

**NETWORKED PODCASTS:  
HOW USERS INTERACT WITH TWO PODCAST SHOWS ON TWITTER**

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The Major Research Paper is presented to  
Ryerson University in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Professional Communication

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2019

Sarah Pratt, August 2019

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### Abstract

In the past 15 years, the podcast industry continues to evolve as media companies assemble podcast shows into networks characterized by advertising business models, while other shows remain independently produced. In both cases, audiences can connect to the shows directly via social media. Studies on the phenomenon of podcasting (McClung & Johnson, 2010; Perks & Turner, 2018) found that podcast users continue to seek interaction and gratification from their favourite podcasts online. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether differences in business models have an impact on the level of users' gratification and their interaction with the content. A thematic analysis of Twitter data compares the networked storytelling podcast, *Criminal*, a show from the network Radiotopia, and the independently produced audio storytelling podcast, *Lore*, to determine the similarities and differences in interaction that occur in Twitter. Observed themes suggest that Twitter audiences support host-led narratives and the promotional activities of a podcast network, though interactions are limited to discussion of the podcast episodes and result in fewer reciprocated interactions with the host. Twitter audiences of the independently produced podcast seek a strong sense of community when interacting with the host and contributed praise and critique to the creative process of the podcast. These key distinctions provide new insights for the podcast industry as the integration for podcast networks and social media both benefit and limit the potential of meaningful engagement between podcasters and their audiences.

*Keywords:* podcast user, podcast models, podcasting, audio storytelling, social media

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my Supervisor, Dr. Guang Ying Mo, for her ongoing support and encouragement, and my Second Reader, Dr. Matthew Tiessen for his additional insights to the process of this study. I would also like to express gratitude for the unwavering support of my family and colleagues in the Master of Professional Communication program, and the city of Toronto for being my home during this journey.

**Table of Contents**

Declaration .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
List of Tables .....	vi
List of Appendices .....	vii
Introduction .....	8
Literature Review .....	12
Research Questions .....	18
Methodology .....	19
Data Analysis .....	26
Comparative Analysis .....	40
Discussion .....	47
Conclusion .....	53
References .....	55
Appendix A .....	<b>61</b>

**List of Tables**

Table 1: Keywords .....	24
Table 2: Criminal Dataset Themes .....	32
Table 3: Lore Dataset Themes .....	39

**List of Appendices**

Appendix A. List of Tweet Excerpts.....	57
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## **Introduction**

In late 2014 “Apple Podcasts” the first native, built-in podcasting app, is included in every iPhone (Bottomley, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Podcasts are no longer limited to the manual transfer of audio files from a website or software application (Berry, 2006), but fully integrated into Apple’s iTunes platform for users to search, subscribe to, and download (Friess, 2015 as cited in Bottomley, 2015). This app started a new era of podcasting – moving from the fringes of experimental, do-it-yourself passion projects (Berry, 2006; Markman, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019) into the cultural mainstream of audio programming (Bottomley, 2015). For podcasters and media companies, this app presented a new opportunity for the business of podcasting. Some podcast shows adopted a business model focused on content strategy, audience growth, and advertising revenue. Media companies assembled networks of podcast shows, such as Gimlet Media, Maximum Fun, and Radiotopia, and dedicated marketing strategy to engage and diversify their audiences in new ways, from social media profiles to live hosted events (Quirk, 2015; Wrather, 2016). Networks support podcasters in pooling resources and knowledge, share costs, aggregate and diversify audiences, and negotiate advertisements on behalf of the podcast shows (Quirk, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019).

Podcasting represents the disentanglement of audio content from traditional radio broadcasting to new models of podcast distribution through digital channels (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). While networks provide podcasts with a platform to monetize and promote their content as a collection of shows, podcast users continue to support independently produced podcasts through social media engagement and crowdfunding models (Quirk, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Previous studies have explored the interactions between independent podcasters with their fan audiences on social media (Florini, 2015; Markman & Sawyer, 2014; Spinelli & Dann,



## NETWORKED PODCASTS

2019). Now, current research on podcasting explores the relationships and interactions of networked podcasts and their fan audiences on social media (Spinelli & Dann, 2019; Wrather, 2016). This scholarship finds a connection between podcast listening and audiences wanting to share their experiences and support their favourite shows over social media (McClung & Johnson, 2010; Perks & Turner, 2018; Wrather, 2016). However, as podcast networks became a common model in the podcast industry, little attention has been paid towards how podcast audiences interact with a networked podcast. To study these interactions, I conduct a qualitative analysis of Twitter data to compare the characteristics of a networked audio storytelling podcast to an independently produced audio storytelling podcast.

### **Podcast Networks**

A podcast network is the grouping of radio format audio content by a larger media company in order to share resources, attract advertisers, and engage audiences (Bonini, 2015; Hilmes & Lindgren, 2016; Quirk, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Networked podcasts are independent productions that may already have an established audience or level of success but agree to group under a collective brand. Podcast shows do not need to be part of a network in order to succeed and benefit monetarily in the podcasting space. However, they are incentivized to join a network for the benefit of increased brand identity, advertising sponsorship, and cross-promotion across networks and media channels (Quirk, 2015). For example, the podcast company, Gimlet Media, produces and bundles podcast content for commercial interest and advertising impressions<sup>1</sup> (“About | Gimlet,” n.d.; Quirk, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Maximum Fun is a comedy podcast network that produces over twenty podcasts (Wrather, 2016). Radiotopia assembles as a “curated network of extraordinary, cutting edge podcasts” with

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<sup>1</sup>Music subscription giant, Spotify, acquired Gimlet Media in 2019 (Quah, 2019).

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

financial support from the radio station-turned-podcasting platform, PRX (Public Radio Exchange), advertising, and contributions from listeners (Quirk, 2015; “About,” n.d.). Unlike other advertising-driven networks, Radiotopia brands itself as a network that empowers independent producers and cultivates a community of listeners (“Radiotopia- About Radiotopia Podcasts,” n.d.). Podcast producers who work with Radiotopia maintain full creative and technical control over their shows (Spinelli & Dann, 2019).

### **Independently Produced Podcasts**

Independent podcasts, or podcasts created and produced by an individual podcaster, are not affiliated with traditional media organizations and are often supported through financial donations and crowdfunding campaigns (Hilmes & Lindgren, 2016; Markman & Sawyer, 2014). The ‘independence’ of these podcasts is not in contrast to podcast networks but instead proposes an alternative business model for brand and marketing strategy. This model is rooted in the participatory cultures of grassroots radio, amateur production, and user-generated content (UGC) (Berry, 2006; Bottomley, 2015; Markman, 2012). Independent podcasts create communities of financial support by other independent podcasters’ supporting, promoting, and cross-referencing each other’s work (Markman, 2012). Early podcasts are amateur productions that stem from the format of traditional radio but distribute through peer-to-peer file-sharing services, and RSS<sup>2</sup> feeds (Berry, 2006; Bottomley, 2015). However, as podcast technology improved, so did the growth of advertising revenue. Notable independent podcasts such as *My Dad Wrote a Porno* and *Lore*, are successful shows hosted and produced by amateur creators and have amassed huge followings and listenership (Morton, n.d.; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Such creators have evolved

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<sup>2</sup> Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is the use of syndication software to generate automatic downloads of audio files in the form of a “feed” (Dearman & Galloway, 2005).

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

professionally from the “do-it-yourself” approach of home-based audio production to fully-fledged podcasters (Markman, 2012; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Home-produced podcasts are financially sustainable as creators leverage their niche popularity to advertisers, build social media followings, and utilize online podcast distribution sites, also known as podcatchers (Dearman & Galloway, 2005; Spinelli & Dann, 2019).

In the podcast industry, two distinct business models emerge. A network business model generates revenue by grouping podcast content and attracting advertising partners. Whereas, an independent business model is financially dependent on advertisers and subscription or crowdfunding platforms. This study examines how podcast audiences interact with these different models when engaging with a podcast show on social media. The two case studies of storytelling podcasts, *Criminal* and *Lore*, represent each business model. A qualitative analysis of interactions on Twitter asks: what kinds of interactions do podcast users have with audio storytelling podcast content in particular? Moreover, how do the business models of networked podcasts and independently produced podcasts comparatively influence these interactions?

### **Literature Review**

The use of social media platforms by podcasters and media companies to build interactive audiences (McClung & Johnson, 2010; Spinelli & Dann, 2019; Wrather, 2016) has drawn the attention of scholars in media and communication studies. The first framework examines the interpretations of uses-and-gratifications theory in podcasting (Boling & Hull, 2018; Markman & Sawyer, 2014; McClung & Johnson, 2010; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Perks & Turner, 2018). The second framework engages the concept of media convergence and participatory culture in podcast study (Jenkins, 2004, 2006; Markman, 2012; Markman & Sawyer, 2014; Wrather, 2016). The third framework of networked publics (boyd, 2010) explores the affordances of social media as a participatory, community-building platform. Studies apply this paradigm when examining the presence of podcast communities on social networks (Cwynar, 2017; Florini, 2015; Markman & Sawyer, 2014; Wrather, 2016). The literature review also considers the phenomenon of “The Golden Age of Podcasting” (Bonini, 2015; Quirk, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019) as a catalyst to the professionalization and commercialization of the grassroots podcast industry.

### **Uses & Gratifications Theory**

Early podcast research tries to understand the motivations and reasoning behind podcast use by podcast audiences. Contemporary uses-and-gratifications (U&G) theory, framed within the uptake of the desktop computer and internet use, holds that people use media to gratify their needs and wants, and this practice influences the motives and outcomes of consumer behaviour (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Numerous researchers use this theory to explain what kinds of motivations and reasonings are made by podcast users, such as downloading a podcast episode, subscribing to a podcast show, or further interacting with a podcast host or episode content

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

online (Boling & Hull, 2018; McClung & Johnson, 2010; Perks & Turner, 2018). McClung and Johnson's (2010) landmark survey study identifies several motivations for podcast use by social media users (i.e. MySpace and Facebook users), finding the factors of entertainment, time shifting, library building, advertising, and social aspects to be predictors of podcast use. The "social aspect" factor is especially significant. Respondents emphasized the importance of talking with friends about podcasts, downloading the podcasts their friends tell them about, and engaging with other podcast fans about the shows they download (McClung & Johnson, 2010).

**Gratification Typologies.** In order to understand the motivations of the podcast user, previous studies have identified new and existing interpretations of why people listen to podcasts. Perks and Turner (2018) found that the social relationships of companionship and intimacy between the podcast host and podcast listener strengthened the listener's feelings of gratification. The intimacy of the audio medium motivates podcast listeners to express feelings of gratification towards the podcast show and engage in conversation with the podcast host (Perks & Turner, 2018). Audience behaviour identified in U&G studies is further explained in the dichotomy between active audiences and passive audiences (Ruggiero, 2000). Ruggiero (2000) suggests that "active individuals" engage in exploratory behaviours on the internet, such as contacting users, finding information, and interacting with different sources (Eighmey, 1997 cited in Ruggiero, 2000). Individuals who exhibit "passive audience" behaviours only consume media in an escapist, leisurely way to pass the time (Barwise, Ehrenberg, & Goodhardt, 1982; Kubey, 1986 cited in Ruggiero, 2000). The active user is better understood within the concept of the "interactivity," defined as "the degree to which participants in the communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse" (Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988, p.15 cited in Ruggiero, 2000). Interactive individuals seek to fulfill their information,

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

entertainment, and social needs (Ruggiero, 2000). The U&G framework is frequently used to assess the gratifications involved with audio content. However, in later studies, it is criticized as a framework for podcast study due to the growing potential of audiences to be both the consumer and producers of audio content (Markman & Sawyer, 2014).

### **Media Convergence**

The lens of media convergence touches upon the occurrence of podcasting in the media landscape. To Jenkins (2006), the concept of media convergence, or simply “convergence,” is not only a technological process but a “cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content” (Jenkins, 2006). This shift is part of the emergence of “participatory culture” described as the relationship between a fanbase, their online texts, and the content producers (Jenkins et al., 2015). Media convergence challenges traditional notions about audiences as passive spectators of media content for active, participatory spaces of Internet users who share rules and expectations for how content should be created and consumed (Jenkins, 2006; Markman, 2012). Recent podcast studies (Markman, 2012; Markman & Sawyer, 2014; Wrather, 2016) observe the convergence of amateur podcast content and social media as a nuanced relationship built between the producers and their audience and user-generated content, such as fan art.

Convergences of traditional radio content and digital technology also initiate discourses of “produsage.” The concept of produsage refers to the shift from traditional media channels, like radio, to participatory online communities where creators can produce, consume, collaborate, and interact with audio content through cheaper and faster ways (Markman, 2012, p. 549). Markman (2012) views produsage as indicative of Jenkins’s (2015) concept of participatory culture as it promotes an interdependent relationship between media producers and their consumers.

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Actors in produsage communities identify as “Pro-Am” (professional amateur), or “amateurs who work to professional standards,” made podcasting accessible to more listeners (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004, p. 12 cited in Markman, 2012). Wrather (2016) conducted a case study of the independent podcast network, Maximum Fun. He concludes that the convergence of podcast content and social media not only enrich the interactions between creators and audiences but offer listeners the ability to have fan experiences with the show (Wrather, 2016). The concept of media convergence is instrumental in understanding the integration of podcasting technologies and online discourses of independent creators. However, the role of media convergence remains relevant in a time of conglomerated media companies and socially networked audiences.

### **Networked Publics**

The conceptual frameworks discussed above address the exploration of media convergences and participatory cultures within independent podcast communities. However, social media are playing an increasingly integrated role in podcasting. One study finding that “podcast listeners spend more time online and engage with social media, including Facebook and Twitter, at higher rates than the general population” (Edison Research, 2012 cited in Florini, 2015). boyd’s (2010) concept of “networked publics” approaches the affordances of social network sites as the restructuring of “publics.” In this case, “publics” are defined as “a collection of people who share a common understanding and consensus on collective interests” (boyd, 2010, p. 40). Mediated audiences may not share physical space but share meanings, text, and social exchanges (boyd, 2010; O’Donnell, 2018). The paradigm of “networked publics” refers to the inherent structure of a social media platform. A technological structure that provides affordances of interaction and participation to its users on the platform (boyd, 2010). For example, social media sites or streaming media platforms are designed to structure the

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

experiences of users and encourage relevant, discoverable, content for continued engagement and participation (Cwynar, 2017). For Wrather (2016), social media sites offer audiences the opportunity to respond to and facilitate discussion about the podcast content they listen to, and for podcasters to track, promote their content, and build a fan base of listeners.

### **The Golden Age of Podcasting**

From the pioneering podcasts of 2005 to the widespread consumption of podcasts in 2013 (Berry, 2015), podcast scholars still grapple with podcasts as a ‘mass medium’ due to its limited advertising opportunities and the growth of video-centric media (Bottomley, 2015). However, the phrase “the Serial Effect” has been used by both journalists and scholars to describe the success of the 2014 podcast, *Serial*, which resulted in millions of downloads and a renewed focus on the medium of podcasting (Boling & Hull, 2018; McHugh, 2016; Quirk, 2015). The industry recognition of *Serial* as a high-quality, true crime podcast set the creative pace of podcasting due to its small team of producers and controlled release schedule (Berry, 2015; Bonini, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Podcasts began to professionalize and monetize as a digital product, at the same time distancing themselves from public radio streams (Bonini, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019, Quirk, 2015). “The second age of podcasting” starting in 2012 conceptualizes the transition of podcasting from American public radio to independent productions financed by listeners, such as the production of *99% Invisible* from host Roman Mars, who would later launch the podcast network, Radiotopia (Bonini, 2015). Similarly, “the Golden Age of Podcasting” coined in the release of Apple’s podcast app on iOS 8 and the first episode of *Serial* in the fall of 2014 (Spinelli & Dann, 2019) marks a departure from independent podcasting (Birch & Weitkamp, 2010; Bonini, 2015; DeLys & Foley, 2006). Podcasts begin to



## NETWORKED PODCASTS

join or be created by networks, such as Radiotopia and Panoply<sup>3</sup> in order to meet audience's demand for podcast content while attracting advertising and financial support (Bonini, 2015).

To conclude this section, the growing body of podcasting literature draws heavily on radio studies and mass communication theories to understand the phenomenon of podcasting and the creators and audience behind this new media. Insights on audience behaviour, the producer and creator relationship, and the affordances of social media networks provides a foundation for understanding the interactions that happen between podcast listeners and their favourite podcasts on social media. The three frameworks of U&G theory, media convergence, and networked publics inform the analysis of Twitter data from two case studies of popular storytelling narrative podcast shows as described in the following section.

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<sup>3</sup> As of September 2018, Panoply rebranded to Megaphone with a new focus on target marketing (Megaphone, 2019).

### **Research Questions**

This study aims to examine podcast users' interaction with podcast content on social media, and the differences between interactions with a podcast network-hosted audio storytelling show and that with an independently produced audio storytelling show. The research questions reference and build upon the preliminary podcasting and mass communication studies provided in the literature review. This study examines the case studies of two podcast shows on Twitter with a focus on the business models that impact audience interaction and gratification. A thematic analysis of Twitter data answers the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What kinds of interactions do podcast users have with audio storytelling podcast content on social media networks?

**RQ2:** What similarities or differences in engagement occur when podcast users interact with audio storytelling content on podcast networks compared to independently produced podcasts?

### **Methodology**

A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted using publicly accessible Twitter data to address both research questions. I use Braun and Clarke's (2013) framework of thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). The thematic analysis conducted in this study uses open coding to categorize the overarching themes and patterns of Twitter text. The process of open coding references Braun and Clarke's (2013) phases of thematic analysis, including familiarization of the data, generating of codes, collating of codes into categories, and reviewing and refining potential themes towards clear definitions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) define a 'theme' as capturing something important about the data and identifying "some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset" (p. 82). Variations of thematic analysis are used in podcasting scholarship to measure the U&G motivations of podcast users (Perks & Turner, 2018). Themes categorize the distinct social interactions and gratifications of Twitter users of each case study. The themes collated through open coding adhere to a constructionist perspective - in which the socio-cultural context and structural conditions of the qualitative texts frame the shared meanings of audiences, rather than individual accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The identification of sub-themes supports the key themes of the analysis. Braun and Clark (2013) define a "sub-theme" as "essentially a theme-within-a-theme" and provide structure and hierarchy to the complexity of emerging themes (p. 92). Note that sub-themes do not act as a quantitative "code," but as an indicator of qualitative text categorized under an observed pattern of interaction.

### **Case Studies**

To effectively compare the interactions of podcast users who listen or engage with either a networked podcast or independently produced podcast, I conduct two case studies of the

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

narrative storytelling genre representing both podcast business models. “Storytelling” refers to a narrative podcast format which reflects the values and technical production standards of radio journalism (McHugh, 2016; Wake & Bahfen, 2016). The case studies of *Criminal* and *Lore* characterize this storytelling format popularized in post-2014 American podcasting (McHugh, 2016). Due to the lack of publicly published podcast data, it is difficult to determine the actual audience size of each podcast. In regards to the audience size of both cases, the podcast network, Radiotopia, reports over 19 million downloads of its podcasts each month (“About,” n.d.). *Lore* celebrated 2 million downloads of the podcast in June of 2019 (“@lorepodcast,” n.d.).

**Criminal.** *Criminal* is a bi-weekly non-fiction audio storytelling podcast created and produced by co-creators Phoebe Judge and Lauren Spohrer. The show follows a familiar narrative of true crime shows. *Criminal* focuses on stories about the victims of resolved crime cases and their relationship to the transgressor (“About | Criminal,” n.d.). The podcast was launched in January of 2014 and has since released over 110 episodes (“Criminal podcast,” n.d.). *Criminal* is hosted on Radiotopia’s network, displaying the Radiotopia logo at the bottom of their website with the tag: “We are a proud member of Radiotopia” (“Criminal: A Podcast - Home,” n.d.). Each episode of *Criminal* mentions “We are a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around” and includes “Criminal is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX” in the show notes (Judge & Spohrer, 2019). The profile image of *Criminal* on podcatcher platforms, like Apple iTunes, Stitcher, and PlayerFM, includes the Radiotopia icon (“Criminal podcast,” n.d.). The sister podcast of *Criminal* is *This is Love*. In February of 2019, the online shopping giant Amazon broadcast a Super Bowl LII advertisement titled “Big Game” which featured an audio clip of a *Criminal* episode. *Criminal* is active on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and runs an email newsletter, “The Accomplice.” As of 2019,

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

*Criminal*'s Twitter handle "@CriminalShow" has over 30,000 followers since joining in 2013 ("Criminal (@CriminalShow) / Twitter," n.d.). *Criminal*'s Facebook and Instagram accounts have over 33,000 and 22,000 followers, respectively ("Criminal: A Podcast," n.d.; "Lore Podcast," n.d.). Who manages *Criminal*'s social media accounts is not specified.

**Lore.** *Lore* is a bi-weekly non-fiction audio storytelling podcast hosted by Aaron Mahnke. The show features historical events and scary stories in a campfire-style narrative, all written and produced by Mahnke (Lore, n.d.). However, production has expanded to include audio production staff, researchers, tour management, and a music composer ("Aaron Mahnke is creating Lore | Patreon," n.d.). *Lore* earns monetary support through advertising revenue and crowdfunding on the artist site, Patreon (Aaron Mahnke is creating Lore | Patreon, n.d.). For \$5 per month or more, patrons get access to ad-free versions of "Lore Premium," a Patreon-only podcast *Behind the Lore*, as well as, exclusive extras, discounts, and early access to live tour tickets (Aaron Mahnke is creating Lore | Patreon, n.d.). *Lore* is active on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. As of 2019, *Lore*'s Twitter handle "@lorepodcast" has over 60,000 followers since joining in 2015. Its Twitter bio states that the podcast is "created by @amahnke" ("@lorepodcast," n.d.-b). *Lore*'s Facebook and Instagram has over 71,000 and 67,000 followers, respectively. *Lore* has grown into a TV adaption for Amazon, has three books in print, and has sibling podcasts of *Cabinet of Curiosities* and *Unobscured* ("About — Lore," 2018). Mahnke tweets from both his personal "@amahnke" account and *Lore*'s official "@lorepodcast" podcast profile (Spinelli & Dann, 2019).

### Data Collection

I collected publicly accessible tweets as data with Sysomos<sup>4</sup>. Sysomos is a social monitoring engine that searches through online conversations, trends, and performs pattern analysis. Its intuitive system allows for the visualization of social media data, complex query comparison, and analysis of keywords, conversations, and sentiment (“Sysomos Search - Social Media Search Tool | Sysomos,” n.d.). Sysomos uses data extracted from Twitter.com, one of the leading social media platforms worldwide, with 335 million monthly active users in their second quarter of 2018 (Statista, 2018). Other social media networking platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit, were considered for the analysis. However, due to the results of the Twitter data sample and the lack of Facebook data available on Sysomos, exploratory theme analysis of raw Twitter data was deemed superior in its relevancy to the research questions. Researchers note the qualitative benefits of Twitter when studying the social interactions around podcasts due to the ubiquity and publicness of its data (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). A sample analysis of Twitter data first examined what search keywords would be relevant to the posed research questions and what data was deemed irrelevant to the datasets. For example, a cleaning process redacts any retweets and quote replies that repeated text found in originally authored tweets. Tweets irrelevant to the research were excluded from the sample analysis. However, this only represented a low number of tweets compared to usable data.

**Sample Analysis.** Using Twitter data extracted from Sysomos between January 7th, 2019 and March 15th, 2019, a sample dataset of 127 tweets was selected from a dataset of 3,833 tweets. The sample consisted of 64 tweets from the “Criminal Podcast” dataset and 63 tweets from the “Lore Podcast” dataset. Tweets ranged from March 8th, March 12th, and March 14th of

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<sup>4</sup> As of 2018, Sysomos is also known as Meltwater Social (Meltwater, 2018).

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

2019. A matrix was created to denote exploratory themes, their characteristics, and Twitter posts categorized by each theme. Similarities in preliminary themes of both the “Criminal Podcast” and “Lore Podcast” sample datasets included: gratification, suggestions, intention, internal community, external community, and bundled. Differences in preliminary themes included instances of media coverage and network-specific tweets in the “Criminal Podcast” dataset and instances of support and links to other media in the “Lore Podcast” dataset.

Once the sample analysis proved sufficient for a thematic analysis, data are extracted from Sysomos over the intended time frame of 90 days between January 1st, 2019 and March 31st, 2019. The chosen time frame of 90 days collects tweets published in early 2019 and provides an accurate representation of the current podcast industry. This large amount of collected data preserves the anonymity of Twitter users and the objectivity of the research questions. Both podcasts release new episodes biweekly (Player FM, 2019a; PlayerFM, 2019b), resulting in six episodes released during the time frame, respectively. When using Sysomos during data collection, four search terms for each podcast were used to create two keyword sets (Table 1):

Table 1: Keywords

<b>Criminal Keywords</b>	<b>Lore Keywords</b>
“#criminalpodcast” OR	“#lore” AND “#podcast” OR
“#criminalshow” OR	“#lorepodcast” OR
“@criminalshow” OR	“@lorepodcast” OR
“criminal podcast” OR	“lore podcast” OR

The chosen search terms aggregate relevant Twitter data on Sysomos. Keywords intend to reflect the language and search terms used by podcast audiences on Twitter.com and the posed research questions. Therefore, the keywords “DnD” or “#dnd” were excluded from the keyword search, due to the Twitter account “@dungeonpedia” using the hashtags “#lore” and “#podcast” in their content, which is unrelated to this study. In Sysomos, data filters for the countries “USA” and “Canada” and “Twitter” are applied to ensure that data extraction remains North American and Twitter-based. The keyword sets each generates data for two separate spreadsheets. The spreadsheet labelled “Criminal Dataset” contains 2,855 tweets from the keyword set “Criminal Keywords” and the spreadsheet “Lore Dataset” contains 2,182 tweets using from the keyword set “Lore Keywords” for a total of 5,037 tweets. Both datasets are reviewed to ensure only relevant tweets used during the open coding process. Tweets marked “TC” for “text coded” indicated tweets chosen for theme analysis. Tweets marked “NC” for “not coded” indicate tweets not chosen for theme analysis due to redundant language, lack of clarity, or irrelevancy to research questions. In the “Criminal Dataset,” tweets marked “NB” for “The Numbers” indicated tweets excluded from thematic analysis but counted quantitatively in the analysis. This quantitative measure is discussed later in the analysis section. “Retweets” or the reposting of a full tweet by



## NETWORKED PODCASTS

another Twitter user and “Retweet with comments” or the commenting of new text onto the original text of the user (“Retweet FAQs,” 2019) are part of the datasets.

In the coding process, a matrix organizes and segments tweets into rough themes based on observed patterns and characteristics of the datasets. The “characteristics” column contains rough, undefined themes next to the relevant tweet. Using Braun and Clarke’s (2013) process of “immersion,” data are repeatedly reviewed and re-read in search of shared meaning and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Upon completing the immersion process, 342 tweets from “Criminal Dataset” and 312 tweets from “Lore Dataset” form the analysis. Themes continue to be identified and refined to ensure that clear, independent definitions categorize all relevant tweets. Collated themes reflect Braun and Clarke’s (2013) revision process to ensure themes remain “internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive” (p. 96).

### Data Analysis

This section discusses the thematic analysis of 654 tweets from the *Criminal* and *Lore* datasets. The analysis of 342 tweets in *Criminal* dataset categorizes into four themes: Host support, network-related, gratification, and production-related. The analysis of 315 tweets in the *Lore* dataset categorizes into four themes: Creator support, independent production-related, gratification, and community-related. The analysis of themes addresses the first research question by categorizing, describing, and characterizing the interactions of the *Criminal* and *Lore* dataset as four distinct themes. The subsequent analysis compares the eight themes in four pairs to addresses the second research question of what similarities and differences in podcast user engagement occur between networked podcasts and an independently produced podcast. The overlapping term of “Twitter user” used throughout the analysis describes both a profile user on Twitter.com and a podcast listener.

### Criminal Dataset Findings

**Host Support.** The first theme identified in the *Criminal* dataset is “host support.” It describes tweets that seek the attention of the host on a host-led podcast using positive, praiseful, and receptive language. A “host-led” podcast is a podcast format used to build audience recognition and legitimacy around the podcast presenter (McHugh, 2016). In the sub-theme, *direct mention of host* (Table 2), Twitter users either addressed the host directly by name, “Phoebe has the best stories!” (1036), her profile handle, “Best. Podcast. @PhoebeVJudge, the host is excellent.” (2662), or directly commented on Judge’s hosting style or storytelling ability. For example,

“@CriminalShow Thanks, Phoebe, for a fantastic episode! I’ve lived in Memphis for 23 years but had never heard of the Baby Snatcher until I read “Before We Were Yours” by Lisa Wingate. Hers was a fictional account, but your episode filled in so much great detail. Horrifying stuff!” (284)

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Twitter users also made positive *reference to the host's voice* (Table 2) with descriptive references to Judge's voice as "soothing" (317), "entrancing" (1997), and "dulcet" (2322). Some Twitter users interacted with *Criminal* and the network of Radiotopia because of Judge's voice: "@loubafoster @romanmars @CriminalShow @PhoebeVJudge @radiotopia @prx Phoebe's voice is one of my favorite in all of podcasting." (2784). Judge's distinct voice was frequently mentioned by Twitter users in reference to the opening introduction to *Criminal*. This is categorized as *reference to podcast introduction* (Table 2) for tweets that include the phrase, "I'm Phoebe Judge. This is Criminal." (2501). This phrase was recontextualized by Twitter users to emphasize their excitement towards the podcast, such as "I want her voice as my morning alarm." "I'm Phoebe Judge. This is Thursday." (2144). Another sub-theme observed was the *direct mention of the production team* (Table 2) as Twitter users thanked or directly acknowledged "the whole team" (137) or "@PhoebeVJudge and company" (130). For example, "@Emma\_GVA: In the last 5 months, I listened to all 105 episodes of @CriminalShow. By far my most favourite #podcast of 2018. Thank you so much to Phoebe Judge and the team for brightening (or darkening) my days" (2842)

**Network-related.** The second theme identified in the *Criminal* dataset is "network-related." These tweets show the interactions between *Criminal's* Twitter profile (@CriminalShow), the network Twitter profile, "@radiotopia," and their respective audiences. The sub-theme, *Radiotopia community* (Table 2), saw Twitter users acknowledging *Criminal* as part of the podcast community of a recognized media network. Twitter users showed support for *Criminal* as part of the collection of Radiotopia podcasts, tweeting: "I love it when @radiotopia shows do episodes on similar topics" (2336) or "Amazing show; great episode ~ Thank you, @radiotopia" (1753) or "OMG I just discovered this @radiotopia podcast and have been binging

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

on it all week!” (20). The recognition of the network by Twitter users is also tangible as they post photos of their Radiotopia-themed stickers and merchandise:

“I was so excited to get these super cool stickers from @radiotopia yesterday! Im excited to rep my faves, @CriminalShow, @earhustlesq, @thisisloveshow, and the newest addition to my list @ianchillag! Thanks for making such awesome content!” (2037)

The theme categorizes interactions between “@CriminalShow” and its partner network, “@radiotopia.” Most notably, the media coverage and subsequent Twitter response to the feature of *Criminal* in Amazon’s Super Bowl LII advertisement, “Big Game,” which aired on February 3rd, 2019. The advertisement features the gag of Amazon’s virtual assistant technology, Alexa, inside an electric toothbrush with actor Forest Whitaker asking the toothbrush to “play my podcast” (Siegel, 2019). As Whitaker brushes his teeth, a muffled audio clip of *Criminal* plays inside his mouth (Siegel, 2019). In support of *Criminal*’s feature in Super Bowl LII, Radiotopia tweeted a promotional video asking, “what was that podcast playing on Forest Whitaker’s toothbrush?” with the text:

“@radiotopia: Alexa, play the podcast from @forestwhitaker’s “Big Game” commercial. Okay, playing @CriminalShow from Radiotopia and PRX. #SBLIII #SuperBowl” (2186)

In support, Radiotopia tweeted an article about the advertisement from PRX’s Medium blog, asking: “any of you Radiotopians watching the sportsball show tonight just to catch @PhoebeVJudge’s voice?” (2212). Twitter users responded to Radiotopia and *Criminal* by asking if Radiotopia knew about the ad, “did you guys know? This is so exciting!!” (2161), describing the *Criminal* podcast as a “founding @radiotopia show” (2126), and congratulating both *Criminal* and Radiotopia for the publicity received and its cultural impact on the podcasting industry as a whole. For example,

“congrats to @PhoebeVJudge @CriminalShow & @radiotopia for making it into a Superbowl commercial! A breakout moment for the whole industry!” (2086)

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Tweets categorized as *part of the Radiotopia network* (Table 2) demonstrated Radiotopia's efforts to leverage their professional relationship with Judge and Spohrer's show.

For example, Radiotopia would promote upcoming episodes on behalf of *Criminal*:

“@radiotopia: It's baaaaack. Listen here or wherever you enjoy podcasts most” (2358).

Radiotopia would include *Criminal* in tweets about Radiotopia's collective of podcasters, such as invite fans to join Judge and other producers for “an exclusive @radiotopia Listening Party”

(1992) or include a photo of Judge as a member of the “@radiotopia bowling league” (2563).

*Criminal* reciprocated some of these interactions, such as their video message for Radiotopia's fifth birthday. In a video tweet, Judge says, “we're incredibly lucky to be part of a network that supports independent work from independent producers. Radiotopia has allowed us to continue to bring you the best show we can. So happy birthday to Radiotopia from all of us here at

*Criminal*.” (404) Radiotopia responded with the tweet:

“@radiotopia: A touching birthday message from the crew at @CriminalShow. Thank you for sharing your talents and passion with us. This is #RadiotopiaTurns5.” (404)

**Gratification.** The third theme identified in the *Criminal* dataset is “gratification.” This theme delineates from a U&G framework in which people use media to gratify their needs and wants (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). This theme describes the gratifications gained by Twitter users in their interactions with the *Criminal* podcast. Displays of gratification included the sub-theme *discussion of episode* (Table 2) in which Twitter users discuss specific stories with other fans or give their opinion about a recent *Criminal* episode:

“Who listened to this and didn't think there's no way this woman hasn't tried this (and maybe succeeded!) in the past?! Her answer to every problem is “HIRE A HIT MAN” ; Linda Gillman was determined to see her plan through... even from jail. New episode! Check it out on @radiopublic and let us know what you think!” (2542)

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Others engage with emotional language in describing their horror, empathy, and incredulous towards the storytelling content of *Criminal* episodes. This sub-theme categorizes as *emotional expression* (Table 2). Twitter users react with: “Quite a disturbing episode” (307) or “I am amazed at the kind of stories covered on @CriminalShow. Sometimes they’re funny, sometimes they’re absolutely heartbreaking. #thisiscriminal” (215).

Some gratifications stemmed from supporting *Criminal*’s true crime genre. The sub-theme *audience interactions* (Table 2) observes tweets from users who posed questions to the *Criminal* show about an episode, “Where is the real justice for Silvon?!” (63), gave feedback about a specific episode, “So disappointed! There is nothing to this story!” (2309) or pointed out parts of the episode that confused them, “It’s never made any sense to me that the ghosts would be giving her instructions on how to confuse them.” (2344). Tweets that recommended *Criminal* to other users were frequent in the dataset and categorize as *user recommendations* (Table 2). Some Twitter users gave positive reviews “@PhoebeVJudge on @CriminalShow is one of the best podcasts out there. Give it a listen - you’ll be glad you did!” (2010), while others engaged with fans of true crime podcasts: “For those you into true crime podcasts, check this episode of @CriminalShow out.. It takes place in Utah..” (2515). Others recommended a specific episode: “You SHOULD be listening to Criminal podcast. Latest episode "Homewrecker" is fascinating/frightening. A woman's life is ruined because someone posted something about her online - it was a lie - it was super easy - and there's almost nothing she can do. @CriminalShow #podcast” (465)

**Production-related.** The fourth theme in the *Criminal* dataset describes tweets that discuss the marketing or audio production activities of the *Criminal* podcast as part of the Radiotopia network of shows. A significant sub-theme observed was the “*The Numbers*” contest (Table 2). Following the release of “Episode 108: The Numbers” on February 15th, 2019 (PlayerFM, 2019), *Criminal* ran a Twitter contest between February 15th and February 22nd,

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

2019. *Criminal* asked their Twitter following to play with them their version of “The Numbers.” Entrants would choose three numbers, just like the lottery game described in episode 108, and tweet them to “@CriminalShow.” The winning number would receive a personalized voicemail message recorded by Judge (1704). In the *Criminal* dataset, contest responses totalled 1,184 tweets. Twitter users were responsive to the contest, with Twitter users engaging with the game and the *Criminal* Twitter profile asking: “can I post numbers for today” (1612) and “@CriminalShow How many people have won?? I'm super curious to know the stats lol. Anyways, my final number is: 198. Thanks for all the fun!” (728)

Tweets also reference fan attendance to *Criminal*'s 2019 live show tour. The sub-theme, *live show* (Table 2), categorizes tweets mentioning *Criminal*'s live tour, which consisted of 16 live shows featuring Judge and Spohrer in the United States and Canada (“About | Criminal,” n.d.). Twitter users expressed excitement about attending the show (2791), asked producers for the show to come to their hometown (2811), and posted fan photos with Judge and Spohrer: “@iBeezNdahTRAP: A recap of my weekend. @PhoebeVJudge is amazing! @CriminalShow and @thisisloveshow are two of the best podcasts out there! You all are welcome in Dallas anytime! #dotcalm” (2755)

Lastly, the sub-theme, *crossovers* (Table 2) identifies tweets that reference other network podcasts that intersect with *Criminal*. One tweet proposed a crossover episode with *Criminal* and Gimlet Media's technology podcast, *Reply All* (474), in response to the social media-focused storyline of “Episode 109: Homewrecker.”

“QT @CriminalShow: @replyall just wanted to introduce you to this criminal episode in hopes that @PJVogt will track down Molly and interview her with his “yeah but really you're batshit crazy” voice. #punchableface #punchablevoice ; Episode 109: Homewrecker. Listen and share with a friend: <https://t.co/cwV5JIsTCz> <https://t.co/N34s2S37P9>” (474)

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Table 2: Criminal Dataset Themes

<b>Theme 1</b>	Host Support
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Direct mention of the host</i> <i>Positive reference to the host's voice</i> <i>Reference to podcast introduction</i> <i>Direct mention of production team</i>
<b>Theme 2</b>	Network-related
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Radiotopia community</i> <i>Network support during Super Bowl LII</i> <i>Part of the Radiotopia network</i>
<b>Theme 3</b>	Gratification
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Audience interaction</i> <i>User recommendations</i> <i>Discussion of episode</i> <i>Emotional expression</i>
<b>Theme 4</b>	Production-related
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>"The Numbers" contest</i> <i>Podcast feedback</i> <i>Crossovers</i> <i>Live show</i>



### Lore Dataset Findings

**Creator Support.** The first identified theme of “creator support” in the *Lore* dataset is similar to the definition of the “host support” in the analysis of *Criminal*. However, “creator support” describes tweets that seek the attention of an individual podcast producer, or creator, using positive, praiseful, and receptive language. Definitively, the term “creator” describes the work of one person whose independent podcast is a passion project or espouses a particular narrative, drawing on the feedback of their audience as part of their creative process (Spinelli & Dann, 2019; Yeates, 2018). Reference to a “creator” was observed in the sub-theme, *directed at the podcast host* (Table 3), as Twitter users included the host’s name, “hey Aaron!” (4456) or using Mahnke’s personal Twitter handle, “Thank you @amahnke for doing this story” (4902).

The sub-theme *user thanks host* (Table 3) categorizes tweets that express the sentiment “thank you.” Twitter users acknowledged the Mahnke’s creative process in a praiseful and appreciative way: “your hard work is appreciated more than I can express” (3728), and use of an online platform to build a community around his work:

“Dear @amahnke - just wanted to say this: Thank you for all your work with @lorepodcast & @theworldoflore, @curiositiespod & @unobscuredpod. Thank you for using your platform to try to make people think critically, act civically, and engage constructively. Really, Thank you. <3” (4614)

Further, the theme shows Twitter users’ response to Mahnke’s request that listeners interact with him on *Lore*’s social accounts. After each episode, Mahnke asks his listeners to follow the show on social media and “say hi” because “I like it when people say hi” (Mahnke, 2019). Many tweets in the dataset included “hi!” (4675) or added a personalization, “Since you like it when ppl say Hi, thought I’d pop by & do just that!” (3025).

Mahnke and his audience engaged in conversation over Twitter, and this interaction categorizes under the sub-theme, *host engagement* (Table 3). Mahnke responded to Twitter users

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

who tagged their tweet with *Lore*'s Twitter handle or referenced his name in a tweet. In a segmented six-part tweet on the fourth anniversary of the podcast, Mahnke expressed his gratitude for his fan base over the past four years, thanking them for their ongoing support of the *Lore* podcast and offering advice on how to make it as an independent podcaster.

"Tomorrow marks the 4th anniversary for my @LorePodcast, and I'm overwhelmed with gratitude. You folks have let me tell you my stories for four years, and have helped the show grow into something much bigger than it once was. And in the process, you gave me a career. /1" (3345)

"Creator support" not only refers to a supportive host-listener relationship but considers the role of podcast fanbase within the wider podcast community. In March of 2019, controversy erupted on Twitter over the decision of the podcast network, Wondery, to part ways with *Sword & Scale*, a podcast hosted by Mike Boudet due to Boudet's misogynistic comments posted on Instagram (Baysinger, 2019). Mahnke condemned Boudet's comments on his personal Twitter account (@amahnke) and revealed that he, along with other podcasters, had complained to Wondery about Boudet's behaviour (Baysinger, 2019). Both Mahnke and "@lorepodcast" received tweets expressing both support and critique surrounding the controversy. Twitter users who supported Mahnke in his decision cited the critical distinction between a host's personal opinion on the matter and the employment decisions of a podcast network:

"@nichugme @prtyheartattack @lorepodcast @SwordAndScale Weird. Does @amahnke own Wondery? No? Is he the one who runs Sword and Scale? No? Then it's not his fault. If Mike stopped being such a piece of shit, Wondery wouldn't have dropped him. He has the \$ to keep it going independently but chose to cancel it. Blame him." (3531)

Others who critiqued Mahnke's reaction cited censorship and invasion of free speech expressed. One tweet expressing that "free speech is dead with all the sensitive people in the world" (3494).

**Independent production-related.** The second theme identified in the *Lore* dataset is "independent production-related." This theme describes tweets that pledge monetary support for

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

independently financed podcasts. This description alludes to the home-studio, DIY approach of “Pro-Am” communities (Markman, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019) discussed in the literature review. The sub-theme *Patreon* (Table 3) captures Twitter users’ discussion about the benefit of using a crowdfunding model to support Mahnke and *Lore*. Twitter users tweeted about their subscription to *Lore* via the online crowdfunding platform, Patreon, “Got on Patreon just so I can support @amahnke and @lorepodcast” (4035) and provided reasons for supporting Mahnke’s work:

“To be fair to @amahnke, as I've fast-forwarded through ads previously (note my above claim) but don't want his content damaged by it, I'm now a patron on your patreon so I can skip ads in @lorepodcast without damaging it's ad ROI and allowing him to continue his awesome content.” (3698)

The sub-theme, *production quality* (Table 3), identifies the interest of Twitter users in *Lore* as an independently produced podcast. On the “@lorepodcast” account, Mahnke discussed the release of new episodes, “My red eye flight landed this morning with just enough time for me to open my laptop and post the new episode.” (4708). He also responded to a request from Twitter users to start releasing episodes weekly, tweeting: “There’s a lot of power in releasing constant, regular, dependable content, no question about it. But. It’s also tough to do anything \*else\* now, like tour or go to conventions or expand my work into new areas.” (3742), and mused about revising previous episodes:

“@lorepodcast: Im going through old Lore episodes to clean up and modernize the credits, and I’m fighting the urge to completely re-record and produce the first 50 or so episodes.” (4241)

Twitter users then responded and urged Mahnke not to revise old episodes, acknowledging his reasons for wanting to and providing reasons why he should not:

“@orridge\_anna: @lorepodcast Don't, though. The early ones were fantastic. Besides, I think one of the great things about listening to a long-standing podcast is seeing how the production evolves as the creator or creators develop the idea.” (4228)

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

This theme also observed a connection between the storytelling genre of *Lore* and the process of writing scary stories in the sub-theme, *writing community* (Table 3). Twitter users expressed their feelings of inspiration on social media after listening to *Lore*: “This has in turn re-inspired my desire to write. I just want to say thank you!” (4954) or thanked Mahnke for his influence on their own writing:

“@lorepodcast and @amahnke thanks for doing what you do. Lore’s been a big influence on my last two books!” (3447)

**Gratification.** The third theme identified in the *Lore* dataset is “gratification.” This theme recalls the description of “gratification” used in the analysis of *Criminal* tweets as the use of media to gratify and fulfill people’s needs and wants (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). However, tweets observed in the *Lore* dataset indicated gratifications as *appreciation* (Table 3) and *learning* (Table 3). The sub-theme, *appreciation* (Table 3) observed Twitter users who appreciated the online community of *Lore*: “Thankful for entertaining content, good music, and wonderful social media interaction from the whole lot of ya!” (4544), await the latest episode, “Seeing @lorepodcast pop up on my podcast feed always makes my Monday. Well, my every other Monday...” (4031), and post images of fan art:

“Meanwhile #sketch cover inspired by e23: Rope and Railing from @lorepodcast @amahnke #Illustrator #haunted” (2879)

The sub-theme is *learning* (Table 3), which shows Twitter users appreciating how Mahnke’s writing taught them something new: “i’ve learned so much listening to @lorepodcast that i cant believe every single horror movie coming out isn’t a western about tuberculosis or milk depots” (4157). There were some instances of Twitter users recommending the podcast to other Twitter users. However, *user recommendations* (Table 3) focused on promoting Mahnke’s work to others: “bro if you’re not listening to @amahnke’s masterpieces of podcastery and

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

historical analysis then idk what you're doing." (4455), or conveyed the creepy, spooky quality of its storytelling, "Yes omg Lore is phenomenal! If u love history and creepy shit and GREAT storytelling it's just the podcast for u" (3764).

**Community-related.** The fourth theme identified in the *Lore* dataset is "community-related" content, which describes all tweets that refer to a social community of *Lore* audience members. Linking to Jenkins' concept of "participatory culture" (Jenkins et al., 2015), the online community of *Lore* is determined through shared meanings of cultural production and social exchange. For example, the sub-theme, *content request* (Table 3) reveals the ease Twitter users felt when asking Mahnke directly for specific stories and folklore to be included in upcoming episodes:

"@lorepodcast May I suggest an episode featuring Cave-In-Rock? It's a Ohio River cave in Illinois mostly known for having been a pirates hideout. It's most famous residents are Samuel Mason and the Mason Gang, and the Harpe Bros. America's first true serial killers." (4372)

The data suggest that content requests were generally not responded to on Twitter by Mahnke. However, tweets that fell under the sub-theme *corrections* (Table 3) were usually responded to by Mahnke. This sub-theme described the input of Twitter users that sought to correct mistakes or inconsistencies from previous *Lore* episodes. For example,

"@lorepodcast i wish u would have told more of the real Washington dc origin story like the huge impact of Benjamin Banneker. I was surprised by this oversight, @amahnke uve always been good at including the less lauded historical retellings like that. Its a pretty big one." (2988a)

Mahnke responded with:

"Every episode has great stories I have to leave out. I have limited space, and never want to bloat my narrative, so I have to be careful about what I add in. Leaving them out doesn't mean they aren't important to me, just that they don't fit the flow of my episode." (2988b)

The sub-theme of *live show* (Table 3) is also present in the *Lore* dataset. The "Lore Live" tour featured Mahnke and the show composer, Chad Lawson, who performed live recordings of

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

the show in venues across the United States (“About — Lore,” 2018). Twitter users posted tweets about tour dates (2900) and expressed excitement in seeing the show live (2864) and meeting Mahnke in person (4225).

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Table 3: Lore Dataset Themes

<b>Theme 1</b>	Creator support
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>User thanks host</i> <i>Directed at podcast host</i> <i>Reference to “say hi”</i> <i>Host engagement</i> <i>Sword &amp; Scale controversy</i>
<b>Theme 2</b>	Independent production-related
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Patreon</i> <i>Production quality</i> <i>Writing community</i>
<b>Theme 3</b>	Gratification
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Appreciation</i> <i>Learning</i> <i>User recommendations</i>
<b>Theme 4</b>	Community-related
<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Content request</i> <i>Corrections</i> <i>Live show</i>

### Comparative Analysis

As observed in the section above, the open coding of text collected from Twitter data resulted in the categorization and analysis of defined themes. Themes identified in the *Criminal* dataset showed support for the host as a media personality of the podcast network, promotional support from Radiotopia, gratifications stemming from discussions around episode content, and success with promotional activities. Conversely, themes identified in the *Lore* dataset showed support for the host as the creator of the podcast, community supports for an independently produced podcast, gratifications from the production and crowdfunding assets, and a critically-engaged community. To examine the similarities and differences of the two cases, I compare four pairs of contrasting themes. The first pair “host and creator support” explores the significance of the host-listener relationship in the context of emerging podcast business models. “Network podcast model vs. independently produced model” addresses the kinds of audience interactions that emerge within each podcast business model. “User gratifications” focuses on the amount of satisfaction exhibited by podcast listeners online. The final pair “community vs. production” considers the promotional and community-building tactics to increase and diversify audiences. The comparative analysis reveals new insights into how podcast content is discussed, shared, and supported by audiences in a time of networked podcasts.

#### Host and creator support

The first pair observes the role of the host-listener relationship in both case studies. This relationship, as examined in previous studies, identifies the influence of empathy, informality, personability, even intimacy, between the host and listener during audio narratives (Edmond, 2015; McHugh, 2016; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). This intimacy emerged when Twitter users addressed the host by their full name (i.e. “hey Aaron!” (4456)) or sought a personal response



## NETWORKED PODCASTS

from the host through questions and opinions about the show. However, the host-listener relationship differed depending on the interactions of a networked podcast or independently-produced podcast. The “host support” theme observes the *Criminal* audience giving praise for the unique tone of the Judge’s voice and storytelling ability. Twitter users value the professionalism of the networked podcast with the acknowledgement of Judge and Spohrer as the personalities of a host-led narrative. This need for listeners to interact with the personality attached to the voice of the program is reminiscent of radio programming and more recently, the response of audiences to host Sarah Koenig’s work on break-out true crime podcast “Serial” (McHugh, 2016).

The cultivated host-listener relationship of a networked podcast contrasts to *Lore*’s “creator support” theme. *Lore*’s Twitter audience sought a personal connection with the host and focused on the writing process of the podcast show. *Lore* audiences actively showed their support for the creator of the podcast in routinely including the message of “thank you” to Mahnke and praising his writing ability, work ethic, and personal passion for the podcast. The Sword & Scale controversy is a significant event as it showcases existing tensions within the independent podcast community around the professional expectations of a podcast host versus an individual creator. For *Lore*, this meant audience members not only commented on the content of the show but could in engage with Mahnke about his personal opinions about the podcast industry.

### **Network podcast model vs. independently produced model**

In this pair, themes explore Twitter users’ interpretations of each podcast business model, and what distinguishing factors emerge. The “network-related” theme in the *Criminal* data observes Twitter users as cognizant and supportive of *Criminal* as both independent in its audio

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

production and as part of a larger collective of the Radiotopia network. For example, an audience tweet recognized the inclusion of the *Criminal* podcast in a Super Bowl LII advertisement as a “breakout moment for the whole industry” (2086). This media exposure following the advertisement was significant as Twitter users drew a connection between the highly mediated, televised event of the Super Bowl LII and the calibre of a networked podcast. This event further entrenched Radiotopia’s commitment to “authentic, high-quality podcast production” for its suite of podcasts (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Users of Twitter and Radiotopia responded with excitement and pride for Super Bowl LII, thus raising the public consciousness of the podcast. Twitter users also made efforts to include Radiotopia’s Twitter handle when discussing *Criminal* (2336) or made specific reference to *Criminal* as a Radiotopia podcast (20). *Criminal* and Radiotopia encouraged this promotional relationship as Radiotopia held “listening parties” where audiences could meet with the podcast hosts of Radiotopia and would ask if “Radiotopians” were listening to *Criminal* (2212). These interactions indicate a concerted effort by Radiotopia to display a mutually beneficial partnership with *Criminal* on social media, encourage audience loyalty and cross-promote advertising and other Radiotopia podcasts.

The theme of “independently produced-related” examines the interactions of podcast listeners on social media when supporting an independent podcast through donations and crowdfunding. Twitter users pledged to build financial and community support for the podcast’s production through grassroots funding models, such as subscribing to Patreon’s crowdfunding platform (4035) or listening to the advertisements on the podcast (3698). This financial commitment reinforced the influence of *Lore*’s creator narrative on its audience. As observed in other podcast studies, the creator narrative describes a podcast host who identifies as the sole writer and producer of the podcast show (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). This narrative invites

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

audiences to connect a podcast to the craft of a podcaster, rather than a corporate media company. This narrative resulted in Twitter users responding to Mahnke's honesty and openness when providing insight into his writing and audio production process through his own Twitter profile and the *Lore* podcast profile. The audience of *Lore* responded with feelings of inspiration and desires to finish their creative endeavours, whereas, the audience of *Criminal* responded to the show's episode or their partnership with Radiotopia.

Moreover, this theme observes the value of community-based interactions when discussing podcast content. Twitter users actively engaged with Mahnke and were more often responded to by Mahnke. Rather than only discussing content found in the episode, Twitter users expressed an emotional connection to Mahnke's work. Mahnke's musings about reviewing and re-recording some of the first episodes of his podcast (4241), left Twitter users uncertain about this decision. The sub-theme of *production quality* follows the conversation by Twitter users over whether Mahnke should re-record his episodes or not, thus leading to a discussion on how podcasters should retroactively handle their podcast content. This particular interaction between Mahnke and his listeners showed a deeper engagement with an independently-produced podcast than a networked podcast.

### **User gratifications**

The theme of gratification is present in both *Criminal* and *Lore* dataset. This, particularly, in how Twitter users express appreciation for the storytelling narratives in podcast shows, and their willingness to recommend such content to other Twitter users. As McClung & Johnson (2010) have already discovered, podcast users who are already on social networks, are socially motivated to interact and seek out other fans in which to discuss podcast content. However, the social motivation to discuss podcast content varies depending on the podcast business model.

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

*Criminal* audiences expressed their gratification primarily through relaying specific moments or stories in a *Criminal* episode (2542) and using a range of intense emotional language when discussing episodes on Twitter (215). Audiences of the networked podcast wanted to share their experience of the episode, and the sentiment felt with other *Criminal* fans and listeners and did so through the Twitter platform. The analysis also reveals the frequency of recommendations to listen to the podcast by users to other users on Twitter. *Criminal*'s Twitter audience promoted and recommended the *Criminal* podcast to other true crime fan communities (2515).

Conversely, *Lore* listeners showed gratification by expressing interest in the content development of the podcast and the opportunity to provide feedback and commentary. For instance, Twitter users expressed excitement for the release of new episode each week (4031), posted fan art (2879), and commented on the experience of *Lore* as having a establish social media community (4544). Unlike the emotional language used by *Criminal* audiences, *Lore* audiences were gratified not only by the online community surrounding the *Lore* podcast, but also the opportunity for the storytelling podcast to teach them about historical folklore. *Lore* listeners commented on how the podcast introduced them to folklore stories and events that they previously did not know (4157).

### **Community vs. production**

Of the comparative analysis, the last pair refers to the promotional and community building activities of podcast shows. As the industry sees more productions, podcast shows look to promotions and events to build and diversify their audience base (Bonini, 2015; Bottomley, 2015; Wrather, 2016). The analysis shows how the networked podcast of *Criminal* engaged its listeners through contests and media events in order to grow its social presence and community.

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Whereas, the independently produced podcast of *Lore* encouraged critique and feedback from its listeners to facilitate social media interactions.

Notably, the Twitter contest held by *Criminal* and based on the episode “The Numbers” amassed a substantial amount of interactions between *Criminal*’s Twitter handle and their audience. The contest encouraged a high-volume of tweets towards a specific episode and offered a recognized and valued component of the show as a prize: a personalized voicemail from Judge. Contest tweets primarily consisted of three numbers in submission to the contest. Some Twitter users interacted with the contest with questions about entries (1612) or with positive feedback about the prize (728). It is unclear though, whether *Criminal* responded to these tweets. Data also show that Radiotopia did not promote the contest on their social channels, even though the network previously promoted new episodes of *Criminal* through their “@radiotopia” Twitter handle.

Mahnke had a different approach to the promotion of *Lore*. Rather than capturing the attention of listeners through marketing promotions and contests, *Lore* actively engaged its audience in discussions about the creative direction of the podcast show. Not only did *Lore*’s Twitter audience request for Mahnke to include specific stories in upcoming episodes, but audience members would also attempt to correct any inconsistencies in the storyline. Mahnke would reply with a lengthy justification or explanation for his creative decisions regarding the storyline (2988). These interactions between Mahnke and his audience were reciprocal conversations which provided context and understanding about Mahnke’s passion for writing and his ability to bring stories to life through podcasting.

Finally, the analysis observes Twitter interactions about the live show tours of both podcasts. From this analysis and review of previous podcast studies, the auditory experience of

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

podcasting on a live stage is an emerging phenomenon. The response to *Criminal*'s live show by its Twitter audience centred on their excitement for the upcoming live shows and posting photos of them meeting the host, Phoebe Judge, and the producer, Lauren Spohrer at the event.

Whereas, the response of *Lore* audiences about *Lore*'s 2019 live show tour focused more on fan's reaction to seeing and meeting Mahnke in person during and wanting to travel to the next tour date as to not miss the opportunity to see the show live.

### Discussion

The following section interprets and discusses the findings of the thematic analysis in consideration of the comparative analysis and literature review. The analysis of themes reveals the relationships audiences developed with the host, the perception of podcast business models, the gratifications expressed by listeners, and the importance of cultivating a social community. As the assembling of professionalized podcasts into podcast networks becomes a common strategy for media companies, the comparison of a commercial podcast to a grassroots, independent podcast considers the impact of business models on podcast audiences. It leaves questions as to whether the integration of social media in podcasting enhances the listener's social experience of a podcast, or perhaps distances the podcast from the community building opportunities of its amateur beginnings.

### Reframing the Golden Age of Podcasting

The assertion of a “Golden Age” of podcasting by scholars in 2015 envisions the departure of passive radio listening for the free distribution of user-generated content on the world wide web (Spinelli & Dann, 2019; Bonini, 2015). Throughout the history of podcasting, researchers have consistently conceptualized the medium of podcasting beyond passive act of listening (Bonini, 2015; Bottomley, 2015; Wrather, 2016). Recent approaches interpret podcasting as an active medium that engages the intimacy of storytelling, socialness, and community with its audience (McHugh, 2016; Spinelli & Dann, 2019; Markman, 2015; Wrather, 2015), however, the concept of network podcasts limits this vision of the active, social podcast audience. While *Criminal* listeners attempt to develop a rapport with the host, Judge, interactions are relatively non-reciprocated. This one-way relationship best describes as a “parasocial relationship”, in which the online interactions between listeners and media personalities are an

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

illusion of intimacy that is usually non-reciprocated (Lee & Jang, 2013). This finding is consistent with a recent podcast study (Perks & Turner, 2018) in which listeners who engage with a podcast host through social media see it as gratifying experience, even if the listener receives no response.

Findings indicate that the host-listener relationship is stronger for independently produced podcast audiences due to the personalized responses of the creator host. As noted in previous sections, Mahnke tweeted from both the podcast account, “@lorepodcast,” and his private account, “@amahnke” (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). The blended role of creator and user on social media platforms connects to the concept of “produsage,” in which the audience is both the producer and consumer (Markman, 2012). Media scholars (Bottomley, 2015; Jenkins et al., 2015; Markman, 2012) have long viewed podcast production counter to radio media as working outside of media companies and standards of professionalism for the culture of niche user-generated content and online fan support. This observation is not to frame Mahnke’s technical production and craft as unprofessional, in any sense, but to emphasize the component of produsage when following the interactions of independently produced podcast audiences. From this, Mahnke can leverage his social media following and encourage listeners to support other creative pursuits and the financial feasibility of the podcast.

### **Understanding Podcast Business Models**

This study aims to compare the phenomena of podcast business models within the podcast industry. The analysis of themes reveals that Twitter users are, indeed, aware of marketing and promotional strategies of the case studies but interpret and interact with these models in different ways. *Criminal* audiences not only interacted with the show’s content but made efforts to showcase *Criminal* as a reputable Radiotopia show. As discussed by Spinelli &



## NETWORKED PODCASTS

Dann (2019), what networks offer podcast shows is security, stability and the chance to cross-fertilize, or be promoted on other network podcasts without risking their creative property and originality. Overall, findings suggest that podcast networks represent a point of contention for the podcast industry. Networks as the grouping of podcasts present a practical, possibly lucrative model for advertising, promotions, and diversifying audiences in an increasingly saturated media space. However, the lack of reciprocated interactions with listeners reflects a less personal and community-focused approach. Thus, resulting in fewer motivations by Twitter users to interact and engage as a community of listeners.

To counterpoint, *Lore*'s audience recognition of Mahnke as the creator of the podcast by demonstrates the strong community ties and shared meanings around how fans interact with independently-produced podcasts. This strong sense of community echoes the participatory cultures conceptualized by Jenkins (2006) as the mixing of cultural production and forms of social exchange. Listeners are encouraged to follow *Lore* on social media, share ideas, or say "hi!" (4675). One could argue that Mahnke leveraged his online social following for greater recognition in the podcast industry and expansion into other areas of media. While Mahnke's podcast came from grassroots beginnings, the inclusion of his published books, an Amazon TV series, and live show ("About-Lore," n.d.), suggest a new opportunity for an evolving independent model. Independent creators who can create a niche brand, attract a loyal and growing audience, and maintain a steady stream of revenue may start their own media companies without having the conglomerating effect of a commercial network.

### **Online Communities of Podcast Users**

Comparative findings consider the richness of podcast user feedback when using social media platforms. *Criminal*'s audience used Twitter's platform to respond positively to the

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

show's promotional tactics, such as the Numbers game and idolize the podcast host, Phoebe Judge. Whereas, *Lore*'s audience used the platform to participate in the community of the *Lore* podcast and felt encouraged to follow on social media, give feedback and submit corrections directly to host, Mahnke. Recalling boyd's (2010) paradigm of "networked publics," the affordances of social media allow people to engage with media in ways that they previously were unable to. While both shows utilized the affordances of social media to engage with their audiences in intimate, integrated ways that they previously could not with traditional audio media, audiences reacted to the engagement differently depending on their perception of the podcast business model.

Previous studies explored the connection between podcast use and social media and found that social media networks are a tool for podcast users to structure their experience, form fan relationships with the host and genre of the show, and discover niche content relevant to their interests (Cwynar, 2017; Wrather, 2016). For *Lore*, this meant a collective of listeners who share an interest in supporting folklore storytelling and the creators who bring their written works to the podcasting medium. For *Criminal*, listeners presented a growing interest in live shows, promotional games, and crossovers with other popular podcasts. In particular, a tweet asked *Criminal* to combine an episode with *Reply All* (474), which was another networked podcast hosted by the podcast network, Gimlet Media ("About | Gimlet," n.d.). This merging of content, audiences, and promotions by podcast networks prompt new questions about the commercialization of the podcast industry, and its impact on the experiences of listeners.

Research and discussion around the social, cultural, and economic considerations of podcasting have only just begun in the podcast industry (Hilmes & Lindgren, 2016; McHugh, 2016; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). The increasing integration of social media into podcasting

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

(Spinelli & Dann, 2019) only reveals the conflicting interests of commercialized podcast shows and the grassroots origins of the medium. Podcasters want to attract the attention of affluent advertisers, cross-promote with other podcasters, and ideally, monetize their podcast, all while still retaining creative and intellectual integrity (Quirk, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Media companies want to find technical talent, merge resources and production knowledge, diversify customers, and formulate advertising packages for each partnership (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). However, it is how podcasters engage with their audiences that will ultimately determine the success of their business models.

### **Limitations and Future Direction**

Limitations of this study note the approach of manually coding data. I chose to conduct coding manually over a textual analysis software due to the nature of exploratory coding, which observes the nuanced patterns and relationships of data. The relevancy and timeframe of the data posed certain limitations in terms of efficacy. The Twitter profiles of both case studies have been active for over four years, and so the study of Twitter data is considered exhaustive only within the time frame of data collection. No podcast network or podcast show is the same regarding its social media interactions, and different user interactions may occur on other social networking platforms. Future study would benefit from expanding the sample size to other popular social networking sites and comparing the interactions between platforms. Expanding the study to other types of podcasts, not just audio storytelling narratives would also diversify findings. This study is not intended to directly compare social media strategies of the case study profiles, as this would extend past the scope of the study, but to compare the participatory interactions based on each mode of production.

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

For future study, a longer time frame and focus on multiple podcast interactions may deepen the similarities and differences observed. The scope of this study addresses podcasts produced with business models that offer listeners free access to its episodes. However, other areas of study on this topic could include subscription-only based business models that offer exclusive content or acquisitions of podcast networks by larger media companies, and the social interactions involved.

### Conclusion

The current podcast industry is forging its path in the media landscape through assemblages of podcast networks, crowdfunding platforms, and fan communities. This study asks whether the interactions of podcast users on social media networks, such as Twitter, presents a new opportunity for podcast business models to promote their content and engage with listeners online. Using two popular case studies of audio storytelling podcasts, *Criminal* and *Lore*, a qualitative thematic analysis uncovers how Twitter users interact with the business models of a networked podcast and independently produced podcast. Findings suggest that the audience of a network podcast is more likely to tweet about the host, engage in promotional activities of the network, and find gratification in discussing and recommending the podcast to other social media users. Whereas, the audience of an independently produced podcast is more likely to appreciate the creative work of the host, support the podcast monetarily through crowdfunding and advertisements, and engage with the host over inconsistencies or creative decisions found in the podcast content. These comparative differences reveal the fundamental shifts taking place in the podcast industry for both independent podcasters and podcast shows part of large media conglomerates.

Using thematic analysis of recent Twitter data, categorized themes provided insight into similarities and differences in how audiences respond and interact with other listeners via social media. First, the analysis observes the motivations and gratifications of Twitter users when interacting with a *Criminal*, a networked podcast from Radiotopia, *Lore*, an independently produced podcast. A comparative analysis then distinguishes similarities and differences in audience behaviour of a networked podcast to an independently produced podcast, and whether these models ultimately improve the podcast experience. This study reveals how receptive social

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

media users are to the content production, marketing, and financial sustainability of a podcast model, particularly in a time when podcasts are working to cultivate a social media presence (Perks & Turner, 2018; Spinelli & Dann, 2019; Wrather, 2016).

Overall, the findings of this study reveal how podcast audiences interact with business models of podcasting - whether audiences are aware of this or not. Lessons learned from a qualitative study of Twitter interactions impart that while networked business models may be a pragmatic way to support the promotion and audience growth of a podcast (Quirk, 2015), it does not always inspire community interactions from its listenership. The comparisons of these two models reveal that there are advantages to creating independently produced podcasts. A loyal and active fan base, who are willing to support the show financially, is an advantage that networked podcasts should consider. Considering the use of live shows and contest by *Criminal* and *Lore*, podcasts should continue to invite different types of media content into its production to further grow and develop as an audio media. There is an opportunity for the podcast industry to experiment, shift, and perhaps entirely reinvent the wheel when it comes to the future of podcasting industry and the benefits of social media. Even if networks grandfather into new ways of monetizing podcast content on digital platforms, the podcasts interdependency on social media networks continues to shape the medium of the podcast.

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# Appendix A

No.	A List of Tweet Excerpts
1036	Are you listening to @CriminalShow ? No? Why not? Phoebe has the best stories!
2662	@kflay @CriminalShow Best. Podcast. @PhoebeVJudge , the host, is excellent.
284	@CriminalShow Thanks, Phoebe, for a fantastic episode! I've lived in Memphis for 23 years but had never heard of the Baby Snatcher until I read "Before We Were Yours" by Lisa Wingate. Hers was a fictional account, but your episode filled in so much great detail. Horrifying stuff!
317	@MichaelRapaport Check out @CriminalShow some heavy, some light hearted crime stories and all the while the soothing voice of @PhoebeVJudge takes you through.
1997	I think I could be addicted to @CriminalShow or maybe it's just @PhoebeVJudge's entrancing voice.
2322	@CriminalShow Wide awake at midnight & I think a visit to the Winchester mystery house on @CriminalShow will be just the ticket. Scary, yet delivered in phoebe's dulcet tones.
2784	@loubaforster @romanmars @CriminalShow @PhoebeVJudge @radiotopia @prx Phoebe's voice is one of my favorite in all of podcasting.
2501	Realized earlier that I have a whole store of unlistened-to @CriminalShow episodes and I'm VERY excited to catch up! "I'm Phoebe Judge. And this is Criminal"
2144	QT @trucepodcast: omg I would SO love this! I am so picky about radio/podcast voices, which i know is super judge-y (haha), but @PhoebeVJudge has hands down the best one ever. ; @RobByers1 @CriminalShow @PhoebeVJudge I want her voice as my morning alarm. "I'm Phoebe Judge. This is Thursday."
137	@PhoebeVJudge Wanted to let you know that I am OBSESSED with your Criminal podcast, @CriminalShow. I put it on, put in my earbuds, and get totally lost in your fabulous stories! Great work by you, and the whole team!!
130	Not sure how to feel about this but @CriminalShow episodes that begin with "sensitive material not for all audiences" interest me more. Congrats to @PhoebeVJudge and company for handling the baby seller story so well. #NeverForget #Podcasting #ThankYouPhoebe
2842	RT @Emma_GVA: In the last 5 months, I listened to all 105 episodes of @CriminalShow. By far my most favourite #podcast of 2018. Thank you so much to Phoebe Judge and the team for brightening (or darkening) my days
2336	QT @CriminalShow: I love it when @radiotopia shows do episodes on similar topics. Listen to today's @CriminalShow episode, and then follow it up with this @99piorg episode from 2015: <a href="https://t.co/HnckuDpgWp">https://t.co/HnckuDpgWp</a> ; According to legend, Sarah Winchester designed her house to confuse the ghosts that were following her. Here's the famous staircase to nowhere. Check out the full story in today's episode, "The Widow and the Winchester." Listen!
1753	@CriminalShow 598 Amazing show; great episode ~ Thank you, @radiotopia team!
20	@CriminalShow OMG I just discovered this @radiotopia podcast and have been binging on it all week! GREAT variety, excellent interviewing, and a depth of researching that uncovers people and crime stories you haven't heard yet!

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

2037	I was so excited to get these super cool stickers from @radiotopia yesterday! Im excited to rep my faves, @CriminalShow, @earhustlesq, @thisisloveshow, and the newest addition to my list @ianchillag! Thanks for making such awesome content!
2186	RT @radiotopia: Alexa, play the podcast from @forestwhitaker's "Big Game" commercial. Okay, playing @CriminalShow from Radiotopia and PRX. #SBLIII #SuperBowl
2212	QT @PhoebeVJudge: RT @radiotopia: Any of you Radiotopians watching the sportsball show tonight just to catch @PhoebeVJudge's voice? 🐶🐶 <a href="https://t.co/9IBcCzRPHj">https://t.co/9IBcCzRPHj</a> ; Tomorrow night I will be serving my famous enchiladas for a SuperBowl party. With any luck we will hear @CriminalShow in a SuperBowl ad. If you catch it, tell a friend about the show!
2161	@radiotopia @amazonecho @ForestWhitaker @CriminalShow I'm sure this is a silly question - but did you guys know? This is so exciting!!
2126	QT @CriminalShow: RT @vika_aronson: I don't love that I'm RTing an Amazon ad, but this is THRILLING!!! A bonafide indie podcast, founding @radiotopia show,... ; In Amazon's Super Bowl ad, a podcast stars alongside celebrities <a href="https://t.co/V6o6DsKSsM">https://t.co/V6o6DsKSsM</a> via @usatodayports #SBLIII
2086	congrats to @PhoebeVJudge @CriminalShow & @radiotopia for making it into a Superbowl commercial! A breakout moment for the whole industry! <a href="https://t.co/F3PTq5Uqoc">https://t.co/F3PTq5Uqoc</a>
2358	QT @CriminalShow: RT @radiotopia: It's baaaaack. Listen here or wherever you enjoy podcasts most: <a href="https://t.co/8twRuTAclu">https://t.co/8twRuTAclu</a> <a href="https://t.co/5w0n3JMzwL">https://t.co/5w0n3JMzwL</a> ; When Sarah Winchester's husband died, she decided to move across the country and start building a house. She didn't stop building until the day she died. It's been called the most haunted house in the world. New episode: <a href="https://t.co/9FraIgBAjr">https://t.co/9FraIgBAjr</a> <a href="https://t.co/iKsKCwa3Qv">https://t.co/iKsKCwa3Qv</a>
1992	Join @PhoebeVJudge @jpoyant @ianchillag and more of your favorite producers for an exclusive @radiotopia Listening Party at On Air Fest March 1-3 at @WytheHotel in Brooklyn. it's a mix and mingle radio-style with the creative minds behind @CriminalShow @zigzagpod + more!
2563	@Mortified @CriminalShow @radiotopia @HrishiHirway @jpoyant @PhoebeVJudge @RadioDiaries One of these is not like the others.
404	RT @radiotopia: A touching birthday message from the crew at @CriminalShow. Thank you for sharing your talents and passion with us. This is #RadiotopiaTurns5. <a href="https://t.co/o0OUqdceFF">https://t.co/o0OUqdceFF</a>
2407	Episode 42 of @CriminalShow (The Finger): "I know I'm a man of idiosyncrasies, but unpopular speech is the most important kind there is." #ThursdayThoughts
559	QT @CriminalShow: Love this podcast. Excellent episode with important lessons for us all on social media and not rushing to judgment of people we don't know. ; It's one thing to get into an argument with a stranger on Facebook. It's another thing to try to ruin that stranger's life. New episode today: <a href="https://t.co/NWjUYi5NCf">https://t.co/NWjUYi5NCf</a> <a href="https://t.co/NAFGS8hfFS">https://t.co/NAFGS8hfFS</a>
2542	QT @CriminalShow: Who listened to this and didn't think there's no way this woman hasn't tried this (and maybe succeeded!) in the past?! Her answer to every problem is "HIRE A HIT MAN" ; Linda Gillman was determined to see her plan through... even from jail. New episode! Check it out on @radiopublic and let us know what you think! <a href="https://t.co/473Y6oHd95">https://t.co/473Y6oHd95</a> <a href="https://t.co/uVoa7QpHxz">https://t.co/uVoa7QpHxz</a>
307	QT @CriminalShow: I feel like I need a shower after listening to this episode. Quite the disturbing episode about a vile human. ; Episode 110: Baby Snatcher. Listen here- <a href="https://t.co/djlSIZVS34">https://t.co/djlSIZVS34</a> <a href="https://t.co/5qlM7X0ekg">https://t.co/5qlM7X0ekg</a>

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

215	I am amazed at the kind of stories covered on @CriminalShow. Sometimes they're funny, sometimes they're absolutely heartbreaking. #thisiscriminal
63	@CriminalShow Where is the real justice for Silvon?!
2309	QT @jeannette_ng: @CriminalShow So disappointed! There is nothing to this story! It spit the same rumor fueled narrative. It took us on a guided tour with a spooky script & failed to mention anything about the fact that it was bought by a theme park entrepreneur- this thread does better <a href="https://t.co/TBKFMQJOGC">https://t.co/TBKFMQJOGC</a> ; There's also a lot to be said about how so many of the "mysteries" of the house are simply conveniences and comforts for an old woman. Not strange, not weird, just not built for ableds. <a href="https://t.co/BjWDt5MJ0J">https://t.co/BjWDt5MJ0J</a>
2344	@CriminalShow @PhoebeVJudge It's never made any sense to me that the ghosts would be giving her instructions on how to confuse them. "Here's one that'll really get us riled up."
2010	@PhoebeVJudge on @CriminalShow is one of the best podcasts out there. Give it a listen - you'll be glad you did!
2515	RT @49erCoug: For those you into true crime podcasts, check this episode of @CriminalShow out.. It takes place in Utah.. Interesting listen! <a href="https://t.co/727UOLk4yu">https://t.co/727UOLk4yu</a>
465	You SHOULD be listening to Criminal podcast. Latest episode "Homewrecker" is fascinating/frightening. A woman's life is ruined because someone posted something about her online - it was a lie - it was super easy - and there's almost nothing she can do. @CriminalShow #podcast
1704	Wha!??? For years I've secretly thought how cool it would be to have a Phoebe Judge voicemail greeting, now it's possible, but you/I've gotta win at the @CriminalShow numbers. Here's my three #PickstoPlay: 707 Go me!
1612	QT @CriminalShow: Can I post numbers for today yet? If so my numbers are 818 This is the best follow up to an episode yet @CriminalShow ; Fannie Davis ran her underground numbers business for more than 30 years. Her daughter kept it a secret even longer. In today's episode, she tells us all about it: <a href="https://t.co/GEdbiSzooV">https://t.co/GEdbiSzooV</a> <a href="https://t.co/DkgU4BoF9U">https://t.co/DkgU4BoF9U</a>
728	@CriminalShow How many people have won?? I'm super curious to know the stats lol. Anyways, my final number is: 198. Thanks for all the fun!
2791	@CriminalShow So excited for the show to start! <a href="https://t.co/BE0gkSbqZf">https://t.co/BE0gkSbqZf</a>
2811	Heya @PhoebeVJudge can you come to Nashville? Please I think we're relatively closer than Dallas! My heart is so sad. I'm too poor to go to Texas come love us! @laurensphorer @oh_hey_nadia @CriminalShow @thisisloveshow
2755	RT @iBeezNdahTRAP: A recap of my weekend. @PhoebeVJudge is amazing! @CriminalShow and @thisisloveshow are two of the best podcasts out there! You all are welcome in Dallas anytime! #dotcalm <a href="https://t.co/CQrH6YQ3X9">https://t.co/CQrH6YQ3X9</a>
474	QT @CriminalShow: @replyall just wanted to introduce you to this criminal episode in hopes that @PJVogt will track down Molly and interview her with his "yeah but really you're batshit crazy" voice. #punchableface #punchablevoice ; Episode 109: Homewrecker. Listen and share with a friend: <a href="https://t.co/cwV5JIsTCz">https://t.co/cwV5JIsTCz</a> <a href="https://t.co/N34s2S37P9">https://t.co/N34s2S37P9</a>
4456	@lorepodcast hey Aaron! I want to share the episode about the Fox sisters with my BF but I can't find it! What number is it? Love the podcast!

## NETWORKED PODCASTS

4902	Growing up in Maine made your latest episode of @lorepodcast so interesting! Thank you @amahnke for doing the story, absolutely loved it!
3728	@amahnke @lorepodcast Your hard work is appreciated more than I can express. Your podcast has been a steady comforting voice reminding me that the world is still fascinating, creepy, and wonderful. Things can be bad but having a steady voice take you away from your daily pain can save your sanity.
4614	Dear @amahnke - just wanted to say this: Thank you for all your work with @lorepodcast & @theworldoflore, @curiositiespod & @unobscuredpod. Thank you for using your platform to try to make people think critically, act civically, and engage constructively. Really, Thank you. <3
4675	@lorepodcast hi!
3025	@lorepodcast - I love listening to your amazing Podcast. It's definitely my favorite and your other Podcast: @unobscuredpod is another fav! Since you like it when ppl say Hi, thought I'd pop by & do just that!
3345	Tomorrow marks the 4th anniversary for my @LorePodcast, and I'm overwhelmed with gratitude. You folks have let me tell you my stories for four years, and have helped the show grow into something much bigger than it once was. And in the process, you gave me a career. /1
3531	@nichugme @prtyheartattack @lorepodcast @SwordAndScale Weird. Does @amahnke own Wondery? No? Is he the one who runs Sword and Scale? No? Then it's not his fault. If Mike stopped being such a piece of shit, Wondery wouldn't have dropped him. He has the \$ to keep it going independently but chose to cancel it. Blame him.
3494	I will no longer listen to @lorepodcast (sucked anyways) by @AaronMahnke or follow the #adnansyed case or any podcast ft. @rabiasquared due to what they did to S&S @MBoudet and @WonderyMedia. Free speech is dead with all the sensitive people in the world. #thanks #podcast
4035	Got on Patreon just so I can support @amahnke and @lorepodcast
3698	@amahnke To be fair to @amahnke, as I've fast-forwarded through ads previously (note my above claim) but don't want his content damaged by it, I'm now a patron on your patreon so I can skip ads in @lorepodcast without damaging it's ad ROI and allowing him to continue his awesome content.
4708	QT @lorepodcast: My red eye flight landed this morning with just enough time for me to open my laptop and post the new episode. This one is a doozy, too. Enjoy! ; A brand new episode of Lore is here! Download today or listen here: <a href="https://t.co/HkSrgfNMgN">https://t.co/HkSrgfNMgN</a> [•] <a href="https://t.co/SJg1n6JXvW">https://t.co/SJg1n6JXvW</a>
3742	@lorepodcast There's a lot of power in releasing constant, regular, dependable content, no question about it. But. It's also tough to do anything *else* now, like tour or go to conventions or expand my work into new areas. Which I've managed to do, yes, but I have to do it carefully. /2
4241	RT @lorepodcast: Im going through old Lore episodes to clean up and modernize the credits, and I'm fighting the urge to completely re-record and produce the first 50 or so episodes.
4228	RT @orridge_anna: @lorepodcast Don't, though. The early ones were fantastic. Besides, I think one of the great things about listening to a long-standing podcast is seeing how the production evolves as the creator or creators develop the idea.
4954	@amahnke @lorepodcast I started listening 2 weeks ago. After a week of burning through 60 of them, I introduced my History loving 12 year old daughter to it. This has in turn re-inspired my desire to write. I just want to say thank you!



## NETWORKED PODCASTS

3447	@lorepodcast and @amahnke thanks for doing what you do. Lore's been a big influence on my last two books!
4544	@chadlawsonpiano @lorepodcast @amahnke Kind words where appreciation is due! :) Thankful for entertaining content, good music, and wonderful social media interaction from the whole lot of ya!
4031	Seeing @lorepodcast pop up on my podcast feed always makes my Monday. Well, my every other Monday...
2879	Meanwhile #sketch cover inspired by e23: Rope and Railing from @lorepodcast @amahnke #Illustrator #haunted <a href="https://t.co/2kAKWEO21S">https://t.co/2kAKWEO21S</a>
4157	i've learned so much listening to @lorepodcast that i cant believe every single horror movie coming out isn't a western about tuberculosis or milk depots
4455	bro if you're not listening to @amahnke's masterpieces of podcastery and historical analysis then idk what you're doing. i finally caught up on @lorepodcast, and now i'm onto @unobscuredpod and i'm IMMERSED. wow. damn. ok anyway
3764	@gomadelpelorota @lorepodcast Yes omg Lore is phenomenal! If u love history and creepy shit and GREAT storytelling it's just the podcast for u
4372	@lorepodcast May I suggest an episode featuring Cave-In-Rock? It's a Ohio River cave in Illinois mostly known for having been a pirates hideout. It's most famous residents are Samuel Mason and the Mason Gang, and the Harpe Bros. America's first true serial killers.
2988	@lorepodcast i wish u would have told more of the real Washington dc origin story like the huge impact of Benjamin Banneker. I was surprised by this oversight, @amahnke uve always been good at including the less lauded historical retellings like that. Its a pretty big one.
2864	QT @lorepodcast: My dream would be to go to DC on my birthday to watch his live show. Ugh, wish I had money! ; Ticket sales for this year's Lore Live tour will open up tomorrow, but only for Patreon members (Wednesday for everyone else). But...here's a final list of dates and cities (we're not adding more), to help you plan ahead. <a href="https://t.co/TQaT5MgyeU">https://t.co/TQaT5MgyeU</a> ——— <a href="https://t.co/GhdRsntqtJ">https://t.co/GhdRsntqtJ</a>
4225	@lorepodcast Please come back to Colorado @amahnke! It was such a delight seeing you live Dec 2017. I would love to do so again.