Call for Papers: Investigating True Crime & the Media.
A conference hosted by *Journalism@Newcastle* and *Ethical Space*, the Journal of Communication Ethics.
June 23, 2022 – Deadline for abstracts October 29, 2021

True Crime has a long and popular history in journalism, literature, drama, radio, film and television - and now the podcast. *A Warning for Fair Women (1599),* the dramatization of the 1573 murder of London merchant George Sanders by his wife's lover, was the curtain-raiser for many more playwrights to adapt true murder narratives in the decades and centuries that followed (Rohrer 2019). True Crime podcasts today clock up tens of millions of downloads (Punnett, 2018) and research suggests that the audience is overwhelmingly made up of women (Boling & Hull, 2018). Perhaps because of this, it is often dismissed as a sensationalist genre bordering on pornography. But such perspectives are challenged by research which identifies a focus on advocating for justice where the formal justice system has failed (Rowen 2017). True Crime podcasts have represented women in ways that 'use the affordances of mass media to draw support from the public, effectively inviting the audience to perform as an alternate jury' and engendering change in judicial processes (Pâquet 2020). The sub-genre of criminal biography has used the voice of the accused to challenge institutional truth-claims (Buozis, 2017) and journalistic investigations have repeatedly exposed miscarriages of justice (Larke-Walsh 2021). Kelli Boling (2019) argues that true crime podcasts are impacting the criminal justice system in unprecedented ways and could challenge both criminal justice and media reform. But proponents have also been accused of complicity in the propagation and popularisation of narratives of female-directed violence and the visualisation of mutilated female bodies (Greer 2017). Erica Haugtvedt (2017) interrogates the range of ethical tensions which emerge when, for example, people become characters and factual narratives are developed as plots. And a focus on particular types of criminal activity have addressed critical social issues of our day such as femicide (Mahadeen 2017); the persecution of racial (Oliver 2003) and LGBTQ+ communities (Polchin 2019); human trafficking (Gregoriou 2018);' and crimes against the planet (Ruddell 2017). How do we make sense of these pressing concerns as the genre soars along the cultural arc? Case Punnett (2018) charts the theoretical landscape that we might draw on – but much of the topography remains to be mapped.

Journalism@Newcastle – the journalism department at Newcastle University, UK - and **Ethical Space** invite papers for a global conference: **Investigating True Crime & The Media**. Submissions are welcome which explore its rise in popularity in recent years, shifting perceptions and receptions, changing platforms, new understandings. To be held at Newcastle University and online, June 23, 2022. Authors are also invited to submit their papers to peer review to feature in a subsequent winter 2022 double edition of *Ethical Space*.

Submissions are open to researchers, PhD students, and practitioners working in the field, and parity of esteem will be afforded to both theoretically-driven and practice-related papers.

We particularly welcome submissions from diverse voices and nations and regions beyond western perspectives. The aims of the conference and double issue are to explore current and emerging concepts, developments and potential future trajectories of true crime narratives and production from a global perspective.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Feminist perspectives (production, consumption, reception)
- Theorising the field
- Queer theory and True Crime
- True crime in Africa, Asia, South America and the Pacific
- European perspectives and the Nordic Noir
- The rise of the true crime podcast and dedicated channels and platforms

- Ethical tensions
- Campaigning and investigative journalism
- Literary true crime – critical reception and unease
- Media reporting
- Representations of victimhood
- The accused and control of the narrative
- The writer's mission
- Fictionalisation and negotiations of truth
- The commodification of fear
- Institutional failure and the quest for social justice
- True crime and a warming planet
- Commercial imperatives and the public interest

Please submit abstracts of 500 words plus a 50-word bio to Barbara.henderson@newcastle.ac.uk by Friday 29th October 2021. Authors will be notified of the outcome by January 19, 2022. Presentations may be made at the conference, but full papers (5,000 words including references) for publication in *Ethical Space* Winter 2022 should be submitted by August 31, 2022.

Works cited:

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Larke-Walsh, GS (2021) Injustice narratives in a post-truth society: emotional discourses and social purpose in Southwest of Salem: the story of the San Antonio four. *Studies in Documentary Film*, *15*(1), pp.89-104.
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Polchin, J (2019) *Indecent Advances: A Hidden History of True Crime and Prejudice Before Stonewall*. Icon Books.
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Rowen, L (2017) True Crime as a Literature of Advocacy. Bellarmine University. Kentucky
Ruddell, R (2017) *Oil, gas, and crime: The dark side of the boomtown*. Springer.
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