Fear After Dark: Exploring women's experiences of urban space at night through site dance film.

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'The threat of rape alters the feel of the night. Observe how your body feels, how the night feels, when you're in fear. The constriction in your chest, the vigilance in your eyes, the rubber in your legs.'

(Men on Rape, Beneke, 1982 pg3)

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Introduction

This research explores how women in Western society interact with urban night-time space, specifically addressing issues faced by women in urban night-time environments in the UK. To explore these themes, it will employ both a textual analysis of a variety of theoretical sources and a practice as research methodology exploring the urban spaces of Chichester and Portsmouth & Southsea after dark. Last year in the Charles Dickens and Nelson area of Portsmouth over 2,051 Violent and Sexual assaults were reported (Ingram, 2019) and in Chichester despite only 93 cases; these made up just over a third of all crimes committed in Chichester (Detailed statistics for Chichester West, 2020). Through these methods of textual analysis and practice as research, I am interested in understanding how women experience urban space after dark in particular this project explores the following research questions:

- How are women's experiences of urban night-time space shaped, controlled and experienced?
- How might these experiences and related themes be explored through site dance film?
- How might this process shift perceptions of night-time space for participants and viewers?

To explore these research questions, I will draw on theoretical ideas from a range of fields Including: Human Geography (Beebeejaun, 2017; Blumen et al., 2013), Psychology (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McMillan, 2016; Solymosi et al., 2015) , Sociology (Fenster, 2005; Phipps et al. 2017), Proxemics (Lefebvre, 2004; de Certeau, 1984), and Screen and Site-Dance Research (Dodds, 2001; Hunter et al., 2019).The wide scope of this literature allows for an in-depth exploration of the research questions and, facilitates a more nuanced understanding of women's urban night-time experiences.

The western world is generally considered a good place to live as a woman. When compared to countries such as India, Afghanistan, Somalia and Pakistan, all rated in the top ten worst places to live as a woman (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018), where issues such as human trafficking, physical and sexual assault, lack of access to work and even practices of genital mutilation, female infanticide and honour killings are still commonplace (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018), the western world seems incredibly safe for women. However, in this same 2018 study the USA was named the tenth worst place to live as a woman, though it avoided being listed for issues of human trafficking, access to healthcare and cultural traditions it was ranked highly enough for both violent and sexual assault to make it into the top ten. This raises the question of how safe the western world really is for women and lead me to explore how safe I felt within my personal experience of western society within the UK.

In her article *Rhythms of Fear*, Laura Maw examines her personal experiences walking home alone at night through the works of Proxemics theorists such as Lefebvre and De Certeau. This article acted as a starting point for my own interest in the subject of women's experience of urban space at night, causing me to reflect on my own experiences of urban night-time space and the fear it causes. Having spent the ages 16-21 walking home after dark from dance classes and then working in a pub, I have experienced fear walking after dark. One of the most terrifying experiences I ever experienced was an incident when I was 18, I was getting the train home after a dance class in Exeter when an intoxicated man on the train kept trying to make conversation with me and proceeded to follow me after I left the train in my home town. Luckily my workplace was nearby to the station and I went in there to get help from the male bar staff, however the fear of being followed is still a fear I hold every time I walk home alone in the dark to the point where I have to ring someone every time I set out in the dark so that I have someone there if something should happen to me. My

dancer also had a similar incident of being followed whilst on a night out in Brighton. Men following women home at night has been a somewhat regular occurrence in Chichester during my time at university here too; every few months an email seems to go around warning of such incidents occurring and telling girls to be cautious. Though violent crime and sexual assault can occur at any time of day, the Office from National Statistics report on the nature of violent crimes in the UK for the years 2017-18 states that 'more than half of violent incidents (54%) occurred in the evening or during the night' (Office for National Statistics, 2019). This includes anytime between 6pm and 6am. This same fact is portrayed in pop culture depictions of crime, Levin's 2013 analysis of four prominent crime shows showed that 'The "typical" crime on these television shows usually occurred at night and in a private location […] Victims were most commonly women (60.3%)' (Levin, 2013 p18). Undertaking this research with a Practice as Research methodology I was drawn to the medium of film to explore these themes. Using film allows for the exploration of themes of surveillance, and the male and female gaze.

This research project employs Objectification Theory, as proposed by Frederickson and Roberts in 1997, as a framework for understanding how and why women's experiences of urban night-time space are formed. Objectification Theory defines the experiences and consequences of being a woman within a culture that objectifies the female body and works on the assumption that almost all women experience objectification and its consequences during their lifetime (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). The four experiential consequences named by Objectification theory are - feelings of shame, feelings of anxiety, lack of peak motivational states and unawareness of internal bodily states. This research will largely focus on two former consequences, shame and anxiety, as these are the most relevant to the urban night-time experiences of women. Though the urban night time experiences of women do have an impact on peak motivation and bodily awareness in women through a reinforcement

of self-objectification, which Frederickson and Roberts state should be viewed as a 'strategy many women develop to help determine how other people will treat them, which has clear implications for their quality of life' (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997 p180), by providing an environment in which sexual harassment is more normalised, 'Sexual harassment is the norm in the night-time economy' (Parliament.uk, 2018). However, shame and anxiety are a more immediate consequence of women interacting with urban night-time space, and for some women experiences of shame and anxiety can lead to them not even wanting to leave the house at night (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Maw, 2016; Parliament.uk, 2018).

Within these experiences of shame and anxiety there is discussion of defence mechanisms, both internal in the form of self-objectification which may help women to understand how men will respond to their presence in a space that men might consider to be their domain (Beneke, 1982; Lewis, 2018; Ross, 2016). Alongside the external mechanisms, both in terms of avoiding conflict by avoiding interactions and covering themselves and through self-defence techniques such as improvised weapons and basic manoeuvres, for example the SING (Solar-plexus, Instep, Nose and Groin) technique. These are just some examples of the defence mechanisms women are forced to develop to live and function being in an objectified body in society. Though there has been some debate on the topic, research suggests that the act of rape has little to do with sexual attraction and much more to do with a desire for power and dominance (Baker, 1997; Beneke, 1982; Palmer, 1988). Despite this, being considered sexually attractive is still a high-risk factor for women. In his book *Men on Rape* (1982) Beneke reports that many men who commit rapes would consider a woman being physically attractive to be a threat and deserving of retaliation: one man even related it to be equivalent to being punched in the face.

Returning to the external defence mechanisms, they provided a starting stimulus for discussion and movement creation, both the personal ones of my participants, such as calling a friend, and those described by Frederickson & Roberts (1997). They identify things such as carrying keys between finger, jogging with a dog, not going out after dark, feigning deafness, because 'being female in a culture that objectifies the female body creates multiple opportunities to experience anxiety along with its accompanying vigilance' (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997 p182) and this was a key area of interest for my practical research.

Chapter 1: The Patriarchy in the UK

This research draws on issues of women's safety and freedom pertinent to the current social and political climate. In recent years for example, there has been a series of upheavals in both politics and society as a whole regarding gender relations, especially the violent and sexual assault of women. The founding of the Women's March, sparked by Donald Trump's 2017 inauguration[1], and the rise of the #MeToo movement linked to the highly publicised conviction of the rapist Harvey Weinstein are considered by many to be a turning point in the discussion and publicity of women's rights issues. Though both of these events began in America their impact was felt globally: women's marches sprang up around the world including the UK where it began in London in 2018 and continues to be an annual event. The #MeToo movement was also evident in the UK and was a key influence in the creation of The Justice and Equality Fund which has been backed by various UK celebrities and donated millions to women's charities (BBC News, 2019 [online]). It was also an influence in the 2017 Westminster sexual misconduct scandal were Members of Parliament (MP) were accused of unwanted sexual behaviour that lead to the resignations and suspension of several MPs and cabinet members. The first accusations within parliament became public in late October 2017, following the #MeToo movements' rapid rise in publicity after the hashtag's use against Harvey Weinstein in the New York Times article in earlier that month (Jaffe, 2018 [online] pg. 80). Subsequently the then Prime Minister Theresa May stated that ''unwanted sexual behaviour' is 'completely unacceptable'' (Krook, 2018) and the opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn condemned the

[1] The Women's March on Washington was in response to Trump's election despite sexist and racist comments, most notably his leaked recording in which he states "I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything." (Jacobs, Siddiqui and Bixby, 2019).

> warped and degrading culture' that has permitted abuse of women to be 'accepted and normalised'. He stated emphatically that there would be 'no tolerance in the Labour Party for sexism, harassment, or abuse. Whatever it takes, we are absolutely committed to rooting it out.
>
> (Krook, 2018).

Corbyn's reaction was seen as more proactive than May's. This may be due to the first allegations coming from Labour members as well as their creation of the #LabourToo website which brought further unwanted press for the Labour Party, already struggling with accusations of anti-Semitism within the party. However, another argument for the difference in reactionary statements and media response to them could once again be linked to gender. The language used regarding Theresa May during her term is indicative of the way women are viewed, both in politics and wider society. The difference in language is demonstrated in a 2018 report which analysed tweets about both May and Corbyn found that May received 'three times as many derogatory comments related to her gender' (Hervey, 2018 [online]). Portrayals of May as a 'bloody difficult woman' by both herself and her rivals reflects how women in power are often portrayed as being 'difficult' or 'nasty' as opposed to their male counterparts who are 'strong'. Some members of the public, when interviewed even suggested that women shouldn't be in positions of power due to 'too many hormones' (Maltby, 2019 [online]), a more passionate response to the sexual misconduct scandal could have led to further criticism on May's part for being too emotional. Another memorable incident occurred in 2018, when Jeremy Corbyn was accused of calling May a 'stupid woman'. Despite the gendered language used to oppose her many argue that the resistance May faced within parliament was due only to her policies, largely referring to her attempts to negotiate the Brexit withdrawal agreement with Brussels (Andrews, 2018 [online]).

Another key political event was the election of Boris Johnson as head of the Conservative party following May's resignation in June 2019, and his landslide victory in the December 2019 general election. Johnson has a long history within the media for sexism,

racism[2] and homophobia [3](Beinkov, 2019; Wood, 2019). Johnson's recorded sexist comments, dating back to his time in journalism in the 90s where Johnson is seen sexualising female Labour Party members, ''Tottymeter' reading is higher than at any Labour Party conference in living memory,"'(Johnson, 1997 in Beinkov, 2019 [online]), having a nude calendar on his desk despite female colleagues discomfort, and his extremely sexualised comments regarding the Spectators publisher Kimberly Quinn '"just pat her on the bottom and send her on her way"' (Johnson in Beinkov, 2019 [online]). As well as his comments during his political career, when hosting the 2012 Olympics as mayor of London he made highly sexualised comments regarding the female volleyball players, during his run for party leader he was also accused of domestic violence against his partner by his neighbours after they were forced to call the police regarding an altercation, though no charges were brought against him. Johnson's election was met with some protest, however the media response to protests was to belittle and mock the protestors calling them 'sore-losers' and claiming they were 'anti-democracy' (Wood, 2019), and despite the protests Johnson's landslide victory is the Conservatives' largest victory since Thatcher in the 1980s. This evidence of sexism within parliament and the publics apparent acceptance of it provides a window into the opinions held by the majority of people in the UK. The acceptance of such demeaning and sexist language from the Prime Minister reflects a culture of misogyny, which deems women unworthy of respect.

The impact of #MeToo was not only seen in celebrities and parliament. Since the beginning of #MeToo women are becoming more comfortable discussing and reporting their experiences of harassment and assault (Bowcott, 2019[online]; Jaffe, 2018 [online]), despite

[2] Johnson has referred to black people as 'piccaninnies' with 'watermelon smiles', called Muslim women wearing burqa's as 'letterboxes' and 'bank-robbers' (Beinkov, 2019; Wood, 2019)
[3] Johnson has referred to gay men as 'tank-topped bum boys', equated gay marriage becoming legalised to 'three men and a dog' being allowed to marry (Beinkov, 2019; Wood, 2019))

this rise in reporting of assaults conviction rates have actually fallen in the last two years since the beginning of the #MeToo movement (Bowcott, 2019[online]; cps.gov.uk, 2019[online]). One suggested reason for this is that attitudes to women reporting assaults have not changed (Bowcott, 2019[online]; Lewis, 2019), both within the judicial system and wider society. When a woman comes forward the question is raised, what if she is making it up? Beneke noted this during his research in the 1980s; the suggestion that women reporting rapes or assaults were making things up or seeking attention came from doctors who examined them, lawyers who represented them or their rapist, as well as the police they reported the crime to (Beneke, 1982). Though the UK seems to have progressed drastically in terms of women's rights since the 1980s with important milestones such as the 1985 equal pay act, the criminalisation of marital rape in 1994, several developments in the laws regarding domestic violence[4] and then the 2017 #MeToo movement, the question is still raised, '"How do we know these are true?"' (Ellis in Bowcott, 2019). This is evidenced in Lesley McMillan's 2015 collaborative research paper which examined medical professionals and forensic examiners' perceptions of rape victims in which she concluded that the majority hold views 'centered broadly on the vilification of victims and the vindication of perpetrators' (McMillan and White, 2015). Her study 2016 into police perceptions of false allegations of rape, in which she found that 'police officers' estimate of false allegations varies as widely as from 5 to 90%' (McMillan, 2016) but that the police force 'continue to invest in and hold onto gender stereotypes about women as deceitful, vengeful and ultimately regretful of sexual encounters' (Phipps et al., 2017). The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) can provide few reasons for the decrease in prosecutions, only stating that the number of cases referred to them by the police has decreased and suggesting that the police take longer

[4] 2004: Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act makes common assault an arrestable offence.
2014: Clare's law is introduced allowing police to disclose details of an abusive partner's past.
2015: Coercive control becomes a criminal offence. (Fawcettsociety.org, 2016)

to investigate and discuss the cases with the victims which results in a stronger case but takes a much longer time to reach the CPS for prosecution (cps.gov.uk). Another issue with reporting assaults and harassment in the UK is the libel laws, which can lead to women who speak out against men, especially public figures, being sued (Bowcott, 2019).

In her article, *The Collective Power of #MeToo,* Sarah Jaffe discusses the idea of rape culture and its place within patriarchy. Jaffe proposes that the #MeToo movement brought attention to the societal norms often called rape culture. The term 'rape culture' was first popularised by US feminists in the 1970s and refers to

> a set of general cultural beliefs supporting men's violence against women, including the idea that this violence is a fact of life, that there is an association between violence and sexuality, that men are active while women are passive, and that men have a right to sexual intercourse.
>
> (Phipps et al., 2017)

Rape culture is intertwined with patriarchal society. Jaffe states that it exists 'to ensure a culture of male dominance, which takes many forms' (Jaffe, 2018 pg83) and that its existence continues to perpetuate victim blaming and provides further evidence for the belief that sexual harassment and assault are largely not a crime of passion but instead a method of asserting power and dominance (Baker, 1997; Beneke, 1982; Jaffe, 2018; Palmer, 1988). Victim blaming is a consistent tool of Patriarchal society to demean and belittle women who speak out. A highly publicised example of victim blaming in recent years is the trial in which a teenage girl's underwear was used as evidence against her by her accused rapist in court. The defence lawyer claimed '"You have to look at the way she was dressed. She was wearing a thong with a lace front" '(BBC News, 2018), even suggesting that the thong provided evidence that the girl had been 'open to meeting someone and being with someone' (BBC

News, 2018). Though this event did cause outrage, the very fact that it occurred in the first place, and that following the trail the man was found not guilty of rape, shows the normalisation of victim blaming within the UK. The hashtag #safetytipsforladies was used by Hilary Bowman-Smart in 2013 to highlight the preservation of victim blaming through the advice given to women to avoid rape. Bowman-Smart began a trend of women using exaggeration and humour to display how irrational victim blaming often is, tweets suggesting women 'should don chain mail' (Rentschler, 2015 p4) or 'leave their vaginas at home before they go out' (Rentschler, 2015 p4). These ideas of victim blaming and the suggestion that there are ways from women to avoid assault will be explored further through the practical element of this research where they will be used to explore how women alter their natural habits when walking alone at night. This is a particularly important theme because, as Jaffe says

> Patriarchy spreads the lie that there are rules we can follow that will keep us safe—that if we wear the right clothes, say no loudly enough, walk away, don't laugh at men, work hard, no harm will come to us.
>
> There are not.
>
> (Jaffe, 2018 pg83 [online])

This is one of the main factors in creating fear after dark for women - they have been told that certain behaviours will keep them safe, and often impose these rules upon themselves, yet are constantly presented with examples of how these defence mechanisms or behaviours will not necessarily protect them.

Chapter 2: Fear of Crime and the Gendered City

As established in Chapter 1, the Patriarchy is a strong force which continues to impact women's lives in the UK. In our Western patriarchal societies women's interaction with urban space areas is largely shaped by a range of systems, urban design processes and societal codes and conventions shaped and designed by men. In her article *Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life* (2016) Yasminah Beebeejaun, Professor of Urban Planning, highlights three key ways in which women's right to the city are impacted by this. Firstly, the economic inequality women face and the perpetuation of the belief that women should undertake the main responsibility for household chores and childcare (Beebeejaun, 2016; Mattingly & Sayer, 2006), secondly, the underrepresentation of women in politics and urban planning[5] (Women in Planning, 2019) and lastly the continuation of violence against women in the urban setting (Beebeejaun, 2016; Jaffe, 2018; Phipps et al., 2017). These three factors inform women's engagement with urban spaces in specific ways and enforce a series of constraints that shape their domestic, societal and economic engagement with urban spaces and design systems.

Women's responsibility for household chores and childcare remains a limiting factor on women's right to the city. Sociologists Mattingly and Sayer state that 'Although women's time commitments to paid work have in- creased, they remain responsible for managing household labor and child care' (Mattingly & Sayer, 2006). This leads to women experiencing less free time than men during which they could be experiencing the city outside of the home and claiming these spaces for their own leisure pursuits. Furthermore, as well as being limited in the areas they are able to experience within the city, access to the city

[5] 'women fill only 17% of leadership positions in private sector planning consultancy' (Women in Planning, 2019)

for mothers is an ongoing issue in the UK: often women with small children find accessing urban spaces difficult due to issues such as a lack of child friendly spaces and the scarcity of accessibility slopes and lifts, and difficulties managing pushchairs on public transport especially when travelling alone. In the late 1980s the Women's Design Service (WDS) began a series of campaigns to help provide mothers with better access to the city, advocating for buggy spaces on public transport and making shops accessible to mothers with pushchairs. However, issues still remain around women with children having full access to the city, for example issues surrounding breast feeding spaces and baby changing access which are still restricted. Campaigns like British Toilet Association's having to be made to provide more and better facilitated public toilets highlight this fact. Public toilets are a necessity for young children and public baby changing facilities are essential in providing women with full access to the city. Availability of public toilets is not only an issue addressing mothers though, public toilet closures have been an ongoing issue for women - '32% of public toilets in England & Wales have closed since 2000, as of March 2018' (Knight, 2018). This hinders women's ability to spend time walking and exploring the city without having to return home significantly more than men's because men not only need to urinate less than women, and can do so wherever they choose if necessary, but also don't menstruate which can require women to need access to toilets regularly when out in public (Beebeejaun, 2016).

Feminist human geographer Liz Bondi (1998) discusses the gender divide between public and private spaces within the urban setting in her article *Gender, Class, and Urban space: Public and private space in contemporary urban landscapes*, drawing on various theorists to discuss the connotations of the alleged femininity of private space and masculinity of public space. She, along with other feminist scholars, argues that the patriarchy has continued to enforce the idea that the home is a woman's true place (Bondi,

1998; Blumen, Fenster and Misgav, 2013; Fenster, 2005; Pateman, 1989). Bondi argues that ‘the notion of public and private spheres is inseparable from a conception of gender in terms of "complementary" heterosexual relations’ (Bondi, 1998 p164). In her argument she highlights a key element of the gender divide between public and private space stems from the traditional patriarchal family roles in which the woman is the designated as the primary homemaker and caregiver. As established by Mattingly and Sayer (2005), this remains true today despite many women also having a paid job outside of the home.

Men’s lack of understanding of these issues plays an important role in denying women access to urban space. The lack of representation for women within urban planning - ‘women fill only 17% of leadership positions in private sector planning consultancy’ (Women in Planning, 2019) - means that issues that primarily face women are often overlooked when considering urban design and planning proposals. Other examples of the impact of urban designs on women include the consideration for lighting around parks and carparks, spaces that are often considered to be a danger hotspot for women after dark (Office for National Statistics, 2019), and public staircases without pushchair or disability access, or with gaps between steps which provide an area for sexual harassment of women wearing skirts. Women’s underrepresentation in urban planning and the private sector is evidenced here to provide a hinderance on women’s freedom of access to the city, Fenster, a social and cultural geographer, states that ‘The right to participation includes the right to take an important role in decisions regarding the production of urban spaces at any relevant scale’ (Fenster, 2005). In this she highlights how the right to the city includes the right to impact the production of urban space.

Fear of violence is arguably the most limiting factor in women’s access to the city, especially when engaging with urban spaces after dark. Urban areas have an overall higher crime rate, and notably for this research they have a higher rate of both violent and sexual

assaults reported by women (gov.uk, 2019). Cities function with a concentrated population in a small area, whilst maintaining a level of anonymity for their inhabitants. In their article *Why is there more crime in cities?* Glaeser and Sacerdote (1999) state that this concentrated population is a strong factor in the high crime rates experienced in cities. They hypothesise that the deterrent for crime, arrest and potential jail time, is less effective in a city with a large population as the pool of potential suspects for any one crime is so large that conviction is less likely than in a rural area with a smaller population (Glaeser and Sacerdote, 1999). Though this theory remains relevant today more recent research would be beneficial to fully understanding why crime is more prevalent in urban areas, although, more recent research into this area is lacking. Glaeser and Sacerdote's work goes some way towards explaining women's fear of crime in urban areas, however there is significant research into women's fear of crime (Pain, 1997; Painter and Farrington, 1999; Solymosi et al, 2015; Whitley and Prince, 2005) which examines a number of other contributing factors from the urban environment such as street lighting, public transport and Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) monitoring. From a criminology perspective, Solymosi et al. (2015) describe how

> fear of crime has knock-on effects on willingness to choose active travel modes, […] walkability […] older people's willingness to leave home unaccompanied […] and on constraints to social behaviour
>
> (Solymosi et al. 2015 p3),

In their study on fear of crime mapping they note that fear of crime does not necessarily equate to experienced crime or recorded crime rates. They suggest that in fact 'women experience more fear of crime than would be expected' (Solymosi et al., 2015 p11) in relation to crime rates and this might be 'because they often suffer harassment that is not reflected in these statistics' (Solymosi et al., 2015 p11) which influences their feelings of fear. The city at night is a consistent location in which women report fear of crime (Solymosi et al, 2015; Whitley and Prince, 2005), a key contributing factor to this is the lack of visibility for victims

to see and be seen and the opportunity for assailants to hide in poorly lit areas. There has been substantial research into the effect of better street lighting on crime rates and perceived fear of crime. Painter and Farrington (1999) argue that improved street lighting would help reduce crime in a wide variety of ways:improved lighting deters potential offenders by increasing visibility for both the potential victim and any potential witnesses, who they also reason are more likely to be present in better lit areas. Furthermore, the presence of better street lighting increases the perceived safety of the area and potential police presence (Painter and Farrington, 1999). Though Pease's article *A Review of Street Lighting Evaluations: Crime Reduction Effects* (1999) overall agrees with Painter and Farrington (1999), Pease (1999) also clarifies that even though increased light is beneficial in many cases, 'general increases in street lighting do not always have overall crime prevention effects' (Pease, 1999). He goes on to say that in fact though better lighting is likely to reduce violent or sexual assaults at night it may lead to an increase in burglaries due to more people feeling safe to socialise outside of the house after dark. Pease (1999) goes on to proposes that there is also possibility that increased visibility may provide assailants with more opportunity to observe potential victims, allowing them to form a 'better judgement of their vulnerability and the value of what they carry' (Pease, 1999), and then proceed with an attack once they leave the well-lit area.

Another key influence on the levels of fear of violence women experience in the city is CCTV. The suggestion has always been that CCTV is there to make the public feel safer, however the majority of research surrounding CCTV and surveillance demonstrates that the presence of CCTV rarely has a positive impact on fear of crime. Williams and Ahmed (2009) analyse a series of studies on CCTV and fear of crime. Across the majority of studies they analysed the recurring trend was that the presence of CCTV cameras often increased people's fear of crime; 'those respondents who were aware of the cameras actually worried more often

about crime than those who were not' (Gill & Spriggs, 2005 in Williams and Ahmed, 2009 p4). Armstrong and Norris (1999) also found negative consequences from CCTV in their study *CCTV and The Social Structuring of Surveillance* which examined the practices of CCTV operators over a two-year period. Armstrong and Norris (1999) discovered that CCTV operators often leant strongly towards stereotyping: over the course of the study they found that the operators were statistically more likely to target surveillance on groups of young men – especially young black men (Armstrong and Norris, 1999). Another area they touch upon in their study is the potential gender bias from the predominantly male camera operators, despite women making up just over half of the population 'they only accounted for 7% of primary persons surveilled' (Armstrong and Norris, 1999 p174). As well as this bias towards ignoring women, Armstrong and Norris (1999) also address how this predominantly male environment in the CCTV operators' room could lead to further objectification of women,

> CCTV also fosters a male gaze in the more conventional and voyeuristic sense: with its pan-tilt and zoom facilities, the thighs and cleavages of scantily clad women are an easy target for those male operators so motivated. Indeed, 10% of all targeted surveillances on women and 15% of operator-initiated surveillance on women were for voyeuristic reasons, which outnumbered protective surveillance by five to one
>
> (Armstrong and Norris, 1999 p176).

This would suggest that despite the intention of surveillance being to increase the public's feelings of safety, CCTV may actually be detrimental to women's experience of fear in cities after dark in some cases adding to the objectification of women and often creating increased anxiety about potential violence or crime. It is evident that urban planning plays a role here in women's fear of violence and crime, however, Pain (1997) argues that too much focus on trying to design ways to make cities safer which 'carries the danger of focusing attention away from the social and political causes of crime' (Pain, 1997) which we examined in the previous chapter.

As established earlier in this chapter, women's access to the city can be limited by their ability to travel via public transport if they have young children. This issue predominantly effects mothers during the daytime, however, women's urban mobility after dark is still significantly impacted by public transport. Research has shown that women are more reliant on public transport than men. In their 2017 study on sexual harassment on public transport Solymosi et al. (2017) states that many women had

> little or no access to other forms of transportation. According to the National Travel Survey 2014, 48% of those in the lowest income quintile households in the UK are without access to a car
>
> (Solymosi et al. 2017 p5).

Once again, fear of crime plays a key role in limiting women's mobility in an urban environment, 'A number of surveys have identified that fear of crime and personal security is a major inhibiting factor to the use of public transport' (Newton, 2014) and in large part this can be contributed to two factors: the woman's inability to flee from transportation that is between stops, and the anonymity that busy transport gives the perpetrator (Lewis, 2018). Lewis (2018) identifies that 'the context of public transport as an overcrowded, isolating and hard to control environment, may facilitate particular types of sexual harassment' (Lewis, 2018 p34). Projects such as Transport For London's (TfL) 'Report it to Stop it' campaign have attempted to combat the frequency of sexual assaults and harassment on public transport by encouraging the victims to report all harassment (Lewis, 2018; Solymosi et al. 2017). An area of sexual harassment often not covered by this type of campaign is the act of 'upskirting' defined as 'the non-consensual taking of images of an individual's pubic area underneath their outer clothing in public places' (McGlynn et al. 2017). 'Upskirting' is not covered under any sexual harassment or voyeurism laws in the UK despite some campaigning for this

(McGlynn and Rackley, 2017), and due to advances in technology the practice of ‘upskirting’ is on the rise. McGlynn et al. (2017) attributes this to increased accessibility of cameras with the capability of capturing these types of images surreptitiously, such as smartphones and go pros, and the availability of internet access which all ‘make it easier to take and distribute the images’ (McGlynn et al. 2017). Despite the apparent frequency of ‘upskirting’, there is still very little that can be done to report this harassment as they remain uncovered by harassment and voyeurism laws and therefore are not a reportable case of sexual harassment. and this alongside the danger often associated with the area surrounding bus stops and train stations, which can often be poorly lit, creates an environment of fear which limits the distance women are willing to travel after dark.

Chapter 3: *Text Me When You Get Home Safe:* Practice as Research through site-dance film

In order to fully explore the impact of these interconnecting themes regarding women's urban experience after dark, I chose to use the medium of site-dance film. Through Practice as Research (PaR) methodology I used studio exploration as well as a series of filming excursions to develop my research and produce a short site-dance film, *Text Me When You Get Home Safe (2020).* In his book *Practice as Research within The Arts*, the performance researcher Robin Nelson describes the PaR methodology as when 'practice is a key method of inquiry' (Nelson, p23) and describes how one might use PaR to develop and understand research questions. This methodology helped me to address the project's research questions regarding women's experience with urban night-time space and how these experiences are shaped and controlled. In particular the PaR methodology facilitated an exploration of the potential for site dance film to be used in a creative articulation of some of the findings and experiences expressed by women (including myself) of their night-time urban experiences.

The project was filmed from 27th February[6] to 14th March[7] and I worked with one dancer in Chichester and Portsmouth. Before we began the filming process, I had to consider the safety of myself and my dancer in an urban night-time space and the impact any measures taken to ensure this would have on the research. There was some discussion of perhaps needing to take a male friend with us on our filming excursions, debate on what methods of transport would be safest and decisions on how many people should accompany us on these excursions. I decided against having a man accompany us as I felt like this might sway both myself and my dancer in being able to fully explore the fear we experience in a night-time

[6] Filming was due to begin on 6th February but due to ongoing health issues this start date was delayed.
[7] Filming was cut short due to the COVID-19 outbreak and university closure.

space as women, however we did choose to be accompanied by a few other women on any excursions which required travel, especially via public transport. Another consideration was costume - I decided on casual clothes but selected a red top or coat for the dancer to wear. I chose this for two reasons. Firstly, in colour theory red represents danger and I wanted to highlight the sense of danger the city poses to women and secondly, because the red helped the dancer to stand out on camera, making it clear she was the focus of our attention.

I began my PaR work by doing some studio exploration of the key ideas and feelings I wanted to explore through my film. Originally, I began working with 3 dancers, thinking I would have one dancer exploring each city[8], Chichester, Portsmouth and Brighton. However, once we began filming, I realised that this did not convey my ideas fully and became somewhat confusing to follow. In our studio exploration I provided stimulus for my dancers, for example the 'defence mechanisms' described by Frederickson and Roberts (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) such as holding keys between the fingers and avoiding eye contact, or more simple stimuli for example the emotion of fear. I chose to begin with studio exploration in order to try and develop a movement vocabulary in a more relaxed environment and to provide a safer, less rigorous space for my dancers to work through the themes and ideas of the research project. Nelson describes studio research as 'a matter of allowing ideas relevant to your project to circulate freely in the investigative space' (Nelson, p33). I used this studio research to finalise my ideas and develop a much clearer concept of how to create the film in a way that explored all of my key ideas. I found this studio research helpful as it did provide me with clarification as well as familiarising my dancer with the research material. However, very little of the material created in the studio was used in the final film, which evolved into a much more pedestrian movement vocabulary. I believe that the studio space encouraged my dancer to create more traditional dance material, however

[8] Due to restrictions from the COVID-19 virus I was only able to explore two cities, Portsmouth and Chichester.

when we began to work in the city locations, we discovered that that type of movement distracted from the research ideas rather than emphasising them.

To begin my research for how to develop my own PaR film I researched both screen dance theory and the work of other dance artists exploring the relationship between the body and urban spaces. Despite feminism and female empowerment becoming prevalent themes in many contemporary dance and theatre works, there is currently a lack of work specifically addressing women's fear of urban spaces after dark. The feminist and disability rights campaigner and performance theorist Morag Rose and her collective, the *Loiterers Resistance Movement* (LRM) provide an interesting look into access to the city, generally looking at the rights of the disabled. The group is a 'collective of artists, activists and urban wanderers interested in psychogeography, public space and the hidden stories of the city' (About the LRM, 2020) and they believe that 'the streets should belong to everyone and that our pavements are full of stories, adventures and connections just waiting to be discovered' (About the LRM, 2020). This work is relevant to my own research project as it engages with city spaces in a similar mode as employed in my own PaR investigation, by exploring things that cause unease in the city such as loitering and CCTV surveillance. A further example of work that questions human-urban relations is Anna Teresa de Keersmaker's work *Slow Walk (2016-19)*, a walking performance piece in which the public is invited to join the dancers in a slow walk through a city location. *Slow Walk* aims to be 'a meditation and an invitation to slow your body and mind and experience the city and its inhabitants from a new perspective' (Rosas, 2020). It lacks the more political motivations of the LRM however, but it does still relate to the overall themes of this research in its exploration of city space and the rhythms within it. The choreographer Oriana Haddad also explores the ideas of city space, its rhythms and how a body can alter the city in her work *Make My Skin: Intimate Regeneration Of The City (2016).* In this work she places her female body in urban spaces and moulds herself into

the urban design. This work challenges common assumptions and ‘rules’ regarding where and how female bodies are normally permitted to engage and as such offers a form of resistance to patriarchal norms. Despite many works addressing the relationship between the body, particularly the female body, and the city, there is very little research into the way that that relationship changes after dark. The scarcity of research and practice exploring this theme was a contributing factor in the development of my own PaR research project and the resulting site dance film *Text Me When You Get Home Safe (2020)*. After reading Sherril Dodds’ book *Dance on Screen* I concluded that I wanted to create my work in a way that totally removed it from a studio setting. Dodds explores the idea that movement created for stage is entirely different to movement created for film and when creating dance for film a choreographer has to consider both how the movement will fit within the frame and that 'There's a different sense of time [in television], and that's how little you need to establish something' (Houston in Dodds, 2001 p23). This informed my later development of movement during filming, attempting to ensure that my film was exploring the relationship between the female body and urban space through a cinematic site-dance lens and not a theatrical lens.

After exploring these ideas in studio, we began the more intensive task of exploring the cities. We began by conducting an exploration of the city without filming, taking a walk to discover the areas where we felt safe or unsafe and planning shots which I added to a storyboard (See Fig. 1) which I continually changed and updated throughout this process. This process of documenting helped me to develop a clear image of how the film would come together and combined with my research into cinematography to understand how I might build a strong feeling in the film using these locations and shots. Some sites of key interest for this research were car parks, poorly lit alleyways, public transport and the area

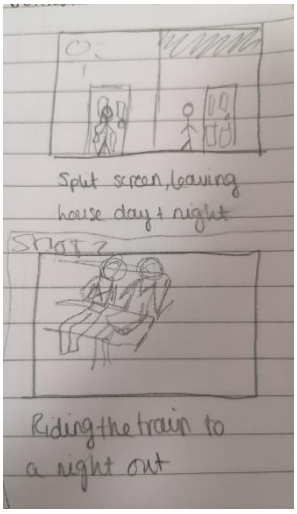

Figure 1 Examples from Storyboard

surrounding pubs and clubs, as these are some of the locations where women are most likely to be assaulted by a stranger (Office for National Statistics, 2019). One technique I used several times in *Text Me When You Get Home Safe* is a corridor reveal shot, this technique is used to build tension by slowly revealing what is or is not down the corridor. I use this technique to reveal alleyways and what's behind the dancer. This technique is commonly used in horror or thriller films, 'depriving the spectator of the information he needs can cause the fear of the unknown, which is often in the form of anxiety' (Loker, 2005 p12) and this fear of the unknown is a key aspect of women's fear in urban night-time spaces. In her article *Rhythms of Fear* (2016) feminist writer Laura Maw describes how women see 'an unavoidable history of the streets as a psychogeographical archive of implicit or explicit violence.' (Maw, 2016), embodying the knowledge of the potential dangers facing them with a building anxiety from the lack of knowledge of when, where or how it might happen. Maw writes from her personal experience of walking through the city alone at night, describing her process of worst-case scenario planning based around the implied dangers of the city around her. Though the fear of the unknown in film is a strong tool for inducing this anxiety in *Text Me When You Get Home Safe* psychologist Loker (2005) states that 'fear induced by such devices […] cannot last long if it is not supported by fear induced by the spectator's own story' (Loker, 2005 p12), I tried to explore this through the cameras perspective in the film using the themes of surveillance which were explored in Chapter 2 of this research paper.

The idea of surveillance is one of the key elements to *Text Me When You Get Home Safe*. The camera switches between following the dancer or seeing things from her perspective. I used the technique of a subjective camera, which is when the camera 'takes the point of view of one of the characters, and you witness the scene through their eyes' (Heiderich, 2020 p12), to create tension and build fear in my film. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) identified surveillance as one of the ways in which objectification is imposed on

Figure 2 An extreme close up on the eyes from Text Me When You Get Home Safe

women. Surveillance in urban environments comes in many forms, CCTV monitoring, monitoring from police or bouncers and the gaze of others out in the night. To create the idea of surveillance through a subjective camera I used the 'The Dark Voyeur' Technique**,** a horror technique where 'perspective is a framing device used to imply a character is being watched' (Calvo, 2013) which I portrayed by shooting shots through bars or from down the alley the dancer walked past. By creating this stalking persona for the camera and switching between this and the dancer's perspective, I hoped to build a sense of unease in the viewer, emulating the unease felt by women walking alone at night. Surveillance was so important to my film as one of the main ideas of Objectification Theory is that women are under constant surveillance, which causes them to 'internalise an observers perspective as a primary view of their physical selves' (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997 p172), and this is one of the fundamental elements in causing the experiential consequences of anxiety and shame. I also used some extreme close ups of the face, eyes (see fig. 2) and hands. Extreme close ups are used for 'amplifying emotional intensity' (Heiderich, 2020 p9), and I chose to use them to build on the emotions of fear and anxiety, showing the eyes darting and the shifting of the keys between the fingers to give a more personal and emotional connection to the dancer.

Text Me When You Get Home Safe is edited in a jumpy style, I wanted to create a sense of disorientation and anxiety for the audience and I used this quick, jumpy style to try and achieve this effect. This technique is employed in a number of well-known horror and thriller films such as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). I began by establishing the physical and emotional setting by showing the image of my dancer outside of a pub on her phone, with a quick flash to an image of her running through the street, and back to the establishing shot of

her by the pub, continuing the narrative by leaving and beginning her walk. Through this approach I hoped to establish the narrative of a woman walking home and also provide the image of her running to suggest that perhaps everything is not alright and something bad was to come. I continued with this jumpy style throughout the film in order to build the feeling of anxiety, by not giving the mind time to process the information fully before more information is presented and 'Shorter shot durations can increase the exogenous control of eye position and eye movements; more motion attracts attention […which] creates anxiety' (Cutting, 2016). I also use the editing technique of overlaying throughout the film, both in overlaying images on themselves and overlaying extreme closeups on wide panning shots. I used the image overlaid upon itself to emphasise both the sense of disorientation I was trying to create and also the idea that this walk happens regularly, as though we are seeing different timelines of her performing the same walk. Overlaying the extreme closeups over long following or panning shots helped to convey the emotional intensity of these moments that might otherwise seem quite boring. The scene in which we follow the dancer walking down a street, but it is overlaid with the close up image of her clutching her keys between her fingers (see fig. 3), builds the atmosphere of that walk, the keys in the fingers symbolises her anxiety and fear which she keeps contained as she walks the dark street.

Figure 4 Hand clutching keys overlaid on footage on dancer walking

For the sound accompaniment I created a soundscape of footsteps on concrete overlaying audio from our walk footage such as the wind and cars. I also chose to use the words from the poem *Walking Home in the Dark Through a Succession of Categories* (nda) by Jill Jones. Jones' poem addresses the fears of walking home alone at night,

I hold the keys tight in my hand, I hold the night close and distant, I hold my thoughts close to my disquiet, I hold my tightness like a resistance, I'm not trespassing in the world

(Jones, nda).

In these introductory sentences she touches on both the defence mechanism of keys between the fingers that I explored in my film and also on the idea that women out at night are often considered trespassing in the male domain as I discussed in Chapter 1. The poem provides insight into the thought process of a woman walking alone at night and helped to provide even more context to the thought and emotions of the dancer in the film. Jones states 'I am not a story to tell, I am not someone's metaphor, the dark isn't a symbol'. Here she is emphasising that her experiences are real to her, and, similar to Maw's observation she explores the idea that women see the stories of other women across the city and it influences their feelings of fear after dark. Jones ends her poem with the words 'if I meet another voice, another hand, another truth – if I fall in the dark, who will hear' (Jones) which brings us back to the ideas explored in Chapters 1 and 2, of women being ignored when they report harassment or assault. I felt this poem was the perfect accompaniment for my poem as it clearly explores the key areas of my research and provides a great emotional accompaniment to *Text Me When You Get Home Safe.*

In the creation of *Text Me When You Get Home Safe,* I aimed to explore how women's fear of the city after dark was created and how I could portray this through site-dance film. In my earlier chapters I presented an overview of how a patriarchal society and urban planning conventions and constraints reinforce this fear after dark and through this practical exploration of urban night-time space I created a film which used a variety of methods to portray the feelings of fear, shame and anxiety that being a woman walking alone

at night caused. In discussion with my dancer we found that whilst we both had developed a greater understanding of the dangers we might face walking after dark and the reasons for them this had not changed our fear of walking after dark and in some ways had increased it, because it became clear that the anxiety of being alone in an urban space after dark was justified by the interactions we had with members of the public during the filming process. Though nothing serious happened to any of us, groups of men on nights out would point and laugh, and an interaction of two drunk men arguing on the train left us feeling on edge and uncomfortable.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore how and why women experience fear after dark in urban environments and how this research could be undertaken using a Practice as Research (PaR) methodology, using the medium of site-dance film. One of the recurring impediments on women's freedom and safety was the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in the UK. In Chapter 1 we established the social and political climate in the UK in order to create a basis upon which we could develop further understanding of how women's position in society affects their freedom and safety in everyday life. The type of language used in both media and political circles suggests that the patriarchal society of the UK largely considers women as sexual objects, the sexualised and often demeaning terms used to refer to women by those in elected positions of power provides insight into the predominant opinion of the population who continue to elect these people. This correlated with the project's theoretical framework of Objectification Theory (Frederickson and Robert, 1997) which provides us with the understanding that in western society women are inherently objectified. This treatment of women is a significant factor in the assault of women, in Chapter 1 it was also established that rape is not a sexually motivated crime but rather a way for men to assert power over their victim (Baker, 1997; Beneke, 1982; Jaffe, 2018; Palmer, 1988), and through the aforementioned objectification women become an object for them to own. Objectification Theory also helps to contextualise the occurrence of internalised victim-blaming through 'self-objectification' (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997) which is only further reinforced by the fact that women are often vilified or disbelieved in cases where they choose to report sexual assault (McMillan and White, 2015; McMillan, 2016; Phipps et al., 2017).

Having established the cultural influences on the danger to women from assault in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 we examined the ways in which the patriarchy in the UK effects urban

development and fear of crime and how this effects women's freedom and safety in the city. Here we develop an understanding of how the very design of the city reduces women's urban freedom. Discussion centres largely around the right to the city, a popular term in proxemics research, and the impact that urban planning and women's fear has on their right to the city. It is apparent that women have significantly less right to the city than men, during the daytime their mobility is limited by considerations of childcare, feminine hygiene and personal safety, and at night these considerations for personal safety become the number one limitation on their right to the city. Despite numerous initiatives trying to combat women's fear of crime in the city, addressing issues such as street lighting, CCTV and public transport safety with varying levels of success, fear of crime remains a significant barrier for women's right to the city which lends credibility to Pain's (1997) suggestion that initiatives that focus too strongly on physical changes to the city detract from the social and political causes of crime. It is clear from both Chapter 1 and 2 that there needs to be serious social and political upheaval in the UK to ensure women's safety in urban spaces after dark, addressing the systemic issues which fail to condemn the objectification, harassment and abuse of women in our society.

In Chapter 3 we explore the process of creating a site-dance film based on the experience of being a woman walking through a city alone at night. The aim was to create a film which addressed the feelings of anxiety, fear and apprehension, which was attempted using the discussed screen dance and film techniques. In the process of developing this film both myself and my dancer were forced to face our personal fears within the urban night-time environment and address the innate responses and defence mechanisms we had developed to this fear. To develop this research further it might be of interest to explore the different levels of fear and anxiety felt in different city environments further, perhaps the creation of a series of films would aid in this development – each city using a dancer who lives there and using interviews with the dancers to further examine their emotional responses to the city and the

making process of the film, these interviews could be developed into a soundscape for the films to further convey these themes. It would also be interesting to show these films in an urban night-time space, creating a series of installations using projection in city spaces to raise public awareness for the ongoing issues surrounding women's safety in the city after dark.

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