



SerialKillersInTelevision

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Social Constructionism and Dexter

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Social Constructionism and Dexter

Walter Lippmann (1922) wrote: "For the most part we do not first see, and then define. We define first and then see.... We pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture." (p.54) In essence, Lippmann has described the core concepts of Social Constructionism. (Surette 2011)

[Social Constructionism](#) is the theoretical idea that views knowledge as a product of social interactions. The realities that people perceive the world to be draw from from the interactions and relationships that are socially created. Through social construction, the emphasis of shared meanings held by people is what creates the accepted understanding.

Stages of a Socially Constructed Reality

Stage 1: The Physical World

- Conditions, events, and properties

Stage 2: Competing social constructions

- Descriptions of social conditions that have been identified as a social problem

Stage 3: Media as social construction competition arena

- Process where media helps filter out other competing constructions

Stage 4: Winning social construction

- Emergence of dominant social constructed reality

Faulty Criminal Justice System Frame

In the television series, Dexter, there are many socially constructed realities that are portrayed. One of particular prominence is the [Faulty Criminal Justice System Frame](#). In this frame, the cause of crime is due to the leniency and inefficiency of the criminal justice system. In the television series, Dexter seems to be always ahead by a step when dealing with crime. As the police are slowly uncovering a murder, Dexter Morgan has already established who the killer is. Dexter and the police appear to be in competition with each other, as both try to catch the criminal first. However, one has the motif to kill the criminal while the other has the motif to put the criminal behind bars. And as it seems as if Dexter is on the hunt for his next victim, the police are trailing behind, never keeping up. Dexter is portrayed as the new crime fighter while the police appear useless.



The frequent occurrences of Dexter outwitting the police are enough to establish a frame within the police. The police are portrayed with knowledge deficits, incompetency, and inefficiency. The police are never the first to solve the crime as Dexter on his own, has established who the killer is, what the motives are, and who the victims are. The view that police are incompetent and slow within this frame socially constructs what people may perceive the police to be in the real world.

Stages of the Faulty Criminal Justice System Frame in Dexter

Stage 1: The Physical World

- Miami, serial killings, murders

Stage 2: Competing social constructions

- Police must catch the criminals vs. Dexter must kill the criminals

Stage 3: Media as social construction competition arena

- Dexter as the super-hero, attractive, super-intelligent protagonist
- Dramatization of violence

Stage 4: Winning social construction

- Dexter kills criminals first, beat the police, justice is served
- Police are ineffective

The Rogue Cop Narrative

Surette (2007) describes that the Rogue Cop [Narrative](#) is usually portrayed as a plainclothes character with special weapons. The characteristics of this narrative include, superior intelligence, hyper-masculinity, physical fitness, intuition, and is an outsider.

Dexter is indeed a rogue cop, who fights crime with his own vigilantism. Besides from Dexter's lab coat which he only wears at the lab, Dexter wears the typical everyday clothes and is always seen wearing his green shirt and cargo pants when committing a kill. Dexter's special weapons include his needle (which he uses to sedate victims), his knife (which he uses to kill his victims by stabbing them in the chest), and his blades (for cutting up victims). Dexter has superior knowledge in blood patterns and processes within the police. Dexter is able to theorize efficiently and come up with conclusions. He is a physically fit and attractive character, and seems to have super-human instincts. As an outsider, Dexter has his own secrets, and is not the typical human being. Dexter is a psychopathic serial killer which deviates him away from a normal human being. Dexter follows the rogue cop narrative which viewers recognize and have become accustomed.



Dexter using a needle to sedate his victims

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ashvc86	Nov 17, 2010 3:51 pm	Member
benarora	Nov 17, 2010 5:12 pm	Member
emily.fritz	Nov 17, 2010 12:26 pm	Organizer and Creator
j.szeto	Nov 24, 2010 10:27 am	Member
rdevries	Nov 22, 2010 6:48 pm	Member
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