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3 Celebrity and Sickness

To speak of celebrity ‘craving’ implies both a compulsion to be famous on the part of would-be celebrities and an emotional dependence upon fame in the celebrity flock. Psychologists argue that, today, pronounced and seductive types of celebrity craving are unprecedented. The risks that they pose to ordinary men and women are unparalleled. The Internet, satellite television and show-business magazines make public news and private details of celebrity lives ubiquitous and offer round-the-clock access. Exposure to celebrity culture is instant and perpetual. With perpetual exposure, there are, of course, gains, but also appreciable risks and high costs.

For example, Madonna’s humanitarian work in Malawi suffered a serious blow when an audit report (2011) revealed that \$3.8 m (£2.4 m) had been spent on a prestigious academy for underprivileged girls that had never been built. The report alleged outlandish expenditures on salaries, cars, office space, golf course membership and free housing. The controversy led to the resignation of the charity’s executive director, Philippe van den Bossche, the partner of Madonna’s personal trainer. In addition, eight charity workers sued the singer for unfair dismissal and non-payment of benefits. Madonna was presented in the media as gullible and out of touch. To make matters worse, it was revealed that she had loaned \$11 m (£6.9 m) to the charity. This raised the separate, difficult question in the media of whether it is proper to treat a loan as an act of charity. Despite her publicity statement that she intended to team up with the Global Philanthropy Group to focus on schools across the country rather than concentrate her humanitarian efforts on one school, Madonna was widely criticized in Malawi and elsewhere for breaking her promise.

Celebrities have high social prestige. Many ordinary men and women regard specific stars or celebrity genres as occupying the pinnacle of glamour and social achievement. In addition, society showers lavish economic, social and cultural rewards upon stars. It is therefore not unreasonable for many ordinary men and women to look up to stars as role models or inspirational lifestyle leaders.

The snag is that the same social prestige that provides celebrities with status, affords licence for them to behave in ways that would be unacceptable in everyday life.

Stardom is strongly associated with narcissism.¹ That is a psychological syndrome consisting of attention-seeking, bullying, vanity, arrogance, intimidation and superiority. Some psychologists even speculate that narcissism is a *pre-condition* for stardom

(Pinsky and Young, 2009). That is, only persons with a high sense of personal self-worth and social authority are likely to develop a calling for achieved celebrity or celestoid status. Be that as it may, the latitude that the PR-Media hub extends to addictive, hysterical, manipulative, disassociated and superior forms of celebrity behaviour is an unfortunate precedent. It breeds imitation. Daniel Boorstin, who characterized the modern world as an 'age of contrivance', warned of the personal and social dangers of living 'with a wall of mirrors'. In some cases, this escalates into obsessive infatuation (Boorstin, 1962: 255). The results for individuals and society can be problematic. Not to beat about the bush, researchers propose that a) the social prestige afforded to celebrities results in specific types of self-harm and social risks for some stars; and b) there is a 'contagious' relationship or 'mirror effect' between dysfunctional forms of celebrity behaviour and negative psychological and social traits among the general population (McCutcheon *et al.*, 2004; Pinsky and Young, 2009).²

We will come to the details and evidence for these propositions presently. Before doing so, a few more observations about the nature of these propositions are in order. Most strikingly, the case that celebrities exert an effect of emulation over segments of the population implies that for a significant part of the population the secondary relations of celebrity culture have supplanted the primary relations of home and community. That is for some appreciable sections of the population, the make-believe world of stargazing provides stronger emotional support and more meaningful rewards than family, school, nature or community. In particular, it provides a basis for copycat behaviour and various forms of self-harm. Self-mutilation, anorexia, bulimia, burning oneself with cigarettes, attempted suicide, suicide and homicide have been directly attributed to an obsessional or borderline-obsessional relationship with celebrity. Psychologists qualify this line of argument with the proviso that introverted personality types and individuals who have suffered some type of psychological and social dislocation through the divorce of parents or environmental disturbance or catastrophe have a greater propensity to develop dysfunctional symptoms.

Rates of celebrity self-harm and copycat types of dysfunctional behaviour among the celebrity fan clusters are directly related to the inflation of celebrity in popular culture. The media is identified as the primary source of inflation. 'Life, for millions of star-struck persons,' write McCutcheon *et al.*, 'is little more than a steady diet of television shows, interspersed with musical CDs, movies, and an occasional fan magazine' (McCutcheon *et al.*, 2004: 24).

What is not often noticed is that this 'steady diet' is calculated and highly processed by the PR-Media hub. The media provides much more than news about celebrities. It purports to offer a window on what Britney is thinking, who Paris is dating and why Lindsay has a history of alcohol abuse. In building powerful

secondary relationships between the star and the public, the PR-Media hub operates to invert the order that is customary in primary relationships.

What does it mean to invert the order that is customary in primary relationships? In primary relationships we are bound to relations by blood and a history of face-to-face contact with others with whom we choose to recognize close personal sympathy. We get to know them better, through extended social encounters in which intimate private details are exchanged and provide the glue for an enriching relationship. The details of private life percolate through to us stage by stage, like coffee through a filter. Strong primary relationships depend upon discretion and taste. If too much is revealed too soon, or if we ask too much, the health of the relationship is imperilled.

In contrast, the private details of celebrity lives are full-on in the media and require no gradual, learning process through social encounters that respect boundaries and the development of intimate bonds based on the exchange of personal information. The PR-Media hub requires us to form powerful, emotional attachments with stars in order to boost impact factor ratings. This is why private details of celebrity family life, sexual relationships, medical conditions, rivalries, likes and phobias dominate celebrity culture. Frankness, incident, emergency and excitement are among the hallmarks of celebrity. By implication, the lives of ordinary men and women are inhibited, frustrated and repressed.

The chain of association reinforces star power since it boosts the attraction of celebrity prestige. This inference is psychologically consolidated by the practice of the PR-Media hub to portray the lives of the stars as packed with incidents and emergencies. Nowadays, celebrities, especially in the fields of light entertainment and sport, are routinely promoted as secular gods. The adoration awarded to them is a major challenge to personal health and self-restraint. Stars are reported to live on the edge, take big risks, dance with the Devil and, in general, ignore the boundaries that ordinary people observe. They occupy a frontier existence in which the financial stakes are portrayed as spectacular, emotional relationships are more vivid and personal risks are higher.³

In contrast, the PR-Media hub positions fan clusters as eking out predictable, risk-averse, uneventful lives. It is celebrities who stake everything on a dream and cultivate an all-or-nothing discipline in the conduct of private and public life. Look at Paul Potts or Susan Boyle. Despite lacking glamour or influence, they dared to live the dream.

It is ordinary people who pay their bills on time, never step out of line and make themselves scarce when bold, life-changing challenges come along. This contributes to the extension and corroboration of a more permissive licence to govern the conduct of star behaviour. Stars do what the rest of us are too frigid and timid to try.⁴

The idea that stars suffer for their fame results in more relaxed attitudes to the exhibition of symptoms of arrogance, entitlement, hysteria, disassociation, intimidation and megalomania in celebrity conduct. This relaxation reinforces the image of the lives of stars as packed with incident and emergency because it means that celebrities are more likely to get involved in highly public controversies with corporations, rival celebrities, the police, the judiciary, the press and the public. Because of adulation and financial rewards, celebrities may not think twice about confronting authority with a 'Do you know who I am?' attitude, whereas ordinary people are most likely to be compliant. We toe the line, while celebrities take it for granted that they can overstep the mark.

Of course, being on the frontier often means that one loses track of ordinary rules of reality. Hence, for example, Mike Tyson's six-year prison sentence for rape in 1992; Lil' Kim's (2005) one-year prison sentence for conspiracy and perjury; Wesley Snipes's 2008 prison sentence for tax evasion; Boy George's (2009) fifteen-month prison sentence for imprisoning a male escort; or, in 2010, Lindsay Lohan's high-handed violation of a probation order, which resulted in a prison sentence.

Some celebrities behave as if the ordinary rules of everyday life do not apply to them. The resultant controversies are faithfully reported and analysed by the media. They contribute to the image of celebrities as beyond the law. This reinforces the preconception of the celebrity as living a frontier existence far away from the order and humdrum of ordinary life.

A considerable literature has now grown up, which maintains that the proliferation of second-order relationships are socially harmful and, for some vulnerable people, personally destructive. The term 'fame attack' refers to a set of celebrity relationships that are toxic. It is more than a matter of perpetual grandstanding in relations with others, being neurotically attached to presenting a beguiling facade for manipulation, insistently badgering, bullying or obsessively spinning fantasies of humanitarian world-changing contributions to mankind. Fame attack means a distinct set of clinical and subclinical forms of psychological and social illnesses that afflict both stars and stargazers. Among celebrities and would-be celebrities the symptoms of dysfunctional conduct may take various forms, including a lack of empathy, callous indifference, a sense of automatic superiority, exhibitionism, entitlement, exploitativeness and grandiosity. In extreme cases, these result in syndromes of dysfunctional behaviour that produce events or patterns of self-harm for stars and stargazers.

Celebrity mortality and the mirror effect

Some years ago, Fowles investigated mortality data pertaining to 100 US stars and compared it with the average of the US population. He reported that celebrities have

much lower life expectancy than the rest of the US population. In 1992 the average age of death for Americans was 71.9 years. For stars it was 58.7. The differences became starker when gender data is compared. In 1974 the average American male died at age 68.1, and the average American male star died at age 59.8, a difference of 8.3 years. For female stars the difference is even more dramatic. In 1974, the average age of mortality for an American woman was 75.8 years (Fowles, 1992: 236). For an American female star it was 54.3 years, a difference of 21.5 years. According to Fowles, American celebrities have a higher than average incidence of death from cancer, accidents, influenza, cirrhosis, suicide, homicide, kidney disease and ulcers (Fowles, 1992: 233).

More recent work by Mark Bellis and associates (2007) at the Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University, compared survival rates of famous musicians and matched them to general populations in Europe and North America. They found that pop stars who experienced between three and twenty-five years of fame, had significantly higher levels of mortality (more than 1.7 times) than demographically matched populations in the UK and US. Higher mortality rates are explained as a result of the high-stress environments of pop star culture in which the incidence of alcohol, drugs, violence and high-risk behaviour is higher than in mean populations. The inescapable conclusion is that fame is sometimes a killer.

Pinsky and Young (2009) extend the argument from celebrities to celebrity culture. They argue that celebrity produces a 'mirror effect'. The frontier, risk-taking existence of celebrities is mirrored by negative adaptive behaviour among the public.⁵ Outwardly, media coverage rewards the bad behaviour of celebrities. Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, Britney Spears, Pete Doherty, Jude Law, Mel Gibson, Nicole Richie and Kiefer Sutherland engage in highly public displays of rule breaking and irresponsible conduct. While they are subject to vociferous disapproval from gossip columnists and talk-show hosts who deplore their irresponsibility and outlandish disrespect for convention, they are not exactly knocked off the perch of celebrity prestige. On the contrary, there is evident public approval for bloody-minded behaviour that dares to go where ordinary people fear to tread. Celebrities appear to have it all, do it all, and get away with it all. For Pinsky and Young (2009) this sets a malign precedent. Bad behaviour is copied by some sections of the general population who act upon the precept that they will have their cake and eat it, just like their celebrity idols.

Doubtless the propensity for emulation varies with age, gender, income, education and a range of other factors. However, for Pinsky and Young (2009) the cultural prevalence of fame attack often correlates with personal histories of physical abuse, hypersexuality, emotional harassment, aggression, introversion, an irrational sense of entitlement, exhibitionism, heavy drinking, drug dependence, dietary irregularities, egoism, panic attacks, delusions, low self-esteem and various

types of self-harm among the population. Although the authors acknowledge that fame can harness positive energy and produce inspiring role models, they conclude that the balance is currently terribly out of kilter. The magnification of fame in popular culture is fraying the fabric of society. It creates morbid dependencies and avoidable illnesses that will only be rooted out with considerable determination and struggle on the part of parents, medical and therapeutic personnel and opinion-makers.

At its worst, celebrity culture infests ordinary people with false values, base aspirations and abusive character traits. It sweeps all participants and components up in a perfect storm of illusory relationships. Fan clusters are basically imaginary communities who devote themselves to celebrities whose public image is itself a combination of fantasy, figments of imagination and public relations sound bites.

Pinsky and Young's remedy is to prevail upon parents and educationists to trim sails and batten down hatches. Narcissistic parents should stop producing narcissistic children. The School and University systems must abjure a culture of overpraise for pupils and students in favour of benign realism. The media must stop presenting celebrities as secular gods and cease portraying celebrity culture as a perpetual soap opera.

I am bound to say that I see a King Canute-like element about these remedies. They imply a sea change in psychology, culture and mass communication that would be truly momentous. The central dynamics of celebrity culture and the PR-Media hub are concerned with maximizing publicity and achieving high social impact factors. Trimming sails, battening down hatches and tightening up standards of education and regulation are very likely to get nowhere because the countervailing vested interests of the PR-Media hub and business are too powerful.

Be that as it may, at least Pinsky and Young are trying to be constructively critical. This is refreshing because a good deal of the literature never rises above a sort of high-handed, holier-than-thou level of criticism without suggesting how the renaissance of celebrity culture might be achieved. But what exactly are Pinsky and Young seeking to cure? It is one thing to say that fame is bad for some celebrities and for wide swathes of society. But what are the precise details of the syndromes in question?

Over the last ten years the pathology of celebrity has grown into a large, multifaceted subject. It encompasses issues of celebrity mortality and illness rates, patterns of dysfunctional behaviour among stars, hate mail from fans, stalking, physical attack, patterns of self-harm among fans and dangerous or debilitating fan fantasies. The psychological literature posits two behavioural disorders that are relevant in explorations of celebrity illness and pathology: Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Celebrity Worship Syndrome. These are useful frameworks to organize thought and explore the harmful and pathological consequences of celebrity culture. Let us examine them in consecutive order.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)

Although the symptoms apply to fans who develop this partly through imitating the worst traits of celebrity culture, narcissistic personality disorder is a condition that applies primarily to stars. The term narcissistic derives from the Greek myth of Narcissus, a proud and beautiful hunter who was beguiled by his own image in a reflecting pool and subsequently pined away. Self-love is associated with excessive validation of the individual and extravagant invalidation of others. The American Psychological Association distinguishes three types of narcissistic personality disorder:

Type A consists of eccentric, unpredictable behaviour, including paranoia, schizoid personality and a strong propensity to delusion.

Type B consists of antisocial behaviour, borderline identity, attention-seeking, an unreasonable sense of entitlement, exhibitionism, irresponsibility, superiority and vanity.

Type C consists of anxious or inhibited behaviour, neurasthenia, excessive dependency, anger, aggression, suicidal feelings and obsessional compulsive traits.

The diagnostic criteria for identifying NPD are ninefold:

- 1 A grandiose sense of self-importance. A person with NPD behaves as if they are the centre of the world. They expect unqualified admiration from others, react aggressively to criticism and have a powerful conviction in their superiority without feeling obliged to demonstrate any evidence to support the claim of preferment.
- 2 A preoccupation with delusions of spectacular success, exceptional beauty and rare brilliance. In some cases there is a strong correlation between these delusions and genealogy. That is persons who label themselves as wonderfully beautiful, of razor-sharp intelligence, possessing amazing powers of expression or superior judgement, and believe that their children are blessed with the same qualities.
- 3 A belief that a person is unique, unrivalled or specially talented. This carries over into the conviction that only other 'special' people are capable of understanding or mixing with such a person. The implication is that the majority of us constitute a sub-species that is subordinate and incapable of attaining the level of persons who see themselves as 'special'.

- 4 A ceaseless craving to be admired, flattered and celebrated. This goes hand in hand with seeing life as a perpetual series of special events or treats. A person with NPD craves incident above continuity, and values generosity above prudence.
- 5 An acute, unyielding sense of entitlement. This translates into convictions that their interests are paramount and the interests of others are insignificant.
- 6 A readiness to exploit others by manipulation, trickery and sheer deceit. Because NPDs are in touch only with their own reality, they have no inhibitions against making things up when it suits their purpose to do so.
- 7 An affable outward public face, which conceals a callous manner, ruthless self-interest and lack of empathy. Because the interests of the person with NPD are automatically viewed as paramount and beyond criticism, the rights and entitlements of others are often neutralized or ignored.
- 8 A delusion that others are the seat of envy. In some cases this translates into suspicious, paranoid forms of behaviour in which others are labelled as grasping, selfish and unreasonable.
- 9 A supercilious, arrogant manner. A person with NPD is heedless of the needs and wants of others. This is associated with authoritarian, bullying forms of behaviour that bulldoze opposition and smother resistance.

When an individual's behaviour conforms to at least five of these criteria, then that person is diagnosed as having the condition of NPD.

A common symptom is an acute sense of isolation.⁶ In celebrity culture, the star is alone with his genius, his demons or his so-called 'unique' issues and unable to relate to others as equals. As a result, a person with NPD may indulge in perpetual distraction, profligate expenditure, be reliant on alcohol, drugs or other stimulants, in order to numb the scalding sense of being alone in a cruel world.

Underlying this condition is often a deep sense of insecurity and unworthiness. Arrogance, self-importance and vanity are coping mechanisms to manage an inner sense of incompetence or damaged credibility. The roots of this are often preverbal, which perhaps accounts for why many NPDs find it so difficult to articulate or comprehend the symptoms of their behaviour. This militates against building enriching relationships with others. NPDs often have a history of broken relationships, divorce and estrangement from children, relations and friends. The more an individual feels trapped into playing the game of perpetual dazzling brilliance, physical perfection and social superiority, the greater the propensity to seek distraction or oblivion through alcohol, narcotics, psychological abuse or profligacy.

Pinsky and Young cite the highly public dysfunctional behaviour of celebrities like Paris Hilton, Nicole Richie, Lindsay Lohan, Britney Spears and the late Anna Nicole Smith as textbook examples of NPD in celebrity culture. It reveals toxic levels of superiority, entitlement, vanity, irresponsibility, high risk and self-harm (Pinsky and Young, 2009: 26–31).

One also thinks of the ITV1 documentary *Living With Michael Jackson*, in which Martin Bashir interviewed the late Michael Jackson (2003). The programme is widely regarded to have tarnished the already troubled public image of Jackson. It showed him to be a lonely, solitary figure, insulated from the real world by the walls of his Neverland Ranch, surrounded by an on-call-all-hours team of cultural intermediaries and in thrall to a disturbing Peter Pan complex in which he saw himself as a pure, misunderstood artist alone in a heartless world of media sycophants and bloodsuckers. A good deal of footage concentrated upon Jackson's unapologetic profligacy as he squandered hundreds of thousands of dollars on tasteless baubles in a West coast luxury department store and his heartfelt, but unconvincing, denial that he had undergone major cosmetic surgery.

Child stardom and its consequences

Jackson always lamented that stardom had robbed him of his youth and the innocence and wonder of being a child. There is nothing new about this. Childhood stardom is often presented, by the celebrities who experience it, as a curse, since it produces a sense of exaggerated entitlement, vanity and arrogance. The list of child stars who have suffered mental breakdowns, alcohol and drug dependency is a long one, especially if stardom does not continue into adult life. If this happens, child stars are trapped by memories of the days of their youthful bloom when they enjoyed a privileged relationship with the public, wealth and effortless access to a life of incident. Not surprisingly, many find the psychological problems intolerable, and cannot cope. The list of child star casualties is sobering.

Corey Haim, star of *The Lost Boys* (1987), died of an accidental drug overdose at 38; Dana Plato, who played Kimberley Drummond in the US sitcom 'Diff'rent Strokes', committed suicide at 35; the singer Lena Zavaroni also died at 35 following a 22-year battle with anorexia; Andrew Koeing who played 'Boner' in the TV series 'Growing Pains' committed suicide at 41; Gary Coleman, who starred in 'Diff'rent Strokes' from the age of 10 to 18, died of a brain haemorrhage at 42, after an adult life as a washed-up child star peppered with a history of charges of assault, disorderly conduct, reckless driving and domestic violence. Judy Garland, Jackie Coogan, Mickey Rooney, the Olsen Twins, Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears all had troubled adult histories that were explained as part of the struggle to come to terms with the complicated psychological consequences of childhood fame.

Child stars require expert protection. They need counsellors who can advise them on the pitfalls of fame and guide them away from harmful, dysfunctional behaviour and into building solid, enriching relationships with others. The stress of not being able to live up to one's public image or handle the media correctly can be punitive. Child stars may become trapped in a Neverland of eternal youthful fame, which becomes harder to occupy as ageing takes its toll.

In adult life, sudden fame can be just as bad. Unknowns who become overnight sensations are like children in the world of fame. Susan Boyle, the plain, Scottish spinster who was the sensation of the 2009 run of the TV amateur talent show *Britain's Got Talent*, spent time in a psychiatric clinic after coming second in the final. She was said to be emotionally exhausted and unable to deal with the complexities of fame and failing to win the contest outright. After her release, she compared sudden fame to a 'demolition ball'.

Likewise, the Canadian freestyle skier Alex Bilodeau who won a gold medal in the 2010 Winter Olympics, Shane Lynch of *Boyzone*, Lisa Stansfield, Eminem, the late Amy Winehouse, Lily Allen and the late George Best, all testified to being overwhelmed by sudden fame, which resulted in various forms of self-harm, bullying and other forms of dysfunctional behaviour.

Fame, bipolarity and borderline personality disorder

Clinically speaking, fame is also frequently associated with bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder. The symptoms include depression, belligerence, hypomania, delusions, fatigue, concentration lapses, irritability, loneliness, self-loathing, panic attacks, feelings of personal worthlessness, poor appetite, overeating and suicidal impulses. People who suffer from bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder see life as a series of fragments. The rules and disclosures that apply to one fragment are not necessarily consistent with the next one. A person may engage in the delusion of presenting herself as a glamorous promiscuous novelist with three book contracts and a TV tie-in in one fragment, and elsewhere as a dedicated, home-loving mother who sees through the fame game, is a principled and trustworthy confidante and supports family values, *without recognizing any inconsistency, delusion, or acknowledging that they are lying*. People with these conditions treat encounters as akin to standing on a precipice and living for the moment. Since much of what they do and who they say they are is based upon lies, they often have a phobia of being found out. Because presence carries with it the risk of disclosure, people with this condition may become reclusive. Alternatively, they adopt a Devil may take the hindmost attitude to publicity and say anything that comes into their heads since, for them, nothing is true. Echoes of this abound in celebrity culture, even though they might not be related to full-blown syndromes.

In his squib on Arnold Schwarzenegger, Gary Indiana (2006) recounts a jaw-dropping *aperçu* about Ronald Reagan. Reagan, the B-list movie celebrity who gained control of the American presidency for two terms in the 1980s, publicly declared that after the collapse of Nazi Germany he participated in the liberation of the Jews. When it was pointed out that this was impossible since Reagan had never been to the war front, he is reported to have replied, 'facts are stupid things'. This is exactly what the bipolar or borderline personality believes when they spin a yarn.

Inevitably, bipolarity carries a fear of failure. As a result, bipolar and borderline personalities have difficulty in formulating a sense of continuity in their personal relationships and a coherent moral perspective. They may be excessively gregarious in public but people who are close to them do not know who they really are. They live for the moment, and have little concern for the connection between actions and consequences. Each fragmentary encounter elicits a different energy rush or energy slide. They cope with this by ever more grandiose flourishes. The spendthrift use of the credit card and immense, ultimately specious, undertakings to love or reform, or the flamboyant undertaking to lavish care upon others, or to devote themselves to saving mankind, are typical coping techniques. Because of this, bipolar and borderline people have difficulty in building durable relationships of trust and mutual respect. Stimulants, especially alcohol, drugs, sleeping pills and sex are used as standbys to combat the psychological frictions that arise.

NPD, bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder are closely associated with the arts. This has led many commentators to contend that mania and creativity go hand in hand. Among the celebrities that have gone public about suffering from bipolar disorder are Stephen Fry, Carrie Fisher, Russell Brand, Mel Gibson, Sinéad O'Connor, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Brian Wilson. It is likely that there is a much bigger silent majority among the 'celebritariat'.

In the appropriate measure, narcissism is usually regarded to be a healthy component in personalities. It correlates with ambition, drive and the desire to be recognized. It follows that all celebrities need a strong measure of narcissism in order to pitch themselves to the public as would-be or bona fide stars. While most celebrities are able to hold narcissistic tendencies in check so as not to become a risk to themselves or others and require clinical intervention, a significant minority are unable to cope with fame. Narcissism is quixotic and volatile. Stars inhabit a looking-glass world in which the praise and adulation of others inherently distorts interaction and relationships. The star and the audience are entangled in a world of surfaces and mirrors. The actress Uma Thurman puts her finger on some of the problems that this poses for the star in relating to others:

When you meet someone who has a very intensely preconceived notion about you because of what you do, it's a hurdle you have to climb over in

order to be really interactive with another person. You're not any of that list of clichés that they think you are. Maybe you're some of them, but maybe not in the order that they think you are. (Uma Thurman, quoted in Berlin, 1996: 261)

For a star suffering from NPD, bipolar disorder or borderline personality disorder, the looking-glass world of stardom can lead to an exaggerated sense of entitlement and self-worth. When stars in this position feel threatened they often regress to the childhood coping strategies of anger, disassociation, lying or rejection. The incredulity and incomprehension that this produces in others contributes to the star's sense of insufferable isolation.

Patently, NPD, bipolarity and borderline personality disorder are conditions in which the energy level of projection in social encounters is inappropriate and harmful. It produces dysfunctional and, in some cases, pathological types of conduct. It is especially prevalent among celebrities because one of the prime functions of the PR-Media hub is to layer an exaggerated sense of self-worth and glamour on stars. Stars are portrayed as possessing the mysterious, sought-after X factor that makes them objects of desire, fantasy and admiration among the rank and file. They are courted and pampered as kings or queens and permanently held aloof from the common ruck, who are treated as lucky to touch the hem of their garments. This requires stars to devote an immense amount of emotional labour in personal grounding and reality checks. As Henry Winkler, while discussing the pleasures and pitfalls of fame, puts it:

It's very heady. You can easily start to believe that you're more than you are. They make you believe that you're very special, that all of a sudden you've grown inches. You're handsomer than you were. Your hair is golden blonde and flowing. It's a very seductive thing. Maybe one of the great lessons of life is how to maintain your equilibrium. (Henry Winkler, quoted in Berlin, 1996: 262)

The gulf between the star and the public is deliberately exaggerated by the PR-Media hub that portrays celebrities as living a frontier existence where each life is packed with incident and emergency.

It may be objected that celebrities are not alone in this. The poorest sections in society also have lives packed with incident and emergency. Their daily existence is a struggle to make ends meet and see the light at the end of the tunnel. But, of course, the frontier existence of celebrity culture is categorically different. Celebrity addictions, breakdowns and crack-ups contribute to the aura of stars as special people who deliberately and voluntarily *suffer* for their art. They accept incident, risk and emergency as part of the pact with fame and the inevitable price of affording

social impact. This aura is exploited and developed by the PR-Media hub to boost the star's mystique. At a personal level, the hoopla of being portrayed as permanently located in a world of incident and emergency, compounds narcissistic, bipolar and borderline tendencies. It makes stars conscious of living in a special, vulnerable place and acting under pressures that ordinary people do not face and can never truly understand. Arrogance, vanity, entitlement and superiority are legitimated as responses to the challenges of stardom – heroic challenges that ordinary people cannot really imagine.

Celebrity worship syndrome

Fame is also associated with personality disorders and other morbid symptoms in the behaviour of fans. In this regard, psychologists have coined the term 'celebrity worship syndrome' (McCutcheon, Lange and Houron, 2002). By this is meant a type of obsessive-compulsive behaviour involving general states of dissociation and occasional borderline-pathological events. It is essential to make a distinction between non-pathological and pathological/borderline-pathological types of celebrity worship.

Non-pathological types of celebrity worship are founded upon an intense, insistent preoccupation with fame. It may take the form of an obsession with the lives of the rich and famous or it may address genres of celebrities or specific stars. Typical behaviours involve devoting an excessive amount of non-work time to tracking and assimilating news and gossip about celebrities through newspaper reports, celebrity TV channels, celebrity magazines and other branches of the commercial media; obsessional monitoring work; imitating the physical appearance or characteristic dress of celebrities; adopting celebrity catchphrases, vernaculars or philosophies of life; having tattoos of celebrities inscribed on the body; writing obsessively to celebrities; visiting the addresses or other physical settings associated with stars, and such like.

In most cases these forms of celebrity worship are manageable. They do not lead to the disruption of primary relationships, the interruption of work patterns or extreme forms of conduct such as stalking or physical attack. As such they are compatible with familiar life and do not pose a risk to the celebrity worshipper or others.

However, even the non-pathological form of celebrity worship has a variety of subclinical social effects. It encourages a culture of dependency as fans become addicted to stars and celebrity genres that uproot or replace primary relationships. It proliferates narcissistic tendencies as audiences imitate the bad behaviour of stars. Typical consequences are the production of cultures of entitlement, exaggerated

opinions of self-worth, disassociation, mania, fastening upon life as packed with incident and emergency and rejecting ordinary life as routine and uneventful.

The pathological/borderline-pathological type refers to conduct that produces self-harm and/or a risk to others. The main categories of behaviour are twofold: stalking, and suicide or attempted suicide.

Stalking

Stalking refers to a pattern of intrusive attention, contact or surveillance that causes distress in the victim. It encompasses being followed, being physically attacked, having notes pinned to property, receiving unwanted gifts and getting repeated unwanted telephone calls, letters or emails. The murders of John Lennon and the actresses Rebecca Schaeffer and Kathryn Dettman, were all fan-related. In this respect, the late Mexican Tejano singer Selena bears the dubious accolade of ultimate distinction: she was murdered by the deranged president of her fan club!

In addition, celebrity stalkers have been put on probation, referred to psychiatric hospitals or jailed for harassing stars including Richard Gere, Steven Spielberg, Jodie Foster, Gwyneth Paltrow, Theresa Saldana, Uma Thurman, Keira Knightley, Miley Cyrus, Britney Spears, Kirsten Dunst, James Foxx, Bryan Adams, Conan O'Brien, Halle Berry, Janet Jackson, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Anna Kournikova, Ivanka Trump, David Letterman and George Harrison.

Psychologists argue that stalking begins with a narcissistic fantasy focused upon an external object. Desire for people that we don't know is a perfectly normal part of the human condition. However, in the case of the stalker, the line that divides the public person from the self is either weak or wholly erased. Desire is so strong that the public person ceases to be regarded as a separate entity with meaningful, independent feelings. It becomes part of the desiring person's self and is subject to getting into line by intimidation, brinkmanship and harassment. As such, the desiring person naturally proceeds on the basis of having entitlements and jurisdiction. When this is thwarted by acute or chronic rejection, it promotes a sense of injustice and builds the defence mechanisms of anger and rage. This translates into the devaluation of the desired object and behaviour that is intended to hurt, control, damage or destroy (Reid Melloy, 2001).

Celebrities are particularly at risk of being victims of stalkers because the PR-Media hub is dedicated to present them to the public as super-glamorous, irresistible figures. Delusions of intimacy are reinforced by the constant stream of details from the private life of celebrities. The PR-Media hub affects to imply that audiences are being *taken into confidence* by disclosures concerning the health records, sex lives, work histories, family relationships and friendship networks of the stars. Stargazers

are deluded into believing that they are entering into relationships of confidence and intimacy with the celebrity, when in fact the data produced by the PR-Media hub is available on an open-access basis.

The popular conception of celebrities as living a frontier existence in which excitement and risk abound, is reinforced by the PR-Media hub in which the celebrity is situated. The dramatic requirements and compressed form of film, television shows, videos or music recordings enhances the public perception of stars as living lives packed with incident and emergency. As Wykes and Gunter put it:

Stars very often role-play publicly and fictionally, the embodiment of extremes of human emotion, passion, privacy, pain and pleasure and they do so in intense and contracted episodes. Hence, their iconographic status: they symbolize our lives back to us in fast forward – even soaps don't operate in real time – but they also offer us aspects of human life that we don't personally experience, hence their larger than life quality. (Wykes and Gunter, 2005: 104)

Stalkers have a history of seizing upon the private details of the life of a celebrity and forming a proprietorial, obsessive relationship with them. In some cases, stalkers transfer emotions of anger and rage from the desired object on to a separate object that most of us regard as possessing social honour. Psychiatrists and police surmise that through this means the stalker seeks to be recognized by the object of desire. Arguably, the most famous recent example is John Hinckley. In 1981 he attempted to assassinate Ronald Reagan. The assault was apparently motiveless. However, during the police investigation and subsequent trial it emerged that Hinckley was infatuated with the film star Jodie Foster. The assassination attempt on the President was purported to be a strategy to gain Foster's attention. By killing the leader of the American people, Hinckley hoped to win recognition and approval from Foster.

Do stalkers have common personal and social characteristics? Psychologists and criminologists submit that, typically, celebrity stalkers are isolated, introverted and immature. They are likely to hail from broken families and have a history of difficulties in the labour market. Immersion into the world of secondary relationships, focused around stars, is a coping strategy to manage real-world difficulties.

Stalkers are more likely to be men than women. The most common forms of harassment are silent phone calls, physical intimidation, tailing, trespass and unwanted letters (Budd *et al.*, 2000: 10).

Increasing public awareness about stalking has resulted in anti-harassment legislation. In the United States, the state of California made stalking an offence in 1990. By 1993, most states had passed anti-harassment legislation. The United Kingdom followed suit with the Malicious Communications Act (1988) and the

Protection from Harassment Act (1997). But although society now officially recognizes celebrity stalking as a problem, it has not devised the means to modify or prevent it. This is because legislation focuses upon the stalker, rather than the causes of stalking. By criminalizing or pathologizing the stalker, society absolves the rest of us from recognizing unreasonable, possessive tendencies with respect to stars in our own habitual behaviour.

Suicide and attempted suicide

Celebrity worship may take the form of self-harm. The category of self-harm is amorphous and, in relation to celebrity worship syndrome, demands specification.

Three subsets of self-harm should be distinguished. To begin with, fans may harm themselves because they recognize that the distance between the star and the stargazer is unbridgeable. The stargazer can never enter the orbit occupied by the star. The resultant sense of estrangement and isolation may be handled by the stargazer harming themselves as a form of punishment for being permanently 'outside'.

The second subset refers to forms of self-harm that arise from the stargazer nurturing ambitions of achieved celebrity for themselves and the realization that they are never going to make the celebrity grade. When stars are not born they are cast back into the anonymous, indifferent universe. In such circumstances self-harm is resorted to as self-punishment for not being good enough to achieve celebrity status by virtue of their talents and accomplishments.

The third subset refers to obsessional or borderline-obsessional devotion to stars. In this condition stargazers identify so profoundly with the lives of stars that their own existence becomes a metronome of star life. When a star achieves success, this provides an emotional lift in the lives of stargazers. Similarly, when a star experiences falling and decline, the emotional trajectory is replicated in the lives of the stargazers. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this subset of self-harm behaviour in stargazers, is the phenomenon of copycat suicide that follows a celebrity supernova.

Now, it must be allowed that the motivation behind suicide is a complex question. It has to do with the intersection of family history, genetics and wider psychological, cultural and social factors. Research into this subject therefore requires sensitivity and due respect for the unique facts of biography. Fortunately, students of celebrity can draw upon, refer to and enlist well-founded research. Cheung *et al.* (2007) investigated 270 individuals who attempted suicide following the suicide of Taiwanese TV star M. J. Nee. They found that, compared to the incidences of attempted suicide in 2003 and 2004, there was no less than a 55 per cent increase in suicides in the weeks following media reports about the death of Nee.

Similarly, Fu and Yip (2007) researched the effect of celebrity suicide on the general suicide rate, following the suicide of the Hong Kong pop star Leslie Cheung. They found that 38 per cent of their respondents were influenced by the suicide of a celebrity. There were significant age and gender specific variations. The study found a 'significant' increase in the suicide rate for men aged between 25 and 39 years who used the same method as Cheung to kill themselves (jumping from a great height).

Other researchers into the relationship between celebrity suicide and general suicide rates found that media publicity produced a risk of copycat suicides that lasted for between two and four weeks (Phillips, 1974; Stack, 1987; Howton *et al.*, 2000). Fu and Yip's findings suggested a much longer copycat risk period, stretching to between eight and fifteen months after the celebrity suicide (Fu and Yip, 2007: 544).

Similarly, other researchers have assumed that the copycat effect is concentrated in people who are vulnerable to self-harm and suicide for independent reasons. Fu and Yip's research concludes that 'celebrity suicide may trigger suicide ideation in anyone within the community, regardless of whether he or she were otherwise vulnerable for suicide (Fu and Yip, 2007: 544).'⁷

The 'sensational' nature of the Hong Kong Chinese media's reporting of suicides is cited as a major factor in copycat suicides. It is not unusual for papers to carry graphics, photos and diagrams of suicides on the front page, with emotional banner headlines. As Fu and Yip point out, this method of media reporting does not comply with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines (Fu and Yip, 2007: 545).

European research conducted by Etzersdorfer, Voracek and Sonneck (2001) refers to a 'dose response' from the media to describe the emotional trigger behind copycat/contagious suicide. This is based upon an analysis of the motivational factors involved in a 43 per cent rise in attempted suicide or suicide from firearms following newspaper coverage of a suicide by shooting of an Austrian celebrity in Vienna.

Copycat/contagious forms are intimately related to media coverage. This is why Etzersdorfer *et al.* use the term 'dose effect'. The media administer the information dose that produces a reaction in vulnerable fans. Of course, this is not intentional. But it imposes considerable responsibilities upon the media to report celebrity supernovas in ways that are duly sensitive to the impressionable elements in the fan base. Etzerdofer *et al.*'s (2001) research into the Vienna case demonstrated that the formulation and application of clear media guidelines in reporting celebrity suicide can contain the copycat effect.

All of these subsets arise because stargazers have allowed the secondary relations of celebrity culture to supplant the primary relations of home and community. Where

the balance of close primary relationships is disturbed, the resultant emotions of isolation and loneliness may be handled by formulating intense, emotional secondary relationships with stars. It is not so much that stars are a substitute for defective relationships in family life and friendship networks. Rather, it is a matter of identification with the stars in offering a stairway to heaven.

Common, largely unrecorded examples of self-harm involve self-mutilation using cigarette burns or cuts, starvation regimes and withdrawal from communication. Ultimately, as we have seen above, fans may resort to suicide. The most common form of suicide in celebrity worship culture is the so-called copycat or contagious type that follows a celebrity supernova.

Most people might say that celebrity culture has a neutral effect upon the general population. Against this, celebrity worship syndrome proposes that a) dysfunctional behaviour publicized in relation to stars, carries over and generally multiplies, and b) these forms of generally distributed behaviour would not exist without celebrity culture.

A general culture that has developed a preoccupation with fame produces fractured, divided, grandiose, self-important, disconnected, aggressive and intimidating people. They live in a world of mirrors and have perpetual doubts about their authority and their physical and social presence. As a result they struggle to build and maintain fulfilling primary relationships and turn to the secondary relationships of celebrity culture as a shortcut that enables them, voyeuristically, to experience fame, glamour and empowerment.

The resort to secondary relationships as a way of experiencing fame voyeuristically is reinforced by the plainly bad odds for gaining achieved celebrity. Because the desire for fame is universal, but the opportunities for acquiring or participating in celebrity are elusive, strong general propensities are unleashed to disassociate from the world of work and primary relationships. Cast adrift from the well-publicized stimulants of Beverly Hills and the consumer cornucopia of Rodeo Drive or Bond Street, people feel unfulfilled and thwarted by their distance from the lush life of celebrity, and turn to more readily available stimulants, such as living their meaningful lives through celebrities or alcohol and drugs.

The spiral of dependence is fuelled by the PR-Media hub, which employs cultural intermediaries to titillate and inflame the public with images of celebrity libido. The cultural prestige of stars depends upon the receptivity of the public. Because of this, the PR-Media hub devotes significant resources to positioning the public in relation to alluring symbols of fame and stardom.

Typically, this positioning identifies the audience as receptive to images of beauty, power and authority. Public opinion is primed to react positively to the assembly line of stars paraded by the PR-Media hub. The process obediently follows the

sixfold model of moulding public opinion that has emerged in the post-war period, namely strategy analysis, audience analysis, determining community demographics, content creation, delivery and the calibration of results. In this way receptivity is *prepared* and *managed*.

Of course, the PR-Media hub is not omnipotent; it is merely the major force in influencing the public's reception to stars. Yet in this role it has immense power to shape the social horizon of fame and set the agenda of consumer aspirations.

McCutcheon *et al.* estimate that up to a third of the population display traits of celebrity worship behaviour (McCutcheon *et al.*, 2004: 166). This figure is not based on a scientifically convincing sample of the population. As such it may be on the high side. Even so, McCutcheon *et al.* are right to suggest that celebrity worship is much more than a minor subcultural phenomenon. Rather it is a general, deeply rooted characteristic of contemporary culture.

Celebrity worship syndrome appears to be related to the experiences of low self-esteem and social exclusion. According to Schlesinger (2006), the most important social characteristics of celebrity stalking at the time of the crime are unemployment, immigration, not being in a relationship and a history of psychiatric treatment and drug abuse. Maltby *et al.* (2001) found that celebrity worship correlates with low levels of self-worth, anxiety, fantasy-proneness and depression. These symptoms are common among people who feel isolated, rootless, inarticulate and unconfident. Where people feel an absence of close, proximate, primary relations celebrities are appropriated as superior, heaven-based makeshifts. These substitutes may become the basis for obsessive-compulsive identification that replaces the demand for primary relationships. Those who suffer from celebrity worship syndrome may hold down steady jobs and appear to be perfectly respectable members of society. But their meaningful lives are spent in a world of make-believe.

The Absorption-Addiction Model

In the age of achieved celebrity, the majority of those who achieve stardom start out as stargazers. Exposure to celebrity culture begins at birth. Infants absorb cultural symbols of glamour and power developed by the PR-Media hub with their mother's milk. Only a third are likely to develop celebrity worship syndrome but a much larger number are schooled in the culture of fan worship, stargazing and stardom. What are the issues here?

Several attempts to explain the pathway of celebrity worship syndrome have been made. McCutcheon *et al.* have developed what is arguably the most cogent psychological explanation: the Absorption-Addiction Model (McCutcheon *et al.*, 2004: 154–63).

This is a developmental theory of celebrity worship which identifies three distinct stages in the emergence of obsessive or borderline-obsessive conduct: Entertainment-Social; Intense-Personal; and Borderline-Pathological. As with all psychological developmental theories it is not proposed that all individuals are bound to pass through the three stages. Progress into the rarer, subclinical or clinical forms of dysfunctional behaviour depends on the strength of primary relationships and the unsatisfactory resolution of intense secondary relationships. However, in the case of a fully developed instance of celebrity worship syndrome the clinical assumption is that the individual progresses through each of the three stages. What are the behavioural characteristics of these stages?

1. Entertainment-social

The normal phase in the process of adolescent socialization in the West is prolonged interaction with the media. The prominence assigned to celebrity culture in the media means that children and adolescents spend a good deal of formative time in the company of images of glamour and stardom processed by the PR-Media hub. Powerful images of what is attractive and powerful in females is presented in pop promo videos of female singers like Lady Gaga or Christina Aguilera. Male heroes like Sam Worthington in *Avatar* (2009) or Jake Gyllenhaal in *Prince of Persia* (2010) are imprinted as glamorous role models for the under-15 demographic. Children absorb these images and in many cases imitate the attitude and behaviour associated with the role models, before they go through the normal stages of psychosexual development.

Absorbing media images of stardom is an ordinary part of growing up. It plays a positive role in enabling young people to adjust to the insecurities and strains that arise from primary relationships in the home and community by empathizing with and projecting onto star worlds. By identifying with a star on screen the adolescent stargazers may find ways of working through emotional blocks or communication breakdowns in the home. In addition, it may assist with peer group membership and breaking down barriers between strangers. Celebrity news and gossip is a medium that ignores the boundaries of class, gender, nation or race. As such, it operates as a global icebreaker. Referring to Miley Cyrus or Justin Bieber may be a calling card to join local peer group relationships, but it also has the capacity to operate as a passport that connects people from different cultures and nation states.

Exposure and, to some extent, absorption in the entertainment-social phase of celebrity culture is portrayed as an orthodox part of growing up. In most cases, children adjust optimally to the heroic and glamorous images presented to them by the media and real-world relationships. But a crucial part of McCutcheon *et al.*'s (2004) thesis, is that optimal adjustment is not invariable. Indeed, they hold that

variation from the mean is sufficiently appreciable to constitute a matter of public concern.

2. Intense-personal

In some cases, especially when individuals are introverted or isolated, media bombardment of celebrity news and gossip becomes addictive. Stargazers formulate the delusion that they possess a special or unique relationship with their favoured star. They comb the press, television, the Internet and fan clubs for news of their idol. They adopt the hairstyle, pedicure, vernacular and public outlook of the star. They may have tattoos of the star printed on their bodies. Identification with the recorded life of the star becomes pivotal in establishing the stargazer's personal sense of authority. This is often reinforced by joining Web and blogging sites devoted to the star. Chris Cocker's plaintive video on YouTube and MySpace begging the media to leave Britney Spears alone after her under-par performance at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2007, has become an industry cause célèbre.

As we have already seen, the video generated millions of hits and hoisted Crocker into the national press, produced a development deal for a reality show (*Chris Cocker's 15 Minutes More*) and a recording contract.

If the stargazer suffers from the want of personal success, the life of the star may provide solace and a measure of compensation. By voyeuristically living through the public life of the star, the stargazer may come to acquire a sense of personal authority and social presence. In the fully developed intense-personal stage, this delusional relationship torches primary and secondary relationships to become all-consuming. The stargazer's life is organized around media coverage of the celebrity. The separation between the stargazer and the star becomes weak. The narcissism of the star carries over into the private life of the stargazer, leading to the development of aggressive, arrogant, superior, disassociated forms of behaviour.

3. Borderline-pathological

In the borderline-pathological stage of absorption, stargazers are unable to extricate themselves emotionally or psychologically from the star. Over-identification connects the stargazer to the star in a mechanical metronomic relationship. When the media portrays the star as triumphant, the mood of the stargazer is upbeat; when the star is presented as insecure, withdrawn and emotionally bottled up, the mood of the stargazer follows suit. Over-identification may culminate in the delusion that the autonomy of the star is inconsequential. Stargazers come to the conclusion that they possess the right to besiege or devour the star. This is the product of a progressively stronger immersion in the life of the star.

The borderline-pathological stage of celebrity worship syndrome is marked by neurotic and psychotic behaviour, the inability to recognize personal and social boundaries, the idealization or demonization of secondary relationships and weakly defined primary relationships. The pathological form may involve stalking, harassment and suicide.

It appears to have been behind the motive behind the intimidating and violent behaviour of Robert Dewey Hoskins, a vagrant loner, against Madonna. In 1995 Hoskins was arrested for stalking and making a terrorist threat against Madonna and her bodyguard, Basil Stephens. He had been intercepted trespassing at her Los Angeles home, leaving unwanted notes on the property. When restrained by Madonna's bodyguard, Hoskins threatened to 'slice' Madonna 'from ear to ear' if she did not marry him that evening.

Similarly, in 1998 Jonathan Norman was jailed for 25 years in California after being found guilty of stalking and threatening the Hollywood film director Stephen Spielberg. Prosecutors alleged that Norman trespassed on to Spielberg's Pacific Palisades mansion and was carrying a 'rape kit' that he intended to use on the director. Norman's behaviour was described as 'obsessive and frightening' by the Superior Court Judge Steven Suzukawa.

Likewise, when news broke of Catherine Zeta-Jones's clinical treatment for bipolar disorder in 2011, fan harassment was cited in the media as a factor in her condition. In 2004, an infatuated fan, Dawnette Knight, was jailed for stalking Zeta-Jones. She was found guilty of sending letters to the actress telling her that she would die like John F. Kennedy or Manson Family victim Sharon Tate. Zeta-Jones was reported as testifying that 'this has affected me and it will affect me for the rest of my life. I felt like a ticking time bomb' (Hattenstone, 2011).

Celebrity worship syndrome is directly related to the high-profile exposure that the PR-Media hub gives to portraying the lives of stars as packed with incident, risk and emergency. The drip-line of intimate details of the private lives of celebrities creates the delusion in the minds of some stargazers that they have a special or unique relationship with the celebrity.

Recorded rates of celebrity stalking and harassment have increased dramatically over the last three decades. This reflects the intense colonization of the private lives of ordinary men and women by the PR-Media hub. The saturation and manipulation of celebrity images is a highly accentuated feature of contemporary public life. It is no longer a matter of being bombarded with celebrity images at home. The same images are carried in the breast pocket or handbag on mobile phones and other communication devices.

Celebrity sickness is not just a condition afflicting specific stars and stargazers. It is a social malaise that has become associated with a variety of dysfunctional and antisocial forms of behaviour. Pinsky and Young refer to the fixation on media images which breeds dependent personalities, unable to develop self-motivating growth; the attempts to construct an alluring 'pseudo self'; the development of a culture of entitlement, and ensuing collision between entitlement and reality that precipitates panic; 'the descent into envy'; and 'the insecurity that is at the core of every narcissistic personality' (Pinsky and Young, 2009: 236). This is a long and woesome list. Added to the material on the conditions of narcissistic personality disorder, borderline personalities and celebrity worship syndrome, it suggests that celebrity culture has much to answer for in explaining the problems and ills of the day.

Moral pundits in the media often twin celebrities with the various personality disorders and social illnesses discussed in this chapter. But does this give the topic of celebrity a fair shake? It is easy to dwell on the misuses of fame. The narcissism of stars, the guile of star-makers and the credulity of stargazers will always sell newspapers and attract big television audiences. However, dealing with celebrity on a dismissive level begs the question formulated by Rousseau (1984) and already raised here, namely why is celebrity universal in human groups? We might scorn the narcissistic behaviour of Heidi Montag and Spencer Pratt of MTV's *The Hills*, and revile the film director Roman Polanski and the pop star Gary Glitter for using their fame to have sex with underage girls. But is it right to cast all fame in the same dye? If it is plausible to attribute some types of psychological sickness and social malaise to celebrity culture, is it not also right to postulate and explore a positive relationship between celebrity, ambition and emulation?