

When beginning to write this research paper, I was not clear on the exact direction that I wanted to go with it. I knew that I wanted to investigate the recent surge in interest in true crime media. Initially, I thought I would focus on how true crime treats victims compared to how it treats criminals. I had planned to do this by looking at how victims and their families reacted to the content produced about them, as well as what degree of fame was given to the criminal. I began my research process by conducting general searches through Goucher's online library databases, mainly using Academic Search Complete.

At the beginning, I started out by using general search terms and making use of the AND/OR/NOT filters, searching things such as "true crime" and "victims' families" or "true crime" and "famous criminals." As I began to go deeper with my research and read more and more academic sources and peer-reviewed papers, I discovered a thread to follow that I had not expected to find. Many of the papers that I was reading discussed racial disparities within the true crime genre. They talked about how white victims were highlighted while black victims were ignored. Additionally, many of the sources mentioned how true crime's way of promoting longer prison sentences and not questioning bias during trials and sentencing ignored the racism that is prevalent within America's justice system. After discovering this new path to follow, I shifted my research to try and find out more about how the true crime genre can be racially harmful. After deciding to make this shift, I changed what search terms I was relying on as well, now using terms such as "true crime" and "victim racial demographics." Knowing that I was focusing on modern true crime media, I used the time filter to have the database only show me sources created after a certain year.

When I became stuck and could not find the sources that I needed, I looked into non-academic sources, such as newspaper articles or podcasts, and then used information from these sources to help me find new search terms to use with the library's database.

This new focus ended up being what my final paper was about. I talked about who true crime focused on, as well as who it seemed to choose to ignore. I talked about who the genre harmed, and what the real-world results of these harms were. Finally, I talked about what stereotypes that true crime media perpetuated. After finishing this main part of my paper, I

discovered that I needed more information to use for the introduction. I went back to the library database, again with new search terms, and looked for general information about true crime, as well as information about the beginning of true crime, that I could use to introduce a reader to the genre, as well as to my paper. To do this, I used terms such as “history of true crime”. This time, I did not filter my results by a modern date, but by an older one, as I was hoping to find sources from the early 1900s or earlier.

After finishing this paper, I find myself to be much more proficient in using the variety of sources that the library data base offers. Before I did the research for this paper, I did not know how to properly filter my sources by specific source terms, how to only look at peer-reviewed sources, or even how to filter my search results by date. Now, I find that I am able to apply any of these filters or parameters to my research easily, and with great results.