

RELATIONSHIP ATTACHMENT AND THE BEHAVIOUR OF FANS TOWARDS CELEBRITIES

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This study examined psychological characteristics of fans associated with self-reported attempts to approach celebrities. Two hundred undergraduate students (100 male, 100 female) completed a questionnaire consisting of the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised questionnaire (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) and a scale measuring frequency of self-reported attempts to contact a favourite celebrity. Multiple regression revealed a statistically significant positive association between *attachment related anxiety*, and a negative association between *attachment related avoidance* and the frequency of self-reported approach behaviour towards a celebrity, which is consistent with a pre-occupied attachment style. The implications of these findings for theories of stalking and harassment of celebrities are discussed.

This study investigated the behaviour of fans towards celebrities, with particular interest in determining the associations between psychological characteristics of fans and their self-reported attempts to contact and/or approach their favourite celebrity. There has been some research involving the behaviour of fans towards celebrities, the psychological characteristics of fans and the nature of communications fans send celebrities (e.g. Giles & Maltby, 2003; Dietz, et al., 1991); however, little research has directly examined associations between the psychological charac-

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teristics of fans and their behaviour towards celebrities. Evidence for such associations may have a number of potential benefits. First of all, it is known that a subset of fans may develop pathological interests in favoured celebrities that often involve repeated attempts to approach and/or contact them (Giles & Maltby, 2003; McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran, 2002). Knowledge of the psychological characteristics associated with such behaviour might be helpful in designing treatment interventions for these individuals. Secondly, approach behaviour that becomes more sinister and provokes fear in a celebrity may be of interest to law enforcement. An understanding of the psychological characteristics related to approach behaviour in this context might prove useful in identifying perpetrators, informing risk assessment, and risk management.

Celebrity Status

Boorstin (1961) defined a celebrity as someone who is known for being well known. Celebrity status may be achieved from involvement in many different fields, including sport, entertainment, medicine, science, politics, religion, or a close association with other celebrities (McCutcheon, et al., 2002). The lives and behaviours of celebrities are of great interest to other members of society (Morton, 1997) and it appears that exposure to television and other media has helped to increase interest levels (Bogart 1980; Fishwick, 1969; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Powers, 1978). Use of the mass media, particularly by adolescents and young adults, appears to be common. Figures from the United States and United Kingdom suggest that they spend an average of 2.8 hours each day watching television (Larson & Verma, 1999). In addition, there are opportunities to utilize other media outlets such as the Internet, cinema, newspapers and magazines, music, and computer games (Giles & Maltby, 2003). The effect is that many individuals are likely to be exposed to a great number of potentially influential figures through the media. Indeed, over 75% of those questioned in a recent study reported a strong attraction to a celebrity at some time in their lives and 59% claimed that a celebrity had an influence over their attitudes or beliefs (Boon & Lomore, 2001).

Fan Relationships with Celebrities

The symbolic cognitive and emotional processes that form the basis of normal human interaction are also implicated in the development of relationships with celebrities (Planap & Fitness, 1999). Through frequent media exposure, audiences come to feel that they know a celebrity from their appearance, gestures, conversations, and conduct, despite having had no direct communication with them (McCutcheon, et al., 2002; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Giles & Maltby, 2003). Attachments to celebrity figures that develop in this way are referred to as parasocial relationships, which are essentially imagined relationships that tend to be experienced as real. The behaviour of the celebrity and events in their life frequently provoke feelings and emotions in individuals akin to those experienced in real-life relationships (Rubin & McHugh, 1997).

It has been argued that parasocial relationships are a normal part of social development during childhood and adolescence and perform important emotional and social functions (Adams-Price & Greene, 1990; Greene & Adams-Price, 1990). For example, a romantic parasocial relationship with a pop star may enable a young person to practice a relationship at a safe distance as a preparation for an adult relationship (Hinerman, 1992; Steel & Brown, 1995). In most cases the significance and influence of celebrity figures decreases with age (Raviv et al., 1996), however, for some individuals the relationship with a celebrity may become highly significant and even come to dominate their lives (McCutcheon, et al., 2002). Such individuals devote considerable amounts of time to their favourite celebrity and are likely to attempt to make contact and/or approach the celebrity (Giles & Maltby, 2003).

Experiences of Celebrities

Fans attempting to contact and/or approach celebrities is a relatively common phenomena (Morton, 1997). Some of this fan behaviour is relatively innocuous and involves requests for memorabilia and might be considered to be a legitimate part of the celebrity lifestyle. However, some behaviour may have a more sinister quality and may provoke fear and distress in a celebrity (Dietz,

et al., 1991). Fear might be provoked by a number of means, such as repetitive contact attempts by the same individual, unwanted visits to a celebrity's home or workplace, sending unusual items to the celebrity, sending obscene or threatening material, and even pursuing violent attacks (e.g. Dietz, et al., 1991; Meloy, 1998). Where a fan's attempt to contact or approach a celebrity are unwanted, repetitive and provoke fear in the celebrity the behaviour might be labelled as criminal harassment or stalking (Meloy, 1998). Indeed, the use of the term stalking to describe unwanted attention has its origins in the late 1980's with media reports describing the persistent pursuit of celebrities (e.g. Meloy, 1998; Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000).

The precise point when attempts to contact and/or approach another individual become stalking is not clearly defined and has been the subject of considerable debate. It appears to depend upon the reactions of the recipient and the number of approaches made (e.g. Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003). The effect is that what one individual might experience as fear provoking, another might regard with humour or perhaps even flattery (De Becker, 1997).

Stalking and Fan Behaviour

In our attempts to examine the associations between personality characteristics of fans and their behaviour towards celebrities, the literature on stalking behaviour provides some interesting and relevant hypotheses. Whilst there is currently little consensus as to a precise definition of stalking, most authors agree that stalking is a label for a long-term pattern of unwanted, persistent pursuit and intrusive behaviour directed by one person towards another that engenders fear and distress in the victim (Meloy & Gothard, 1995; Mullen & Pathe, 1994; Mullen, et al., 2000; Zona, Sharma, & Lane, 1993). The most common stalking behaviours appear to involve attempts to contact and/or approach another individual through such methods as telephone calls, visiting the victim's home or work place, letter writing, following the victim, sending unwanted gifts, and face-to-face meetings or confrontations (Meloy, 1996, 1997, 1998; Westrup, Fremouw, Thompson, & Lewis, 1999; Mullen, et al., 2000; LeBlanc, Levesque, Richard-

son, Berka, 2001; Sheridan, Davies, & Boon, 2001; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000; Emerson, Ferris, & Gardner, 1998; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). As definitions of stalking rest so crucially upon the victim's reaction to unwanted attention (i.e. fear), it is argued that stalking may be regarded as an extreme case of a more normative approach and/or contact behaviour towards another person (Sheridan & Davies, 2001). It is therefore possible that the psychological processes underlying stalking behaviour might be similar to those underlying all forms of approach and/or contact behaviour towards others. As such, the literature on the psychology of stalking may provide a useful starting point in generating hypotheses relevant to the present study. Drawing from this research, one model that has received some empirical support is a suggested association between attachment pathology and stalking behaviour (Meloy, 1996; Kienlen, 1998).

Stalking and Attachment

Bowlby (1973, 1980) defined attachment as a strong enduring affectional bond between individuals. Attachments initially develop during childhood and are ties between parent and child; however, attachment behaviour continues throughout the lifespan so that in later life attachments are formed between adults. (Bowlby, 1980; Ainsworth, 1989). Bowlby (1980) argued that through interactions with caregivers, individuals develop either positive or negative cognitive schema, which he termed *working models*, of the attachment figure (who they are, where they are, their expected responses) and of themselves (perception of how acceptable or unacceptable they are to the attachment figure) (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bretherton, 1992). The nature of these working models of self and others determines an attachment style that is relatively stable and endures into adulthood (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

There are various individual differences in adult attachment styles and some individuals exhibit maladaptive attachment styles resulting from a pathological attachment history. Bartholomew produced a model of adult attachment that described four attach-

ment styles based upon individual working models of self and others (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The *secure attachment* model involves positive models of the self as worthy and acceptable and a positive other model as available and supportive. Individuals with this attachment style have a positive view of themselves and of others and generally feel confidence and comfort in close adult relationships. *Pre-occupied attachment* involves a negative self-model and positive other model. Individuals with this style of attachment have a poor self-image and a positive image of others; they frequently devalue themselves at the expense of others and actively seek approval and validation from others. *Dismissing attachment* involves a positive self model and negative other model. These individuals maintain a positive self-image by remaining emotionally distant from others and view relationships as unimportant. *Fearful attachment* involves a negative self model and negative other model. These individuals experience ambivalence between a desire for interpersonal relationships and distrust of others, as well as fear of rejection. Bartholomew and Shaver (1998) found that these four attachment styles could be located within a two-dimensional model of adult attachment; these two dimensions were *attachment-related anxiety* and *attachment-related avoidance*. The four attachment styles can then be considered manifestations of different levels of these two dimensions: fearful attachment would characterise individuals who were high on avoidance and high on anxiety; preoccupied attachment would be found in those high on anxiety and low on avoidance; dismissing attachment would entail high avoidance and low anxiety; and secure attachment would characterise those low on both anxiety and avoidance.

Meloy (1996) argued that stalking could be considered an abnormal attachment pattern similar to the preoccupied attachment style. Individuals with this attachment style may indulge in approach and stalking behaviour because they overvalue others and perceive that contact with others is a means by which they can gain personal validation, which they can use to challenge negative views of the self. In essence, acceptance from others serves to indicate that the individual is acceptable and valued. Individuals of

high social status, particularly celebrities, would be expected to be most at risk of approach behaviour and stalking motivated in this way (Meloy, 1998).

The Present Study

As previously stated, the present study is interested in associations between the psychological characteristics of fans and their attempts to contact and/or approach celebrities. The stalking literature was used as a source of hypotheses as many of the common stalking behaviours are attempts at approaching or contacting another individual. Given that preoccupied attachment is characterised by high attachment-related anxiety and low attachment-related avoidance, it is expected that there will be a positive association between attachment-related anxiety and the likelihood of approach behaviours towards a favoured celebrity, and a negative association between attachment-related avoidance and the likelihood of approach behaviours.

METHOD

Participants

The participant sample consisted of 200 undergraduate students from the University of Teesside (100 males and 100 females: the response rate was 57.14% as 350 questionnaires were distributed). The mean age of the participants was 20.28 years (standard deviation 3.2 years). Eighty-two percent of the participants classified themselves as white; 12% as Asian (Indian sub-continent) descent and 6% as Black.

Materials

Participants were presented with a questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section obtained demographic data from participants. The second section consisted of the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised questionnaire (ECR-R, Fraley, et al., 2000). This is a 36-item self-report attachment measure. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The ECR-R yields scores on two subscales, *avoidance* (discomfort with closeness and discomfort with de-

pending on others) and *anxiety* (fear of rejection and abandonment). This questionnaire has been shown to demonstrate good internal reliability (with alpha values for both scales generally found to be around 0.9, e.g. Sibley & Liu, 2004) and good validity (Fraley, et al., 2000). In the third section of the questionnaire each participant was asked to think of his or her favourite celebrity from the world of entertainment, with no restrictions placed upon the sphere of entertainment. Research has indicated that the nature of the celebrity, such as their field of activity, does not influence the degree to which fans are attracted to them nor the likelihood that they will become objects of pursuit (McCutcheon et al., 2002).

Participants were then presented with an *approach behaviour questionnaire* that was designed for the present study (see table 1). This was a twenty-four item self-report questionnaire based upon the Stalking Behaviour Checklist (SBC, Coleman, 1997). Coleman's original SBC was designed to obtain participant's reports of their experiences of stalking behaviour. It is made up of twenty-five items and consists of two sub-scales: *violent behaviour*, which consists of items such as "stalker broke into your car," "violated a restraining order," "threats to cause you harm," "physically harmed you," and a *harassing behaviour*, consisting of items such as "stalker came to your home," "sent gifts," "watched you," "sent letters." The current study modified the SBC to refer to behaviour in relation to a favourite celebrity. For example, the original SBC item stating the stalker "watched you" was modified to "spied on your favourite celebrity." A distinction was also made in the questionnaire items pertaining to a celebrity's home and workplace so that iteming asked about visits, telephone calls, and letters to a celebrity's home and workplace were separated. The response format consisted of the original SBC scale, which asked participants to indicate how often they had indulged in a particular behaviour using a five item Likert scale of 1 = never, 2 = one occasion, 3 = two to three occasion's, 4 = three to five occasion's and 5 = more than five occasions. Finally, participants were asked to explain their reason(s) for contacting or approaching the celebrity.

Procedure

Participants were contacted during undergraduate lectures at the University of Teesside. They were informed that the experimenter was carrying out research into fan behaviour towards celebrities. Those who were interested in taking part were invited to remain in the lecture theatre. Participants were then presented with the questionnaire and were allowed to examine it and to ask any questions. They were informed that all responses were anonymous and that their data would be treated as confidential. Participants were then asked to take the questionnaire and complete it in their own time. Completed questionnaires were returned to a sealed box located in the reception area of the Social Sciences building of the University of Teesside.

RESULTS

Table 1 contains the frequency counts for the different approach behaviours considered by this study. The results of this study indicate that 49% of the sample reported that they indulged, at least once, in one of the contact or approach behaviours. The most common activity reported by participants was "sent letters to a celebrity's workplace," followed by "telephone calls to the celebrity's workplace." None of the participants indicated indulging in any behaviour associated with interpersonal violence, threats, or self-harm.

To further examine the various approach behaviours, the individual questionnaire items were subjected to factor analysis. As participants reported indulging in a subset of the approach behaviours (i.e. the first ten items listed in table 1), factor analysis could only be completed for these items. A principal components analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on these items. Factors with Eigen values of at least 1.5 were retained. This somewhat conservative Eigen value was used due to the relatively small sample size and so that larger factors would be formed. The most parsimonious factor solution was a single factor that accounted for 42.2% of the variance (factor loadings are presented in table 2). Interpretation of the factor was based upon inspection of factor

Table 1
Self-reported frequencies of various approach behaviours

Item	Number of Males reporting carrying out activity at least once (N=100)	Number of Females reporting carrying out activity at least once (N=100)	Total number of participants reporting carrying out activity at least once (N=200)	Overall percentage of Participants reporting carrying out activity at least once
Sent letters to celebrity's workplace	50	48	98	49%
Telephone calls to celebrity's workplace	35	34	79	39.5%
Left messages for celebrity	16	14	30	15%
Sent gifts to celebrity	19	10	29	14.5%
Visits to celebrity's workplace	12	13	25	12.5%
Telephone calls to celebrity's home	10	12	22	11%
Made hang-up telephone calls to celebrity	9	12	21	10.5%
Visits to celebrity's home	5	7	12	6%
Followed celebrity	5	7	12	6%
Sent letters to celebrity's home	2	3	5	2.5%
Sent photographs to celebrity	3	2	5	2.5%

Note: None of the participants reported indulging in any of the behaviours listed below:

Broke into celebrity's house,
 Violated a restraining order,
 Attempted to break into celebrity's car,
 Threats to cause celebrity harm,
 Broke into celebrity's car,
 Attempted to harm celebrity,
 Physically harmed celebrity,
 Attempted to break into celebrity's house,
 Physically harmed yourself, Stole/read celebrity's mail,
 Damaged celebrity's property,
 Threatened to harm yourself,
 Made threats to celebrity's partner,
 Harmed celebrity's partner,
 Spied on the celebrity

loadings using loadings of 0.3 or greater as the cut-off. This single factor appears to be associated with attempts to approach and/or contact a celebrity. Factor scores were computed for this factor and these were used for subsequent analysis of the associations between *attachment style* and frequency of *approach behaviour* towards celebrities.

Table 2
Factor loadings of components on “Approach Behaviour” factor.

Behaviour	Factor Loadings on Factor 1: “Approach Behaviour”
Telephone calls to celebrity’s home	0.826
Sent gifts to celebrity	0.811
Left messages for celebrity	0.733
Telephone calls to celebrity’s workplace	0.678
Made hang-up telephone calls to celebrity	0.406
Visits to celebrity’s workplace	0.380
Followed celebrity	0.380

The computed factor score for males and females are presented in table 3. Statistical analysis using an independent t-test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the factor scores for males or females ($t = -0.252$, $df = 198$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests no differences in the level of approach behaviour between the two genders.

Table 3
Mean Attachment and Approach behaviour scores by gender
(standard deviation in brackets)

Gender	Attachment related anxiety	Attachment related avoidance	Factor scores
Male	3.37 (1.18)	3.19 (1.09)	0.18 (0.09)
Female	3.50 (1.28)	3.10 (1.32)	- 0.17 (0.11)
Overall	3.43 (1.23)	3.15 (1.21)	

Effects of Gender

The effects of gender on scale scores were also examined. Table 3 shows the means for attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and approach behaviour frequency. The scores for males and females are similar for all of these components and multivariate statistical analysis using MANOVA revealed no significant effect of gender upon attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance and approach behaviour.

Motives

The data obtained for this part of the study was a little disappointing as there was a limited range of motives for approaching or contacting a celebrity reported. All participants who indicated that they had attempted to approach and/or contact a celebrity gave motives that clustered around the broad theme of “to obtain an autograph or other memorabilia;” participants presented no other motives. The lack of variation in this data, as participants were essentially reporting similar motives, resulted in no further analysis.

Regression Analysis

In order to examine possible correlates of approach behaviour, a multiple regression was carried out with approach behaviour factor scores as the dependant variable, and gender scores on the attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance scales as predictor variables. The results of this analysis are presented in table 4.

Table 4
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Approach Behaviour Score

Variables	B	Standard Error	Beta	Sig. T
Gender	-0.205	0.835	-0.015	0.806
Attachment related anxiety	3.265**	0.379	0.583	0.000
Attachment related avoidance	-0.930 *	0.386	-0.163	0.017

*sig. <0.05 ** sig.<0.001

There was a small positive correlation between attachment related anxiety and avoidance ($p = 0.12$), which is consistent with findings from previous research (e.g. Fraley, et al., 2000). A statistically significant multiple regression model was obtained ($R^2 = 0.32$; $F = 25.862$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.001$) that indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between *attachment-anxiety* score and *approach behaviour* factor ($\beta = 3.265$; $p < 0.001$) and a statistically significant negative relationship between *attachment-avoidance* score and *approach behaviour* factor ($\beta = 0.583$; $p < 0.001$). There was no statistically significant interaction effect of attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance upon the approach behaviour factor scores ($F = 0.78$, $df = 38, 10$; $p > 0.05$). Thus the likelihood of an individual indulging in approach behaviour towards a celebrity was greatest with higher levels of attachment anxiety and lower levels of attachment avoidance; this was consistent with expectations.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that attempts to contact or approach favourite celebrities may be a relatively common phenomenon, with 49% of participants indicating that they had carried out at least one approach. Most commonly, participants reported attempting to contact a celebrity through their workplace, particularly using written communication (letters, emails). This finding is in accord with other studies indicating a high volume of correspondence received by celebrities from fans (e.g. Morton, 1997; Dietz, et al., 1993).

Approach and Communication Behaviour

There was a significant distinction between the most and least reported approach behaviours such that the latter appears to involve more intrusive contact with the celebrity. The most common behaviours reported, "sent letters to the celebrity's workplace and telephone calls to the celebrity's workplace," do not necessarily involve direct personal contact or physical proximity to the celebrity; such behaviour might be expected to result in minimal intrusion into the private life of a celebrity. The least common behav-

iours, which involve interpersonal violence, telephone calls to the celebrity's home, letters to the celebrity's home, spying on the celebrity, following the celebrity, involve significantly more intrusive contact in that they impinge upon the privacy, and in the case of interpersonal violence, the safety of the celebrity. One can assume such behaviour may cause feelings of fear and distress within a celebrity.

This sense of levels of intrusiveness in the lives of celebrity's is consistent with literature that has looked at the behavioural tactics of stalkers. Spitzberg and Cupach (2003) provided an analysis of the behaviours found in stalking in which they identified five clusters of behaviour, or *stalking tactics*. These consisted of *hyper-intimacy* tactics involving behaviours such as sending gifts, letters, exaggerated messages of affection, telephone calls; *pursuit* tactics including approaches, following, and physical contact; *invasion* tactics consisting of breaking and entering, hang-up phone calls, and trespass; *intimidation* tactics involving sinister gifts, harassment, and threats; and *violent* tactics including interpersonal violence and self harm. Whilst not suggesting that the participant's in the present study were stalking celebrities, this description of stalking tactics can be applied to the findings. The majority of participants seemed to utilise socially acceptable means of contacting a favoured celebrity such as letters to a celebrity's workplace, but a small subset utilised more intrusive methods such as the hyper-intimacy tactics. However, none of the participants reported using pursuit, invasion, intimidation, or violent tactics.

Spitzberg and Cupach (2003) argue that there appears to be a natural and implicit escalating sequence within stalking-tactics shifting from intimate to aggressive. Indeed, Hargreaves (2003) argues that when more socially acceptable methods of obtaining information or intimacy about another person fail, individuals might attempt other means such as approaches to the target, following, and surveillance. Invasion tactics thus represent an escalation of surveillance in terms of encroachment into personal privacy. Intimidation tactics might then reflect recognition of rejection by the target requiring an escalation of coercion. Within this

interpretation, violence represents the ultimate tactic of last resort when rejection is made even clearer.

As In terms of Hargreaves' (2003) model, the finding that most participants in this study used the least intrusive methods of contacting celebrities (e.g. contacting a celebrity's workplace), might indicate that they were content with the levels of information and/or intimacy they obtained from their activities. This seems likely, as the main motives participants reported for contacting or approaching celebrities - to obtain autographs and/or memorabilia - would be likely to be served by this type of behaviour. If an individual's needs were fully met, they would have little need to escalate their behaviours towards greater intrusiveness. Perhaps other motives might require an escalation of tactics towards more intrusive acts. For example, if an individual developed a romantic attachment to a celebrity this might require greater intimacy than can be obtained from contacting a workplace. Future research could test this question by making a more detailed study of the attitudes of participants towards their favoured celebrity and a more detailed inquiry into their reasons for approaching or contacting the celebrity.

The fact that a non-forensic participant sample was used in this study might also mitigate finding the use of more intrusive or violent tactics. Certainly one might expect that those individuals who become known to the criminal justice system might do so precisely because their behaviour had involved violent and intrusive acts towards celebrities. It would be of some future interest to replicate this study with a forensic sample of adjudicated celebrity stalkers to see in what ways their tactics differ from those used by the non-forensic sample.

Gender Effects

The results indicated no effect of gender upon the likelihood of approach behaviour towards celebrities. This finding somewhat contradicts other studies that have looked at harassment and stalking, which have found that males are more likely to indulge in stalking and pursuit behaviours (e.g. Mullen, et al., 2000). It is

argued that these differences in findings may be accounted for by differences in the social acceptability of attempts to contact or approach a celebrity as compared to non-celebrities, as well as differences in the motives reported by participants for contacting or approaching celebrities compared to those most commonly associated with stalking.

The most common forms of stalking are those involving some form of romantic motivation such as stalking a former romantic partner and attempting to instigate a romantic relationship with another individual (e.g. Mullen, et al., 2000). This may in part be explained by standard gendered dating patterns in Western cultures, which tend to regard the male as the instigator and the female as the recipient of romantic approaches. Celebrities might represent a different class of target for approach and contact, perhaps due to the expectation that being a celebrity entails some degree of social acceptance of contact from others (McCutcheon, et al., 2002; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Giles & Maltby, 2003). This may result in both males and females feeling more entitled to make contact with a favoured celebrity than with other types of individuals such as a romantic interest. Indeed, males and females appear equally likely to develop fan relationships with celebrities (McCutcheon, et al., 2002).

The motives for contacting or approaching celebrities in the present study also appear to be different to the most common motives for stalking another individual. Stalking behaviour is most commonly motivated by a desire to start or rekindle a romantic relationship (e.g. Meloy, 1998; Mullen, et al., 2000); however, the self-reports of participants in this study indicate no such motivation. Perhaps the desire for information about a celebrity is more gender neutral than is the pursuit of another in the cause of romantic involvement, in which case it is not surprising that there were no effects of gender on the likelihood of attempting to contact a celebrity.

Inspection of the frequencies of the various approaches and contact behaviours (table 1) revealed striking similarities between

males and females. This finding is consistent with research on stalking and harassment (e.g. Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003). Thus, at least as far as the present participants were concerned, males and females appear to have used similar methods to contact celebrities.

Attachment

The results of this study suggest the likelihood of contacting or approaching a favourite celebrity had a positive relationship with attachment related anxiety and a negative relationship with attachment related avoidance. Hence, those individuals who made the greatest number of attempts to contact a celebrity were the most likely to have higher scores on attachment related anxiety and lower scores on attachment related avoidance. This pattern of attachment is characteristic of the preoccupied attachment style, which supports an association between preoccupied attachment and the likelihood of approach behaviour towards celebrities. These findings are consistent with predictions drawn from the stalking literature positing an association between repetitive contact and approach behaviours (stalking) and disordered attachment (e.g. Kienlen, 1998; Lewis, Frenmouw, Del Ben, & Farr, 2001; Meloy, 1998). The present results also imply that similar psychological processes might underlie both pathological behaviours such as stalking and more innocuous behaviours such as attempts to contact a celebrity; indeed, it might be that one of the factors distinguishing stalking behaviour from more acceptable behaviours is the nature of an individual's attachment style.

It is interesting to consider how preoccupied attachment might relate to contact and approach behaviour towards celebrities. Individuals with a preoccupied attachment style tend to have negative views of self and a simultaneously positive view of others; such individuals may overvalue others whilst undervaluing themselves. The effect is an attempt to obtain approval from others to compensate for their lack of self-worth. Celebrities may be particularly attractive to individuals with a preoccupied attachment style due to the high social status. In terms of the present study, it is possible that a higher number of contact and approach behaviours may be attempts to increase the perceived association an individual has

with a celebrity, with an attendant increase in the individual's feelings of self worth. It is interesting to note that if this is the case, the participants were either unwilling to admit it or did not recognise it as a motive and instead presented their motives as a need for more information or memorabilia from the celebrity.

Limitations and Future Direction

There are various limitations to this study, one being the potential for social desirability responding to have influenced the results. Self-reports of participants in this study indicated no use of the most intrusive or aggressive tactics, which might indicate a desire to create positive impressions. As it relied upon retrospective self-reports, the data are also subject to biases associated with faulty recall. The limited sample of the current study also limits generalizations. The participant sample consisted of male and female undergraduate students, an approach that has been used in previous research on stalking (e.g. Lewis, et al., 2001) and the attitudes of fans to celebrities (e.g. Giles & Maltby, 2003). This sample was chosen because students are relatively homogeneous as to social class, level of intelligence, educational attainment, and age, all of which are potential confounds in studies of fan characteristics. However, it is recognised that students present a problem for the generalization of the results given their restricted demographic characteristics, so the finding of this study should be interpreted with caution.

This study obtained limited information about motives for attempting to contact or approach a celebrity. Motives could be highly significant as individuals may use different behaviour depending upon their particular needs. For instance, a desire to obtain tour dates, details of a new film, or a signed photograph are all likely to be met by contacting a celebrity's workplace. Other needs might require different behaviours, such that a need for closeness or association with the celebrity may require a personal confrontation. More pathological needs might rely on more intrusive behaviours such as a desire to monitor the celebrity's behaviour. Future research should therefore consider the motives of fans and attempt to relate these to the particular behaviours exhibited.

The findings of this study have a number of potential practical applications. The clear implication is that the greater the frequency of approach or contact behaviours, the more likely an individual is to have higher levels of attachment related anxiety and low levels of attachment related avoidance. Thus, inferences might be drawn as to the attachment behaviour of an individual who repeatedly attempts to contact a celebrity, which would also allow judgments about the characteristics of their relationships with others and their perception of others. This might be useful in the context of policing, such as attempting to draw a psychological profile of an unknown offender or in planning interviews with an offender. In a clinical context, perhaps specific interventions might be designed to improve attachment difficulties.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study suggest that attempts to contact and approach celebrities are relatively common and that most individuals that indulge in such behaviour use socially acceptable methods that involve minimal intrusion into the private lives of a celebrity. A small subset may utilise more intrusive behaviours, although this study did not identify such individuals, perhaps because of the non-forensic nature of the sample. This study found an association between the likelihood of contact and approach behaviours and a preoccupied attachment style. It is therefore suggested that preoccupied attachment may be significant in the aetiology of attempts to contact or approach celebrities and perhaps in the aetiology of celebrity stalking.

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