

## **Celebrity status and the attribution of value**

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### **Abstract**

The concept of status is in the background of much research on celebrity but rarely made explicit, so in this collection of articles we seek to intervene by drawing attention to the usefulness of the concept in understanding the attribution of value in celebrity culture. We consider that celebrity status derives from an accumulation of social esteem or disparagement based on the countless evaluative judgements, positive or negative, that accumulate in media and wider public discourse. We conceptualize celebrity status as operating within and relating to the social fields that celebrities occupy and move between. Analysing status within the context of fields enables us to better account for how celebrity status is accrued and/or lost within particular social fields in accordance with field-specific criteria and in relation to wider shifting cultural, political and technological contexts. The articles in this special issue have in common an attentiveness to the evaluative criteria by which celebrities are judged as they move from field to field, and as their status undergoes a transformation – for better or worse – in the field they occupy. Ultimately, we argue that the status attributed to celebrities tells us much about how value is attributed, distributed and accumulated in contemporary society.

### **Keywords**

Celebrity, evaluative judgements, field analysis, status, value

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## Introduction

Over a century ago, the classical social theorist Max Weber (1978 [1922]) defined status as an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges on the basis of lifestyle, heritage, hereditary privilege and/or achievement. More recently, Murray Milner (2010: 381) has argued that status is ‘the accumulated approvals and disapprovals that people express toward an individual, a collectivity or an object’. Weber argued that social differentiation on the basis of status would decline as capitalism and democratic society developed. However, claims to social esteem on the basis of status – as distinct from social class – remain prominent, whether in the circles of A-list celebrities or in the dining societies of elite universities. The concept of status is in the background of much research on celebrity but rarely made explicit, so in this collection of articles we seek to intervene by drawing attention to the usefulness of the concept in understanding the attribution of value in celebrity culture. We consider that celebrity status derives from an accumulation of social esteem or disparagement based on the countless evaluative judgements, positive or negative, that accumulate in media and wider public discourse. We conceptualize celebrity status as operating within and relating to the social fields that celebrities occupy and move between. Analysing status within the context of fields enables us to better account for how celebrity status is accrued and/ or lost within particular social fields in accordance with field-specific criteria and in relation to wider shifting cultural, political and technological contexts.

We combine field analysis with the Weberian concept of status in order to gain a stronger understanding of the ways in which field-specific attributions of value or valuelessness intersect with wider structural inequalities. First, with reference to Imogen Tyler and Bruce Bennett’s (2010: 376) conceptualization of celebrity as ‘a hierarchical domain of value formation characterized by struggles over the social worth and meaning of selected classed, gendered and racialized bodies’, we argue that celebrity status is attributed along the lines of wider social structures. For example, ‘improper’ or ‘value less’ celebrity, which is often depicted as feminine and working class, serves as a negative reference point from which dominant groups build value. Value less celebrity status derives from an accumulation of predominantly disparaging evaluative judgements in media and public discourse, especially where the celebrity’s habitus is out of kilter with the requirements of the field (McRobbie, 2004). For example, Tyler and Bennett (2010) draw attention to media discourse that depicts Kerry Katona as a talentless and trashy ‘bad girl’ celebrity whose success is indicative

of a dumbing down of culture and the rise of a criminal underclass of young women. This 'underserving' celebrity status contrasts with the respectable, 'deserving' celebrity status of middle-class celebrities such as Emma Watson (Mendick et al., 2018). Second, we find ways of conceptualizing how value accrues to celebrity status. We argue that the accrual of aesthetic, cultural or political value *in the moment* and *over time* is the net result of all individual judgements made, in cultural fields, by individuals and institutions in accordance with field-specific criteria. The trajectories of such judgements, taken as a whole, can be short or long-lived, and celebrity status is the accumulation of such values and valuations. This accumulation of values functions as a supra-individual voice. It is full of contradictions and is heterogeneous. It bears the stamp of the social-structural dynamics referred to above, but in the case of each celebrity has its own field-specific logic.

### **Celebrity status and value**

While examples of famous people stretch back to the Ancient World, celebrity is a distinctly modern phenomenon, 'associated with mass communications, specifically television and print media' (Braudy, 1997; Giles, 2000: 109). In his classic study, Chris Rojek (2001) refers to celebrity as 'the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere' (p. 10), and he identifies three categories of celebrity: ascribed, achieved and attributed. According to Rojek (2001), a serial killer can attain celebrity status no less pronounced than that of a sports star, albeit it of a quite different nature, and while ascribed celebrity status, which derives from blood-line, does not necessarily entail social prominence, it is often the case. For example, members of the Royal Family such as Princes William and Harry have extremely high status in British society. In contrast, those who have achieved celebrity are perceived to have done something noteworthy – for example, Pablo Picasso as a visual artist, Venus Williams as a tennis player, Ali Farke Touré as musician. 'Achieved celebrities' are generally considered to have higher status than attributed celebrities, those who have risen to prominence as a consequence of 'the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries' (Rojek, 2001: 19). The category of attributed celebrity includes 'ordinary people' propelled into media at the behest of cultural intermediaries in pursuit of high ratings or sales. It includes, for example, someone who has had an affair with a politician or sport star. The celetoid, as a compressed version of attributed celebrity, attains a celebrity status that is

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deemed to be transient and is least likely to be socially venerated (Rojek, 2001: 18). The term 'celebrity' is used across fields, partly because 'celebrity' is used as a general term in contrast to terms that relate to specific fields such as 'stars' in cinema and 'idols' in popular music (Marshall, 1997). There is also a degree to which anyone who has acquired fame in the media is treated as a celebrity regardless of the provenance of that fame (Giles, 2000).

According to Rojek (2001, 2016), 'achieved celebrity' – a category referring to those who have gained celebrity status through perceived accomplishments in a given field – came to the fore as part of a growing mass culture that had taken hold by the 1840s, thus replacing the age of ascribed celebrity. The drive towards achieved celebrity is characterized by a 'frontierism' which, in contrast to the founding stories of the American pioneers' conquest of the horizontal frontier through demonstration of character and the acquisition of property, is based on a 'vertical (stratified) frontier) and the accumulation of attention capital' (Rojek, 2016: 381). This conquest is accompanied by the development of personality and challenges existing norms, hierarchies and social mores. Charles Dickens and Richard Wagner are two celebrities who typify this conquest of the vertical frontier in their capacity as achieved celebrities (Rojek, 2016). In deploying their creative output, both draw attention to their humble origins (thus ensuring a connection with the people) but also, with the assistance of cultural intermediaries, seek to utilize the technologies of the mass era in order to promote themselves and their works. As Rojek (2016: 385) observes, both 'ruthlessly pursued a programmatic vision of personal renown that was designed to bulldoze the frontier of achieved celebrity and outlast their mortal days'. With reference to a quite different kind of celebrity, in contrast, scholars have drawn attention to the increasing significance of attributed or 'ordinary' celebrities, as part of a 'demotic turn' in contemporary celebrity culture, involving "ordinary" people, with no special abilities and achievements, as the 'talent' (Turner, 2010: 58).

Categories such as 'achieved' and 'attributed' celebrity are useful in helping us to distinguish different eras as well as differentials in perceived celebrity status. For example, without need for any attribution of moral worth, there are clear differences between the celebrity status of someone who has been propelled to fame entirely by accident and someone who has gained recognition for work over a number of decades. However, we argue that by focusing on the concept of status, understood as a composite of positive and/or negative evaluations in media and in wider public discourse, we can gain more precision about the ways in which value is distributed and accrued in celebrity

culture. Our first argument, broadly in line with cultural studies traditions, draws attention to how value is often distributed in classed and gendered terms (Skeggs, 2004; Tyler and Bennett, 2010). For example, as Allen and Mendick (2013: 79) point out, 'it is the female working class celebrity in particular that is constructed as abject other'. Such celebrities are deemed to fail in their attempts to perform femininity appropriately and their lowly status is contrasted with the ideal type of the successful, competitive 'have it all girl' (McRobbie, 2004) or the 'natural', 'deserving' middle-class celebrity (Mendick et al., 2018). Research on the public discourse on Reality TV demonstrates that working-class celebrities are devalued because (for example) they are perceived to lack moral worth and cultural capital, they are excessively corporeal, they make the wrong consumption choices and, perhaps above all, because their celebrity status is something that has been gained by luck or chance rather than through hard work (Allen and Mendick, 2013; Skeggs and Wood, 2011; Tyler and Bennett, 2010). These 'improper' celebrities are depicted as exemplars of bad taste: they are offered up in reality programmes as a pedagogic tool, a form of governmentality which demonstrates to viewers how not to behave, what not to wear and what not to do (McRobbie, 2004; Ouellette and Hay, 2008). Along similar lines, studies of the uses and interpretation of celebrities find that young people draw distinctions between deserving/undeserving, proper/improper, talented/talentless, authentic/inauthentic celebrities along the lines of gender and class, and in doing so, distance their own aspirations from those associated with 'illegitimate' fame (Allen and Mendick, 2013; Mendick et al., 2018). While some of the young people in these studies challenge such dominant attributions, in the main, celebrities such as Reality TV stars serve as negative reference points from which to construct a neoliberal self-image of hard working, enterprising self. In gendered terms, 'improper' celebrities are deemed to have taken the easy route to fame (Allen and Mendick, 2013). Celebrities such as Reality TV stars are often denigrated for a perceived lack of talent or because they have done nothing to deserve their celebrity status. Attention to the actual labour process involved in becoming and maintaining a career as an 'ordinary celebrity' might provide a counter to common-sense arguments that these low-status celebrities represent a culture of the work-shy. As Wood et al. (2017) argue, 'ordinary celebrity' is a 'measured, calculated, embodied and lived form of 'real labour' around the screen' for its participants (Wood et al., 2017: 17). However, in public discourse, 'ordinary celebrities' are often depicted as feckless and incapable of performing femininity correctly to the point of appearing as grotesque (Jones and Weber,

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2015; Tyler and Bennett, 2010). They are deemed to represent the constitutive limit of taste, 'the real from which tasteful distance must be drawn' (Skeggs, 2004: 169). For example, in their study, Tyler and Bennett (2010) focus on the figure of the 'celebrity chav', whose appeal is in part a cruel spectacle of abjection that serves to embolden the value and status of more 'deserving' celebrities. In each of these examples, the low status of celebrities is the result of an accumulation of evaluative judgements across media platforms and in wider public discourse that serves to render these 'ordinary celebrities' as valueless.

Our second argument draws attention to the ways in which value is attributed from field to field, and over time, in order to enhance celebrity status. We argue that status is accrued on the basis of countless approvals and disapprovals, each made by individuals but expressed to and with others, collectively as part of groups and consolidated through institutions. We argue that the accrual of status, whether to celebrities or the works and objects that they produce, can be seen to form in much the same way as Georg Simmel (1971 [1908]) conceptualized society as the totality of all social interactions between its individual elements. This process of value-accrual takes the form of a supra-individual voice that rises above us and extends out over time. Studying this process of value accrual enables us to explore the temporal dimension of celebrity status. Often, studies of celebrity status are fixed in the present and cannot account for how and why the high status of some celebrities endures while that of others dissipates. By connecting analysis of celebrity status to field analysis, as we do below, we are able to gain a stronger understanding of its temporal dimension. The accumulation of evaluative judgements as a supra-individual voice follows a similar logic to Simmel's objective culture, which towers above each individual even though each one of us contributes to its development. Simmel (2004 [1900: 449]) argues that

The labour of countless generations is embedded in language and custom, political constitutions and religious doctrines, literature and technology as objectified spirit from which everyone can take as much of it as they wish to or are able to, but no single individual is able to exhaust it all.

Simmel argues that we, as individuals, feel relatively powerless when confronted with this totality of knowledge. Our personal development cannot keep pace with the exponential growth of this objective culture. Analogously, we argue, there is a ceaseless and ongoing process of evaluation in media and wider public discourse that extends its reach above each individual. It is a supra-

individual voice, the sum total of all evaluative judgements that take place, uttered by the field's most and least powerful figures. It is heterogeneous and full of contradictions, and what some praise, others disdain. This supra-individual voice rises up above us though it is our own creation, and according to its logic, the status of one celebrity (and/or their associated works) is raised over time while that of another is cast into oblivion. Even though it derives from all those who participate in making judgements, it is by no means equitable or democratic. For a start, some voices are louder than others, along the social structural lines discussed above, and are in a stronger position to command respect and define the trajectory of the conversation. Their judgements are consolidated and emboldened by institutions and awards. However, the voices of the dominant are also contested and new voices come to the fore. This supra-individual voice contains contrary and subversive elements and points to new futures, new canons of value. One way to study this process of value accrual is to break it down into more manageable parts through field analysis.

### **Celebrity status and field analysis**

There is an emerging body of literature on the relation between celebrity status and field (e.g. Couldry, 2016; Driessens, 2013; Giles, 2015) but it remains an under-researched area of inquiry. In his discussion of Flaubert's position in the 19th century French literary field, Bourdieu (1993: 194) provides a clear exposition of his conceptualization of field analysis as a method:

This method centres on three elements as necessary and as necessarily tied to each other as the three levels of social reality that they grasp: first, analysis of the position occupied by the artistic or literary field within the field of power and the evolution of that position over time; second, the structure of the literary field, that is, the structure of the objective relations between the positions occupied by actors or groups competing for literary legitimacy at a given moment; and finally, genesis of the different producers' habitus.

Field analysis enables us to envisage that cultural fields have a cumulative logic: as Bourdieu (1993: 266) points out, the history of any cultural field is irreversible and anyone attempting to contribute to the field 'must inevitably situate themselves in relation to all the preceding attempts at surpassing which have occurred in the history of the field ... which it imposes on the newly arrived'. Field analysis enables us to see the broader sweep of time in the cultural field. Several of the articles in this special issue review the contemporary literature

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on field analysis and apply this method to the analysis of celebrity status, but here we think it important to highlight a few general points regarding its uses and limitations in celebrity studies. First, field analysis, as applied by Bourdieu (1993, 1996), was mainly concerned with 'high' culture such as literature and the visual arts and it remains a challenge to apply his analysis to popular culture (see, for example, Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006; Fowler, 2016). Second, much work remains to be done on the relation between fields. For example, as Couldry (2016: 116) puts it,

a detailed field theory account of, say, the relations between general journalism and the processes we might want to gather together under the label of a general 'celebrity' (or perhaps 'promotional') subfield has not been written, but it might be an interesting project to develop.

A further challenge is to utilize field analysis to understand media saturation which is a result of the mediatization of society, a process whereby media 'become an irreducible dimension of all social processes and their interrelations' (Couldry, 2016: 115). Couldry's (2003, 2016) work is instructive here: he argues that media institutions (and by extension, the effects of celebrity) provide a cross-field metacapital analogous to the power that derives from the 'field of fields' or the wider field of power. These institutions could thus be said to possess power that influences the state of play in other fields in a manner analogous to the role of the state in the wider field of power.

Celebrity capital derives from this media metacapital, and its convertibility into symbolic capital is by no means guaranteed (Couldry, 2016; Driessens, 2013). This depends on the extent to which the celebrity capital intersects with field-specific rules and criteria and the capitals (media-related or otherwise) relating to that particular field. Mediatization and the spread of media metacapital enable us to account for the fact that there appears to be a broad, Anglo-American 'celebrity culture' that straddles various fields (Couldry, 2016). Couldry goes on to argue that as media institutions seek to assert their importance in a rapidly transforming media environment, audience attention is scarce and so celebrity becomes a basic grammar of media production: celebrities are utilized as a reliable, even banal strategy to cultivate an audience base. In this capacity, they become role models for 'the culture of self-promotion' and, on occasion, rebellion, even if, as Joke Hermes and Jaap Kooijman (2016) argue, they are often points of conversational reference rather than figures to be emulated.

Olivier Driessens's (2013) work provides valuable insight into the variability of celebrity status across fields via the concept of celebrity capital, which he refers to as 'accumulated media visibility', and as distinguished from symbolic capital, which is field-specific. As we see in the articles in this special issue, celebrity capital enables some celebrities to migrate from one cultural field to another. We argue that the concept of status helps to illuminate this: first, the ability to migrate across fields depends on the status of a celebrity in relation to wider societal factors such as class, gender and race. For instance, the mobility of a celebrity is restricted if they do not possess the requisite forms of capital or if their habitus does not accord with the standards of success in a given field. As a consequence, they are likely to be rendered valueless in media and in wider public discourse and their actions will not be recognized as legitimate by those who are in a position to regulate and police field-specific criteria. Moreover, 'ordinary' celebrities who gain extensive media visibility, rather than crossing from field to field, can become fixed in place, implicated in the logic of what Jennifer Lynn Jones and Brenda R. Weber (2015: 14) term transmediated continuity. This occurs simultaneously across various media platforms (rather than from field to field) and 'stands for a transaction that messily confuses its genre, agent(s) of creation, and moment(s) of birth'. One example is form of the celebrity mother, who is characterized, through transmediated continuity, as grotesque, hypersexualized, out-of-control, overly ambitious and excessively bodily. The figure of the celebrity mother reveals 'a misogynistic disciplining of ambitious, successful, and difficult women that intensifies in transmediated continuity' (Jones and Weber, 2015: 30).

When celebrities do attempt field migration, Driessens (2013: 555) points out, the conversion of celebrity capital is often resisted as 'it can disrupt the relative value of the different kinds of capital and the corresponding power dynamics within social fields'. David Giles (2015) provides a striking example of such resistance: when Sir Paul McCartney migrated from the field of popular music to the field of classical music, his high volume of celebrity capital (derived primarily from his career as a member of the Beatles and from his solo career as a songwriter) gave him access to key institutions and awards in the field of classical music. However, while he achieved institutional and economic success, critical success eluded him. Giles (2015) notes that McCartney did not receive the approval of the field's critics. In one review after another, McCartney's compositions were lambasted because they did not accord with the field's legitimate criteria. In the classical field, McCartney was accepted into some of the field's key institutions because of his celebrity status. He is a successful,

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white middle-aged rock star, with high volumes of cultural, social and economic capital and whose musical output has been legitimized by key cultural institutions. At the same time, he was rejected in his capacity as a (formerly) working-class outsider to the classical music establishment: he was depicted as a musical illiterate. McCartney did not possess a *classical music habitus* and could not read or write music. Here again, we see the significance of celebrity status not only in relation to field-specific criteria but also to wider social structural factors such as class. These examples demonstrate the limitations of celebrity capital and underscore our argument that celebrity status derives from the accumulation of countless positive and/or negative evaluative judgements and pronouncements that take place in media and wider public discourse. These judgements are field-specific and accord value to celebrities (and the cultural works or objects that they produce) in accordance with aesthetic, cultural or political criteria, depending on the celebrity and field in questions. We argue that this field-specific value is cumulative and emerges from all those who take part in the field.

### **The articles in this issue**

The articles in this special issue explore, in different ways, celebrity status in relation to cultural fields and wider social structures. Taking a different tack to the studies mentioned earlier on ‘improper’ or ‘ordinary’ celebrities, Mercè Oliva’s article examines the conflict between cultural hierarchies that occur when a celebrated writer voluntarily exits the field of literary fiction and enters the (sub)field of Reality TV. Other scholars have drawn attention to the difficulties associated with upward field migration (e.g. Arthurs and Little, 2016; Giles, 2015) but Oliva’s study demonstrates that downward migration, even when voluntary, is just as fraught with difficulties. Extebarria’s status in the literary field is by no means secure. For example, Extebarria has long been accused of drawing too heavily – in her writings – on popular cultural influences and being motivated by the pursuit of money. Nevertheless, when she appears on the Reality TV programme, the narrators and Extebarria herself make pronouncements referring to her high levels of cultural capital (including a PhD) and the symbolic capital associated with her prize winning novels. However, her status is soon diminished. Oliva finds that the mode of evaluation in the (sub)field of Reality TV is quite different from that of the literary field and Extebarria is heavily criticized by other contestants (and by the media) for her inability to adhere to the field’s evaluative criteria which places high value on authenticity, emotional sincerity and ordinariness (Biressi and Nunn, 2005;

Skeggs and Wood, 2011). Extebarria does not possess these forms of popular capital and is thus depicted as fake, pretentious, excessively sensitive and privileged. Before long, even the previously-held certainty about Extebarria's literary status is questioned. The other contestants ask: 'If she is here, is she not just ordinary like the rest of us?' Ultimately, Extebarria's field migration is characterized by failure and the attacks on Extebarria continue. While the attacks are indicative of a populist backlash against middle-class privilege, they are articulated through an individualized discourse that fails to account for wider structural inequalities. Moreover, the depiction of Extebarria in wider public discourse as a 'mad woman' demonstrates how readily 21st century representations of gender fall back on timeworn tropes of the 'hysterical woman' and contrast with the masculine-inflected association of madness with creative genius.

While Oliva traces Extebarria's downward field migration, Ellen Watts draws attention to two contrasting attempts made by the British comedian Russell Brand to gain status in the political field. His attempted upward migration, from the field of comedy to the field of politics (which intersects with the wider field of power), is characterized by successes and failures. Drawing on analysis of celebrity capital in relation to Brand's celebrity status (Arthurs and Little, 2016) and also on Saward's (2010) theory of representative claims, Watts argues that Brand's status in the political field depends on the extent to which he is able to legitimately claim to represent other citizens. Brand is widely considered an outsider in the political field as a consequence of his class background, his accent, his reputation as an 'unserious' comedian with a history of drug abuse and, most significantly, the fact that he has not been elected to any position of political representation. Nevertheless, Brand brings with him a high volume of celebrity capital and he has the ability to command a large audience. He deploys these resources in two prominent campaigns. First, in protesting against the New Era development in East London, Brand self-consciously played the role of campaign 'amplifier' (rather than leader) and those he represents back him up on this in the face of claims that he is a hypocrite (because he is extremely wealthy and is thus part of the 'high rent' problem). Second, Brand was able to point to his own working-class background and broken family upbringing in order to demonstrate his affinity with the protestors. This campaign, then, represented a successful boundary crossing. In the second example, when Brand intervened in the General Election of 2015 and interviewed the Labour leader at the time (Ed Miliband), Brand had no recourse to any personal characteristics that could save him. Here, his reputation and public persona

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worked against him. He was a political outsider, labelled ‘unserious’ by the Prime Minister David Cameron, and his ability to represent the non-voting, disaffected, ordinary mass of voters was called into question when he endorsed Miliband for the General Election. This flew in the face of his previous statements that he did not vote in elections. In sum, his inability to imbue his claim to represent this group with a sense of credibility meant that his most ambitious upward field migration failed. Brand’s adventure in the political field was of short duration and he has since retreated.

Extending his work on aesthetic value, Simon Stewart also focuses on factors specific to fields. His focus is field-specific aesthetic criteria, which are neglected in much analysis of celebrity and cultural production (Stewart, 2012, 2013, 2018) with reference to the film *Masked and Anonymous* (M&A), a film co-written by Larry Charles and Bob Dylan. Charles directs the film and Dylan is the lead actor. Both are in unfamiliar territory in the field of cinema. With high levels of celebrity capital, Dylan is able to attract a range of A-List actors willing to appear in his film project. Charles too is able to migrate from the field of television because of his critical successes with projects such as *Seinfeld* (1989–1998) and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2010 to present). Stewart draws attention to several instances of boundary work through which the film critics critically pan M&A and draw attention to Charles and Dylan’s *manqué* status in the field. The film critics refer to film-specific aesthetic criteria concerned with plot, direction, screenplay and acting, in order to assert their role as arbiters of taste and distinguish their expertise from those who do not understand the rules of the field (including Dylan and Charles). At the same time, the film is more favourably reviewed by popular music critics who define their expertise in opposition to those who ‘do not understand’ Dylan’s work. These critics distinguish themselves through their ability to trace the aesthetic pleasures inherent in M&A by making connections with the aesthetic content of his songs. Stewart observes that even the film critics refer to the aesthetic value of Dylan’s songwriting and music; moreover, they cannot ignore the accumulation of value – created by countless critical judgements from experts and fans – which spills over from the field of popular music (where Dylan has succeeded) to their field. With its focus on the publicly pronounced evaluative judgements produced by these cultural intermediaries (film critics and music critics), Stewart draws attention to how the accumulated value that has accrued to Dylan’s body of work crosses fields with greater ease than Dylan can himself. Dylan’s celebrity status is thus overshadowed by this accumulated aesthetic value. In making this

argument, Stewart raises wider questions relating to how value accumulates over time within cultural fields as a supra-individual voice.

The most prestigious forms of achieved celebrity are consolidated over time through institutional processes. These processes are analyzed in Chris Greer and Eugene McLaughlin's article on the formation of an elite category of celebrity status: *the national treasure*. The national treasure is a relatively recent, specifically British, phenomenon (post-World War 2) and derives from two inter-related processes: the rise of celebrity culture and the popularization of the honours system. Greer and McLaughlin draw attention to three forms of validation that combine to produce this status over a period of several decades: first, celebrities are awarded the highest level of peer validation (e.g. through awards such as Academy Awards or BAFTAS). Second, they receive honours from the state (e.g. in the British example, through the various honours bestowed by the Queen, such as Officer of the Order of the British Empire or the Order of the Companions of Honour). Third, they are celebrated and their achievements are extolled in the media (e.g. they rank highly in lists in magazines, newspapers and specialist publications that provide ranking systems). Scholars in celebrity studies have drawn attention to the demotic turn in celebrity culture (Turner, 2010), the increasing prevalence of attributed celebrities (Rojek, 2001) and 'improper' celebrities (Allen and Mendick, 2013). But while these trends point to a crowded marketplace where attention is limited and celebrity status is transient, Greer and McLaughlin argue that national treasures have found a place in the higher echelons of celebrity culture where time moves at a slower pace and a very prestigious kind of celebrity status is consolidated. National treasures become 'part of the furniture' and are regularly celebrated across media platforms, having largely avoided the scandals that bring down the careers of their rivals. In the British context of this study, the elite status of national treasures is strongly linked to the class system. Greer and McLaughlin make their argument with reference to Dame Judi Dench. Dench, they argue, is one of the few British celebrities to attain national treasure status. This status designation has a double-edged outcome. On the one hand, it provides the nation with a positive role model, characterized by lofty achievements and untainted by scandal; it is someone to be emulated. On the other hand, the national treasure serves an ideological function in perpetuating a myth of meritocracy and perpetuating class inequalities. National treasures tend to be from elite backgrounds and their success obscures inequalities in access to the creative professions (O'Brien et al., 2016).

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Moreover, their 'untouchable', perennial status clearly distinguishes them from those at the bottom of the celebrity hierarchy whose fame is fleeting.

A quite different story is told in Gaston Franssen's article. Franssen draws attention to the rise and fall (and rise again) of Demi Lovato. The focus of the article is the celebrity health narrative created by Lovato and various cultural intermediaries, and how this narrative is commodified as part of a wider culture of self-improvement. Lovato's recovery from drug addiction and mental illness is celebrated as part of her personal struggle; she externalizes her mental illness and creates a narrative of self-transformation that enhances her career. In doing so, she asserts herself through resilience, self-belief, and the expediency of self-management. Franssen argues that these narrative elements connect with wider tropes of meritocracy and competitive individualism, and it appears to be the case that Lovato's celebrity status has been further enhanced by the whole process. This example highlights what Franssen terms the celebritization of self-care which has a remarkable congruence with late capitalism: just as the latter expresses its logic through cyclical crises, re-adjustments and transformations, the celebritization of self-care involves a perpetual struggle and oscillation between the loss and gain of self-control. Significantly, Franssen draws attention to the flipside of this transformative narrative in relation to mental health: it individualizes crises and in doing so, stigmatizes those who are not able to make such a striking recovery as Lovato's. For the purposes of this special issue, this article demonstrates ways to examine the oscillations of celebrity status over time, even if, in this instance, Lovato's story takes place within a fairly limited timescale.

Ruth Deller and Kathryn Murphy examine the celebrity status of YouTubers. Focusing on representations of YouTubers in mainstream media, they argue that YouTubers represent an attraction *and* a threat for traditional broadcast and print media. On the one hand, the inclusion of YouTubers enables these media to stay relevant and access new, younger audiences. Utilizing these celebrities also opens up new commercial opportunities for advertising and marketing across a range of platforms. Indeed, recent research by Mendick et al. (2018) demonstrates how YouTubers appeal to young people as 'authentic' celebrities in part because they are perceived as ordinary people who have worked hard to find a way of making a living. They are, thus, 'austere meritocracy's ideal celebrity' (Mendick et al., 2018: 150) because of their entrepreneurial spirit. On the other hand, YouTubers, some of whom command tens of millions of viewers on their channels, pose a threat to established media. With more and more young people turning to online content instead of

broadcast media, YouTubers represent a challenge to the status quo. Journalists and presenters seek to combat this through various forms of boundary work which undermines YouTubers' credibility by representing them as amateurish, inauthentic hobbyists. When YouTubers enter the fray in established fields such as publishing, their books are derided as fraudulent and trashy; when they appear on television, it is insinuated that they are not really famous. YouTubers are depicted as attributed celebrities and this overlooks the creative skills that they deploy in their editing and presenting. Deller and Murphy hint at a revolution taking place in the field and/or even the potential creation of new fields. Those to whom Deller and Murphy refer do not yet possess the kind of symbolic capital held by those dominant in the field, but the state of play is changing and the newcomers might soon be the ones in the strongest position to assert their legitimacy.

Chris Rojek's article takes a different tack and focuses on a different kind of capital: attention capital. As Rojek (2001) notes in his earlier work, celebrity culture produces more winners than losers. In this article, he puts forward a new concept: designer notoriety. This is used to explain circumstances in which frustrated individuals seek the attention of the media and gain celebrity status by committing acts of violence. The case of co-pilot Andreas Lubitz's sabotage of a plane, which resulted in the deaths of 150 people, highlights the utility of Rojek's concept. Designer notoriety is a means of accumulating attention through the complicity of the media. Rojek argues that the concept needs to be considered in relation to three key factors: the demotic turn, mediatization and the world historic event. The demotic turn is central to designer notoriety because it refers to a situation where in celebrity culture, the ordinary is valorized. In this democratic context, a belief takes hold among the population that everyone has talent and a right for this to be recognized. However, because only a small number of people are successful in being celebrated for their talent, the vast majority are left frustrated. For those who feel this frustration most acutely, designer notoriety is an extreme means of gaining celebrity status and is only possible because of the mediatization of everyday life. Media frame how we perceive events and present them as a series of unconnected stories, without reference to wider structural issues, and also style the ways in which events are presented to audiences. While World Historic Events – such as the French Revolution or World War 2 - irrevocably change the course of history, cases such as the crash caused by Lubitz qualify as Micro-Historic Events inasmuch as they spectacularly derail the temporal order and saturate news coverage, but only temporarily, and not with sufficient weight to change things

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permanently. The celebrity status sought and achieved by Lubitz did not last long but the event that he created is irresistibly mediagenic. Designer notoriety represents a particularly desperate form of attention grabbing in pursuit of celebrity status. The status gained is brief and analogous to that of the celestoid, described in Rojek's (2001: 20–21) earlier work as 'compressed, concentrated attributed celebrity', and as those 'who command attention one day, and are forgotten the next'.

## **Conclusion**

The articles in this special issue bring status to the fore in the analysis of celebrity. They have in common an attentiveness to the evaluative criteria by which celebrities are judged as they move from field to field, and as their status undergoes transformation – for better or worse – in the field they occupy. Each article provides insight into how field-specific capital is accrued (or lost) and the significant role played by cultural intermediaries is emphasized. In some instances, we see how celebrity status is rendered valueless along the lines of class and gender; here field mobility is also limited by a lack of requisite forms of capital. In other instances, fields are in the process of being transformed by 'newcomers' and/or in accordance with new technologies. We draw attention to how aesthetic value accrues to celebrities (and/or to their body of work) and consider how this value accumulates over time and extends into the future. With this field-specific approach to celebrity status we are able to envisage the ways in which status can be lost in an instant as well as how it extends over long periods of time and why it is that even in death, celebrities continue to accrue value (Penfold-Mounce, 2018). The articles pave the way for further research into how celebrities gain or lose esteem, depending on the extent to which their contributions (e.g. aesthetic, cultural or political) accord with field-specific criteria and are favourably received in the course of successive evaluative judgements in the media and in the wider public sphere. In doing so, the articles raise more questions than they can answer: for instance, is 'valueless' celebrity status necessarily short-lived? Under what conditions does an 'underserving' celebrity become 'deserving' (and vice versa)? What are the key factors behind the persistence of prestigious forms of celebrity status over several decades or centuries? How does celebrity status work across fields in a global context? As Nick Couldry (2016) puts it, celebrity has become a basic grammar of media production, a common reference point, and thus a role model for the development of personal culture. Ultimately, we argue that the status

attributed to celebrities tells us much about how value is attributed, distributed and accumulated in contemporary society.

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