

Romanticizing Murder

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Research Question: Why are women attracted to deviant men?

Summary:

Why are some women attracted to deviant men, including serial killers? One explanation is that women see the attention that the deviant men are getting from both the media and entertainment industries (movies, television shows, book deals, interviews, etc.). Due to media coverage, some serial killers have become household names, their lives and crimes put on the big screen for the world to see. This project focuses on how the media and entertainment industries can influence women's interest in deviant men. Like regular celebrities, serial killers have fans, most of whom are women, and these fans support them throughout their trials, prison sentences, and even after their deaths. Three case studies are utilized to explore the media coverage of serial killers that resulted in a following by women. Social learning theory and social reaction theory (labeling theory) are used to explain how these women observe the media attention paid to these deviant men as a way to gain the same attention for themselves.

Theoretical Framework:

Social learning theory and social reaction theory (labeling theory) are the most appropriate theories to apply to this thesis topic. According to Larry J. Seigel (2018) social learning theory is defined as "the view that human behavior is modeled through observation of human social interactions, either directly from observing those who are close and from intimate contact, or indirectly through the media" (p. 239). Just as well, according to Larry J. Seigel (2018) social reaction theory (labeling theory) is defined as "the view that people become criminals when significant members of society label them as such, and they accept those labels as a personal identity" (p. 239). For learning theory this is due to how serial killers and their fans are portrayed in the media. Given this, many women can make note of how much attention these deviant men are given, as well as how much attention the women who claim to be in love with these deviant men get as well. With that being said, if a woman were to see that a serial killer got married while incarcerated, she would also be able to see the media attention that the serial killer's new spouse was being given. Essentially, these women would eventually learn that if they were to become involved with an infamous serial killer, they could potentially get their own "fifteen minutes of fame". Whereas for labeling theory this can be connected because of the labels that are given to both the deviant men as well as the women who fall in love with them. Look at Charles Manson and his infamous Manson Family for example, Manson was and still is referred to as a Cult Leader, therefore the family is considered to be full of Cult Members. The girls closest to Manson were often referred to as the Manson Girls or Disciples. The media could use this to their advantage when discussing Manson and his Family. Just as well, this can be seen with other serial killers and their fans because we label them as serial killers and as fans. Referring to individuals like Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, Richard Ramirez, etc. as serial killers gives them the attention that they could be seeking. Additionally, when the media focuses in on

labeling the individuals who show a major interest in these serial killers as their fans that gives them attention as well. All in all, it still leads to their potential “fifteen minutes of fame”.

Case Studies:

Three case studies are utilized to theoretically explain possible reasons why women are attracted to men known to be deviant. The first case study is Ted Bundy, coined as a charming and intelligent individual; he gained the trust of his numerous victims by pretending to be injured. It was a common occurrence to see numerous women outside of the courtroom during his court hearings. “Several young women, similar to his victims, attended the court sessions and frequently corresponded with the killer. Some wanted to marry Bundy; others believed they could ‘help’ Ted” (Hickey, 1997). The second case study Charles Manson, coined a “Cult Leader”, he opened his arms to outcasts, welcomed young women who had difficult backgrounds, if you needed somewhere to go you could always join his revolution. This case study is different from the others, when it comes to Charles Manson these women were not attracted solely by his looks or actions, they were attracted because Manson would give them what they were missing, a sense of belonging. According to one of the Manson girls Susan Atkins in her book *Child of Satan, Child of God*, “my desire for his attention was an obsession” (Atkins, 1977, p. 116). Additionally, this case study is important due to the connection the Manson Family had with nine murders, each of which involved some of the Manson girls. Lastly, the third case study Richard Ramirez, coined as the ‘Night Stalker’ had an extremely publicized trial, which increased the attraction to him. “Even one of the female jurors in his trial, Cynthia Haden, fell in love with him while the grotesque details of his crimes were laid out for the court” (Crime and Investigation, n.d.). Each of these case studies shows a different perspective of why a woman would be attracted to them.

Method:

The first thing I needed to do was decide the criteria for my case studies. Each of my three case studies was chosen specifically for how popular they each were as well as for what occurred during their court hearings. The second thing needed for my methods was to see how these three case studies were portrayed in the media. Each of these men are considered to be popular culture icons, people show such an interest in them, so much so that it eventually becomes an obsession with the topic of serial killers as a whole, or an individual serial killer. The last thing needed for my methods section was to see how the gained celebrity status influenced women falling in love with serial killers. From my research it seemed like there was a large influence from the idea of these women being given media attention as well.

Findings:

When serial killers gain the status of a celebrity, they also become household names. Giving these men so much attention also influences how people view them in society. For some people they have a huge interest in the lives and crimes of these serial killers, which leads to the want to know more. This want to know more heightens the level of celebrity because it leads to more movies, books, documentaries, etc. about these individuals because there is such an interest. Some view them as horrible beings that should be forgotten, while others may view them as horrible people but also strive to understand or want to know more about them, which

only continues to make them popular. The entertainment industries have been publishing these forms of entertainment for decades. For example, in 1986 a made-for-TV movie *The Deliberate Stranger* was released. Both the book (published in 1980) and the movie tell the story of Ted Bundy's life. Just as well, Charles Manson and his infamous Manson Family are the focus of many books and movies. In 1974, *Helter Skelter* was published by the prosecutor of the Tate-LaBianca trials, Vincent Bugliosi. This book tells the story of the murders conducted by the members of the Manson Family, as well as the trials and sentencing of Charles Manson and his disciples. Two years later in 1976, a made-for-tv movie was released with the same title *Helter Skelter* based off Bugliosi's book. However, in comparison to the movies based on Ted Bundy and Charles Manson, the movies based on Richard Ramirez do not follow the same pattern of the "Based on a True Story" format. *The Nightstalker* released in 2002 tells a story that involves Ramirez and his crimes but includes much more of the "Hollywood" dramatization. None the less with all the books, movies, and television shows being created and released it only continues to feed into serial killers becoming celebrities.

Conclusion:

For these women falling in love with a deviant man is easy, the love, attention, and affection they want is right where others do not find it, right behind a barrier made out of steel bars. They want to be loved, wanted, and needed. They want media attention, book deals, and movies about their life. They want a man who is not going to hurt them like the other men in their lives have. Due to that, they reach out to the men like Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, and Richard Ramirez because that puts them one step closer to fulfilling their own fantasy, a relationship that will not end with them getting hurt again or even better, their own "fifteen minutes of fame".

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Romanticizing Murder. By: Rachael Jones. Research Question: Why are women attracted to deviant men? Summary: Why are some women attracted to deviant men, including serial killers? One explanation is that women see the attention that the deviant men are getting from both the media and entertainment industries (movies, television shows, book deals, interviews, etc.). Due to media coverage, some serial killers have become household names, their lives and crimes put on the big screen for the world to see. Netflix Really Wants You To Stop Romanticizing Ted Bundy, The Serial Killer. Netflix. The notorious serial killer "who confessed to kidnapping, raping, and murdering at least 30 women in the 1970s" is the subject of a brand new true crime documentary on Netflix, Conversations With A Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes, that features never-before-heard audio from Bundy recorded during an interview conducted while he was on death row. sometimes romanticizing) many French cathedrals and monuments desecrated and ruined after the French Revolution. His projects were carried out by the architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. These included the restoration (sometimes creative) of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris, the fortified city of Carcassonne, and the unfinished medieval Château de Pierrefonds.[94][97]. Romanticized Murder. This tag belongs to the Additional Tags Category. Parent tags (more general): No Fandom. This tag has not been marked common and can't be filtered on (yet). Works which have used it as a tag: The Dollmaker by chesomnia. Romanticized violence and abuse is quite a common trope that is used in movies and TV. A lot of classics were never called out for the depictions of domestic violence and sexual assault by the "hero" until quite later. How many stories have we seen that imply that the women actually enjoyed the sexual assault and eventually fell for the man (take "The Fountainhead" for example)?