

Celebrity - the Making of A President

Do not underestimate the importance of celebrity. Particularly if your identity is under threat because the touchstones, rituals and group membership through which you could affirm it have been diminished. This leads you to lose a sense of particularity or specialness, while all those celebs on TV have tons of it. You are left wanting a bit of their magic.

The same happens if you are in a transition between one social group and another. Hence our endless strivings to 'stand out', 'be different' and the attempts of fashion, entertainment and music to make statements to help young and old create identity.

There has been little real thought put into the role of celebrity in all this, yet it is right at the centre of today's western cultures. In the UK more than 10 million people watch the X Factor and Strictly Come Dancing each week. Donald Trump, now President Elect, was formerly the CEO on a TV reality show, the Apprentice. We will never know for sure how much his TV persona was worth in terms of votes, but his ability to wield power and make decisions was a weekly feature of his TV role - even though he has no experience of government. He is now CEO of the world's most powerful nation.

What is a celebrity? It is nothing more or less than a celebrated person; ***a special person***. A person who is famous for...being famous. The rise in interest in celebrities is the single biggest popular social movement of the past twenty years. Every day in the Sun more column inches are devoted to the comings and goings of 'known' people than anything else. Eight million people read the Sun, the Express, the Mail or the Mirror in the course of an average day! What is it all about?

It is clearly about the clamour for attention and status which singles one out from the herd. It is another echo of Warhol's famous 'one day everybody will be famous for 15 minutes' thought. It is the biggest phenomenon to result from the trend from Dependency to Autonomy. [Individualism explained](#)

At the everyday individual level celebrity is replicated in 'likes', 'comments' and shares on social media. Who does not feel a little more celebrated when someone else likes or shares their posts? In this way we *can share in a taste of celebrity* in a way that we cannot indulge in a bit of governing or law making.

There seem to be three main types of celebrity:

1. Talent from the world of sport and entertainment. Very occasionally these are joined by eminent persons, like Stephen Hawking.
2. Reality TV or soap-spawned 'faces' who we have watched evolve from nobodies to

somebodies.

3. Notorious or outrageous figures who act out various forms of unconventional behaviour – from Wossie to Mossie - a variant on the entertainment celebs.

We can see that Donald Trump exemplifies and combines all three.

Another way *in which moments of fame or celebrity can be experienced by viewers* is through identification with the celebs and their entourages on TV. This is why Trump made such a fuss of friends and family in his acceptance speech, going up and down the line to kiss or congratulate them all, and singling out a black lady among others. We all have friends and family too, thus we can see a vestige of ourselves or those we know among his associates as he moves along it. He could be congratulating ME!