A critical discourse analysis of the whole life tariff, within newspaper journalism.

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Supervised by: Dr. David Holmes   April 2016

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ABSTRACT

Narratives of violent crime are ubiquitous within news media, where serial murder and other violent crimes serve to tantalize readers' attention as a form of entertainment (Reiner, 2007; Wiest, 2016). Chibnall's (1977) seminal imperatives of newsworthiness were employed to critically analyse journalistic narratives of the whole life tariff within two case studies of murder. Sixteen articles were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodology, assessing gender and social inequality, journalistic style and news ideology, based upon social constructivist notions that discourse is constitutive in creating and sustaining social realities (Burman and Parker, 1993; Wood and Kroger, 2000). The discussion of these ideas is embedded within the analysis. The results suggest fundamental differences in the portrayal of female and male criminals, and their victims alike. Furthermore, as Muchado and Santos (2009) suggest, inherent variance exists within newspaper 'quality' portrayals.

	DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	GENDER	JOURNALISM	NEWSWORTHINESS	SERIAL MURDER
KEY WORDS					

Contents

Introduction

Newspaper Media and Newsworthiness

Narratives of violent crime visibly pervade British press and have produced an upward trend in the popularity of crime news reporting, within both quality and popular press (Reiner *et al.*, 2000a; 2000b; Reiner, 2001; 2007; Wiest, 2016). The increasing number of platforms through which the news can be accessed, facilitated by use of the internet, means that crime news is ubiquitous within society (Dowler *et al.*, 2006; Meikle, 2009; Wilks-Heeg *et al.*, 2012). Homicide and violent crime exist to tantalize and captivate society as a form of news media to parallel that of popular entertainment, or 'infotainment' (Fishman and Cavender, 1998; Surette, 1998; Beckett and Sasson, 2000; Carrabine, 2008; Hildebrand and Culhane, 2015). Deviance is the quintessential element of newsworthiness (Ericson *et al.*, 1987; Reiner *et al.*, 2003).

Most fundamentally, creators of news are driven by a desire to achieve audience response and reaction (Reiner, 2007), asserting principles of news and newsworthiness as essential within the assessment of newspaper discourse (Nairn *et al.*, 2001; Bilić and Georgaca, 2007). For Chibnall (1977) newsprint is 'ordered and controlled' by specific professional imperatives, which interconnect to support and articulate a newspaper ideology. Amongst these *immediacy*, *novelty* and *dramatization* form the most basic imperatives and emphasise the notions of 'finding the scoop' and seizing consumer attention in a process of market driven journalism (McManus, 1994; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002).

Worcester (1998) suggests that variation in newspaper quality also attracts, and markets to, different classes; broadsheet newspapers circulate within upper and middle classes, whereas tabloid news gains its popularity within lower, working classes (Worcester, 1998; Örnebring and Jönsson, 2004). These traditions dictate that broadsheet, or 'quality', press is more concerned with a reflexive or distanced style of writing (Bourdieu, 1994; Hanusch, 2013), while tabloid or popular press articulates meaning with a sensationalistic or entertaining style, as formed around colloquialism (Bourdieu, 1994; Machado and Santos, 2009). According to this notion, market and class orientation sustain differences between 'quality' and 'popular' presentations, characterised by the inherent nuances in style and format, and furthermore the ideologies they construct (Machado and Santos, 2009).

News Discourse and Social Constructionism

Foucault (1979) postulated a shift in the way modern Western societies are managed and controlled; a contemporary interpretation of this is that journalistic narratives have become a form of power, which insidiously manage the way individuals discipline and scrutinise others against the view of their own morality (Burr, 2015). Bourdieu calls this power 'symbolic power', centred upon "making people see and believe" (1991: 170). In societies where information is essential, "symbolic power is the power to name, to define, to endorse, to persuade" presenting news media as central to the construction of reality (Meikle, 2009: 4).

News discourse structures social space and controls the actors, or subject positions, within it, since language is action-orientated it creates and contributes to the construction of socially accepted norms (Fairclough, 1995; Burr, 2015): thus, of who is deemed right or wrong within society. These discourses are therefore tied to social structure, and operate as a form of disciplinary power within society (Foucault, 1979).

Reiner (2007) expresses the interdependence of discourse and the social world, with Wiest (2016) interpreting this in terms of a cyclical relationship between the 'non-material' and 'material' of culture – where the material are the tangible elements of society, the non-material are the coexisting, constitutive language, values and beliefs (Wiest, 2016). Hence, the discourse of journalism, lends itself to a form of social construction which relates discourse to a 'material' social reality, and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Wiest, 2016).

Since the news media is a site of "knowledge-production and meaning-exchange" (Hartley, 1999: 6) journalism becomes a representative site for cultural analysis on a whole (Wiest, 2016). The imperative of *conventionalism* dictates that the news provides the reader with an interpretation of social ideology, or social convention, whereby contemporary paradigm shifts allow journalists to provide a subjective point of view (Chibnall, 1977). Conventionally, strict impartiality is not required within newspaper rhetoric, and hence exists as a form of clean propaganda (Chibnall, 1977) – used to circulate ideologies of crime.

Baden and Springer (2017) refer to varied repertoires within journalistic reporting using a 'framing theory'. Thus, nuanced differences in style represent differences in the point of view and the specific 'framing' of social ideology. Such frames inevitably abandon contrasting opinions, which are sustained by others; this means that deeper analysis of journalism suggests a difference in the political or social positioning of newspapers.

Chibnall (1977) extends this view by stating that newspapers are expected to present a certain 'political colouring'; as part of critical discourse analysis, it is important to situate what is written in its own context which can refer to a political alignment (Richardson, 2007). The notion of 'brand loyalty', to a particular newspaper, proposes that regular purchasers become "accustomed to the 'feel' of their newspaper" (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002: 56). Green (2008) ascertains that personal cultural predisposition impacts on the resonance of journalistic rhetoric, where Machado and Santos (2009) found that the specific discourses relate to their audiences' perceptions of the social world.

As based on this notion, reports of homicide and the consequent social constructions of crime exist concurrently (Cottle, 2005). They constitute a phenomena of interpretation and internalisation of the views towards violent crime, as inferred by stylistic newspaper reporting (Peelo *et al.*, 2004; Peelo, 2006). Social ideologies are constructed and exerted by the news, supporting its existence as a form of contemporary disciplinary power deeming that which is the norm, where the deviant does not fit.

Perceptions of Violent Crime and Gender

Serial murderers are rare offenders, whereby female violent criminals are statistically more rare than men (Farrell *et al.*, 2002). With the essence of crime news gaining precedence as entertainment, serial killers have become an inescapable point of reference within popular culture (Haggerty and Ellerbrok, 2011). This research follows Holmes' (2010) definition of serial killing, which refers to the killing of three or more victims sequentially.

Bartels and Parsons (2009) suggest that much of the scholarly work surrounding the investigation of serial murder suggest "essentialist stereotypes" from psychogenic elements of violence (Dietz, 1996; Bartels and Parsons, 2009: 267), where over-representation of men within crime places them as the convention. Women who commit crime stray from the mundane: they are not only sensational but fascinating and evolve as 'mega case' stories (Daly and Maher, 1998; Schram and Koons-Witt, 2004; Peelo, 2006; Skilbrei, 2012).

Additionally, they are "doubly deviant" since they transgress all social norms of femininity (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002: 50). By convention, women should be "pure, passive, caring, maternal, monogamous, house-proud, dependent, fragile and fair" (Wykes, 2001: 138); those who are not raise public anxiety since their immoral actions command a strong emotional response (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Jewkes, 2015). Naylor (2001) suggests that women who commit such crimes are cast as the epitome of deviance.

The chivalry hypothesis (*see* Grabe *et al.*, 2006) states that lone female perpetrators are treated more leniently within crime reporting, compared to men. However, this is refuted when women commit crimes defined as 'out of line' with womanhood (Grabe *et al.*, 2006). Newspapers draw on two dichotomies of women in crime - victim or villain, good or bad – and those who act against cultural norms are therefore denigrated (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Humphries, 2009a; Skilbrei, 2012; Brooks *et al.*, 2015).

Women who commit crime are further categorised by being "bad, mad, wicked or weak" (Grabe *et al.*, 2006: 140), as they transgress ideologies of femininity, sexuality, and domesticity, often with associations of evil and mythical monsters (Skilbrei, 2012; Jewkes, 2015). As a result, their moral misdemeanours deem them as other-worldly, bound by their status as transgressors of moral and societal decency.

Female perpetrators of crime attract public attention as based on their gender alone (Humphries, 2009b), but also because of their violation of implicit cultural norms and expectations. Vilified and sensationalised representations within crime narratives mean the female criminal is 'othered' within society.

Research Aims

The present study investigated newspaper presentations of high-profile criminals given a life imprisonment, or whole life tariff sentence, comprised of two case studies of a male and a female criminal.

The investigations were drawn from the suggestions of Peelo *et al.* (2006), who insists upon the evaluation and exploration of murder at a micro level, to understand public narratives surrounding homicide and violent crime (Beckett and Sasson, 2000) with consideration of what constitutes newsworthiness (*see* Chibnall, 1977).

A critical discursive and social constructionist perspective provides additional analysis of prominent issues that appear; as dictated by the practice of discourse analysis, this considered prevalent issues regarding gender, politics and social ideology. Grabe *et al.* (2006) and Skilbrei (2012) explore the presentations of gender and deviance within Norwegian and American crime news, respectively. The present work mirrors these in terms of its exploration into the representation of male and female profiles of deviance, but within British crime news. Brookes *et al.* (2015) studied perception and recognition of high profile criminals in the UK, however do not asses how the news forms perceptions of the criminal within society; therefore, contextual analysis must occur. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used here as based on assertions of its importance within qualitative analyses, and placing news presentations of crime within a larger social context (Beckett and Sasson, 2000; Bilić and Georgaca, 2009; Machado and Santos, 2009).

Furthermore, Machados and Santos (2009) allude to presentational differences based on the 'quality' of newspaper journalism. This outlook was employed within the present research, where characteristics of newspaper presentations were drawn from tabloid and broadsheet newspaper portrayals.

Methodology

Data Collection: newspaper collation and case studies

This investigation employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); this method is concerned with the collation and study of discourse and the presentation, representation and meaning of the written words within specified texts. Discourse texts take a variety of form (Grant *et al.*, 1998), including that of newspaper journalism, from which case studies of the whole life tariff are compiled. A male presentation of this is Steven Wright, the 'Suffolk Strangler' (*see* Appendix 3), the female presentation is of Joanna Dennehy (*see* Appendix 4), one of only three women in the UK to receive life imprisonment.

Data collection methods followed that of Hussain (2014), whose method was simple and easily replicable. *The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Daily Mail* and *The Mirror* were used as based on their varied political alignment and difference in 'newspaper quality', from tabloid to broadsheet, as based on the work by Machado and Santos (2009).

The case studies were made up of articles systematically selected from these online newspaper databases, after a search of specified key words (Hussain, 2014): the names of the two individuals, 'Steven Wright' and 'Joanna Dennehy'. Sixteen articles were selected to be analysed: this was two from each of the four newspapers, for each case study. Articles were chosen as based on the criteria for newsworthiness, as outlined by Chibnall (1977) (*see* Appendix 4). They were selected from a timeframe of

between the individual's arrest and their consequent sentencing, to reflect Chibnall's (1977: 22) notions of 'immediacy' and 'novelty'.

Wright and Dennehy were respectively chosen based on their similarities: both committed serial murder, in the UK – Wright murdered five times, and Dennehy three – and were given a consequent whole life tariff for their actions. The two committed their crimes within the ten years prior to the present research. Adding other individuals into the research may have meant including those which differ in their contemporary use of police investigation, forensic science and moreover their style of journalistic reporting.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Practices of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are broad and contemporary (Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Richardson, 2007) and with little in terms of institutionalised guidelines, CDA is often dismissed as a research method (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Its aims are drawn in the exploration and connection of the paradigms of written discourse and the active use of language within society (Fairclough, 1995).

Thus, CDA is used to explore and investigate the specific distal setting and social context of the reporting of crime news, whilst investigating the issues surrounding crime reporting, constructing crime narratives, and gender within crime (*see* Peelo, 2006; Reiner, 2007; Machado and Santos, 2009; Skelbrei, 2012; Weist, 2016). Furthermore, it represents a unique element of the research, as an unavoidably reflexive and 'non-traditional' exploratory tool (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000; Phillips and Hardy, 2002).

Critical discourse analysts position language as constitutive in the production, dissemination and interpretation of social reality (Burman and Parker, 1993; Wood and Kroger, 2000), where language is central to human activity (Blommeart, 2005; Richardson, 2007). From a constructivist epistemology people, psychological phenomena and ideology are all both the producers of and the products of discourse (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Foucault, 1979; Billig, 1991; 1997**;** Fairclough, 1995; Gergen, 1999; Wood and Kroger, 2000; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Richardson, 2007). Hence, language is not simply a vehicle for communication or persuasion, but is an essential element of building social reality (Winch, 1958; Wittgenstein,1967; Machin and Mayr, 2012).

The role of language within discursive activity is to further constitute and sustain unequal power relations (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1997), and maintains that dialogical conflicts are revealed in the privileging of a particular discourse or idea, at the expense of the marginalisation of the inferior (Mumby and Stohl, 1991; Keenoy *et al.*, 1997). According to this notion CDA explores how perpetrators of crime are maintained in society as menial within newspaper journalism.

'Subject positions' are the ideological drawings of particular individuals, according to certain social vantage points (Davies and Harré, 1990; Edley, 2001). Thus, the perceptions of crime and those who commit it are "identities made relevant by specific ways of talking" (Edley, 2001: 210); since there are a multitude of ways to socially

construct an identity so too are there a multitude of identities which occur (Horton-Salway, 2011).

Discursive activity does not occur in a vacuum (Phillips and Hardy, 2002), and exists as an interrelated relationship between discourse and reality (Parker, 1992; Macnaghten, 1993; Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Newspapers are appropriate because of their role within the construction of social ideology, through their use of language, rhetoric and journalistic style whilst CDA highlights complexities of culture, persons, reality and the construction of social norms within discursive presentations of crime.

The discourse analysis examined what kinds of identities were made relevant in newspaper portrayals of two criminals, given a whole life tariff, and in what ways they are embedded in repertoires which construe particular social characters, such as 'the criminal' (*see* Appendix 3 for an exemplar of this analysis).

Ethical Considerations

The British Psychological Society (2009) provide rigorous guidelines for the ethical conduct of all research carried out in the UK. The present research adheres to these guidelines whilst additionally following those specified by Manchester Metropolitan University (*see* Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), ensuring that all standards of ethical practice within empirical research are met. The present research was not considered as needing to make any ethical considerations, as it involves the use of published newspaper documents, already available in the public domain. Consent is not required within the present study.

Reflexive Analysis

Phillips and Hardy (2002) believe social constructivist perspectives of CDA make up the social world out of physical discourses: including individual identities. Hence, the researcher's personal identity – political affiliations, gender and age – shapes patterns of thought and the interpretation of discursive data. Moreover, it relates to a form of epistemological bias. Mason (1996: 6) states reflexivity requires the researcher to assess their own "role in the research process and subject [it] to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their 'data'".

The researcher must examine their own role where assumptions, preconceptions and acts within social research may be constitutive of the research outcome (Hsiung, 2008). Obligations to researcher ethics ascertain that research be carried out with impartiality. Since CDA is an unavoidably reflexive exploratory tool, the influence of personal opinion is inevitable when extracting meaning from text and hence complete objectivity is hard to obtain (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000; Madill *et al.*, 2000; Phillips and Hardy, 2002).

Whilst using critical discourse analysis it is imperative that the researcher is reflexive, highlighting aspects of the researcher's ideology on all levels of analysis (Yates *et al.*, 2001; Ballinger, 2003). Therefore, as newspaper journalism shows a 'political colouring' (Chibnall, 1977), use of CDA unavoidably shows a unique, 'researcher colouring' as informed by biographical aspects of age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, value, motive, and

politics.

Analysis and Discussion Joanna Dennehy

"A cruel, calculating, selfish and manipulative serial killer" (Dodd, 2014: online).

Violent crimes in the news are frequently understood in terms of being an 'engendered cultural reading'; since Dennehy's sex is the lens through which her violent actions are interpreted she is positioned as neither sane nor a woman (Wight and Myers, 1996; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Gilbert, 2002; Easteal *et al.*, 2015).

Newspaper media provides a commercial context for *titillation,* in which drama and the personalities created are sustained as a salacious, literary art (Chibnall, 1977). Humphries (2009b) proposes that presenting sexuality alone satisfies the use of titillation, whilst adultery, cross-dressing, sexual deviance and murder – all present within Dennehy's case – fulfil the "voyeuristic predilections" of the reader (Chibnall,

Woman, 31, admits to being a SERIAL KILLER as she stuns court by pleading guilty to murdering THREE men and dumping their bodies in ditches

- Joanna Dennehy admits killing three men found dead in Cambridgeshire
- Kevin Lee, 48, Lukasz Slaboszewski, 31, and John Chapman, 56, all died
- Also pleads guilty at Old Bailey to attempted murders of two other men

1977: 32).

Figure 1: The Daily Mail headline, 18 November 2013 (Source: Stevens and Camber, 2013: online)

Dramatization of news stories relates to a commercial competition that is fulfilled by emphasising drama. The use of dramatization was more blatant within the tabloid articles of this investigation – from *The Daily Mail* or *The Mirror*. Stevens and Camber (2013) emphasise the words 'serial killer' within their headline, to attract and sustain the readers' attention, as seen in Figure 1 (Stevens and Camber, 2013: online).

Contrastingly, *The Guardian* or *The Telegraph* were much more refined in their portrayal of drama; rather, they tended to use sophisticated literary techniques such as hyperbole to emphasise that Dennehy was the "first woman" to be given a whole-life sentence by a judge, due to "so exceptionally serious" crimes (Dodd, 2014: online). These differences reflect a framing theory (*see* Baden and Springer, 2017) whereby different interpretive journalistic frames lend to presentational differences in narratives; conventionally,

broadsheet newspapers aim to educate their readers, by being more factual than tabloids (Hanusch, 2013).

The creation of personalities within news discourse encompasses the imperative of *personalisation* – this was particularly salient within Dolan and Rush's (2014) article, in which Dennehy is juxtaposed to her family. Dennehy's sister is perceived as an upstanding member of society – she "serve[d] her country in Afghanistan" (Dolan and Rush, 2014) - where conversely Dennehy herself is plebeian, having descended into a life of drug addiction.

Newspapers sustain the ideological dichotomies of women in crime, and of the good versus the bad by maintaining the notion of 'taking-sides' (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Humphries, 2009a; Machado and Santos, 2009; Skilbrei, 2012). The "elimination of the shades of grey" (Chibnall, 1977: 29) between the complexities of good and bad promotes the *simplification* of criminal behaviour; Chibnall ascertains this is to make stories "easily comprehended by readers of widely differing intellectual abilities" (ibid). Dennehy is presented as choosing "a lifestyle which culminated in a two-week killing spree" (Dolan and Rush, 2014).

In no way is Dennehy presented as a product of her society, reinforcing the notion of deviant women as part of a cultural disarray where women, more generally, are socially uncontrollable (Shapiro, 1996; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Gilbert, 2002; Brooks *et al.*, 2015; Jewkes, 2015). They demand strong emotional responses, due to their anxiety-producing and fear-sustaining status (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Brooks *et al.*, 2015; Jewkes, 2015). Myers and Wight (1996) posit that narratives of women's violence circulate as eminent discourses, in order to demonstrate their apparent "abandonment of traditional femininity" (Gilbert, 2002: 1282).

Structured access is perceived as to sustain unequal power relations through news articles being "firmly grounded in the authoritative pronouncements of experts" (Chibnall, 1977: 37); concurrently the narratives are legitimised as "structured in dominance" positioning news media within a "privileged position of access" (Hall, 1972; 1973; Chibnall, 1977: 38). The 'voice' of the judge, prevalent throughout the articles analysed, provides a point of view which aims to situate the media next to other forms of social control. Such 'official accounts' can manage and control societal symbols of morality, "in the interplay of non-egalitarian ... relations" (Foucault, 1978: 94; Cottle, 2005). Thus, the news validates identities within society, whilst rejecting others, and contributes to the social construction of conventional standards of right and wrong (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2008; Burr, 2015) whereby Dennehy is sustained as a grinning, "psychopathic serial killer" (Stevens and Camber, 2013; The Telegraph, 2014: online). Additionally, these quotes structure the narratives as a live drama, unfolding as the reader proceeds: a principal way in which news is shaped to fulfil the readers' expectations of 'story-telling' (Meikle, 2009).

CDA considers socio-political 'repertoires' of crime (Baden and Springer, 2017), organised to encapsulate the specific lexicon of conversations (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edley, 2001). When the news articles for Dennehy's case were written, the UK

was governed by a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition. This government indicated there were "no intention[s] of abolishing the mandatory life sentence" (Lipscombe and Beard, 2015: 14), where Dennehy received a 'whole life tariff' ordering her to serve the entirety of her sentence without possibility of parole.

However, Dennehy does not appear to comprehend the extent of her crimes, stating "it could be worse" (Smith, 2014). Moreover, she "stuns court by pleading guilty" (Stevens and Camber, 2013) which could be an indication of her naïveté; laws states that with "a whole life minimum term, there will be no reduction for a guilty plea" (Lipscombe and Beard, 2015: 9), thus she does not consider her killings as respective of the sentence she is given. This could also relate to a myriad of psychopathic traits which the news narratives analysed allude to.

The whole life tariff places her alongside two other female serial murderers, Myra Hindley and Rose West, to whom she is compared (Dodd, 2014) and whose notoriety symbolise the "iconography of evil" (Birch, 1993; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002: 62). Additionally, when news narratives place Dennehy's crimes next to other prolific, British criminals her story is immediately more newsworthy and memorable.

Women are stereotypically viewed as nurturing and vulnerable, with hegemonic discourses of femininity dictating that they are not "physically or psychologically capable of murder" (Holmes *et al.*, 1991: 247). Dennehy represents no aspect of womanliness, and is consistently degraded due to her wholly violent crimes and masculine appearance. The star tattoo on her cheek (*see* Figure 2, Dodd, 2014: online), and other photographs depicting her brandishing a large knife, add to her persona as "the man-woman" (The Telegraph, 2014).

Figure 2: Photograph of Joanna Dennehy showing the star tattoo on her right cheek. (Source: Dodd, 2014: online).

Furthermore, with mention that she abandons the most deep-rooted engendered stereotype of women as care-giving nurturers, she becomes the 'bad mother' (Farrell *et al.*, 2011; Skilbrei, 2012; Prynne, 2014; Dodd, 2014; Dolan and Rush 2014). She is the epitome of unfemininity and is hence more heavily vilified (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Humphries, 2009a; Skilbrei, 2012; Brooks *et al.*, 2015; Jewkes, 2015).

Breaching engendered social norms associates Dennehy with mythical monsters (Skilbrei, 2012) whereby the image presented of Dennehy is that of a sorceress. She is said to have "cast [a] spell" (The Guardian, 2014) over her victims, and lured them to their ultimate deaths with the promise of sexual favours (Dodd, 2014). Not only does she appear to fulfil the stereotype of deviant women as other-worldly, but she uses the practice of sexual deviance to commit these crimes.

Dennehy is newsworthy as based on gender alone, where being female makes the difference between a normal crime report and a newsworthy crime report (Humphries, 2009b). She moves the narrative from a 'mundane' account of crime, since she is not only fascinating but promotes sensationalism (Daly and Maher, 1998; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Skilbrei, 2012). Chibnall's (1977) imperatives are used consistently throughout the accounts of her case, and highlight some differences between broadsheet and tabloid presentations of crime. Furthermore, since newspapers promote specific, hierarchical, social structures, and show a 'political colouring' they sustain and advocate certain socio-cultural practices, where Dennehy exemplifies unfeminine deviance (Chibnall, 1977; Foucault, 1979; Burr, 2015).

Steven Wright

"A real Jekyll and Hyde" (The Telegraph, 2008: online).

Essentialist understandings of crime posit men as more frequently violent, insofar as crime is "unimaginable in the absence of men" (Newburn and Stanko, 1994: 1). 'Toughness' and 'male sexual prowess' become core principles of being a violent male criminal, whose victims are powerless strangers (Stanko, 1994; Hinch and Hepburn, 1998). As a result, serial killing and sexual homicide have become synonymous in popular culture (*see* Meloy, 2000; Schlesinger, 2007; Bartels and Parsons, 2009). These notions are linked to social constructions of masculinity which dictate that men, versus women, are more appropriate in their use violence (Hale and Bolin, 1998).

The expectation that men will be violent present stories of male violent crime as less sensational, whilst offering an aetiology for these crimes. Instead, Gomel (1999) presents this in terms of dichotomies of either the "born monster" or "abused child" (Bartels and Parsons, 2009). Wright's crimes are shown as surrounded by the complexities of his "unsettled upbringing", "leaving [him] always searching for a mother figure" (McVeigh, 2008: online), perhaps explicating his history of mental health issues, multiple suicide attempts and furthermore, his victimisation of vulnerable women.
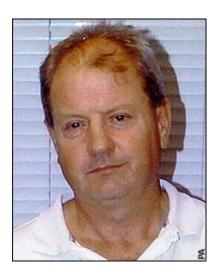
Figure 3: Photo of Steven Wright captioned "Wright has been described as 'the most boring bloke in the world'." (Source: Allen and Rayner, 2008: online).

Simplification of news reporting concerns the elimination of often ordinary, cliché or common sense knowledge (Chibnall, 1977). However, many of the news stories analysed present Wright as a complicated character with two sides of his persona that work in a complex interplay of volatility and the mundane; news narratives offer a "rare insight" (McVeigh, 2008) into his life where the stereotypes of a split personality, and being "a real Jekyll and Hyde" (Allen and Rayner, 2008), infer that crime characters have a darker side to which they are victim to (Canter, 1995). Coates and Wade (2004) found that, in their analysis of discourse within sexually driven violent crimes, judges tended to construct perpetrators as being "overwhelmed by psychological forces that drove them to commit their offence" simultaneously minimising their own responsibility (Bartels and Parsons, 2009: 277).

Bartels and Parsons (2009) assert a contemporary shift in the way that crime is understood, supposing a shift from understanding the criminal act towards the criminal actor, where the 'narratives' function as to construct the ontology of "Suffolk serial killer Steven Wright" (Canter, 1995; Addley *et al.*, 2008: online). They continue this point of view by supposing that, often, violent men act in accordance to their social stereotyping, and violent crimes are performed as to fulfil the expectations of engendered social norms (Bartels and Parsons, 2009). Wright's crimes therefore evolve to epitomise this perspective, where his use of violent and dominant power over vulnerable women fulfil all expectations of male violent crime (Wattis, 2016).

News reports are primarily concerned with 'breaking news' (Humphries, 2009b), reporting on events as and when they happen; often public knowledge of crime news occurs concurrent to the case unfolding. A particularly noteworthy aspect of the telling of Steven Wright's crimes is that the investigations were being carried out whilst some murders were still happening. Hence, readers of Wright's story were, hypothetically, involved as "the trial continue[d]" (The Daily Mail, 2008a), and the news stories rolled out as 'live' making the telling of his crimes additionally newsworthy.

The rise in popularity of crime drama television is perceived to blur the line between fact and fiction within crime reporting also, and sustains the consumer in a participatory role as a 'virtual witness' within the crimes they read about (Peelo, 2006; Reiner, 2007; Machado and Santos, 2009). How the reader forms their consequent verdict is as based on the discursive presentations and social constructions surrounding the subject of crime (Machado and Santos, 2009).

Through the creation of personalities within news stories the 'sides' of good and bad are presented for further interpretation. Steven Wright was named the 'Suffolk Strangler', as a result of his actions. However, perpetrator 'nicknames' could be perceived to romanticise violent acts, whilst making serial killers 'famous' since they become an easy point of reference for crime news writers and the public, due in part to the use of alliteration. Their actions are publicised and popularized (Guy, 2015). Other examples include The Moors Murderers and The House of Horrors, whose unprecedented notoriety is observed within the telling and retelling of crime news stories.

Other important identities created throughout the stories of Wright's crimes are that of his victims. These women were consistently presented unfavourably, harshly and crudely within more right-wing or tabloid news, ultimately to contrast being five innocent women, undeserving of threat; the women were "naked and partly-decomposed" and murdered "while high on drugs" (The Daily Mail, 2008a), one victim "almost certainly knew him and had no hesitation in taking his business" (Allen and Rayner, 2008). *The Guardian* on the other hand, present the women as "drug-addicted and vulnerable", inescapably victims in Wright's "targeted campaign of murder" (McViegh, 2008). Since the notion of *personalisation* dictate that these identities align with a newspaper's ideological framework, a more liberal or compassionate point of view is noted within the left-wing broadsheet papers. Furthermore, the journalist becomes an intellectual, and critical commentator of social phenomena too (Chibnall, 1977).

Suffolk Strangler Steve Wright locked up for life for Ipswich prostitute murders

Prostitute killer Steve Wright will die in jail, a judge ruled today.

Suffolk Strangler to die in jail for prostitute killing spree, judge rules

Figure 4: Above, The Mirror (22 February 2008) and below, The Daily Mail (22 February

2008) headlines depicting the emphasis drawn on Wright's victims having worked as prostitutes. (Source: The Mirror, 2008: online; The Daily Mail: online).

Prostitutes are amongst the most vulnerable targets of sexual and violent crime, for those who feel "the urge" as Wright did (Home Office, 2008; Kinnell, 2008; McVeigh, 2008). Neo-liberal economies are interpreted as widening prevalent social inequalities, and creating marginality and vulnerability, representing the "mutually reinforcing operation of modernist frameworks of denigration" wherein female prostitutes are more likely to be victims, and less likely victimised (Hall and Winlow, 2005; Haggerty, 2009: 182; Hall, 2012; Wilson, 2012; Wattis, 2016). Unequal social organisation locates victims, perpetrators and the state within an imbalanced axis of power and marginality (Wattis, 2016), where violence against women, or the socially vulnerable exists within a wider context of engendered power relations and demonstrations of pathological masculinity.

Wright's crimes received vast amounts of media attention, both nationally and internationally on account of the public reading news which titillates their feelings and confirms their opinion and prejudice (Chibnall, 1977). *Conventionalism* provides the reader with an interpretation of social ideology and convention, where the present news stories offered a multitude of societal dichotomies: good versus bad, victim versus victimized, moral versus immoral, amongst sex crimes, abuse, murder and controversial sex trades. The notion of *titillation* furthermore allows news media to "trivialise reality and divert attention from politics and social problems" (Chibnall, 1977: 33).

However, with due consideration of this media attention Wright's murders sparked many contemporary political debates with a consequent paradigm shift in the many ways prostitutes are publicly perceived: from criminal to vulnerable. Concerns were drawn over the laws surrounding prostitution within Ipswich's sex market. Changes made would emphasise not the criminalisation of the women, but the implementation of a no tolerance approach to kerb crawlers due to the inherent dangers of this activity and the actions of those such as Wright (ACPO, 2011; Suffolk County Council, 2011; Scotter, 2016).

Final Discussion and Commonalities

Wright's aggression is perceived as natural since it constitutes hegemonic discourses of masculinity and crime (Connell, 1987; Newburn and Stanko, 1994). Heidensohn argues that "although men provide more menace to the basis of society, it is women who are instructed in how to behave" (1985: 106) and hence Dennehy is disparaged based on her abandonment of all that is deemed womanly. The masculine tradition of aggression is overlooked, whereas femininity and aggression are tightly controlled (Wykes, 2001).

When men are aggressive the aetiology of aggression isn't perceived to be their character because they are socially reinforced to act in this way (Hale and Bolin, 1998). On the other hand, violent aggression and murder must occur from uncontrollable causes or social instability, such as Wright's abandonment by his mother. Blame is often placed on a deranged psyche, to which men are subject to (Stanko, 1994).

Feminist arguments on the other hand posit that "all men are violent" (ibid: 39); Brownmiller (1975) contends that man's desire for control, combined with a male, biological propensity to assert sexual dominance through violence explicates acts such as those of Wright.

Unlike Wright's, Dennehy's aggressive nature is borne from her own descent from "the perfect middle class upbringing" (Stevens and Camber, 2013). Faludi described the language of the contemporary media as a means of "push[ing] women back into their acceptable roles ... as Daddy's girl or fluttery romantic, active nester or passive love object" (1992: 16).

Biological perspectives into the causes of aggression have focussed on hormonal influences, most notably testosterone. Research has shown that young girls exposed to high levels of 'male' hormones before birth engaged in more masculine behaviours, and tended to initiate violence (*see* Hale and Bolin, 1998). This is true for both Dennehy and her sister, who both engage in forms of violence – however war-related violence is often perceived as using violence to a positive cause, and viewed more lightly when juxtaposed with Dennehy's crimes.

More frequently, women are framed alongside the men with whom they commit crime (Morrissey, 2003; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007) - most notably, Myra Hindley situated alongside Ian Brady and Rose West beside Fred West. However, Dennehy was not coerced or influenced by a masculine power and acquired male accomplices for her crimes. As a result, Dennehy remains "unique" (Stevens and Camber, 2013) within the realms of public knowledge and psychology. When female serial murderers are portrayed as so it is necessary to question why society is reluctant to believe that women can kill (Morrissey, 2003; Skilbrei, 2012). Often their actions are presented as in no way borne from hegemonic cultural practices since female violence uproots all expectations of femininity and masculinity alike.

Feminist scholars have stayed away from the issue of women's violence for political reasons, since the victimisation of women "serves a better purpose within feminist activism" (*see* Shaw 1995; Skilbrei, 2012: 141). However, Wright's case study provides evidence to suggest that this is only so when the victims are 'conventionally good women'. Since they were prostitutes they were victimised less and their social status presents them as expectant of their fate.

Both case studies of the whole life tariff utilise Chibnall's (1977) imperatives of crime reporting, emphasising the newsworthiness of both cases within British crime news. The use of *dramatization* most fundamentally emphasises that both individuals were to "die in jail" (The Daily Mail, 2008); crime is always newsworthy (Wykes, 2001), but more so when departing from a perceived social 'norm' (Katz, 1987). Violent crime, serial murder and the whole life tariff are not part of day-to-day activity (Farrell *et al.*, 2011) concurrently exaggerating their perceived newsworthiness and their commercial success within news media. However, this dramatized style often results in a departure from the truth, or reality, whereby news journalism may not offer a wholly informative perspective of social events.

Social constructionism is often only concerned with abstractions of what things or people "might be", not what they are (Hacking, 1985: 222), where often they are categories shaped for human idiosyncrasy (Khalidi, 2013). On this basis, constructions of criminal identities are fluid or contextual, thus more open to individual interpretation. More unchanging aspects of psychological research, such as cognitions or neurobiology, may be insightful for future research and help to encapsulate a more holistic approach to understanding individuals given a whole life tariff. Furthermore, integration of other psychological interpretations, such as models of offender behaviour (*see* Farrington, 2005), would widen the context of the research and enable the broadening of analyses. On the other hand, Skrapec (2001) ascertains the importance of avoiding such typologies within the study of criminals since the events which surround their cases are wholly subjective.

Serial murderers are rare offenders, and this, coupled with challenges in accessing and assessing data about them, pose as a significant challenge within empirical research (Farrell *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, any attempts to widen the scope of psychological understanding and perceptions of high profile criminals are necessary; in terms of undergraduate investigations, more 'detached' methods of analysis, such as CDA, are helpful when direct access is not available to such enigmatic individuals. Additionally, CDA's growing prevalence is believed to stem from its pluralistic abilities within social research, due in part to psychology's prominent liberal or libertarian ethos (Phillips and Hardy, 2002).

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