 film’s racialisation of drug users not only began the process of associating specific drug types with
32 specific groups of people – something which indeed continues to the present day – but so too did it
33 infer that wider society was threatened by the spectre of drugs and those that use them. While
34 Hickmans (2009) argues that society has been largely repugnant of drug users, there has been a
35 relentless process of culturally envisioning them. Contemporary films continue to produce equally
36 problematic representations of drug use and users. As McKenna (2012) notes, such representations
37 continue to perpetuate both the stigmatisation of drugs and drug users but so too reproduce the often
38 inaccurate assumptions and stereotypes that are attributed to them. In reiterating the very real
39 intersection between culture and society identified by Boyd (2008) previously, McKenna (2012) adds
40 that these representations, constructions and inaccuracies far too often mirror the narratives of different
41 governments and politicians to the extent that when conjoined contribute towards an ‘authoritative
42 discourse’ that not only reinforces the perceived threat being posed to society by drugs and drug users
43 but so too confers legitimacy on advocating ever more punitive measures.

44 For Taylor (2008), there is little doubt that these cultural representations and narratives contribute
45 towards the legitimisation of policies and approaches that seek to moralise and demonise drugs and
46 drug users. Given that contemporary representations and constructions of drug users – and drug
47 addicts in particular – in popular culture appear to threaten progression (Lalander, 2003) the result is a
48 hegemonic understanding and conception of of drug use, drug users and drug addiction; one that is
49 intrinsically linked to crime, immorality and deviance (Carnwath and Smith, 2002). While this can be
50 seen with all drugs, Carnwath and Smith (2002) note the link between drugs and criminality is
51 especially profound as regards opiate consumption. As they also duly note, it is also the linkage that
52 has the longest history and greatest pedigree. In this respect, heroin holds the status of the ultimate
53 ‘criminogenic drug’. By this, they mean that even in the earliest cultural representations, the link
54 between heroin, its use and its users with crime, criminality and deviance was unduly accentuated.
55 Consequently, heroin and heroin users – the latter commonly referred to as ‘junkies’, a term that is also
56 used from hereon in to refer to heroin users – have always been ‘Othered’ and demonised in popular
57 cultural products especially filmic representations (Carnwath and Smith, 2002). While so, few studies
58 to date have sought to explore this: the representation of heroin as a criminogenic drug and of junkies
59 in contemporary cinematic representations.

60 This article responds to an identified and significant gap in the existing scholarly canon to consider
61 the extent to which cinematic representations construct heroin users - the ‘junkie’ - as a criminalised
62 ‘Other’ which confer legitimacy to the notion that such are criminogenic and deviant. Positioning itself
63 within the field of cultural criminology, this article seeks to build on existing knowledge while also
64 contributing new thinking and ideas about the interlinkage between drugs and drug use with crime
65 and deviancy. To do so, this article begins by setting out its analytical framework, one that draws
66 together and explains Hall’s (1997) theories relating to representation and Hjelm’s (2014) theories
67 relating to social constructionism in conjunction with theories and models relevant to the discipline of
68 criminology and including Becker (1963) and Ferrell (1998) among others. Having also set out the
69 methodological approach, some context will be provided in the form of a brief exposition of the history
70 of heroin and junkies as social problems and criminalised ‘Others’. From here, the findings from
71 narrative analyses of five films will be considered. These films are: *Sid and Nancy* (1986); *The Basketball*
72 *Diaries* (1995); *Trainspotting* (1996); *Requiem for a Dream* (2000); and, *T2 Trainspotting* (2017).
73 Structured around narrative themes the findings explore junkies as: criminogenic; dangerous
74 underclass; embodying decay and depravity; and in terms of female junkies, as junkie whores. In
75 conclusion, this article seeks to elucidate any new knowledge and thinking to have emerged from the
76 study.

77 **2. Analytical Framework**

78 Cultural criminology emerged out of the work of Ferrell and Sanders (1995) and the interest
79 shown towards popular cultural constructions of crime, criminals and crime control. Of particular
80 importance has been the symbolic representations deployed in popular cultural constructions and
81 their potential to shape and inform meaning and identity (Ferrell, 1998). Cultural criminologists
82 therefore - like their cultural studies counterparts - place a significant emphasis on representation,
83 image, and style among others. This is important because as Ferrell (1998) explains, cultural
84 criminology affords a lens through which researchers can undertake “a journey into the spectacle and
85 carnival of crime, a walk down an infinite hall of mirrors where images created and consumed by
86 criminals, criminal subcultures, control agents, media institutions, and audiences bounce endlessly
87 one off the other”. Despite the language, such investigations are not fanciful. As Kane (1998) puts it,
88 they allow the interconnections that exist between cultural constructions and the discourses of state
89 institutions, governmental actors and crime enforcement agencies to be explored and subsequently
90 understood. The approach preferred here fits with Ferrell’s (1998) notion of the relevance and
91 importance of cultural criminology in enabling a better understand of the role and meanings
92 attributed to the ‘symbolic’ in popular culture. This is important because popular cultural
93 constructions not only relate to more widely held social and political constructions but so too have

94 the capacity to shape and influence them. Cultural criminology also responds to Becker's (1963)
95 demand that criminologists necessarily consider 'all the people'.

96 Some explanation is required however as regards the theoretical understandings preferred here.
97 The first of these relates to cultural studies and Hall's (1997) theories of representation whereby
98 meaning is seen to be constructed as opposed being naturally inherent. Consequently, it is the process
99 of construction that attributes meaning. For him, the best way to understand this is through notions
100 of 'representation', something he defines as the way in which societies and voices within them deploy
101 language as a means of saying something meaningful (Hall 1997). Representation therefore is
102 concerned with meaning that is given and subsequently made known. For Hall, this is threefold. The
103 first reflects meaning as it is seen to exist in the world. Consequently, reflective representations have
104 the potential to be fair and accurate. The second is intentional whereby representations convey
105 meaning intended by the producer or constructor. Intentional representations may neither be true
106 nor correct if that what was intended. Third is constructionist where meaning is conceived and put
107 forward through the use of signs and symbols that in turn give meaning. While Hall (1997) is keen to
108 stress that constructionist representations do not deny the existence of the material or 'real', what is
109 important is that the meaning conveyed does not necessarily reflect the material or 'real' because it
110 is constructed and produced. Constructionist representations therefore have the potential to fix
111 meaning and understanding to specific objects and things as also communities and individuals.

112 Hall's theories of representation therefore have a clear resonance with those relating to social
113 constructionism. For the purpose of this article, Hjelm's (2014) definition is preferred: "social
114 constructionism argues that the human world is not as simple and obvious as it seems and that
115 people, you and I, take actively part in producing and reproducing – constructing – it..." (Hjelm [2]
116 2014). For him, social constructionism has four functions. First, it ontologically functions to offer a
117 view of what the world is like as also what it consists of. Second, it is epistemological in offering a
118 view of how meaning is produced. Third, social constructionism is critical in that it makes possible
119 thinking and communicating about the world differently. And fourth, it is methodological in that
120 helps study processes and impacts in the social world. Social constructionism therefore shapes and
121 informs both the analytical and theoretical framework adopted here, each of which are drawn upon
122 in varying ways.

123 As regards constructed representations, Hjelm (2014) notes that neither these nor the meanings
124 given can be accepted without question. This is because they are constructed to narrow down the
125 complexity of social life. For Best (1995), one way of achieving this is through the process of naming
126 whereby 'drug dealer' or 'mass murderer' for instance can be seen to rather more effective in terms
127 of conveying a particular meaning than say 'illegal substance trafficker' or 'social pathologist' (Hjelm
128 2014). This article is premised on the basis that the criminalisation of junkies is a social construction
129 that effectively functions as a name through which complex meanings are narrowed down. In line
130 with this, this article is also premised on the basis that social constructions of heroin and junkies are
131 analogous with them being social problems. In the field of criminology, Becker (1962) elucidated
132 something similar via labelling theory. As a perspective through which to understand crime and
133 deviance within the context of the social world, he argues that those who are 'labelled' as deviant
134 undergo a significant transformation of status and identity thereby becoming isolated, excluded and
135 categorised negatively: "when a rule is enforced, the person who is supposed to have broken it may
136 be seen as a special kind of person, one who cannot be trusted to live by the rules agreed on by the
137 group, he is regarded as an outsider" (Becker, [1] 1963). 'Deviance' therefore "is not an objective fact,
138 waiting to be catalogued and analysed, but rather a collective process of human creation and
139 subjectivity" (Ferrell, Hayward and Young [37] 2008). As Rock (1973) suggests deviance is "a social
140 construct fashioned by the society in which it is identified" (Rock [19] 1973).

141 3. Methodological Framework

142 While positioning this article within cultural criminology, the field is not one that is
143 characterised by any preferred methodologies and approaches. As Ferrell (1998) puts it, the field's
144 methodologies comprise a 'melange'. While so, a distinction is normally evident between those who

145 prefer ethnographic inspired fieldwork and those who undertake media and textual analyses (Ferrell,
146 1988). This article prefers the latter on the basis that in the contemporary setting, there is a multiplicity
147 of media through which research can be conducted. Here, the preference relates to film and cinematic
148 representations through which to explore constructions of the junkie and heroin use more broadly.
149 This is because film is a cultural medium that reflects dominant social attitudes at the same time as
150 going some way to shape social perceptions and ideas (Welsh et al, 2011). This is supported by Appel
151 (2008) and Appel and Richter (2007). Interestingly, Surette (2007) suggests that such is even more
152 prominent when fictional representations centre on crime and criminals due to the fact most people
153 have little direct experience of either. For Kappeler (2004), cinematic representations function by
154 providing 'convenient mortar' in that they provide the knowledge that people have about unfamiliar
155 issues. Given that most people have little experience of heroin use and that junkies are typically
156 unknown, it is likely that cinematic representations of both will provide some 'convenient mortar'.
157 Welsh et al (2011) go further. For them, cinematic representations influence judgments about crime
158 and importantly, how those with appropriate power should respond. While this article does not
159 directly posit that representations of junkies in films directly influences and shapes political and
160 policy responses to drug use and users, it does posit that cinematic representations reflect wider
161 social and political attitudes.

162 Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that qualitative methods are best suited for investigating
163 media representations. Qualitative methods are also the most appropriate when variations in
164 dialogue and action involving fictional characters, narratives and settings are likely to be evident
165 (Pehlke et al, 2009). The qualitative method preferred here is narrative analysis. Having theoretical
166 resonance with Hall's (1997) notion of constructionist representations, narrative analysis is premised
167 on the basis that it does not approach narratives and the stories that emanate from them as a medium
168 that transmits a set of facts about the world. Like constructionist representations, narrative – in line
169 with Hall's concept of representation - is not primarily concerned with claims to truth (May, 2002).
170 According to Bruner (1986), narratives are constructed as a means through which meaning is given
171 to lived experience. As he goes on, given that narratives can be verbal, textual or visual they help
172 make sense of the more ambiguous and complex aspects of human lives thereby complementing
173 Surette's (2007) observations previously.

174 Narrative analyses are therefore typically fluid. Some place greater emphasis on the 'content'
175 of the narratives while others on 'meaning' (Polkinghorne, 1995). Some combine the two in varying
176 measures. In this way, narratives can be seen to provide a means through which knowable realities –
177 including those that are constructed and produced – can be analysed. While so, this article agrees
178 with Polkinghorne's (1995) observation that narrative analyses need to be reflexive due to the
179 complexity, messiness, inconsistency and ambiguity inherent in stories and narratives. In line with
180 Gehart et al (2007), the approach to narrative analysis preferred here was ongoing; undertaken
181 throughout the research process rather than after data was collected. Incorporating verbal and visual
182 narratives, each of the films were analysed in isolation and as a collective thereby enabling the
183 incorporation of both lesser and meta-narratives (Gerhart et al, 2007). The methodological approach
184 therefore was something of an organic endeavour that sought to identify narratives that provided
185 insight into meaning that was known and importantly, how that meaning was known. In doing so, the
186 approach is appropriate for the field of cultural criminology.

187 The sampling technique used for this dissertation was non-probabilistic and purposive;
188 identified on the basis of what needed to be known as a means of determining what needed to be
189 identified (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006). A fourfold criterion was applied. The first was
190 that a film's main protagonist – or fictional character – had to be a junkie. Second, that in addition to
191 being a junkie the film had to have a narrative about heroin running through its entirety. This ensured
192 that the analyses went beyond individual characters. The third required the film to have had a major
193 release in both the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US). Finally, the film had to be available
194 to view either on DVD or through streaming services. Using these criteria, a search was undertaken
195 using the IMDb database (IMDb, 2017). Using a series of keywords 'heroin' produced 858 entries,
196 'heroin user' 10 and 'junkie' 447. The high number of entries could be seen to be somewhat misleading

197 as many of the entries did not necessarily relate to relevant content. For instance, one entry referred
198 to *Junkie XL*, the chosen name of a composer while another referred to a character nickname in the
199 American television drama series, *Trees*. Individually viewing each entry not only ensured that the
200 criteria was consistently applied but so too was the number of relevant entries also significantly
201 reduced. For example, films such as *Heroin* (2017) had to be excluded on the basis that it did not have
202 a major release in the UK. So too *The Man With The Golden Arm* (1955) which despite being the first
203 film shown in the UK to feature heroin use, was neither contemporarily available to purchase or view.
204 Others such as *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) were initially included but on viewing were excluded due to
205 the fact that while drug use was a prominent narrative, heroin was neither named nor meaningfully
206 identified. In sum, five films met the sampling criteria: *Sid and Nancy* (1986); *The Basketball Diaries*
207 (1995); *Trainspotting* (1996); *Requiem for a Dream* (2000); and, *T2 Trainspotting* (2017).

208 Each of the films was watched individually during which extensive notes were made. While
209 observations and notes primarily focused on the film's fictional characters that were junkies and of
210 heroin use more widely, notes were also made about the social and cultural context and setting within
211 which the films and ensuing narratives were situated. During individual viewing, no comparative
212 analyses were undertaken. These only took place once all the films had been viewed in order that any
213 emergent meta-narratives could be considered. In undertaking the narrative analyses, it was
214 important to ensure that the analytical framework set out previously was adhered to. As such,
215 narratives were analysed in line with Hall (1997) in order to try and understand not only what
216 meaning was being conveyed but so too how meaning could be seen to be being fixed to certain
217 communities, groups and individuals. One way of doing this was through the lens of what Best (1995)
218 and Hjelm (2014) refer to as the narrowing down on complexity, not least through the use of 'names'
219 and other narrative techniques that seek to attribute or give meaning. Similarly, the construction and
220 representation of heroin users and heroin use as being a social problem was also considered as part
221 of the analysis. This was essential in order to ensure that the narrative analyses undertaken were
222 positioned within the field of cultural criminology..

223 4. The 'Junkie' in Historical Context

224 The historic nature of opiates have historically transformed from a drug used for its medicinal
225 purposes to one viewed as destructive and dangerous. This transformation was social and political,
226 a crucial distinction to note in trying to understand why heroin and its users became both 'Othered'
227 and criminalised (Carnwath and Smith [6] 2002). The origins of this can be traced back to the
228 Temperance Movement of the nineteenth century. As Bell (1996) argues, key to the success of the
229 Temperance Movement was the perceived threat from increasing hedonism and the ensuing need
230 therefore to focus on frugality as a means of achieving salvation. In seeking to "bring order in the
231 conduct of its adherents" (Weber [119] 1970), opiate-based drugs were seen to be antithetical and thus
232 became seen as the primary causes underpinning a whole raft of different societal problems including
233 poverty, criminality and poor morality (Sulkunen and Warpenius, 2000). With this came greater
234 political interest whereby greater attention was duly paid to the 'scourge of addiction' (Berridge,
235 1999). Conceived as a medical ailment, addicts were increasingly understood to need to be cleansed
236 as much as they were saved also. In doing so, the problem was seen to shift from being the scourge
237 of the morally weak to those whose personal vulnerabilities compelled social deviance (Berridge,
238 1999). Importantly, this gave credence to the view that deviance was a personal choice rather than
239 the consequence of structural factors such as poverty or inequality (Springer and Page, 2013).

240 This was especially pertinent as regards heroin. While opiate users were previously higher class
241 white women, by the start of the twentieth century heroin was a 'problem' increasingly being
242 attributed to poorer, lower class men in the urban spaces: what Courtwright (2001) describes as the
243 'dope-fiend street criminal'. Concurrent to this was the transformation of opiate users into categories
244 of medical and non-medical users and as regards the latter, the increasing recognition of 'iatrogenic
245 addicts' and 'pleasure seeking addicts'. Codified as problematic but more importantly, socially
246 deviant also (Courtwright, 2001), iatrogenic addicts were increasingly seen to be linked to usage of
247 the newly created diacetylmorphine - or heroin - in 1868. While the new opiate-based drug was seen

248 to be a problem of the Chinese, non-white communities and the lower classes, it was also seen to be
249 the choice of the 'criminal underworld' and thereby "alien, dirty and depraved" (Carnwath & Smith
250 [16] 2002). For Berridge (1999), it was this coupling of associations with class and criminality that was
251 most determinative in shaping social constructions. From the outset then, heroin was deemed to be
252 problematic.

253 For Lee (2015), this catalysed the construction of heroin user as 'junkie'. Graber and Dunaway
254 (2016) highlight the importance of the media in achieving this. For them, media representations of
255 junkies were routinely deployed as a means of maintaining and reinforcing the political ideologies
256 and policies associated to them that sought to control and criminalise drugs and drug use. Entirely
257 hegemonic, this was evident in "the way in which certain groups exerting social authority and control
258 over subordinate groups by obtaining and moulding consent so that the actions and power held by
259 the higher classes appear legitimate and natural" (Lavoie [912] 2011). Consequently, certain meanings
260 became increasingly attributed and subsequently normalised as regards junkies especially in
261 representations within the news and other popular cultural outputs. As Hickman (2002) put it:

262
263 "Everyone knows what a junkie is supposed to look like: hollow cheeks, panda eyes, a haunted
264 expression, wasted, decadent desperate. And yet, narcotic addiction, as a physiological or
265 psychological condition is invisible. It offers no infallibly visible markers of its presence"
266 (Hickman [1475] 2002).

267
268 While having a historical grounding, the name 'junkie' emerged from sustained media coverage
269 in the early 1950s of groups of men who lived in New York and were renowned for collecting and
270 selling scraps of metal as a means of acquiring money to sustain their heroin addiction. The name
271 therefore literally meant 'junkman' (Radcliffe and Stevens, 2008 p.1065). The name was also
272 symbolically appropriate given that "within a short amount of time, the locus of addiction had shifted
273 from the office or parlour to addiction and addicts as desolate urban debris" (Courtwright [110] 2001).
274 By the 1953 publication of William Burroughs's popular literary autobiographical account *Junky*, the
275 name 'junk' had come to mean heroin itself and 'junkie' the "morally degenerate user" (Reinerman
276 and Levine [3] 1997). Consequently, both the name and notion was coined and constructed within
277 the context of the media and popular culture, two settings where it has continued to be coined and
278 used as a means of constructing criminality and deviance (Lee [2] 2015). Similar constructions have
279 been recurrent ever since in both the US and UK.

280 According to Huggins, media and popular cultural constructions have also unduly focused on
281 junkies bodies as a way of reproducing and constructing ongoing representations of the "threatening
282 junkie..." that reinforced the widely held and historically informed view that heroin users were
283 "...deprived, dirty, injecting dope-fiends" (Huggins [166] 2006). As decaying and filthy, he argues
284 that the body:

285
286 "acts as a map for the (perceived) social significance of drug use and addiction, one maps onto
287 the other and back again as the centrality of symbolic and representational form both enhances
288 and is enhanced by the socially marginal location of the addict" (Huggins [166] 2006)

289
290 Turner (2003) agrees but adds that notions of filth and decay can also be seen in the undue focus
291 on the urban decay and squalor within which popular cultural representations tend to show junkies
292 inhabiting. Another is the undue emphasis placed on representations which show heroin needle
293 being used to ingest heroin. In these, the body of the junkie is always paramount (Turner [3] 2003).
294 For Turner (2003) these representations seek to reinforce constructed meanings that junkies are not
295 only 'abnormal' but through metaphor and symbol also convey that such only occurs in the context
296 of disorder, danger and threat. In doing so, it becomes easy to promote anti-drug messages and
297 develop ever more punitive legislative and policy responses (Huggins [168] 2006). Such
298 representations are crucial in constructing what a junkies looks like namely, dirty, decaying,
299 depraved and unhealthy (Huggins [173] 2006). Recurrently, media and popular cultural

300 representations construct junkies as powerless, strange and alien; rarely a face of an “ordinary, living
301 drug user, only a suffering, monstrous, freakish diseased Other” (Fitzgerald [380] 2002).

302 For Loukides and Fuller (1996), there is a need to recognise how important media and popular
303 cultural representations are in shaping and informing understanding while also giving meaning to
304 the social world, social issues and social problems. They refer to the media and popular culture as
305 functioning with ‘ideological agency’, whereby constructions and representations that are routinely
306 and repeatedly employed are also typically mythologised. For them, such are embedded within
307 dominant ideologies which propagate myths of “individualism and personal choice, institutional
308 neutrality and the absence of class, gender and racial divisions enforcing personal rather than
309 institutional responsibility for social ills and immoral behaviour” (Loukides and Fuller [167] 1996).
310 Reinerman and Duskin (1999) concur. From their research into drug use, they put forward the belief
311 that the media constructs junkies extremely narrowly, characterised by the “routinisation of
312 caricature...” which actively “...promotes worst case scenarios as the norm and sensationalizes drug
313 use and users in the media” (Reinerman and Levine [49] 1999).

314 Ferrell, Hayward and Young ([4] 2008) state that this is most evident in representations of junkies
315 in film. While so, investigations show that very few scholarly studies have been undertaken to
316 investigate this. From a cultural criminology point of view, this is problematic as popular cultural
317 constructions relating to all forms of crime provide insights into “collective meaning and collective
318 identity...” not least because “...within it and by way of it, the government claims authority, the
319 consumer considers brands of bread – and the ‘criminal’, as both person and perception, come alive”
320 (Ferrell, Hayward and Young [2] 2008). Despite the lack of scholarly inquiry into cinematic
321 representations of junkies, Stevenson (1999) observes how “motion pictures serve as incubators and
322 conduits of myth for modern audiences, and a cultural reservoir, which indirectly or directly
323 influences societal perceptions” (Stevenson [11] 1999). As regards junkies this is even more pressing
324 given that until the 1950s, heroin and its use was banned from mainstream cinema screens
325 (Stevenson, 2000). After the demise of ‘old Hollywood’ cinema, the easing of censorship regulations
326 meant that drugs, drug use and drug addiction began to appear on screens. Maybe surprisingly,
327 Markert (2013) notes that since then heroin has become the most common drug when films seek to
328 represent narratives about addiction. This dissertation therefore not only seeks to contribute
329 knowledge to an identified gap in the scholarly literature but so too consider the most demonised
330 and most ‘criminogenic drug’ in the form of cinematic representations as a lens through which to try
331 and better understand constructions which seek to inform and give meaning to the social world
332 (Stevenson [12] 2000).

333 5. Findings from the Narrative Analysis of Five Cinematic Representations

334 5.1. Heroin Users as Crimonogenic

335 Without doubt, each of the films resonated with Carnwath and Smith’s (2000) observation that
336 heroin is the most ‘criminogenic drug’. In *The Basketball Diaries* for instance, the main protagonist Jim
337 is shown to progress into criminality on the basis that he was unable to cope financially with the
338 demands of his heroin habit especially once he began to use more and more. This was further
339 reinforced through the words of Jim which are deployed to narrate the story throughout the film.
340 Integral to this is the primary narrative whereby Jim chronicles his descent into crime and criminality.
341 Increasingly deviant – and deviating from what would be seen to be society’s norms – the film’s
342 overarching narratives are such that they fit with the representation of the drug user in popular
343 culture as defying society’s normative morality. These constructions are further given meaning as the
344 film unfolds and the true extent of Jim’s criminality and deviance become known. Somewhat
345 ominously, Jim self-references the fact that he engages in “unpure activities” some of which are
346 shown to include auto theft, robbery, purse snatching and hustling all of which are undertaken as a
347 means of securing money to fund his heroin habit. Again reinforcing wider constructions through
348 Jim’s own self narrative, he notes that while he “does not like mugging people...” he adds that this
349 is “...now his only way out”. In seeking to reinforce Jim’s descent into criminality, the film jumps

350 from a visual representation of him robbing a victim at knifepoint to participating in prostitution,
351 selling himself in public toilets for cash before hinting at having to engage in sex acts that involved
352 him dressing in women's clothes. Consequently the narrative illustrates the transformation of Jim
353 from being a 'normal' person prior to his dalliance with heroin to one that is codified as not only
354 being criminalised but deviant also.

355 At the start of *Requiem for a Dream*, the film's three main protagonists - Harry, Tyrone and Marion
356 – are known to use heroin for recreational purposes. In developing the film's narrative, Harry and
357 Tyrone are seen testing the quality and strength of the heroin with the intention of selling it on the
358 streets in order to build their own "drug empire". Interestingly, the film's narrative implies low
359 morality through developing the narrative in order to show that this is solely for the purpose that the
360 two protagonists can "have as much heroin and money as they like". Unlike Harry and Tyrone,
361 Marion is represented as being a more "creative or spiritual user"; where heroin helps her to feel real
362 and somewhat tragically, more loved by Harry who also happens to be her boyfriend. As with *The*
363 *Basketball Diaries*, the film's narrative sets out how despite her heroin use being initially recreational
364 she soon descends into criminal and deviant acts not least prostitution illustrated by scenes of her
365 having sex with her therapist, pimps, and strangers at a sex party in exchange for money and at times,
366 heroin. The underlying cause for her descent is captured in a narrative exchange between Marion
367 and Harry. Having convinced Marion to have sex with her therapist as a means to gain a "score"
368 Marion says:

369

370 Marion: "Getting the money's not the problem, Harry"

371 Harry: "Then what's the problem?"

372 Marion: "I don't know what I'm going to have to do to get it"

373

374 While the friends are not seen stealing or mugging as was the case with Jim previously, *Requiem*
375 *for a Dream's* director Darren Aronofsky makes clear that there are criminal undertones to their heroin
376 use. This can be seen in narratives that set out the extreme acts of sexual depravity preferred by
377 Marion, Tyrone's increasing involvement with a drug cartel in order to buy and sell heroin, and
378 Harry's acquisition of large sums of illegal money in order to buy large "scores" of heroin in order to
379 create his drug "empire". As the film's develops, while the group is shown to establish a small drug
380 dealing business so the narrative illustrates how they all become increasingly tolerant to the effects
381 of heroin resulting in them quickly becoming addicted to the drug which supersedes their individual
382 and collective abilities to be able to distribute and subsequently sell.

383 While the depiction of moral impurity and the ongoing representation of criminality and
384 deviance are recurrent throughout, the film's closing scenes are most telling. Harry is admitted to
385 hospital alongside Tyrone as a result of an infection in his arm. The narrative explains that the
386 infection is a consequence of his repeated use of a dirty hypodermic needle. The association of
387 criminality and heroin is a primary feature of the film's closing narrative. As soon as medics see
388 Harry's infected arm, police officers and the Sheriff are shown to arrive at the hospital to arrest Harry
389 on suspicion of drug charges. At the same time, Tyrone is seen craving heroin as his heroin hit wears
390 off before being arrested along with Harry having been stalked in the hospital waiting room by police.
391 Despite the scene's narrative showing that Tyrone was trying to hide and mask his supposed
392 criminality, the meaning put forward in the narrative is one where the link between heroin use and
393 criminality and deviance is undoubtedly clear. In reiterating the findings from the previous section,
394 police officers are seen laughing and mocking Harry and Tyrone:

395

396 "That's the trouble with ya New York dope fiends. Ya got a rotten attitude" (*Requiem for a*
397 *Dream*, 2000)

398

399 Junkies as criminogenic are also embedded in the main narratives of Danny Boyle's film,
400 *Trainspotting*. Although critically acclaimed as an empathetic representation, the film's narratives
401 embody many of the same stereotypical themes and meanings as those identified in the films

402 considered previously. The opening scene shows the main protagonist Mark Renton – who is also the
403 film’s narrator - running to escape a shop security guard, chasing him and his fellow junkie friends
404 Spud and Sick Boy. The initial narrative that emerges in the opening credits is one of junkies as being
405 criminal, stealing and hustling as a means of obtaining a ‘score’. The main and most stringent theme
406 demonstrated within Boyle’s narrative is one that shows the film’s junkies as “dole fiddlers, engaging
407 in senseless violence, casual theft, and underage sex” (Stevenson [207] 2000). The film’s opening
408 narration is taken straight from Irvine Welsh’s critically acclaimed novel of the same name. Popularly
409 referred to as Renton’s ‘Choose Life’ speech, the unfolding narrative speaks about the limbo of heroin
410 addiction and how anything within contemporary culture is different than living a life on the margins
411 of society:

412
413 “Choose Life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a fucking big television,
414 choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players and electrical tin openers. Choose good
415 health, low cholesterol, and dental insurance. Choose fixed interest mortgage repayments.
416 Choose a starter home. Choose your friends..... Choose your future. Choose life. But why
417 would I want to do a thing like that? I chose not to choose life. I chose somethin' else. And the
418 reasons? There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?” (Trainspotting,
419 1996).

420
421 As Renton’s narration ends, the film shows the security guard catching up with the group
422 resulting in a violent fight between Sick Boy and the guard. While so, the emphasis on choice and
423 autonomy highlights the ongoing societal belief that junkies make an informed choice about using
424 the drug. In doing so, Welsh and Boyle subsequently ignore the structural and socio-economic
425 disadvantages experienced by users especially those that would have prevalent in 1990s Scotland.
426 The emphasis on choice therefore confers legitimacy.

427 As with *Requiem for a Dream*, the narrative associated with the main protagonist in *Trainspotting*
428 illustrates a slow progress into deeper criminality. In doing so, Renton and his groups of friends plan
429 to sell a large amount of heroin which they have obtained in exchange for cash. Having made the
430 sale, Renton takes off with all the money in order to start a new life leaving his friends behind in
431 Edinburgh. In doing so, the narrative questions Renton’s morality; something that is a recurrent and
432 somewhat constant narrative throughout the entirety of the film. What is interesting is that while the
433 film is based around the premise of friendship, the film’s narrative is such that it constantly implies
434 that junkies are little more than a connected group of criminal desperados whose lives revolve around
435 heroin in particular the need to secure their next “fix” or “score” (Stevenson [214] 2000).

436 In line with Ferrell (1998), this along with the overarching narrative and surreal style of
437 *Trainspotting* is such that the watching public clearly engages in “a journey into the spectacle and
438 carnival of crime, a walk down an infinite hall of mirrors where images created and consumed by
439 criminals, criminal subcultures, control agents, media institutions, and audiences bounce endlessly
440 one off the other” (1998). In this way, despite being perceived to be somewhat more empathetic to
441 junkies, it offers much the same representations about users as those films that might appear
442 somewhat less so. Framed within the theoretical lens of Hall (1997), it is quite clear that irrespective
443 of the perceived positionality of the film – empathetic or otherwise – the process of construction and
444 the meaning subsequently attributed would appear to be much the same. In saying something
445 meaningful about the world, what the narrative analysis shows is that heroin is undoubtedly
446 represented as a criminogenic drug where its users are repeatedly shown to be drawn into criminality
447 and social deviance. While Hall (1997) stresses that representations do not deny the existence of the
448 material or ‘real’, what emerges from the narratives of the films analysed here is that the ‘real’ can
449 also be deployed in order to codify and concretise meaning that is rather more constructed and
450 produced.

451 5.2. Heroin Users as Dangerous Underclass

452 The second clear narrative theme was junkies as part of a dangerous underclass, again
453 resonating with historical notions. For Jones (2012), this is particularly important in that it has been a
454 recurrent theme within cinematic representations. This was true of the films analysed here where
455 representations of junkies being an underclass evident in all of the films. From the analysis, this was
456 most prominent in *Trainspotting* and *T2*. It is possible that this was because both films were situated
457 within the reasonably contemporary British context and were linked, *T2* being a sequel of sorts to
458 *Trainspotting*. Both films depict a group of socially isolated individuals who are not only from lower
459 socio-economic backgrounds but also participate in criminality and use heroin. In the second scene
460 of *Trainspotting* – after the Renton scene referred to previously – the narrative introduces one of the
461 main locations preferred in the film, Spud's squalid and filthy flat. To represent this, the flat is seen
462 to have urine soaked carpets that are scattered with various paraphernalia required to administer
463 heroin including used needles, foil and heating equipment. This visual narrative is recurrent
464 throughout the film. In doing so, the repeat use of this within the narrative development of the story
465 is such that it continually reminds and subsequently reaffirms the squalor and filth associated with
466 heroin users and heroin use also. That they are seemingly willing – and maybe even happy – to exist
467 in these conditions suggests that such are normative and attributive of their normativity.

468 In another scene in which the narrative restates the association of junkies with an underclass,
469 the character of Alison is introduced. While the narrative quickly establishes her as a 'junkie' she also
470 has a six month old child. Shown to be living alongside other members of the friendship group -
471 including Renton and Sick Boy – the narrative develops to explain that she seemingly fails to notice
472 let alone care for the child in preference of shooting up with the intention of getting high. To reinforce
473 this, the child is seen crawling around among the squalor and filth within the flat while Alison and
474 the others appear semi-conscious. Shortly after, the narrative develops whereby the viewer sees
475 Alison screaming at the side of her child; the baby not only being dead but also having started to
476 decompose. Harrowing enough, the narrative attributes further meaning to Alison through inferring
477 how she does not seem to know who the father of the child is. Latterly, it is however hinted that the
478 father is Sick Boy. What is important here is that the notion of illegitimacy is a key characteristic of
479 Murray's (1996) understanding of an underclass. Parental abandonment and neglect are other
480 characteristics associated with the notion of an underclass and both of these are narratively conveyed
481 in *Trainspotting* via the character of Begbie. Having been constantly portrayed as an angry and violent
482 psychopath across the two films, a scene in *T2* shows Renton and Begbie walking around a disused
483 railway station late at night when they encounter an old homeless, dishevelled 'wino'. As the
484 narrative develops, so it becomes apparent that the 'wino' is in fact Begbie's father. In the same film,
485 Begbie's relationship with his own son is also shown to be dysfunctional; again, a characteristic of
486 what Murray (1996) states is a recurrent in representations of 'underclass families'.

487 When Renton says in *T2*, "Begbie, staggered off, drunkard cackles filling the desolate barn, I
488 noticed that Begbie seemed strangely subdued and uncomfortable, he was turned away from us, it
489 was only then we realised the old wino was Begbie's father" the narrative gives meaning to the notion
490 that the 'underclass' also reproduces depravity and immoral behaviour, both components of a
491 perceived unbreakable cycle of poverty (Murray, 1996). While the notion of an underclass is evident
492 in *Trainspotting*, it becomes even more prominent in *T2*. In fact, the two films complement each other
493 in this respect as they provide a means by which to narratively illustrate what might be referred to
494 as career poverty or career criminality. Considering the lives of the characters through narratives that
495 span the twenty year period between the two films, the narratives remain firmly rooted in the context
496 of junkies and heroin use being criminogenic with characters continuing to participate in hustles to
497 obtain money for drugs at the same time as being portrayed as 'lazy' through the implication of a
498 lack of aspiration or drive as regards more normative life goals.

499 A similar narrative is apparent in the film *The Basketball Diaries*. Here, Jim is explained through
500 the developing narrative to come from a single parent household in an area of New York where
501 poverty was known to be rife. Jim, who was previously noted as being routinely engaged in criminal
502 activities also aligns himself with wider notions of an underclass. Like the two *Trainspotting* films,
503 narratives about Jim explain how his descent into criminality and deviance coincided with his turn

504 towards living in filth on the streets of New York. This included Jim being shown in many desolate
505 places, the most prominent being the 'Headquarters' which in fact is little more than a basement
506 where all of the new York's 'street junkies' are known to 'hang out'. In the narrative, Jim observes
507 how most of the people here "have been high for four days of 'temporary death', unable to attempt
508 human posture". The scenes featuring the 'Headquarters' are typified – like Spud's flat in
509 *Trainspotting* – by the intensely squalid conditions: filth, drug paraphernalia, urine, faeces and stained
510 clothing and carpets being the norm.

511 The function of these visual and narrative forms is as Hjelm (2014) notes, a way of successfully
512 narrowing down the true complexity of social life, in this context junkies and how they live. In line
513 with Best (1995), instead of giving a name by which a particular meaning can be effectively conveyed
514 these narrative and visual devices perform a similar function. They too convey a very particular
515 meaning which as analysed here would seem to be that heroin users and heroin use are both complicit
516 and indeed conducive to notions of an underclass. Without doubt, these would appear to be social
517 constructions that function in line with Hall's (1997) theoretical premise relating to representation in
518 that they not only confer meaning but so too give that same meaning credence and validity. In this
519 respect, heroin use and heroin users are given meaning that they are both intrinsically linked to
520 notions of an underclass.

521 5.3. Heroin Users as Embodying Decay and Depravity

522 In line with Huggins (2006), narratives about decay and filth regarding the junkie including the
523 junkie's body were evident in each of the films. What was common were narrative and visual
524 depictions of decaying junkies, each routinely showing the shift from what was perceived to be a
525 'healthy' drug-free body to a somewhat more 'unhealthy' rotting and bruised body that was the result
526 of heroin use and addiction. Narratives associated with the visual decay of junkies also functioned to
527 represent the embodiment of 'Otherness' thereby establishing them as distinct and different from
528 normative society. For Springer and Page (2013), the visualisation of decay and disease in conjunction
529 with urban squalor contributed to narratives about junkies being alien, having evil impulses and
530 having no loyalty or care for others. In doing so, this gives meaning about what junkies not only look
531 like but more importantly also what they are like. This was apparent in *Trainspotting* where Renton
532 is almost entirely conceived in narratives that depict notions of squalor, filth and decay. Some of
533 *Trainspotting's* most memorable scenes exemplify this. In one, Renton is seen being sucked into a
534 faeces-filled public toilet while in another he is seen using a dirty needle; the latter, seeing the camera
535 linger on the needle piercing his skin until he loses consciousness. As with Huggins (2006), focusing
536 on the needle can be seen to be a symbolic of wider narratives about how junkies willingly deface
537 their bodies in pursuit of what might be understood to be self-serving pleasure. This is a recurrent
538 narrative in *T2* whereby Spud – despite twenty years having elapsed since the first film – is shown to
539 be still living in the same flat. In situating Spud in this way, a narrative is established between the
540 first and second film which conveys the notion that little changes. In reinforcing this, it is interesting
541 that the character says in the second film, "once a junkie, always a junkie". As with those
542 constructions about junkies and heroin having been shown to be somewhat constant across a
543 reasonably significant period of time, so this would appear to be reinforced in cinematic narratives
544 also.

545 The embodiment of decay and depravity within the bodies of heroin users was also evident in
546 the narratives of *Requiem for a Dream*, not least where Harry notices that he has an infected vein from
547 the sustained of using it for injecting heroin. Throughout this scene the camera focuses on the
548 minutiae of administering heroin from the use of hypodermic needles to the belt that is used around
549 the arm in order to heighten veins. In a particularly harrowing scene, Harry's arm is shown to be
550 completely black with the surrounding veins seen to be swollen and red from infection and disease.
551 Despite noticing the infection, the narrative explains how Harry continues to use the same arm and
552 infected veins in order to administer heroin into his body. Having done so, he writhes around in pain.
553 Once the high of the heroin wears off, the film's narrative tells of how Harry admits himself to
554 hospital where the infection is immediately recognised as being the result of injecting heroin. To

555 further emphasise the visual decay of Harry's arm – and the association of bodily decay with heroin
556 use – the meaning is given greater credence through the dual reinforcement of visual and verbal
557 narrative devices.

558

559 Court Doctor: Can you hear me? Can you see me?

560 Prison Guard: He says he's got something wrong with his arm.

561 [the doctor grabs Harry's arm and exposes the wound, causing him to scream in pain]

562 Court Doctor: I don't think he'll be puttin' any more dope in that arm.

563 Prison Guard: Smells worse than he do.

564

565 The film also confers similar meanings onto junkies through the development of scenes and
566 plotlines where sexual deviancy is prominent. In one, Marion is forced to engage in anal intercourse
567 with an unknown man while being watched and jeered at by a large group of men. During the scene,
568 the camera initially lingers on Marion's semi-conscious face during intercourse before switching to
569 her face once the sex act is over. In the latter, she appears elated because she is given a bag of heroin
570 in exchange. The representation of Marion in this way reinforces the 'dope-fiend' stereotype
571 previously, denoting that users will do anything to obtain the 'demon drug' (Boyd, 2008).

572 Similar narratives were apparent in *The Basketball Diaries* where Jim's body is seen to embody
573 disease and decay. Shown as head of his high school basketball team prior to his heroin use, Jim is
574 depicted as a fit teenage athlete. As the film develops however, the narrative informs the viewer
575 about how Jim's addiction spirals out of control. At the same time, visual narratives show how Jim's
576 physical appearance drastically changes: his eyes become shallow and sunken, his skin pale and
577 puckered with scabs, his body thin and bruised. The attention to the detail in relation to Jim's
578 morphing into an addict is a key narrative which, like *Requiem for a Dream* reinforces wider
579 constructions relating to what it means to be a "junkie". Jim's descent into depravity is also narratively
580 conveyed in scenes involving Jim and his mother. Realising that he has ran out of money to finance
581 his addiction, Jim visits his mother's apartment. Refusing him and his pleas, Jim verbally abuses her
582 during which he blames her for his addiction. Begging her for money, the narrative develops p show
583 Jim sitting on the floor outside of his mother's apartment while she sits on the other side of the door
584 terrified. This juxtaposition reinforces the visualisation of Jim's body as decaying and him as
585 threatening whilst his mother is represented as the epitome of health and reason thereby giving
586 meaning to confer legitimacy to constructions of heroin users.

587 In *Sid and Nancy* (1986) the embodiment of depravity is also evident. In one particularly poignant
588 scene, the main protagonist Sid sings a cover of Frank Sinatra's *My Way*. From a narrative that
589 illustrates the positive response shown to the song, the scene cuts immediately to Sid lying in a filthy
590 stained bed with Nancy, the film's other main junkie character. In doing so, the narrative juxtaposes
591 the public life of Sid with his private life with Nancy as junkies something that was given greater
592 impact by being interspersed by a conversation with the couple who, having just taken hits of heroin,
593 discuss the prospect of a mutual suicide pact. The couple's final scene in which Nancy dies is the final
594 visualisation to the viewer of how far Sid and Nancy have descended into depravity. Maybe going
595 further with the narrative than the other films analysed, *Sid and Nancy* conveys the ultimate
596 embodiment of decay on heroin users. Although not formally codified in the film's narrative, the film
597 does show Sid and Nancy arguing during a drug fuelled rage where it is hinted that Sid accidentally
598 kills Nancy, who then bleeds to death in the apartment. Not only then does *Sid and Nancy* narrativise
599 the ultimate embodiment of bodily decay in terms of the resultant death of Nancy but so too does the
600 narrative also infer that it was the use of heroin that was also the cause of that ultimate manifestation
601 of decay. Heroin therefore was both causal and consequential.

602 5.4. Female Heroin Users as 'Junkie Whores'

603 Narratives that construct female heroin users as 'junkie whores' can be seen in three of the films
604 analysed. *Trainspotting*, *Requiem for a Dream* and *Sid and Nancy* all employ narratives where female
605 characters can be seen to 'sell' their bodies for either money to buy heroin or for heroin itself. Such

606 narratives are not without precedent as scholarly evidence suggests that constructions about junkie
607 relationships are rarely viewed as 'normal' or 'real' but instead, almost entirely destructive,
608 exploitative and encompassing of varying levels of suffering (Rinke, 2016). The depiction of female
609 junkies as 'whores' is highlighted in what is described as the 'junkie love' mini genre comprising *Sid*
610 *and Nancy* and *Requiem for a Dream*. Both films show how the love between couples quickly unravels
611 into destruction, abuse and even death as a consequence of the introduction of heroin. In both, the
612 narratives seek to depict the couples to be "possessed by a demon drug..." that in turn transforms
613 them into "...monstrous drug-fiends" (Rinke, 2016 p.8). Both films also portray female junkies as
614 immoral beings who stop at nothing to gain their 'fix'. In *Requiem for a Dream*, Marion is shown to be
615 in a loving relationship with Harry at the start of the film. The narrative however soon shows how
616 the two begin to use heroin to pass time: Marion repeatedly saying "Do you want to waste some
617 time?" throughout the film. That recreational use however soon becomes problematic once Harry
618 and Marion can no longer obtain it and start experiencing withdrawal symptoms.

619 From here, Marion is shown to have sex with her therapist in an attempt to acquire money for
620 heroin. Once the ensuing drug deal goes wrong however, Marion begins to engage in prostitution to
621 fund her and Harry's habit:

622

623 Harry: [about the failed drug score] Some dumbass junkie...

624 Marion: Did what? Some dumbass junkie did what? You mean, you fucked it up!

625 Harry: What the fuck is wrong with you?

626 Marion: You promised me that everything was gonna be okay, remember? I fucked that
627 sleazebag for you, then I put myself through fucking hell for you?

628

629 However Marion's relationship with Harry soon deteriorates once they cannot get heroin. Harry
630 exploits Marion's love by giving a desperate Marion the details of a local pimp for whom she can
631 exchange sex for heroin. The film shows Marion engaging in visibly humiliating sexual activities
632 firstly with the pimp, then at a sex party in which she and another woman engage in sexual activities
633 for a watching crowd. The narratives about Marion therefore codify how female junkies are
634 represented in constructions both about women as indeed junkie relationships.

635 Similar are evident in *Sid and Nancy* where Nancy is portrayed as being both desperate and
636 immoral. Nancy is introduced to Sid as someone who just wants to meet a guy who can pay for her
637 'junk'. Nancy before meeting Sid offers sexual favours to other members of the band (The Sex Pistols)
638 in which they all refuse as she is constantly high and in their view, out to take what she can from
639 them. At this point, the narratives about Nancy already appear somewhat misogynistic and
640 problematic. Throughout the film the phrase "never trust a junkie" is also repeatedly directed
641 towards Nancy. Narratives about Nancy therefore concur with scholarly studies for instance those of
642 Boyd when he states that, "representations of junkie women on screen, reproduce the pleasure of the
643 male gaze, with their characters being overly sexualised and one dimensional, women can be viewed
644 as being characterized as sexually aggressive and promiscuous when using heroin" (Boyd, 2008
645 p.149). Similar narratives are evident in *Trainspotting* via the character of Alison. As a young junkie
646 mother, she is seen lying in the filth and squalor of Spud's flat along with other members of the group.
647 Sick Boy is seen preparing Alison's arm for injecting heroin, with a belt wrapped around her arm,
648 before inserting a needle into her vein. Beginning to moan, Alison stares into Sick Boy's eyes and
649 says, "that beats any fucking cock in the world".

650 In all of *Requiem for a Dream*, *Sid and Nancy* and *Trainspotting*, all the female junkies are shown to
651 have larger appetites for both heroin and sex than their male equivalent. This is apparent when their
652 lovers retreat and want to get 'clean'. In each, the female characters are also shown to be resistant and
653 betraying of their partners. This is especially prominent in the narratives of *Sid and Nancy* when
654 Nancy threatens to 'rat' on Sid if he leaves her. Prostitution too is shown in all three movies as the
655 only way out for the women albeit one that each of the female characters also appears to be wholly
656 willing and even complicit to participating in. Not only does this reinforce the image of the female
657 junkie as 'junkie whore' but so too does it support Hall's (1997) theory that representations have the

658 ability to convey particular meanings about certain individuals, groups and communities. As well as
659 being problematized in terms of being heroin users, constructions of female heroin users are further
660 problematized by the added constructed meanings that infer negative attributes in terms of greater
661 sexual desire, greater propensity for heroin, and a greater willingness to betray those who appear to
662 stand in the way of their pursuit of sex or heroin or both. In doing so, representations of female heroin
663 users further elucidate the construction of heroin as a criminogenic drug that is indeterminably
664 connected to criminality and deviance.

665 6. Conclusion

666 Positioned within the field of cultural criminology, this article sought to consider the importance
667 of popular cultural representations – in particular cinematic representations - in constructing and
668 representing heroin and its users – junkies - as social problems. Through the lens of social
669 constructionism in accordance with Hjelm (2014), this dissertation looked at the construction of
670 heroin users in cinematic representations as being both problematic and criminalised. In doing so,
671 this dissertation has gone some way to show how those representations and narratives that were
672 evident in films were similar to those that existed in wider society and also in recent history. In
673 seeking to consider the extent to which cinematic representations construct the ‘junkie’ as a
674 criminalised ‘Other’ and the extent to which they confer legitimacy on wider socio-political
675 understandings that see heroin and junkies as being indeterminably linked with crime and deviancy,
676 the narrative analysis of the five films presented here also sought to respond to an identified gap in
677 the existing scholarly body of evidence. From the analysis undertaken, the cinematic representations
678 considered would indeed appear to go some way towards constructing junkies as criminalised
679 outsiders that are also undoubtedly deviant. This was evident in all of the films considered. This was
680 conveyed and given meaning through themes that sought to accentuate junkies not only being
681 explicitly represented criminals but so too as part of a dangerous underclass, as embodying decay
682 and depravity, and female junkies as ‘whores’. Cinematic representations therefore do indeed
683 coincide with wider socio-political views and understandings; intrinsically linked to criminality and
684 deviancy while also being characterised by that which goes against societal notions of the normal and
685 normative.

686 The analysis of *Sid and Nancy*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *The Basketball Diaries*, *Trainspotting* and *T2* all
687 gave a lens through which to view the junkie. *Sid and Nancy*, provided us with a lens through which
688 to view the representation of female junkies and how they are depicted as being sexually
689 promiscuous and deviant. In *Requiem for a Dream*, a lens was afforded that reinforced this view
690 through the inclusion of another female character which descended into depravity at the behest of
691 heroin usage. The films were helpful in providing narratives, by which themes could be identified
692 around what it means to be a heroin user, how the image of the user is represented, and how those
693 representations concur with stereotypical depictions highlighted in the wider literature in particular
694 the embodiment of ‘Otherness’ and decay (Taylor, 2008). Such was given further credence by the lens
695 afforded by *Trainspotting* and *T2* and their respective representations of junkies as part of a dangerous
696 underclass. In sum, the films reaffirmed the wider scholarly view that both heroin and its users – the
697 much-maligned junkie – are wholly demonised. In doing so, films continue to reinforce narratives
698 about junkies being ‘dirty dope-fiends’, criminalised and deviant that need a strong response and
699 punitive punishments from the state and its institutions. In conclusion, this article contributes new
700 knowledge that responding to an identified and significant gap in the existing scholarly canon. While
701 further research and analysis is required, this article provides a foundation upon which further
702 investigation and analysis can be based.

703

704 **Funding:** This research received no external funding.

705 **Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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