

OBSESSED WITH  
FAME

## The psychological desire for fame

By Jayne Abraham

More than ever before there seems to be a yearning for fame, a certain thirst for validation that can only be quenched by what can be boiled down to numbers on a screen. Perhaps this phenomenon is coincidental, or maybe it is a product of the growing materialism of society as a whole. Regardless, research has shown that it is no accident that fame is so sought after.

Fame has proven itself to be an all-consuming topic at the forefront of many people's minds, especially young people. The "Scientific American" wrote, "In 2012, a study found that a desire for fame solely for the sake of being famous was the most popular future goal among a group of 10-12 year olds..." This article explored studies by professors John Maltby of the University of Leicester and Dara Greenwood of Vas-sar College that justify this need for fame.

Maltby's study showed that motivations for fame were rooted in what was described as "...a perceived suitability and intensity for a celebrity life-style." The allure of wealth, success and notoriety are essentially unavoidable in the age of social media. It is difficult to be passive when images of extreme fame are constantly imposed upon people, pulling at their envy and desire. This factor coupled with a that-should-be-me mentality are enough to drive one towards the objective of gaining fame.

A study by Greenwood and colleagues narrowed down reasons for wanting fame simi-

larly to how Maltby's study did. This study outlined three desires as motives for fame: the desire to be seen or valued, the desire for an elite status and the desire to use fame to help others or make others proud. It seems that, to many, the highest form of validation can only be acquired through fame. As mentioned in Maltby's study, much of the appeal of fame can be attributed to the materialistic bragging it enables people to do.

Both professors' research links specific motives of fame to narcissism and a desire to fit in. Narcissists are more drawn to the glamour and recognition that comes with high status, and see fame as a reasonable objective. Conversely, those who crave a sense of belonging are more attracted to the idea of fame and fantasize about it as an escape more than a rational goal.

Essentially, this apparent yearning for fame can be condensed to age-old human desires: wanting what one does not already have and longing to fit in. Within the context of the past few decades and the rise of technology, fame has clearly become more accessible. As a result, a seemingly fitting and increasingly plausible solution to the aforementioned desires is fame. The entrancing elements of fame are inescapable, as they are advertised in almost every facet of life.

What's more is that those who are not famous feel a certain shame for not possessing any degree of popularity. Whether that popularity is found through social media

or within the hierarchies of high school it has become quite the divisive factor. Former president of Oberlin College, Robert W. Fuller, Ph. D., developed this idea through the concept of "rankism" and what he calls "somebodies" and "nobodies." Rankism deals with the exploitation of those with a lower status, where the struggles of nobodies are completely invalidated by those in possession of fame, or somebodies.

Fuller describes fame similarly to how the previously mentioned studies do. Fame can be seen as an escape from the barriers, perceived or legitimate, imposed upon people either by themselves or others. The point Fuller gets at is that nobodies are so disconnected from the fascinating lifestyle of somebodies that fantasizing about obtaining notoriety provides a sort of temporary relief from daily struggles.

In an era where fame is something people seek, it is important to recognize and explore how this came to be. The human desire to obtain elite status and find a sense of belonging puts people in a vulnerable position where they seek easy solutions. When something as glamorous as fame seems to pose a solution to a multitude of issues, it is easy to fall into an oblivious enchantment with it. This paired with the little effort it seems to take to become famous nowadays leads to a justified longing for fame among young people.

## Technology creates traction for teenage fame

By Vinay Joshi

With the advent of new social media platforms over the past decade, it seems like it is easier than ever for someone to become famous. The most recent generation of social media websites and apps are notable for discovery features that can propel a relative nobody into celebrity status overnight.

The earliest forms of social media were primarily websites that allowed users to connect with their friends and family by sharing moments from their lives via pictures, videos and text. The latest social media platforms have been structured differently. Many feature endless scrolling, ultra personalized feeds, push notifications urging users to check out creators that they may like and a myriad of other features.

The culmination of these features results in the phenomenon known as discovery algorithms. Discovery algorithms enable new creators to gain traction, and users to broaden their followings. This results in more time spent on an app or website, which also benefits the platform at hand. Discovery algorithms create a profile for a

user based on their in-app interactions—such as liking certain posts, following other users and watch time—and prompt users to interact with similar content.

While early social media companies focused on connecting users with their personal circle of friends, family and acquaintances, current social media companies have been built with discovery as their cornerstone. Tik Tok is known for its ubiquitous For You Page, which features content specifically tailored to each individual user. YouTube's recommended page shows videos from a user's subscriptions but never fails to sprinkle in other content that the algorithm thinks the user might like.

While these discovery algorithms were designed to increase in-app engagement, they have an equally important flip side: they allow normal people to start building an audience. Senior Nathan Lokenvitz amassed over 100,000 likes on Tik Tok from only 2 short Tik Toks. Lokenvitz has stopped making Tik Toks for the time being, but commented, "I guess by just posting consistent, quality content anyone really has a chance at becoming famous or at least semi-famous." Lokenvitz's example proves how Tik Tok's algorithm is adeptly able to distribute content on a broad scale from a user with little to no following at the time. Between two videos, Lokenvitz's content was viewed over a million times: "It was fun seeing a couple of my videos that I made as jokes blow up like that and have hundreds of thousands of random people see them," he said. Aman Manazir is a PV alum that recently started a productivity focused YouTube chan-

nel. He spent the past summer thoroughly researching the ins and outs of the YouTube algorithm and applying his findings to his channel. Manazir sincerely believes that it is easier to build an audience now more than ever before. "The internet has provided an avenue for anyone who creates quality content to get noticed. There are always people out there who enjoy the same stuff as you; as long as you love your work, you'll be able to slowly build an audience from anywhere in the world," he reflected.

Manazir has been able to slowly start growing his audience, amassing 3,500 views in 3 months. Manazir's channel was recognized by productivity juggernaut Ali Abdal, a creator with over a million subscribers. Manazir's growth has been comparatively slow to Lokenvitz, despite his dedication to making weekly videos with quality at the forefront of his agenda. This goes to show how Tik Tok is far superior to YouTube in its ability to showcase the content of an undiscovered creator to its user base.

Overall, the shift from social media platforms focusing on a user's social circle to social media platforms showing users new content has simplified the process of building an audience and becoming famous. Teenagers posting content for fun suddenly find themselves with millions of views and followers. This has led to a whole new world of monetization, brand deals and sponsorships.

The idea of social media was introduced less than 20 years ago. Since then, social media platforms have evolved into a space where anyone with content viewed as desirable can be propelled into the limelight. Time will tell whether such features will prevail or become disregarded completely. As of now, it seems that discovery algorithms are here to stay.



## Fueling the fire: the media's obsession with stardom

By Alyce Brown

Society is celebrity obsessed, and the media has been quick to cash in on and further this obsession.

At a very basic level, the idolization of those at the top is a common human trait. "In our society, celebrities act like a drug," psychologist James Hounan told Live Science. "They're around us everywhere. They're an easy fix."

And the world is addicted.

News media has sensed this interest and turned it into a 24/7 celebrity news cycle; outlets like "People," "Us Weekly" and "E! News," among many others, have made the lives of stars a full time fascination. Articles titled "Stars and Their Favorite Foods," or "Timothée Chalamet's Best Looks" flash across millions of screens everyday, as people hunger for insight into the lives of the idolized.

Articles alone, however, have not quenched the thirst for celebrity. An additional segment of the media, paparazzi photographers, have become an integral part of gossip tabloids. A-list celebrities can no longer make it down the street before a swarm of photographers are snapping pictures of their every move, knowing that these photos can sell to news outlets for hundreds or thousands of dollars. "Good photos can sell over and over again, earning a smart paparazzo up to \$500,000 yearly," said celebrity news outlet "E! News."

Paparazzi videos have also taken over, with videos of stars walking through the airport or to yoga being posted on YouTube to the reception of millions of views each.

Celebrities themselves have not always taken kindly to the results of society's obsession. These videos routinely show

backlash from their subjects: "You guys are completely inappropriate," (Miley Cyrus); "Will you please just let me get to the car," (Selena Gomez); "I should sue you mother f\*\*\*er" (Iggy Azalea).

Alongside these traditional forms of celebrity media, the emergence of relatively new media like YouTube has only increased and deepened the demand. Architectural Digest's YouTube channel runs a series of videos showing the insides of celebrities' homes, Vogue runs a series on celebrities showing their morning routines, and interviews with those in the spotlight about every aspect of their lives are consistently in demand.

With the news media knowing that photos and articles about celebrity happenings are in demand, what logically follows is an overtaking desire to "get the scoop," sometimes at the expense of ethical behav-

ior. One of the most obvious and recent examples of this is the reporting on Kobe Bryant's death back in January.

TMZ broke the story of his death to the public before the victims' families had been notified, pushed by a desire to be the first with celebrity news. "It would be extremely disrespectful to understand your loved one has perished and to learn about it from TMZ," said Alex Villanueva, Los Angeles County sheriff.

Many believe that this overwhelming desire to be first with celebrity news is a consequence of the fame culture that society and the media have created. It has turned into a never-ending cycle of consumer and product, but neither are leaving any time soon; all that's left is the choice of how far into this infatuation they will let themselves fall.



## Drawing the line: Social media paves the way for child fame

By Alissa Pandit

In a growing age of technology, people around the world are constantly finding new ways to go viral on the internet. It's a simple concept: everyone wants to be famous. The real question is how far are people willing to go? Where are they crossing the line?

Every day, nearly 2.5 quintillion bytes of data are created on the internet. As new apps such as Tik Tok and YouTube gain popularity, creators have a higher chance of going viral.

The Tik Tok app shuffles Tik Toks from around the world to generate a custom "For You Page" for each user. YouTube, on the other hand, is a platform in which creators are able to post long videos with click-bait titles.

These networks demonstrate how easily accessible fame has become to the common person.

A common trend found amongst rising stars is child exploitation. Tik Toker "Future Dr. Ryan" is a current med student studying child and adolescent psychiatry.

The Tik Toker uses his social media platforms to advocate for online child safety. In one of his viral videos, he explains the difference between a Hollywood star, social media star and family vlog star.

A childhood Hollywood star enters the industry through consensual auditions, and pure talent. These childhood stars are protected by the Coogan Law, which saves 15% of a child's earnings for when they turn 18.

With this law, childhood Hollywood stars are able to prevent situations in which parents take their child's earnings. Similarly, the child social media star willingly puts themselves out on the internet. They are able to build their own platform and choose their own content. Both the Hollywood star and social media star have laws to protect them from exploitation and corrupt parents.

Child family vlog stars, however, do not have laws to protect them nor do they have their own platform. They are exposed to a degree that a parent or guardian is able to choose. As an individual, a child of family vloggers is unable to make their own decisions that are broadcast across the internet.

Family YouTuber Mabelle Hobson used to post weekly YouTube videos about her family of seven. Hobson launched a YouTube channel, "Fantastic Adventures,"

about her seven adopted children. CNN reported in 2019 the family had 800,000 subscribers. These hundreds of thousands of subscribers were unknowingly viewing footage of unconsenting minors.

"Last week, Hobson was arrested on two counts of molestation of a child, seven counts of child abuse, five counts of child neglect and five counts of unlawful imprisonment. Police say the children were starved, pepper-sprayed and otherwise punished when they did not remember their lines or want to participate in the videos, according to the probable cause statement," wrote CNN.

This case from 2019 represents the extent and normalization of child exploitation on social media. Hobson tortured her children for simply messing up their lines in a video.

Child exploitation across the internet is a new concept the world is still learning about. As new child exploitation cases rise, it has become clear that there is no law that prevents children from being exploited on the internet if they have a consenting parent.

"When parents share about their children online, they act as both the gatekeeper and the ones benefiting from the sharing of their children's personal information. Most parents share with good intentions and are hopefully cautious about what information is shared," University of Florida law school professor, Stacey Steinberg, reported to CNN.

With the internet becoming a new normal, activists advocate the need for new online anti-child-exploitation laws.



## Whatever it takes: Fame knows no boundaries

By Aayusha Adhikari

From eating tide pods to licking toilets, the modern generation has typically been willing to do just about anything it takes to gain attention from the media.

Social media has become a medium that people utilize to pave paths in order to have their basic needs for attention met. The glorification of having a large number of likes and shares drives people to the craziest lengths, especially those who value cyberspace as a fabricated version of reality.

Junior Niyati Kulkarni commented on the negative atmosphere of many social media sites. "Everyday, while scrolling through Tik Tok, I see people expose personal things about their friends or exes in order to gain attention. People are participating in cancel culture and putting each other down left and right just for a few likes and views."

This is not a rare sight to see on social media platforms these days. Just recently, a trend became popular where people duet others' videos and post hurtful com-

ments about the original poster's appearance. Worse than this, instead of defending the person and standing up for them, the comment section becomes filled with negative remarks from others who continue to comment on the person's appearance.

There are even worse problems growing on the darkest side of the internet, where people can freely attack and threaten others based on their race, sexuality, religion, or gender.

Today, one of the biggest concerns is the normalization of hate crimes and jokes about serious issues such as school shootings in the media. People hide under the shield of dark humor, claiming their remarks were in good fun. Those who speak up about such matters are sometimes labeled as overly sensitive--or even a snowflake.

This normalization is exactly what Tom Teves has spent his life trying to fix. After 2012, Tom Teves, father of late Alex Teves who was murdered in a movie theater, started the No Notoriety

Protocol. Tom Teves has spent the aftermath of his son's death convincing people that the quest for notoriety and infamy is the leading motivator in rampage mass killings and hate crimes. In an effort to reduce future crimes, he calls for responsible media coverage for the sake of public safety; he aims to deprive violent-minded individuals of the celebrity and spotlight they so crave.

This generation of internet users has the potential to stop these attention-seeking criminals and bullies if only they decide to speak up about it.

Senior Alexis Belme stated, "Whenever I see a hate comment or a post that could be potentially dangerous, I try to give them the exact opposite attention they were looking for. We need to stop normalizing things like this even if it doesn't directly affect us."

### Against the odds

With countless unsuspecting people claiming their fame seemingly overnight, it's no wonder so many young people cling to the hope of fame via social media.

In 2018, after a man was arrested for illegal drugs and weapon possession, Jeremy Meeks's mugshot was posted online, earning him the title of "Hot Felon" across social media within days. After serving his prison sentence, that instant social media fame earned him a modeling contract, an heiress wife, and a few possible Hollywood contracts.

While such examples of quick fame are widespread, the expression of having only "15 minutes of fame" isn't that far off. The chances of fame lasting long

enough for the average person to recognize you is slim.

The New York Post calculated that there are approximately 4,763 "famous people" right now, but only 2% of those people are commonly recognized, putting a person's odds of widespread fame at around 1 in 1,574,638.

So, those after a lifetime of fame have little possibility of earning such a title--but the odds increase slightly if, like Meeks, you're willing to settle for only "15 minutes."

