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Public private tragedy: Stigma, victimisation and community identity

Introduction

Although historically ignored, crime victims are now firmly on the map. For politicians, the media and the public at large, criminal injury and loss are a source of constant concern and anxiety. Within criminal justice and public policy there has been a discernible shift from the individual, to claims of victim status based on experiences of collective identity, to a cultural context of the 'universal victim', where we can ask 'are we all victims now?' (Mythen, 2007: 464). Both criminological and victimological literature has addressed much of this concern in recent years (Chermak, 1995; Furedi, 2006; Green, 2008; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). Yet Spalek (2006) has argued that a deeper consideration around the diversity of the crime experience may result in a more nuanced understanding of indirect victimisation; the impact on a wider audience as a result of their shared 'subject position' (p.88). With this in mind, this article examines what has not yet been investigated, how communities experience high profile crimes and the effects of the media attention that inevitably follows.

Utilising events that took place at Dunblane Primary School, Scotland on 13 March 1996 as a case study of a serious, high profile and highly mediated crime event, this article uniquely explores the construction and representation of a collective sense of identity, notions of victimhood and the processes by which some in the community come to acquire a collective stigma and sense of spoiled identity. Drawing on 18 qualitative interviews with members of the wider community of Dunblane, we explore identity and victimhood in the wake of a serious and high profile crime. In doing so this article offers a novel sociological account of how the media represent people and places and what it means to accept or resist a 'spoiled identity'. It considers the processes of achieving or acquiring victim identity or status, the management or otherwise of stigma and the consequences of the medias' role in constructing a private tragedy for public consumption.

This article situates within a victimological position that embraces the turn to the 'cultural' (Ferrell at al, 2008; McGarry and Walklate, 2015; Mythen, 2007; Valier, 2004). More explicitly it lies where cultural victimology foregrounds our exposure to suffering, how it is presented to us and how we make sense of it (McGarry and

1

Walklate, 2015). Specifically, we not only recognise the public nature of emotional responses provoked by criminal victimisation and harm, but also highlight the wider dissemination of them, in this case via the media. We know the broader ramifications, the legacy and other embedded experiences of high profile traumatic events can extend way beyond those most directly involved and their families, such events can also 'haunt witnesses who are less frequently heard' (Walklate et al., 2014: 267). Through original empirical research this article gives voice to the lived realities of such individuals and 'collectivities' (McGarry and Walklate, 2015) and in doing so contests the boundaries of victimhood, in order to understand the significance of victim identity and the impact that a high profile crime and subsequent societal reaction can have on wider members of a community.

As has been expressed recently by David Wilson and colleagues, very little is known academically about the serious crime event in Dunblane, amounting to what can be described as a 'criminological silence' (Wilson et al., 2016: 2). Some academic literature has been published regarding Dunblane and gun control (Squires, 2000) and some more exists with regard to how the murders were covered in the print and broadcast media (see Jemphrey and Berrington, 2000; Smith and Higgins, 2012). Also available are more intimate accounts of the events, such as *Dunblane Never Forget* (2000), an emotional and moving account of Mick North, father of one of the primary school victims, Sophie Lockwood North. However, even less attention has been paid to the significance of these events, on those 'other', indirect witnesses, in the wider community of Dunblane.

From a cultural victimological perspective and utilising the sociological framework of Goffman, this article addresses this gap, by exploring how some in the community of Dunblane lived through the tragic events at the time and how they coped with the attention of the world's media afterwards. After first giving a vignette of the events that took place in Dunblane on 13 March 1996, this article will then set out the theoretical framework and analytic approach which informs it.

Vignette

Dunblane is a small cathedral city in Perthshire, Scotland, with a population of almost 9000 people (Scotland Census, 2017). On the morning of 13 March 1996, a local man Thomas Hamilton drove the short six-mile journey to Dunblane from his home in Stirling. He arrived at Dunblane Primary School just before 9.30am.

Primary 1/13 (a class of 5 and 6 year olds) had changed for their gym lesson and along with their teacher Gwen Mayor; the class of 28 pupils had made their way to the gymnasium for their lesson (Cullen, 1996). Thomas Hamilton entered the gym pointing a loaded handgun. He fired indiscriminately and in rapid succession. Mrs Harrild (the P.E. teacher in attendance) was hit several times and stumbled into the open-plan store area that adjoined the gym, followed by a number of the children. Mrs Mayor was shot several times and died instantly. Mrs Blake (a teaching assistant in attendance) was then shot but also managed to reach the store, ushering some children in ahead of her. After firing further random shots at the remaining children, Hamilton then left the gymnasium. Once outside he began shooting into a mobile classroom. The teacher realising something was wrong, had told the children to hide under the tables. Hamilton also fired at a group of children walking in a corridor, injuring another teacher (Ibid.) Hamilton then returned to the gym where he fired shots at the group of children who had either been disabled by the initial firing or who had been thrown to the floor. He fired at them at point-blank range. He then took out another gun and turned it on himself. He died instantly. Thomas Hamilton killed 16 children, one teacher and wounded all but two people in Primary 1/13. 15 children died at the scene along with their class teacher. A further 11 children and three adults were rushed to hospital, with one of these children pronounced dead on arrival (Cullen, 1996).

Within hours of the incident at the school (minutes in the case of some local media), large numbers of the print and television media - local, national and (later) international crews and reporters - converged on the town. The *Daily Mirror* for example, sent 12 journalists to Dunblane within hours of the tragedy (although through co-operation with its Glasgow based sister paper, the *Daily Record*, it drew on more than 30 overall). By the end of the day driven by the requirements of a 24-hour rolling news station, *Sky News* had five reporters and five camera crews present in Dunblane (Carter, 1996). In the days following the tragedy Dunblane and its' people were 'overwhelmed' by up to 600 journalists and associated media workers (BEIPI, 1996: 26), who had come to cover the events at the school and their aftermath.

Theoretical context and analytical approach

Exploring the concept of victim identity

The key and often taken for granted characteristic associated with being a victim may be described as one who has suffered as a result of an imbalance of power relations, willingly or otherwise (McGarry and Walklate,

2015). This is central to how we understand who is given and who is not given the label of victim and as a consequence who acquires, or not, the status of victim. In a similar fashion when Nils Christie (1986) articulated the characteristics underpinning the 'ideal victim', he was attempting to capture an appreciation of process. Acquiring the victim label is a process and to attain victim status, others must acknowledge an individual's victimisation and as such victimhood is highly contested. Centring on the importance of process, Strobl (2010: 6) suggests four analytical possibilities in the construction of victimhood: the actual victim (considered a victim by themselves and others), the non victim (not recognised by themselves or others), the rejected victim (regarded as a victim by themselves but not others) and the designated victim (considered a victim by others but not themselves). As well as characteristics of power, suffering and choice (as discussed further by McGarry and Walklate 2015) this categorisation by Strobl highlights the importance of the process of recognition, how victim identity happens and how it is understood. Contemporarily, the role of the media is acutely relevant to understanding the processes and conditions for successful acquisition and recognition of the victim status for certain types of crime. There is undoubtedly a complex process of victim acknowledgement as indicated by Strobl (2010), but this also indicates a potential role for the cultural, as witnessed by Mythen, '…acquiring the status of victim involves being party to a range of interactions and processes, including identification, labelling and recognition' (2007: 466).

Such concepts are part of a wider notion of suffering and blamelessness, from which Carrabine et al. (2004) came to identify a 'hierarchy of victimisation'. At the bottom of this hierarchy are those undeserving groups or categories of people who are presumed to have exposed themselves to victimisation. These might be the 'rejected victim' according to Strobl (2010) for whom the recognised status and label of victim becomes very difficult to acquire. Those at the top of the hierarchy (the actual or designated victim) are those who have been subjected to processes not of their choosing; they are innocent, legitimate and deserving.

Further dimensions to our understanding of who is to be considered a victim occur at the definitional level. Whilst primary victimisation refers to the direct impact that a crime has on a victim (Davies, 2011, Walklate, 2017), indirect victimisation draws attention to the experiences of others, for example those who know the victim, witnesses to the victimisation or those involved in a wider sphere who may be unable to make sense of what has happened, all of which can manifest in many different and context dependant ways. Spalek (2006)

4

argues that thinking more deeply about the diversity of the crime experience might result in a more subtle understanding of indirect victimisation. Introducing the notion of 'spirit injury', Spalek suggests that some victimising experiences have a detrimental effect on an 'individuals self-identity and their dignity' (p.88) and that this is also likely to impact a wider audience who may be indirectly victimised as a result of their shared and collective situation. Although Spalek's contribution here was designed to appreciate cultural and ethnic difference, the idea of a collective indirect victimisation also has resonance for others with shared experiences of crime; demonstrated here by the wider impact of the activities of Thomas Hamilton in 1996 and the consequences of such for many in the local community.

Victim identity and stigma

Individuals and communities (and collectivities as defined by McGarry and Walklate, 2015) can be enhanced but also diminished as a result of indirect victimisation. It is here that stigma becomes evident in our discussions of the process and acquisition of a victim identity. It is widely accepted that the notion of stigmatization, as detailed in Goffman's (1963) classic study (to which all later studies of stigma refer), goes some way to explaining why some (perceived) deviants are subjected to marginalisation and social exclusion and are the recipients of hostile reporting and censure by the media. By refracting this notion this article examines the influence of media constructions and representations of indirect victims and their subsequent stigmatization by association with locations where serious and high profile crimes have taken place.

Stigma is described by Goffman as 'the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance' (1963: 9). Originally the term stigma was used as a reference to the visual signifiers of the moral status of the bearer; a cut or burn to the body often indicated a criminal, slave or traitor; a blemished person who should be avoided. However, over time the term stigma has more often been used in relation to the disgrace itself, rather than the bodily evidence of physical disorder and shifts have occurred and continue to occur in the kinds of disgrace that arouse concern (Goffman, 1963). Stigma is therefore the social consequence of the negative attributions, which are attached to a person based upon a stereotype (Pilgrim, 2011: 154). In order to examine what relevance stigma may have on the examination of wider indirect victims' and their representations in the media, is it helpful to examine the structural preconditions of stigma as indicated by Goffman (1963). Routines of social intercourse allow that for any social setting one has a preconceived idea,

both of the type of person they would expect to encounter in that setting and in the range of attributes they naturally expect that person to possess. Goffman describes this as a person's 'virtual social identity' (1963: 12), that which we ordinarily expect them to be. However, this person has an 'actual social identity' and if in reality he/she is in possession of a less desirable attribute than one expects, this person is then reduced in our minds and in such a way becomes tainted or spoiled. Such an attribute is a stigma; a special discrepancy that may exist between one's virtual and actual social identity. It is argued that the stigma assumes more importance than other characteristics and becomes the defining attribute of a person; as Goffman notes 'we tend to impute a wider range of imperfections on the basis of the original one' (1963: 15). Thus, the label of the stigma becomes the defining or 'master status'.

Goffman notes, that one who has been stigmatized will often feel unsure of how the rest of 'normal' society will identify and receive him [sic] (1963: 24). This feeling of stigma, represented and disseminated via the media in the case of high profile crimes, may be as a result of the knowledge that the community cannot reverse or fix that collective spoiled identity in the eyes of the rest of the world; 'thus in the stigmatized arises the sense of not knowing what others […] are 'really' thinking about him' (1963: 25). Context is important when considering what Goffman terms the 'usual scheme of interpretation for [actions and] everyday events' (1963: 26). Within this any minor accomplishments by the stigmatized become remarkable and noteworthy because of their circumstance, thus further enhancing their difference and stigma. Conversely minor failings and indiscretions of one who is stigmatized may be interpreted as a direct expression of that difference.

Since Goffman's early contribution, the concept of stigma has been applied widely and used in different ways (Kosketa et al., 2016; Link and Phelan, 2013). However, it has been criticized for being imprecisely defined, too focused on the individual rather than on social processes and for neglecting the perspective of the stigmatized person (Link and Phelan, 2001, 2013; Yang et al., 2007). Definitions of stigma have moved only gradually from ones which stress its individual aspects to ones which emphasize its social and moral dimensions (Yang et al., 2007), points to which this article now turns.

'High profile crimes': victims and the media

Media representations of crime, deviance and control serve as one of the primary sites of social inclusion and exclusion in late modernity. In recent years the interest in the media's willingness to present the atypical as typical, serves primarily to exacerbate audience anxieties and deflect attention away from more commonplace offences (Jewkes, 2015). The wider impact of the media as a vehicle for constructing and disseminating representations of certain serious and high profile crimes has deep significance for those in the wider communities involved. As Goffman (1963) has indicated, each time someone with a stigma makes a spectacle of themselves (either good or bad), these events can be covered by the media and communicated to wider society. An associated concept here, pertinent to indirect victims is that of 'courtesy stigma'. In such circumstances, those who are related in some way to the stigmatized situation are obliged by association, to share some of the discredit and the stigma although, 'the problems faced by stigmatized persons spread out in waves, but of diminishing intensity' (1963: 43). As others have also found indirect (or co-victims) may experience social stigmatization due to the loss of a loved one or one known to them, as a result of a serious crime (Van Wijk et al., 2017).

As Goffman notes, in general the tendency for a stigma to spread from the individual to their close connections provides an opportunity for those relations to be severed or avoided; thus a disassociation with the stigmatized (1963). Whilst this may be true in some circumstances, within contemporary late modern society this attachment and vicarious association with suffering and harm – with victimhood - *can* be a sought after status and one which can be facilitated via the media (Valier, 2004). Furthermore some of those in wider society, those unconnected with the potentially stigmatizing events seem to actively seek out connections and relationships with those most directly involved and affected, albeit often from a distanciated position (Giddens, 1990). With specific regard to victim identity in such situations, this may amount to an invasion of the private by the public, where more distant others feel compelled and want to identify with a community or event that is removed from them, both symbolically and physically. This point is made clearly by others. As Robert Reiner has recently noted, the harm done by crime is often equated with the suffering and distress of the victim, through portrayals of their 'ordinariness, innocence and vulnerability' (2016: 138). Elsewhere, Paul Rock (2002) argues that the status of victim is one so stigmatized that it may be naturally and understandably avoided. Yet this is not always the case. For many, including those that visit and leave their thoughts and emotions in physical (and virtual) books of condolence, the association with the serious and high profile crime

event, with the direct and indirect victims and the on-going aftermath is precisely what *is* sought; to be involved in some way, to be or feel part of it. In contemporary life, the mass media play a critical role in the transformation of a 'private tragedy' into a 'public suffering'.

As such the media can be seen as a conduit for those attachments and associations where the interest has turned to focusing on the collective outpouring of grief witnessed in relation to certain criminal acts, which has resulted in such cases occupying a particular symbolic place in the popular consciousness. It is suggested that this coming together of individuals to express collective anguish – whether physically or symbolically, is a 'gesture of empathy and solidarity with those who have been victimized' (Jewkes, 2004: 28). However, this may also be seen from a post-modern position as a voyeuristic desire to be part of the 'hyper-real' (Baudrillard, 1981); to take part in a globally mediated event and say 'I was there'. It is clear that the media are significant in creating and representing an identity for localities associated with a high profile crime. In considering the processes by which wider individuals or collectives come to be labelled or self define as victims and the stigma of being associated with a serious and high profile crime event, this article draws both on Goffman's framework on stigma and highlights the significance of the process of acquiring a victim identity as identified by cultural victimology. Preceding those discussions this article sets out the research design and methodology.

Method

Over a 24-month period (January 2006 – December 2008), I made multiple research visits to Dunblane and the surrounding area. During those times I attended significant places of interest such as Thomas Hamilton's house in Kent Road, Stirling. These visits also saw me walking the streets of Dunblane, visiting the churches and memorials to the children and their teacher, eating and drinking in pubs and going to the site of the school and the approaching lane, where so many tributes were laid in the days and weeks following the shootings. Spending time in Dunblane in such a way illustrates a clear ethnographic strand to the research.

Whilst other researchers more recently (Wilson et al., 2016) have reported they were confronted with a silence in the community, my own experience was a very different one. The potential causes of such reticence from the community experienced by other investigators may have been twofold. Firstly, it would seem that

Wilson and colleagues were attempting to talk about the perpetrator, Thomas Hamilton. My own experiences and early conversations with some Dunblane residents, quickly established that almost *as* a collective, participants did not want (consciously or otherwise) to engage in discussions about this man. Feelings of grief, loss and a need to remember the children who were killed and injured, was not to be contaminated by entertaining into simultaneous discussions of Hamilton. Secondly, many had come to foster an insider/outsider attitude (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Ransome, 2013) based on their earlier experiences of the community and locality as a focus of media and public attention. Those, whom I had spoken to both as participants in the research and others more informally, wanted the events to remain a private (community) tragedy. My research did not focus solely on the crime event and even less on the perpetrator, but rather on the participants as individuals and as a collective, with a wider connection to this tragic event; the shared indirect victimisation they suffered and the subsequent impact on their identity(ies). On these topics they felt willing and able to contribute in a way that would not be perceived (by others in the community) as speaking for, or on behalf of the Dunblane community.

During this two-year period I focused on conducting and simultaneously analysing the 18 semi-structured interviews, representing input from a selective range of those living and working in Dunblane. The sampling strategy was open and inclusive, so obtaining a broad perspective on the issues being explored. Using a convenience sample, I relied on self-selecting and 'directed' volunteers from an initial contact made within the community, who effectively acted as a 'champion' for the research (for a full account of the methodology see ██████████ All interviews were conducted face to face and on a one to one basis (although on one occasion two participants; a husband and wife, preferred to be interviewed together). There are of course a number of limitations associated with the approach taken here. The empirical research was conducted almost ten years after the serious crime event had taken place. It is inevitable that during this time some residents may have moved away (possibly as a result of the shootings). Other residents may not have been aware of the study and others still will have decided not to engage, as is the case in such situations, those available and willing to partake were a selective sample of the Dunblane population.

For many of those that did take part in the research, the subject was inevitably of a sensitive and emotional nature and as such mechanisms were put in place to mitigate any adverse impact this may have had. After the

interviews had taken place, participants were provided with the contact details of sources of support if required. All interviews were digitally recorded. The interviews lasted between sixty and ninety minutes on average, amounting to around 28 hours of transcribed research data in total. The transcription procedure began early in the data collection process and was subsequently organised and coded to produce categories in line with areas of thematic interest. Participant names and identifying details were anonymized. The interviews were analyzed in light of the aims of the research study and extant literature relevant to the field. This article will now go on to explore these themes and processes.

The process of victim identity and stigmatisation

Stigma: the legacy of 'tragic towns'

Inscribed with issues of victim identity and stigma is how the crime itself and the community in which it happened are remembered by the rest of the world. The media play an important part in creating/communicating an identity for a place such as Dunblane, which previously may have constituted a plurality of communities or possessed multiple identities. Before the notorious crime took place, Dunblane had many different and competing associations. However, since the time of the crime event and via the media, it has become synonymous with, and a coded reference for, the serious crime event that took place there. This stigmatised construction involves the use of particular representational and rhetorical frameworks by the media, drawing on a tragic crime event to evoke images with which to brand the next event or current crisis (Innes, 2004). This is demonstrated in the following newspaper headlines from The *Guardian* in the days after the murders:

> Dunblane massacre: Slaughters: Dunblane joins roll of Carnage: Sixteen deaths at Hungerford head catalogue of other killings (14 March, 1996)

> Targets of Fear: Hungerford was bad; Dunblane was even worse (19 March, 1996)

In such simple ways the media are a strong influence in the way the crime event and the community are remembered, including tarnishing the place name and forging links with other 'tragic towns'. However, the identification of Dunblane as a 'tragic town' was not only apparent in the media. Some research participants

frequently referred to other communities who had suffered tragedies themselves in the past, but also and more specifically to those who had undergone specific and intense media scrutiny and as such were deemed synonymous with their corresponding crime or tragedy, i.e. those that were stigmatised. Often help and advice from such places and communities was offered and taken by community leaders and others in Dunblane:

> We consciously took a decision for the first year that we would not officially acknowledge the first year anniversary. We were actually advised that by the people of Lockerbie. They had got locked into an annual commemoration and didn't know how to get out of it.

> (Church leader 2, Dunblane)

Places where serious and high profile crime events have occurred may become 'place-laden'; the serious crime event often becomes universally known by the name of the physical locality where it happened. In the case of Dunblane it is now synonymous with the fatal shootings at Dunblane Primary School on 13 March 1996. Like 'Hungerford',[1] 'Lockerbie'[2] and 'Aberfan'[3] before it in the UK, these localities and residents are labelled, identified and can be stigmatized by the crime event that took place there.

The above response was typical of many on this issue; adding Dunblane to the list of 'tragic towns' may seal the fate of those living and connected to the community for many years to come. The ramifications of this stigma by association (Goffman, 1963) could be identified some years later with the emergence on the world tennis stage of Andy Murray (who is from Dunblane and was present at Dunblane Primary School at the time of the attack). During a television interview in 2013, Murray spoke emotionally and for the first time about the trauma and difficulty of being in the public eye and associated with Dunblane and the crime events so directly. Murray revealed that it is only in later years that he has been able to position that association in a more positive way and through the recognition of his sporting achievements he has been able to modify or transform the negative connection for Dunblane that still existed in the minds of many people (Andy Murray: The Man Behind the Racquet, 2013).

It is in such ways, the media stigmatise (and at times sanctify) those victims deemed particularly vulnerable or tragic, thereby encouraging the 'ritualisation and commodification of grief, where grief becomes something to

be conspicuously consumed and then discarded' (Greer, 2004: 116). It is this power of the media to symbolise grief and define the (blurring) boundary between the private and the public to which this article now turns.

Dunblane: private tragedy to public grief

A further significant theme illuminated by conversations with Dunblane participants, was the concept of physical place as the focus for widespread national and international grief. Many talked of how they understood the feeling of those from within their own community, of needing to 'do something' in the wake of the crime events; it was after all 'their' tragedy. What they often found more difficult to understand was the grief felt by wider and unconnected others; those not personally or geographically involved in the crime event at all. For some of these 'others', it may seem to be a straightforward and uncomplicated expression of sympathy; participating in the grief and suffering of a (far removed) tragic event, is one way of outwardly expressing the depth of feeling one has. In addition it is argued by some that the fact that this empathy is expressed towards strangers only serves to amplify that expression of feeling further (Greer, 2004). However, for those from within the community affected, it was much more complicated.

Four months after the shootings in Dunblane, a Derby based tour company announced plans to run a sightseeing trip to the primary school in Dunblane: 'Fury at idea of coach tour for Ghouls' (headline: *Guardian,* 12 July 1996). As well as the site of Dunblane Primary School, potential attractions were to include the Gloucester home of convicted murderers Fred and Rosemary West[4] and the street in Hungerford, Berkshire where Michael Ryan shot and killed 16 people in 1987. On the idea of becoming a kind of 'Disneyland', many in the community of Dunblane were united in their condemnation of the tours. In reply, a spokesman for the tour company said:

> '…it is not to satisfy people's gratuitous, morbid curiosity, but more along the lines of helping them come to terms with what has happened by actually being there' (*Guardian,* 12 July 1996).

Yet as one participant illustrates in the quote below, knowing others from afar are quite so emotionally engaged and that the physical community of Dunblane is a focus and centre for an outpouring of expressive empathy and grief does not always have the expected or desired effect:

> It's understandable but very difficult to deal with practically…the amount of letters and toys we received for the children was overwhelming, this was very difficult to deal with on a community level.
>
> (Church leader 1, Dunblane)

For others still, the impact on their community as the physical point of reference and focus for this wider collective sense of victimhood and grief was even more strenuous and problematic. In addition, the extent and nature of the media coverage contributed to and enhanced those sentiments:

> We had difficulty dealing with all that because it was raw emotion. All those tributes…we watched and listened to the international media coverage and I think it wrecked some of us. Tributes…they are a visible, tangible expression of emotion, but to be the recipients of that emotion has a tremendous effect on the community.
>
> (Community member 10, Dunblane)

Whilst some participants were troubled to see their community as a focus for that wider expression of grief and suffering, others in Dunblane seemed to feel differently regarding the impact of the public attention received. For some of these participants the outcome of the extensive media coverage affected them in different ways that on first analysis seemed to be more positive. However, this more constructive observation of the impact of the media coverage was quickly tempered by the effects of the inevitable end to the coverage of Dunblane and of the crime that had taken place there. As the following quote reveals:

> There was the feeling that we had the goodwill of the rest of the world and people really felt buoyed by that I think. But the community definitely felt isolated after the event had dropped out of the media – we needed a national support group to help deal with the wider community feelings and emotions. This did not just happen to those directly involved.
>
> (Community member 7, Dunblane)

This highlights two interesting elements. Firstly, the media's coverage of events and their physical presence in the community seemed to have a positive impact on some. What is more often referred to as the 'intrusive' nature of the media was seen as constructive and of benefit to some participants. The media are a powerful tool and their potential for good can often be understated. In all its various forms and platforms, the mass media reaches a vast audience on a daily basis and is the site of exchange for news, messages and important information. For some victims of crime, both direct and indirect, this can aid recovery on an individual or collective level by allowing them to utilise the media. Some who have been victims (and witnesses) may derive comfort from the media interest in them and for some, talking to the media can help them to feel that they are doing something to help with the profile or the investigation of a crime (Mulley, 2001). However, the second observation contained in the quote above alludes to the crime 'happening' to the physical community as a recognised body. This expression also indicates a notion of ownership over the crime event and the subsequent emotions that are evoked when that ownership is called into question. In fact several of the Dunblane residents told of similar feelings as the quote below illustrates:

> We did receive thousands of letters from around the world, particularly people sending money…I think it makes people feel better, like they are doing something. I think there is an element of belonging and wanting to be involved somehow in the tragedy.
>
> (Church leader 1, Dunblane)

In an example that dutifully illustrates the notion of ownership and the blurred boundaries between private tragedy and wider public grief, one participant to this research told the following story:

> I was at one of the funerals and I spoke to an elderly man outside. I had noticed him earlier he had been around the church and in the vicinity for hours; it seemed he was crying the whole time I spoke to him. He told me that he and his wife used to holiday in Dunblane for many, many years and he thought of it as such a happy place. He could not believe that the shootings had happened here and he said he just had to come back and express his sorrow. But he was so upset, it was really moving.
>
> (Community member 11, Dunblane)

Within this story there is reference to the notion of a stigmatized 'sense of place' in relation to identity. Within the media the issues around the texts and images of landscape, location and place are all part of how we come to acknowledge and frame crime events, where they happen and whom they happen to. The geographical and social placement of a story by the media is framed by the descriptions and visuals used to conjure up ideas about the location, cultures and peoples where the crime event occurred (Kitzinger, 2004). Descriptions and images of place are used to provide context for the audience. These images of place, as well as introducing atmosphere can also be used to lend authority to media reports, inviting the audience to 'be there' and to 'see with their own eyes'. However, these representations or descriptions of place are more than simple physical geography, they evoke ideas and values about the social context of events and as Goffman (1959/1990: 11) suggests, convey ideas about 'the natives'. As such the symbolic importance of this on the wider audience should not be underestimated. Consider the following quote:

> It seemed like the world was grieving, although I try not to overstate that, but what I saw was an outpouring of grief from all over the world.
>
> (Police Officer 1, Dunblane)

The media and the way the story is narrated by text and image is significant when considering victimhood and identity as an (inter)national focus of grief after serious crime events, such as that which occurred in Dunblane. How the wider audience come to regard the community and more specifically the people within it is defined solely in most cases via the media. Intertwined with ideas about Dunblane as a physical space, were ideas about the people who lived there. The stigmatizing effect of this may have meaning for victim identity on an individual and community level. At times this emotional involvement from those in the wider media audience was none the less personal for its vicarious state. The quote below demonstrates this theme in action:

> My sister had five or six phone calls from abroad at the time. She didn't know them at all, they had looked her name up in a telephone book and because they shared the same surname as her…they actually phoned her up and asked 'Are you affected? Do you have any relatives affected?'
>
> (Community member 8, Dunblane)

15

As the discussions above indicate, the community of Dunblane and its' people as a focus for national and international grief was a comfort to some, but for many such vicarious attachment to and involvement from others much further afield from the tragic events that took place within the community, were a source of stigmatisation and negative emotion. The loss of ownership over the tragedy that occurred was a significant theme in the empirical research and foregrounded some further explorations into the theme of agency and the ability of some to otherwise manage or resist the stigmatising label enacted by social reaction, to the serious crime event that occurred in Dunblane.

Managing, resisting and breaking down stigma

It is interesting and important then to question how the media's wide reach, repetition and standardisation of response and narrative around such people, places and crime events is built into how both direct victims and groups of indirect victims come to see themselves, their identity and how they deal with the serious crime event and the subsequent social reaction to it. Notions of labelling and stigma are often associated with media coverage of serious and high profile crimes and there are distinct consequences to that construction and representation of identity. However, it should not be assumed that label of victim in this sense results directly in stigmatisation. Participant data discussed in this article illuminates how some individuals can manage or indeed employ further agency and resist, the stigmatised identity that is thrust upon them.

Previous related work has suggested that negative labels can be managed or resisted (Goffman, 1963; Link et al., 1989, 2002; Thoits, 2011), and there was evidence in the accounts of participants in this research of both stigma management and resistance. One way of managing stigma was avoidance of an identity that could be associated with Dunblane. Many times over, participants claimed to have denounced their belonging or knowledge of the place where they lived. The following quote plainly illustrates this position:

> When I go on holiday now I do not say I am from Dunblane, I say Stirling now to avoid being interrogated. Saying you are from Dunblane is a conversation stopper.
>
> (Community member 12, Dunblane)

16

Many participants indicated that for some the stigma of association with the name Dunblane where the crime occurred was centred on emotions such as embarrassment, self-consciousness or fear for future generations of residents in the town. Since stigma is often seen as a permanent predicament or dilemma the consequences of which are hard to eliminate (Link and Phelan, 2001), participants worried about the long-term implications for their individual and community identity in this regard. However there were others who seemed to have ulterior motives for not wanting the stigma of association, as implied by the following quote:

> Some people do not want the name of Dunblane associated with this. Some of that is selfish; it's down to property prices. Some people just want it to go away but that's never going to happen.
>
> (Police Officer 1, Dunblane)

For other victims in the community this notion of stigma by association of name or place was conversely seen as a positive referent and as a potential catalyst and reinforcement for resistance and change. Therefore for some the stigma associated with the murders as presented and reinforced by the media, was encouragement for a wider audience not to forget what had happened. However it should be noted that this was primarily the case for those most directly and closely affected by the crime event itself:

> It doesn't feel tainted (Dunblane). It will always be place-laden but that can be a good thing, people will not forget what happened here and how it happened.
>
> (Father of victim 1, Dunblane)

This quote highlights the tension apparent within the community between forgetting and remembering, where 'remembering is to honour the truth' (North, 2000: 298). Whilst there were some in the community encouraging the media and the world at large to look forward and move on from the tragic events at Dunblane, for those most closely associated with events, not forgetting what had happened in their community and constructing patterns for prevention and change in the future was uppermost in their minds. Such strategies continue as a form of resistance to the stigma associated with the crime events that have taken place in the town. Thoits (2011, summarized by Link and Phelan, 2013) identifies a number of forms of resistance in such situations that may include behaving in ways that contradict the stereotype, attempting to

change the attitudes or behaviours of others and engaging in advocacy and activism. There was certainly some evidence of this in community members challenging the media to be responsible and also activism seen in the formation of the Gun Control Network.[5] However, from whatever concern these feelings of stigmatisation arise, crucially it is the media's pivotal role in late modern society, which turns this essentially private matter into a public one. This is the impact of collective indirect victimisation. The medias construction and use of rhetorical frameworks (Innes, 2004) in the representation of the events that took place in Dunblane, led to the identification and public labelling of the community as an collective. The stigmatisation of Dunblane and the people within is ultimately reinforced by the societal reaction that follows in the wake and aftermath of such media portrayals. The boundaries between public and private (community) grief are subsequently blurred and in the case of Dunblane, the loss of ownership of that grief for many participants only added insult to harm and injury.

Conclusion and Implications

Utilizing the findings of a two-year qualitative study, this article has looked beneath the surface of the experiences of indirect victims, those who are struggling to come to terms with the most harrowing of events, within the glare of the media spotlight. Through the lens of cultural victimology and the social and meaning making processes associated with 'becoming' or 'being' a victim, this article has considered ways in which some participants experience stigma and a 'spoiled identity' as a result of a serious and high profile crime event. It has examined the media's role as the conduit in reshaping and representing private grief and suffering for its 'public and didactic salience' (McEvoy and Jamieson, 2007: 425). In doing so, this article also reflects on the management of, or resistance to, the application of the 'victim' label and the associated stigma that is imbued by extensive media coverage of the serious crime event. As such it offers a unique cultural and sociological account of how communities who have experienced serious and high profile crime make sense of becoming or being a victim, what it means to live with the associated stigma and how the media representation of their victimisation shapes their individual and community identities.

The primary contentions of this article are firstly that in our media saturated, late modern society there is a constructed identity, and in some cases a stigma, associated with particular serious and high profile crimes for those indirect victims in the wider community. For some their individual and collective identities are 'spoiled'.

Following Goffman (1963) the argument presented here is that processes of stigmatisation are specific to the social relations in which they are embedded, the result of which is for many, having to manage and/or sometimes resist the label and associated stigma. This research has demonstrated how acceptance of the stigma is not inevitable. Whilst some adopt the label applied to them, others with a degree of agency may be able to adapt or even resist the stigmatised identity assigned to them. The second contention concerns how the media constructs and reports these events with an 'excavation' of our feelings (Valier, 2004), where we the wider global audience, are positioned and entitled to share in the suffering. Certain serious and high profile crime events are communicated in such in a way that urges us all to empathise unreservedly - to 'see it with our own eyes' - but more than that, to imagine ourselves in the situation; side by side with the victim as the turn to the cultural would suggest (Cole, 2007; Furedi, 1997). The final contention is that a consequence of both of the above; the stigmatisation of a collectivity (McGarry and Walklate, 2015) around a high profile crime and the expression of vicarious victimhood, results in a feeling of loss of ownership for many of those involved; where a private tragedy comes to be owned by the wider public. Private grief and suffering of the victim community is commodified via the media and for public consumption. (Greer, 2004; Valier, 2004). This position cannot be separated from the increasingly visual nature of social life and of the media which constantly places us beside the victim – encouraging us to feel what they feel.

The research that informs this article arises from a wider and a long-standing interest in the role that criminal victimisation plays in shaping self and collective identity. This includes a focus on the social processes associated with 'becoming' a victim. Considering the events at Dunblane with a focus on victim identity through the lens of cultural victimology, this empirical research illuminates and gives voice to a previously unheard collective of victims. This has two significant consequences and related implications.

Firstly, by examining how the media construct identities in the wake of a serious and high profile crime and the associated stigma this can cause, this paper uniquely demonstrates the impact of the media coverage of events in Dunblane, on the wider community involved. In propelling such crime events into the public sphere with sufficient vigour and emotional intensity, the media shape wider public fears of victimisation, often invoking the strongest public reaction locally, nationally and sometimes globally. In doing so it reveals the victimising experience as a process, how it affects individual and collective identities and lives, through to the

impact on the community as a focus for on-going international attention and focus for public grief. These explorations have significant implications for how we engage with and support indirect victims' of similar and future crimes and help to transform our understandings of 'other' victim experiences.

Furthermore, this article contributes to the increasing body of work emerging as cultural victimology, by challenging and contesting the notion of victimhood and who can legitimately be considered a victim whether on an individual or collective basis. The resulting visibility of some types of victims and not others, frequently dictates the ways the state and its services respond positively or not (or not at all) to certain types of harm (Greer, 2017; Mythen 2007). As McGarry and Walklate (2015) have stated this also has important implications for how we do victimological work. High profile crime events of late, such as the Oslo and Utoya terrorist attacks carried out by the Anders Breivik in 2011, numerous incidences of deadly shootings in the United States as exampled by Columbine (1999), Sandy Hook (2012) and most recently tragic events in Las Vegas (2017); the Paris attacks (including the massacre at the offices of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo) in January 2015 and the sexual assaults on the streets of Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015 are all historically recent international examples of events as wider forms of victimisation. Events such as these have an impact on and consequences for our study of identity, collective victimisation, stigma and resilience. These are often marginalised but wholly relevant areas of investigation as the kaleidoscope of victimological theory and research explores and illuminates those darker areas of knowledge and interest which have traditionally harboured an invisibility of such communities suffering.

Notes

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[1]The Hungerford massacre was a series of random shootings in Hungerford, Berkshire, UK on 19 August 1987, when Michael Robert Ryan, an unemployed part-time antique dealer and handyman, fatally shot 16 people, before committing suicide.

[2] On 21 December 1988, a transatlantic aircraft PanAm 103 was destroyed by a bomb, killing all 243 passengers and 16 crew, in what became known as the Lockerbie bombing. Large sections of the aircraft crashed onto residential areas of Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 11 more people on the ground.

[3] The Aberfan disaster was the catastrophic collapse of a colliery spoil tip in the Welsh village of Aberfan, UK that killed 116 children and 28 adults on 21 October 1966. The collapse was caused by the build-up of water in the accumulated rock

and shale tip. In only a few minutes more than 1.4 million cubic feet of debris covered a section of the village including the primary school.

[4] Fred and Rose West committed at least 12 murders between 1967 and 1987 in Gloucestershire, England. All the victims were young women. The victims' bodies were typically buried in the cellar or garden of the Wests' Cromwell Street home, which became known as "the House of Horrors". In addition, Fred is known to have committed at least two murders on his own, while Rose is known to have murdered Fred's stepdaughter. The pair were apprehended and charged in 1994.

[5] A group, known as the Gun Control Network, was founded in the aftermath of the shootings and was supported by some parents of victims at Dunblane and of the Hungerford massacre. Bereaved families in Dunblane and their friends also initiated a campaign to ban private gun ownership, named the Snowdrop Petition (because March is snowdrop time in Scotland), which gained 705,000 signatures and was supported by some newspapers, including the *Sunday Mail*, a Scottish tabloid newspaper. The Cullen Inquiry into the massacre recommended that the government introduce tighter controls on handgun ownership. The Home Affairs Select Committee agreed with the need for restrictions on gun ownership but stated that a handgun ban was not appropriate.

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