

Some the bbc has a
legal obligation



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Some sociologists such as Baudrillard (1998) argue that we live in a postmodern Simulacra where the role of the media is to reduce all information to a homogenous state that is anodyne and miraculous (1998: p33). Baudrillard states that the information is actualised, i. e. it is dramatized in a spectacular mode then is entirely deactualised so that it is distanced by the method of communication. Baudrillard also argues that the media should be seen as a representation of reality that creates a simulation that is more visually satisfying and fun for the audience to consume.

This understanding of the media can be applied to creating celebrities out of serial killers as this method of communication of information, in this instance; serial killers, allows the audience to digest the crime easier and become infatuated with the story rather than the actual crime itself.

Baudrillard claims that this is the media allowing the audience “ to playout of their desires” (Lane, 2008: p72) without having to be confronted with the problematic dangers of the events. This also creates a blurred line between fiction and reality for the viewer, further distorting the boundaries that viewers place on the actions of serial killers, allowing them to be seen as ‘ celebrities’ in the media. Baudrillard calls this idealistic representation that the media presents the hyperreality. However, King (1998) criticises Baudrillards’ hyperreality for being sociologically inadequate. “ Baudrillard leaps suddenly and unjustifiably to the claim that there is no longer any reality” (King, 1998: p52). King argues that the media and television does not create a false reality as media coverage is determined by the cultural norms of society at the time.

This can also be applied to the media creating celebrities out of serial killers, it is not the media who is creating celebrities out of serial killers but societies fascination with the phenomenon which in turn increases the need for more media coverage of serial killers and offenders to satisfy the needs of the consumer. For example, the BBC has a legal obligation to inform and educate viewers providing information that is pluralistic and diverse, i. e. that all areas of society are catered for, this includes the cultural norms and fascination with serial killers. Gibson (2006) suggests that because serial killings are statistically rare it is a cultural phenomenon which the vast majority of the public will only be able to understand and experience through a media event. This allows the media to exploit this phenomenon and encourage the audience to become intimately familiar with the lives of particularly well-known serial killers. However, it can be argued that the media does not create celebrity but creates folk devils to heighten fear of crime in the public. Chandler, (Cited in Potter, 2014), argues that the media cultivates attitudes and values which were never absent within society.

This implies that the media promotes fear of crime by displaying images over a long period of time. This suggests that the media is not creating celebrities out of serial killers, but in fact, by over-saturating viewers with images of serial killers, they are nurturing the fear that viewers may already have about possible serial killers (refer back to folk devs). This argument can be supported by Glassner (2000, as cited in Weist, 2006: p6) who argues that the serial killers remind the public of the cultural standards and symbolise a collective fear and insecurity. Despite this, sociologists such as Gitlin (2007, as cited in Weist, 2006: p6), Kurzman et al.

, (2007, as cited in Weist, 2006: p6) and Turner (2014, as cited in Weist, 2006: p6) all argue that this understanding of the role of the media in creating celebrities out of serial killers is flawed as although serial killers remind members of society what they despise and find unacceptable, the media plays a fundamental role in creating celebrities and these celebrities reinforce cultural norms and become a symbol of them, therefore, although the media does not innately create celebrities out of serial killers, by proving a figure for society to fear, this consequently creates a celebrity out of a serial killer. Serial killers have become a central theme within many movies, fictional and true television, novels and also true crime books. – Relates to demand for public fascination, becomes inevitable that serial killers become the main theme of mainstream media, just like how celebrities dominate tabloids, serial killer's dominant mainstream media and TV screen. Despite this, it can be argued that the media does not inherently create celebrities out of serial killers, rather the media sparks a conversation on important issues such as mental health awareness, gun control and violence.