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Serial Killers & the Conscious

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Abstract

Serial killers differ greatly from non-serial killers in some aspects, some might say that serial killer consciouses developed differently. Sure, they can seem charming and nice, magnetic even, or even cold and emotionless. Many sources, from websites to journals, discuss serial killers and how films romanticize or portray them wrongly. For example, films tend to portray how serial killers act wrong. Serial killers have also been shown to feel or act differently from non-serial killers, like they were born wired differently. In “The Hidden Springs by M. Solms Review- The Riddle of Consciousness Solved?”, by O. Burkeman, he discusses a book by M. Solms, in which Solms discusses how the consciousness derives from feelings. In N. Andreu’s, titled “Serial Killers,” Andreu discusses how serial killers often feel from imagining or performing act of murder, that feeling being satisfaction. In another article, “Trauma, Motive and the Post-Troubles Psychopath in The Fall” by R. Barton, Barton discusses how films do not seem to really understand serial killers, often making a false image of a serial killer or portraying them in a way to make people like them. In yet another article, “Film Focuses on Serial Killer Jeffrey Dahmer” by K. Orland, Orland discusses some reasons producers make serial killer films. Also, in Z. Bousnall’s article “Romanticizing Serial Killers in the Media” she discusses how serial killers are romanticized. All of these articles help my research by giving me examples of how different scenarios can affect or alter a person’s emotions, potentially altering their conscious as well.

Introduction

Serial often get romanticized or portrayed in a way that completely creates a false sense of what a serial killer actually acts like. Some could also say that serial killers were born wired differently. For example, serial killers might feel or perceive the world differently. Some might even say that the conscious of a serial killer formed differently compared to that of a non-serial killer’s conscious.

Literature Review

One such website that discusses the representation of serial killers in film is the Cleveland19 news channel. An article, “Film Focuses on Serial Killer Jeffrey Dahmer”, on this website discusses a recent movie that came out about Jeffrey Dahmer. In this article, author K. Orland, discusses in depth about a film concerning Jeffrey Dahmer. In this article, Orland also discusses the reasons the producer portrayed Dahmer the way he did, as well as, the major actors and Dahmer himself. Director, David Jacobson, claimed that the intent of this film wasn’t to make a slasher film, but to examine the intent of Dahmer: “David Jacobson, director of an independent feature film about serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, says his goal wasn’t to make a slasher movie but to examine what drove Dahmer to commit his crimes.” This article provides a way film industries represent serial killers, by examining their motives and reasons.

Another article, “Romanticizing Serial Killers in the Media” by Z. Bousnall, takes on a more romantic approach to serial killer representation. In this article, author Z. Bousnall discusses a specific serial killer in particular, serial killer Ted Bundy. Bousnall discusses how the media romanticizes “bad boy’s” and applaud and lust over them. In her article, “Romanticizing Serial Killers in the Media”, Bousnall mentions how Allison Wargo views Zack Efron’s role and Bundy’s portrayal in a recent film about Ted Bundy: “When asked about her thoughts on Zack Efron’s role and Bundy’s portrayal in the film, Allison Wargo, a Rhoner Park resident said ‘It was difficult to view him as a serial killer, and his role as a villain was incredibly sexualized, which created a huge fandom behind it making girls want a serial killer as a boyfriend’.” The media turns serial killers into icons deserving of worship, lust, applause and praise, despite the horrendous acts they commit.

Model

A theory that could help to connect the reasons serial killers commit the acts they do comes from M. Solms. M. Solms created a theory about the human consciousness and a man named O. Burkeman helped me in understanding this theory. In an article, “The Hidden Springs by M. Solms Review- The Riddle of Consciousness Solved?”, by O. Burkeman (2021), he discusses a book by M. Solms, whom in this book discusses the theory of the true origins of the human conscious. Writing that the conscious actually comes from emotions, or feelings. This article discusses how feelings are more “intrinsically conscious” unlike our perceptions caused by our senses, which makes more sense when one realizes that feelings reside as an essential factor in human survival.

To better understand this notion, imagine a person turned zombie-like. It is possible to imagine this zombie-like person knowing the difference between red and green apples, but harder to imagine that same zombie-like person acting scared or happy without feeling those emotions. In O. Burkeman’s article “The Hidden Springs by Mark Solms Review- The Riddle of Consciousness Solved?” he discusses how feelings connect to the human consciousness and are essential to human survival. So, feelings are necessarily conscious; and feelings are essential to human survival; so when you take the first-person perspective of a human system – in other words, you or me, inside our own heads – it makes sense that it would feel conscious to be there (2021). And if feelings are where our consciousness derives from, then do serial killers feel things differently? Allowing them to form a conscious that wants to and takes pleasure from acts of murder.

Analysis

In the topic of serial killers, one characteristic that really makes them different from non-serial killers shows in how serial killers perceive the world. Meaning how they perceive what they feel and what they see. In an article by N. Andreu (2005), titles “Serial Killers,” Andreu discusses how serial killers often feel or gain satisfaction from imagining or performing act of murder. The critical feature of serial killers that distinguishes them from others who may harbor deviant sexual fantasies is that their imaginary scenarios must be translated into the world of real people, who become their victims. Although serial killers may seek ongoing satisfaction by replaying the scenario of a killing in their minds, sometimes using "trophies" and symbols from the victim, this eventually fuels the drive toward another killing (2005). Not many people would derive satisfaction from these acts, but disgust and horror. This leads me to believe that the serial killer conscious is wired differently from that of non-serial killers.

In another article, “Trauma, Motive and the Post-Troubles Psychopath in The Fall” by R. Barton (2021), Barton discusses how films do not seem to really understand serial killers, often running out of ideas or making a false image of a serial killer. The plot becomes increasingly far-fetched and it was evident that the series had run out of ideas…(2021). It appears that the film industry finds accurately depicting a serial killer to difficult. Serial killers in most films often get depicted as cold and emotionless, where as in real-life the opposite is truer. An example of this can be taken from real-life serial killer, Ted Bundy, whom often got described as charming and intelligent. This leads back to emotions in the way that serial killers are not always what they seem. They can often hide their true colors and put on a front. And if they hide their true colors, they can also hide their true emotions. For instances, a majority of serial killers show manipulative characteristics, making me wonder if manipulation and hiding feelings can alter a person’s conscious.

Serial killers often have bad experiences in childhood, which could lead to mental, emotional and physical problems in the future. The emotional change could possibly alter their psyche or their conscious making them more susceptible to serial murder. Jeffrey Dahmer, is an example of a serial killer with a not so good change in his past. Dahmer had undergone a surgery when he turned 4, after this surgery Dahmer’s whole personality changed. He became reserved and withdrawn and eventually started killing. Dahmer even had a few movies made of him. One such movie is discussed by K. Orland (2002) in his article “Film Focuses on Serial Killer Jeffrey Dahmer”. In this article, Orland discusses the reason for the producer making this film. David Jacobson, director of an independent feature film about serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, says his goal wasn’t to make a slasher movie but to examine what drove Dahmer to commit his crimes (2002). Could the surgery Dahmer had as a child affected the way he felt and acted? Therefore, affecting/altering Dahmer’s conscious. This just might be so.

Films also often romanticize serial killers and in real-life some notorious serial killers also gain quite the fan club. These fans can sometimes boost their egos and make them gain confidence, which in turn can most likely make them prouder or angrier of their murders. Possibly even altering their consciousness even more, making them kill more or less. One such case of this comes from serial killer Richard Ramirez. When Ramirez went to trial, he ended up acquiring quite the fan club. Ramirez’s fan club ranged from people obsessed with his looks to people fantasizing over how he killed. In Z. Bousnall’s (2021) article “Romanticizing Serial Killers in the Media” she discusses different platforms serial killer romanticization appears on. This kind of idolization can be found across every platform- especially TikTok. There are video montages of sexualized edits for others to romanticize these serial killers with little remorse for the violent acts they committed (2021).

Conclusion

Someone could continue my research by looking further into how serial killers perceive the world around them. Someone could also continue my research by looking further into how serial killers often hide their true selves and how this might affect their conscious. Someone could also continue my research by looking further into how childhood trauma effects a serial killer and their conscious. Thirdly, someone could further my research by discussing further how a fan club might enact a serial killer to kill more or less and how a fan club can potentially alter a serial killer’s consciousness. If someone would like to discuss another topic, they could further my research by looking into how movies made about serial killers effects the serial killers they are about or other serial killers.

Reference Page

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