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# 'Don't Look Now' - Masculinities, Altruistic Fear and the Spectre of Self: When, Why and How Men Fear for Others

Trickett, Loretta

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**'DON'T LOOK NOW' - MASCULINITIES, ALTRUISTIC FEAR  
AND THE SPECTRE OF SELF:  
WHEN, WHY AND HOW MEN FEAR FOR OTHERS\***

**Loretta Trickett<sup>1</sup>**

**Nottingham Law School**

**Abstract:**

This article draws on the contentious concept of the fear of crime and in particular focuses on two factors which, it is argued, have been afforded insufficient consideration in the 'fear of crime' debate, those of gender and age, and uses them to examine a form of 'fear' that has also been neglected; that of 'altruistic' fear. Based on data from a qualitative study with men and boys the article argues that the concept of a gendered selfhood is fundamental to understanding how men worry about other people. The traditional conceptualisation of altruistic fears is thereby contested and suggestions are made for a new conceptualisation of fears which involve others.

**Keywords:** masculinities, gendered developmental ageing, life course, personalised and altruistic 'fears' around crime

**Introduction**

It has been suggested that the 'fear of crime',<sup>2</sup> is a problem in its own right. Indeed, there is a vast literature on the subject and it continues to receive substantial government and media attention.<sup>3</sup> The main focus within the 'fear of crime' literature has been on personal fears and concerns.<sup>4</sup> Fear for others, often termed 'altruistic fear' has only recently become the subject

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\* The title was chosen to reflect the theme of the article itself which is that men's own identities and vulnerabilities are reflected in their fears about others although this is rarely acknowledged. 'Don't Look Now' is a horror film from 1973 starring Donald Sutherland who plays a father who thinks he is being haunted by the spectre of his dead child. The film was adapted from a tale of the same name by the novelist Daphne Du Maurier from her short story collection 'Not after Midnight' (1971).

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Law, Nottingham Law School, Nottingham Trent University, [loretta.trickett@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:loretta.trickett@ntu.ac.uk). An earlier draft of this article was presented as a paper at The British Criminology Conference in Huddersfield 9 July 2008. I am grateful for feedback provided by Professor Rob Mawby, University of Plymouth; Dr Dominic Wood, Canterbury Christchurch University; Professor Brendan Gough, Matt Long and Tom Lewis all from Nottingham Trent University. Any errors or omissions remain my own

<sup>2</sup> The concept of 'fear of crime' has been heavily criticised; for an informative evaluation of the concept see Chris Hale, 'Fear of Crime: A Review of the Literature,' *International Review of Victimology*, 4 (1996) 79-150.

<sup>3</sup> The most recent issue for the government and the media has been knife crime.

<sup>4</sup> See Kenneth Ferraro, *Fear of Crime: Interpreting Victimization Risk*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1995), 'Women's Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault?' *Social Forces*, 75 (1996) 667-690; Kenneth Ferraro and Randy LaGrange, 'Are Older People Most Afraid of Crime? Reconsidering Age Differences in Fear of Victimization,' *Journal of Gerontology*, (1992) 233-244; James Garafalo, 'The Fear of Crime: Causes and Consequences,' *Journal of Criminal Law and*

of study in its own right;<sup>5</sup> albeit, a few studies have focused on both personal fear and fear for others.<sup>6</sup>

This article takes a different approach to the topic of 'altruistic' fears firstly, by focusing on men and masculinities due to the fact that so little attention has been paid to the 'fear' levels of men as men; and secondly, using a developmental approach to gender and ageing and combining the two. The emphasis is on the achievement of masculine identities by men at different stages in the life course and the implications for their discussions of altruistic 'fears'; a process which today assumes that 'one's behaviour results from the type of person one is.'<sup>7</sup> The paper suggests that gendered identities and life stages can explain the subjects of altruistic fears, the shape that such fears take and the motivations behind them. In other words, who are the other people that men worry about, how do they worry about them and why do they worry about them?

To this end the article examines those crimes discussed by the male respondents in an empirical study that gave rise to fears about others and contextualises them within their daily lives as men. The article comprises four parts. In Part One the notion of altruistic fear used by writers hitherto is contested. In Part Two the nature of the empirical research is outlined. In Parts Three and Four the concerns of the men are discussed and similarities and differences are examined. Part Five concludes by arguing for an abandonment of the concept of altruism when discussing fears involving others and makes suggestions for a new conceptualisation of what have previously been referred to as altruistic fears.

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*Criminology*, 72 (1981) 839-857; Dan Lewis and Greta Salem, *Fear of Crime: Incivility and the Production of a Social Problem*, (Transaction Books, 1986); Mike Hough and P Mayhew, *The 1982 British Crime Survey First Report*, (HMSO, 1983); W Skogan, and W Maxfield, *Coping with Crime*, (Sage, 1981); Mark Stafford and Galle Omer, 'Victimization Rates Exposure to Risk, and Fear of Crime,' *Criminology*, 22 (1984) 173-185; Rob Mawby, 'Age, Vulnerability and the Impact of Crime,' in Mike Maguire and John Pointing, (eds.) *Victims of Crime: A New Deal*, (OUP, 1988); Mark Warr and Mark Stafford, 'Fear of Victimization: A Look at the Proximate Causes,' *Social Forces*, 61 (1983) 1033-1043; Natasha Semmens et al, 'Preliminary Findings on Seasonality and the Fear of Crime,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 42 (2002) 798-806; U Gabriel and W Greve, 'The Psychology of Fear of Crime: Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 43 (2003) 600-614.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Warr and Christopher Ellison, 'Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime: Personal and Altruistic Fear in Family Households,' *American Journal of Sociology*, 106, (2000) 551-578; Karen Snedker, 'Altruistic and Vicarious Fear of Crime: Fear for Others and Gendered Social Roles,' *Sociological Forum*, 21(2) (2006) 163-195.

<sup>6</sup> See Jocelyn Hollander, 'Vulnerability and Dangerousness: The Construction of Gender through Conversation about Violence,' *Gender & Society*, 15(1) (2001) 83-109; Esther Madriz, *Nothing Bad Happens to Good Girls: Fear of Crime in Women's Lives* (University of California Press, 1997); Sally Engle Merry, *Urban Danger: Life in a Neighborhood of Strangers*, (Temple University Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn Blackwell, 2005) 67.

## 1 Contesting the Notion of Altruistic Fear?

### *The significance of gender and age*

The factors of gender and age are highly relevant to the shape and size of personal 'fears;' for example, men and women may be at 'risk' of different types of crime, and both may be more prone to be victims of some crimes than others at particular life stages. It follows they will be more 'fearful' of those crimes from which they perceive themselves to be at risk. Gender and age are also highly relevant to the study of fears for others. Yet despite this, these factors have been seriously underplayed and even in the literature on personal fears,<sup>8</sup> studies that have considered gender or ageing have tended to focus on either one or the other. Such work has, in part, been fuelled by the notions of both a 'gender' and 'age disparity' in fears about crime<sup>9</sup> and the focus has largely been on explaining the apparently greater fear levels among women and the elderly.<sup>10</sup> Notwithstanding, there has been scant effort to explain the apparently lesser fear levels of men, especially younger men and even in those few studies<sup>11</sup> where men have been the focus; their concerns have rarely been contextualised within their experiences of living as men including their masculine identities, discursive choices and daily practices. In this respect therefore work on gendered fear remains incomplete and this is especially so in relation to altruistic fears.

Work on ageing and the 'fear of crime' has also been partial because it has been limited to the study of older people and there has often simply been an assumption that individuals come to feel more vulnerable as they grow older.<sup>12</sup> There has been little effort to interview

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<sup>8</sup> There has also been some work that focuses on differences/similarities in the 'fears' of men and women for some types of crime i.e. car crime, see Catriona Mirrlees-Black and J Allen, *Concern About Crime: Findings from the BCS Self-Completion Questionnaire*, Research Findings No. 86, (HMSO, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Mike Maguire and Claire Corbett, *The Effects of Crime and the Work of Victim Support Schemes*, (Gower, 1987); Rachel Pain, 'Elderly Women and Fear of Violent Crime: The Least Likely Victims?' *British Journal of Criminology*, 35(4)(1995) 584-598; Jo Goodey, 'Boys Don't Cry: Masculinities, Fear of Crime and Fearlessness,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 37(3) (1997) 401-418; Madriz, *Nothing Bad Happens to Good Girls*, (1997); Jennifer Wesely and Emily Gaarder, 'The Gendered "Nature" of the Urban Outdoors: Women Negotiating Fear of Violence,' *Gender & Society*, 18(5) (2004) 645-663.

<sup>10</sup> Ferraro, *Fear of Crime*, (1995), 'Women's Fear of Victimization,' (1996); B Fisher and J Sloan, 'Unraveling the fear of victimization among college women: Is the "shadow of sexual assault hypothesis" supported?' *Justice Quarterly*, 20(3) (2003) 633-659; Liz Kelly, 'The Continuum of Sexual Violence' in Jalna Hanmer and Mary Maynard (eds.) *Women, Violence and Social Control*, (Macmillan, 1987) pp. 46-60; Liz Kelly and Jill Radford, 'Nothing Really Happened' The Invalidation of Women's Experiences of Sexual Violence,' *Critical Social Policy*, 10(3) (1990) 39-53; Elizabeth Stanko, 'The Case of Fearful Women: Gender, Personal Safety, and Fear of Crime,' *Women and Criminal Justice* 4 (1992) 117-135; Mark Warr, 'Fear of Victimization: Why are Women and the Elderly More afraid?' *Social Science Quarterly* 65 (1984) 681-702, 'Fear of Rape Among Urban Women,' *Social Problems* 32 (1985) 238-250.

<sup>11</sup> For example see Elizabeth Stanko and Kathy Hobdell, 'Assault on Men: Masculinity and Male Victimization,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 33 (1993) 400-415.

<sup>12</sup> Wesley Skogan and M Maxfield, *Coping with Crime*, (Sage, 1981); Garafalo, 'The Fear of Crime,' 1981; Hough and Mayhew, *The 1982 British Crime Survey First Report*, (1983); Warr, 'Fear of

women or men at different stages in the life cycle in order to compare their fears around crime<sup>13</sup> and certainly not in terms of crimes involving others. This research seeks to address these concerns.

### **Problems with use of the word 'altruism'**

The use of the word altruism to describe fears for others is problematic because it implies a degree of disconnectedness and suggests that such worries are context free. However, for respondents in this study, their fears about others were largely determined by the concrete contexts in which they found themselves which included their gendered identities and life stage. This is important because work on altruistic fear has tended to theorise it as being 'when a person fears that someone else will be the subject of crime' and accordingly as being distinct from personal fear.<sup>14</sup> This supposed distinction between personal and altruistic fears emanates from the use of the word altruism to describe fear involving others. However, this article argues that because fears about others are embedded within the concrete contexts within which people live out their lives they have personal dimensions; indeed they are implicitly connected to a person's identity and often involve threats to it. These personalised dimensions of altruistic fears mean that they cannot simply be separated from personal ones. Evidence for these points is provided by the discussions of men in this study about their fears involving others which reflected their own feelings of vulnerability.

Recently, the concept of altruistic fear has been challenged by other researchers. Snedker<sup>15</sup> has pointed to the distinctiveness of truly altruistic behaviour and suggests that Warr and Ellison's<sup>16</sup> concept of 'altruistic fear' may not adequately capture fear for others. She argues that labelling fear for others as 'altruistic' implies an unselfish care for the welfare of others to the extent that it incurs costs to the individual. Snedker suggests that altruism need not be self-sacrificial or self-neglecting, but argues that it does require a behavioural response that puts another's welfare over one's own. She argues, therefore, that altruism involves both a

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Victimization,' 1984; Box et al., *Fear of Crime: Causes, Consequences and Control*, (University of Kent Applied Statistics Research Unit Report to Home Office, 1986); Hale, C., et al., *Age, Gender, Race and Fear of Crime: Some Results using Data from Local and National Crime Surveys in England and Wales*, (University of Kent Applied Statistics Research Unit Working Paper, 1990); Christina Pantazis, 'Fear of Crime, Vulnerability and Poverty,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 40 (2000) 414-436; Pain, 'Elderly Women and Fear of Violent Crime,' (1995).

<sup>13</sup> For an exception see Marian Tulloch, 'The Meaning of Age Differences in the Fear of Crime,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 40 (2000) 451-467.

<sup>14</sup> See Madriz, *Nothing Bad Happens to Good Girls*, (1997); Mark Warr, 'Altruistic Fear of Victimization in Households,' *Social Science Quarterly*, 73 (1992) 723-736; Warr and Ellison, 'Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime,' (2000) and for limitations of this work see Snedker, 'Altruistic and Vicarious Fear of Crime,' (2006).

<sup>15</sup> Snedker, 'Altruistic and Vicarious Fear of Crime,' (2006).

<sup>16</sup> Warr and Ellison, 'Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime,' (2000).

connection to behavioural change and selflessness. In this respect, she questions the relevance of the term within her own study, because when expressing fear for others, most of her respondents discussed family members with whom they enjoyed a close attachment, rather than a generalised concern for others. Snedker asserts that whilst those who express concern for family members may be acting altruistically, their concern becomes intertwined with personal interest. For instance, a child benefits from his/her own risk-aversion but so does the parent. Snedker suggests that the term 'vicarious' fear may be a useful complement to the concept of altruistic fear because it does not require that concern for others be unselfish nor that it includes action on their behalf, but simply indicates the fear that an individual feels for another. Vicarious fear, she claims, is a better overall description of the feeling of fear not linked to social action or the material payment of costs.

Problems remain with Snedker's work on altruistic fears, however, because she fails to acknowledge the complexity of the motivations and the extent of the personal dimensions involved. Motivations behind fear for others are often intrinsically connected to an individual's conception of self and also to one's own personal 'world view.' Consequently, although threats to others do not pose distinct tangible threats to one's own person, in the way that direct physical attacks do, they do often involve a sense of threat to one's conception of selfhood. Whilst, this is particularly the case with threats to 'significant others' such as close family members; personal identities may also be implicated in fears for strangers because the latter are usually based on a sense of personal connection whereby people identify with others in some significant way, for example, they share certain characteristics such as being parents. A recent example can be found in the case of the missing child, Madeline McCann,<sup>17</sup> whereby parents in the home village of the McCann's laid flowers at the local church and other parents worldwide left messages of support on their website.

Indeed, concerns for strangers may involve even more individualised conceptions of selfhood such as one's personality and world view; for example a person may see themselves as being a caring individual who is concerned about events in the local community and the world more generally and this may be coupled with a personal world view which involves being environmentally aware. As a consequence of one or both of these factors an individual may be more likely to worry about environmental crime on behalf of future generations. It follows, therefore, that a fear about others will rarely be unselfish taking

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<sup>17</sup> Esther Addley, 'Neverending story: The abduction of Madeleine McCann has sparked an unprecedented global campaign,' *The Guardian*, 2 June 2007.

the form of a 'vicarious fear' as proposed by Snedker because in reality we worry about others precisely because they have some connection with ourselves.

Once the extent of the personal dimensions involved in concerns about others is accepted, it becomes clear that deciding whether a fear is altruistic based on a simple cost/benefit evaluation simply does not work. In fact, it is questionable whether a personal cost in the form of making a behavioural change to one's own behaviour is necessary before the label of 'altruism' can be invoked because concerns about others involve personal costs regardless of a lack of action. An example of 'altruism' based on behavioural change as discussed by Snedker might include driving to collect a wife or teenaged child at night, to avoid the possibility of them being assaulted, or, alternatively, a father choosing to stay at home in the evening to avoid potential assaults because of his family commitments. But other actions, such as keeping children at home or the giving of advice, involve virtually no behavioural change and in that respect, would not qualify as altruistic threats as defined by Snedker because they supposedly do not involve costs. Notwithstanding this, surely the very experience of feeling concern about another involves personal costs regardless of whether action is taken and this is even more likely to be the case if one's own identity is implicated in the concerns. Indeed, it is precisely because altruistic threats are connected to our personal identities that they arguably involve highly personal 'costs' and may cause considerable anxiety, in some instances, more so than purely personal risks.

A further argument against this type of cost and benefits analysis is that these cannot be easily divided; for example, if a person makes a behavioural change to benefit another, which involves a cost to them, there may also, be a corresponding personal benefit. The benefit may actually be the stronger of their motivations and this is particularly so where their own identity is involved. Therefore, although Snedker raises some pertinent problems with the use of the word altruism to describe fear for others; her solution of using altruism to describe purely unselfish fears, and vicarious fear to describe fears which are not linked to behavioural costs, is still too simplistic to capture the multi-faceted nature of such fears. This is because she fails to give sufficient attention to the role of motivation and its connection to personal identities and thus reduces the inherent complexities in fears involving others. In short, the continued use of the words altruistic or vicarious to describe fear involving others is misguided.

Having argued that a recognition of selfhood is key to understanding altruistic concerns about crime, this article points to how a person's notion of selfhood is connected to their developmental gendered ageing process; in other words, people's ideas about who they are,

and how they view their place in the world change as they go through the life course and any discussion about concerns for others must take account of this. Finally, within the conclusion these points are addressed through a proposal to abandon the notion of altruism and suggestions are made to replace it with alternative ways of theorising fears involving others.

## **2 The Research: Establishing 'Fear of Crime' at Different Life Stages**

Connell's work has sparked many debates about the nature of masculinity and its relationship with femininity, above all the reality that at any one time historically, and in any one culture, there will be a variety of masculinities which must be measured against what are considered societal 'norms' in terms of gendered identities.<sup>18</sup> This debate has underlined the importance of masculinity as a form of practice, and of the significance of the body as part of the gender project.<sup>19</sup> This comprehension has been fundamental to the thinking that has underpinned this article, and contextualises the discussion that follows.

In order to explain the connections between identities, life course and altruistic fears an explanation of the former will now be provided. The objectives of the research on which this paper is based were to explore and analyse the 'fear of crime' of men at different stages of the life course and to assess any similarities and/or differences between and within different age categories. The method of depth interviewing was chosen because it was suited to research aimed at developing new perspectives enabling men to speak freely about their concerns and experiences and to discuss them at length. Men were questioned about their early home lives, experiences of schooling and also their current lives.

Interviews were undertaken with men from three different age ranges which were considered to be important stages in the lifecycle as highlighted by Goodey<sup>20</sup> and Gardiner.<sup>21</sup> The 16–21 age group was chosen because this was the age that boys were leaving school and either going to college or starting work, 25–45 was chosen as a time when men start to settle down and may have family responsibilities, and 60 plus because it is an age when men start to retire and/or think about retirement. The research was conducted in a suburban ward in South Birmingham, approximately 7 kilometres south of the city, consisting of mainly inter-war and post-war council housing, half owner-occupied and half rented. Respondents were

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<sup>18</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, (2005) introduction; Patricia Yancey Martin, 'Why Can't a Man be More Like a Woman? Reflections on Connell's *Masculinities*,' *Gender and Society*, 12(4) (1998) 472-74.

<sup>19</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, (2005) pp. 67-71.

<sup>20</sup> Goodey, 'Boys Don't Cry,' (1997).

<sup>21</sup> Judith Gardiner, (ed.) 'Theorizing Age and Gender: Bly's Boys, Feminism, and Maturity,' in *Theory: New Directions*, (Columbia University Press, 2002).



mostly in blue collar occupations or unemployed,<sup>22</sup> one respondent was an architect and another was a social worker, two respondents were on government training schemes, four were at college and one was about to leave school. Forty-two of the respondents were white and three were mixed race; two described themselves as being of Afro-Caribbean/White background and one Asian/White. The respondents of mixed race were in the youngest age group.<sup>23</sup>

The choice of method, sampling technique and forms of analysis were associated with Glaser and Strauss' 1967 method of grounded theorising.<sup>24</sup> The sampling technique selected was that of snowball sampling, a version of non-probability sampling or convenience sampling, chosen because the researcher was female and heavily reliant on the men's co-operation in taking part. Early in the research the chain referral system broke down and a switch was made to a form of non-probability quota sampling.

The interview schedule used open-ended questions and the interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed by the same researcher. A combination of cross sectional and non-cross sectional indexing was used in the analysis of the data. As the data was collected it was entered into the qualitative data analysis package of NUD.IST, a software package which enables the researcher to index and retrieve data across a whole set of coded interviews. This was used mainly as a repository for the hand-indexed data and to provide a visual illustration of the emerging linkages between key themes and questions but it was also used in conjunction with non-cross sectional indexing.<sup>25</sup> This careful use of NUDIST alongside non-cross sectional indexing helped to alleviate some of the inherent problems with the use of software packages; such as distorting the meanings behind the data.

The use of semi-structured depth interviews permitted flexibility and an incorporation of reflexivity; it enabled respondents to use their own terminology and gave the researcher the opportunity to be responsive to them, to remain conscious of exploitative situations, to be

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<sup>22</sup> Eight of the younger sample were unemployed, two were on government training schemes while five were at school or college. All of the middle age group were in work, only was in a profession. Four of the older sample were in work, one in a profession while two were unemployed and nine were retired.

<sup>23</sup> Therefore, this sample is not representative of the general population and the findings cannot be generalised. However, they do raise issues for further investigation by other researchers.

<sup>24</sup> Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, (Sociology Press, 1967).

<sup>25</sup> See Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, (Sage, 1996); David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, (Sage, 2000).

open about the research designs and objectives and to answer questions as fully as possible. The researcher's subjective experiences were also analysed and made clear.

### **Explanation of the categories of respondents**

The categorisations of identities of the men in the study were based on their self descriptions and discussions of their daily lives; a process also informed by the work of scholars such as Connell, Tolson and Clatterbaugh in deciding the labelling of the various categories.<sup>26</sup> Eleven of the 15 respondents in the middle category and four of the 15 respondents in the older category described themselves as 'New Men' by discussing an identity that conformed to descriptions of 'New Men' including being involved fathers and/or sharing domestic tasks as part of their daily activities. Although ten other men used 'New Man' type discourses<sup>27</sup> when talking about themselves and their lives, some demonstrated a certain amount of reluctance about involvement in household chores and felt that they may be doing 'too much' in the home or did only certain household tasks; these respondents were termed 'Reluctant New Men.' However, it was clear from the talk of these men in the middle age group that their partners expected that they would be involved with their children and help out in the home as well as being breadwinners and doing 'traditional' male jobs such as mowing the lawn and DIY. In contrast, although some older respondents did housework and babysat for their grandchildren, only one had shared childcare and housework with his wife when his children were growing up. In addition to their emphasis on being caring fathers who were involved with the home, men with young children also emphasised their roles as providers for their families and protectors of them:

#### **Andy (Aged 31)**

"...I tend to worry very little about myself, at the moment the paramount worry is the little fella...I'm worried about what we do about nursery and I want him to go to a good school, to have a good education, I want to be as supportive as I can to him...so it's more of what can I do to get myself into the situation where I can provide the best for him"

#### **Vincent (Aged 28)**

"...the only thing I worry about is being a father and making sure my kids grow up fine, and I think every parent does that, don't they?"

#### **Warren (Aged 31)**

"...a man is supposed to protect his family isn't he? Well that's how I see it... I want to protect my kids and make sure that nothing bad happens to them"

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<sup>26</sup> Connell, *Masculinities* (2005). See also Peter Murphy (ed.) *Feminism and Masculinities*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), especially the chapters by Clatterbaugh and Tolson; and for a discussion of the use of popular labels such as 'New Man' in interpreting self categorisation, see W. B. Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men. How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Three men in the middle age group and seven in the older age group.

Six men in the younger sample and one older man were categorised as 'Softer Men.' None of these men lived with women and they were not involved in childcare or sharing of household tasks but they all discussed 'softer' aspects of personality and being considerate towards others which have been associated with the concept of the 'New Man.' It may have been the case therefore that these 'Softer Men' who were not in existing relationships with women may have been categorised as 'New Men' had they been.<sup>28</sup>

A minority of men were categorised as traditional, because they held traditional attitudes about male and female roles<sup>29</sup> and were not involved in domestic tasks or with childcare. Although these men discussed cultural changes in the roles of men and women, they held more traditional views and suggested that they had 'old-fashioned' relationships with their wives, where their partners did everything in the home while they worked and/or pursued hobbies. Therefore, in part, the 'traditional masculinities' of these men were formed against the 'traditional' femininities of their partners, unlike the identities of the 'New Men' and 'Reluctant New Men' in the middle age group, whose wives expected more of them.

Nine of the younger respondents were described as 'Macho Men' because their masculinities were premised on being 'tough' and streetwise and their routine activities consisted of hanging out in a gang on the streets engaging in fights and crime.<sup>30</sup> At the time of the study all nine of these young men were unemployed and had a criminal record and/or several cautions from the police.

A factor emphasised in the discussions of men in the middle and older age groups when describing themselves was that of home ownership, which was considered to be reflective of their breadwinner status, either past or present:

**Robbie (Aged 30)**

"...if you're a working man you may as well buy your home, .it makes you feel that you're doing better in life and makes things more secure for your family"

**Brian (Aged 32)**

"...I'm buying the house...it's an investment isn't it? You might as well have something to show for working"

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<sup>28</sup> Softer aspects of personality including being caring and showing emotion were also emphasised by eight of those respondents who discussed 'New Man' styles of identity.

<sup>29</sup> Four respondents: three from the older and one from the middle age groups.

<sup>30</sup> One of the Macho Men had a three year old son from a former relationship who he saw at weekends.

Many men in the middle and younger age groups also discussed the importance of maintaining control which they saw as an important part of being a man:<sup>31</sup>

**Alan (Aged 37)**

“...I wouldn’t like to think that someone could get the better of me, either defensively or otherwise”

**Andy (Aged 31)**

“...well, if you’re a man, you’re supposed to be resilient, to stay in control”

**Ricky (Aged 19)**

“...I don’t like feeling that I could lose my grip on things that happen”

The daily lives of those men with children at home included full-time employment, time spent with children and doing household chores. In particular, the eleven fathers of young children had little time or money for socialising. Respondents in the middle group without children spent time at work or socialising outside of their area with their girlfriends and friends. Retired men mostly spent time with partners and grandchildren, going shopping, visiting friends or relatives and partaking in hobbies. Of the younger sample, the ‘Macho Men’ spent time hanging out on the streets, drinking and larking about with friends, they had little money for socialising and only occasionally went to pubs or nightclubs. In contrast, the remaining six respondents in the younger sample were involved in college, work, hobbies and regular socialising at pubs and clubs outside of the area. Having discussed the identities and routine activities of the respondents the article now turns to their concerns.

### **3 Concerns Expressed by the Men: Threats Involving Others**

An issue which has received little attention in the literature is concerns around others in public spaces where men are present. The issue of being a male protector was an important factor in the discussions of men in the middle sample when they were out in public spaces with their families. Nine men in the middle age group reported feeling especially vulnerable when they were out with their children and/or partners because they felt the need to protect them and also because they perceived that they were viewed as easier targets when out with their families than if they were out on their own:

**Robbie (Aged 30)**

“...if your family is with you...you’re always more careful...you don’t want anything kicking off when they’re around”

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<sup>31</sup> Emphasised by seven men in middle age group and also ten in the younger age group:

These threats in public places could be termed as 'dual' threats because the men were worried in both a personal and an altruistic sense at the same time. A graphic illustration of the dual nature of such threats is shown in the next extract where a father is out with his young children:

**Stephen (Aged 37)**

"...I took the kids for a picnic...I picked them up from school, got a McDonalds and went to eat it in the park...I had to carry them across the car park because there was so much broken glass, I put them down and I had to tell them not to move because they'd tread in something dreadful, syringes, condoms, dog muck, an engine that somebody had stripped from a car...I walked them fifty yards and sat under a tree, we were bothered by stray dogs...there were four teenagers that were urinating in front of my children and so on and it was just really unpleasant...it's interesting that the local councillors were recently saying 'Look at the services we provide, the local parks are absolutely wonderful', well the truth is I don't want to take my young children to that park because it's a very unpleasant experience

In this account, the respondent is talking about what should be a pleasant family activity within a social space traditionally considered as child friendly. In reality, it turns into a very unpleasant experience resulting in this father defining it as a dangerous place for his children even when he is present. There is evidence of serious 'incivilities'<sup>32</sup> in the quotation: used condoms, syringes, broken glass, stray dogs, dog mess and 'yobbish' behaviour. All of these present a physical danger to the respondent's young children and a threat to his role as protector of them. This is made even clearer to him by the display of disrespect shown by the youths, which represents a challenge to his status as a 'father' out with his young children. It is also a challenge that, in the circumstances, he can do little about, and this increases his sense of insecurity. This account is indicative of a 'heightened sense of vulnerability' and 'vigilance' which was described by these family men when they were out with their children in the area, particularly when passing groups of youths:

**Warren (Aged 31)**

"...I take my baby son to the park but I'm always on the lookout...the thing is that kids probably sense how stressed you would be if they tried anything...because you would be frightened about what might happen to your child...or what he might see, so I always feel I need to be careful when I pass them [kids]...I suss the situation out and if they look dodgy I take steps to avoid them...if I can't, I try to look ahead, try not to look nervous and get past them as quickly as I can"

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<sup>32</sup> See James Wilson and George Kelling, 'Broken Windows,' *Atlantic Monthly*, Mar (1982) 29-38 for original definition.

In a similar fashion, eight younger men also discussed these dual threats and feeling particularly vulnerable when out with their girlfriends in public spaces:

**Gary (Aged 21)**

“...you’re wary if you’re out with a girl on your own...you feel protective and you feel more edgy”

All of the aforementioned respondents were aware of the potential for altercations in public spaces, where their male protector roles might be challenged and their masculinity ‘put on the line’. In addition to such threats in public spaces, a particular concern of men in the middle sample with young children was that of burglary. These concerns were increased still further where control issues were compromised because some men<sup>33</sup> worked nights:

**Dave (Aged 28)**

“...well you worry about burglaries, you know, especially if you’ve got a wife and kids in the house”

**Jeff (Aged 37)**

“...I worry because I work nights...I’m not here at night and my wife and kids are and that’s what I’m worried about...plus my wife, she’s a really heavy sleeper, you could crash a car through the bay window and she wouldn’t wake up”

As the following narrative about an experience of burglary demonstrates, however, threats to significant others still presented a problem when a man was on the premises and were reminiscent of the dual threats discussed earlier:

**Stephen (Aged 37)**

“...we were burgled whilst we were asleep and that was frightening for a few weeks afterwards...it does scare you, the thought that we were in the house and they’d broken in while we were there, anything could have happened...it was really fear for my wife rather than for myself, this was before we’d got kids”

Implicit in the aforementioned quotation is the respondent’s perception that he may have lost control and been unable to defend himself and protect his wife, yet despite his admission of ‘being scared’ for some time afterwards, he ends his comment by suggesting that it was really ‘fear’ for his wife rather than himself that he was feeling. This is important and suggests that sometimes through their discussions of risks in burglary to women and children men could voice their own concerns while maintaining an image of ‘fearlessness’ before the interviewer. Therefore, a failure to ask men whether they worried about others may have

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<sup>33</sup> Four of eleven.

elicited much lower levels of fear.<sup>34</sup> It could also help to explain the emphasis that some of these men placed on 'altruistic' concerns and suggests that sometimes men project their own anxieties onto women and children.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast, to high levels of concern of men in the middle age group, older men placed much less emphasis on altruistic concerns around burglary; with only three mentioning such concerns in relation to their adult children who had recently experienced burglaries. Of these one had picked up on the concerns of his adult children because they had asked him for help in securing their properties and he was more worried as a result. Another respondent stated that he was upset about a burglary at his son's home because a family heirloom was taken but that he was not unduly bothered otherwise. While a further respondent expressed annoyance about an attempted break-in at his daughter's home but stated that he was not worried because he felt that his son-in-law was a hard man and would be able to defend his daughter and grandchild: here the role of male protector is emphasised in relation to his son-in-law. Therefore, in contrast to the concerns of those in the middle category around burglary which involved an emphasis on their masculine identities and male protector roles these older men expressed their concerns as simply being on behalf of their children and personal discourses of responsibility were absent:

"...well it crosses my mind, you know, that they could be burgled again...but they're grown up now...so they have to look after themselves...they're sensible anyway and they've taken precautions now"

Generally, the younger respondents did not discuss altruistic concerns about burglaries. The exception to this was a young man whose father had recently died and he had since viewed himself as man of the house and male protector of his mother. Consequently, notions of responsibility and being a male protector were present in his narrative and he worried in a similar way men in the middle age group:

**Ricky (Aged 19)**

"I'm a bit worried now about my mom...not long ago my old man passed away and she's on her own a bit now, so that's why I stay in a lot now as well, .in case of break-ins and that"

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<sup>34</sup> Similar points have been made by Snedker, 'Altruistic and Vicarious Fear of Crime,' (2006) and Warr and Ellison, 'Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime,' (2000).

<sup>35</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, (revised edn. Hogarth Press, 1963); Wendy Hollway, *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology: Gender, Meaning and Science*, (Sage, 1989).

### **Concerns around partners**

A concern shared by men in the middle, older and younger age categories was about the safety of their wives or girlfriends when they were out alone. Some men<sup>36</sup> in the middle and younger age groups were worried about potential sexual assaults against their female partners. A significant factor here was that these men knew that their partners either went out at night for work or leisure purposes; whereas the partners of the remainder of these men did not and this reduced their fears about rape. Those men that constructed their partners as being at risk from rape drew on normative discourses<sup>37</sup> about sexual attacks; an example is provided in the following quotation which influences the advice a husband gives to his wife:

#### **Alan (Aged 37)**

"....I always worry about my wife when she goes out... I know women are weaker and I feel she's more vulnerable, I've said to my wife, if a bloke grabs hold of you, the first thing you should do is always play with him....you don't have to go all the way....the blokes gonna be stronger and he's gonna be attacking you, to begin with, you try and say 'No, I don't want to'...if you fight him, he'll pin you down quicker and he'll hurt you, but if you play along for a few seconds, until he becomes more vulnerable, when his guard weakens, that's when you go in and hurt him and then run... a bloke is stronger but even blokes have their vulnerable parts...apart from the obvious, down below, the best place a woman can ever hit a bloke is in the Adams apple, he can't breathe, you use your brain don't you?"

One man was especially worried about sexual assaults because his wife had been subjected to sexual harassment during the day. This respondent realised that women did not have to be walking the streets at night to be at risk of sexual harassment or assault:

#### **Warren (Aged 31)**

"...when my missus is out shopping, that always makes me worried, you know, 'cos she gets a lot a attention from other blokes, she is a good-looking woman...so that bothers me, 'cos before she's got a bit scared because she's been followed or hassled or what have you... it makes me very anxious, she has her mobile with her and I tell her to ring me immediately if anything happens"

Three men in the youngest age group also discussed the possibility of girlfriends being sexually assaulted:

#### **Kris (Aged 21)**

".....well I've worried that my girlfriend could be attacked...sexually I mean"

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<sup>36</sup> Nine in total, six in the middle and three in the younger age groups.

<sup>37</sup> Sandra Walklate, 'Risk and Criminal Victimization: A Modernist Dilemma?' *British Journal of Criminology*, 37(1) (1997) 35-45.



**Kieran (Aged 20)**

"...I used to worry about my ex-girlfriend...that she could be raped"

Therefore, when men in the middle and younger age groups discussed concerns about girlfriends it was often a fear of rape. In contrast, older men did not worry about their female partners being raped but four of them did worry about the possibility of their partners being mugged as did nine men in the middle group and they tended to construct their wives/partners as easy targets:

**Martin (Aged 60)**

"...I worry about my wife...I'll give you an example, my friend's son was mugged yesterday for the second time in the local shopping centre...I told my wife...I worry about that because she is always down there and if they are going to mug a young bloke then she is much easier target"

**Stephen (Aged 37)**

"...I do think about crime...it's property crime I think... my wife took the children to a party...she was followed into the car park by a couple of kids...they smashed the car window and nicked her handbag and everything in it"

**Concerns around children**

Concerns about children were largely dependant on the ages of the children involved. Eight fathers of young children mentioned the possibility of children being abducted by strangers. Although some respondents qualified this by saying that they worried more about risks posed by other children and traffic, it was still a risk that they considered:

**Woody (Aged 30)**

"...I do think about paedophiles, there's crap like that, although it's more about them being picked on"

**Robbie (Aged 30)**

"...we hear that much on the news about sex offenders, that obviously worries you constantly"

Some respondents suggested that sex offenders could be living in the area and they would not know about it; the lack of knowledge and the 'unfamiliarity' made the danger more real:

**Trevor (Aged 36)**

"...we worry about adults to a certain extent, you don't know whose living in the area...like paedophiles, 'cos they like to integrate them into an area and it's dangerous without them being treated"

**Vincent (Aged 28)**

“...I think it’s just the way the world is today, there is a threat outside...you don’t know who drives up and down, that’s a worry when you have children, weirdos, trying to encourage children to go off with them”

In contrast, to the concerns of men with young children, a concern of the fathers with older children living at home<sup>38</sup> was of them being physically attacked and/or mugged. The children of two of the five respondents with older children at home had recently been mugged:

**Trevor (Aged 36)**

“...we don’t even like our older son<sup>39</sup> going out...he’s been mugged”

The adult son<sup>40</sup> of another respondent had recently been subjected to a serious and unprovoked physical attack in the area, leaving him extremely nervous about going out which had increased his father’s concerns still further:

**Martin (Aged 60)**

“...I mean my son’s been mugged and I worry about that...they gave him a good beating, completely unprovoked...I had to take him to the hospital... it’s changed him, slowed him down, he’s a lot quieter...he hardly goes out now”

Three respondents with older children living at home also worried about them going to pubs, nightclubs and football matches outside of the area because of the potential for assaults and the nature of these concerns was gendered:

**Harry (Aged 60)**

“...my son and my daughter like to go to the nightclubs up town...I worry about my daughter having her drink spiked, sex crimes...then there’s the violent side of things, people being attacked in pubs by men that have had too much to drink, I worry that my son might get attacked... but I try to be philosophical about it, I have to put myself down to just being grateful when they come home and they’re safe again”

**Tony (Aged 60)**

“...I worry about my son getting attacked or getting dragged into a brawl ...he doesn’t drink...but I worry about him...because of violence, fights, glassings and that”

At a later point in this narrative, the respondent also talks about his concerns when his son visits professional football matches:

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<sup>38</sup> Children aged 15 and above discussed by one respondent from the middle age group and four from the older age group.

<sup>39</sup> Aged 15 years.

<sup>40</sup> Aged 22 years.

“..I worry when he goes to football matches, about football hooliganism ....I mean, there’s a big match coming up on Sunday with Birmingham City and Millwall...people tell me that a lot of Millwall supporters belong to the BNP and apparently there’s several areas in Birmingham where they’re going to cause trouble on Sunday....you worry about that sort of thing...your son getting beaten up”.

Thus men with older children living at home perceived that the lifestyles of their children exposed them to certain risks. However, there was a difference in how these men expressed their concerns; whereas fathers of young children saw themselves as being male providers and protectors and having responsibility for their safety, fathers of older children were no longer able to control their behaviour and act as male protectors towards them, consequently, their concerns were qualified by this knowledge and were expressed as worry on their behalf. Therefore, whilst the father/child relationship was still in evidence it was a caring father only rather than also as a male protector.

### ***Concerns around those outside of the immediate family***

The levels of concerns for others outside of partners and children were more variable. One man in the younger age group worried about his grandmother being mugged because he felt old people were a target for such crimes. Two men in the middle age group worried about their fathers being mugged because they knew that they went to social clubs at night; although one caught a taxi and the other only had to cross the road from his house the respondents felt this reduced their fears somewhat. A childless man in the older sample worried about his niece being sexually assaulted or mugged when she was out at night and two of the older men<sup>41</sup> with teenaged grandchildren worried about them being physically attacked.<sup>42</sup> However, the grandchildren of the remainder of men in the older sample were younger and these men did not discuss worrying about them. It appeared that the ages of the children were relevant here because these younger children were subjected to the direct control of their parents and their grandparents knew this. It is interesting to note that these respondents discussed these concerns as being on behalf of others and did not use discourses of responsibility. These findings are similar to those in Snedker’s 2006 study<sup>43</sup> in that, in the main,<sup>44</sup> men tended to express concerns on behalf of immediate family members for whom they felt responsible. 12 men in the younger sample discussed a generalised

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<sup>41</sup> From a total of three with teenaged grandchildren.

<sup>42</sup> These concerns were again gendered including physical attacks and mugging against males and rape against females.

<sup>43</sup> Snedker, ‘Altruistic and Vicarious Fear of Crime,’

<sup>44</sup> Apart from the exceptions mentioned here.

concern about violent crime but this was because they felt that they were living within an increasingly violent society and their concerns, in large part, were for themselves.

### **Taking control of risks**

The aforementioned concerns about women and children affected the sorts of behavioural strategies that men developed to keep their partners and children safe. For example, some men,<sup>45</sup> tried to take direct control of potential sexual attacks by making sure that their partners were never out alone at night:

#### **Dave (Aged 28)**

"...my wife used to work at the hospital and come home quite late...I used to go and pick her up, it was cave man instinct, to protect her more than anything, I'd hate to think that I was sitting at home and something had happened to her, mugging, rape, death... when I could easily just go and pick her up"

#### **Danny (Aged 20)**

"...I worry about my girlfriend, if she is going out...if she finishes work, say after six and it gets dark, I'll have to meet her or she'll get a taxi, I mean, it's only a ten minute walk but I wouldn't let her do it, I like to protect her"

A similar form of direct control was used with young children who were not allowed out to play unsupervised:

#### **Woody (Aged 30)**

"...the kids, well you always worry about their safety don't you? We wouldn't let them go to school without us...we wouldn't let them go to the park on their own"

#### **Vincent (Aged 28)**

"...my kids are not allowed out anywhere without either me or my wife being with them....I think that is how it is generally today...the world is risky for them, gangs of other kids, weirdos who prey on kids...speeding cars...so we keep them inside"

In contrast, a form of 'indirect' control discussed by respondents<sup>46</sup> was to give their partners or older children advice; often this was all these men could do because older children and women were often out without them:

#### **Ian (Aged 29)**

"... the other night my wife was going out with her friends... I said 'Don't walk across town on your own or through subways' ...I wouldn't want her to walk anywhere where she could risk being attacked...she makes up her own mind but I tell her 'I will worry if you walk across town'"

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<sup>45</sup> Two men from the older sample and three from the middle sample.

<sup>46</sup> Eight middle and four older respondents.

**Robbie (Aged 30)**

“..I tell my stepdaughter to stay away from the shops where groups of lads hang out”

However, the giving of advice was a less reassuring strategy than that of taking direct control because it was dependant on the compliance of the woman or child. The following quotations indicate men’s frustration when their wives failed to heed their advice:

**Jeff (Aged 36)**

“...she’s a target if she’s out with the kids, she’s got her bag and a mobile phone and money and stuff like that... the amount of times I tell her, always to drive with the doors locked and I know she doesn’t ... if she goes out and she doesn’t come back when I expect her back, I have to phone her cos I’m always worried”

**Ron (aged 60)**

“...my wife finishes work at ten o’clock at night...last Saturday, she thought I wasn’t going to be able to make it to pick her up, so she left the building at ten to ten, to go and get a bus ...but I was on my way, she should have called me or at least got a taxi...I always tell her that, I shouted at her and I shouldn’t have done, but I’ve always got that fear”

The lack of direct control over a partner’s behaviour coupled with men’s perceptions of their partner’s vulnerability meant that risks towards partners were particularly troubling.

#### **4 Explanations of the Concerns**

There are several factors which can help to explain the nature of the risks discussed and similarities and differences between the men in the different age groups. Firstly, in terms of who men worried about and why; in the main men worried about women and children who they perceived to be at risk from certain crimes. In this respect, their concerns can be termed as altruistic because they were on behalf of others. However, there were other factors behind these concerns which involved the masculine identities of the men in the study. The factor of life course was extremely important because it was implicated in how men built their masculine identities including their discursive choices and practices and also, their levels of responsibility for others; both of which contributed to levels of concerns about others.

As men progress through the life course, different discourses around masculinity become available and unavailable and the men in this study drew from the discursive options that were available to them at their time of life and relevant to their current circumstances. For example, becoming a wage earner, buying a home, settling down and having children provided respondents with new narratives around masculinity with which to define

themselves as men such as being homeowners, fathers and male protectors. In contrast, the ageing process including reduced physicality and/or retirement decreased the possibility of engaging with some of these discursive options such as being a breadwinner and a male protector; indeed, at certain times in life, some ways of being male simply cease to become available or attractive.

Importantly, these shifts in the availability of discourses around masculine identities correspond with increases or decreases in levels of responsibility for significant others; both of which have implications for risk constructions. With one exception, the younger men did not have children and although eight reported feeling protective about their girlfriends, they did not express feeling responsible for others. While some older men did discuss fears for others their levels of concern were much lower than those of men in the middle age group and were expressed differently because their children were grown up and they no longer saw themselves as being responsible for them. Therefore, although some older men had adult children living at home and were aware of their lifestyles and the risks that they faced; their concerns lacked an emphasis on responsibility and protective roles; their masculine identities were less heavily implicated than those of the men in the middle age sample when discussing concerns around their children.

It was also interesting that few men discussed altruistic concerns about crime towards elderly relatives<sup>47</sup> and where men did so they did not suggest that they viewed themselves as being responsible for elderly relatives, rather such concerns were phrased in terms of being on their behalf. These findings were similar to those of Snedker who suggests that women in her study tended to worry more about elderly parents because they were socialised to empathise with others and did more emotional and caring work as a result; as such they tended to be more involved in the care of elderly parents than men were.<sup>48</sup>

In terms of concerns for children outside of the immediate family circle two men claimed to worry about their nieces and nephews being bullied or mugged. However, only two of the nine men with grandchildren claimed to worry about them, it appeared that this was largely because most of the grandchildren were young and under the direct control of their parents and also because grandparents did not view themselves as being responsible for grandchildren in the way that fathers did.

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<sup>47</sup> Some respondents mentioned being worried or having worried about the health of a relative.

<sup>48</sup> Snedker, 'Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime.'

The gender and life stage of the subject of the men's concerns was also important as it affected how they worried about others. Examples here included the female partners of men in the middle age and younger age groups who were perceived as being potential victims of sexual attacks whereas the partners of older men were not. Similarly, young children were perceived as being possible victims of child abduction, whereas an adult female child was considered to be at risk of rape and adult male children at risk of physical assault from other men.

A further important factor behind concerns about others was the perceived lack of control over such risks; although these men discussed how they tried to take control, this was not always possible. The dubious nature of control served to increase the anxieties about risks to older children and women, especially for those men that had emphasised maintaining control and/or being male protectors in their discussions about identity. Degrees of control were also connected to both the life stage of the man himself and also to the life stage of the subjects of his concerns.

Importantly, these different life stages, effects on discursive choices, levels of responsibility and degrees of control can all have implications for feelings of personal well-being because they may be experienced as either positive and 'empowering,' or negative and 'disempowering'; or even as a combination of the two. For example, the discussions of men with young children were dominated by their ideas about being male providers and protectors with high levels of responsibility for others. On one level, fatherhood was experienced as an 'empowering' experience because it provided new ways of being a man and provided men with happiness and fulfilment; all of these men discussed their enjoyment at spending time with their children. But at the same time it was also experienced as 'disempowering' because it introduced high levels of responsibilities and gave men new benchmarks to measure their masculine identities against, of which they perceived they may fall short, and let down both their families and themselves as men. In this way these risks made them aware of the vulnerability of their own male identities.

In contrast, although some aspects of ageing such as growing physically older can be experienced as disempowering and negative; one of the more 'empowering' and positive aspects of the ageing process was that older men were no longer expected to be providers for and protectors of their children, their levels of responsibility for others were therefore much lower than those in the middle age sample. Older men were not subjected to the sorts of pressures that younger men still had, as they were no longer evaluating themselves by the discourses of being male providers and/or protectors nor as 'New Men' with further

roles in the home in terms of children's care and development. While the older respondents had fewer options in ways of being male, so they could no longer be breadwinners or be tough guys, the compensation was that they had less reason to judge themselves and to feel that they may fall short of some masculine ideal.

Just as it is important to consider the possible empowering and disempowering effects of changes in their own life course for the identities of men; it is also necessary to consider the life stage of the subjects of their concerns and the possible empowering and disempowering effects upon the identities of the men themselves. An example here was the issue of control; while men in the middle sample often experienced the demands of fatherhood as disempowering because of the high levels of responsibility and their corresponding expectations of themselves as men, they were able to neutralise these disempowering effects to a certain extent by taking direct control of the perceived threats to their young children. In contrast, older men were unable to continue to be male protectors through an increase in their children's independence and their corresponding inability to continue to be protectors. However, while the lessening of control over their children was often experienced as disempowering it was compensated by a reduction in their levels of responsibility for others.

Therefore, future research on concerns which involve others needs to focus on such shifts in gendered identities, levels of responsibility and any possible disempowering and empowering effects, of these. To this end, in order to evaluate feelings of 'vulnerability' there is a requirement to focus on balance in terms of how the empowering aspects of experiences within the life course of individuals may sometimes dominate, while at other times negative aspects will over-ride, or alternatively they may balance each other out. By using longitudinal research and focusing on the experiences of men at different stages of the life course it may be possible to evaluate whether some life events and periods are more stressful and 'disempowering' than others.

What also remains important is that both the ages of the respondent and his levels of responsibility together with the age and gender of the subject of his concerns are fundamental to understanding both the amount and shape of the men's fears for others. Those respondents demonstrating the highest levels of such fears were men at the mid-stage of the life course and in large part this was because they had the highest levels of responsibilities for others. Notwithstanding, these high levels of concerns cannot simply be attributed to the issue of seeing oneself as being responsible for wives and children and/or as a male protector. In part, they can also be explained by the more complex 'hybrid' models



of masculine identities enacted by these men, which drew both on traditional narratives about male providers and protectors alongside more modern ideas about being a man, including being caring fathers and husbands who shared the care of their children and domestic tasks. Indeed, these men emphasised substantial practical and emotional investments in their families which were very different to the discussions of the older men and hence the crimes involving others that they discussed represented risks of destabilising several components of their own masculine identities and also their domestic lives.

An illustration is provided by the crime of burglary, which was focused on much more heavily by these men than those in either the younger or older age groups. While this was arguably due in large part to their high levels of responsibility for young families it can also be attributed to the 'hybrid' styles of masculine identities discussed by these men that were heavily focused on families and the home. For example, the majority of these men were buying their homes and had invested time and money in improving them; being a homeowner was part of their masculine identities as providers for their families and reflective of their breadwinner roles. Moreover, these men had little money or time for socialising and apart from work, home provided the main place where they were enacting their masculinities and where they were also involved in parenting and domestic life. The home represented a social space where the many facets of their masculine identities came together.<sup>49</sup> It is suggested that burglaries were particularly threatening to these men because they posed direct threats to their families, but also because this crime represented a potential invasion of their home 'domain' where fundamental aspects of their male identities as caring and involved fathers and partners, male providers, protectors and homeowners came to the fore. Finally, these men also tried to take control of outside threats to women and children by either keeping them inside or advising them to stay at home and therefore burglary represented risks to this domestic domain thereby thwarting men's attempts to keep their families safe.

In a similar fashion, sexual attacks towards female partners were also threatening to men on several levels. Firstly, in a purely altruistic sense men worried on behalf of their partners because they saw them being vulnerable and potentially at risk from such attacks. As with burglary the hybrid masculine identities of the men were also implicated because these respondents emphasised being both loving towards their partners but also protectors of

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<sup>49</sup> It is the combination of these myriad factors at this point in their lives which is important. While some older men were defined as New Men and Reluctant New Men this was because they had done housework since retiring and some experienced close relationships with wives and grandchildren. However, they had not been expected to engage in childcare and domestic tasks whilst their children were young when they had been breadwinners with high levels of responsibility for others.

them; therefore rape presented a risk to these components of the identities of the men themselves. In addition there was a further personal dimension to the crime of rape because the masculine identities discussed by these respondents were those of family men in monogamous relationships. Consequently, sexual assault also had the potential to threaten their ideas about their wives or girlfriends as their exclusive sexual partners and could potentially de-stabilise relationships and family life in a way that purely physical attacks, like muggings, could not. This dimension of monogamy may also have been a contributory factor behind the high levels of concern about burglary. While the factor of exclusive sexual relationships with women was also evident in the discussions of younger men about their girlfriends this lacked the family dimension and also sometimes the monogamous dimension of the discussions of men in the middle sample.

The high levels of altruistic concerns expressed by the men in the middle group need to be centred within their masculine identities which placed great emphasis on relationships with monogamous women, fatherhood and being protective of significant others; which were reflective of their life stages and high levels of responsibilities. It follows that these men were more 'vulnerable' both in terms of how they constructed their families, as defenceless women and children and also how they constructed their male identities. In short, criminal risks to children and female partners represented further risks; that these respondents may fail to live up both to their expectations of their families and also their own expectations of themselves as men.

Finally, the identities of these men need to be contextualised within the historical period in question. It seemed, in part, that both the hybrid masculinities and the daily practices of these respondents were shaped by the expectations of their female partners and reflected changes in gendered roles; these men were expected to simultaneously be both male providers and involved fathers. In contrast, there were suggestions that the older men were not involved in the raising of their children when they had been younger men, as respondents in the middle sample currently were because this had not been expected of them either by their female partners or wider society. In this sense, these 'hybrid' masculinities of the men in the middle age group, can be seen to involve examples of historical changes in forms of gender relations and conceptualisations of masculine identities.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> R W Connell and James Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,' *Gender and Society*, 19(6) (2005) 829-859.

## 5 Conclusions

To summarise, this article has provided a different approach to explaining altruistic fears by taking a gendered developmental focus to help explain male fears for others. It has suggested that some ways of being a man are relevant at different stages in the life cycle and that these often correspond with differences in levels of responsibilities for others. Consequently, there was evidence here to suggest that men may be more vulnerable in terms of worrying about others at certain stages in the life course and that concerns can shift from concerns for oneself (when younger) to concerns about others during the mid stage of the life course, to concerns about oneself again in later life; providing support for Goodey's suggestion that fears can shift backwards and forwards throughout the life course.<sup>51</sup> This is a study which has materially added to the debate about masculinity and its manifestations in relation to crime and disorder, past and present; prompting a call to reconsider many assumptions about male reactions historically to, for example, burglary and a range of events featuring interpersonal violence.<sup>52</sup>

When considering fears for others a focus on how gendered identities change throughout the life course; including how men grapple with the ageing process, shifts in their identities and levels of responsibilities, can help us to better understand the nature and shape of concerns about others. It is important to remember that while the issue of selfhood is largely to do with which social category a man fits into, in terms of being a man of a certain age it is not limited to this. Rather, it also involves how individual men build their masculine identities in terms of which discourses and practices they engage with and how they see themselves as a result.

Therefore, a man's altruistic concerns about crime need to be placed within the context of what sort of man he sees himself as, who he sees himself being responsible for, why and in what way. Suggestions have been made<sup>53</sup> that men may actually be more fearful than women once allowances have been made to account for differences in patterns of gendered socialisation. Certainly there is some empirical support here for this argument as many men were concerned about crimes to their immediate families which also involved implicit threats to their own identities.<sup>54</sup> It is suggested, therefore, that at some stages in life men may be more fearful than women; particularly if they worry about both themselves and significant

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<sup>51</sup> Goodey, 'Boys Don't Cry,' (1997).

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, the chapters contained in Shani D'Cruze (ed) *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850-1950* (Longman, 2000)

<sup>53</sup> See Warr and Ellison, 'Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime,' (2000); Robbie Sutton and Stephen Farrall, 'Gender, Socially Desirable Responding and the Fear of Crime,' *British Journal of Criminology*, 45 (2005) 212-224; Snedker, 'Altruistic and Vicarious Fear of Crime,' (2006).

<sup>54</sup> While Snedker's study in line with previous studies found that men were much less likely to discuss personal fears than were women, many men in this study did discuss fears for themselves.

others and also because threats to significant others may have more damaging consequences to man's conception of selfhood particularly if he draws on discourses of protection and control.

To conclude, this article has suggested that several important factors have been underplayed in the literature on fears for others; consequently, the concept of 'altruistic fear' to describe such fears remains limited. This paper has made three clear arguments; firstly, all 'fears' about crime, including altruistic fears, are connected to the gendered developmental ageing process and the notion of a gendered developmental selfhood has been afforded inadequate attention. Secondly, altruistic fears contain personalised dimensions and are connected to a person's ideas about self and their place in the world and because of this they cannot simply be treated as being distinct from personal fears. Thirdly, these factors are relevant to the motivations behind concerns for others, the form that those concerns take and the nature of the threats that they represent.

A different conceptualisation of altruistic fears is now required and there are several possibilities for better approaches. Firstly, it is possible to describe them as dual fears because they involve a combination of personal and altruistic factors and threats. Secondly, it may be better to view them as an aspect of personalised fear that involves one's connection or relationship with another person. Thirdly, it may be preferable to have a selection of categories to describe such fears which could be dependant on both the specific context within which the fear operates and the features that appear most salient within that context. Such categories could include familial fear,<sup>55</sup> empathetic fear,<sup>56</sup> and selfish gene i.e. 'generational' fear.<sup>57</sup> Future empirical work could test the utility of these ideas and concepts.

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<sup>55</sup> See also Warr and Ellison, , 'Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime,' (2000).

<sup>56</sup> See the example of the McCann case provided earlier.

<sup>57</sup> See Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford University Press, 1976) on his selfish-gene concept where human actions can be explained in terms of evolution and the need to reproduce genes which can be linked to altruistic fear for future generations.