

## FACELESS: HIGH PROFILE MURDERS AND PUBLIC RECOGNITION

### Abstract

This paper reports on the outcome of an investigation into whether or not members of the public would recognise high profile victims and perpetrators and, if so, whom. The study was based on the premise that prominent media coverage would cause a greater number of perpetrators to be recognised than victims and that those victims who were recognised would be white children. Field research was conducted in a University and in non-University settings, such as fast food outlets, bus stops and shopping centres. All twenty images used were black and white headshots. Most photographs showed one person, but two photographs had two images. 103 people were surveyed. The majority of our sample (78%) were unable to name any victims or perpetrators. These results provide strong evidence to suggest that despite twenty-four hour rolling news and the prominence of high profile victims and perpetrators on the front pages of national newspapers, the public fails to remember who these victims and perpetrators are. We discuss why this may be so.

**Key Words:** High Profile, Murders, Public Recognition, and Media Coverage

### Introduction

Robert Reiner questioned whether crime, as represented in the mass media, was concerned with “subversion, social control or mental chewing gum,” (Reiner, 2007: 302). In other words, reflecting a generation of intense academic debate, does the media’s representations of crime and criminals – both in fact and in fiction – have some effect on the audiences who consume these representations? Or, alternatively, do they have very little, or indeed no impact whatsoever? This is a good question to ask, especially in relation to violent crimes such as serial and spree killings, as well as about certain individual, high profile murders. These have become significant events which attract enormous media coverage and public interest (see Wilson, 2009, for a general introduction about serial murder and for the media interest in serial and spree murder Haggerty, 2009; Macdonald (ed), 2013). Images of the victims of these crimes

and the perpetrators when caught, arrested and charged and certainly during trials, feature on TV news bulletins, initially often as “breaking news”. They also appear on the front pages of all national newspapers; broadsheets as well as tabloids. Indeed, Greer and Reiner have further argued that a key feature of contemporary society “is the omnipresence of mass media communication, in rapidly proliferating new forums to the extent that a significant part of each day is devoted by most people to media consumption of various kinds” (Greer and Reiner, 2012: 245).

It has long been established that crime is one of the major components of this omnipresence of mass media communication (Williams and Dickinson, 1993; Ericson et al., 1991; Ericson, 1995; Pearson, 2002). The contemporary mass media, news agenda is also now increasingly accessed via online platforms, with rising numbers of younger people receiving news on the internet (Ofcom, 2014). This can be saturated with images of violent crimes and criminals. Here too we should note that crime news is not only consumed online but is reproduced, recycled and discussed in this digital environment, most notably through social media sites. One key example is Twitter, where the type of crime and the gender of the victim can have a significant impact upon how it is processed by users. Indeed, it has recently been suggested that “news about violent crimes with males as victims are being discussed more intensively than those with female victims” (Lampoltshammer et al., 2014: 65). However, we should also remember that even before the advent of the mass media and the development of online platforms and social media outlets, crime and the punishment of offenders has long been of interest to the general public. Crowds, for example, often gathered to witness executions or humiliate those placed in stocks or in a pillory. Additionally,

when stocks and pillories were in use, the public had an opportunity to inflict further punishment on the offender by taunting, teasing, laughing or throwing objects at them. This could include rotten food, mud, offal and occasionally stones or bricks potentially leading to disfigurement, serious injury and, in exceptional instances, death.

There are of course too many criminal acts – even violent criminal acts - committed for them all to generate significant media attention. Williams and Dickinson (1993) found that while routine court coverage can be restricted to a column or two in local or regional newspapers, nationally, an average of 13% of event orientated news reports concerned crime. This ranged from 5% in the *Guardian* to 30% in the *Sun*. Reiner (2003) noted that reporting of crime stories has increased in recent years from under 10% in the *Times* and the *Daily Mirror* in the 1940's, to over 20% in the 1990's. Homicide was the most common type of crime reported and a third of all crime news stories. How, though, are these crime stories actually chosen?

As newspaper proprietors are predominantly focused on selling newspapers to increase their profit (Beckett and Sasson, 2000), a process McManus (1994) refers to as “market-driven journalism”, the “reporting of crime is, of necessity, selective” (Peelo, 2005: 26). From this perspective, therefore, “news organization decisions are based on journalist and news editor perceptions of what type of stories resonate with the general public. Accordingly, the news production process becomes characterized as an exercise in market strategy rather than a presentation of an accurate summary of local, national, and world events” (Buckler and Travis, 2005: 1). As such it is clear

that the media do not publish or broadcast every criminal act that is within the public domain, but are selective of the kinds of crimes, criminals and circumstances upon which they report. Some criminal acts are chosen over others because of their 'newsworthiness' – in other words, those aspects of a crime that journalists argue make for a good news story. This judgment is, in turn, a product of their 'newsroom culture' (Scruton, et al., 1991: 111; see also Wilson et al., 2010: 154). It can mean that the "pursuit of market and organizational imperatives often results in crime coverage that is disproportionate to the reality of the crime problem" (Buckler and Salanas, 2009: 719).

In seeking to determine what constitutes a human interest story, Johnstone et al. (1994) set out what they referred to as the 'Doyle criteria'. This arose from Doyle's analysis that a human interest story is one that either a) involves a socially "prominent" or "respectable" citizen who is involved as either an offender or as a victim; b) the victim is an innocent or an overmatched target; c) the murder was either shocking or brutal, involved multiple victims and/or offenders, or in which a particularly brutal method of killing was employed; or d) the narrative generates mystery suspense, or drama.

Chermak (1995) considered that news organisations assessed newsworthiness of a crime based on (i) the violent or heinous nature of the offence, (ii) demographic factors of the victim and offender (age, race, gender, income, and socioeconomic status), (iii) characteristics of the incident producers (the news agency), (iv) the uniqueness of the event, and (v) event salience (for example, is the offence a local

event). Prichard and Hughes (1997) similarly thought that the unusualness of the event, the parties involved and the extent to which formally and informally established cultural norms and expectations were violated influenced newsworthiness of that crime for news organisations. For Buckler and Travis (2005), news organisations tended to focus their attention on homicides that are statistically deviant (e.g., involved female victims, multiple victims, unusual weapons, and were committed by strangers), involved a violation of strong cultural norms of behaviour (e.g., robbery-related and stranger-related homicides), and which commanded strong emotional reactions from the general public (e.g., those that involved multiple victims, minority offenders, strangers, and involve minority offenders who murdered non-minority victims).

In thinking about news values in the new millennium Jewkes (2004: 40–55) considered that 12 factors influenced judgements that journalists and editors make when assessing the level of public interest that a story will potentially generate. Wilson et al. (2010) summarised these as:

1. Threshold: Asking whether a story is significant enough to be of interest to a national audience;
2. Predictability: Vital resources are often committed to pre-planned events, ensuring their place on the running order;
3. Simplification: A crime story must be 'reducible to a minimum number of parts or themes';
4. Individualism: Stories must have a 'human interest' appeal and be easy to relate to;

5. Risk: We could all be victims with little attention given to crime avoidance;
6. Sex: Sexual violence, 'stranger-danger' and female offenders being portrayed as sexual predators;
7. Celebrity or high status persons: The media is attracted to all elements of celebrity and crime is no different;
8. Proximity: Both spatially and culturally;
9. Violence: As with sex, it fulfils the media's desire for drama;
10. Spectacle and graphic imagery: Particularly for television news;
11. Children: Either as victims or offenders;
12. Conservative ideology and political diversion: Protecting the 'British way of life'.

Peelo et al. (2004) argue in their analysis of how the *Times*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* had contributed to the social construction of homicide between 1993 and 1996 that the selection decisions newspapers make in reporting homicides construct a public narrative about killing that is different to reality. Specifically, they noted that of the 2,685 homicide cases that had occurred over their sample period, only 40 per cent were reported in at least one of three newspapers and only 14 per cent had been reported in all three newspapers. This selection and distortion was based on the circumstances surrounding the killing, with homicides that were motiveless, had a sexual element or involved young children (but not infant homicides), more likely to be reported. As they explain, newspapers can therefore help to make some murders "infamous, while others go unnoticed in the wider world" (Peelo et al., 2004: 256).

Soothill et al. (2002) describe these as “Mega murders” and argue that they always attract ongoing media interest. They comment that these offences particularly offend society due to their horror, oddness, and the scale of the social disturbance. Peelo (2006) considers that such murders go on to occupy a powerful, symbolic place in our collective, cultural history. They could also be deemed ‘signal crimes’ (Innes, 2004), or offences that are seen as an index of the state of society and social order and illustrative of the way “in which the emotionality surrounding crime debates has moved up criminology’s agenda” (Peelo, 2006: 161). Indeed, reading and hearing about crimes can be considered “a collective, ritual experience. Read daily by a large portion of the population, crime news generates emotional experiences in individual readers, experiences which each reader can assume are shared by many others. Although each may read in isolation, phenomenologically the experience may be a collective, emotional ‘effervescence’ of moral indignation”, (Katz, 1987: 64). This clearly echoes Durkheim’s “collective consciousness”, where “the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life” (Durkheim, [1893] 1933: 79). The media through their reporting additionally seek to assist the public make sense of these major crimes, to identify with the emotions of those who have been hurt by the killing and therefore to share in the event.

Haggerty has also suggested that a symbiotic relationship exists between the media and serial killers as serial killers offer “rich opportunities to capture public attention by capitalizing on deeply resonate themes of innocent victims, dangerous strangers, unsolved murders, all coalescing around a narrative of evasion” (Haggerty, 2009: 174).

With Ariane Ellerbrok, he has also described how “serial killers have become an inescapable point of reference in movies, television fiction, novels, true crime books and video games. This global system of mass media – again, a characteristic attribute of modernity – has made many citizens intimately familiar with the dynamics of serial killing and the lives of particularly notorious offenders” (Haggerty and Ellerbrok, 2011: 6).

In regard to spree killings, “when a spree-killer shoots or stabs multiple victims and secures a large number of fatalities, the story receives serious news coverage, and such coverage is exacerbated if the shooter remains at large and local police are issuing ‘active shooter’ notices to the public. TV news stations will usually drop the majority of their pre-planned stories and features in order to follow the ongoing tragic developments. That is simply how news works in the 24-hour age” (Jackson, 2014).

Additionally, individual homicides, especially if they are unsolved, can also attract sustained public interest. One example of this is the disappearance of Lord Lucan. He fled after being suspected of bludgeoning to death in 1974 his children’s nanny, Sandra Rivett, in the basement of the family home having been identified by his wife as the assailant who attacked her that same evening. There has also been more recently a fascination with the shooting of Reeva Steenkamp by the notable para-Olympian athlete Oscar Pistorius and whether this was an act of self-defence in a case of mistaken identity, or whether he knew that he was shooting at his girlfriend after she locked the bathroom door and hid in there. For an extended period, the inability of the police to apprehend the killers of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence caused



public consternation, particularly amid concerns of “institutional racism” (MacPherson, 1999).

Given the extent of media coverage of serial, spree and high profile individual murders, there is a reasonable expectation that images of those who feature in such cases would be recognised by members of the general public. Indeed, “recognising the identities of people we know is fundamental to being able to interact with them....so recognition from the face is an ability at which we become very skilled as we grow up” (Bruce and Young, 2012: 254). However, “face identification requires that the observer select a single representation from hundreds if not thousands in memory” (Butler et al., 2011: 1444). This is made even more difficult as “the general expression of a face is the sum of a multitude of small details, which are viewed in such rapid succession that we seem to perceive them all at a single glance. If any one of them disagrees with the recollected traits of a known face, the eye is quick at observing it, and it dwells upon the difference. One small discordance overweighs a multitude of similarities and suggests a general unlikeness” (Galton, 1883: 3).

Consequently, while sometimes recognising familiar faces is easy, on other occasions recognising and recalling the name of that face can be more difficult. For example, in a recent Mori poll to find the most famous face in history, commissioned by the TV channel Yesterday, Tahir (2012) reported that Adolf Hitler had the world’s most recognisable face. He was correctly identified by 944 out of 1,000 people. However, one in 20 British children thought that he was a German football coach.

When it came to Britain's most famous faces, fictional wizard Harry Potter, played by actor Daniel Radcliffe, was the most recognised. Britain's most recognised real-life face belonged to the Prime Minister, David Cameron.

But would the public be able to recognise high profile victims and offenders?

### **Research objective**

The aim of this pilot study was to investigate the public's ability to recognise and name high profile victims and perpetrators. This study hypothesised that the public would recognise the perpetrator, rather than the victim; but if the public did recognise the victim, that victim would likely be a white child.

### **Methodology**

This study utilised press images from ten high profile cases and included separate images of victims and perpetrators (specific details of the victims and the perpetrators is provided below). All of the cases which feature in our sample were widely reported upon at the time of the murders themselves, the subsequent trials of the perpetrator(s) and some continued to make headlines several years after the perpetrator had been brought to justice. In other words, they had "news value" (Jewkes, 2004) and "newsworthiness"; these were the cases that were typically reported upon by newspapers, whether of the "broadsheet" or "tabloid" variety. To use Peelo et al's (2004) description, the cases that we have selected were "infamous",

rather than those which had gone unnoticed. They could also be considered 'Mega murders' with those convicted often now serving "a life sentence with a 'whole life order'. This means that their crime was so serious that they will never be released from prison" (Sentencing Council 2014). A measure of this seriousness can be gleaned from the fact that at the end of June 2014, there were only 48 prisoners who were serving whole life sentences in England and Wales (Bromley Briefings, 2014).

We primarily chose recent cases to form the basis of our sample, with the trials of the respective perpetrators ranging from 1995 to 2014. We did not choose cases from the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s, such as those involving the so-called Moors Murderers and nor did we choose cases where a perpetrator has not been convicted. Cases were selected to obtain a balance of age, gender and ethnicity of perpetrator and victim, though the majority of perpetrators were white males. All images that we used were head shots, printed in black and white, which were then shown in random order to members of the public. They were not asked any further questions, for example, concerning news consumption or interest in the news. Interviews were undertaken by three of the authors of this paper.

Fieldwork was conducted between March-May 2014 in a University and also in a non-University setting which encompassed fast-food outlets, bus stops and a shopping centre. In the University setting undergraduates, postgraduates and members of staff were approached and asked if they would be willing to participate in this research project. At the shopping centre, fast-food outlets and bus stops members of the public who were approached were asked if they would be willing to participate in research

that the nearby university was conducting. As with the University based participants, they were informed by the researchers that they were undertaking a criminology project and would just like to ask “if they could recognise some people who have been the victims of crime, or who have committed crime. It will only take a few minutes. Would you be willing to take part?”

Most of the photographs showed one person, but two photographs had two images – those of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman and Woman Police Constables (WPCs) Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone. The images that were used are outlined in Table 1 below and range from late 20<sup>th</sup> century cases, such as that involving the Wests’ victim Lucy Partington, to the very recent case of Joanna Dennehy. Indeed, it should be noted that when the field research was being undertaken the trial of Dennehy had only recently concluded (February 2014). During the field research the *News of the World* ‘hacking trial’ was also taking place, with the deletion of messages on Milly Dowler’s mobile phone featuring prominently in the reporting of this court case. We provide a more detailed account of the respective crimes of the perpetrators in Appendix 1.

*(Insert Table 1 here)*

## **Results**

103 people were surveyed, 50 males and 53 females, aged 18–66 (mean age 33.7, SD 14.68), from a range of ethnic backgrounds (63 white, 40 non-white). The responses

of participants to the images displayed were categorised as (1) No recognition at all; (2) Recalled name in full; (3) Recalled name partially; (4) Recognised image; (5) Recalled details of the case; (6) Confused image with another victim or perpetrator; (7) recognised image and recalled case details but did not recall name.

These categories were then collapsed into two groups. The first group being 'Able to Recall name', from the categories: 'Recalled name in full', 'Recalled name partially' and 'Recalled details of the case'. We use this group to determine the ability of our sample to "recognise" the victim or perpetrator. The second group is described as 'Not Able to Recall name', which we constructed from the categories: 'No recognition at all', 'Recognised image', 'Confused image with another perpetrator'. As such, it should be noted that "Recognised" has a rather loose and generous definition within our sample and here we might also note that 4 participants were not able to recognise *any* of the images used within our sample at all and 1 participant either was not able to recognise the image, or else confused it with another victim or perpetrator. There were no examples of anyone recognising the image recalling case details but not recalling the name. The percentage recall of individual victims and perpetrators is given below in Table 2. Full details of participants' responses to the images shown are provided in Appendix 2.

*(Insert Table 2 here)*

The most recognised victims were Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, whom 72% of our participants recognised and then Stephen Lawrence at 64%. Milly Dowler was recognised by 26% of participants and Sarah Payne by 24%. Tania Nicol and WPCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone were recognised by 9% of participants, with the least recognised being Lukasz Slaboszewki, at 3%, followed by Lucy Partington, Chris Brown and David Bird – all of whom were recognised by only 2% of the participants.

In looking in more detail at the most recognised victims, 49% of participants were able to recall details of the murder of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman; another 10% could remember their names in full; and a further 14% could partially recall their names. For Stephen Lawrence, 46% of respondents were able to recall his name in full; 12% remembered details of the case; and 7% partially recalled his name. A greater proportion of those who could recognise the image of Milly Dowler recalled her name in full (16% of participants) than were able to recall details of the case (7% of participants), a situation which was reversed for Sarah Payne (11% of participants were able to recall details of the case and 8% of participants her name). All five of the most recognised victims were under 20: Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, 10; Stephen Lawrence, 18; Milly Dowler, 13; Sarah Payne, 8; Tania Nicol 19. While 6 of the victims were female and 4 male, 4 of the 5 most recognised victims were females.

The perpetrators who were the most recognised were Ian Huntley, whom 51% of participants recognised; Raoul Moat at 41%; Rose West, 40%; and Joanne Dennehy at 34% of our participants. Dale Cregan was recognised by 19% of participants, Levi Bellfield by 12% and Steven Wright by 10%. The three least recognised participants

were Roy Whiting – who was recognised by 8% of our participants; Derrick Bird by 7%; and Gary Dobson by 5% of participants.

In looking in more details at the most recognised perpetrators, a greater proportion of our participants were able to recall details of the offences involving Ian Huntley and Joanne Dennehy (26% and 29%) than their names in full (17% and 4%). The situation was reversed for Raoul Moat and Rose West, when 27% and 31% of participants were respectively able to recall their names in full, while only 12% and 7% of participants were respectively able to recall details of their offences. While only 2 of the 10 perpetrators were female, they were the third and fourth most recognised perpetrators (care does though need to be exercised in the case of Joanna Dennehy due to her court hearing concluding shortly before the study took place).

In only one case within our sample was there a significant pairing of victim and perpetrator in the public's recognition: Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman (72% recognition by participants) and Ian Huntley (51% recognition by participants), with the next most recognised pairing being Milly Dowler (victim, 26% recognition by participants) and Levi Bellfield (perpetrator, 12% recognition by participants). In the other cases, Stephen Lawrence (victim) was recognised but not Gary Dobson (perpetrator), Raoul Moat (perpetrator) but not Chris Brown (victim); Rose West (perpetrator) but not Lucy Partington (victim); Joanne Dennehy (perpetrator) but not Lukasz Slaboszewki (victim); Sarah Payne (victim) but not Roy Whiting (perpetrator); Dale Cregan (perpetrator) but not WPCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone. Pairs not recognised were Steven Wright and Tania Nicol and, Derrick and David Bird.

## Discussion

Peelo et al. (2006: 171) suggested that newspapers invite readers to identify with victims and victimhood as a way of engaging them in 'human interest' stories and as such "researchers need to explore the nature of the reader-newspaper dialogue at a micro level" so as to make sense of the public narratives that surround homicide. From the findings presented above, an examination of the micro dynamics of media reporting about perpetrators and victims would suggest that the public make sense of these narratives by largely and very quickly forgetting them after their consumption. Despite the high profile of the murders that formed the basis of our research, one of which had only weeks before dominated the news agenda, our most marked research result was a lack of knowledge about these victims and perpetrators. Victims and perpetrators were regularly misidentified to the extent that they had, in effect, become "unseen" (Wilson et al., 2010). Lucy Partington, murdered as part of the serial killings perpetrated by the Wests; Chris Brown, murdered by Raoul Moat; and David Bird, murdered by his twin brother Derrick as part of his spree killings in Cumbria, were all recognised by only 2 people in our sample, despite the very loose and generous way that we constructed our category "recognised". Indeed, we would suggest that Lukasz Slaboszweki, who had been murdered by Dennehy, was only slightly more recognised than Lucy Partington, Chris Brown and David Bird, because his case had been more recently reported upon by the media.

While these victims were not recognised their perpetrators, with the exception of Derek Bird, were. Indeed, Rose West, Raoul Moat and Joanna Dennehy were the most



recognised perpetrators, with the exception of Ian Huntley. What was therefore remembered by the public from the portrayal of these offences in the media was the notoriety of those who committed these murders. Indeed these could all be considered what Soothill et al. (2002) termed Mega murders as they met the threshold for offending society through the horror, oddness, and the scale of the social disturbance of their crimes. Rose West, for example, was involved with her husband, Fred West, in the murder of nine women. She also killed Fred West's daughter while he was in prison. Prior to strangling and suffocating their victims, Fred and Rose would sexually abuse, rape and torture their victims, often over days with elaborate and sadistic bondage acts being an aspect of these assaults.

Similarly, Joanna Dennehy offended society through the horror, oddness, and the scale of the social disturbance of her actions. She pleaded guilty to stabbing to death her three victims and injuring two others, one of whom subsequently died 18 months later. The images of her with a star on her cheek and a wide serrated machete also caused much consternation.

The offences West and Dennehy committed also met the Doyle newsworthiness criteria (Johnstone et al., 1994) of brutal murders involving multiple victims that shock the public along with Chermak's (1995) criteria of violent or heinous offences which are considered unique events.

Here we might note that two women are amongst the four most recognised perpetrators. This may also be due to the rarity of female murderers, acting against

the perceived, stereotypical image of how women should act and, therefore, more popularly vilified in the media. As such this meets the view of Prichard and Hughes (1997) and Buckler and Travis (2005) that offences would be reported in the media where formally and informally established cultural norms and expectations were violated and which command strong emotional reactions from the general public. Even so, West and Dennehy were recognised by less than half the sample, and despite the fact that the latter's case had only just ended.

Of the three most unrecognised perpetrators – Gary Dobson, Derrick Bird and Roy Whiting – we might note that in two of these cases, one had led directly to the naming of the high-profile “Sarah’s Law” and another to an independent investigation about institutional racism within the Metropolitan Police (Macpherson, 1999). The third case – that of Derrick Bird – involved one of the most recent cases of “spree murder” in the United Kingdom. Even so only 8, 5 and 7 per cent of our sample were able to recognise these supposedly high profile perpetrators.

The offences committed by Gary Dobson, Derrick Bird and Roy Whiting can also be considered to have meet the newsworthiness criteria of Soothill et al. (2002); Doyle (Johnstone et al., 1994); Chermak's (1995); Prichard and Hughes (1997) and Buckler and Travis (2005). In these cases though it was the victims, Stephen Lawrence, David Bird and Sarah Payne who were remembered, rather than the perpetrators.

The most recognised victims and the most recognised perpetrator all related to the same case – the murder of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in August 2002 by Ian

Huntley in Soham in Cambridgeshire, (for a good introduction to this murder and its wider impact see Gerrard, 2004). Huntley was sentenced in December 2003 to two terms of life imprisonment with a minimum term of 40 years for the murder of the two school girls who had been best friends. Their bodies were found two weeks after their disappearance, following intensive police activity and mass media interest in the case. The photograph circulated of the two girls, taken only hours before they went missing was of them both wearing Manchester United replica football shirts and it was this photograph which was used in our sample.

In relation to this finding about the Soham case we might note that it satisfies a number of Jewkes's (2004: 40-55) 12-point criteria of 'news values for a new millennium' in that the case involved, at least, child victims, sex, violence and the photograph seemed to serve to create a wider connection to the public. Or, as Gerrard (2004: 12) has described it, in Soham there was a single narrative from which wider meanings could be extrapolated and which, in turn, allowed the public to "make meanings, give beginnings and endings, because we cannot bear a world or self without them". This perhaps takes things too far. After all, whilst these were the most recognised images, a significant proportion of our sample were still unable to identify Holly or Jessica in their Manchester United football shirts, or even Huntley, although we should also note the importance of striking photographs or film footage in the reporting of criminal events, such as the CCTV shots of James Bulger being led away by his killers (Jewkes, 2004: 56-57).

These two murders seem therefore to have entered the collective conscious in a way that the other high profile murders did not with the exception of Stephen Lawrence. Something then about the victims Holly Wells, Jessica Chapman and Stephen Lawrence along with the perpetrator Ian Huntley resonated with the general public at a deeper level than the other high other profile victims and perpetrators included in this research. The murder of Holly Wells, Jessica Chapman and Stephen Lawrence could therefore be deemed as a 'signal crimes (Innes, 2004), an offence seen as an index of the state of society and social order. Rather than just being another murder in a wave of media reporting of 'newsworthiness' individual, serial and spree murders, the killing of two young girls as they walked past the home of the school caretaker who lived with the teaching assistant they were fond of, a relationship that was reciprocated, and the murder of Stephen Lawrence "killed because of the colour of his skin" (Laville and Dodd, 2011), deeply disturbed the general public. For, perhaps more than anything else, we might infer, the general public want to live in a society in which children can trust those who work at the school they attend or who are not targeted simply because the colour of their skin is not white. This suggests something about the priorities of the general public in the way in which they would like the society in which they lived to be ordered. Fundamental to that is the role of those who have a responsibility for the care and protection of children and for all members of the public, regardless of the colour of their skin, to be able to safely walk the streets and wait at a bus stop without being attacked by others simply because they were members of a minority race or ethnic group.

Yet with Holly and Jessica it is not just they as victims who are remembered but also the perpetrator Ian Huntley. Here we might agree with Morrison who argued:

Soham has haunted the nation no less than the other notorious postwar murders - more so, if newspaper sales (which were high even on slack days at the trial) are anything to go by. There are several reasons why. The tender age of the victims. The fact that they went missing in summer, when news is thin. The poignancy of the photograph taken the day they disappeared - the smiles, the necklaces, the matching Manchester United shirts. The intimacy of Soham, a town of 9,000, where people like to think they look after each other and know the neighbours. The mythic, fairytale subtext - Beauty preyed on and lured to death by a Beast in disguise, (Morrison, 2003).

### **Future Research**

Exploring with those interviewed what a recognised victim or perpetrator means to them and why they think they may be able to recall particular victims and perpetrators, yet not others, would be a useful next stage in this research. As would enquiring about their interest in the news, how they access it and with what frequency. It would also be beneficial to select victims and perpetrators in the research sample based on clear news coverage criteria.

Undertaking this research with a larger sample would additionally provide opportunities to investigate age, gender, ethnicity and other demographic characteristics to understand better if particular sections of society recall different high profile victims and perpetrators and why this may be so. Similarly, having an

equal and greater number of participants in each of these groups would enable more sophisticated statistical analyses to be undertaken about those features of high profile crimes which cause the public to remember certain victims and perpetrators, yet not others.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the fact that we are now living in a media saturated age, often dominated by images of exceptional crimes such as murder, spree and serial murder, many high profile incidents do not linger in the public's collective memory. The findings from this pilot project indicate that very few high profile murders are remembered by the public, despite wide-ranging, extensive media coverage of these crimes, across a number of different platforms, accessed by different age groups in different ways. In this sense neither of our two research hypotheses were proven. The public did not remember perpetrators in any greater statistically significant numbers than they recognised victims (which was not as hypothesised) because, in reality, they hardly remembered anyone at all. And, while two white, blond, schoolgirls were the most recognised victims within our sample (which was as hypothesised), a young black man was remembered by almost the same number of participants (which was not as predicted).

So, if there is a "collective conscious" it would appear to remember only a very limited number of key, high profile murders, rather than carrying, transmitting or reifying

messages so as to create a “truly global society” (Piepmeyer, 2007). Put simply, what the public’s memory, or collective conscious, holds can be quite constrained.

We recognise though the limitations of this research in randomly asking university undergraduates, postgraduates and members of staff along with members of the public in the area around and in one particular shopping centre, if they could recall the names of particular high profile victims and perpetrators. Further research needs to be conducted to explore why it is that some high profile crimes are clearly remembered and others less clearly remembered, if at all.

Nevertheless, what our results currently suggests is that the answer to Reiner’s question as the start of this article is that crime, as represented in the mass media, is much more about “mental chewing gum” than subversion or social control. It is consumed and then forgotten.

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Table 1: Perpetrator and Victim Images			
Year Victim Murdered	Year of Trial	Perpetrator	Victim(s)
1973	1995	Rose West	Lucy Partington
1993	2012	Gary Dobson	Stephen Lawrence
2000	2001	Roy Whiting	Sarah Payne
2002	2011	Levi Bellfield	Milly Dowler
2002	2003	Ian Huntley	Holly Wells Jessica Chapman
2006	2008	Steven Wright	Tania Nicol
2010	N/A	Derrick Bird	David Bird
2010	N/A	Raoul Moat999999	Chris Brown
2012	2013	Dale Cregan	WPC Nicola Hughes WPC Fiona Bone
2013	2014	Joanne Dennehy	Lukasz Slaboszewki

Table 2: Percentage recall of victims and perpetrators				
Name	Victim or Perpetrator	Age	Ethnic Group	% Recalled name
Holly Wells & Jessica Chapman	Victim	10	White	72
Stephen Lawrence	Victim	18	Black	64
Ian Huntley	Perpetrator	28	White	51
Raoul Moat	Perpetrator	37	White	41
Rose West	Perpetrator	42	White	40
Joanne Dennehy	Perpetrator	31	White	34
Milly Dowler	Victim	13	White	26
Sarah Payne	Victim	8	White	24
Dale Cregan	Perpetrator	29	White	19
Levi Bellfield	Perpetrator	43	White	12
Steven Wright	Perpetrator	48	White	10
Tania Nicol	Victim	19	Mixed	9
WPC Nicola Hughes	Victim	23	White	9
WPC Fiona Bone		32	White	
Roy Whiting	Perpetrator	42	White	8
Derrick Bird	Perpetrator	52	White	7
Gary Dobson	Perpetrator	36	White	5
Lukasz Slaboszewki	Victim	31	White	3
David Bird	Victim	52	White	2
Chris Brown	Victim	29	White	2
Lucy Partington	Victim	21	White	2

### **Pen Portraits of Cases Used Within Sample**

Rose West was convicted in 1995 of 10 murders and given a whole-life order by Jack Straw, Home Secretary in July 1997. Most of these offences she committed with her husband, Fred West. They also involved the torture and rape of victims and included their own family members. Fred West committed suicide before the trial was held. The offences were committed in the family homes with many of the bodies buried at or near these two properties. Rose additionally killed Fred's stepdaughter while he was in prison for theft. Lucy Partington was one their victims and is the cousin of the novelist Martin Amis.

Gary Dobson was only convicted of the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence in 2012, nearly 20 years after Stephen was killed in April 1993. His sentencing took account of his age at the time of his offence (he was a juvenile). Dobson was given an indefinite sentence with a minimum detention period of 15 years and 2 months. This high profile case led to changes in organisational policies and practices in matters relating to race, diversity and equality, particularly for the Police. It also contributed to the revocation of double jeopardy laws.

Roy Whiting was convicted in December 2001 of the July 2000 murder of eight year old Sarah Payne and given a 'whole life order'. This case is particularly notable because of the extensive use of forensic evidence during the trial and the subsequent introduction of 'Sarah's Law', the sex offender disclosure scheme in England and Wales which allows anyone to formally ask the police if someone with access to a child has a record for child sexual offences.

Levi Bellfield was convicted in February 2008 of murdering Marsha McDonnell and Amelie Delagrang and of the attempted murder of Kate Sheedy. In June 2011 Bellfield was additionally found guilty of the murder of Milly Dowler. At both these trials he was given a 'whole life order'. Milly Dowler was 13 years old when she went missing

in March 2002. Her dead body was found six months later. Bellfield has also been linked with other murders of young people.

Ian Huntley was sentenced in December 2003 to two terms of life imprisonment with a minimum term of 40 years for the murder in August 2002 of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman. Best friends, they had left a family barbecue to buy sweets. On the return journey they passed the home of Ian Huntley whose girlfriend was a teaching assistant at their school. After inviting the two ten girls into his home Huntley then killed them, their bodies being found two weeks later. The photograph circulated of the two missing girls, taken only hours before their disappearance, was of them both wearing Manchester United replica football shirts.

Steven Wright was given a whole life tariff sentence in February 2008 for the murders of five prostitutes between October and December 2006. Their naked bodies were discovered in different locations around Ipswich. These murders received a huge amount of media attention, both nationally and internationally, with increasing concern in the Ipswich area as each body was discovered.

Derrick Bird was responsible for killing 12 people and injuring 11 others before taking his own life on 2 June 2010. This spree killing involved a series of attacks in Cumbria and involved a major police hunt, as Bird drove through different towns randomly shooting passers-by, sometimes calling victims over to his taxi. His twin brother and the family solicitor were targeted shootings. They were the first two people killed.

Raoul Moat was responsible for a major police operation, one of the largest in modern police history, in July 2010. He first shot his ex-girlfriend and then killed her new partner. The next day he shot and blinded a police constable who was sitting in his patrol car at a roundabout. The manhunt lasted almost seven days, involved 160 armed officers, armed response vehicles, helicopters, dogs and even a Royal Air Force jet for reconnaissance. Moat killed himself after being surrounded by police officers.

Dale Cregan shot and killed two policewomen in September 2012 after making a hoax emergency call to the police. In May 2012 he had shot dead a man in a pub and then that man's father in his house during August 2012. He was sentenced in June 2013 to a 'whole life order'. Cregan's image is notable due to the loss of his left eye which features prominently in close-up facial photographs.

Joanna Dennehy was the first British woman sentenced to a whole-life tariff by a judge having been convicted of the fatal stabbing of three men and the attempted murder of two other men in 2013. The other two women given whole life sentences received these from Jack Straw, when he was home secretary. Dennehy's victims were found in ditches in Peterborough. One was her landlord, the other two her housemates. After killing two of her victims on the same day, Dennehy drove to another town and randomly stabbed two men. Her image is notable because of a star on her cheek and another picture of her with a wide serrated machete with a protruding tongue.

Table 3: Percentage participant responses to images shown

Victim or Perpetrator	No recognition at all	Recalled name in full	Recalled name partially	Recognised image	Recalled details of case	Confused image with another victim or perpetrator	Recognised image and recalled case details but did not recall name
Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman	19	10	14	8	50	2	0
Stephen Lawrence	21	47	7	10	12	6	0
Milly Dowler	62	16	4	13	7	1	0
Sarah Payne	20	8	6	29	11	29	0



Tania Nicol	77	0	0	2	9	15	0
WPCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone	84	0	2	9	7	1	0
Lukasz Slaboszewki	94	0	0	5	3	1	0
David Bird	100	0	0	1	2	0	0
Chris Brown	94	1	0	7	1	0	0
Lucy Partington	93	1	0	3	1	5	0
Ian Huntley	42	17	9	3	27	5	0
Raoul Moat	50	28	2	11	12	0	0
Rose West	45	32	2	10	7	7	0
Joanne Dennehy	56	4	1	7	30	5	0
Dale Cregan	66	3	0	16	17	1	0
Levi Bellfield	75	2	2	15	8	1	0
Steven Wright	80	6	0	13	4	0	0

Roy Whiting	78	1	2	15	5	2	0
Derrick Bird	82	1	1	11	5	3	0
Gary Dobson	72	1	0	26	4	0	0