

### Case Study: Deviant and Conformist Identities

On Easter Monday in 2001, the BBC costume designer Elizabeth Sherlock was killed in a gruesome and horrific encounter with a drug-addicted couple. Mark Woolley and his girlfriend Jackie Moorhouse had been repeatedly stealing handbags and shoplifting to fund a £300 a day heroin habit, in what the journalist Joanna Bale called a 'life of crime' (*The Times*, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2001). Moorhouse spotted Mrs Sherlock sitting in the café at Euston station; she stole her handbag and ran outside to their car, in which Woolley was waiting. The enraged victim pursued the thieves and jumped onto the bonnet of the car, but Woolley proceeded to drive away. He swerved violently around the back streets of the station with Mrs Sherlock clinging to the windscreen, screaming for help; when she finally fell off the bonnet, he ran over her. The couple were then alleged to have smiled as they drove the car a short distance, got out and walked away arm in arm. They then used Mrs Sherlock's cash card to steal a further £100, went to a crack house and continued to steal handbags for two days before finally being arrested. Bale reports that Moorhouse had been taking drugs since the age of 13, progressing from solvents to heroin and cocaine in her mid-teens, when she met Woolley. The couple also had a baby who was born addicted to heroin and was immediately taken into care; Moorhouse was even convicted of stealing the handbag of a nurse who looked after her in hospital. In December 2001, Woolley was convicted of Mrs Sherlock's murder and Moorhouse was given a three year sentence for the theft of her handbag and money.

(Source: Joanna Bale, "Desperate life of addict who killed BBC woman" *The Times*, 21 December 2001, p.3)

#### Questions:

1. What does this story tell us about the links between drugs and crime?
2. To what extent do you think Woolley and Moorhouse had become committed to a deviant career or were 'professional' thieves?
3. How does the pattern of drug use here relate to the ideas of Becker and Young and to the evidence from the British Crime Survey?
4. What do you notice about the gendered nature of the various crimes committed in this case?
5. Do you think that Woolley and Moorhouse saw themselves as essentially deviant people? Why/why not?