

Medias biased
coverage towards
celebrity crimes
media essay



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With the prosperity of both science and culture, people are accustomed with an abundant supply of information. Modern media, such as television, newspapers, magazines, reinforces our accesses to news and information of all kinds, the most prevalent of which are those about public figures and celebrities. Now there is a growing awareness that media pays too much attention to the personal lives of famous people.

Another equally important aspect is that most of the reports on lives of famous people are always focused on brilliant achievements and extravagant enjoyments, which overstate the gorgeous part and understate the painstaking part. Therefore, young people are often biased and tend to pursue such kinds of lives but with little endeavour. In addition, since the teenagers are inclined to adore their idols with such passion that mass of negative news and information of popular figures may even twist some youth's view of life.

The extent and quality of celebrity news in the media appears especially inordinate today, multiplying and intensifying at such a rate that 'legitimate' news has fallen in precedence (Brown, 31). Whether it likes it or not, the public knows more about Britney Spears and how many pills she swallowed than about many political issues.

Mainstream media content is most likely increasing in sensationalism due to competition with celebrity news sources, particularly those online. As said by marketing author David Giles, 'The defining characteristic of a celebrity is that it is essentially a media production, and its usage is largely confined to the twentieth century' (3). More than ever, news, according to New York

University sociology professor Todd Gitlin, can be defined as 'anything that happens to newsworthy people' (Rockwell, 40).

The purpose of the project is to examine how the celebrity coverage in the media, both mainstream and entertainment-focused, influences the people and their opinions which affect media credibility as a whole. In doing so, research investigates the sensationalism of mainstream media and its portrayal of celebrities and celebrity-criminals in general.

In this vein, analyzing the content presented by mainstream news outlets, as well as celebrity-news Weblogs and other online sources, offered the clearest method by which to examine how entertainment news is covered and publicized. Researching articles on the major, relevant topics of media ethics, the role of celebrity news in Indian society and credibility of media was instrumental in gaining a better understanding of the subject matter. More emphasis was placed on researching relevant topics, as it is difficult if not impossible to determine the exact effects of media coverage of celebrities through a study or direct observation. One can constantly see and hear about Celebrities' mishaps, but only a fraction of the time does one hear about the actions taken to punish them. Through this research there will be several examples of Celebrity crimes, media coverage about the same. The purpose of this research proposal is to see if media coverage of celebrity-crimes is biased and how this changes people's opinion and perception thus questioning media's credibility.

III. Literature Review

To understand the influence on the people of the portrayal of celebrity-criminals by media, it is important to understand the terms celebrity, crime, media bias and public opinion. These terms may not be connected with each other directly; however the understanding of these together would contribute in assessing the study of this paper.

Celebrity - The word 'celebrity' is derived from the word 'celebrate', in that a person is supposedly famous because the community celebrates him or her (Rockwell, 20). The Greek 'phanai' highlights the idea that a celebrity is spoken about and takes on a fable like mantle as the general public is drawn into the fate of the person in whom it is invested. And for a celebrity, being spoken of may impact how he or she lives in the world, often resulting in negative effects.

Crime - 'Glanville Williams (1955: 107), defined crime as " an act that is capable of being followed by criminal proceedings, having one of the types of outcome (punishment etc) known to follow these proceedings". This in practice is the definition of crime most commonly accepted, as was brought out by Tappan's famous injunction that criminology accepts as its object of study crime, defined as " an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law (statutory and case law), committed without defence or justification, and sanctioned by the State as a felony or misdemeanor". (1947: 100).' (Morrison, 7)

Media bias - Media bias is the bias of journalists and news producers within the mass media in the selection of events and stories that are reported and

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how they are covered. The term 'media bias' implies a pervasive or widespread bias contravening the standards of journalism, rather than the perspective of an individual journalist or article. The direction and degree of media bias in various countries is widely disputed.

Public opinion - Public opinion is the shared expressed attitudes of a collection of individuals on a matter of common concern.

Based on these factors there have been researches that explain how biased media-coverage plays a crucial role in forming biased public-opinion. Media has a fixed agenda of providing certain news in a certain manner so that it is perceived in the manner that media wants it to be perceived as by the people. The world that we are living in today has millions of events that take place simultaneously. Thousands of people are employed by Media organizations and institutions examine these events and report them. The media decides and tells us which issues are important and which ones or not. We have never physically witnessed the war situations of Afganistan, Iraq or even Kashmir. Despite this we have the pictures of these events in our heads. The media reports inform about the latest events and issues that are taking place in the world and are inaccessible to us. Thus, most of our perceptions about the world are based on the second-hand reality created by the media organizations. There is no guarantee that this reality is an accurate picture of the world. (Saib Riaz, 2008: 1)

The things we see in newspapers and the things we hear on the radio are things that people all over the country are talking about. 'The Agenda Setting Theory is based on the premise that we are given our " agenda" of daily

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information for discussion based on what the media wants us to be talking about. Agenda Setting was an early theory given to us by Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz. These two men believed that media content set the agenda for public discussions' (Wilcox, et al., 2003: 213). These men both believed that the media did not specifically tell us what to think about a particular subject, just which subjects we should be forming an opinion of. This theory can also be very detrimental to politicians and other public figures. Sometimes the media plays a more vital role in society other than just reporting the news. It gives us serious topics that are put under our noses on a daily basis. The information is put there for a reason whether most people are aware of it or not. The Agenda Setting theory is positive for society because it puts the information out there. However, the down side is that the information we are getting is biased and does not allow for us to select what we feel is important.

Which aspects of an issue are covered in the news - and the relative emphasis on these various aspects of an issue - makes a considerable difference in how people view that issue. From the pattern of the total news coverage, the public learns what journalists consider the important issues are and who the prominent public figures of the day are. From the details of this coverage - the agenda of attributes presented by the news media - the public forms its images and perspective about these issues and public figures. (McCombs, 7-8)

Thus it can be rightly observed that, " Through their day-by-day selection and display of the news, editors and news directors focus our attention and influence our perceptions of what are the most important issues of the day. <https://assignbuster.com/medias-biased-coverage-towards-celebrity-crimes-media-essay/>

This ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda has come to be called the agenda setting role of the news media."

This shows how public opinion is formed on the basis of the kind of information that media prioritizes and later provides the public. The media does set the agenda of what is discussed around the world on a daily basis. The media chooses the stories and the public reviews them on a regular basis. It does not seem that many people really are aware that there is someone picking out information for them, but that is exactly what goes on every single day. There are pros and cons to someone selecting the stories people receive for processing.

Therefore also when crimes committed by celebrities are covered by the media, it tries to change people's opinion by a positive or negative way of news coverage. Media can manipulate the news using a variety of strategies that can alter the people's perception. It can navigate their audience through what it feels is potent and viable concerning topics specifically related to celebrity crimes. The factors that can contribute towards an altered point of view are media's audience, their lifestyle, interests and its level of sophistication. However there are more contingent variables that create a divergent representation of objective truth. Through this, media has the power to persuade people's point of view.

Reports of soft news far outweighing the amount of hard news in today's mass media landscape can be traced, in part, back to the technological changes seen in modern times.

According to Bennett (2007), some of factors affecting the increase of soft news include the economics of the news business, journalists' dependence on sources who control information, routine news-gathering practices, professional norms and a need to fill the news hole that has been created by 24/7 news coverage. Celebrity focused, soft news tends to be quick and easy to report about. Additionally, such stories have proven to be popular among audiences and are easy to dramatize. Celebrity stories may also serve the uses and gratifications of many audience members. Bennett (2007) suggests that in addition to learning, many viewers use news to satisfy their needs for curiosity and surveillance, entertainment and escape, and social and psychological adjustment. " With the advent of the Web and the Internet, increasing numbers of citizens turn to alternative information channels that deliver politically packaged information in a format better integrated with personal interests and various citizen-action options" (Bennett, 2007: 28). This statement is true of all news information, not just politics. There are websites, magazines, newspapers, television stations, etc. to suit every different need and consumers have the choice to visit only the ones that interest them. Therefore, the shift seen in news coverage from informative to entertaining cannot be blamed solely on the media.

The news stories about celebrities that most often permeate the media airwaves are about stars' mishaps and blunders. Together with media, they are often blamed for social problems. A common complaint is that celebrities are bad role-models and mass media idolizes them anyway. Such practices are thought to be teaching younger generations to fall into drugs like Britney

Spears, become over-sexualized like Miley Cyrus, or anorexic looking like Nicole Ritchie.

" As exemplified in the following quote by Bob Franklin, this is conceived as the diversion of media audiences from 'hard' news and issues of public interest to 'soft' tabloid focuses such as human interest, sport, scandal and celebrity: Entertainment has superseded the provision of information; human interest has supplanted the public interest; measured judgment has succumbed to sensationalism; the trivial has triumphed over the weighty; the intimate relations of celebrities from soap operas, the world of sport or the royal family are judge more 'newsworthy' than the reporting of significant issues and events of international consequence (1997: 4)" (Holmes & Redmond, 2006: 344-345).

IV. Hypothesis

Biased public opinion based on biased media coverage of celebrity crimes questions media credibility.

V. Research Design

The research will be conducted through sampling as well as content analysis. Examples of celebrities who have committed crime and who have been extensively covered whether biased or unbiased by media especially newspapers will be used as the basis on which the research will be conducted.

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Conclusion

The entertainment industry has both positive and negative influence on the youth, but, it is not entirely bad. The negative effects and influences that the industry has, on the upcoming generation need, to be changed and recognized. This can help the youth so that their minds are not that clouded with the celebrity perfection ideas. The youth need to be educated and informed on the need for self confidence and self fulfillment as they are fundamental to true happiness in life. These traits are hard to attain for the youth because of entertainment and media industry. The industries are constantly showing and sending messages to viewers on the definition of perfection. This makes it hard for many of the youths to be contented and happy with their personalities and looks. The youth should stop to look for celebrities, movies, and television shows, for ideal and perfect life. The obsession created by the entertainment industry influences the youth's way of life. They change the way they dress, walk, and even act.

The entertainment industry will continue to have effects and influences on youth and societal trends. The influences should be worked on, to make them have positive effects on society and society as a whole. This can
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involve the transformation of the celebrities, actors, and models in the entertainment industry. The effect can be huge and tremendous on the upcoming generation and society. The changing trends in societal beliefs and values can be influenced to be positive ones on the youth. Things can be better when the effects of the entertainment industry lean more towards the positive influences than the negative influences on the youth. This can be done knowing very well that America is one of the leading producers of entertainment and as such it is a significant component in influencing the behavior of the younger generation. The entertainment industry has influences on the upcoming generation views and expression of culture. This is depicted by the way that they talk, dress, and act on society through social media pressure in the country.

Throughout society there are both individuals and groups of people with a wide range of perceptions about crime and justice. These perceptions are influenced by the media and what the media presents. Media presents crime stories in ways that selectively distort and manipulate public perception, thus creating a false picture of crime. Therefore the media provides us with perceptions and social constructions about our world. Firstly I will be discussing the role of the media in constructing knowledge about crime. I will begin by explaining why the media is important, and go further to explain that media representations construct knowledge of crime and since knowledge about crime is constructed it does not necessarily capture reality in fact crime stories are often sensationalised. I will then link this to my central argument that the media shapes people's perceptions of crime and how this is important as it can lead to changes in the law. I will then explain

what it is that the public or society needs to be aware of when reading and watching media reports about crime. We need to b...