

MY FANDOM AND ME

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This study aims to investigate the changing idea of what it means to be a fan in recent years through an interconnected web of social media relationships and decreasing authenticity factors. By contextually analyzing an existing fandom, The BeyHive, and combining the research and scholarship of pop culture, mediated pop culture, fandom, and social media, I can contextually analyze fandom, celebrity, and authenticity to consider the changing nature of fandom culture. The analysis concluded that while celebrity culture and social media continue to grow as a part of our society, it also damages the existence of fandom culture as we know it. By looking at the cycling effects mediated pop culture, celebrity, and fandom culture have on each other, we have seen how celebrities shape our behaviors as we, in turn, shape theirs.

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methods
4. Results
5. Discussion
6. References

Introduction

As of 2021, there are 4.33 billion social media users worldwide contributing to the ever-growing world of pop culture. (DataReportal, 2021) While this number continues to rise globally, we ask ourselves what pop culture is and why it is important to us? Popular culture can be defined as the everyday objects, actions, and events that influence people to believe and behave in certain ways. (O'Brien & Szeman, 2010, p.2-4) Some might say that pop culture is typically aimed at the younger generation, and with almost 50% of teens in the U.S reported to have active social media accounts (Anderson & Jiang, 2018), we can infer that social media is the most ubiquitous part of history in our world catering to a younger demographic. While social media is not limited to a younger audience or a specific generation, much like pop culture, the current and growing generation typically defines what may or may not be relevant.

Popular culture is an all-encompassing umbrella term with several subsets within its world – one of them being mediated pop culture. The realm of mediated pop culture refers to everyday objects, actions, and events we experience through a media channel that may influence us to believe and behave in specific ways. Mediated pop culture is presented to us in print and digital forms (Sellnow, 2017, p.3-5), with mass accessibility and appeal, much like music, art, literature, fashion, dance, and film, mediated pop culture has become part of our daily routine due to increased internet and social media use. Therefore, creating several more subsets within that world. (Crossman, 2019) Two subsets usually discussed together are celebrity culture and fandom, but to further understand the idea of fandoms, we must first clarify what exactly celebrity culture is and what fandom culture is. The former, meaning a conceptualized interest in a famed person's life, allowing them in some

way to capitalize on that fame, and the latter, describing the sense of community built around people having these mutual pop culture interests, including various celebrities. (Wiest, 2017) This now brings us to the topic of fandoms, a term derived from the word fanatic or fan is a (Goswami, 2019) more hyper-focused conversation about a piece of pop culture with other like-minded people and the feeling of camaraderie and family that comes along with it.

Pop culture and its' relationships with fandom culture and celebrity culture have thrived over the years because of social media, which has undoubtedly become a primary form of interconnection. Within these fandoms, some of which have garnered their own names like The BeyHive(Beyoncé), Directioners (One Direction), or even Potterheads (Harry Potter), people from different parts of the world can come together on a single shared platform and express their mutual appreciation for said entity—practically changing the way we identify as a fan currently. With social media usage expanding the world of fandom and escalating its strength, a recently spawned terminology has become a part of the fandom culture ideology, so much so that the word fan is no longer the most apt term to describe an extreme enthusiast. Referencing the 2000 hit song by rapper Eminem of the same name, "Stan," a portmanteau of the phrase stalker and fan, means to be an even more overzealous, obsessive fan of a particular entity. (Foley & Gagliano, 2021) So, if you aren't referring to someone who loves One Direction as a Directioner, you would either call them a One Direction Stan or even use it in the verb tense to say that they stan One Direction. Situations like creating a new word are among the many nuances that indicate a new wave of fandom in our society.

While organized fandom has been around decades before our current access to social media, the *Social Media Handbook* points out that these same means of accessibility potentially threaten the genuineness of fan culture by commercializing fans as nothing more than users. Celebrity and online fan interaction seem increasingly more and more calculated and planned, rather than authentic. (Hunsinger & Senft, 2014, p.76) But I argue, without that seemingly calculated fan interaction, there is the potential to threaten the existence of celebrity culture and how we understand it.

In an attempt to highlight the changing idea of what it means to be a fan in recent years through interconnecting social media relationships and decreasing authenticity factors, I will combine the research of pop culture by examining existing scholarship of mediated pop culture, fandom, and social media to contextually analyze fandom, celebrity culture and authenticity alongside existing fandoms to consider the changing nature of fandom culture. By providing a contextual analysis of an existing fandom, The BeyHive, I will use Beyoncé's social media and BeyHive rhetoric on *Instagram* and *Twitter* to consider the various ways that Beyoncé Stans showcase their devotion and how that directly translates into the definition of the modern fan and celebrity culture.

There is much to be said about the fellowship shared between people and their mutual love for a celebrity, and its importance for pop culture discourse. By looking into specific examples, we can determine its place in the need for more scholarship surrounding fandom culture.

Literature Review

Pop culture has been around and studied for years since the industrial revolution. It is a broad definition that is composed of everyday experiences and influences. Since pop culture is consistently growing as our world changes, studying mediated pop culture gives us a better lens of our current society. It is defined as the everyday objects, actions, and events we experience through a digital media channel. (Sellnow, 2017, p.2-3) While this book gives us a critical understanding of how media has affected our outlook on life through specific mediums of television shows, it does not discuss the actual conversation that viewers have said about those shows online, which could change the narrative entirely. Mediated pop culture as of 2021 does well to draw examples from online discussion related to that specific show or movie and the ties with celebrity and fandom culture.

Fandom culture is an instrumental part of the mediated pop culture conversation since it widens the scope of influence that television, movies, and celebrities have on our lives. Social media places an open form of communication about specific shows and movies for precise analysis. Belonging to a fandom in many ways is a psychological experience that creates a greater sense of purpose. Connecting with like-minded individuals is good for mental and emotional health, partly thanks to social media. (Wiest, 2017) A substantial underlying factor in the partaking of a fandom that Wiest does well to reiterate is the sense of family and camaraderie that comes with it.

While fans have always been adopters of all forms of social media, altering it to fit their communities, it also poses a threat to fandom culture by commercializing fans as users. (Coppa, 2014, p.77) But were fans ever more than just users in the eyes of celebrity culture?

Due to our intense nature of media consumption, being a celebrity no longer implies just the leading movie star like it did in 1999, but one who possesses star-like qualities. Thanks to technology, mass consumption capabilities, and media publicity, we can promote celebrities as extraordinary and ordinary in the same breath. (Ferudi, 2010) Which I contest is not necessarily a bad thing, if it all. The ability to have that type of access to your favorite celebrity and see them in that relational light is what allows a barrier breakdown paving the way for a highly favorable fan/celebrity relationship. Contemporary celebrity culture succeeds in transforming the powerful and the well-known into intimate and familiar figures. (Ferudi,2010) The bane of celebrity culture relies on the capitalization of one's celebrity status. Still, as these authors question social media's ability to remain legitimate in that process, I also question the authenticity of those relationships. Technological affordances such as social media have facilitated an environment that provides anyone with the means to reach large audiences with their content. Authenticity as a concept is commonly used to evaluate the genuineness and originality of objects or individuals. But new media so often appears to portray an augmented authentic reality. Calculated authenticity, also credited as authenticity labor, is a concept whereby one tries to encapsulate honesty without pretense through social media. (Maares et al., 2021a) While these authors speak on the lack of authenticity that *Instagram* influencers have, they did not relate that notion to actual celebrities with real star power. My input suggests that if everyday people can engage in authenticity labor, imagine how easy it is for a celebrity with an entire team behind them to perform. By pretending to be a calm, laid-back celebrity who posts on *Instagram* and has an average life just like you and me in an attempt to relate to their fans, they also partake in authenticity labor. When you have succeeded in creating

that false outlook, and people feel connected to you, it all circles back to the concept of capitalizing on fans to increase their profits, aka celebrity culture.

Methodology

In my research, I aim to highlight the changing idea of being a fan in this current moment through interlinked social media relationships and its decreasing authenticity factors. Using primary qualitative data from specific social media interactions based on Beyoncé's fandom, the BeyHive, I will contextualize how these fandoms have showcased extreme bouts of dedication.

By taking a qualitative approach to the social media instances, we can see first-hand examples that demonstrate what I believe to be the present understanding of what it means to be a part of a fandom community. The qualitative approach also allows for more evident proof and conversation for a contextual analysis that is to follow. Stephanie Patrick of Becky with the *Twitter*: Lemonade, social media, and embodied academic fandom reported in her research that scholars have tried to distinguish fandom as either a 'network of affiliations and practices' or a more individual and 'personal meaning-making' form of consumption. I attest that fandom culture lies within both those concepts. Each individual who actively partakes in a particular fandom chooses to do so by their own merit, relishing in whatever personal joy that entity may bring. Therefore, placing them in a position to participate in the unspoken practices that fandom takes part in, we will see more examples of this throughout.

To better understand how social media has affected fandom, I scoured ;'" and *Twitter* search bars using hashtags and keywords to find the exact examples of the proof I needed. Being an active user of *Twitter* and *Instagram* since 2013, I was present when many of the moments I describe were trending on both platforms, so I was already privy to these trending incidents.

The social media occurrences that I use to back up my research were evaluated using contextual analysis. This involved finding correlating words, phrases, and language that members of the fandoms used to defend and illuminate the 28 Grammy award-winning pop icon Beyoncé. Analyzing the language and tone of the discourse used in the tweets and comments allows us to see the strong sense of community and motivation displayed and what that means in relation to declining authentic celebrity/fan interactions. Semi-structured interviews with social media users and members of the fandom could have opened the door to a greater but different kind of conversation around celebrity and fandom culture, with less emphasis on the social media impact. Using existing mediated pop culture text from *Instagram* and *Twitter* that already exists stresses how much has already been said online and how much more could follow. The contextual analysis also helps my research address the gap between the correlation of celebrity culture capitalization and reliability.

Primary Research

Beyoncé - seven letters, one accent above the E, and one woman with one of the world's most dangerous and intense fanbases you might ever encounter in your lifetime. Dangerous may not be a word that usually comes to mind when you hear the word fan. You might instantly think of terms like obsessed, fixation, or maybe enthusiastic, all of which fit correctly in that category. But, type in the BeyHive in your search bar, and you're sure to see words like wrath, attack, and frightened in your results, and if you ever see the words BeyHive and your name in the same sentence, there's a 75 percent chance that you should be scared.

The BeyHive is Crazy in Love

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles is one of the world's biggest pop and R & B artists to date, with twenty-eight Grammy wins, a reported net worth of over 420 million dollars (Redacao,2021), and a third-place ranking of 194.12 million *Instagram* followers as of 2021 (Statista, 2021) her stardom needs no further explanation. As we already know, a fandom is a subculture of pop culture, composed of like-minded super fans whose bond is strongly connected through the feeling of camaraderie. Beyoncé's fandom, the BeyHive, has had a long journey from its inception to become the super fan collective that we have come to know. Originally titled the Beyontourage by Beyoncé herself, the actual amalgamation of the words Beyoncé and Hive became popularized by fans several years ago in 2006, following her second studio album *B'Day*. (Music Hub, 2012) But it wasn't until 2011 that Knowles finally acknowledged the new fandom name's existence after petitions surfaced on *Twitter*, garnering her attention, asking her to adopt the name BeyHive instead. (Music Hub, 2012) After officially being crowned Queen Bey, leader of the Hive, Beyoncé posted a

personally handwritten letter addressed to her 17,000 members stating the "Golden Rules." With the rules saying phrases like "We defend our own," "One should never turn on another," and "We defend each other," (Music Hub, 2012), several members of the BeyHive might have taken those words a little too literally.

Okay, BeyHive get into formation

Our first look into the strength of the fandom realm takes us back to the year 2016. 2016 was an exciting time for us; Leonardo DiCaprio finally won his *Oscar* for *The Revenant*, *Stranger Things* was the most-watched series, *Hamilton* won a record of 11 *Tonys*. However, the rage in the music world was Beyoncé's release of a 60-minute visual album, *Lemonade* on *HBO*. (Kosin, 2016) One of the more popular songs on her album, "Sorry," features the lyric "He better call Becky with the good hair," (Beyoncé Official Website, 2016), leaving fans wondering who the heck is Becky? Almost immediately after the song aired, fashion designer Rachel Roy who has been linked to Jay Z in the past, made an *Instagram* post with the caption, "Good hair don't care, but we will take good lighting, for selfies, or self-truths, always. live in the light #nodramaqueens." (Yannetta, 2016) This post prompted fans to speculate that Rachel was the primary catalyst in the outwardly perfect relationship that Beyoncé and Jay Z seemed to have. Since their official union in 2008, the power couple with their three kids together, Blue Ivy and twins Sir and Rumi kept their relationship relatively private and stayed out of the public eye. Except for red carpet appearances and basketball games, they have done well to keep their idealized marriage appear almost flawless. Shortly after the unknowingly fateful post, the BeyHive swarmed to protect their Queen, flocking to Roy's *Instagram* account, leaving hurtful comments with lemon and bee emojis underneath several of her posts. What we now

associate as a signature identifier for the BeyHive, using the Bee emoji alongside comments and tweets is a surefire way to ensure that any potential threat or aggressor to Bey is fully aware that they are here to defend her and leave no mercy. It appeared that the Hive did their job because soon after, Rachel made her *Instagram* account private and tweeted, "I respect love, marriages, families and strength. What shouldn't be tolerated, no matter what, is bullying, of any kind." (Yanetta, 2016)

Sweet Dreams or a Beautiful Nightmare

When we look at the actions taken by the Hive towards Roy, we can see clear examples of fandom that come into play. As we already know, fandom culture exists around the sense of community and camaraderie shared, ultimately creating a family feeling. To be in a fandom is simply the modern iteration of a primal instinct. Connecting with people over shared passions and interests is good for mental and emotional health because it helps create a fraternity-like sense of security. (Wiest, 2017) And if someone hurts a member of your family, you stand up for them the only way you know-how - especially when it comes to the matriarch of your family, who in this case is Beyoncé. Before the days of Social media, we might have been left wondering who "Becky" was for weeks—relying on magazine prints and celebrity news reports to give us insight that we otherwise might have never known or taken us months to string together pieces of speculated information. The illustrious effects of social media grant us this quickly released unlimited access to like-minded people and information about our favorite celebrity that fandoms like *Beatlemaniacs (The Beatles)* didn't quite have. In real-time, as *Lemonade* aired, fans were able to live-tweet their thoughts and emotions about the film and engage with other members of the BeyHive halfway across the world, which is why it did not take long

"Becky's" identity to be revealed, granting users the ability to a swift decision on social media to ambush Rachel. To this day, it was never actually confirmed if Rachel Roy was indeed Becky with the good hair.

Who Run the World? BeyHive!

In a more recent story of when the BeyHive attacks, on June 21st, 90's rapper Trick Daddy made the untimely mistake of dissing Beyoncé on *Clubhouse*. *Clubhouse*, a newly created voice chat room app that prides itself on the invite-only exclusivity aspect, allows users to listen in to conversations, interviews, and discussions about various topics similar to the nature of a podcast. (Danna, 2021) In the leaked audio recording, he reportedly said, "Beyoncé ain't trying to give back to music, and Beyoncé don't write music." (Danna, 2021) Trick Daddy went on to proclaim that Beyoncé could not sing and suggested that Jay-Z wouldn't have succeeded if New York rapper Biggie who passed away in 1997, was still alive. It didn't take long for the BeyHive to assemble into formation in Queen Bey's honor. Several users made ill-mannered tweets towards Trick Daddy, poking fun at the state of his rapping career and his physical image. One person tweeted, "Trick Daddy ain't had a hit since 2004 and he got the nerve to talk about Beyoncé & JAY-Z. Man if you don't sit your faceless behind down somewhere bro." Another member of the BeyHive tweeted, "I forgot Trick Daddy even existed but did somebody leave him in the microwave too long or sum cause ikyfl." (I know you fucking lying) (Eustace, 2021), but when the BeyHive is out for the kill, they leave no crumbs. Once fans decided mean tweets weren't enough to teach Trick Daddy a lesson, they targeted his well-known Miami-based restaurant *Sunday's Eatery*. In a somewhat successful attempt to ruin the establishment's reputation, the BeyHive left a slew of fake, poorly rated Yelp reviews, all accompanied by the significant

mark of the BeyHive bringing the rating down from a 4.5 to a 2.6. While most of the reviews have not yet been taken down, they were flagged for suspicious activity. (Danna, 2021)

They'll never take my power

Moments like this highlight how much the expectations of fan culture have changed over the years. In *The Social Media Handbook*, Francesca Coppa expresses the considerable pop culture shift with the internet emergence of the '90s. Fans have always obsessively collected and shared information, but fandom infrastructure could also develop significantly as the internet evolved. Mailing lists, forums, discussion boards, and fan web pages had become the expected notions of fan interaction for some time. Over the years, the fan collaboration and interaction transferred from simple desktop websites you might have only had access to at the school library to apps right in your pocket. Buying a ticket to a concert, being first in line to see their new movie, or even rushing to the store to purchase their front cover magazine spread is no longer the sole propriety of being a fan. You are expected to follow fan pages on *Instagram* and engage in a serious conversation in the comments and on *Twitter*. If someone speaks ill of that person, it's your responsibility as a member of that fandom to defend them in ways that they can't. And in some cases, bullying is even framed as an appropriate response, especially within the BeyHive.

Let me Upgrade You

An important note regarding both BeyHive attacks is that Beyoncé never once prompted her fans to take any actions towards her "haters" or made any comments afterward, neither in support nor opposition of the occurrences. Much like a parasocial relationship in which one party exerts emotional energy and interest. In contrast, the other party is relatively unaware of the other's existence; many fans feel connected with their

favorite celebrity, prompting them to behave so strongly. Additionally, having 24-hour media access has only increased the strength of the parasocial relationship, deepening the feeling of intimacy (psychologist.org, n.d.), and Beyoncé's fans are no exception. Although Bey's Golden rules denote, in other words, that they should defend themselves to the death, in 2019, Bey stated through her publicist asking them to "move with love," (Music Hub, 2012), eluding to her potential dislike of these aggressive actions towards others. Another crucial observation: Beyoncé isn't an avid social media user. Compared to other celebrities like former Disney Channel pop star Miley Cyrus, whose *Instagram* posts and tweets I get notifications for almost three or four times a day, Beyoncé does not seem to bless our timeline that often. With an ostensibly carefully crafted *Instagram* page filled with perfectly angled pictures that seem to be professionally taken and posts averaging out about once or twice a week and the lack of an active *Twitter* account, it is unclear how much of her social media is done herself. While it is not uncommon for many celebrities to have a social media team that takes complete control of what and when they post, especially those of high caliber as Beyoncé, it prompts the question - If social media is meant to be a way to connect with fans and give them a small window into everyday life, does it have the same effect if they aren't even posting themselves?

Find your way back

While fans have always used social media since its conception to interact and engage with other like-minded individuals, social media also threatens fan culture by commercializing its very existence by seeing fans as nothing more than users. (Coppa, 2014) Social media has given celebrities a platform to share their lives with us, which fans hold in high regard. Still, while they utilize that space to promote intimacy, it has also

become another form of commercialization. I argue that without social media strengthening interconnected relationships between the fans and the famous, celebrity culture and fandom culture would cease to exist as we know it. Celebrity culture acknowledges our society's interest in a famous person's life and their capabilities to capitalize on it. (Ferudi,2010) In the same breath, I also admit that while social media does well to put celebrities in a relatable light, it is becoming harder to tell how much of a celebrities' social media is genuine. Tweeting at celebrities to get a response used to be something that fans would work towards consistently. Tagging famous people in content and directly messaging them hoping to get a coveted "follow back" or even a simple "like" acknowledging your existence was known to evoke excitement. Hard-core fans would take up their sacred biography space otherwise used to describe themselves, to state if a celebrity followed them or even liked a tweet. While that motivation hasn't disappeared entirely from the fandom universe, it has become more apparent that some of these interactions could be fake and done by someone on their team, opening the conversation towards the concept of authenticity labor. Authenticity as we know it is commonly used to evaluate the genuineness and originality of objects or individuals. The practice of calculated authenticity labor refers to the act whereby one tries to encapsulate honesty without pretense through social media. In this instance, encapsulation is known as performance. The performance consists of attempting to portray oneself genuinely and naturally through pictures, videos, and interactions on social media to exploit audiences' for product placement. Audiences ' trust is formed by selectively sharing personal matters and skillfully crafting engagement, which can later be transformed into economic capital gain. (Maares et al., 2021b) Calculated celebrity/fan interactions alongside decreasing

authenticity factors are the bane of the declining genuineness that social media sought out to give us in the first place. Contemporary celebrity culture succeeds in transforming the powerful and the well-known into intimate and familiar figures. (Furedi, 2010) But when celebrities started partaking in authenticity labor, that concept slowly seems to be fading away.

Wake up, Flawless

If we look at Beyoncé's *Instagram* page, we can see a few possible examples of calculated authenticity. As I scroll through her page, a few things catch my eye, firstly, the number of people she follows. With a following of over 194 million followers and over a thousand posts, Queen Bey exudes her excellency aptly by keeping her following count at precisely zero. Secondly, as I continue to make my way down her page, I notice that she has little to no selfies or selfie-like videos not taken professionally by someone else. Thirdly, several of her posts are professionally edited, like a magazine spread; some of her pictures include duplicates of herself in different poses with intricate backgrounds and shapes. Specifically, on June 5th and June 6th of 2021, there were three posts of Bey wearing a leather strapless mini dress, with black pointed-toe heels and a bedazzled black and silver sweater. She also dons a pair of black bedazzled sunglasses to match and a high diamond necklace paired with her glistening brown skin and signature blonde hair. With a golden backdrop in a few pictures and her model-like poses and windswept hair, we catch a glimpse of Jay Z in one of the nineteen perfectly crafted pictures over the two days. In an attempt to perhaps seem fun and laid back, one of the pictures that you would have to swipe once over to catch, Bey gives us a duck face in one frame and a fresh fruit platter in another while also reminding us of her celebrity status we see her feet up courtside at a

basketball game in another. We can infer that some of the images of that quality were not taken and edited only fifteen minutes before being posted, and her captions are no exception to that scrutiny as well. Thus, emphasizing my speculation that her social media might not be a genuine, laid back, honest Beyoncé experience. One of the critical points to be made about authenticity labor is the inability to tell the difference. If the person performing is doing a good enough job, we might not decipher the truth especially given our access to technology. In analyzing Beyoncé's page and our preexisting knowledge and judgment of her character, we can infer she is a hardworking perfectionist. In her *Netflix* documentary *Homecoming 2019*, we see a vulnerable side of Beyoncé leading up to her Coachella performance. In the Documentary, she expresses how hard she works and how much she pushes herself. She doesn't settle for less on stage, so why would her social media be any different. But with little to no genuine fan interaction and her carefully crafted captions (if she bothers to put one at all) only to remind us when the next highly anticipated \$150 apiece Ivy Park release is, our reigning Queen falls victim to providing us with the most prized example of the very threat that social media poses to fandom and celebrity culture.

Discussion

This analysis of Beyoncé's *Instagram* feed and the BeyHive considers that the current cultural understanding of what it means to be a celebrity fan is in the process of change. Increased interconnectivity through social media demands that we consider fandom and fan culture in new terms and with changing expectations.

The complex space parasocial celebrity relationships animate a need for reassessment of fandom culture. Historically, scholars have engaged in an insightful discussion about the sense of family fandom culture can create within designated fanbases. I argue that social media platforms allow for much more interconnectivity for fan bases. Instead of hoping to meet someone who shares that mutual interest with you at a midnight screening or a CD signing, the opportunity to connect with mutuals is highly accessible. The same opportunity to communicate with naysayers is also infinite, unknowingly setting a precedent when contact with "haters" has been had. It has always been expected of a person who is a fan of anyone to defend that celebrity or artist's honor, not because you felt as though it was an obligation, but because you wanted to. The love for Bey was so strong that if anyone dare spoke out against her, you would feel the need to put them in their place. Now, defending that honor has stretched to the online world, not just blogs or forums but *Twitter* and *Instagram*, sometimes *Facebook*, maybe even *Reddit*, and now *Tik Tok*. Being a part of a fandom means, in some cases, bullying others and embarrassing them, and if they deactivate their account or make it private, it denotes a job well done. We see these actions taken with the BeyHive against Rachel Roy and Trick Daddy, showcasing how strong and relentless they can be.

Evoking this type of dedication from fans is ultimately the goal for most celebrities' in their careers. While they might not exactly want their fans to go so far as to hurt others' feelings, having that kind of support is the backbone of one's career. This is why it is crucial in this day and age for celebrities to carry on the legacy of celebrity culture and engage with their fans - especially on social media. Briana Wiest of *Teen Vogue 2017*, giving us a psychological look at the world of fandoms, reminds us, "That being part of a fandom is not something to underestimate. In numbers, there is power, and in community, there is strength." and the BeyHive is a clear example of what that strength can embody. If people can go to the ends of the earth to support your career, that might be worthy of looking into further.

While celebrity culture based its entire existence on making celebs appear to be cooler than us, our culture today promotes them as both unique and utterly dull at the same time. (Ferudi, 2010) Social media has granted us the opportunity to see famous people as something other than just celebrities, which we, the people, have liked. Breaking down that barrier only opened the door for the fandoms to become even stronger and feel more connected to one another and the celebrity. But lately, those interactions we used to yearn for are not what they once were in 2011.

The increased use of the authenticity labor performance and the augmentation of our perception only enables the discourse that while pop culture continues to grow and celebrity culture expands, allowing stars to take part in that growing "stage," perhaps fans are being reduced to nothing more than just a dollar sign. Not to insinuate that fans were ever seen as nothing more than a cash cow at some point in the life span of pop culture and celebrity culture. Still, it has become more evident that some continue to use social media

to sell their products without doing any work. Instead, we do the work for them. The allowance to easily share these perfect pictures between users and engage in excitement and conversation makes it easier for them to post and carry on with their lives. Books, movies, music, and art, all existing under the umbrella of pop culture, always had a focal point of money in the end, which has never changed. But when social media introduced us to the concept of becoming more familiarized with other mutuals and the celebrity as a person rather than a distant entity that we pour our money into, it seemed to change the rhetoric around fan culture. It appears that the future of fandom we assumed we were moving towards might become a staple for regression.

Not every celebrity is on the managed media warpath. As noted, some stars like Miley Cyrus have maintained a healthy balance of what they share and divulge about their personal lives while keeping some aspects private. So while I did not shed much light on those who seemed to be upkeeping their genuine social media persona, it is vital to acknowledge their existence and natural care for fan interaction and authenticity or at least appear to be. Another important note to be made, there are some celebrities, primarily the big-name veterans of celebrity culture like Angelina Jolie or Leonardo DiCaprio, who either have social media and post almost nothing at all or don't even have an *Instagram* account to start, may not exactly fall under the same level of scrutiny. Being some of the original markers of celebrity culture and gossip, the renewed interest in their lives and being in the public eye never truly subsided. Their veteran discount was applied. The next step to furthering the discourse between celebrity and pop cultures and its relationship to fandom culture and authenticity factors could be looking into veteran celebrities and their fandoms. How have they continued to secure their fanbase despite being very inactive on any

platform, or are they losing them? And what does that say about us as a mediated society and mediated pop culture?

The study of pop culture is significant because it has the persuasive power to shape our beliefs and behaviors with lasting implications. (Sellnow, 2017) and so is the study of mediated pop culture and its impactful place in our society. Understanding how we as consumers of media are being taken advantage of by celebrities can be significant.

Recognizing the signs of performed authenticity labor as it is demonstrated to us can allow us to no longer fall victim to their shallow social media engagements and subliminal marketing tactics. With social media being both a positive and negative force in fandom and celebrity culture, studying the effects of natural and calculated celebrity and fan engagement does well to help cut back on the potential threat it currently poses on the existence of both subcultures.

The analysis of the BeyHive provided a backbone for the potential breakdown of other fandoms alike. It can open a window into the strength that fandoms can and will continue to amass as long as social media allows for more increased interconnection. Celebrity markets know the power of a fandom and attempt to fabricate their social media presence to elevate themselves and their careers. Even with the lens of a parasocial relationship, celebrities should be held accountable for their own social media and should want to engage with their fans organically to some degree. By looking at the cycling effects mediated pop culture and celebrity and fandom culture have on each other, we have seen how celebrities shape our behaviors as we, in turn, shape theirs.

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