

Celebrity worship; reality TV and the pursuit of stardom

Vanesa Banuelos(1508963), supervisor: Paul Halligan

Abstract

Research suggests that the desire for fame appears to be increasing among preteens and teenagers (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012). Given the growing fascination with celebrities over the recent years, and based on Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory of mass communication, the aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between celebrity worship and the desire to participate on reality TV shows. Surveys were administered to one hundred and eighteen participants and the findings indicate a significant moderate positive correlation between celebrity worship and the desire to participate on reality TV ($r = .366, p = .001$). The conclusions drawn from the results suggest that celebrity worship has an influence on people's desire for fame and future aspirations

Introduction

A survey carried out for a RTÉ Radio One programme, "Fame", found that 85% of boys and 40% of girls, between 13 and 19 want to be famous. Almost half of all teenagers, 56% of boys and 40% of girls, said that they would drop out of school if they had an opportunity to fulfil their dreams of fame (Regan, 2006).

Fame is not a new thing but in the age of mass media the concept of celebrity has changed in recent times; before it was generally necessary to have demonstrated a great deed or action in order to become a well known and attention drawing star but the contemporary celebrity's fame does not necessarily rest on their achievements but on their concentrated media representation (Graeme, 2004).

The production of reality TV shows have spread the opportunity of becoming a celebrity beyond the various elites and into the expectations of the population in general.



Method

Design - the design of this study was quantitative, correlational and cross-sectional.

Participants - A random sample of participants was used for this study. The sample consisted of 118 respondents (39 males and 79 females) currently living in Ireland and aged between 18 and 44 years.

Materials – the 23-item version of the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS), the 23-item Aspiration index Revised scale (AI-R) and three short scales to measure desire for fame, reality TV participation and Facebook usage

Procedure - The participants were told that the purpose of the research was to examine factors affecting young people's desire for fame and reality TV participation. They completed the questionnaire in single sessions in small groups and through online questionnaires. All respondents were thanked for their participation and offered an email address for further queries regarding the study.

Results

The results showed a significant moderate correlation between celebrity worship and desire to participate on reality TV shows ($r = .366, p = .001$) and the stronger relationship between these two variables was found on the 25 to 34 age group ($r = .508, p = .001$). The results showed no significant relationship between celebrity worship and intrinsic goals and a significant moderate positive correlation between celebrity worship and extrinsic goals ($r = .300, p = .001$). High levels of desire for fame were found to be associated with higher levels of willingness to put a career on hold in order to take part on a reality TV ($r = .399, p = .001$). A strong positive correlation was also found between the desire for fame and the perceived power and influence of famous people.

Discussion

The findings of this study add evidence to the theoretical prediction that those who engage in celebrity worship are more likely to desire to take part on reality TV shows. Although it was theoretically predicted that children's aspirations may become more realistic as they grow up (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012), the strongest relationship between celebrity worship and reality TV participation desire was found on the 25 to 34 age group. Higher levels of desire for fame were found to be associated with higher levels of willingness to put a career on hold in order to take part on a reality TV show. The findings suggest that the reality TV format transforms the desire for fame into something achievable as the participants of these shows, regardless of especial talent, are made extremely visible.

References

- Graeme, T. (2004). *Understanding celebrity*. London: Sage.
- Rojek, C. (2001). *Celebrity*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Turner, G. (2010). *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*. London: SAGE.