Exploring Gender and Fear Retrospectively: Stories of Women's Fear during the 'Yorkshire Ripper' Murders

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Abstract

The murder of 13 women in the North of England between 1975 and 1979 by Peter Sutcliffe who became known as the Yorkshire Ripper can be viewed as a significant criminal event due to the level of fear generated and the impact on local communities more generally. Drawing upon oral history interviews carried out with individuals living in Leeds at the time of the murders, this article explores women's accounts of their fears from the time. This offers the opportunity to explore the gender/fear nexus from the unique perspective of a clearly defined object of fear situated within a specific spatial and historical setting. Findings revealed a range of anticipated fear-related emotions and practices which confirm popular 'high-fear' motifs; however, narrative analysis of interviews also highlighted more nuanced articulations of resistance and fearlessness based upon class, place and biographies of violence, as well as the way in which women drew upon fear/fearlessness in their overall construction of self. It is argued that using narrative approaches is a valuable means of uncovering the complexity of fear of crime and more specifically provides renewed insight onto women's fear.

Keywords: serial murder; gender; women's fear of crime; violence against women; narrative.

Introduction

 Between 1975 and 1980, Peter Sutcliffe, who became known as the Yorkshire Ripper murdered thirteen women and attempted to murder a further seven. With the exception of the doctor Harold Shipman who murdered 215 of his patients, most of whom were women, Peter Sutcliffe has murdered more women than any other British serial killer (Grover and Soothill, 1998). Seven of the murder victims were linked to prostitution and early on in the case the murderer was labelled a 'prostitute killer[1]' and compared to Jack the Ripper who murdered

five prostitutes in the east end of London in 1888 and was never caught. Caputi (1987) argues that the Ripper 'myth' which originated from the label given to the unknown Victorian murderer has become the template for the 'modern sex crime' (p.14), as well as a cultural reference point legitimating violence against women. Indeed, Kinnell (2008) notes how the assumption Sutcliffe only attacked prostitutes, or those he mistook for prostitutes, has been sustained within both academic and true crime narratives on the case. But Sutcliffe's early attacks and his progressive, indiscriminate murder of women outside of red-light areas would suggest a more general motivation to murder women rather than the claimed hatred of prostitutes.

Revisiting the 13 murders and seven attacks on women committed by Peter Sutcliffe allows the opportunity to reflect on gender, violence against women and women's fear of male violence from the unique perspective of a clearly defined object of fear situated within a specific spatial and historical setting. The intensification of women's fears and the temporal and spatial limitations imposed upon women living closest to the murders is well-documented in commentaries from the time (Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Caputi 1987; Smith 2013; Yallop 1983; Burn 1994). Drawing upon oral history interviews conducted with individuals who lived through the murders, the aim of this article is to revisit the gender and fear nexus from the position of these specific socio-historical circumstances. In doing so, the article presents original findings and renewed insight onto the relationship between fear, safety and gender. These themes speak to the large body of feminist work which identifies women collectively as fearful subjects due to the threat male violence (and related behaviours) in public space (Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Stanko 1990; Painter 1992, Valentine 1989, 1992), whilst at the same time disrupting assumptions of fear as a unified experience for women.

The structure of this article is as follows: First, further background to the case and its importance to a range of criminological concerns is presented. Next the gender and fear nexus

is explored followed by a discussion of the empirical and conceptual difficulties which fear of crime presents to criminology. The methodology section then outlines the practicalities of the research and provides detail of data analysis drawing on categorical and narrative approaches. Following on from this, latter sections of the article present diverse findings on women's fears. The findings confirm intensified fears, whilst also revealing powerful accounts of resistance and the disavowal of fear derived from class, place and specific biographies of fear and violence. The article concludes by arguing that biographical and narrative approaches help draw out the ambiguity and complexity of fearfulness (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Ranasinghe, 2013; Sandberg and Tollefsen, 2010) which both challenge and reaffirm feminist perspectives on violence and fear.

The Case the Yorkshire Ripper: Crime and Fear in a Specific Socio-Historical Context

The case is infamous for police investigative failings. Peter Sutcliffe murdered his first victim Wilma McCann in November 1975 and his thirteenth and final victim Jacqueline Hill in November 1979 before he was arrested by uniformed officers in January 1980. Over a four-year period, the murderer appeared to attack women with impunity and as the murders progressed, fears intensified for the safety of women across West Yorkshire and more widely (Bland, 1992; Kinnell, 2008). During the course of the investigation, vital clues were missed and the wholesale acceptance of a hoax tape sent to the police by a man claiming to be the killer significantly misled the investigation. The subsequent Byford Inquiry into the police investigation identified key practical and procedural failings in the management of the case which led to the transformation of future of murder investigations. Official and academic assessments of the case have tended to focus on procedural and practical failings (Byford 1981; Maguire 2008), feminist readings on the other hand, draw attention to misogynist attitudes towards victims and the way police culture shaped the investigation (Bland, 1992;

Caputi, 1987; Smith, 2013). Smith (2013) notes that the sexism and machismo within Peter Sutcliffe's community and peer group (Burn, 1994 Ward-Jouve, 1987) was shared by the male dominated macho culture of the West Yorkshire police. Smith further argues that sexist attitudes towards women misguided the investigation because genuine victims were excluded if they did not fit the assumed victim profile of prostitutes and 'good-time girls' pursued by a criminal Other.

Relatedly, these murders and the discourses surrounding them represent a textbook case from which to observe the differential treatment of victims based on class and gender. Concerns relating to women's sexuality and respectability continue to shape the investigation and prosecution of rape and other forms of gender violence, reflected in the construction of victim credibility and skewed justice outcomes (Smart, 1989; Kelly et al., 2005). Women involved in prostitution/sex work bring into sharp focus how victimhood is disavowed if women do not live up to ideals of feminine propriety. The police made no secret of their contempt for women they perceived as transgressing the boundaries of feminine respectability. Furthermore, women involved in prostitution continued to be arrested and prosecuted for soliciting during the murders (Kinnell, 2008). As such, the case is a reminder of the historical and ongoing stigmatization and repression of women involved in prostitution (O'Neill, 2010): the culture and practice of the West Yorkshire police can be located within this longer history. Kinnell (2008) also observes how the case has continued to shape perceptions of violence against sex-workers as inevitable and the governance of sex work as a criminal justice issue informed by radical feminism's abolitionist position.

Aside from what the case tells us about policing, violence against women and the historical Othering of women involved in prostitution, it also speaks to the links between crime, place and history. Indeed, the crime writer David Peace uses the murders as backdrop within several of his novels, situating the aetiology of the case within a specific set of locally-

situated cultural and historical circumstances. One cannot talk about direct causality, but time and place present as what Haggerty (2009) refers to as 'necessary conditions' for serial murder to take place. For instance, Brown (2012) explores how Peace's novels connect the murders to the socio-political crises occurring in West Yorkshire and beyond in the 1970s: political unrest, police corruption and the physical and economic decline of the industrial North at this time (Shields, 1991; Darnell and Evans, 1995). Moreover, working-class masculinity, sexism and the legitimation of violence against women (Burn, 1994) represent additional socio-cultural 'conditions' which shaped the murders and the discourses surrounding them.

Women and Fear of Crime

Chronologically, the murders occurred in the midst of feminist activism and analysis in the 1970s. The murders became a key issue for radical feminists at the time who viewed the violence itself, the indifference and misogyny directed towards many of the victims and the restrictions placed upon women's movements as part of the wider issue of male violence against women. Feminist activism, media and academic texts presented overarching narratives of fear, anger and protest: 'fear into anger', 'reclaim the night', conveying a sense of shared and collective fear which connected the murders to male violence and harassment as systemic features of patriarchy (Hanmer and Saunders 1984).

Indeed, the emergence of second wave feminism ushered in a focus on the dynamics of violence, gender and power. Key texts from the 1970s and 1980s reveal how rape and sexual violence, domestic violence and sexual harassment were sufficiently widespread to be considered structural in the context of patriarchy and central to women's control and subordination (Brownmiller 1975; Riger and Gordon 1981; Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Kelly 1987). This body of work links women's fearfulness to the threat of sexual violence,

routine negotiation of sexual harassment in public space combined with the construction of feminine vulnerability and the construction of public space and the unknown male stranger as the locus of risk (Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Stanko 1990; Painter 1992, Valentine 1989, 1992). Furthermore, women's fear and the negotiation of space are identified as 'ubiquitous' (Stanko 1997) and longitudinal, as 'a lifetime biography of subordination, social control and oppression' (Painer, 1992:179). Some of the strongest work on women's fear originates from feminist geography which explores the impact of fear on temporal and spatial movements and access to public space (Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1989, 1992; Koskela, 1997). For instance, Koskela (1997) notes how gender, power and fear play out as spatial: 'When some women, often voluntarily, take the longer route around a park, change to another side of the street or stay at home at night, it is a question of power in space or (lack of it)' (Koskela, 1997: 897).

The primacy of the gender/fear relationship has however, been called into question in more contemporaneous work which challenges the given of women's fearfulness and men's fearlessness (Callanan and Teasdale 2009; Moore and Breeze 2012; Ranasinghe 2013). For instance, Koskela has noted the danger in viewing fear as a fixed experience and an 'inborn quality of women' (Koskela 1997, 112). Lee argues that fear of crime as a marker of gender distinction reinforces stereotypes and does not serve women well: 'Women have been the abnormal of fear of crime research, the emotional and the irrational. It has been women's fear that has been the problem to explain or reduce' (Lee 2007, 126). More recent work concerned with gendered experiences of fear accept men's and women's differential fear, but highlight how gender can be 'undone' within specific socio-spatial contexts as men within specific socio-spatial contexts become visible and fearful subjects (Moore and Breeze 2012; Ranasinghe 2013). That said, other recent work continues to identify space, safety and fear as gendered (Fileborn, 2012, 2016). In contrast to Moore and Breeze and Ranasinghe, Fileborn

(2012) observes how rather than 'undoing gender', specific settings exacerbate sexual harassment and women's ability to deal with it.

The Problem with Fear of Crime

The problems establishing empirical truths with regards to fear are not isolated to gender and fear. Fear of crime in general has been a challenge for criminology both conceptually and empirically (see for example, Lee 2007; Farrall and Ditton 2000; Walklate 2007). One of the central concerns being the discrepancy between subjective experiences of fear and its expression (Walklate, 2007), arising from imprecise operationalisation and conflation of concepts and questions within survey research. The upshot being that research findings merely reflect their methodology rather than the reality of experience (Farrall et al.1997).

Over the past 20 years, the qualitative turn in fear of crime research has acknowledged the inherent complexity of fearfulness and subjectivity and sought to unpack it (Jefferson and Hollway, 1997; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Taylor et al. 1996; Sparks et al. 2001; Girling et al. 2000; Jackson 2004). For instance, later work asserts that fear of crime acts as a means of expressing latent anxieties related to the insecurities of late modernity and the 'risk society' (Taylor et al. 1996; Girling et al. 2000; Sparks et al. 2001). Thus, fears are not merely shaped by a material reality, but also by wider concerns and discursive constructions which relate to a sense of social decline and ontological insecurity in the current age (Giddens 1991; Walklate 2007; Lee 2007).

Moore and Breeze's (2012) distinction between fear and anxiety is a useful attempt to understand multi-faceted fear experiences in a more straightforward way. They distinguish between fear as focused and situated in contrast to anxiety, which is a more 'nebulous' and vague state whose origins are less precise. This identifies *fear* of crime as relating to specific social contexts and identifiable sources which renders fear as tangible as opposed to 'illusory'

(p.1175). Indeed, as Moore and Breeze (2012) further argue: 'Fear must be understood in *context,* as a response to a specific social *situation* and not just a general social *structure*' (p.1175, their emphasis). This approach is valuable because of the acknowledgement that context and the embodied occupation of space have some bearing on fear and subjectivity (see also Fileborn, 2015). The focus on context cannot however, fully account for the role of biography and/or how the broader conception of fear/anxiety plays out as a more constant and vaguer subjective state.

Arguably, within the socio-historical context of these murders, problems with meaning and expressions of fear are to an extent, circumvented because the gender/fear relationship is much less ambiguous as the object of fear was readily identifiable. To draw upon Sparks et al. (2001), it was clear *what* people were afraid of and also *why* they were afraid. That said, the application of biographical and narrative analytical frameworks in the context of this research merely served to reinforce the complex and contradictory ways in which women engaged with fear and violence as gendered subjects.

Methodology

This article draws on findings from a project which explored women's accounts of their fears from the time, as well as interrogating the extent to which 'Ripper myth' pervaded everyday life. To address this latter aim, men were also interviewed as part of the project, but the focus of this article is women's fear of the localized threat of a male murderer targeting women. Oral history interviews as 'topical' and event-focused (Roberts, 2002) were utilized in order to explore what individuals remembered about the murders and how they felt about them which was also combined with exploring participants' life histories. Interviews were conducted in the homes of participants and lasted between one to two hours. Ten women and two men, who were living in Leeds at the time of the murders were interviewed for the

project, along with interviews and informal discussions with four key informants. The sample included a feminist activist and two women working as sex-workers in the Leeds red-light district during the murders. Given the nature of the research, ages of interviewees ranged from mid-50s to early 60s. From the outset, the project purposefully sought out individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds – primarily relating to class. The sample thus included women from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds with varied socio-economic circumstances at the time they were interviewed. Two men were interviewed as part of the project: one was a retired chef and the other was a retired engineer. In order to recruit participants, the research was advertised via a range of organisations in the local area such as workplaces and community organisations, and latterly by way of snowball sampling. All of the research participants have been given pseudonyms in this article.

Analysis of research findings includes both categorical and narrative approaches. As Alleyne (2015) notes, combining the two approaches is commonplace in social science research. To clarify, categorical or thematic analysis involves looking across a number of texts to highlight common themes and 'isolate elements of narrative and realign these to fit into nodes on a classificatory scheme' (Alleyne, 2015: 41). Such approaches are an established way of handling qualitative data in the social sciences (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In contrast, analysis of narrative involves working *within* texts to explore connections and work with the story/ies in the individual text. Riessman provides a useful distinction between the two approaches, noting that 'narrative keeps the story together for analytical purposes, while grounded theory approaches tend to pull the text apart into discrete, coded segments' (Riessman, 2008 cited in Alleyne, 2015: 45).

A number of writers have explored fear of crime and gender using biography and narrative to account for the contradictory and multi-layered nature of fearful subjectivity (Sandberg and Tollefsen, 2010; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Jefferson and Hollway, 1997).

Indeed, the value of working with the stories elicited through the research encounter as units of analysis in and of themselves is now widely recognized across the social sciences and humanities (Plummer, 1996). Focusing on narrative means that the story itself becomes the key means for understanding human experience and selfhood (McAdams, 1993), as well as providing a vantage point onto the wider social context (Plummer, 1996; Phoenix, 2008). Broadly, narrative is defined as a structured and emplotted story about the past told from the narrating present (Sandberg et al. 2015). Narratives are multi-faceted but can encompass 'big stories' or life stories and 'small stories' or event stories (Bamberg, 2004). Sandberg (2011) makes the point that both life and event stories occur within interviews, as they are:

> Closely connected and in conversations and interviews they will appear intertwined with each other … searching for life stories will support notions of individual essence, self and identity. Event stories will lead the analysis towards studies of particular key episodes in research participants' lives (p.155).

In sum, the analysis of fear presented herein involved thematic analysis across texts to explore a range of fear experiences. This was combined with *analysis of narrative* within texts which enables more diverse representations (Riessman, 2001) of women's complex and multi-faceted negotiation of fear to emerge.

The 'Climate of Fear'

The sequential appearance of the mutilated bodies of women across the North of England between 1975 and 1980 created a climate of fear as the media and the police activated a discourse of fear which resulted in the assimilation of the Ripper 'myth' into the public consciousness (Caputi (1987). Fears intensified when women who were not linked to prostitution began to be murdered (Bland, 1992; Kinnell, 2008). In the true crime text, *Somebody's Husband, Somebody's Son,* Gordon Burn (1984) notes that it was the murder of student Barbara Leach in Bradford in September, 1979 when 'the ordinary women of the

towns of West Yorkshire felt themselves to be at risk for the first time' and when the 'Yorkshire Ripper' became 'the main talking point in Yorkshire' (p.237). This further intensified when it was confirmed on 19th November, 1980, that another student, Jacqueline Hill had been murdered by in Leeds. In *Deliver Us from Evil*, another true crime investigation of the murders, David Yallop draws upon the conventions of crime fiction (Seltzer, 2006) to convey fears from the time:

> In the cities most vulnerable to the killer, there had been in the days that immediately followed Jacqueline's murder a fear that spread like the wind. It is difficult for any man to comprehend the depth of that fear, of how totally it affected every thought and deed of the women in those cities (Yallop, 1983: 330).

Women's oral testimonies support this 'high-fear' narrative - the consequences of which are evident in restrictions placed upon temporal and spatial movements with women urged not to go out alone in the evening (arguably an extreme example of the fear/space nexus identified across feminist writing on gender and fear (Stanko, 1990, 1997; Fileborn, 2015). Indeed, other disruptions included shift changes so women were not working in the evening, streets blocked with bollards in the red-light district of Leeds and surrounding areas to prevent the killer from escaping, and the regular stop checks of men in cars. The social and physical markers of these murders and their ubiquity are highlighted in the quote below:

> The main thing that I remember about the police was just that it was always there, in the background, you couldn't get away from it, you know. It was, either it was affecting how you logistically got round places or it was, in your face in that you were getting tapes played to you. There were articles in the newspaper or it was on the TV or you were actually getting the physical checks when you were driving around the city as well.

The quote above is from Anna, who had grown up in the student area of Leeds where Peter Sutcliffe's last victim Jacqueline Hill was murdered. In the extract below, she connects her fear to the social and spatial proximity of the murder, as well as reflecting on the victim status

of the murdered woman:

> Well just, I think just everyone was sort of frightened really and you know, just the fact that it was so close. The normality of somewhere like Headingley, that that could happen just seemed unbelievable. And the normality of the victims as well, no-one could believe that you know this was a girl, it wasn't like she was coming home late at night from a party, she was literally returning from university.

The quote below from Laura, who was a student at Leeds University during the murders, confirms a similar set of intense fear-related emotions referring to obsession, hysteria, as well as the practice of private safety/security in the wake of the murder:

> Laura: But I think it became quite...we were very scared I think. I think after Jacqueline, you know it...we became a bit obsessed I suppose by it.
> Interviewer: Really?
> Laura: Yes. I think so. We were very frightened and I suppose we were a lot more careful about what we did and the thing about security and whether your house felt you know was safe in terms of the kind of locks and making sure that you locked up and kept your windows closed and that has an effect as well. Normally, you might want to have your windows open at night. But that, we didn't do that. And I suppose, yeah that was the thing I remember most. It's the fear really and the kind of ... Not hysteria but it did get a bit like that. We felt as though we were ... I think the way I would describe it is that felt like we were under siege. That it was very difficult to go about a normal way of living.

During the course of her interview, Laura reinforces the fear she and her friends experienced, and like Anna, she connected this in particular to the murder of Jacqueline Hill. Both Anna and Laura referred almost exclusively to Jacqueline Hill when discussing Sutcliffe's victims – in a sense, Jacqueline represents the Ripper murders for these two women due to shared social and spatial proximity. This reflects a consistent theme across these findings relating to respondents' fragmented and partial remembering of victims based on vicarious socio-spatial connections and the mediated representations of victims. It is also consistent with Hanmer

and Saunders' (1984) claim that the murders only affected women students after Barbara Leach and particularly Jacqueline Hill were murdered. Laura also discussed a range of incidents involving men at the time. For instance, being followed home from night-clubs and grabbed, being followed and grabbed by a man in a car and being attacked by a group of men. She also recounts an incident where she was followed across parkland in the early hours of the morning, a few days before the murder of Jacqueline Hill, by a man she thought was the murderer. Radical feminism considers these types of encounter as typical feminine experiences of fear, harassment and violence in the context of patriarchy: women fear violence from men in public space and this is confirmed and reproduced by men's harassing behavior (Painter, 1992; Valentine, 1989, 1992; Stanko, 1997). As accounts above highlight however, for some women such experiences were intensified during these murders and as such, represent something more extreme than 'everyday violence' (Stanko, 1990).

It weren't all that': Alternative Narratives of Fear and Resistance

These research findings confirm the popular motifs of high fear linked to these murders and the transformation of the dynamics of fear and safety for many women at the time. Nevertheless, this research also revealed a more variegated set of fear and gendered experiences. For instance, most women, including the most fearful, talked about resisting fear by standing up to male harassment and reclaiming dark and isolated spaces. Several women however, expressed a categorical lack of fear. This is illustrated in the quote below from Rita:

> Rita: Nobody in our area was bothered...I'm not saying they weren't bothered of course they probably were bothered, but for me, myself, my family, my friends, and the people who we worked for we just carried on as normal. People in the school, everybody at school, just carried on as normal. Went to Cowper Street Middle School, Earl Cowper Middle School, right smack bang in the middle of Chapel Town and everybody just carried on as normal you know? It was just...yeah it wasn't...it wasn't all that...it wasn't ... it wasn't a scary time.

What is significant about Rita however, is her proximity to several of the murders and attacks. Rita grew up in the Chapel Town area of Leeds where four women were murdered and two were attacked; Rita was 13 when Wilma McCann, the first victim was murdered close to where she lived and as was the case with several other respondents, she also discussed knowing Jayne MacDonald from living in the area. Indeed, Jayne MacDonald, who was the fifth woman to be murdered, was a well-known face in Chapel Town because she worked in the local supermarket. Rita discusses this in the quote below.

> Not like it is now no, it was a Grandways store and she worked there and ... she were right distinctive Jayne because she had the right long hair and she had the two blonde streaks which were the fashion at the time you know but she was nice you know? And one of the girls who I went to school with Irene, lived in their street, I think there was some ... they were related somehow, I don't know how and you know they all lived in ... they lived in that street and then years ago when you were kids your mam's mates you always called them Auntie you know? And uh...were one of my mam's friends Pat, we called her Auntie Pat, she lived next door to Wilma McCann, I mean she'd moved by this time when she'd been attacked, or had she? No I don't think she had, I think she still lived there then because she was saying I've lived up here for years and nobody comes to see me and all of a sudden every bugger is coming around you know? Because it was all to be nosy! She was next door but one to Wilma McCann and then up the street Jayne McDonald lived in the same street! I mean how...ironic is that? You know they lived in the same street, Wilma McCann and Jayne.

Above Rita describes her connections to victims Jayne MacDonald and Wilma McCann, as well as her relationships with other women. Her account is 'explicitly relational' (Phoenix, 2008) in its depiction of the working-class community where she is positioned within a network of close-knit female relationships. Indeed, Rita also talked about how she and her best friend would regularly babysit for sex workers in Chapel Town while they 'worked' in the red-light district. Rita recalled how they would earn a couple of quid, a few cigarettes and the freedom of somebody's house for the night. These are 'the people who we worked for' who she refers to in the comments above.

Rita's positioning within her community may be at the heart of her response to the murders. Her narrative is dominated by a strong sense of community and place: stories of her childhood and growing up; discussion of family and friends; frequent references to street names and local landmarks. Connectedness and belonging within one's neighbourhood have been identified as mitigating fear of crime as a localized experience (Walklate 1998; 2002; Moran and Skeggs 2004). Even where, as Wallate (1998) observes, 'empirical evidence and experience of criminal activity … may suggest the contrary. (Walklate, 1998: 559)

Rita's interview talk features the murders, but reminiscences of place, community and connectedness to place as part of her own life story dominate the 'small' stories (Phoenix, 2008) recounted therein. As such, Rita's personal narrative of her positioning within a close knit locale can be viewed as constitutive of a canonical narrative of idyllic childhood and community (Bruner, 1990; Phoenix, 2008). Moreover, this positive construction of place and her positioning within it may explain her disavowal of the impact of the murders because it is at odds with how Rita constructs place and community within her narrative.

Other accounts also reveal fear as multi-layered and not to be taken at face-value. For some, fear emerged amidst a range of related emotions and practices such as anger, resistance and defiance with women employing practical and embodied safety strategies whilst out in public space (Koskela, 1997). For instance, during her interview, Jessica discussed being scared, distrusting men and being followed by men, as well as using strategies such as walking in the middle of the road to avoid being grabbed. However, her account was primarily defined in terms of defiance and resistance:

> Jessica: It certainly didn't affect the way we dressed or anything … still tarted-yourself-up and went out with your skirt up your arse … Flashing-it in heels and what-have-you, yeah. Still went to night-clubs, still went to pubs. Not stopping us doing what we wanted to do. Me mother, as me mother didn't go out drinking much … 'ooh be careful, are you sure you should be going out?' 'shut up mother, 'it's never going to happen to me is it?'

Interviewer: Is that what you thought?

J: Yep … Because I know I'll keep myself safe. What a stupid thing to think cos I, do you know what I mean? But you're young and you're daft aren't you? … But it's like anything you always think it'll never happen to you whatever that thing is, don't you? … But, I know, I know at the time, some women didn't go out, they were too frightened. You can't let folk frighten you, you know… What sort of life's that?

Jessica's negotiation of fear and safety resonates with Koskela's (1997) notion of the 'bold walk' as a resource for mitigating the restrictive nature of gendered space for women. For Koskela, the 'bold walk' as a 'matter of style'… as body language, by movement and style, can be seen as a means of taking possession of space' (p.11). Indeed, boldness, strength and resistance were recurring themes within Jessica's personal narrative (Bruner, 1990), forming the dominant tropes within her recollections of the murders, but also within the overall 'self-story' she presented. For instance, she discussed recent interactions including standing up for herself against overbearing and bullying senior work colleagues. In addition, she also recounted a story about how when her children were young, social services mistook a skin condition for abuse and her children were nearly taken into care. Jessica spoke of her anger at how she was treated by middle-class social workers and how this had prompted her to study for a degree and get a career in order to prove these women wrong. In essence, strength and resistance are the traits which Jessica repeatedly draws upon to construct her identity within her interview (Phoenix, 2008: p.37). This is alongside her validation of this self (Bruner, 1990) as strong and someone who will not be pushed around because as she says, 'What sort of life's that?' For Bruner (1990) this is the 'strong rhetorical strand inherent to narrative, where self as narrator not only recounts but justifies' (Bruner, 1990: 121).

Fear Paradoxes and Violent Biographies

Fear of crime research often elicits unexpected outcomes. Interviews with two women involved in prostitution during the murders revealed a less than straightforward relationship

to fear. For example, Kay was working 'the beat' as she referred to it around Chapel Town in Leeds in 1975 when Wilma McCann was murdered and continued to do so during the five years the murders were taking place and was still involved in sex work at the time she was interviewed. When asked about her fears at the time, her response was muted and ambivalent:

> Interviewer: So did the murders affect how safe you felt?
>
> Kay: No because you never felt safe anyway!
>
> Interviewer: So you were always...right that's interesting that so you always felt kind of...feared for your safety?
>
> Kay: Oh yeah! Yeah!
>
> Interviewer: And that didn't get worse?
>
> Kay: But...not...maybe slightly, maybe slightly, but no worse than ...any customer that might be hard work, or didn't pay you at the end of it, or -
>
> Interviewer: It seemed like part and parcel of …?
>
> Kay: Give me back my money type of thing you know, beat you up. It's just all part and parcel of the same job.

Kay tells a range stories which reveal the threat/presence of the Ripper. For instance, she discussed how a friend had thought she had been stopped by the murderer; she also recalled being telephoned by a man claiming to be the 'Ripper'. Despite this threat, Kay did not express extreme fears. This is also in spite of the fact that before, during and following the murders, Kay endured the routine anticipation and negotiation of private and public violence from an abusive partner and clients. The threat of the murderer was therefore not an exceptional intrusion for Kay, but was subsumed as 'part and parcel' of male violence as an everyday and longitudinal threat (Stanko, 1990, 1997; Painter, 1992). In spite of this, Kay's reflections on fear were subtle and subdued, albeit located amidst a range of violent fearful encounters which she also downplayed throughout her interview. As such her account stands in contrast to the vivid fear narratives which most frequently define these murders.

In their discussion of anxiety and the defended subject, Hollway and Jefferson (1997) identify how individuals establish 'defences' to protect the self and alleviate anxiety related to

past traumas in order to render 'recollection manageable' (p.67). Kay's restrained account of a biography of violence resonates with this perspective. Likewise, Pearl's story can be understood in a similar way. Pearl was involved in sex work at the time of the murders and like Kay was impassive about fear. She also discussed vicarious connections to some of the women who were murdered and attacked. For instance, the body of Sutcliffe's fifth victim Jayne Macdonald was discovered in an adventure playground: Pearl talked about walking through the playground the night before Jayne MacDonald's body was found. As with several other respondents, she knew Jayne by sight but they moved in different circles.

Also in common with Kay, Pearl disclosed experiences of violence, involving childhood sexual abuse, as well as being the victim of a violent rape in the late 1980s which led to her moving abroad. She explicitly acknowledges that her past experiences may have shaped how she responded to the murders. Her interview is a combination of talk about the murders and her own life history of victimisation which combine to shape her reflections on fear and violence from the narrating present. This is illustrated in the extract below in which Pearl discusses her proximity to Jayne MacDonald's murder and her complex relationship to fear:

> Well...I wish I could say I felt fear but I didn't have any fear then. Now you see it's like a traumatic thing because I've had loads of counselling and stuff, and it's like my god I can't believe I done that! That poor girl had died and we waved to her when she went out.

Likewise, in the quote below, Pearl reflects further on how her traumatic biography may have shaped how she reacted to the threat which by her own admission was not 'normal' or 'rational'. Pearl's comments, above and below, allude to how traumatic victimization skews individuals' sense of self and their interactions with others which is identified in the trauma and counselling literature in terms of 'distortion of perception and falsification of reality' (Sanderson, 2010: 36). Indeed Pearl herself, refers to counselling experiences to make sense

of her responses.

> Pearl: You know you've got to go deeper into it in a way...I had no fear
>
> Interviewer: No fear at all throughout the whole thing?
>
> Pearl: Not that I remember … We all just looked out for each other. None of us had any fear we'd all been pretty messed up women.
>
> Interviewer: Really?
>
> Pearl: Well ... normally if that were happening, a normal human being wouldn't go on the street on their own would they? They'd be scared wouldn't they?

The way in which fear manifests within these women's stories is a further warning that attempts to comprehend fear via recourse to frameworks of probability, rationality and objective risk are futile (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997). Moreover, Kay's and Pearl's relationship to fear also disrupts the notion of women's unified fears - that women fear the same things in the same ways. And yet, these are a highly gendered experiences. Both women disclosed traumatic early lives and ongoing biographies characterised by persistent and routine violence. Arguably, their lives fit most closely with a radical feminist analysis which presents male violence against women in the context of patriarchy as 'everyday' and systemic (Stanko, 1990). In this way, these accounts both simultaneously reinforce and disrupt feminist messages relating to violence against women and fear, revealing gendered lives circumscribed by violence, whilst at the same time challenging the idea that women share a unified story (Haaken, 2010).

What is more, storytellers are socially and culturally positioned so that individual narratives provide a vantage point onto aspects of the wider culture (Plummer, 1996; Sandberg et al. 2015). Both Kay's and Pearl's individual narratives reveal violence against women as a biographical and structural phenomenon and more specifically the extreme victmisation and vulnerability endured by women involved in sex work. For instance, Kay's interview speaks of both personal and wider experiences of sex work contained within her

historical and contemporary commentary. She discusses anger at police indifference to the murder of sex workers during the murders but intersperses this with views on the current state of sex work. In this way, Kay's series of 'small story' narratives goes beyond her individual experiences (Phoenix, 2008; Plummer, 1996), providing a lens onto the social and political context of sex work, speaking to the legacies of vulnerability, disenfranchisement and stigmatisation.

Discussion: Reflecting on Past Fears from the Narrating Present

This article has sought to explore the theme of women's fear retrospectively, as it related to a very specific threat to safety, by investigating women's memories of their fears during the high profile Yorkshire Ripper murders. Women's reflections on their fears from the time reveal the complex ways women engaged with fear discourses at the time of the murders, and the way in which some women used fear, resistance and a complete disavowal of fear in the stories they told about this time in their lives and beyond. What has not been dealt with thus far however, is the explicit acknowledgement that these are stories about fear from approximately 40 years ago and some consideration must be given to the way in which these now middle-aged women, engaged with and reflected on these murders and the fear they provoked in the narrating present. As Keightley (2008) observes with regard to the 'practice of remembering': 'The narratives elicited are not solely concerned with past accounts, but with present perspectives on experience and the role of the past in orienting participants to particular futures' (p.62). Similarly, Maruna's (2001) work on offenders' narratives of desistance also illuminates the narrator's 'effort to make sense of the past and to give form to their lives, and set the interview and the narrative in their historical context' (p.69).

The fallibility and selectivity of memory are acknowledged but the quest for factual truth is not the point of this type of work (Riessman, 2001), rather it is the 'psychological

truth' of such recollections (Portelli, 1998) and the links between 'past, present and future' (Riessman, 2001: 278) which are of import. A central concern of this study was to investigate women's memories of how they responded to the murders in terms of fear, safety and memories of victims – a factual chronology of this crimino-historical event would never be possible. Moreover, memories of these murders are, it must be acknowledged, derived from the discourses which circulated at the time. However, this is overlaid by the multiple cultural representations, which have occurred in the past forty or so years, and which has meant that these murders have remained firmly within the social imaginary. As Keightley (2008) notes: 'Both public and private remembering draw on and contribute to cultural representations and symbolic repositories' (p. 58). For instance, women discussed watching true crime documentaries about the case and in preparation for the interview, some women had looked up the details of the case on the internet.

Interrogating the past and the present as it emerged within these findings reveals both consistencies and departures with regards women's attitudes towards the case and related fears, as well as the way in which women discussed fear and crime more generally as a contemporary experience. For instance, 'fearless' women at the time, such as Rita, reflected that if their older, 'present' selves were living through these events, they would be more fearful. This was connected to getting older but also to altruistic fears as some women were now mothers with daughters. For others, proximity to fear and violence had not diminished since the murders. This is evidenced in the discussion of sex workers' experiences of fear: the threat of male violence did not diminish when the murderer was caught because as sex workers, their relationship to fear and violence was longitudinal, biographical and ongoing – both predating and outliving these high-profile murders.

Conclusion

This article has interrogated fear in the socio-historical context of a high-profile criminal event - the Yorkshire Ripper serial murders, exploring how the 'high-fear' narrative surrounding these murders played out in women's memories of their fears from the time. Looking across interviews in a categorical fashion revealed a range of fear-related emotions and practices which confirm the popular motifs of heightened fears amongst women at the time. However, findings also reveal ambivalence and ambiguity in women's accounts of fear, articulated more specifically in terms of resistance, boldness and fearlessness. Employing a narrative approach to analysis has been beneficial for understanding women's fear as complex and polysemic, as well as demonstrating how women used fear as a resource to construct personal narratives of self (Bruner, 1990; McAdams, 1993) which went beyond their accounts of these murders.

In addition, the article has considered claims from feminism about the way violence and fear of violence operate as every day and systemic within the socio-spatial conditions of patriarchy. Feminist commentators at the time of the murders claimed the Yorkshire Ripper was not an anomaly, but was instead an example of the male violence/fear/oppression relationship operating within the context of patriarchy and misogynist masculinity (Hanmer and Saunders, 1984; Smith, 2013). Notwithstanding, the threat of the Ripper emerges in these findings, as it did in the social imaginary at the time, as vivid, extreme and out of the ordinary – not as 'everyday'. In contrast, women who disclosed complicated and traumatic biographies linked to violence, whose experiences resembled most closely feminism's claims to everyday and systemic violence, demonstrated ambiguous and contradictory relationships to fear. In this way, these research findings both disrupt and confirm feminist messages relating to women's experiences of fear and violence.

Studying fear as context specific, with a clearly defined object presented the possibility that issues with clarity and meaning associated with fear of crime research could possibly be circumvented (Sparks et al. 2001; Ranasinghe, 2013). However, using oral history and narrative analysis to interrogate past experiences from the narrating present, merely emphasises the complexity of human experience as it emerges within the research encounter (Sandberg et al. 2015), reinforcing the potential of biographical and narrative approaches for making sense of fear and accounting for the paradoxes which frequently emerge within this type of research.

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Notes on Contributor

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