



Further Validation of an Indirect Measure of Celebrity Stalking

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Abstract: The *Obsessive Relational Intrusion and Celebrity Stalking* scale (ORI & CS) was developed to identify persons likely to become stalkers of celebrities. The purpose of the present study is to provide additional evidence about the reliability and validity of the ORI & CS. We administered the ORI & CS and measures of celebrity worship, fantasy proneness, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and celebrity stalking behavior in several possible orders to 145 college students. Neither the fantasy proneness scale nor the obsessive-compulsive measure correlated significantly with the ORI & CS, but both subscales of the latter did correlate significantly with the two more problematic subscales of the celebrity worship measure, essentially replicating an earlier study. Furthermore, obnoxious celebrity stalking behavior was the best predictor of threat subscale scores from the ORI & CS. Implications for the further study of celebrity stalking are explored.

Keywords: celebrity, fame, stalking, test validity.

Introduction

A celebrity can be described as any living person who is famous for virtually any reason. However, previous research has shown that when asked to choose a favorite celebrity about 75% of the choices were either actors, musicians, or athletes (Green, Griffith, Aruguete, Edman, & McCutcheon, 2014). There are at least four good reasons why the stalking of celebrities is a topic worthy of investigation. Celebrity stalkers sometimes commit crimes against celebrities and/or their friends and relatives. Secondly, even when they do not pose a physical threat, they often cause fear, anger and distress in their victims. Third, about half of the individuals who are apprehended for stalking celebrities eventually stalk again. Fourth, it provides an opportunity to correct the media misinformation about celebrity stalkers spread by persons claiming to be experts on celebrity stalking (Meloy, Sheridan, & Hoffman, 2008).

McCutcheon, Lange, and Houran (2002) offered an "Absorption-Addiction" model to explain celebrity worship. According to this model, a weak identity in some individuals facilitates psychological absorption with a celebrity in an attempt to strengthen identity and a sense of fulfillment. The absorption might take on an addictive component, leading to more extreme behaviors to sustain the individual's satisfaction with one's favorite celebrity. Several studies based on the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS; Maltby, Houran, Lange, Ashe & McCutcheon, 2002; Maltby, McCutcheon, Ashe & Houran, 2001; McCutcheon, et al., 2002) are consistent with this proposed model and suggest that there are three increasingly more extreme sets of attitudes and behaviors associated with celebrity worship. Low levels of celebrity worship have *Entertainment-social* value and are reflected in agreement with items like "My friends and I like to discuss what my favorite celebrity has done," and "Learning the life story of my favorite celebrity is a lot of fun." A second level of celebrity worship is characterized by more *Intense-personal* feelings, defined by items like "I consider my favorite celebrity to be my soul mate," and "I have frequent thoughts about my

celebrity, even when I don't want to." This level reflects individuals' intense and compulsive feelings about the celebrity, similar to the obsessional tendencies of fans often referred to in the literature (Dietz, Matthews, Van Duyne, Martell, Parry, Stewart, Warren and Crowder, 1991; Giles, 2000). The most extreme expression of celebrity worship is labeled *Borderline-pathological*. It is shown in items like: "If someone gave me several thousand dollars to do with as I please, I would consider spending it on a personal possession (like a napkin or paper plate) once used by my favorite celebrity," and "If I were lucky enough to meet my favorite celebrity, and he/she asked me to do something illegal as a favor I would probably do it." This third level is believed to reflect an individual's borderline pathological attitudes and behaviors toward a favorite celebrity.

Stalking can be defined as "a pattern of unwanted pursuit, harassment, or intrusion that threatens or intimidates a person, or would be so perceived by a 'reasonable person'" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2008). From this definition it follows that some covert behaviors (e.g. watching from a distance, fantasizing about a romantic relationship, purchasing items associated with that person) would not fit the definition of stalking because they would be unknown to the target person. Thus, the target person must be aware of the activity and perceive it as unwanted, threatening, or intrusive.

The stalking of a celebrity should be distinguished from the stalking of a non-celebrity by the fact that some fan behavior that might be considered intrusive by non-celebrities (e.g. trying to initiate a conversation in public, seeking advice or an autograph, etc.) might be commonplace and therefore seen as non-threatening by a celebrity.

It has been about a decade since the *Obsessive Relational Intrusion and Celebrity Stalking* scale (ORI & CS) was developed and validated for the purpose of identifying potential celebrity stalkers (McCutcheon, Aruguete, Scott, Jr., Parker, & Calicchia, 2006; McCutcheon, Scott, Jr., Aruguete, & Parker, 2006). It consists of 10 items that meet the

criteria cited above. That is, they depict brief scenarios, between 27 and 103 words long, describing fan behaviors that would clearly be unwanted (e.g., sending many fan letters rather than one or two) and/or threatening (warning that bad things would happen to the celebrity), even to a celebrity. The eleventh item is "A fan wrote a letter to the fan's favorite celebrity, a person the fan had never met, describing in great detail how much the fan enjoyed looking at publicity photos of the celebrity." This item is meant as a control, the assumption being that this scenario would be rated as more appropriate than the other ten. The mean score for item 11 indicated that a sample of college students did rate it as slightly appropriate, whereas means for the other 10 scenarios fell somewhere in the "inappropriate" portion of the scale. The ORI & CS correlated significantly with scores on a measure of stalking meant for non-celebrities, and a brief measure of anger, providing evidence for concurrent validity (McCutcheon, Aruguete, et al., 2006).

Factor analysis of the 11 items revealed that seven of the items, including item 11, clustered together in a factor that we labeled "Persistent Pursuit." The theme of these items reflects a willingness on the part of a fan to persist in activities that might be perceived by a celebrity as slightly or moderately annoying. In our judgment, the four "Threat" items are more troublesome. Their theme is letters or phone calls suggesting sexual acts, making obscene comments, and predicting harm that would soon befall the celebrity. Cronbach alphas were .80 and .77 respectively (McCutcheon, Aruguete, et al., 2006).

Although the ORI & CS appears to have reasonable reliability and validity, some important issues remain unresolved. Perhaps chief among these issues is the fact that it is an indirect measure (McCutcheon, Aruguete, et al., 2006). That is, respondents are asked if the fan behaviors described in the scenarios, are appropriate, not if the respondents had actually behaved that way themselves. The strength in this approach is that it is likely to minimize social desirability. In fact, ORI & CS scores correlated -.08

and .01 with scores on a social desirability scale (McCutcheon, Aruguete, et al., 2006). However, it leaves open the question of whether ORI & CS scores predict actual celebrity stalking behavior.

Spitzberg and Cupach (2008) developed a *Fan Activities Scale*, a list of 60 behaviors that fans sometimes direct toward celebrities. We propose to correlate ORI & CS scores with scores on a modified version of the *Fan Activities Scale*, one that contains only those kinds of activities that meet the criteria of being known by the celebrity and being clearly unwanted. We believe that at least 18 of these behaviors would be perceived as threatening to most celebrities (i.e. trespassing on the celebrity's property, engaging in regulatory harassment, stealing valued possessions). We predict that there will be a significant positive correlation between what we are calling the *Obnoxious Fan Activities Scale* (OFAS-18) scores and scores on both subscales of the ORI & CS, but especially so the "Threat" subscale, because of the threatening nature of many of the items on our 18-item adaptation of the *Fan Activities Scale*.

Another issue we address in the present study is replication. The *Celebrity Attitude Scale* (CAS) was developed for the purpose of measuring attitudes towards one's favorite celebrity (McCutcheon, Maltby, Houran, & Ashe, 2004). To date there are more than 40 published studies, taken collectively, that testify to the reliability and validity of this scale. In the first of the two studies in which the ORI & CS was used, the three subscales of the CAS (entertainment-social, intense-personal, borderline pathological) correlated .25, .35, and .25 respectively with total ORI & CS scores (McCutcheon, Scott, Jr., Aruguete, & Parker, 2006). Research has generally supported the idea that the entertainment-social subscale reflects a relatively benign form of celebrity adoration, but the latter two are often linked to attitudes and behaviors that are more problematic (Maltby, Day, McCutcheon, Gillett, Houran, & Ashe, 2004; Maltby, Houran, & McCutcheon, 2003; Maltby, McCutcheon, & Lowinger, 2011). We predicted the significant correlations with intense-personal and borderline pathological, but not the

correlation with entertainment-social. We are administering the CAS in the present study to see if the previous results will be replicated. Or, will ORI & CS correlate significantly only with the two more problematic subscales of the CAS?

Maltby et al. (2005) found that fantasy proneness and obsessive-compulsive disorder were related to each other and to scores on CAS intense-personal and CAS borderline pathological. They suggested that their findings are relevant to the stalking of celebrities. Indeed, one study revealed that 25% of those fans surveyed had fantasized about becoming the celebrity's lover or spouse (Adams-Price & Greene, 1990), and a study of threatening letters that had been sent to celebrities found that many of them expressed the fantasy that the fan was already in some sort of personal relationship with "their" celebrity (Dietz, et al., 1991). Persons suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder often have thoughts of hurting themselves or others, and they frequently encounter unpleasant thoughts that they are unable to dismiss (Foa, Kozak, Salkovskis, Coles, & Amir, 1998). Stalkers sometimes physically threaten, harm or restrain celebrities, and they sometimes threaten to harm themselves (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2008). Agreement with some of the items found on the CAS intense-personal subscale strongly suggests a fan who is obsessed with a favorite celebrity (e.g., "I often feel compelled to learn the personal habits of my favorite celebrity," "When my favorite celebrity dies, I will feel like dying too.").

In keeping with the hypotheses that fantasy proneness and obsessive-compulsive disorder are relevant to the stalking of celebrities, we will administer measures of fantasy proneness and obsessiveness. We predict that scores on these scales will correlate positively with scores on the ORI & CS, and with scores on CAS intense-personal and CAS borderline pathological.

Method

Participants

We asked participants for age ($Mean = 20.50$, $SD = 4.45$), gender (90 women and 55 men), and ethnicity (71 Whites, 57 African Americans, 3 Hispanics, 4 Asians, and 10 other ethnicities). Participants were 145 students from one university located in Missouri, and two universities (one public, 1 private) located in Georgia.

Measures

The *Obsessive-Compulsive Inventory* (OCI) is a self-report instrument designed to determine the diagnosis and severity of obsessive-compulsive disorder (Foa, Kozak, Salkovskis, Coles, & Amir, 1998). Each of the eight items on the obsessing subscale is rated on a five-point scale of Frequency (0 = Never; 4 = Almost always) and Distress (0 = Not at all; 4 = Extremely). High scores on both indicate that the respondent is obsessing very frequently and is extremely bothered by it. Sample items include "I have thoughts that I might want to harm myself or others," and "I am upset by unpleasant thoughts that come into my mind against my will." The subscale was shown to have reliability and validity (Foa, et al., 1998). Cronbach's alpha in the present study is .86.

The 23-item version of the *Celebrity Attitude Scale* (CAS) has been shown to have good psychometric properties over the course of several studies (for a review see McCutcheon, et al., 2004). The response format for the CAS is a 5-point scale with anchor points of "strongly agree" equal to 5 and "strongly disagree" equal to 1. The scale measures three dimensions of celebrity worship that were identified through factor analysis (McCutcheon et al., 2004). These three subscales address entertainment-social (10 items; e.g., "My friends and I like to discuss what my favorite celebrity has done," $\alpha = .83$), intense-personal (9 items; e.g., "I have frequent thoughts about my favorite celebrity, even when I don't want to," $\alpha = .89$), and borderline pathological (4 items; e.g., "I often feel compelled to learn the personal habits of my favorite celebrity;" $\alpha = .72$) forms of celebrity worship. Across several studies total scale Cronbach alphas

ranged from .84 to .94 (McCutcheon et al., 2004). Cronbach's alpha in the present study was .93.

The *Obsessional Relational Intrusion & Celebrity Stalking* scale (ORI & CS) is an 11-item Likert-type scale with "very inappropriate" equal to 1 and "very appropriate" equal to 7. Factor analysis revealed two factors, "persistent pursuit" (7 items) and "threat" (4 items). An example of the former is: "A fan approached his/her favorite celebrity following a public appearance and started an argument about the celebrity's relationships with other people, offering unwanted advice about how to treat others." A sample item of "threat" is: "A fan wrote a letter to the fan's favorite celebrity, a person the fan had never met, describing in great detail a particular sexual act that the fan would like to perform on the celebrity." High scores indicate acceptance of celebrity stalking and identify persons who might be more likely to stalk a celebrity themselves. These two items, as well as the other nine, were followed by "In your opinion how appropriate or inappropriate was the fan's action?" The ORI & CS is short, has good internal reliability and validity, and is free of social desirability bias (McCutcheon, Aruguete, et al., 2006). Cronbach's alpha in the present study is .81 for "persistent pursuit" and .87 for "threat."

The *Creative Experiences Questionnaire* (CEQ) is a 25-item self-report measure of fantasy proneness. It has been shown to have adequate reliability and validity, and is unrelated to social desirability. Respondents choose "yes" (1 point) or "no" (0 points) for each item. Sample items include "As a child, I had my own make believe friend or animal," and "Many of my fantasies have a realistic intensity." High scores suggest that the respondent is likely to be one who experiences fantasy with frequency and intensity (Merckelbach, Horselenberg, & Muris, 2001). Cronbach's alpha in the present study is .76.

We reduced the 60-item *Fan Activities Scale* to 18 items by eliminating "normal" fan activities (e.g., seeking autographs, watching the celebrity in the media), covert

activities (taking photos from a distance without the celebrity's knowledge), ambiguous items (writing to a celebrity may or may not be "normal" depending on the content) and reducing overlap ("expressing sexual interest" is similar to "sexually coercing her/him"). Because the remaining 18 activities went far beyond the range of normal fan behaviors we called it the *Obnoxious Fan Activities Scale* (OFAS-18). Each item was prefaced by this question: "Since the age of 16, how often, if at all, have you ever engaged in any of the following activities?" Possible answers ranged from 1, "never," to 5, "frequently." High scores indicate actual celebrity stalking behavior. Cronbach's alpha in the present study is .95.

Procedure

The measures described above were presented in several possible orders to minimize the likelihood of a systematic order bias. Participants were told that they could discontinue the study at any point without penalty, in accordance with IRB policy at each institution where the study took place. All of the participants who agreed to participate completed the study. Participants filled out the scales in groups ranging in size from 22 to 47 in classrooms at their respective institutions.

Results

Means and standard deviations for all measures used in the study are presented in Table One.

TABLE 1 Possible Range, Means and Standard Deviations for the Measures Used.

	Possible Range	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
ORI & CS – Persistent Pursuit	7-49 (28%)	17.97	6.83
ORI & CS - Threat	4-28 (13%)	6.20	3.67
CAS Entertainment -Social	10-50 (30%)	21.50	7.00
CAS Intense-Personal	9-45 (26%)	17.53	7.97
CAS Borderline Pathological	4-20 (34%)	8.70	3.54
Obnoxious Fan Activities Scale-18	18-90 (4%)	19.63	6.22
Creative Experiences Questionnaire	0-25 (40%)	9.45	4.34
OCI – Obsessing	0-64 (23%)	14.19	12.36

Note: Numbers in parentheses are percentages where mean score falls within each possible range. Thus, the mean score of 17.97 falls 28% above the lowest possible score in the possible range of 7-49.

Table Two shows the correlations among all of the measures used in our study. The relationships shown here are generally consistent with relationships obtained in previous research (Aruguete, Griffith, Edman, Green, & McCutcheon, 2014; McCutcheon, Aruguete, Scott, Parker, & Calicchia, 2006; McCutcheon, Scott, Aruguete, & Parker, 2006).

TABLE 2 Correlation Matrix for All Measures Used

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 ORI & CS – Pers. Pursuit	1.00							
2 ORI & CS - Threat	.66**	1.00						
3 CAS E-S	.17*	.03	1.00					
4 CAS I-P	.39**	.33**	.50**	1.00				
5 CAS BP	.35**	.31**	.53**	.73**	1.00			
6 Obnoxious Fan Activities Scale-18	.25**	.36**	.17*	.31**	.22**	1.00		
7 CEQ	.10	.06	.24**	.25**	.29**	.15	1.00	
8 OCI - Obsessing	-.04	-.01	.13	.10	.10	-.04	.35**	1.00

Note: Because of missing data *N*s vary between 140 and 145. $p < .05 = *$; $p < .01 = **$

We predicted a positive correlation between *Obnoxious Fan Activities Scale-18* scores and both ORI & CS-Persistent Pursuit scores and ORI & CS-Threat scores, especially the latter because of the threats stated or implied in the OFAS-18 . We found correlation coefficients of .25 and .36 respectively. We used a Fisher r-to-z transformation to examine whether or not these correlation coefficients were significantly different from each other. We found no significant difference ($z = -1.02, p = .31$). We also found significant correlations between OFAS-18 scores and scores on each of the three CAS subscales (E-S = .17, I-P = .31, BP = .22).

We predicted positive correlations between ORI & CS subscale scores and the subscales of the CAS. We found significant correlations between CAS- I-P and ORI & CS Persistent Pursuit (.39), and CAS I-P and ORI & CS Threat (.33). We found significant correlations between CAS- BP and ORI & CS Persistent Pursuit (.35), and CAS BP and ORI & CS Threat (.31).

We found a positive correlation between CEQ scores and the CAS subscales of entertainment- social (.24), intense-personal (.25) and borderline pathological (.29). Scores on the CEQ were not significantly related to either ORI & CS Persistent Pursuit (.10) or ORI & CS Threat (.06).

We predicted a positive correlation between OCI-Obsessing scores and the CAS subscales of intense-personal and borderline pathological. We found non-significant correlations of .10 and .10 respectively. Furthermore, OCI-Obsessing scores were unrelated to ORI & CS Persistent Pursuit (-.04) and ORI & CS Threat (-.01).

We computed two multiple regressions in which all statistically significant IVs were entered simultaneously in an effort to determine the relative contribution of the variables that correlated significantly with ORI & CS scores and their combined predictive power. The first equation entered the ORI & CS – Persistent Pursuit as a dependent variable and the CAS I-P, CAS BP, and the OFAS-18 as independent variables. The resulting regression equation was significant; multiple $R = .423, R^2 = .179$,

$F(3,132) = 9.60, p < .001$. The CAS I-P was the only significant predictor of the ORI & CS – Persistent Pursuit ($\beta = .25, p < .05$). The second equation entered the ORI & CS – Threat as a dependent variable and the CAS I-P, CAS BP, and the OFAS-18 as independent variables. This regression was also significant; multiple $R = .441, R^2 = .195, F(3,135) = 10.88, p < .001$. The OFAS-18 was the only significant predictor of ORI & CS – Threat ($\beta = .29, p < .01$).

Discussion

Means, SDs, and Cronbach alphas for the ORI & CS are consistent with those found in previous studies (McCutcheon, Aruguete, Scott, Parker, & Calicchia, 2006; McCutcheon, Scott, Aruguete, & Parker, 2006). Means, SDs, and Cronbach alphas for the CAS subscales are also similar to those typically found in college students in the United States (Aruguete, Griffith, Edman, Green, & McCutcheon, 2014; McCutcheon, Lowinger, Wong, & Jenkins, 2013). Likewise, the means, SDs, and Cronbach alphas for the CEQ are similar to those reported earlier (Merckelbach, Horselenberg, & Muris, 2001). Thus we have reason to believe that the values reported here accurately reflect the views of our respondents.

Our measure of obsessiveness, based on obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), failed to predict scores on either subscale of the ORI & CS. This disorder is characterized by considerable anxiety and repetitive behaviors designed to relieve anxiety. However, obsessiveness can also be regarded as an extreme infatuation of a celebrity, a fixation on the delusional idea that the stalker has some sort of special relationship with a celebrity without the anxiety and ritualistic repetitive behaviors typical of OCD. Proctor (2012) argues that celebrity stalkers can be of either type, but others seem to take the view that the latter type (fixation on a celebrity) is more common in those who stalk celebrities (Meloy, Hoffmann, Guildamann, & James, 2012). Maybe obsessiveness is truly unrelated to celebrity stalking, but that seems unlikely

based on anecdotal accounts of real life celebrity stalking. Furthermore, previous research links celebrity worship and the obsessive behaviors described in the ORI & CS (McCutcheon, Aruguete, et al., 2006; McCutcheon, Scott, et al, 2006). Perhaps the scale we used to measure obsession was not appropriate. For those researchers interested in the possible link between the two, we recommend trying several different measures of obsessiveness/obsession to see which, if any, predict the tendency to stalk celebrities.

The correlation coefficients for fantasy proneness and ORI & CS subscales were both in the predicted direction (.10 & .06), but far too weak for statistical significance. On the other hand, the correlation coefficients for fantasy proneness and all three CAS subscales were statistically significant. These findings partially replicate those of Maltby et al. (2005), who found that the same measure of fantasy proneness that we used correlated with CAS intense- personal (.31) and CAS borderline pathological (.37), but not with CAS entertainment-social (.01). We also found, as they did, that obsessiveness was correlated with fantasy proneness. Maltby et al. suggested that as celebrity worship becomes more intense, the individual perceives having a real relationship with her or his favorite celebrity and becomes increasingly likely to have fantasies about such a relationship. Findings of the present study suggest that the fantasies are also part of the experience of the person who follows a favorite celebrity mostly for entertainment and social reasons.

We also partially replicated another previous finding, namely that ORI & CS scores were related to CAS subscale scores (McCutcheon, Scott, et al., 2006). In the previous study ORI & CS subscale scores were combined to yield a total score, which correlated with CAS entertainment- social (.25), intense-personal (.35), and borderline pathological (.25). In the present study both ORI & CS subscales correlated significantly with intense-personal and borderline pathological, but not with entertainment-social. The present results are generally consistent with Absorption-addiction theory since those who score high only on entertainment-social and not the other two CAS subscales appear to be

relatively normal (Ashe, Maltby, & McCutcheon, 2005; Maltby, Day, McCutcheon, Gillett, Houran, & Ashe, 2004; Maltby, Houran, & McCutcheon, 2003; Maltby, McCutcheon, & Lowinger, 2011). On the other hand, persons who would harm celebrities who they claim to admire would seem to be much less so. Absorption-addiction theory also predicts that persons who might behave obnoxiously toward celebrities (high OFAS-18 scores) would tend to be those who are absorbed or addicted to their favorite celebrity, rather than those who are attracted merely for entertainment social reasons. In fact, our results showed a correlation of .17 between OFAS-18 scores and CAS Entertainment/social scores, but correlations that were slightly higher (.31 & .22) for the two more problematic CAS subscales.

One limitation of the present study is the reliance on self-report. It is well-known that people do not always behave in ways that are consistent with their self-reported attitudes. We also wish to emphasize that accompanying the OFAS-18 was the question: "Since the age of 16, how often, if at all, have you ever engaged in any of the following activities?" A few of the older respondents in our study might have changed considerably since they were 16. Would a wording change (e.g. "In the last 2 years, how often...") drastically alter the results, and if so, how?

Another concern is that we did not obtain a sample of actual celebrity stalkers. Rather, we administered the ORI & CS to students from three universities. We contend that obtaining a sample of persons who are actual celebrity stalkers borders on the impossible. Some of them have been institutionalized (Meloy, Sheridan, & Hoffman, 2008), and it seems unlikely that others would volunteer for a study such as ours. Asking for volunteers for such a study strikes us as being a bit like asking all those who have committed serious crimes for which they have never been arrested to please step forward. In fact, several of the behaviors described in the OFAS-18 (e.g. trespassing on the celebrity's property, engaging in regulatory harassment, threatening to harm the celebrity's romantic partners or friends, physically threatening the celebrity, stealing

her/his valued possessions, attempting to hack the celebrity's personal computer) are crimes in many states. Nevertheless, a few of our university students admitted to actually having engaged in the behaviors that comprise OFAS-18. Furthermore, we obtained significant correlations between OFAS-18 scores and ORI & CS scores *in spite of* low variability in scores on the former.

In conclusion, our main finding, that the ORI & CS subscale scores predicted the reporting of actual celebrity stalking, provides additional evidence in support of the validity of this scale which had previously shown promise. The ORI & CS is unrelated to social desirability, has been shown to correlate with anger, has twice been shown to be related to the tendency to worship celebrities, and has twice been shown to have good internal reliability. We believe that this scale, and especially the Threat subscale, is a potentially useful measure that could be helpful in screening those who might bring either psychological or physical harm to a celebrity.

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