LJMU Research Online

Gaynor, SM

“Bones are life!” true-crime podcasting, self-promotion and the vernaculars of Instagram with Cult Liter

http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/22480/

Article

Citation (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher’s version if you intend to cite from this work)

Gaynor, SM (2024) “Bones are life!” true-crime podcasting, self-promotion and the vernaculars of Instagram with Cult Liter. Popular Communication, 22 (1). pp. 1-16. ISSN 1540-5702

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk

http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/

Popular Communication

The International Journal of Media and Culture

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hppc20

“Bones are life!” true-crime podcasting, self-promotion and the vernaculars of Instagram with *Cult Liter*

Stella Marie Gaynor

To cite this article: Stella Marie Gaynor (2024) “Bones are life!” true-crime podcasting, self-promotion and the vernaculars of Instagram with *Cult Liter*, Popular Communication, 22:1, 1-16, DOI: 10.1080/15405702.2023.2281581

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2023.2281581

© 2023 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

Published online: 09 Jan 2024.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 414

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=hppc20

POPULAR COMMUNICATION
2024, VOL. 22, NO. 1, 1–16
https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2023.2281581

"Bones are life!" true-crime podcasting, self-promotion and the vernaculars of Instagram with *Cult Liter*

Stella Marie Gaynor

Department of Media, Culture and Communication, School of Humanities and Social Science, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

ABSTRACT
Social media engagement is becoming a significant part of true-crime fandom, providing spaces for true-crime fans to share their knowledge and obsessions. This article explores the storytelling techniques of the Cult Liter podcast and how the listeners engage with these stories on the associated Instagram account. Rather than engaging with the implications of violent crime, fans of Cult Liter on Instagram instead engage in self-promotion, like seeking behavior and in-group validation. Through analysis of episode 31, Jeffrey Dahmer, and the listener/user interaction on Instagram, this article evaluates how true-crime podcasts and social media relate to each other, echoing Seltzer's "wound culture," as users gather round the Instagram post as they would the scene of a crime. This article argues that social media provides a safe space where fans can indulge their fondness for stories of murder and their self-proclaimed obsession with certain serial killers.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 18 May 2023
Revised 15 September 2023
Accepted 6 November 2023

KEYWORDS
True crime; podcast; Instagram; Jeffrey Dahmer; Cult Liter; self-promotion; selfie; like-seeking behavior; wound culture; fandom; fan practices

Introduction

The late 2010s and early 2020's has seen a surge in production of true-crime media, with content produced and distributed across all platforms. Stories of real-life murder have appeared across the media landscape, in forms that have pushed the genre away from decades of magazine-like, sensationalist series like *Dateline* (NBC, 1992–present) and *20/20* (ABC, 1978–present). True crime became glossy documentaries, expensive dramatizations, and tentpoles for some of the biggest streaming and premium television services: *The Jinx* (HBO, 2015); *Making a Murderer* (Netflix, 2015); *The Staircase*, dramatized on HBO in 2022; *Conversations With a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes* (Netflix, 2019); and must-see series that became almost mandatory viewing during the COVID-19 pandemic: *Tiger King* (Netflix, 2020) and *The Vanishing at the Cecil Hotel* (Netflix, 2021). True crime and Netflix go hand in hand, with true crime documentaries holding the number-one position on the service for most of 2020 and 2021 (Sayles, 2021). Away from legacy media and streaming services, true crime grew exponentially across self-start up and social media: Podcasts, YouTube channels, Reddit threads, and Instagram accounts dedicated to telling stories of real-life murder,

CONTACT Stella Marie Gaynor S.M.Gaynor@ljmu.ac.uk Department of Media, Culture and Communication, School of Humanities and Social Science, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

© 2023 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

offering a resistance to the usual presentation of true crime by White males, instead offering compassion, support, and recognition of voices that have previously been unheard.

This article will explore an episode of the *Cult Liter* podcast, its corresponding Instagram post, and attached comments from listeners, examining how the tenor and tone of the podcast episode about a tragic and horrific murder case is mirrored in the Instagram comments as users engage in like-seeking behavior and self-promotion in pursuit of in-group validation. The original post from *Cult Liter* adheres to the vernaculars of Instagram and, as Tanya Horeck notes, "true crime sheds light on the dynamics of digital media cultures" (Horeck, 2019, p. 7). Through examination of the podcast and the listener interaction on Instagram, we can evaluate the dynamics of this section of digital culture, and how self-promotion still operates even when the Instagram users are commenting and engaging with a serial killer's story. Scholars are still grappling with podcasts— how podcasts present themselves and how they relate to other media (Berry, 2022)—making the intersection between podcasts and social media of particular interest to scholars of popular culture, fandom, social media, and true crime. The central aim of this study is to explore the rhetoric of contemporary true crime in the chosen podcast case study, with broader aims to contribute to wider research into how these stories are being told, and how podcasts and their associated social media accounts are inviting listeners/fans to view and talk about violent crime. Examining *Cult Liter* and its corresponding Instagram account adds to the field of studying Instagram practices, as here we can observe and understand self-promotion practices regardless of subject. We can use podcasts like *Cult Liter* to examine the private and intimate podcast when it moves across media to the public space of Instagram, giving us an insight into the connections between podcasts, social media, and fan practices.

This article looks closely at *Cult Liter Episode 31: Jeffrey Dahmer*, released on 22, April 2019. *Cult Liter* launched in 2019, is hosted by Spencer Henry, and falls into the true-crime category of podcasts. Hosting alone, Henry's private chat and in-jokes are formed through a direct address to the listener. Henry addresses the listeners as his "Cult Babes" and regularly thanks listeners for joining the "cult" (and following the podcast's RSS feed), encouraging peer-belonging in the community of listeners. This increases "the extent to which individuals feel connected [to other 'cult' members] and valued [with effusive thanks from Spencer Henry] by their peers" (Dumas et al., 2017). Spencer Henry presents his stories in the manner of cautionary or campfire tales, with listeners gathering round to listen at a time of their choosing.

Chess and Newsom (2015) explored the notion of the digital campfire, sites on the internet where users can gather and read, listen to, or share stories. This is asynchronous, as the properties of the podcast mean previous spatial and temporal ties to storytelling have been dismantled. Listeners can download and listen to the story at a time of their choosing as allowed by the properties of the podcast (Hancock & McMurtry, 2017). Listeners are still able to experience the story as intimately as a campfire tale due to the physical practice of listening privately and the host's direct address. To further imply that the episode is a chat between friends, Henry heads each episode with small talk about his weekly activities or what he watched on television. For example, in *Episode 31*, Henry mentions an escape room he went to at the weekend with friends. This personal information spoken to the listeners as friends catching up gives the podcast a feeling of intimacy via modes of direct address and

self-disclosure and encourages the development of a parasocial relationship (Van den Bulck, 2018) between the listeners and the host.

At the time of writing (2023), there has been a flurry of interest in Dahmer's case, driven in part by the anniversary of 30 years since his arrest (1991), trial (1992), and death (1994) at the hands of another inmate at the Columbia Correctional Facility. The Dahmer case has been a mainstay of true crime since the story broke in the early 1990s, with many documentaries about Dahmer, films inspired by the case, graphic novels, and, in recent years, true-crime podcasts taking up the baton of retelling the Dahmer story. According to Mark Seltzer, "Dahmer's serial killings achieved mass-media and tabloid celebrity in part because of the spectacularly horrific forms of his violence . . . and in part because of the racial and sexual politics so obtrusive in that violence (1998, p. 190). I am not going to explore the details of Dahmer's crimes; I am instead going to explore a contemporary telling of the story in *Cult Liter* and examine the presentation, promotion, and exhibition of the self on social media, and what happens when this collides with true crime.

Literature and frameworks

Podcasting came of age in 2015 when Apple integrated podcast support on the default interface of iPhones and iPads (Bottomley, 2015; Bowers, 2005). Hand, Hancock, and McCullum (2019) state that podcasts encapsulate the "uniquity and complexity of contemporary mass media consumption [as they are] democratized, proliferating, diverse, unregulated, globalized, personalized, and immersive" (2019, p. 164). The form is important as an alternative to mass media, "efficaciously using digital media technologies while simultaneously representing a revival of grassroots media (p. 165). True-crime podcasting has been on the rise since the early 2010s. *The Last Podcast on the Left* (LPOTL), launched in 2010; *Criminal* and *Serial*, both launched in 2014, and *In the Dark* and *My Favorite Murder* (MFM) both launched in 2016. *Cult Liter* shares more in common with LPOTL and MFM, owing to its non-investigatory approach. *Cult Liter*, like MFM and LPOTL, makes use of storytelling techniques that create compelling content and generates a community around the podcast. Yardley et al. consider the podcast as reenergizing the documentary format, as the "audio stories [are] 'coloring in' and extending beyond the news agenda" (2019, p. 504). This extension sees a variety of voices and tenors, approaches and explorations of true-crime stories in ways that legacy media has largely ignored. Voices of women, LGBTQ+ communities, and people of color are now telling the stories from new and diverse perspectives. Some podcasts are approaching the tragic stories with comedy, roasting the perpetrators rather than positioning them as iconic monsters with celebrity status (Schmid, 2005). *Cult Liter* was chosen for this study because the podcast embodies all the key elements listed above: it is self-start-up, not investigative, tells stories from a fresh perspective, and the episode subject was requested by fans of the podcast, which allows for a more pointed exploration of true crime fan wants and practices.

Freedoms from media regulation, low barriers to entry, and the "unique properties of audio/visual mediation, temporal disjuncture [and] on-demand play and mobility" (Hancock & McMurtry, 2017, p. 1) give the true-crime podcast a mode of reflection on cases (such as Dahmer) unlike that of legacy media crime content. Hancock & McMurtry note that the podcast intrudes on the everyday and the mundane, via the privacy afforded in

the way in which podcasts are listened to, via personal headphones for example. This intrusion, the podcast, the host, and its subject, come with us on our daily routines, and "occludes the external aural world, and speaks to us wherever we may go: a companion" (2017, p. 3). A retelling of a case so violent, so extraordinary, like the Dahmer case, becomes a personal and intimate narrative, as the mobility of the podcast allows the story to accompany the listener in their daily life via the practice of private listening.

Through detailed research, the podcast host presents "facts from the real world" (Boling & Hull, 2018, p. 92), telling a story which blurs the line between factual and entertainment content. According to Surette and Otto (2002), historically, media has made a clear distinction between information and entertainment, but in contemporary media "crime and justice news and crime and justice entertainment" are not so clearly delineated (p. 445). True crime itself is somewhat of a dichotomy, functioning as both moral parables and content that upholds "law and order" (Browder, 2010, p. 126). Lindsey Sherrill explains that "on one hand, [true crime] narratives uphold law and order and function as morality tales, while also centring criminals, grisly detail and highly subversive characters . . . toeing a line between traditional reporting and crime entertainment" (2020, p. 1,474). Recent true-crime films and documentaries have been considered to be too much on the side of the killer, presenting such deplorable criminals like Ted Bundy as heroic and genius (Gaynor, 2022), and failing to examine the mistakes made by authorities which allowed the killing to go on for as long as it did. Self-start-up and user-generated content like true crime podcasts and YouTube channels like Bailey Sarian's *Murder, Mystery and Make Up* series for example, unpack the stories with a sense of humor, and with a resistance to the usual presentation of the stories told by White males (Gaynor, 2023), instead offering compassion and support to victims, families, and fellow podcast listeners.[1]

True-crime fans, podcast fans, and storytelling fans

Tanya Horeck states "if there is one programme that captures the sea change in the status of true crime in mainstream culture over the last ten years, it is . . . *My Favorite Murder*," demonstrating that "stories of murder are deeply enjoyable" (2019, p. 1). Horeck points to the contemporary, participatory nature of contemporary digital true crime. According to Horeck, true crime has always invited fans to pass their own judgment on justice, and contemporary digital true crime mobilizes the "effective response" on the part of fans to participate across media (2019, pp. 1–2). Building on Horeck's work, it is pertinent to consider how the affordances of individual platforms in this case howInstagram influences or guides fan practices and, in turn, how the platforms and the podcasts invite fans to view violence and real-life murder stories. As Bethan Jones points out, all of these places and platforms in which to find true crime increases the way true crime fans and audiences can discuss a particular case (2023, p. 163). Jones (2023) uses Hills's (2002) definitions of what a "fan" is, observing the fan as someone who is obsessed with a particular celebrity or media text and has deep and detailed knowledge about them or it. Jones' work around the "acceptable" and the "unacceptable" kinds of fandom are particularly useful here, as what might have in the past been perceived as "dark fandoms" (Broll, 2020) have been brought into the light via the uptick in true-crime media, and social media providing spaces in which to publicly display a fan's linkage to a particular fandom: true crime and serial killers. This article examines an intriguing section of true-crime fandom: those fans that can be considered to be already "in the know" as they

already know the details of Dahmer's crimes, yet they want to hear the story told again. They do not need nor do they seek to be taught anything; they are fans of storytelling and, via their participation on Instagram, they are seeking validation from other fans that it is okay to love stories about murder and have a favorite serial killer.

Instagram and wound culture

Instagram has a demographic consisting of mainly 18–29-year-old women, and in 2017 had 300 million daily users (Dumas, Maxwell-Smith, Davis, & Giulietti, 2017). By 2018, Instagram was boasting one billion monthly users (Constine, 2018). The primary activity of Instagram is the presentation of the ideal self, with promotion of the self being the central drive rather than the building and maintaining of relationships, like as seen on Facebook (Enli & Thumim, 2012; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Twenty-five percent of Instagram photos are selfies (self-portraits). Motives to self-present and self-promote are, according to Dumas, Maxwell-Smith, Davis, and Giulietti (2017), for users to document their lives to others, express and showcase creativity, and to increase popularity amongst peers, which is measured via the metrics of Instagram; likes, followers, etc. Use of Instagram is free (assuming existing ownership of digital devices and access to the Internet), and so accounts dedicated to self-start-up podcasts are a logical move to promote the podcast and provide a place for listeners/fans to engage with the podcast. These Instagram accounts feature posts that are assigned to podcast episodes and provide a space for a virtual community to develop among the podcast fans in response to the corresponding episode content. This virtual community can be likened to what Seltzer described as "wound culture":

> The convening of the public around scenes of violence, the rushing to a scene of the accident, the milling around the point of impact had come to make up a *wound culture*: the public fascination with torn and open bodies and torn and open persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound. (Seltzer, 1998, p. 1)

The temporal disjuncture of the podcast and the Instagram posts for each episode and the contemporary digital culture of select, download, and play at a time that suits us, means that we can call back into our present a crime scene from the past. The listeners and Instagram users can gather around the Instagram post - posts which frequently feature crime-scene photographs and/or photographs of victims and killersn- as the public would rush and gather around a scene of an accident, impact, or crime, transferring the wound culture to the digital and social media realm.

While Instagram provides a location for a virtual community to discuss murderers in the comments, and a place to gather round the recalled scenes or victims of the crime, a primary activity on Instagram is to "engage in … self-presentation of one's actual or ideal self" (Dumas, Maxwell-Smith, Davis, & Giulietti, 2017, p. 1). Instagram is an "outlet for self-expression, presentation of impression management … young people on Instagram are particularly focussed on validation or attention from others in the form of likes" (Dumas, Maxwell-Smith, Davis, & Giulietti, 2017, p. 2). This ideal self and impression management are observed as practices that seek to develop peer belonging by engaging in like-seeking behavior.

This behavior manifests in activities and posts that mirror, in the case of the true-crime podcast and its assigned Instagram post, how the host approaches the case.

Instagram users engage in modes of communication appropriate to Instagram (the use of emojis, tagging, liking) as part of the pursuit of attention and self-validation. Mirroring facilitates empathy as one person subconsciously imitates the gesture, speech pattern, or attitude of another. Mirroring on Instagram can be found in gestures represented in the use of emojis and in speech patterns in the shared use of exclamative punctuation and netspeak (LOL, for example). Mirroring of attitude can be seen in the content of the comments, reflecting both the attitude of the host of the podcast and the other users in the post's comments section. This mirroring, which has roots in real-life interpersonal communications (Sheldon, 2015), is part of human limbic synchrony; from an evolutionary perspective, being in sync with members of a group is vital for survival. Instagram is where 18–29-year-olds form groups. This mirroring of gesture, speech pattern, and attitude is significant for the development of validation and value by peers in digital and virtual interpersonal communications (Arnett, 2000; Barry, Madsen, & DeGrace, 2016), and the validation from other members of the true crime or *Cult Liter* fan group.

Pavicia Sheldon (2015) explores interpersonal communication and mediated relationships, drawing on Berger and Calabrese's 1975 study on the relational development between strangers. Sheldon notes that interpersonal relationships develop as people reduce uncertainty about each other. Ways to do this include practices that seek information about the other person, leading to self-disclosure as an interactive strategy. Any uncertainty about the podcast host is reduced through the aforementioned pieces of personal information. It is not relevant to the telling of the story of this crime case for Spencer Henry to include reporting on his private life, but it encourages a feeling of intimacy, community, and peer-belonging when the listeners take the conversation over to Instagram. Instagram users engage in self-disclosure, which is rewarding according to the vernaculars of the platform (gaining likes) and rewarding to others who might engage in mirroring, demonstrating their synchronicity with others in the group by responding with their own self-disclosure. Self-disclosure in this case of the Dahmer episode of *Cult Liter* and the corresponding Instagram post sees users admitting that Dahmer is their favorite, despite the heinous crimes. These comments garner likes from others and make it safe for others to mirror and disclose that they feel the same way. Sheldon (2015) comments on communication privacy management and the communication of private information being bound to culture and context. The culture of true crime and the context of Instagram allows the liking and 'favoriting' of certain killers or cases, self-promotion, and self-presentation which, as I will demonstrate later, leads to Instagram users and *Cult Liter* listeners inserting themselves into the narrative of the Dahmer case. When such information is shared, users self-disclosing that they "love" Dahmer, the boundary around the information becomes a collective boundary, a shared notion that they all "love" Dahmer but that this is personal information which is not appropriate for everyday conversation (Sheldon, 2015). The virtual community that develops around the Instagram posts from *Cult Liter* and in the comments section becomes a safe space in which to disclose this private information and for others to relate to it. Mirroring practices then encourage peer belonging and, in turn, this legitimates and validates interest in true-crime content that takes a more laid-back approach to telling stories of murder.

Methodology

According to Whiteman (2012), researching online "destabilises the standard ethical practices" and therefore the researcher must establish their own stance regarding ethics. Studies such as Markham & Buchanan (2012), and resources via the Association for Internet Researchers, seek to understand how a researcher might ethically conduct their academic work in the quickly shifting online landscape. Whiteman (2012) suggests that a text approach rather than a human-subject approach can help researchers to understand and develop ethical practices. For Whiteman, and for this study, researching activity in social media spaces via a text approach allows for a focus on the performed, constructed, and displayed nature of the content being studied. For this study in which I am examining a digital podcast episode and its corresponding Instagram post and comments, I am following the frameworks suggested by Buchanan & Markman (2012), which state that internet research and enquiry can be done by studying how people use the internet through "collecting and observing activities . . . on social network sites," and that the researcher "employs visual and textual analysis, semiotic analysis, content analysis . . . to study . . . internet facilitated images, writings, and media forms" (p. 4). I am conducting textual analysis of the *Cult Liter* podcast episode, textual analysis of the images presented on the corresponding Instagram post, and semiotic analysis of the comments left by Instagram users and followers of the *Cult Liter* Instagram account. I did not participate in the comments on the Instagram post, beyond following the *Cult Liter* account myself. The *Cult Liter* Instagram account is public, and all comments are also public. Despite this, while the participants, the commenters, do not assume their comments to be private, they do not assume their comments to be subject to research and analysis. For this reason, I will not be naming the commenters via their Instagram handles. I will keep the comments anonymous. I will refer to the commenters as users, followers, or simply as commenters. I stored no date from the Instagram post and its comments, and these remain freely available on the platform. I did decide to use direct quotations from the comments to fully analyze the semiotic discourse and the "netspeak." In total there were (at the time of writing) 32 comments on the Instagram post under study, and I coded the comments by the content of the comments: mirroring, excitement, emotional response, and dramaturgy via emojis. This researcher considers Instagram and this particular post to be a public archive, and that as outlined by the Association of Internet Research, comments and interactions by authors on this Instagram account and post are intended to be public and performative.

Cult Liter: episode 31, Jeffrey Dahmer

The Dahmer case is infamous for its gory and harrowing details: the body parts, the cannibalism, and all undercut with institutional racism and homophobia in the police department that prevented any real intervention from authorities even when neighbors contacted police multiple times with concerns. The tabloid status that Seltzer (1998) described means that the Dahmer case has been well covered in true crime, yet the "Cult Babes" were clamoring for Spencer Henry to tell the story. Henry says in the episode that the "story has been requested so many times," acknowledging that there is not

much more to say on this case. However, it is not new details that the listeners want from *Cult Liter*, they want Henry's own take on the story, his musings, his interpretations, his side notes and side stories. This can be seen in the Instagram comments on the *Episode 31* post, with one follower commenting "IVE BEEN WAITING FOR DAHMER YES!" and another adding "I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS ONE FOR SO LONG AAAA" complete with four "raising hands" emojis, which are usually employed to signify a moment of pride and excitement. Another Instagram user commented with only emojis: raising hands, monkey covering its eyes, and a red heart, conveying the excitement in Spencer Henry telling the story, the can't-bear-to-look monkey pointing to the crimes themselves, and how we cannot help but be curious, and the red heart for love for the Dahmer story. All this excitement illustrates that the listeners/Instagram users know what the Dahmer story entails but want to hear it told by Spencer Henry in his own personal way, with comedic asides and the insertion of common and contemporary parlance into the recounting of the crime story.

"Bones are life."

As the sole host of *Cult Liter*, Henry must muse to himself about Dahmer's motives, or moments that could be understood as darkly comical. Henry muses on Dahmer playing with bones as a child, stating that "bones are life." Using the contemporary parlance of saying something is "life," meaning that the thing is, according to *Urban Dictionary*, so amazing that the person cannot live without it, tells the listener that, for the young Dahmer, this hobby was absorbing and enthralling and continued for some time. *Cult Liter* episodes are usually around the half hour mark, and so there is not time to detail every moment in Dahmer's life. In using the modern slang term "bones are life," Henry is condensing this portion of Dahmer's childhood into three words whilst also pressing to the listener how important this was, especially knowing what Dahmer went on to do. With the *Cult Liter* listeners for the most part already knowing the Dahmer story, it is these structures in Henry's idiolect as he recounts the story that listeners are listening for. He presents the facts (Boling & Hull, 2018) and blurs this with entertainment (Surette & Otto, 2002). In short, it is not what story Spencer Henry tells, it is how he tells it.

Later, Henry comes to the point in the story that recounts the mannequin, which Dahmer used to satisfy his urges to be with a motionless body. Henry steps out of his scripted retelling to wonder about these key moments, pondering such occurrences by placing himself in the situation. He speculates "if it was me," or, "I'm thinking, how does that work?" In the case of the mannequin, Henry asks himself and he addresses Dahmer directly, on how a certain moment in the story might happen:

Henry: But here's a weird tidbit: he once took home a mannequin, and he would have sex with it. So . . . I don't . . . I'm like thinking, I'm like, how . . . does that work? We've all seen a Forever 21, there's a mannequin, but like, are they rubber . . . mannequins? Because like that I could, understand more, but like a *snigger* just like, are you just fucking a big piece of plastic Jeffrey? *laughs*

Questioning Dahmer directly and pointing out the red flags and deviant behavior, *Cult Liter*

upholds the morality of true crime (Sherrill, 2020), albeit in an informal, laid-back fashion. *Cult Liter's* conversational tone and relaxed tenor of delivery places modern parlance directly into the speech of the players in the story. When Dahmer was a child, he, as said, showed an interest in preserving bones. His father, Lionel Dahmer, a chemist, was at the time pleased that his son was showing an interest in scientific work. In hindsight, of course, such an interest in bones might have been a red flag. Henry explains young Jeffrey's request to his father as to what would happen if they put animal bones in bleach, and muses on how he himself might react, before explaining, in his own tenor and tone, how Dahmer's father felt about this newfound interest:

Henry: "If that was me, *giggles* I'd be like . . . hmmm . . . alright, nope, uh, we're not doing that! But his dad was a chemist, lest we forget, so he was like, "oh dope, you're showing interest in something."

Lionel Dahmer, a middle-aged White man, in the late 1960s and early 1970s would not be using the term *dope* as an exclamation of something being exceptional.[2] Placing modern slang into the speech of Lionel Dahmer when retelling the story serves to underpin the tenor of the podcast, a casual chat between friends that, despite the gossipy style, maintains a thread of caution. The laid-back delivery of Spencer Henry, even when talking about something so monstrous as the Dahmer story, is picked up by the commenters on the Instagram post. Their engagement on Instagram is inspired by and mirrors the approach and attitude of the podcast host. As the Dahmer story comes to a close, Henry invites listeners to "feel free to continue this conversation over on the *Cult Liter* Instagram page," once more placing the podcast as a personal interaction between himself and the listener and as a conversation to be continued between the two on another platform, encouraging a parasocial relationship.

Vernaculars of Instagram

Instagram launched in 2010 primarily as a platform for creating photo galleries. Instagram was, and still is, a platform driven by aesthetics, and has "shaped our collective visual culture [and has] popularised photographic conventions and aesthetic values" (Caldeira, 2020, p. 5). Instagram drove the rise of the selfie, with the handheld self-portrait becoming a popular form of self-representation on the platform. Instagram users follow a set of (unwritten) rules regarding acceptable aesthetics and perceived markers of beauty and value (Tiidenberg, 2018). The aesthetics of the uploaded photographs are constructed with style, grammar, and logics that have developed from the interface and design of Instagram and how that is used and interpreted by users. These vernaculars, states Caldeira (2020), influence both the conventions of the content on Instagram but also how other users and followers engage with content and derive meaning. Because of the emphasis on the visual that Instagram promotes, there is then limited scope for any real depth in any given discussion (Caldeira, 2020). Instagram is a place for promotion and presentation of an ideal self, with user contributions of their own photographs constructed to fit the vernaculars of the platform, which in turn is meant to generate likes (Gibbs, Meese, Arnold,

Nansen, & Carter, 2015). When users engage with other people's content, commenting on a post, the tendency toward self-promotion and like-seeking continues.

Creating an Instagram post that corresponds to an episode of *Cult Liter* adds visuals to the aural storytelling and encourages user/listener engagement across media platforms. Despite the serial-killer content, *Cult Liter* posts still adhere to the vernaculars of Instagram. The post that corresponds to *Episode 31: Jeffrey Dahmer* features a carousel of five images. The first features the *Cult Liter* logo, episode number and title; the second, third, and fourth are photographs of Jeffrey Dahmer himself (two taken in court and one mugshot), and the fifth is the gallery of photographs of the victims, arranged in a grid with each man's surname underneath. This story is a tragedy, yet the post is arranged according to the aesthetics, styles, grammar and logics of Instagram. The gallery of images, while not selfies, are portraits of the killer and the victims. The expected convention of true crime mugshots and galleries of victims becomes part of the Instagram aesthetic. Being aged photographs which were originally taken on traditional film camera, the images of Dahmer in court and his mugshot are textured with grain and noise. These effects are frequently added by Instagram users to their own digital selfies via filters and adjustments easily available in the app, which blur skin and features to make selfies appear—according to Instagram aesthetics—more visually appealing. Users might add grain and noise to create a vintage look to their selfies, reducing brightness, sharpness, and contrast, to create a stylized self-portrait. The Dahmer mugshot with all its grain and noise, echoes the contemporary Instagram practice of digitally adjusting selfies to fit the expected Instagram aesthetic of filtered and doctored photographs that mask imperfections. That Dahmer's mugshots fit Instagram's beauty aesthetic can also be linked to the filters of Instagram historically not serving or including people of color (Lawson, 2021; Childs, 2022). Dahmer in his Whiteness, looking like a filtered selfie on the carousel of portraits, further cements the racist elements of the case, and how listeners/followers are invited to view this crime story via *Cult Liter* and Instagram: Dahmer is the star and focus of the stylized selfies, and the fans gather around the digitally created crime scene in an echo of wound culture (Seltzer, 1998), to profess their love of the White star (Schmid, 2005) of the story.

The practice of creating posts and self-portraits on Instagram is, says Caldeira, an "exercise in curational agency" (2020), where users have a choice over how they represent themselves. But neither the victims nor Dahmer himself have choices regarding if and how they are represented on Instagram. If social media allows people to claim agency, then self-representation can have an underlying political character (Caldeira, 2020). In this *Cult Liter* post, neither Dahmer nor the victims have curational agency. However, counter to this, Amanda Greer (2017) argues in her exploration of another true-crime podcast, *My Favorite Murder* (MFM), that the practice of true-crime podcasts that are created and hosted by underrepresented voices in media (women in MFM and LGBTQ+ representation in *Cult Liter*) serve to give voices back to the victims. Greer states that the given the aural medium of the podcast, existing for the ear alone, the "vocal engagement constitutes a never-ending production of images in the mind, a never-ending process of imagination." This process is evocation, a "call to presence" (2017, p. 155) of those that are lost. Combining this with the Instagram post, it could be argued that a face has been given back to the victims, one that listeners/users seek out by moving from RSS feed to Instagram and actively scrolling

through the carousel of images. But to counter again, considering the true crime tale recounted by Spencer Henry and the images on Instagram as somewhat sympathetic to the victims and their loss is undermined by the comments left by the users/listeners on the post. While the logics of Instagram as a platform driven by aesthetics does not promote depth of discussion, there is a marked lack of mention of the victims in the user comments.[3] Victims are not named by the Instagram users/*Cult Liter* listeners; neither is there any comment on the police mistakes, the poverty, or structural racism or homophobia that are key factors in the duration of Dahmer's killing career. Instead, users comment on their love for Dahmer or, more tellingly as a pointer toward the self-promotion and like-seeking behavior that drives Instagram usage, add in their own tenuous links to the case, the investigation, and even to Dahmer himself.

True crime and like-seeking behavior

Merserko notes that "the dynamics of the artist-fan relationship are profoundly influenced by the content itself. If the user feels compelled to participate with media he or she consumes, then something must exist within these texts that makes engagement with them attractive" (Merserko, 2015, p. 23). Spencer Henry invites listeners who are driven by an emotional compulsion inspired by the content and their perceived parasocial relationship with the podcast host to Instagram to participate and engage with the corresponding post. As part of a "culture that is defined by celebrity," Dahmer is one of the biggest stars (Schmid, 2005, p. 1) that *Cult Liter* fans can obsess over, motivated as they are to express this obsession on the Instagram post. As *Cult Liter* invites users to continue the conversation over on Instagram, users showcase their personal links to the case or their developed knowledge of the story, in the same way that fans of a movie star might draw themselves closer to the object of their obsession by learning as much as they can about their subject. The practices of fandom on Instagram for *Cult Liter* and for Dahmer are shaped by the "contexts and interfaces" (Morris, 2018, p. 358) and conventions of the platform. As Horeck explains, this is an "affective response" where the podcast "shapes and manages the audience attention" (2019, p. 4). The listeners/users response to the Dahmer case via *Cult Liter* is shaped by Henry's attitude, tone, tenor, and how he places himself hypothetically in the story: "If it was me ..." This dynamic of interaction sheds light on how fans of true crime self-promote for group validation on Instagram. This can be examined in the comments that demonstrate like-seeking behavior via the accepted dramaturgy of Instagram. One commenter posted:

> So I studied criminal justice at a community college in the Milwaukee area and one of my instructors was actually ow [sic] of the detectives on his case so we got first hand experience and to see pictures that were never released to the public including the Polaroids.

Another follower wrote:

> I'm from Milwaukee, and my dad was the regional manager for Sears Logistics. Dahmer brought the freezer that he kept the body parts in at Sears, and my dad was the one who had to go in and check the purchases for the police to tie Dahmer to the freezer. I was a kid, but still remember my dad being so excited that he helped the investigators. He even showed everyone the receipt with Dahmer's signature! Wish I still had a copy of it!

As the *Cult Liter* host puts himself in the story with his musings, so the Instagram users/podcast listeners attach and place themselves as close to the story as they can with their personal connections, compelled as they are to participate with this media (Merserko, 2015). A follower has seen pictures from the crime scene that most people have not, a comment that promotes the user's ideal self - someone who has a deeper, more exclusive knowledge of the case. A different commenter also has some deeper knowledge, having seen a receipt that had Dahmer's signature on it. Considering the use of punctuation in this comment, the exclamation marks mirror the tenor and tone of Henry's speech patterns as he raises the volume of his voice to emphasize his own emotional affective response to the case. Rather than somber tonality which this tragic case might garner in other media outlets, in the comments section as typed by Instagram users, there are instead excessive exclamation marks which make the writer seem overexcited. Placing oneself so close to the crime - however tenuously - serves the like-seeking, self-promoting nature of engagement on Instagram. Rather than any discussion of the case itself or the victims, users pull focus to themselves: Their experience at college, their family member who worked on the case, or, as in this comment, their brother-in-law. This user commented:

> I just started re listening to this and I just found out my sisters [sic] husband is the second cousin to Jeffrey Dahmer. Just thought I'd share that creepy piece of info with you all!

The motivation here is not to expand on the case but to pull focus to the users themselves, to self-promote and display an ideal self that has more knowledge or more close personal links to a notorious celebrity serial killer. As Schmid explains, the very existence of "famous serial killers in American culture brings together two defining features of American modernity: Stardom and violence" (2005, p. 105). I would expand on this and argue that stardom, violence, and self-promotion due to the rise of social media now create three defining features of American modernity. This study of true crime content and its corresponding social media participation by fans illustrates this addition to Schmid's ideas. The listeners/users are fascinated by the violent star, and self-promote and seek likes through publicly demonstrating their fascination for violence to each other.

Instagram has an accepted dramaturgy, modes of engagement that users take part in as they post and comment on the platform. In the written comments, accepted modes include the excessive exclamation points, the use of emojis, and netspeak (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). This is an expected performance of the self (Hogan, 2010) on Instagram, and users comply and reproduce these forms of communication as part of mirroring practices. Evident in the comments under the *Cult Liter Episode 31* post on Instagram, users mimic each other with shared parlance that binds the users together as "Cult Babes," and mirror Henry's speech patterns in their written comments. Two users refer to Spencer as "cult dad," demonstrating, as Van den Bulck explains, an "illusion of a long-term friendship . . . encompassing an emotional connection, yet mediated and one-sided" (2018, p. 291). This parasocial relationship is one-sided, as in the comments section of this post (and across the *Cult Liter* Instagram account), Spencer Henry never likes or replies.

Other users comment on this dark and disturbing case with gestures (emojis) and speech patterns (typing style) that serve the practice of mirroring, like-seeking behavior (Sheldon, 2015), and in-group validation. A user comments "Agh he was sooo sick but he's so intriguing at the same time" with the "face with open mouth vomiting" emoji. A fellow commenter concurs with "me and my best friend are legit tearing up over this. We have

a slight obsession with dahmer so this is a dream. Just ughhhh" with three "beaming face with smiling eyes" emojis. The excitement is clear from another follower commenting simply "Yesssssds" with the "heart eyes" emoji, seconded by another with "HAIL YES" and two "raising hands" emojis. All of these comments, and others, feature gestures that the other followers will understand and sentiments that they will relate to (sick but intriguing/ obsessive interest in Dahmer/excitement about Spencer Henry's personal take on the story), forming strong bonds within the group and facilitating peer-belonging and in-group validation via the mutably used and recognizable vernaculars of Instagram. However, what this article is revealing is the ways which contemporary and participatory true crime is inviting us to view and talk about violence, especially violence against marginalized communities. The ethics of displaying such love for Dahmer complicates what Schmid termed "ones own imbrication with and contribution to that fame" (2005, p. 109). This *Cult Liter* Instagram account is a safe space to proclaim love of this real-life story, but the way that the fandom manifests on Instagram (Morris, 2018, p. 358) mediates the practices of the fandom through its own vernaculars of self-promotion.

A safe space to love Dahmer

Users gathering around the post to comment as part of self-promotion and like-seeking behavior shifts the focus of the wound culture (Seltzer, 1998). The listeners/users pull focus away from the spectacle of the torn bodies to themselves, in a safe space where it is permitted and reasonable to express not only the excitement about the episode but also self-proclaimed love for this true-crime story. Virtual communities are built on shared interests and peer-belonging (Matei, 2005), and in the comments section on Instagram, users can admit how much they enjoy this story, again pointing to their familiarity of this case and how they relish hearing it again. One user comments "Holy crap so excited, I think he's one of the most fascinating serial killers I've come across. So happy you're doing an episode on him!" Agreement comes from a follower with "Omg im [sic] so excited ["grinning squinting face" emoji and "face with tears of joy" emoji'] {kinda weird to say but oh well} ["face with tears of joy" emoji." A user feels it is safe to comment "He's one of my absolute faves ['face with tears of joy' emoji]," and another commenter rhetorically asks "Is it wrong for me to say he is one of my favourite serial killers though?" All of these comments generate likes from other users, yet from outside the "Cult Babes" group these comments might seem insensitive and crass. As Dumas et al. explain, users are "engaging in behaviours on Instagram to gain attention and validation from others" (2017, p. 2) via the accepted and expected tenors and behaviors between "Cult Babes" participating on Instagram. The shared collective attitude of playfulness is part of the like-seeking behavior of this particular group. No one in the comments is expanding on the tragic nature of the crimes, or the wider structural problems. The rhetorics of true crime in legacy media have often presented serial killers as rare geniuses, and have often invited the viewer, though less openly, to admire these killers and those tasked to find them (Gaynor, 2022), rather than sympathize or empathize with the victims as human beings. Along with the celebrity status (Schmid, 2005) imposed on figures like Dahmer, it is important that we examine these spaces where fans can safely articulate their love for serial killers without judgement,as they form significant parts of how fans engage with true crime media and their practices when they feel they are

amongst peers. What might have been previously deemed dark or unacceptable now forms part of the self-promotion and validating processes that drive social media.

Conclusion

Despite the Jeffrey Dahmer case being well known and well told, contemporary true-crime fans still want to hear the story, but through the personality, humor and idiolect of the *Cult Liter* host, Spencer Henry. Prefacing the episode with an acknowledgment that there is not much more to add, Henry compacts the story into 30 minutes and inserts both modern parlance and himself into the well-worn narrative via slang and off-script musings. *Cult Liter* helps us to understand broader true crime practices, as podcasts and social media provide alternatives to the legacy or dominant media representations, which are often run by middle-class, heterosexual White men. Fans are encouraged to behave according to the metrics and vernaculars of a given platform. Instagram promotes a focus on aesthetics, self-promotion, and like-seeking behavior. Though listeners are there to engage with the podcast, Instagram drives users to self-promote and to seek likes, which results in commenters pulling focus away from the crime and onto themselves. Users bring in their own tenuous links to the case in an effort to present themselves as their most idealized version according to both the vernaculars of Instagram - gaining likes and follows - and the expectations of the true crime community: A developed knowledge and a sense of "being in the know." The listeners/Instagram users mirror each other in recognized and accepted gestures (emojis) and speech patterns (capital letters, excessive punctuation), rejecting legacy media's previous somber tellings of the Dahmer case.

Cult Liter helps us to understand true crime fandom, as what might have once been considered "dark" or unacceptable is via self-start-up content and social media, brought into public spaces where fans can gather together and share their group tastes. Fans of the podcast exclaim their excitement and readiness to hear *Cult Liter's* take on Dahmer, as the virtual community in the comments section provides a safe space for the listeners to disclose their love for the case. Disclosures which, in another time and place, might to others seem unacceptable. This case study reveals to us the parasocial relationships being built in the true-crime podcasting space. *Cult Liter* encourages continued listener interaction over on Instagram, yet the conversation between host and listener is not actually there. The listeners/users comment between themselves, seeking likes and validation from others in the fan group. The listener community, together with the Instagram post, call back crime scenes from the past into the present, gathering around the Instagram post as people might rush to an actual crime scene, in a digital version of wound culture.

Notes

1. Fan groups have built up around various true-crime podcasts, away from the hosts, and the groups offer support to other listeners. Support includes mental health support and sexual-assault victim support (from the *My Favorite Murder* fans), and financial support in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (from the *All Killa No Filla* fans).
2. The urban slang "dope" to mean exceptional was first used by rappers Busy Bee and Grandmaster Flash in lyrics in the 1980s (Urban Dictionary, 2015).
3. Aside from one user who mentions a victim's name in relation to Spencer Henry struggling to pronounce the surname.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Stella Marie Gaynor is Senior Lecturer in Media, Culture and Communication at Liverpool John Moores University. She is the author of Rethinking Horror in the New Economies of Television (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022). Her research explores horror and true crime across television, digital and social media, comics and film.

ORCID

Stella Marie Gaynor http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4803-1239

References

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*(5), 469–480. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469

Barry, C. M., Madsen, S., & DeGrace, A. (2016). Growing up with a little help from their friends in emerging adulthood. In J. J. Arnett (Ed.), *The oxford handbook of emerging adulthood*. Oxford University Press.

Berry, R. (2022). What is a podcast? mapping the technical, cultural, and sonic boundaries between radio and podcasting. In M. Lindgren & J. Loviglio (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to radio and podcast studies* (pp. 399–407). New York: Routledge.

Boling, K. S., & Hull, K. (2018). Undisclosed information – serial is my favorite murder: Examining motivations in the true crime podcast audience. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media*, *25*(1), 92–108. doi:10.1080/19376529.2017.1370714

Bottomley, A. J. (2015). Podcasting: A decade in the life of a new audio medium: Introduction. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media*, *22*(2), 164–169. doi:10.1080/19376529.2015.1082880

Bowers, A. (2005, December, 30). The year of the podcast. *Slate*. http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/2005/12/the_year_of_the_podcast.html

Broll, R. (2020). Dark fandoms: An introduction and case study. *Deviant Behaviour*, *41*(6), 792–804. doi:10.1080/01639625.2019.1596453

Browder, L. (2010). True Crime. In C. Nickerson (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to American crime fiction* (pp. 205–228). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caldeira, S. P. (2020). 'It's not just Instagram models:' exploring the gendered political potential of young women's Instagram use. *Media and Communication*, *9*(2), 5–15. doi:10.17645/mac.v9i2.3731

Chess, S., & Newsom, E. (2015). Folklore, horror stories, and the Slender Ma*n*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Constine, J. (2018, June, 20). Instagram hits 1 billion monthly users, up from 800M in September. *Tech Crunch*. https://techcrunch.com/2018/06/20/instagram-1-billion-users

Dumas, T., Maxwell-Smith, M., Davis, J., & Giulietti, P. (2017). Lying or longing for likes? Narcissism, peer belonging, loneliness and normative versus deceptive like-seeking on Instagram in emerging adulthood. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *71*, 1–10. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.037

Enli, G. S., & Thumim, N. (2012). Socializing and self-representation online: Exploring facebook. *Observatoria (OBS*) Journal*, *6*(1), 87–105.

Gaynor, S. M. (2022). Better the devil you know: Nostalgia for the captured killer in Netflix's *conversations with a killer: The Ted Bundy tapes*. In B. Robinson & C. Daigle (Eds.), *Serial lkillers in contemporary television: Familiar monsters in post 9/11 culture* (pp. 135–151). New York: Routledge.

Gaynor, S. M. (2023). What else can I add?": Inverting the narrative through female perspectives in *falling for a killer*. In G. Larke-Walsh (Ed.), My favorite Murder, *and* murder, mystery, and make up (pp. 180–196). New York: *True crime in American media*.
Gibbs, M., Meese, J., Arnold, M., Nansen, B., & Carter, M. (2015). #funeral and Instagram: Death, social media, and platform vernacular. *Information, Communication & Society*, *18*(3), 255–268. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2014.987152
Greer, A. (2017). Murder, she spoke: The female voice's ethics of evocation and spatialization in the true crime podcast. *Sound Studies*, *3*(2), 152–164. doi:10.1080/20551940.2018.1456891
Hancock, D., & McMurtry, L. (2017). Cycles upon cycles, stories upon stories: Contemporary audio media and podcast horror's new frights. *Palgrave Communications*, *3*(1), 1–8. doi:10.1057/palcomms.2017.75
Hand, R., Hancock, D., & McCullum, V. (2019). Beware the untruths: Podcast horror in Trumps America. In V. McCullum (Ed.), *Make America hate again: Trump-era horror and the politics of fear* (pp. 164–174). New York: Routledge.
Hills, M. (2002). *Fan cultures*. London: Routledge.
Hogan, B. (2010). The presentation of self in the age of social media; distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *30*(6), 377–386. doi:10.1177/0270467610385893
Horeck, T. (2019). *Justice on demand: True crime in the digital streaming era*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
Jones, B. (2023). Forensic fandom: True crime, citizen investigation and social media. In G. S. Larke-Walsh (Ed.), *True crime in American media* (pp. 163–180). New York: Routledge.
Lawson, C. E. (2021). Skin deep: Callout strategies, influencers, and racism in the online beauty community. *New Media & Society*, *23*(3), 596–612. doi:10.1177/1461444820904697
Matei, S. A. (2005). From counterculture to cyberculture: Virtual community and the dilemma of modernity. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communications*, *10*(3), 00–00. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2005.tb00262.x
Merserko, V. M. (2015). The pursuit of authenticity on Marc Maron's *WTF* podcast. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *29*(6), 796–810. doi:10.1080/10304312.2015.1073682
Morris, J. M. (2018). Platform fandom. In M. A. Click & S. Scott (Eds.), The Routledge companion to media fandom (pp. 356–365). New York: Routledge.
Sayles, J. (2021, July 9). The bloody bubble. *The Ringer*. https://www.theringer.com/tv/2021/7/9/22567381/true-crime-documentaries-boom-bubble-netflix-hbo
Schmid, D. (2005). *Natural born celebrities: Serial killers in American culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Seltzer, M. (1998). *Serial killers: Death and life in America's wound culture*. New York: Routledge.
Sheldon, P. (2015). *Social media: Principles and applications*. Lexington Books.
Sheldon, P., & Bryant, K. (2016). Instagram: Motives for its use and relationship to narcissism and contextual age. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *58*, 89–97. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.059
Sherrill, L, A. (2020). The "Serial Effect" and the true crime podcast ecosystem. *Journalism Practice*, *16*(7), 1473–1494. doi:10.1080/17512786.2020.1852884
Surette, R., & Otto, C. (2002). A test of a crime and justice infotainment measure. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *30*(5), 443–453. doi:10.1016/S0047-2352(02)00147-2
Tiidenberg, K. (2018). *Selfies: Why we love (and hate) them*. Leeds: Emerald Publishing.
Urban Dictionary (2015). It's life. https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=It%27s%20life
Van den Bulck, H. (2018). Exploring local fandoms: Celebrities' fans in the global-local nexus. In M. A. Click & S. Scott (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to media fandom* (pp. 289–298). Routledge.
Van Dijck, J., & Poell, T. (2013). Understanding social media logic. *Media and Communication*, *1*(1), 2–14. doi:10.17645/mac.v1i1.70
Yardley, E., Kelly, E., & Robinson-Edwards, S. (2019). Forever trapped in the imaginary of late capitalism? The serialized true crime podcast as a wake-up call in times of criminological slumber. *Crime Media Culture*, *15*(3), 503–521. doi:10.1177/1741659018799375