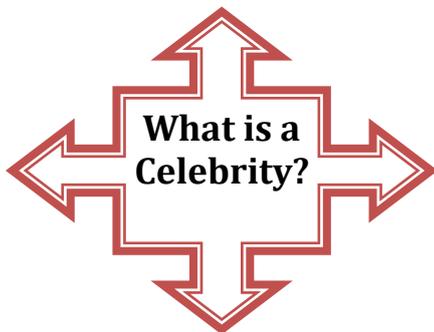


### 3. The Psychology of Celebrity

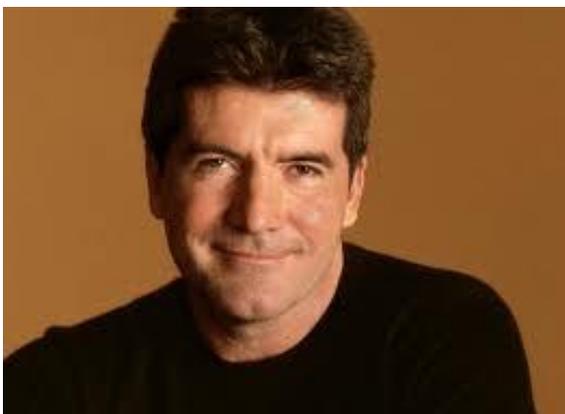
The Syllabus: The topics which must be covered

<b>Media Psychology PY4 - See Appendix for issues and debates in Psychology</b>	
Media influences on social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explanations of media influences on pro- and anti-social behaviour</li><li>• The positive and negative effects of computers and video games on behaviour</li></ul>
Media and Persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The application of Hovland-Yale and Elaboration Likelihood Models in explaining the persuasive effects of media</li><li>• Explanations for the persuasiveness of television advertising</li></ul>
The psychology of 'Celebrity'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The attraction of 'celebrity', including social psychological and evolutionary explanations</li><li>• Research into intense fandom, including, celebrity worship and celebrity stalking</li></ul>

#### The attraction of Celebrity, including Social Psychological and Evolutionary Explanations



Holt & Lewis (2009): A modern phenomenon meaning, 'Well known' linked with the popularity of Reality TV shows such as



In 2008 Simon Cowell was named as the most popular person in the world, followed by God and the Queen.

## 3. The Psychology of Celebrity

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### The Attraction of Celebrity

According to Holt and Lewis (2009) society seems to be obsessed with the multi-million pound celebrity industry: Magazines devoted to celebrities; television programmes such as the X-Factor and Britain's Got Talent.

The adoration of celebrities, as idols or role models, is a normal part of identity-development in childhood and adolescence (Giles & Maltby, 2004).

However, this parasocial can be an abnormal phenomenon whereby individuals become virtually obsessed with one or more celebrities.

An addiction develops, leading to more extreme (and perhaps delusional) behaviours to sustain the individual's satisfaction with the parasocial relationship.



### Social Psychology Explanations

**Parasocial relationship:** an entirely one-sided relationship between two people in which one person feels strongly attached emotionally to the other person, who is typically completely unaware of the existence of the first person. The majority of relationships between fans and celebrities are parasocial ones, where the fan possesses a lot of knowledge about the celebrity.

Eyal and Cohen (2006) found that the break up distress reported by viewers of the last ever episode of Friends reflected the extent of their parasocial relationship with the show's characters. There were emotional scenes when the last broadcast was shown in Times Square, New York.

There is convincing evidence that parasocial relationships resemble real ones, and that they fulfil the needs fulfilled by real relationships.

**Evidence:** What kinds of people are most likely to seek parasocial relationships? It is argued that those most attracted to celebrities are shy and lonely. Eyal and Cohen found that lonely participants experienced more distress than non-lonely ones after the last episode of Friends.

An important factor influencing attraction to celebrities is **age**. Giles (2000) found teenagers and young adults engage in celebrity worship.

**In a study by Giles and Maltby (2004)** of British adolescents aged between 11 and 16, those with intense personal interest in a celebrity reported low levels of security and closeness to others and low attachment to parents. Giles and Maltby said celebrities provide adolescents with a secondary group of pseudo-friends during a time of increasing independence from parents.

An important factor in determining the intensity of an individual's parasocial relationship is his or her **attachment style**.

**Using Ainsworth's Strange Situation**, three major types of attachment were found. Secure, avoidant or resistant ambivalent. It was found that students having ambivalent attachment were likely to form parasocial relationships; those having avoidant attachment least likely to; and the secure ones in the middle.