

**A FEMINIST RE-READING OF U.S. MEDIA DEPICTIONS OF WOMEN
MURDERERS**

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In Partial Fulfillment
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in
Women's Studies

by
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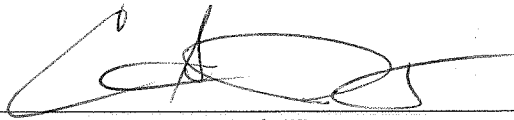
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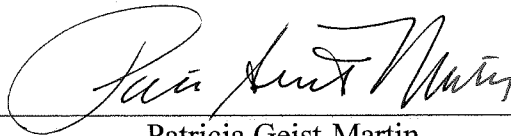
A Feminist Re-Reading of U.S. Media Depictions of Women Murderers



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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This study critiques how U.S.-based media portray women murderers and how their crimes were linked to caring labor roles and femininity. To accomplish this critique, I examined 52 online news articles that reported on the following three cases: Case A: Michele Kalina (n=15), a mother who killed her five children; Case B: Kimberly Saenz (n=19), a nurse who murdered five of her patients; and Case C: Amanda Logue (n=18), a sex worker who murdered one of her clients. A feminist discourse analysis was conducted using 21 variables that focused on the women's appearance, behavior, and sexuality as well as the components contributing to the murder. The frequency of each variable was determined through a close read of each article. Results indicate media represent women murderers as caring laborers in all of the articles; this included discussing Kalina as a mother, Saenz as a nurse, and Logue as a sex worker/prostitute. The women's sexuality (sexual behavior, love triangles, or affairs) was also emphasized in 15 (100.0%) articles for Kalina, 18 (100.0%) articles for Logue, yet 0 (0.0%) for Saenz. The women were frequently described as mothers; in 15 cases (100.0%) for Kalina, 8 (42.1%) for Saenz, and 5 (27.8%) for Logue. Furthermore, descriptions of the women's mental health (depression, addiction, schizophrenia, etc.) appeared in 10 (66.7%) of the articles for Kalina, 9(47.4%) for Saenz, and 0 (0.0%) for Logue. Absent from the articles was the mention of the women's race; however, it was assumed that all three women were white. Their socioeconomic status and level of education were rarely described in the articles, although it was evident that the women were educated and employed. This research argues that media reinforce hegemonic notions of gender by "objectively" depicting women murderers as feminine, sexual, nurturing, and caring. In doing so, media were able to establish that women who commit murder adhere to feminine gender roles. Therefore, femininity must be a "natural" part of a woman's identity. Media reports provide a partial and subjective view of women murderers, one that relies on sexist, racist, classist, and ageist ideologies that harm marginalized groups. This research encourages society to consume media critically and demonstrates the strong influence media have on societal perceptions about women criminals who contest hegemonic notions of gender.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

She was professional, prompt, and seemed all around normal, well so I thought.

--Fox News article on Amanda Logue case

The present research is built on the belief that United States-based media fundamentally contribute to societal perceptions of women, especially women who challenge traditional notions of gender. In particular, this research examines the ways in which U.S. media depict women murderers within news reports. While women murderers represent a small portion, approximately 10-20% (Belknap, 2007; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Farrell, Keppel, and Titterington, 2011; Jensen, 2001; Mann, 1996) of convicted murderers in comparison to men, the scope of this research focused on three highly publicized murder cases by female offenders. More specifically, each of these women murderers performed a different “caring labor” vis-à-vis her victims. The cases include a mother who murdered her children, a nurse who murdered her patients, and a sex worker who murdered her client. Feminists (England & Folbre, 1999; Gilligan, 2014; Hartsock, 1997; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Messerschmidt, 1986) have described how women are primarily responsible for the care and well-being of others and, as a result of this expectation, are commonly exploited and oppressed. My focus is on how U.S. media depict women who are both violent murderers *and* caring laborers. To accomplish this analysis, news articles were collected for each of the murder cases and critically evaluated using a feminist discourse analysis.

In this chapter, I first establish my location vis-à-vis this topic and describe how I came to be interested in this research area. I then explain the highly conflated terms of “murder” and “homicide,” as defined by the U.S. Department of Justice in the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) report on crime. Following that discussion, I provide an overview of the prevalence of murder/homicide in the U.S. I describe both traditional criminological theories of women criminals as well as the more recent field of feminist criminology. This research is then positioned in relation to its importance within feminism and is linked to feminist theories that include discussions of femininity, masculinity, caring labor, and gender equality.

POSITIONALITY: ESTABLISHING MYSELF VIS-À-VIS WOMEN MURDERERS

The unusual topic of women murderers prompted many of my friends and colleagues to question my interest in researching this taboo subject matter. To begin, the fact that the topic is considered by many to be taboo warrants further research in this field. I questioned why this topic is taboo for women but not for men. The assumption of many people, when hearing about my topic of women and murder, is that I am studying women who have been murdered, not women who murder. It seems that the field of criminological research is so gendered that we are unable to think beyond the binary of women as victims and men as perpetrators of violence.

My initial interest in crime occurred as a child, when it was a rare occasion for anyone to find me without a yellow *Nancy Drew* book in hand, and an even rarer occasion to be without my detective's magnifying glass and zip-lock bag full of "evidence." The *Nancy Drew* series is about a young, white, affluent girl who solved crimes and brought the offenders to justice. She was brave, independent, and smart. I appreciated that Nancy Drew offered an alternative to the hyper-feminine, damsel-in-distress Disney Princess or Barbie doll. While I enjoyed reading about Nancy Drew as a capable crime solver, what I enjoyed most was the feeling I got when I "solved" the crime before finishing the book. In some way, it made me feel that justice had been served, though as I got older, my desire to bring justice to the victims in the Nancy Drew series shifted to my desire for social justice within the "real world."

As I started to discover my feminist identity before entering college, I began watching more television. Still entertained by mystery stories and crime, I was struck by the rapid influx of television shows about crime, including shows like *Unsolved Mysteries* (1987), *Law & Order* (1990), *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (1999), *CSI* (2000), *NCIS* (2003), and *Criminal Minds* (2005), among others. These shows were all based on reenactments of real-life murder cases in which police detectives brought the offenders to justice.

After taking my first Women Studies class, I began to view the television shows more critically and notice the gendered dynamics in each episode. A typical episode began with a reenactment of a white woman walking alone, who was then sexually assaulted and gruesomely murdered, frequently by an African American man. These reenactments were

particularly horrifying because they were based on real-life murder cases, in which women had been killed. I wondered whether anyone else saw anything wrong with these depictions. Women, predominately white women, are repeatedly the only victims of murder in these shows, when women of color are also victims of murder. The discrepancy between the victim rate of white women and women of color is relatively minor, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR); in 2011 1,745 white women were murdered compared to 1,068 women of color. Similarly, African American men were repeatedly portrayed as the sole perpetrators of violence; yet again, this is inaccurate. In the 2011 UCR, there were 1,034 white and 642 African American men responsible for the murder of 1,745 white women. As stated by the FBI, white men were in fact more likely than African American men to murder white women.

Although traditional crime shows continue to be successful, with *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* reporting more than 63 million views worldwide (Bibel, 2012), their popularity has dwindled as society becomes less shocked by the gruesome atrocities committed against women. As a result, media shifted their focus in the early to mid-2000s to a more shock-worthy topic: women murderers. What emerged was a lengthy list of television shows in which women were the perpetrators of violence, often killing multiple victims. Some of the shows included *Snapped* (2004), where women simply “snap” following years of being oppressed or abused, *Mothers Who Kill* (2003) that depicts mentally ill women who killed their children, and *Deadly Women* (2005), which attempts to explain the motives behind the murderous acts committed by mothers, grandmothers, wives, and daughters. Due to the high viewership, more television shows emerged focusing on women as perpetrators of violence. These included *Women Who Kill* (2005), *Wives with Knives* (2012), *Wicked Attraction* (2008), *Pretty Bad Girls* (2012), *Scorned: Love Kills* (2012), and *Poisoned Passions* (2013). While limited data are available on the rate of viewership, the premiere of the show *Killer Women* reported more than 3.9 million people watched the first episode of the series (Reiher, 2014). Every show depicted glamorous, stylized reenactments in which the women were portrayed in gender-specific ways with tight fitting clothing, heavy make-up, and styled hair. For example, women were often portrayed in the kitchen, caring for their children, or as hypersexual femme fatales who lured men with sex before killing them.

As my feminist beliefs became stronger throughout college, I examined these shows more critically, discovering patterns in how these shows trivialized the crimes committed by women and disregarded the victims and their families. I thought about how it must feel to have a family member murdered and then watch the glamorized, hyper-sexualized reenactment on a television show. What really struck me was how in these shows police reports and news articles were often distorted into inaccurate and trivial details. This is where my research interest began. I started reading the news and magazine articles about the women murderers whose stories I had seen on television. I found that the information discussed in the news articles did not match what was depicted on television. With the memories of *Nancy Drew* in the back of my mind and the desire for social justice, I utilized *my* feminist perspective in order to determine how media communicate normative notions of gender through the representation of women murderers.

UNDERSTANDING MURDER AND HOMICIDE

The terms *murder* and *homicide* are commonly used interchangeably, yet they do not have the same meaning. According to the U. S. Department of Justice (2011), murder is defined as “the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human by another” (p.1). In contrast, homicide is a broader concept that can refer to the justifiable and/or excusable killing of another human being. This can be seen in cases of self-defense. Depending on the circumstances, homicide can be justified and legal, whereas murder is always illegal. It is important to be aware of these terms because they are used in the reporting of statistics as well as in media accounts. For the purposes of this research the terms “murder” and “murderers” will be used in order to communicate the point that the crimes were not self-defense, but rather willful, premeditative, and illegal. However, when reviewing national crime statistics, the terms murder and homicide are used in conjunction with one another to create a more comprehensive view of the deaths caused by killing. By doing so, researchers have utilized these definitions to examine the components associated with murder/homicide, such as the characteristics of the offenders and victims as well as the prevalence within the U.S.

PREVALENCE OF MURDER/HOMICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES: GENDER, RACE, AND CLASS

Using the number of arrests reported by 2,430 law-enforcement agencies in the U.S. between 1962 and 1970, Alder (1975) stated that the arrest rate for women was rising three times faster than the rate of men. While 73% percent of crimes were committed by African American women and 27% by white women, the statistic does not offer a breakdown by other ethnic or racial groups (Alder, 1975). People with lower socioeconomic status committed more crimes than those with higher socioeconomic status, which also intersects with race. Alder reported that in 1971, 10% of arrested African American women were unemployed compared to 6% of white women. Furthermore, she stated that in 1972, 56% of African American women arrested for crimes held low-paying industrial/service jobs compared with 35% of white women.

Deming (1977) also analyzed the crime rates for both men and women using the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) from 1960-1975. The rate of major crimes (homicide, rape, robbery, and assault) committed by men increased 119.3% during this time span compared to a 373.5% increase for women. Although the actual numbers were not provided for 1975, Deming states that the major crimes committed by women increased from 387,073 in 1960 to 675,212 in 1970. While criminal activity for both men and women was on the rise, women comprised only 5% of violent offenders, whereas men represented the remaining 95%. However, although the actual number of women offenders was not provided, Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004) stated that the rate of women arrested for murder increased 105.7% during this time period.

Mann (1996) used data from the 1979 and 1983 UCR to compare national and city homicide rates as well as demographic data on female and male offenders. Of the female offenders who had known their victims personally, 84.1% were African American, 9.0% were white, and 6.9% were Latina. Between the years 1979 and 1983, the rates of homicide by African American women decreased by 5%, decreased 1.1% for white women, and increased 10% for Latinas. Furthermore, most female offenders were unemployed (78.6%) and those who worked had low socioeconomic status. Simon and Ahn-Redding (2005) examined the UCR from 1963 through 2001 and found that in 1963 women represented 15.8% of those arrested for violent crimes, 10% in 1976, and 18.1% in 2001.

Each year the FBI branch of the U.S. Department of Justice collects data for the UCR on the prevalence of criminal activity and provides partial demographic information about the offenders. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2011), there were reported to be 14,612 murders and 14,548 homicide offenders responsible for these murders. Of these offenders, 9,485 (65.2%) were men, 1,138 (7.8%) were women, and the gender of 3,925 (27.0%) was unknown. The data demonstrated that homicide rates have steadily decreased over the years in comparison to the UCR from 1980 to 2008, when women represented 10.5% of homicide offenders. Demographics about race, which were not presented separately by gender, indicated that 4,729 (32.5%) of offenders were white, 5,486 (37.7%) were African American, 256 (1.8%) identified as other, and in 4,077 (28%) cases the race was unknown. Statistics on women's criminality have largely contributed to theories that have attempted to generalize the characteristics of women criminals and the crimes they commit. In doing so, various theories have been established that examine the commonalities of women and their criminal behavior.

THEORIES ON WOMEN AS CRIMINALS

Traditional criminological theories have predominately focused on determining the origins of men's criminal behavior due to the notion that men commit more crimes than women. However, as women's criminal behavior began to increase beginning in 1875 (Pollak, 1950), then sharply from 1960-1970 (Deming, 1977), theories emerged in an effort to explain the factors influencing women's criminal actions. As a result, three major arguments were developed: (a) women's physical traits determine their likelihood of committing crimes, (b) women's biology and sexuality fuel their criminality, and (c) women's criminal activities are the result of social and economic marginalization. While many of these arguments may seem outdated and easily disprovable, their contributions to the field of women and crime remain foundational components of research. The theories are beneficial in examining how female criminals have been represented within traditional disciplines and how these theories oversimplify women's identities. The theories will be discussed by first exploring the most dated theories of women's criminality, followed by the more nuanced approaches that consider how women's position and socialization have contributed to their crimes.

Lombroso's Theory on the Physical Traits of Female Criminals

Theorizing on female criminality began in 1920 with Cesare Lombroso and his coauthor Guglielmo Ferrero who proposed that there were specific physical traits common among all women criminals. In their book, *The Female Offender* Lombroso (1920) examined the corpses of what he subjectively deemed “criminal women” in order to compare their cranial size, height, hair color, weight, moles, and bone structure. As a result of the deductive nature of Lombroso's research, he discovered what he set out to find--similarities in the physical characteristics of female criminals. He argued that “. . . women possessing a number of these physical traits could be identified as criminal types even before committing crimes, and thus society could take step to protect itself against them” (cited in Deming, 1977, p. 48). In addition to this belief, Lombroso also supported the evolutionary notion that white women were the most evolved, whereas women of color were the least evolved and therefore more likely to be criminals. In essence, female criminals were physically less evolved than “normal,” non-criminal women. The evolutionary underpinnings of Lombroso's theory contributed to the inherent sexism, racism, and classism built into his research. Lombroso's research completely disregarded any social, psychological, economical, or structural components of criminality; however, he shaped a field of study that brings women to the forefront and sheds light on the complexities of female criminality.

Klein (1976) conducted an overview of past literature that related women's biology to their criminal behavior. She suggested that most criminological theories function within the “good” versus “bad” binary. She examined Lombroso's (1920) argument that supported the idea that women had physical attributes that allowed them to better adapt to their environments, therefore increasing their likelihood of survival. However, these physical and evolutionary theories were inconsistent with the major understanding of femininity and masculinity. Women were considered “good” when their biology was consistent with their appropriate feminine attributes. For example, because a woman is biologically female, and could give birth, it was assumed she was nurturing and compassionate. “Bad” women were those whose biology was inconsistent with their behavior, which as Klein mentioned was commonly the case for female criminals. “Bad” women were perceived as being more masculine in behavior, which was demonstrated by their criminal acts, whereas “normal”

women were feminine. Klein argued that the continued use of the “good” versus “bad” dichotomy leads us to raise questions regarding past research that has linked women’s biology to criminology. Other theories have created connections between women’s biological and their sexuality as the source of their criminal behavior.

Thomas and Pollak: The Role of Biology and Sexuality in Female Criminality

The theoretical connection between female criminality and sexuality was originally discussed by sociologist William Thomas in his 1923 book, *The Unadjusted Girl: With Cases and Standpoint for Behavior Analysis*. Thomas disapproved of Lombroso’s work and shifted his research towards studying the ways women have been socially lured into committing crimes. However, Thomas did not disregard the role of biology in the construction of the female criminal. Rather, he theorized that women are biologically predisposed to desire and give love. Therefore, when these desires are not fulfilled women turned to crimes such as prostitution in order to have them satisfied. He also argued that “delinquent” women strategically manipulated men with sex in order to feel loved. He explained that as a result of women’s sexual prowess and manipulative tactics, they are better able to get away with crimes in comparison to men. This theory fundamentally “. . . equated female delinquency with sexual delinquency” (Heidensohn, 1995, p. 117). The issue of morality and what it meant to be a “moral” and “good” woman were deeply imbedded in this theory.

In an effort to expand on the possible theories surrounding women’s criminality, Otto Pollak (1950) further complicated the idea that women’s criminal behavior was linked to social beliefs, sexuality, and biology. In *The Criminality of Women*, he attempted to determine the motivations behind the crimes women committed. He theorized that the crime rates for women were in fact higher than reported because their crimes were often “hidden.” Pollak argued that women were naturally more deceitful than men because of their ability to physiologically conceal menstruation and orgasms. Additionally, women were not responsible for the success of sexual acts; therefore, Pollak argued, women have an inactive role in heterosexual intercourse. Pollak (1950) further contended that women’s crimes were frequently unseen because women have more opportunities to conceal their crimes because they commonly work as privately as domestic workers, “. . . housekeepers . . . laundresses, laborers, seamstresses, dressmakers, cooks, and peddlers” (p.111). The final component of

Pollak's theory was that crimes committed by women were sexually motivated in contrast to the economically-motivated crimes committed by men. In essence, while women may persuade men with sex before robbing them, men may simply rob a bank. While Pollak's theory was filled with problematic assumptions about heterosexuality, female sexual passivity, and the physiologically manipulative components of women, he continues to be cited in the field of female criminality. It is clear that Pollak's research insinuates that the opportunities provided to women allow them to successfully hide their crimes, which is consistent with other theorists who suggest that as women gain more employment opportunities they will have the chance to commit more crimes.

The Opportunity Theory

The opportunity theory was established by Rita Simon, a significant contributor to research on women's criminality, and her co-author, Heather Ahn-Reading (2005). The theory begins with the understanding that neither men nor women are more or less moral, but that the social position, skills, networks, and opportunities available to men have contributed to their tendency to take part in criminal actions. As a result, when women do commit crimes their social locations are likely to be a contributing factor. Great significance is placed on women's position in the labor force because many crimes are committed in connection to the workplace, such as embezzlement and theft. The opportunity theory also supports the notion that as women become more educated, work full-time in the labor force, and attain economic independence, they will have the same opportunities to commit crimes as men. Simon and Anh-Redding (2005) specifically reference violent acts by stating that women who become economically stable and independent will no longer be reliant on the abusive men in their lives and therefore they will no longer be "victims." Their economic self-sufficiency will allow them to leave abusive situations that could possibly lead them to murdering their abuser in order to escape, lessening the likelihood of women committing violent acts. However, although women may be less likely to commit violent, criminal acts, they will be more likely to commit white-collar crimes due to their full-time involvement in the workforce. The connections between women's criminality and their economic and employment opportunities become evident in theories that examine women's marginalized status within our economy.

Economic Marginalization Theory

While the economic marginalization theory has been discussed by many theorists, the main contributor to this idea was Ngaire Naffine who, in her 1987 book, *Female Crime: The Construction of Women in Criminology*, began to investigate the role of gender inequality within crime and the field of criminology. The economic marginalization theory stated that in contrast to the opportunity theory, it is the lack of employment opportunities for women that contributes to an increase in female criminality. The theory supports the notion that because women have low-paying jobs and fewer opportunities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, women are persuaded to commit crime. This turn to crime is often committed by women in order to survive and support themselves and their families. With more female single-headed households, women are experiencing more economic pressure and are unable to attain employment with a living wage due to the low-paying employment opportunities. This theory is linked to the feminization of poverty in which women disproportionately live in poverty due to their lack of economic and employment opportunities. Naffine's theory continues to be the most widely accepted theory on women's criminality. With this theory, it becomes evident that women's criminality cannot be discussed without taking into consideration gender inequality and how women's criminal behavior can be attributed of these inequities. These discrepancies are also apparent in how the sociocultural position of women and men contribute to their ability to express themselves and cope with challenges.

Theories on Aggression, Stress, and Frustration

The psychological and emotional impacts that economic deprivation has on women led theorist Anne Campbell to postulate about women's aggression. While there is substantial research on the gender differences in aggression and anger, few studies examine the role of aggression and how it is related to crime. In her book, *Men, Women and Aggression* Campbell (1993) argues that the frustration women experience and the attempts to control this frustration lead them to be aggressive, which in some circumstances includes murder. Because women are socialized to express their anger internally rather than externally, women who have stifled their stresses and irritation eventually lash out aggressively against others or themselves.

In addition to Campbell's (1993) theory, Robbin Ogle and her coauthors Maier-Katkin and Bernard (1995) examined how women cope with stress and how that was reflected in women who commit homicide. They argue that, in general, women experience more stress than men due to their social, cultural, and structural positions within a patriarchal society. As a result of continued strain and devaluation, women are likely to become angry. Women attempt to cope with their anger by internalizing these feelings, transforming their anger into guilt, and convincing themselves that their rage is unjustified. Ogle et al. (1995) state that this has a negative effect, in that women experience emotions consistent with self-doubt, anger, guilt, and emotional pain. It is at this point that women are no longer able to utilize their coping mechanisms and therefore must find another way to express their anger. Ogle et al. (1995) conclude this theory by stating that "women, on average are less likely than men to have developed regulative rules for the experience and expression of anger. . . women experiencing peaks of stress are more likely than men to explode with episodes of extreme uncontrolled violence" (p.186). This theory offered critical insight into the detrimental effects socialization has on women's psychological well-being and how the internalizing of stress can result in violent acts.

SHIFTING TOWARDS FEMINIST CRIMINOLOGY

Feminist criminology was developed by second-wave feminists who had recognized the racist and sexist foundation of conventional studies on women and crime. The field of feminist criminology focuses on women as both victims and offenders of crime, as well as their roles within the justice system as police officers, judges, and detectives. Burgess-Proctor (2006), along with many other feminist criminologists, argues that feminist theorists must take into consideration women's subordinate status within patriarchal society and the demographic differences among women. To do so, feminist criminological research must examine women's identities and oppressions using an intersectional approach to examine how women offenders are marginalized within a patriarchal and hierarchal social order. The term *intersectionality* was developed by feminist sociologist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), and argues that women have multiple and intersecting components of their identities, such as race, class, sex, sexuality, ability, immigration status, and other defining characteristics of identity. This results in multiple forms of oppression and domination. Feminist scholars

argue that feminist criminology research challenges the “malestreaming” of criminological research and that traditional research lacked the components necessary to examine marginalized women and intersectional identities (Bernard, 2012, p. 4). In doing so, feminist criminologists are able to theorize how women’s experiences with oppression, poverty, and access to resources (i.e., jobs, health care, and education) contribute to the crimes they commit. Furthermore, feminist criminologists also examine how macro-level structures such as media and capitalism have depicted and influenced women’s criminal behavior. With the increased presence and power of media, feminist criminology has recently begun to examine mainstream media in order to critically analyze depictions of women criminals. Chesney-Lind (2006) examined the factors that have contributed to the perception that the Women’s Movement/feminism was to blame for the increased rate of female criminality during the 1960s and 1970s. She argued that mainstream U.S. media were largely responsible for creating this concept that categorized female offenders as having either “bad” or “good” forms of femininity. Women were depicted as having “bad” femininity, if they were masculine in appearance, behavior, and/or personality, whereas women were considered to have “good” femininity if they were submissive and in control of their emotions and behaviors. This was further problematized when female offenders who were African American were depicted as “bad,” while white women were depicted as “good.” As a major contributor to the field of feminist criminology, Chesney-Lind (2006) states,

It is essential that feminist criminology understands that in a world governed by those who self-consciously manipulate corporate media for their own purposes, newspapers and television may have moved from simply covering the police beat to constructing crime ‘stories’ that serve as a ‘nonconspiratorial source of dominant ideology’. (p. 13)

At the same time, the feminist movement continues to receive backlash through media interpretations of feminisms and women’s rights. The U.S. public often receives messages from media sources demonizing and stereotyping feminists, insinuating that they pose a threat to society because they challenge patriarchy and “hate men.” As a result, “Feminist criminology’s agenda must consciously challenge these backlash media narratives, as well as engage in “newsmaking criminology” particularly with regard to constructions of girls and women offenders” (Chesney-Lind, 2006, p.13).

ALDER: THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION/EMANCIPATION HYPOTHESIS

Alder's (1975) book *Sisters in Crime* examines the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) between the years 1960 and 1972, which indicated that while both women and men's crime rate was increasing (and men still committed the vast majority of crimes), women's crime rate was increasing three times faster than men's. Women's crime rates were rising faster than men's in all types of offenses, including robbery, larceny, and embezzlement. The only differing offense was aggravated assault and murder at which both women and men's rates were increasing at the same rate. Alder postulated that during this period of time, the women's movement was at its height and therefore must have contributed to the increase in women's criminal activity. Adler's Women Liberation/Emancipation theory (or the Gender Equality Hypothesis as it has been called) states that as women achieve more social and economic equality with men, their rates of crime increase. Furthermore, Alder supports her argument by claiming that feminists have encouraged women to adopt male social roles in order to close the gender gap and by doing so, women were becoming more like men, aggressive, disobedient, and violent. According to Jensen's (2001) review of this theory, women's increased crime rates were presumed to be the result of women embracing masculine behaviors after being "liberated" by feminism, which insinuated that gender equality would result in higher numbers of women perpetrating murder/homicide. Alder supported the idea that feminism encouraged women to swap their oppressive and traditional feminine attributes for more dominant masculine traits, as these traits would provide them with more social and economic power. This insinuated that in order for women to achieve more economic power, they must enter into more male-dominated fields of work where the pay was higher. Consistent with Alder's theory, if women gain more economic power, they will be more like men (i.e., earning an income outside of their home), meaning they will commit more crimes because masculinity is tied to law-breaking behavior. On the same note, this implies that women who remain in female-dominated fields of work such as childcare, nursing, or teaching would commit fewer crimes because they were fulfilling feminine gender roles of passivity, morality, and obedience.

While there are many problematic aspects to Alder's (1975) hypothesis, it remains a significant component in studies on women's criminality because it began to link patterns of

crime to feminism. By arguing that feminism and gender equality turned women into criminals and created an unsafe society, Alder maintained a powerful role in perpetuating the backlash against feminism and still remains widely cited in the field of criminology.

In 1977 Deming analyzed the UCR to determine the factors that contributed to the increase in women's criminal activity from 1960 to 1975. Deming argued that the rise of feminism in the U.S. was the single most important factor that contributed to the increase in female criminality. Similar to Alder, he concluded that women's crime rates would continue to increase if women attained more equal social and economic opportunities to men.

The connection between the women's movement, gender inequality, and increased women's crime rates has been controversial. Theorists such as Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) argue that Alder's (1975) hypothesis is too simplistic and does not examine the positionality of women or the role of larger societal structures within the context of crime. They support the "gender inequality" argument in which patriarchal power dynamics force women into specific gender roles, especially with regards to work (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996, p. 470). The employment opportunities available to women regularly result in low incomes, causing a need for economic survival, which results in higher rates of female crime. According to Steffensmeier and Allan, women commit crimes that are consistent with normative notions of gender in which they have the most opportunities, compared to crimes that transgress normative notions of gender, which have the lowest rates of female criminals and fewer opportunities available to women. The crimes committed by women are the result of gender *inequality*, not gender *equality*. This theory is particularly important within the context of feminisms because gender inequality is not an individualized issue, but rather an epistemic problem created by a patriarchal society that devalues the feminine and values the masculine. This results in men and the work they perform being more socially and economically valued than women and women's traditional work.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY

In order to discuss the contributing factors to women's economic subjugation and how it relates to the sexual division of labor, I examine constructions of femininity and masculinity. To begin women and men are not born feminine or masculine. Rather, these notions are part of the hegemonic socialization process that occurs throughout our lifetime in

which we “perform” gender (Butler, 1990). While there are many components of femininity, it is generally defined as “...an arbitrary category given to women’s appearance or behavior by patriarchy... it connotes sexual attractiveness to men” (Humm, 1989, p. 73). As the definition indicates, femininity is a subjective concept that relies on the notion that femininity is the “normal” and “natural” expression for women. In concrete terms, a feminine appearance is usually associated with being petite, thin, having large breasts, long hair, small features, wearing make-up, fashionable clothing, high-heels, or anything else that is believed to be attractive to the opposite sex. Feminine behavior is consistent with being quiet, passive, moral, emotional, nonaggressive, submissive, obedient, nonsexual, helpful, noncompetitive, selfless, and caring. Women who fulfill these standards are deemed “good” women, whereas women who do not are “bad” women. Masculinity, in contrast, is defined as the traits, behaviors, and appearances ascribed to men that make them attractive to the opposite sex. A masculine appearance is commonly viewed as being tall, strong, muscular, and with chiseled features. Masculine behaviors are consistent with being threatening, disobedient, competitive, aggressive, hypersexual, non-emotional, motivated, and wealthy. While there are many other attributes that can be used to describe femininity and masculinity, these basic definitions offer substantial insight into the restrictions placed on women and men in a hegemonic and heteropatriarchal society.

It is evident that femininity and masculinity are presented in opposition to one another, which often leads to masculinity receiving more social value. As a result, women, who are associated with femininity, are perceived as inferior to men. This inevitably leads to gender inequality and subjugation. The unrealistic and heterosexist nature of femininity and masculinity creates a foundational issue that feminists have attempted to counteract (Butler, 1990). Hegemonic notions of femininity and masculinity are harmful to both men and women. These notions are continuously visible and reinforced by mainstream media. Feminists have long interrogated media constructions of femininity and masculinity and have more recently examined these issues through a feminist criminological lens. According to feminist criminologist Chesney-Lind (2006), media have assisted in dichotomizing female offenders as either having good or bad femininity, meaning that female offenders were considered “good” if they were submissive and in control of their behavior and emotions. In opposition to this, “bad” women were depicted as more masculine. In essence, women’s

physical appearance and behavior cannot be similar to that of men because these expressions would challenge and blur the lines of both masculinity and femininity. By differentiating men and women through the constructions of femininity and masculinity, it becomes clear that female criminal offenders are in many ways violating traditional notions of femininity. According to Belknap (2007), “Female lawbreakers historically and to some degree today have been viewed as ‘abnormal’ and as ‘worse’ than male lawbreakers—not only for breaking the law but also for stepping outside of the prescribed gender roles of femininity and passivity” (p. 32). It is imperative to examine the ways in which constructions of femininity have contributed to women’s criminal acts and how they have been portrayed within media.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND CARING LABOR

The issue of gender inequality, many feminists would argue, is rooted in capitalism and the sexual division of labor. Utilizing a Marxist framework, Nancy Hartsock (1997) examines the sexual division of labor, and how it contributes to gender inequality. To do so, Hartsock used *feminist standpoint theory*, which states that men and women’s positions within capitalist production are vastly different and this has led to women having a different understanding of reality than men. Within a traditionally patriarchal society, men’s experiences are valued more than women’s. As a result, Hartsock argues that women’s experiences should be applied to explain deeper societal meanings. In this context, Hartsock placed heavy importance on the sexual division of labor because it is organized by gender. She argues that, unlike men, women have dual contributions to production because they are responsible for “...producing both goods and human beings and women are forced to become the kinds of people who can do both” (Hartsock, 1997, p. 223). Importantly, women’s gender roles force them to contribute to the creation and sustainment of human beings as well as the production of profitable goods. The expectation for women to create human beings reflects the importance placed on motherhood and how the work women perform is in many ways the mothering or caring for others. While women are dual contributors, “much of women’s wage work nursing, social work, and some secretarial jobs in particular –requires and depends on the relational and interpersonal skills...” that women are taught by their mothers (Hartsock, 1997, p. 225). This dual contribution and emphasis on motherhood allots women unique

experiences and perspectives that contribute to the understanding of women's oppression and how it relates to capitalism and production.

Similarly, in *Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Crime: Towards a Socialist Feminist Criminology*, Messerschmidt (1986) supports Hartsock's perspective and extends it by explaining that women tend to work in more nurturing positions where they experience *superexploitation*, meaning they usually work at unpaid or low-paying, abusive jobs. Within a Marxist framework, women have limited control and power over the work they perform and therefore become disconnected from their production. This insinuates that within the context of "feminine" occupations where women are in the position of caring for others, they may become detached from those that they care for, such as children, patients, and clients. Because women are trapped within highly exploitative jobs, and are not given the same power and control as men, they are likely to commit crimes that improve their economic conditions.

For the purposes of this study, I use the definition of caring labor generated by England and Folbre (1999), which states that caring labor is "any occupation [either paid or unpaid] in which the worker provides a service to someone with whom he or she is in personal (usually face-to-face) contact" (p. 40). As a result, women are most likely those who perform caring labor roles, both at home and in the workplace. These caring labor roles include, but are not limited to, jobs in which women are mothers, nurses, child care workers, teachers, sex workers/prostitutes, flight attendants, psychologists, and members of the customer service/sales industry.

Within a feminist framework, caring labor occupations are generally oppressive, abusive, and offer few opportunities for professional, personal, or economic growth. However, many women continue to work in caring labor fields because jobs are plentiful and accessible. While the pay is low, it still provides an income. Women are socialized to believe that they are innately caring (Gilligan, 2014) and are presented with excessive opportunities that are consistent with this ideology, thus making it challenging for them find to jobs outside of the caring labor field.

THE PROCESS OF SELECTING THE MURDER CASES: WHY THESE CASES?

Within the present study, the women murderers I chose to focus on contain three examples of caring labor. The murder cases were chosen using a public database known as Murderpedia that catalogs both female and male murder cases. The database is organized by U.S. state and usually includes a brief biography of the murderer, photographs, a description of the murder (method of murder, location, date/time, number of victims, plea), and the names of the victim(s).

All the cases selected occurred after 2008, so as to gauge current media presence. Also, each case entailed a victim/offender relationship that represented an example of caring labor, and had substantial visibility within mainstream media. The three cases I selected were Michele Kalina (Case A), a mother convicted of murdering her five children (2010), Kimberly Saenz (Case B), a nurse convicted of murdering five of her patients (2008), and Amanda Logue (Case C), a sex worker convicted of murdering one of her client following a paid sexual encounter (2010). All of these cases represent women murderers who were engaged in different types of caring labor, in which their victims were those who they were supposed to care for.

Michele Kalina: “Mom Killed Her Babies”

The case of Michele Kalina was selected because she represents a woman who had a lifetime of caring for her family as well as for others. As a mother, Kalina had given birth to eight children: a teen daughter, a deceased teenaged son, a baby daughter that she gave up for adoption, and an estimated five infants that she murdered at the time of birth. This horrifying case caught widespread media attention due to the graphic nature of the murders and the gruesome discovery of the infants' bodies in coolers, boxed with cement within the family closet. Kalina was not only a mother of eight, but also worked as a nursing assistant at an elderly care home for most of her working life. Like many women, Kalina's caring labor roles overlapped and she spent most of her life caring for others, making her crime even more heinous.

Kimberly Saenz: The “Nightmare Nurse”

The case of Kimberly Saenz exemplified a murder case in which a seemingly caring nurse murdered five of her patients and injured five others. Saenz worked at a popular dialysis center, where she assisted patients in the long process of kidney dialysis, a procedure that most patients undergo multiple times a week, if not daily. The case received extensive media responsiveness due to the underlying distrust in the medical establishment as well as the odd method of murder. Aware that bleach is a commonly used substance at the dialysis center, Saenz injected her patients’ dialysis tubes with bleach, eventually resulting in their cardiac arrest. While Saenz worked as a nurse for many years, she was also a married woman with two children. It is evident that Saenz was responsible for the health and livelihood of others; therefore her murderous actions were particularly astonishing.

Amanda Logue: Sex Worker “Sunny Dae” and the Sex-Party Slaying

The Amanda Logue case broke news headlines when she and her boyfriend Jason Andrews murdered tattoo shop owner Dennis Abrahamsen. The victim had hired Logue, who had a history of working in the sex work industry as a porn star and prostitute. Abrahamsen had paid Logue to perform at a sex party and to have sex with him on camera after his other guests left. The victim had been lying on his stomach and was violently bludgeoned to death by Logue and presumably by her boyfriend. While media debated whether it was Logue or Andrews who had delivered the fatal blow, it appeared that Logue had been the mastermind in planning the murder and had committed the initial injury. With Logue and Andrews both committing this murder, it offered an opportunity to compare media depictions of women and men murderers. This case also represented an important example of thinking beyond what is traditionally described as caring labor. It is common to connect caring labor to motherhood, nursing, or teaching; however, prostitution and sex work are also forms of caring labor. Furthermore, Logue was also a married mother, again showing the overlap in caring labor roles.

FEMINIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF U.S. MEDIA

A feminist discourse analysis, an effective methodological approach to interpreting media sources, was conducted using the news articles that detailed the cases of Kalina,

Saenz, and Logue. With most of U.S. society exposed to mass media, it was imperative to apply a methodology that acknowledged the value and power of media and how they inform societal beliefs of women, femininity, and caring labor. This methodology was particularly useful in examining media because news reports and images frequently reflect common societal beliefs about gender, sexuality, class, and race. Furthermore, this method supports the idea that larger societal structures such as media contribute to sustaining the hegemonic and patriarchal foundations of society. It was imperative to utilize both a feminist and feminist criminological perspective when conducting this study. Each perspective offered the necessary components to thoroughly examine media and how they contribute to gender inequality and societal perceptions about women murderers. The next chapter provides an extensive review of literature on the topic of women murderers, which offers a contextual background of the type of research that has been conducted in the past on this topic and how it informs my current research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will provide an extensive overview of previous research within the field of criminology, women murderers, and feminist involvement in these topics. While criminological research has predominately utilized male-dominated samples, due to higher frequencies of male criminal activity, a substantial amount of research has focused on the differences between the female and male offender population. These comparisons have encouraged researchers to specifically study women murderers by analyzing government statistics as well as media sources. As a result, the majority of research has relied heavily on statistics, which are often simplistic and limiting. However, because women criminals remain an under-researched population, critically engaging with these statistics is necessary because they demonstrate how women criminals have been studied from a traditional criminological lens. In doing so, trends and patterns emerged, which facilitated the creation of many typologies that have been used to categorize women murderers. As research on women murderers continues to expand, feminist involvement in the topic has amplified.

RESEARCH ON GENDER DIFFERENCE AMONG MURDERERS

Jensen (2001) analyzed 13,296 murder cases reported by the FBI's 1990 Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR). Of the cases, 1,220 (9.2%) murderers were female and 12,076 (90.8%) were male. Jensen compared information on the victim/offender relationship for both female and male offenders. The results indicated that 480 (39.3%) female murderers versus 1,161 (9.6%) male murderers killed an intimate partner, 435 (35.7%) versus 6,340 (52.5%) an acquaintance, 221 (18.1%) versus 864 (7.2%) a family member, and 84 (6.9%) versus 3,711 (30.7%) a stranger. Based on these data, it was evident that women killed intimate partners more frequently than men. Jensen argued that was likely due to the fact that women offenders experienced more gender inequality within intimate heterosexual relationships than men.

In a follow-up study on homicide in Dade County, Florida, Wilbanks (1983) examined the differences between 47 female and 522 male homicide offenders. Data on the murder weapons, the victims, the context of the murder, and general demographic information were collected from the medical examiner's office in Florida and from police investigations. Wilbanks supported the notion that the context in which women and men murdered differed. Based on the results, women were more likely to have killed within a domestic context as a result of an argument (46.8% women vs. 7.6% men) and to have killed family members, including heterosexual partners, spouses, and/or children (70.2% vs. 12.6%). Women were also less likely than men to have used handguns (53.2% vs. 64.2%), but more likely to have used knives (25.2% vs. 12.7%) as their weapons, and to have acted alone (91.5% vs. 56.6%). The peak age of offenders was between 25-44 years for women and 15-24 years for men. There were no cases in which the actions of men were determined to be self-defense, but 13 of 47 female offenders were not arrested because their actions were deemed self-defense, not murder.

These statistics are beneficial in relation to my research because they provided a gendered approach to examining the crimes committed by women and men. While these statistics have limits to their usefulness, it was evident from these studies that there are numerous factors that must be examined in relation to criminal activity. This includes among other things, the types of crimes committed, the weapons used, the victim/offender relationship, and the context in which the crimes took place. All of these factors demonstrated the complexities and interrelatedness of criminal activity and how they differed between men and women. Although the current research is primarily concerned with women murderers, it was imperative to utilize these data driven studies because they offered an initial set of characteristics that were valuable in analyzing the cases.

RESEARCH ON WOMEN MURDERERS

Using reports from investigators, police and interrogation accounts, and statements by witnesses, Goetting (1988) examined records of 136 female offenders arrested for homicide and their 136 victims in Detroit, Michigan during 1982 and 1983. The results showed that 85.1% of female offenders had at least one child, and 52.7% of the female offenders lived with their common-law or legal husband. Of the offenders, 45.8% had been educated through

12th grade, 17% beyond 12th grade, and 1.9% had 16 years of education. With low rates of formal education, 76.9% of the offenders were unemployed and 64.7% had been previously arrested. The social relationships between the female offenders and their victims was as follows: 6.7% of their victims were strangers, 42% spouses (legal or common-law), 17.2% ex-spouses or romantic partners, 18.7% acquaintances, 3% friends, 1.5% roommates, 6% the woman's biological children, 1.5% the children of her ex-spouses' new romantic partner, 0.7% foster children, and 0.7% other relatives. Of the offenders, 35.3% had been drinking alcohol during the crime, most had used guns as their weapons, and 54.9% of the murders were the result of a domestic argument. The results were used to create an overall image of a woman murderer in Detroit, which Goetting argued would be beneficial in creating prevention and intervention strategies. While this is problematic, specifically with regard to issues surrounding racial stereotyping within the criminal justice system, Goetting's research examined the female homicide offender population, which was beneficial to the current research.

Ward, Jackson, and Ward (1979) examined descriptions, prison records, and police/inmate statements that had been collected on 400 female inmates at the California Institution for Women (1963-1964 and 1968) and the Minnesota Women's Reformatory (1964-1966). The crimes included homicide (n=100), assault (n=100), robbery (n=100), and burglary (n=100). Of the cases of homicide, 77% of the offenders acted alone and committed the homicides in their own home (13%) or in the home shared by the offender and victim (47%). In 61% of the cases, the offender murdered an adult male; this included a spouse/lover (35%), a friend (18%), or a stranger (8%). Children were victims in 19% of the cases, whereas coworkers and unidentifiable relationships each represented 2%. The condition of the victim at the time of the murder indicated that 42% were drunk, sick, or asleep, 28% were conscious/not incapacitated, 19% were helpless, and 11% of the cases had no available information. Homicides were determined to be premeditated (methodical and consciously planned) in 21% of the cases, 46% were not premeditated, and 33% were unable to be determined. In 13% of the cases the offenders claimed to be innocent, 24% claimed that their actions were justified (self-defense or victim was deserving of it), 34% had other circumstances that included being drunk (5%), psychologically disturbed (9%), accidentally killing (17%), or blaming others for the incident (3%). Moreover, 8% of the offenders

reported multiple reasons for murdering and 21% had no information as to the reasons behind their actions. Of the murder weapons, knives were used 35% of the time, guns 34%, and 23% used other weapons or no weapons. The author concluded that women's criminal behavior is distinct and that their cultural and societal gender roles are of the utmost importance. This was particularly useful in relation to the cases I analyzed because unlike men, women's normative gender roles are linked to their caretaking and nurturing ability, particularly within a patriarchal society.

MEDIA ANALYSIS OF WOMEN MURDERERS

Naylor (2001) analyzed 1,727 British newspaper articles between February 1992 and July 1992 that depicted violent acts committed by men and women. Results indicated that 19.2% of the articles were reports on female offenders, 72.9% on male offenders, 2.1% involved both male and female offenders, and 5.8% were on the category of "other." Female offenders were categorized as having participated in a "love triangle" (115 articles), as having experienced partner violence (58 articles), terrorist violence (52 articles), and/or violence committed against their own child (35 articles). Naylor argued that most newspaper reports were about female offenders who committed violent acts against people with whom they had intimate, parental, or caring relations. The articles about male offenders were short, whereas female offenders were described in full-page articles. Women's violent actions were most commonly attributed to stereotypical beliefs that women were emotional, irrational, and mad/psychologically ill. In contrast, violent acts by men were frequently rationalized and normalized in media. The author indicated that it was imperative to create an understanding of the ways in which media produce stereotypical perceptions about femininity and masculinity. This is in agreement with the current research, which focuses on examining the influential roles of media in constructing society's perceptions of femininity and masculinity.

Similarly, Farrell et al. (2011) conducted an extensive analysis of 70 homicides committed by 10 female serial murderers, using newspaper articles from the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times*. The researchers examined 282 newspaper articles about how female offenders were described according to age, race, number of victims, motivation for the killings, the relationship between the victims and offenders, the method used in killing, the location of the crime, the offenders' career, their mental health state, and the age

of the victims. All of the offenders were white with a median age of 37.5 years and each had murdered an average of 8.89 people. Ten (14.29%) offenders were motivated by family profit, 1 (1.43%) by stranger or acquaintance profit, 7 (10%) by revenge, 13 (18.57%) had unknown motives, and 39 (55.71%) were categorized as motivated by a combination of factors. Adult victims whom the murderer personally knew (spouse, lover, parents, or siblings) represented 23 cases (32.86%). Similarly, in 16 cases (22.86%) the victims were children with whom the offender had a personal relationship, such as their biological children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, or stepchildren. There were 10 cases (14.36%) where the victims were children with whom the murderer was acquainted, 7 cases (10%) in which the victims were adult strangers, and 4 cases (5.71%) in which the adult victims and the murderer were acquaintances. In 3 cases (4.29%), the adult victims were friends of the murderer and in 7 cases (10%) the victim/offender relationship was unknown. In 23 (32.86%) cases the victims were between the ages of 20-54 years, 11 (15.71%) were 55 and older, 9 (12.86%) were between 1-12 years, 4 (5.71%) were infants, and 1 (1.43%) was a teen. Twenty-one (30%) offenders were nurses, 4 (5.71%) were mothers/homemakers, 7 (10%) were prostitutes, 25 (35.7%) had other careers, and in 13 cases (18.6%) their careers were unknown. The results showed the mental health of the offender was called into question by media in 31 (44.29%) cases. In 24 (34.29%) cases, the offenders were charged with homicide and in 46 (65.71%) they were determined innocent. The authors indicated the limitations and biases of both their study and media interpretations of the crimes as well as the offenders. This study related to the cases I selected because it examined the careers of women serial killers and moved beyond standard demographic data. It further supported a major component of my research because it revealed the victim/offender relationship and insinuated that women serial killers also had roles as caregivers.

Using newspaper accounts from the database Lexis-Nexus and ProQuest, Messing and Heeren (2004) analyzed 32 cases in which women committed multiple murders between 1993 and 2001. Of the cases, 20 were women who killed their children, 6 killed their intimate partners, and 2 attacked an ex-spouse and his new intimate partner. The remaining 4 cases consisted of a grandmother who killed her two grandchildren, a woman who set her son's ex-lover's apartment complex on fire, and a woman who killed her husband's girlfriend and child following an affair. The mean age of the offenders was 34.4 years. Fifty percent of the

female offenders were non-Hispanic white, 23.3% Hispanic, 13.3% Black, and 13.3% Asian. Regarding marital status and employment, 71.4% of the offenders were married and homemakers, 28.6% were married and employed outside of the home, 50% were separated and homemakers, 50% were separated and employed, 60% were divorced and homemakers, and the remaining 40% were divorced and employed. Of the 25 women who had children, 28% had two children, 44% had three, and 28% had four or more. The role of precipitating events or circumstances that occurred prior to the murder was also examined. In 68.8% of the cases women experienced a change in their domestic setting that was categorized as role loss. Women's role loss was precipitated by events such as breakups (27.3%), a lover having an affair (31.8%), a custody dispute (22.7%), or lost autonomy due to child care (18.2%). While both women and men experienced role loss, the authors argued that the lives of female offenders were more likely to revolve around domestic relations in comparison to male offenders. In 31.2% of the cases the female offenders had experienced psychological disturbances, which included depression (40%) or delusional thinking (60%). The authors argued that the offenders often experienced social isolation following their roles loss, which contributed to their acts of violence.

A content analysis of 54 front-page newspaper articles from the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* that reported on violent and non-violent crimes committed by women was conducted by Brennan and Vandenberg (2009). Of the 54 cases used in their sample, 48.9% (23) were white women, 23.4% (11) Latinas, 19.1% (9) African American, 4.3% (2) other, and 4.3% (2) were multiracial. The authors hypothesized that racial minority offenders would be represented less favorably in media than white women. The results supported their hypothesis-- white offenders were 3 times more likely to be portrayed favorably in comparison to minority offenders (47.8% vs. 16.7%). The actions of white offenders were also more likely to be excused or denied compared to minority offenders (56.5% vs. 21%). White women were also depicted as more likely to be successfully reformed or changed following the crime, whereas minority women were depicted as essentially deviant and unable to be rehabilitated. While this research did not focus solely on female murderers, it provided insight into the racial differences in media coverage and how that relates to the three cases in my current study.

Meyer and Oberman (2001) analyzed 219 newspaper articles on women who killed their children. Many of the articles on female murderers focused on women who were generally middle-to-upper class, young, white women who came from “good” families. As a result, their criminal acts were viewed as more unusual and therefore more newsworthy. The crimes committed by affluent white women were more highly publicized in media compared to those of minority offenders.

Berrington and Honkatukia (2002) focused on the ways in which media, particularly newspapers, represented female murderers as either “bad or mad.” To do so, the authors analyzed two popular murder cases: the case of Rosemary West in England and Sanna Sillanpaa in Finland. Rosemary West was framed in media as the “bad,” unattractive, evil, sexually deviant, and sadistic bisexual woman, with a history of abuse, with no incidences of mental illness. In contrast, the authors used the case of Sanna Sillanpaa to demonstrate how media portrayed her in a sympathetic way as a physically attractive, “mad” woman, who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. The use of these two cases supported the dichotomous notion that in order for women to commit violent acts, they must be sexually deviant, mentally ill, or have been sexually abused in their childhood.

A portion of Meyer and Oberman’s (2001) research was dedicated to deciphering how media depicted female criminal offenders. Women were most commonly portrayed as “mad,” meaning they normally ascribed to feminine gender roles and were deemed moral, and acted out as a result of mental illness. By depicting women as “mad” the offenders frequently utilized the insanity defense when on trial for murder. The insanity defense was used to demonstrate that the offenders were not responsible for the crime they committed, because they were psychologically disturbed or mentally ill. In contrast, “bad” women were depicted as being immoral, evil, and unable to satisfy the societal standards of femininity with regards to their appearance, behavior, and motherhood. Women who were categorized as “bad” received harsher sentences as a result of their inability fulfill expectations of femininity or to plead guilty for reason of insanity.

TYOLOGIES OF WOMEN MURDERERS

The creation and use of typologies has been a major component in the study of women murderers. A foundational contribution to the categorization of female serial killers

was the book *Bad Girls Do It! An Encyclopedia of Female Murderers* by Newton (1993), in which he provided a thorough overview of each known female serial killer. In the absence of much data about women murderers, the use of media and press coverage informed most of the author's exploration. The women were categorized as "serial killers" if they had murdered more than three people at different times and locations, and as "mass murderers" if they had killed four or more victims during one event and at one location. Each of the 183 cases contained a profile of the offenders' personal life as well as a detailed description of the crimes and possible motives behind them.

Kelleher and Kelleher (1998) created the categorization of female murderers that is frequently used by both media and academic researchers. *Black Widows* involved women who killed their family members, including spouse or relatives, whereas *Angels of Death* were essentially caregivers within the medical profession, such as nurses. Furthermore, women who were categorized as *Questions of Sanity* were perceived as mentally ill and tended to murder randomly. Women who worked with at least one other individual to commit the murder were referred to as *Team Killers*. In the case of *Sexual Predators*, women's motive to kill was linked to sexual gratification. Additionally, those murderers who had past relations with their victims were often categorized under *Revenge* murder. Women who killed systematically for financial motives were known as *Profit or Crime* killers. In addition, Kelleher and Kelleher also created two categories in which the acts of female murderers were simply *Unexplained*, meaning the random acts of violence against strangers, or *Unsolved* cases. The work of Kelleher and Kelleher created a substantial compilation of female murder cases and the characteristics of the cases have aided subsequent research in this field.

In her book *Women, Murder, and Femininity: Gender Representations of Women Who Kill*, Seal (2010) described the connections between women murderers and mid-twentieth century media representations of femininity in England. She first offered extensive background on how feminist theory informed her work and the usefulness of examining feminine and masculine gender norms in relation to violent acts. For example, women are commonly perceived as passive victims of violence, whereas men are seen as aggressive perpetrators. Seal stated that most research on women who kill has focused on women as mothers and as victims of domestic violence who eventually "snapped" and murder their

abuser. She concluded that the research on female murderers must move beyond discussions of domestic violence and motherhood, and rather explore alternative explanations of women's acts of murder. To do so, she completed a discourse and narrative analysis of media representations of twelve "unusual" female murderer cases. The results supported five major themes of representation. These themes included *the muse or mastermind*, (women who were either the assistant or leader in committing murder with the help of their male partner), *the masculine woman* (women who appeared masculine and/or who were perceived as lesbian), *the damaged personality* (women who were psychopathic and/or mentally ill), *the respectable woman* (women who fulfilled feminine gender roles) and *the witch* (older women suspected of killing multiple people). Each of these typologies were related to women's ability to fulfill certain characteristics of femininity and/or masculinity. In cases of the *muse or mastermind*, the role of women in the murder was seemingly unidentifiable because they were either under the "spell" of their male partner or had placed men under their "spell." *The masculine woman* typology was linked to the masculinization of women murderers, in which women who commit violent acts were believed to be unwomanly and have traits that were more similar to men. This includes sexually desiring women. Furthermore, *the damaged personality* represented the idea that in order for women to kill, they must have a mental/personality disorder because sane or "normal" women would have never committed such crimes. This included women who were aggressive, impulsive, lacked remorse and empathy. *The respectable woman* appeared to be a "normal" woman who was feminine and non-threatening. She was not transgressive nor inherently deviant. This typology was primarily used to categorize white, heterosexual, middle class women who committed murder. The notion of *the witch* symbolized the most evil and devilish; however, these were not women who were believed to be magical witches. Rather, they were thought to be older women who appeared ordinary, yet were in fact malicious and had killed many victims. In addition, Seal discussed the ways in which women who committed murder often transgressed gender boundaries by rejecting their traditional feminine roles physically, as mothers, or victims of domestic abuse.

Gurian (2011) examined 65 cases of female murderers from across the world. In 30 cases female offenders committed serial murders with a male partner, whereas 35 cases were committed solely by female offenders. Gurian found that partnered serial murderers had

more victims than solo female offenders. Female partnered serial murderers were more likely to kill for sexual enjoyment, to cross state lines, to murder for monetary gain, to be cult members or leaders, or to be the accomplice of a male serial killer. In contrast, female solo offenders were more likely to be classified as members of the medical field known as “Angels of Death,” to murder for profit (also known as “Black Widows”), and to be murderers of infants or children.

Morris’ (2008) book *Dangerous Women* offered a contemporary view of women who stepped outside of both the law and their traditional gender roles through their criminal actions. Morris used a variety of methods to collect data, which included public records of highly-publicized criminal cases, media coverage of the cases, and his own experience as a clinical and forensic psychologist. He specifically described murder cases in which women killed both non-family and family members. This included women who killed their intimate partners, accidental murders, women who killed or molested their children, teachers who sexually abused their students, and religious women (such as nuns) who sexually abused children.

Hickey (1991) used a variety of sources, including interviews, journals, newspaper articles, bibliographies, biographies, and general computer searches, to examine 169 male and 34 female murder cases from the period 1795 to 1988. He argued that female serial killers tended to fall into two categories: “Angels of Death,” who were nurses that had control over a dependent population such as the elderly or babies, and “Black Widows,” women who murdered their spouses, children, or relatives. Of the 34 cases, 32% of the female murderers were homemakers, 18% nurses, 15% had a criminal career that included prostitution, 6% were hired housekeepers, 9% were storeowners, waitresses, or other, and 20% were unemployed. Unlike men, 62% of the female offenders killed in place-specific locations, meaning they committed their murders at the same physical location, such as at their workplace or home. Hickey stated that media have frequently created trivializing nicknames for female murderers, such as *Giggling Grandma*, *Lonely Hearts Killer*, *Beautiful Blonde Killer*, and *Old Shoebox Annie*. Hickey further examined 76 cases that were categorized as “Team Killers,” those who committed murder with one or more accomplices. In 38% of the cases, a female offender was involved, usually the wife if the offenders were

related. However, if they were not related they would frequently be duos in which the man had more power than the woman (65%) or male/female unmarried lovers (15%).

These typologies offered diverse ways to categorize women murderers and the crimes they commit, which can be both useful and problematic. Within the context of the current research, there are three typologies that will be applied; the *Black Widow*, the *Angel of Death*, and the *Team Killers/Sexual Predators*. The case of Michele Kalina, the woman who killed her five children represents a *Black Widow* because her crimes were committed against member of her own family. Additionally, because Kimberly Saenz worked in the medical field and murdered five of her dialysis patients she would be categorized as an *Angel of Death*. Lastly, Amanda Logue and her accomplice Jason Andrews murdered their victim together and were sexually aroused by the thought of taking the life of another human being. As a result, they are considered *Team Killers/Sexual Predators*. While these typologies are effective in creating patterns and profiles of women murderers, they also rely on dominant notions of gender and femininity. For example, because women have been traditionally associated with purity and morality, the typology of the *Angel of Death* would not be used to describe a male murderer. Similarly, a *Black Widow* is based on the characteristics of a female spider that kills and eats her male mate. Furthermore, these typologies force women into categories, which they often do not fit into. In doing so, the typologies create a seemingly general profile of a woman murderer, which relies on gendered assumptions about women and the motives behind their crimes. For example, a woman categorized as a *Revenge* killer may in fact not be seeking retribution, but the sexist assumption that women are jealous and vengeful assists in establishing this typology. While these typologies have been beneficial due to the lack of research available, it is vital that we are critical of the all-encompassing sexist, racist, classist and heteronormative nature of them. As feminist research in this field continues to grow, the effectiveness of these typologies will likely diminish. While the typologies offered information about the various profiles of women murderers, other research has examined the context of the murder as well as the relationship between the victim and offender. I consider this research to be a more valuable and inclusive approach to examining women murderers.

Murdering in the Domestic Sphere

In her book, *When Women Kill*, Mann (1996) utilized data from the UCR, the National Center for Health Statistics, media accounts, and research conducted in prisons, resulting in 293 cases of female perpetrated homicide. She examined the offenders' age, race, marital status, education level, employment and maternal status, number of children, previous arrests/convictions, history of violence, and childhood abuse history. The characteristics of the murder itself included the city, year, date, time, day of the week, location, victim/offender relationship, premeditation, motive, method used, number of wounds, and the offender's role. She found that 47.8% of the cases involved domestic relations in which the victims/offenders were in either legal or common-law marriages, lovers who lived together, separated couples, same-sex lovers, or previous lovers. Additionally, 10.6% of the women murdered their own children. Of this percentage, African American women represented 52% of those arrested for killing their children that were of preschool age or younger, white women represented 28%, and Hispanic women 20%. The results also indicated that 7.9% of the women murdered in-laws or other relatives.

Friedman, Cavney, and Resnick (2012) reviewed the debates surrounding women who killed their children and the penalties for offenders. The authors considered the past history of infanticide law and defined the differences between *filicide*, meaning the death of a child by its parent, *neonaticide*, killing an infant the first day he/she was alive, and *infanticide*, the killing of an infant within the first year of his/her life. Their examination of the motives and characteristics of neonaticide indicated that mothers usually committed the murder alone, were in denial about the pregnancy, and/or did not want the child. The motives behind filicide included unintended death by constant maltreatment, simply not wanting the child, killing the child for the purpose of seeking partner revenge, killing the child "out of love," and killing the child without a motive as a result of a mental disorder. According to current infanticide law, only women can be charged with infanticide whereas men are charged with murder.

Meyer and Oberman (2001) utilized the NEXIS database to identify 219 U.S.-based news reports and newspaper articles in which mothers killed their own children between 1990 and 1999. The authors classified women into five categories. There were 37 cases in the first category, *filicide related to an ignored pregnancy*, in which women either denied or hid

their pregnancies from family, friends, and the public. *Abuse-related filicide* (15 cases) involved women who killed their children while they had been physically abusing them, and *filicide due to neglect* (76 cases), referred to women who had not provided their children with basic needs, resulting in the children's death. There were 12 cases of *assisted/coerced filicide* when the child was actually killed by the mother's intimate partner, yet the mother was convicted of the killing. There were 79 cases that fell under the category of *purposeful filicide and the mother acted alone*, which included women who killed their children.

In addition to women murdering in the domestic context, research has also indicated that women specifically murder victims who they are hired to care for. This is particularly clear in cases of medical nurses who kill their own patients. While both nurses and mothers are caretakers, nurses are trusted with the lives of others, which makes society question the medical establishment and the morality of medical practitioners.

Nurses Who Kill: The Murdering of Patients

Field and Pearson (2010) conducted a media discourse analysis of 5000 sources from 14 countries that included 50 homicide cases of nurses who murdered their patients between 1980 and 2006. The researchers analyzed the murderer, the victims, the location of the murder, the opportunities available to the murderer, the method utilized, the evidence presented in the case, unusual patterns of death, and the punishment for the convicted nurses. They found no predictable patterns with regard to the nurses' age, race, motive, method of killing, or the amount of notoriety they received by the press. However, their victims were most often members of vulnerable populations, such as patients who were ill, disabled, elderly, and/or children. The locations of these murders were most frequently committed in intensive care units, emergency rooms, and elderly care communities. The opportunities to kill were usually when the nurses were working alone and then switched to different jobs when problems or suspicions emerged. The most common method of murder was lethal injection, suffocation, or general abuse. The most common evidence presented in the cases was unusual patterns of death, meaning hospitals or healthcare centers whose patient death rates increased drastically and the punishment for the offenders was most often life in prison without parole. The authors stated that the motives behind these murders were linked to the women's exertion of power over their patients. A major shortcoming of the study was that

the gender of the nurses was not specified. It was assumed that most of the nurses in these cases were women, because nursing is a female-dominated field, yet this factor was left unexamined.

To most of society, nurses appear to be an unlikely population that would commit murder. However, in contrast, research has indicated a possible connection between sex work/prostitution and murder. While causal data were unable to be determined due to the hesitancy for women to admit to being paid to have sex or to identify as a prostitute, past research has demonstrated correlations between the rate of murder and sex work/prostitution.

Sex Workers Who Kill: Murder and Prostitution

In Kauffman's 1993 research (cited in Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004) he examined the connections between prostitution and violent offenses perpetrated by women in Hawaii. Using arrest reports from 1991, he found that women only represented 9.0% of those arrested for violent crimes and 43.0% of those women had been previously arrested for prostitution. Based on these data, Kauffman supported the belief that prostitution was women's gateways into violent crimes.

Limited research has been conducted to determine a direct correlation between prostitution and the number of women who have committed murder. However, a portion of Chesney-Lind and Pasko's (2004) book was dedicated to determining trends in women's criminal activity over the ten year period of 1992-2001. Using the UCR, they established that the rate of women charged with prostitution decreased by 18.5% and the rate of women charged with murder simultaneously decreased by 4.0%. In general, while the total rate of women charged with crimes had increased (15.0%) over this period of time, rates of murder and prostitution decreased.

FEMINIST APPROACHES TO WOMEN MURDERERS

Burgess-Proctor (2006) argued for the use of an intersectional and multicultural feminist approach to examining gender, crime, and justice. She challenged researchers to examine the interlocking identities of female offenders' race, class, religion, nationality, age, ability, and other inequalities experienced by women and thus to take into consideration women's subordinate status within a patriarchal society.

Similarly, Cluff, Hunter, and Hinch (1997) supported the notion that most research on women serial murderers has had a narrow perspective, analyzing cases from an individual, micro-level. Within feminist theorizing on criminology, the emphasis has been placed on women as the victims of murder perpetrated by men, therefore ignoring accounts of women homicide offenders. The authors suggested that macro-level structures must be accounted for as contributing factors in women's murderous acts.

SUMMARY

After reviewing this literature through a feminist lens, I felt a level of discomfort in the amount of "objective" statistics used to represent women and men's experiences. Most of the research on women murderers utilized media depictions and/or the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, which have built-in biases and limited usefulness. Specifically, the UCR only provided information about the type of crime committed, and the offenders' race, age, and sex as separate (but not intersectional) variables. Much of this research produced generalized numbers that lacked humanity as well as qualitative data or narratives to support their arguments. Previous literature also focused on the differences in criminal activity between white and African American female offenders, often excluding all other racial/ethnic groups. This reinforces harmful racial binaries that have contributed to notions that white women are "good" and commit fewer crimes and African American women are "bad" and commit more crimes. Furthermore, while research demonstrated that there was a correlation between race, criminal activity, and socioeconomic status, it did not discuss of how these categories intersect and contribute to the offender's social location. The development of typologies for women murderers essentializes the experiences of women in hopes of creating a specific profile of a woman murderer. Many of the labels created by scholars and media sources trivialize women's criminal acts and objectify, sexualize, and/or demonize the female offenders. Interestingly, there were no comparable typologies created for male murderers, therefore normalizing violent acts committed by men and sensationalizing the violent acts of women. This is likely due to the belief that it is acceptable to create stereotypes for women based on normative gender roles and femininity, yet not for men. Furthermore, while much of the literature used the terms "femininity" and "masculinity" in relation to criminal offenders, there was rarely a description or definition of these terms. Lastly, there was no

exploration of the reasons why women murdered people they knew and in the domestic sphere, in contrast to men who most commonly murdered strangers outside of the home. The previous research related to the topic of women murderers assisted in informing the current. It illuminates the gaps and limitations of past research and indicates the need for future feminist research in this field.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this research, I defined feminist discourse analysis as the critical interpretation of the texts and images within news articles, in order to determine the underlying meanings and gendered assumptions within media representations of women. Moreover, the feminist discourse analysis was used to explore how social meanings were transmitted through texts and the ways in which media perpetuate gender inequality and constructions of femininity. By using the information available in the texts and images of news articles, I critically interpreted how media have shaped societal perceptions of women, femininity, and caring labor roles through their depictions of women murderers.

To examine media sources through a feminist discourse analysis, I utilized two discourses: *discourse of femininity* and *discourse of caring labor*. I defined the discourse of femininity as the examination of the normative notions of feminine gender roles. Specifically, I examined how women's normative femininity is reflected in media depictions of women's physical appearances, way of dress, emotional states, personalities, actions, sexuality, mental health, marital status, and occupations. This discourse was utilized as a way to think about, analyze, and critique media in order to gain insight into the sociocultural perceptions of women murderers. Feminist theorists such as Judith Butler (1990) discuss femininity as a *performance* of gender, in which female-bodied individuals perform actions, behaviors, and physical appearances that appeal to the desires of heterosexual men. Furthermore, Simone De Beauvoir (1952) states that femininity is associated with the "...clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations" traditionally ascribed to females (p. xxxviii). In fulfilling normative femininity, women receive more privilege than women who demonstrate unfeminine attributes. It was vital to take these definitions into consideration when utilizing the discourse of femininity that used in this research.

In relation to femininity, I defined the discourse of caring labor as the dominant ideology in which women are predisposed to nurturance and caregiving roles. The work women perform as caring laborers frequently occurs in female-dominated fields that are

commonly underpaid (e.g. teachers, nurses, prostitutes, childcare workers) or unpaid (e.g. caring for elderly family members, mothering). These roles are devalued by society and generally result in the exploitation and oppression of the women performing these roles. The connections between caring labor and women emerged due to women's association with reproduction and nurturing. Care and caring labor has been explained as "...a form of reproductive labor that fulfills three aims necessary for individual survival, development, and social reproduction" (Engster, 2005, p. 51). This includes facilitating the biological (food, water, shelter, protection from harm, sexual activity, etc.), developmental (emotional, speech, movement, etc.), and social (relieving suffering to improve their overall life) needs of others. Creating and implementing the discourse of caring labor to analyze media is imperative when conducting feminist-based research. According to Carol Gilligan (2014), the notion of care and caring labor is a feminist concept and should not be associated with the "feminine" (p. 101). Therefore, the discourses of caring labor and femininity are linked to feminism in that it is the goal of many feminists to deconstruct the meaning of care and who can perform caring labor. This research contributes to this deconstruction, by examining women who are presumed to be nurturing caretakers, yet subsequently reject their caretaking roles.

Feminist theorists who discuss the performance of femininity and ethics of care were instrumental in the creation of the discourses used in this research. Both discourses are based on societal assumptions that women are innately feminine and caring. In utilizing these discourses, I was able to demonstrate the ways in which media represent normative societal perceptions about women. In essence, news sources were analyzed using these discourses to gauge how women's femininity and caring labor roles were communicated by media to mainstream society.

Using the discourses of femininity and caring labor to assess the ways in which U.S. media depict women murderers, I searched for online news articles that reported on the women murderers within my sample. I included both national and local print news sources. I conducted a Google search using the names of the women murderers; for example, "news stories on Michele Kalina," "news articles on Kimberly Saenz" or "Amanda Logue case." News articles were included if they contained information about the female murderer and/or a description of the murder case. Articles were excluded if the text repeated previous news articles verbatim or if the news source was from outside the U.S.

To determine the variables that would be utilized in analyzing the articles, I reflected on previous literature that analyzed media depictions of women criminals. This included the examination of sexuality, “love triangles” (Naylor, 2001) and marital status (Messing and Heeren, 2004). Other useful sources included Farrell et al. (2011), who used variables such as the women murderer’s age, race, motives, method of murder, career, and mental health. The variables were also influenced by the idea that women are either depicted as “mad” or “bad” (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002; Meyer & Oberman, 2001), which I connected to their representation as victims or villains within news reports. Furthermore, analyzing women’s physical appearance and the presence of photographs originated from the objectification of women in media. This was evident in reviewing the sexist and sexualized typologies of women murderers (Hickey, 1991) as well as the research that examined their fulfillment of femininity (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002). After reviewing the literature on media and women murderers, I conducted an initial read through of each article, which was shaped by the discourses of femininity and caring labor. In doing so, I created variables based on the reoccurring items that were cited within the news articles. Following the review of literature and the preliminary analysis of the news articles, I established 21 variables:

- Physical appearance: clothing, hair, make-up, body size, or weight
- Race: description of the murderer as white, African American, Latina, Asian American, etc.
- Age: age of the murderer
- Socioeconomic status: poor, living in poverty or in a low-income area
- Education: high school graduate, college graduate, or other education (e.g. trade school, training as a nurse’s assistant)
- Motherhood: identified as a mother or having biological children
- Mental health: depression, addiction, schizophrenia, or other mental health problems or diagnoses
- Caring labor role: primary role described as a nurse, mother, sex worker/ prostitute, or other caretaking role
- Emotional state: crying, guilt, anger, apathy, or other emotional state
- Personality characteristics: introverted, isolated, compassionate, friendly, caring, etc.
- Sexuality: sexual orientation, affairs/love triangles, or sexual behavior
- Spouse and/or significant other: husband, boyfriend, or lover

- Method of murder: poisoning, asphyxiation, stabbing, bludgeoning, etc.
- Motives: specific motivation for the murder (e.g. extramarital affair, financial or material gain, hiding pregnancy)
- No motive: directly stating there was no motive
- Plea: guilty or not guilty
- Victimized: survivor of mental health problems, addiction or abuse, remorseful, apologetic
- Villain: evil, indifferent, cold, calculated, premeditated
- Personal statement: direct quotes from the women
- Head-only photograph: above shoulders, mug shot, detainment photo
- Full-body photograph

These variables were informed by the discourses and each offered an intersectional approach to examining depictions of women murderers. As discussed, normative femininity is related to a woman's physical appearance, body shape, personality, and sexuality. Similarly, traditional views on women as caretakers are associated with reproducing the well-being of others through motherhood, marriage, and/or their occupation outside of the home. When critiquing how women murderers were depicted in media, it was imperative to use variables that reflected the interlocking components of the women's identities. As is evident by the variables listed, many of them overlap, for example motherhood and caring labor roles or mental health and victimization. These variables are not restrictive examples of women's identities; rather, they provide insight into how these components and discourses intersect with one another in media representations.

Using these variables, I analyzed the presence of each of them in the news articles, highlighting textual examples in order to create themes. Each of the articles was read in detail, with the discourses of femininity and caring labor framing the analysis of each variable. The texts were interpreted and the underlying meanings and messages within the news reports were determined. In addition to analyzing and interpreting the text, I also examined photographs that were included in news articles. The presence of a photograph and/or the type of photograph (e.g. head shot or full-body) was studied to indicate how the women were portrayed physically by the text and by images. While the images were not analyzed extensively, the availability of photographs facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the traits media sources emphasized.

To track the occurrence of each variable in the articles, the process of coding was utilized. Once a variable was determined to be present in a news article, it was recorded under the corresponding variable category. The data were coded using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and the variables were coded as 1 if they were found within the articles and 0 if they were not. The data were separated by case (i.e. Kalina, Clark-Saenz, and Logue) and the average frequency of each variable was calculated across all news articles for that case. The coding process indicated the variables that were most frequently emphasized in media depictions of women murderers.

In addition to coding the variables within the articles, I used the discourses of femininity and caring labor to create common themes based on the frequency of the variables as well as from sample quotes found in the texts. It was beneficial to pair the variables with textual examples from the articles in order to support the coding process. This encompassed analyzing both the presences of the variables as well as the ways in which they were communicated in the news articles. While coding variables was a useful method of organizing, analyzing, and creating themes, its usefulness is limited without supplemental data such as quotes and personal statements from the women murderers.

In conducting this research, the process of coding has been critiqued by many feminists as a positivist framework that desires to discover the objective “truth” and in doing so reduces women’s identities down to a mere statistic. I propose that the methodological approach utilized in this research is consistent with Donna Haraway’s (1988) concept of “situated knowledges” (p. 581). Haraway’s model deconstructs the concept of objectivity and argues that it is imperative for researchers to situate their partiality in relation to their research in order to create useful knowledge. As a feminist researcher, this study is my interpretation of media, it does not assume that the results of coding reflect the experiences of all women and all depictions in media sources. I situate myself as a feminist researcher, in which my “Translation is always interpretive, critical, and partial” (Haraway, 1988, p. 499). As a feminist researcher, it was imperative to examine a population of women who have been traditionally silenced and ignored within academic fields, yet highly objectified and sexualized in media and popular culture. With limited research having been conducted on the women murderer population, creating variables and coding data were necessary starting points for future research in the field of feminist criminology. Furthermore, while past

research has only examined women murderers and media through the use of statistics, I provide an interdisciplinary approach by conducting a discourse analysis that utilizes textual examples to support the selected variables. As I have limited access to the women murderer population, analyzing media articles and coding data were an effective alternative to interviews. In doing so, I was able to indicate specific examples of how media represented women murderers.

While the women murderers used in this research are currently incarcerated for their crimes, their perspectives and voices have been made visible through media reports. In an effort to give incarcerated women an opportunity to share their perspective, I analyzed the presence of a “personal statement” within the news articles. In doing so, a level of discomfort emerged when I began to situate myself in relation to the women murderers who had taken the lives of others. I questioned whether these women were deserving of being heard and how this research could provide insight into preventing future violence. I realized that in critiquing media representations through a feminist lens, I am engaging in a more accurate understanding of these women’s violent acts and demonstrate how media have depicted only a biased story of the women and their crimes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

I utilized 52 online news articles that reported on the three female murderer cases: Case A: Michele Kalina (n=15), a mother who killed her five children; Case B: Kimberly Saenz (n=19), a nurse who murdered five of her patients; and Case C: Amanda Logue (n=18), a sex worker who murdered one of her clients (see Table 1). In Table 1, the title of the articles, the author, the news source, and the articles' publication date are represented. The articles ranged from the years 2008-2012 and included both national (*Huffington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Fox News*, *ABC News*, etc.) and local (*Tampa Bay Times*, *Lufkin News*, etc.) news sources. The articles were selected if they were published by online news or newspaper sources that reported on the murder cases in my sample.

Some of the articles were published in more progressive newspapers whereas others were from more conservative sources. Specifically, the *Huffington Post* is viewed by many feminists as a more liberal and reliable news source, which communicates important events through a more egalitarian lens. Similarly, one can speculate that small local news sources such as the *Lufkin News* may simply report on the news without having any vested political interests. In contrast, *Fox News* represents a more conservative and hegemonic source, which uses news reporting as a public forum to communicate their political, economic, and social opinions. Like most news sources, they maintain that their reporting is unbiased and objective. However, it cannot be ignored that these corporations function within a capitalist market in which gaining readership usually means profit. While many of these news sources such as the *New York Times* or *ABC News* may not directly communicate their vested interests, they exist to both report on news stories *and* make money. As a result, this research selected and examined these sources with an awareness of the biases built into each of the news articles and corporations that published them.

Table 1. Media Articles by Title and Author

Title of Articles (n=52)	Author	News Source	Date Published
Case A: Kalina (n=15)			
“Updated: 5 Infants Dead. Reading Pa Woman to Be Charged 5 Murders”	Sherry Tomfield	Yahoo News	10/25/2010
“Reading Woman Charged with Killing Five of Her Infants”	Steve Reinbrecht	BCTV Berks County Local News	10/25/2010
“US woman 'Killed Four Newborns'”	BBC News	BBC News	10/25/2010
“City Woman Charged in Deaths of 5 Infants; DA Calls Case Bizarre”	Holly Herman	Berks County Local News	10/26/2010
“Mom Charged With Murder of 5 Babies”	Rob Quinn	Newser	10/26/2010
“Police: Pa. Mom Killed Her Babies, Kept Bones in Closet”	Mara Gay	AOL News	10/26/2010
“Pennsylvania Woman Charged in Deaths of Infants”	Logan Burruss	CNN	10/26/2010
“Police: Pennsylvania Mom Killed 4 Infants, Kept Bones Hidden”	Associated Press	Fox News	10/26/2010
“PA Mother Michele Kalina Killed Own Children, Stored Bodies in Cooler and Cement”	Saul Relative	Yahoo News	10/26/2010
“Cops: Pa. Mom Killed Her 4 Newborns, Kept Bones”	Edecio Martinez	CBS News	10/26/2010
“Mom Accused of Killing 5 Babies to Plead Guilty”	Teresa Masterson	NBC Philadelphia	5/6/2011
“Pa. Woman Set to Plead in Deaths of 5 Newborns”	Associated Press	WSVN News (Florida)	6/2/2011

(table continues)

Table 1. (continued)

Title of Articles (n=52)	Author	News Source	Date Published
Case A: Kalina (n=15)			
“Woman Who Hid Remains of 5 Babies Pleads Guilty”	Associated Press	CBC News	8/4/2011
“Pennsylvania Mom Pleads Guilty to Murder After Baby Skeletons Found in Closet”	Jessica Hopper	ABC News	8/2/2011
“Pa. Woman Who Hid Baby Remains Gets 20-40 Years”	Ryan McFadden	USA Today	8/4/2011
Case B: Saenz (n=19)			
“Police: DaVita Nurse”	Jessica Savage	Lufkin Daily News	5/30/2008
“DaVita: Charges Against Nurse 'Unprecedented'”	Jessica Savage	Lufkin Daily News	6/19/2008
“Nurse Charged with Injecting 10 Patients with Bleach, Killing 5”	Associated Press	Fox News	4/1/2009
“Former DaVita Nurse Pleads Not Guilty to Charges She Killed Five Dialysis Patients”	Jessica Savage	Lufkin Daily News	4/17/2009
“Nightmare Nurse: Poisonous Injections Could Net Death Penalty”	Ryan Smith	CBS News	7/16/2009
“Texas Nurse Accused of Killing Patients with Bleach IVs”	Associated Press	CBSDFW News (Texas)	3/5/2012
“Texas Nurse Faces Death Penalty For Patient Deaths”	Michael Graczyk	CBSDFW News (Texas)	3/5/2012

(table continues)

Table 1. (continued)

Title of Articles (n=52)	Author	News Source	Date Published
Case B: Saenz (n=19)			
“Trial Starts for Alleged Killer Nurse”	United Press International	UPI News	3/5/2012
“Week 2 of Testimony in Trial of Former Nurse Accused of Injecting Dialysis Patients with Bleach”	Alexis Spears	KTRE News (Texas)	3/12/2012
“Prosecutor: Patients Terrified By Nurse's Actions”	Juan A. Lozano	CNS News	3/29/2012
“Jury Now Has Texas Bleach Injection Deaths Case”	Juan A. Lozano	Union-Tribune (San Diego)	3/29/2012
“Kimberly Clark Saenz, Texas Nurse, Awaits Verdict In Bleach Injection Trial”	Associated Press	Huffington Post	3/30/2012
“Kimberly Saenz, Ex-Nurse Gets Life In Prison For Killing 5 With Bleach”	Michael Graczyk	Huffington Post	4/2/2012
“Kimberly Saenz, Former Nurse Convicted of Killing Five Bleach, Awaits Sentence”	Crimesider Staff	CBS News	4/2/2012
“Jury Hands Down Life Sentence for Kim Saenz”	Alexis Spears	KTRE News (Texas)	4/2/2012
“Ex-nurse Convicted of Bleach Killings Awaits Fate”	Michael Graczyk	Yahoo News	4/2/2012
“Life in Prison for Ex-nurse in 5 Bleach Deaths”	Joel Andrews	USA Today	4/2/2012
“Nurse Sentenced to Life for Killing Patients by Injecting them with Bleach	MSNBC Staff	US News	4/2/2012

(table continues)

Table 1. (continued)

Title of Articles (n=52)	Author	News Source	Date Published
Case B: Saenz (n=19)			
“Texas: Nurse Spared Execution in Bleach Deaths”	Associated Press	New York Times	4/3/2012
Case C: Logue (n=18)			
“Leesburg Woman Arrested for Prostitution and Murder”	Tayleigh Davis	WALB News	5/28/2010
“Georgia Woman Arrested in Murder of New Port Richey Businessman”	Erin Sullivan	Tampa Bay Times	5/28/2010
“Leesburg Woman Arrested for Murder”	Pete Skiba	Albany Herald News (Georgia)	5/28/2010
“Porn Stars Accused of Sex-Party Murder Shared Exploits on Twitter, Text Messages”	Drew Harwell	Tampa Bay Times	6/26/2010
“Porn Actors Amanda Logue, Jason Andrews Indicted for Murder of Florida Tattoo Artist”	Sean Alfano	New York Daily News	7/16/2010
“Fla. Detectives: Porn Actors Texted Plans in Days, Hours Before They Killed Tattoo Shop Owner”	Associated Press	Fox News	7/6/2010
“Former Porn Star Arrested for Florida Sledgehammer Murder in Chattanooga”	WBIR	WBIR News (Tennessee)	7/16/2010
“Fugitive Wanted in Sex-Party Slaying Arrested Locally”	Monica Mercer	Times Free Press	7/17/2010

(table continues)

Table 1. (continued)

“Amanda Logue and Boyfriend Killed a Tattoo-Artist”	Felix Haynes	05 News	7/17/2010
“Porn Amanda Logue Murder Indictment”	Kara Gilmour	Newsoxy	7/18/2010
“Amanda Logue and Jason Andrews: Porn Stars Charged with First-Degree Murder”	Edecio Martinez	CBS News	7/19/2010
“Porn Actor Pleads Guilty in Murder of New Port Richey Tattoo Parlor Owner”	Erin Sullivan	Tampa Bay Times	1/25/2012
“Porn Actress Pleads Guilty in Slaying of Tattoo Parlor Owner After Sex Party”	MSNBC Staff	NBC News	5/21/2012
“Porn Actress Pleads Guilty to Murder, Gets 40-year Sentence”	Erik Waxler	ABC News	5/21/2012
“Porn Actress Amanda Logue Enters Plea in 2010 Sex Party Slaying”	WTSP	WTSP News (Florida)	5/21/2012
“Porn Actress Pleads Guilty in Sex Party Slaying”	Tbo.com	WFLA News (Florida)	5/21/2012
“Porn Actress Takes Plea Deal in 2010 Pasco Sex Party Slaying”	Cait McVey	CF News (Florida)	5/21/2012
“Amanda Logue, Porn Star 'Sunny Dae', Gets 40 Years in Prison for Sex Party Murder”	Andy Campbell	Huffington Post	5/22/2012

CASE A: MICHELE KALINA, THE MOTHER WHO KILLED

The case of Michele Kalina represented just one of the many murder cases in which mothers kill their own children. Kalina, like many women murderers, had overlapping caring labor roles. She was the mother of multiple children, a married woman, and had at one time worked with the elderly as a nursing assistant. On October 25, 2010 in Reading,

Pennsylvania, Kalina was arrested for the murder of her five infants. After giving birth, Kalina immediately smothered, poisoned, and/or neglected the infants, all of whom were born alive during the period 1996-2010. The remains of the infants were discovered in storage containers in the family's living room closet by Kalina's husband and teenage daughter. While Kalina was married, she also had a long-term lover who was reported to be the father of all five of the victims and of a daughter whom Kalina put up for adoption after secretly giving birth to her. Kalina pleaded guilty to five counts of homicide and received 20-40 years in prison for her offenses.

The results of my internet search are depicted in Table 2. Women's physical appearance was frequently mentioned in media, and at times was the main focus of the news report. The focus on Kalina's physical appearance occurred in 8 (53.3%) of the articles describing her murder case. This included articles that mentioned her body shape, weight, and clothing. The articles discussed Kalina's pregnancies and whether people around her noticed any changes in her body. For example, articles stated "She was always slim" (McFadden, 2011) and that "Kalina started dating the co-worker in 1997 and soon appeared to be gaining weight" (Associated Press, 2011a). Furthermore, Kalina's husband was also questioned about her physical appearance: "he [Jeffery Kalina] said... he had not seen his wife naked during that time, when she carried babies to full-or nearly full-term births" (McFadden, 2011). One news source stated that Kalina was "a petite woman," yet there were no further details on her physical appearance (Associated Press, 2011a). It was clear from these examples that media sources not only placed importance on Kalina's body, but also offered the public information about her personal life.

The demographic information (i.e. race, age, socioeconomic status, and education) represented in the articles was limited. There was no mention of Kalina's race in any of the articles. However, Kalina's age was stated in 12 (80.0%) of the articles; for example, "Michele Kalina, 44, was charged with criminal homicide..." (Gay, 2010). Kalina's socioeconomic status was mentioned in 2 (13.3%) of the articles; Kalina was described as the only source of income in her family, and that they were forced to move from a suburban home to a small apartment for financial reasons. One article stated: "Jeffery Kalina, 54, a disabled stay-at-home after father for much of their 25-year marriage" (McFadden, 2011).

Table 2. Depictions of Kalina in News Articles

Case A: Michele Kalina (n=15)	
Variables	Number of Articles (%)
Physical Appearance	8 (53.3%)
Race	0.0%
Age	12 (80.0%)
Socioeconomic Status	2 (13.3%)
Education	1 (6.7%)
Motherhood	15(100.0%)
Mental Health	10 (66.7%)
Caring Labor Role	15(100.0%)
Emotional State	5 (33.3%)
Personality Characteristics	3 (20.0%)
Sexuality	15(100.0%)
Spouse and/or Sig. Other	15(100.0%)
Method of Murder	11 (73.3%)
Motives	3 (20.0%)
No Motive	2 (13.3%)
Plea (guilt/not guilty)	5 (33.3%)
Victimized	5 (33.3%)
Villain	10 (66.7%)
Personal Statement	10 (66.7%)
Head-Only Photograph	9 (60.0%)
Full-Body Photograph	1 (6.7%)

The educational level of Kalina was mentioned in 1 (6.7%) of the articles, which stated that she had received some college education at Albright College before getting married.

The role of motherhood in media depictions of Kalina was extensive. In 15 (100%) of the articles, she was described as being a mother, not only to her victims, but also to her teenage daughter, deceased son, and a daughter she put up for adoption. One article by Tomfield (2010) stated that “in 20003 Michele gave up a daughter for adoption that was

conceived by a lover. She has a teenage daughter with her husband and a son who died in 2000 due to a lengthy illness.” According to an article by Hopper (2011), “Kalina’s 19-year-old daughter also testified and described her mother as a good mother.” It was clear within the news articles that Kalina was primarily depicted as a mother who murdered five of her children, yet still remained a loving mother to her teen daughter and her deceased son.

Given the difficulty in accepting a mother murdering her children, Kalina’s mental health was questioned in the news articles. A discussion of Kalina’s mental health appeared in 10 (66.7%) of the articles; Kalina was depicted as being depressed, an alcoholic, and suicidal. Information from defense psychiatrist Dr. Gottlieb stated that “Kalina is on one of several anti-depressants, but Gottlieb said he fears she will attempt suicide...” (McFadden, 2011). Kalina’s mental health was also reflected in statements where she is described as “an alcoholic who was intoxicated for all the births and does not fully recall what took place. She also suffers from severe depression and other mental-health issues” (Associated Press, 2011b) and that the authorities believed “Kalina would have a psychiatric evaluation” (Reinbrecht, 2010). The news articles provided limited information about exactly what mental illnesses Kalina had, but made the assumption that a mother who killed her own children must be mentally ill.

The presence of a caring labor role was determined by examining whether the articles depicted Kalina as primarily a mother. Although Kalina had previously worked as a nurse’s assistant, this was not the role frequently mentioned by media reports. In 15 (100%) of the articles, Kalina’s primary caring labor role was described as being a mother, in statements such as “...she is the mother of at least four of the infants...all five of the babies were born during 14 years Kalina was having an affair” (Quinn, 2010). This can also be seen in the titles of the articles; many of them included the words “mother,” “children,” or “babies,” such as, “PA Mother Michele Kalina Killed Own Children, Stored Bodies in Cooler and Cement” (Relative, 2010).

Descriptions of Kalina’s emotional state were presented in 5 (33.3%) of the articles. This included descriptions of Kalina crying, feeling guilty, or depressed. For example, one article stated that “Kalina sobbed as she told the judge she now has nightmares about the babies...” (Associated Press, 2011b). The personality characteristics of Kalina were

presented in 3 (20%) of the articles, and included her living an “isolated” life and being “brazen” and fearless.

Kalina’s sexuality was a main focus in the news articles. In 15 (100%) of the articles, Kalina was portrayed as having a long-term affair and being overly sexual due to the number of times she was pregnant. One article stated, “She [Kalina] started the affair with a co-worker in 1996 and became pregnant that year” (McFadden, 2011) and another that “Investigators say Kalina-who is married- conceived the infants through an affair with a man who was unaware of the pregnancies” (Martinez, 2010b). It was clear from these examples that Kalina was depicted as promiscuous and sexually irresponsible. All of the articles mentioned her spouse, Jeffery Kalina, and/or her lover. These two variables (i.e. sexuality and spouse/significant other) were frequently intertwined. An article by Hopper (2011) stated that “Her husband of 25 years testified during Kalina’s trial that he still loves his wife and plans to stay married to her...he testified that they stopped being intimate with one another in 1992....” This variable demonstrated that Kalina was described in relation to the men in her life, whether it be her husband or her lover. The articles disclosed very personal information about Kalina’s sex life and her marriage.

The method of murder was described in 11 (73.3%) of the articles, with statements such as “...four infants found in the apartment died after they were born from non-natural causes consistent with smothering, poisoning, or neglect” (Reinbrecht, 2010). The articles typically offered gruesome details of the murder scene. In addition, 3 (20.0%) of the articles mentioned Kalina’s presumed motives, which were described as a desire to conceal her affair: “A Pennsylvania woman secretly gave birth to at least four babies, killed the newborns to hide an extramarital affair and hid their remains in a closet, authorities say” (Gay, 2010). Conversely, 2 articles stated that Kalina had no motive. While Kalina had originally pleaded not guilty, she later pleaded guilty to five counts of homicide; 5 (33.3%) of the articles mentioned this fact.

Kalina was described as a victim in 5 (33.3%) articles. This included statements like “A public defender sought leniency on grounds that she [Kalina] had learned to deny reality in order to endure severe physical and sexual abuse as a child” (Associated Press, 2011b). In contrast, Kalina was depicted as a villain in 10 (66.7%) of the news articles, in which she was described as violent, unapologetic and as showing no remorse for the deaths of her victims.

For example, one source stated “A gruesome story has come out of Reading Penn. Worthy of any CSI or Law and Order script, where a 44-year-old nurse’s aide has been charged with murder after the remains of babies were found in her apartment” (Relative, 2010).

Furthermore, Kalina was also portrayed as cruel and seemingly indifferent: “She [Kalina] told a psychiatrist she had wrapped each baby with a towel and then stored the body in a tub or container in a locked closet” (Associated Press, 2011b). Throughout this description, the emphasis was on the fact that Kalina was aware of what she was doing and had created a plan to cover up the murders of her children.

Whereas media reports often ignored or overlooked women’s voices, 10 (66.7%) articles about Kalina included personal statements from Kalina herself. An article by Gay (2010) stated that “In court paper, authorities said Kalina told them she ‘had been meaning to clean that closet’ . . . the remains of a fifth newborn ended up in a dump and could not be directly linked to Kalina through forensic tests because it was badly decomposed.” Many of Kalina’s personal statements prior to the guilty plea communicated her indifference and demonstrated her emotional disconnection from the actual murders. In contrast to her cold and dismissive demeanor during the trial, after the trial Kalina was depicted as regretful and ashamed of her actions: “I cry for the babies, and nothing I can do can bring them back” (Associated Press, 2011b).

Regarding the photographs that accompanied the articles, I found that 9 (60.0%) articles included a head shot of Kalina whereas 1 (6.7%) article included a full-body image. Photographs of Kalina included her being escorted in handcuffs by police or of her official mug shot taken after she was arrested. These photos demonstrated the importance media placed on visual depictions of the women in the news articles and thereby assisting the public in determining what a women murderer actually looks like.

CASE B: KIMBERLY SAENZ, THE NURSE WHO KILLED

Kimberly Saenz was a 34-year old vocational nurse who worked in a DaVita dialysis center in Lufkin, Texas. She had been employed at the Lufkin center for eight months prior to her arrest, and had worked at many other hospitals over her career. The case of Saenz represented the commonly-used typology, “Angels of Death.” Like the other women murderers in my research, Saenz performed various interlocking caring labor roles-- she was

not only a nurse, but also a married mother of two. On May 30, 2008 Saenz was arrested and charged with the aggravated assault of five patients and the murder of five other patients. Saenz had murdered her patients by injecting bleach into their dialysis tubes. An increase in the number of deaths and complications at the DaVita center resulted in a federal health investigation of the center's staff and medical practices. This led investigators to Saenz, who had not only been on duty during these murders, but was also seen by two witnesses drawing bleach into syringes. Because bleach was a commonly-used cleaning substance within the dialysis center, the incidents were not reported. After a four-year trial, Saenz pleaded not guilty and was convicted on five counts of murder and aggravated assault, resulting in a life sentence.

Table 3 portrays variables in the media articles associated with Saenz. Her physical appearance was mentioned in 2 articles (10.5%). This included descriptions of her clothing or facial features, such as “dressed in a vibrant green shirt, Kimberly Saenz stood out in a crowded Angelina County courtroom” (Savage, 2009). The articles did not mention Saenz's body shape, hair, or any other features of her appearance.

None of the articles mentioned Saenz's race or socioeconomic status, yet 15 (78.9%) articles indicated her age either at the time of the murders or the trial. Saenz's educational level was represented in 1 (5.3%) article in which the journalist had asked an old classmate “...about Saenz not completing high school... [Because] Saenz dropped out her senior year” (Spears, 2012). This indicated that while Saenz worked as an entry-level vocational nurse, she was not well-educated, limiting her job options.

The role of motherhood was reported in 8 (42.1%) of the articles. Saenz's connection to motherhood was reflected in statements about her children, her actions as a mother, and the effects the murder case had on her children. For example, “. . . Saenz participate[d] in her two children's school work and athletics” (Graczyk, 2012). Similarly, another article stated that a witness “. . .complimented the ‘good’ parenting job Saenz had done with her son” (Spears, 2012).

The mental health of Saenz was portrayed in 9 (47.4%) articles that discussed her difficulties with prescription drug addiction, depression, and/or possibly Anti-Social Personality Disorder. While she was not clinically diagnosed with a mental disorder, many of the articles insinuated that Saenz was mentally ill in various ways. In one article, the author

Table 3. Depictions of Saenz in News Articles

Case B: Kimberly Saenz (n=19)	
Variables	Number of Articles (%)
Physical Appearance	2 (10.5%)
Race	0.0%
Age	15 (78.9%)
Socioeconomic Status	0.0%
Education	1 (5.3%)
Motherhood	8 (42.1%)
Mental Health	9 (47.4%)
Caring Labor Role	19 (100.0%)
Emotional State	3 (15.8%)
Personality Characteristics	12 (63.2%)
Sexuality	0.0%
Spouse and/or Sig. Other	5 (26.3%)
Method of Murder	19 (100.0%)
Motives	0.0%
No Motive	6 (31.6%)
Plea (guilty/not guilty)	4 (21.1%)
Victimized	4 (21.1%)
Villain	10 (52.6%)
Personal Statement	4 (21.1%)
Head-Only Photograph	8 (42.1%)
Full-Body Photograph	3 (15.8%)

stated "...Saenz overused prescription drugs, had substance abuse and drug addiction problems..." (Associated Press, 2012) while another article quoted a family member of a victim who said Saenz was "nothing more than a psychopathic serial killer" (Graczyk, 2012). Numerous other articles stated that Saenz was depressed and one author quoted a victim's family member who stated "how can someone that sick walk around and appear to be a normal person?" (Smith, 2009). Like many women murderers, Saenz's mental health

was called into question, not only within the articles, but also by the victims' family members who felt it was impossible for a "sane" woman to commit such a crime. The flippant use of terms such "depressed," "sick," and "psychopathic" without any diagnosis indicated that Saenz may not actually be mentally ill, but rather assumed to be based on her actions.

The caring labor role of Saenz was determined by whether the articles primarily discussed her career as a nurse; 19 (100%) stated this fact. Saenz was described by her lawyer in one article as "... 'A good nurse, a compassionate, a caring individual who assisted her patients and was well liked'" (Associated Press, 2012). While some articles mentioned the work Saenz performed, all of the articles similarly stated that Saenz had worked as a dialysis nurse at a busy clinic in Lufkin, Texas for more than eight months. The focus of the articles was that Saenz had been a nurse who had murdered her patients, rather than a murderer who had killed five people and injured five others.

The emotional state of Saenz was mentioned in 3 (15.8%) of the articles. For example one author indicated that after the conviction, "Saenz had sobbed quietly earlier Monday..." (Andrews, 2012). None of the articles described Saenz as regretful for her actions or apologetic to the victims' families.

Saenz's personality characteristics were mentioned in 12 (63.2%) of the articles; she was described as "disgruntled," "deceitful," "impatient," "compassionate," "funny," "very hard worker," and "caring." Her positive personality characteristics were emphasized in one article as follows: "... Saenz, who Oates [survivor] said often helped her pass the dreary, hours-long dialysis treatments by telling jokes" (Smith, 2009).

Saenz's sexuality was completely absent from the articles; none of the articles mentioned her sexual behaviors, affairs, or sexual orientation. However, 5 of the articles (26.3%) stated that Saenz was married, separated, or in the process of getting divorced. There were some inconsistencies among the articles as a result of the long, four-year trial, but there was no mention of an extramarital affair in any of the articles. Yet one article mentioned that "Records show her husband had filed for divorce and obtained an emergency protective order against her in June 2007, a year before the clinic deaths and illnesses" (Graczyk, 2012). The articles that mentioned Saenz's husband offered little detail into their marriage, but insinuated that her mental health had played a role in the deterioration of their marriage.

The method of murder used by Saenz was described in every article as lethally injecting the patients with bleach. Initially the victims became very ill, and many of them subsequently went into cardiac arrest. None of the articles mentioned possible motives for the murders; 6 (31.6%) of the articles specifically stated that Saenz had no motive. Saenz's plea of not guilty was discussed in 4 (21.1%) of the articles that simply stated she pleaded not guilty to all counts of murder.

Saenz was portrayed as a victim in 4 (21.1%) articles. This was determined by statements such as "...Saenz is innocent and is being targeted by the clinic's owner" (Lozano, 2012b) or "Her attorneys argued she was being used as a scapegoat by the clinic to explain the unusually high numbers of death that [occurred in] April" (Crimesider Staff, 2012). In these articles, Saenz was presented as being the victim of a large corporation, which was looking for a scapegoat for their poor medical practices. This insinuated that Saenz did not commit the murder, but was being incriminated as the perpetrator of these deaths. Four articles (21.1%) cited personal reactions from Saenz, such as the fact that "she felt 'railroaded' by the clinic and 'would never inject bleach into a patient'" (Lozano, 2012a).

In contrast to victimization, Saenz was portrayed as a villain in 10 articles (52.6%). For example, one family member stated "'you have disgraced your family and the medical field' said Hollingsworth, a nurse herself. 'I honestly say I hope you rot in hell'" (Graczyk, 2012). Saenz was also portrayed as a dangerous threat to society: "Society is protected. You will never see her again" (Andrews, 2012).

After analyzing the images included in the news articles, 8 (42.1%) the articles were accompanied by head shots whereas 3 (15.8%) articles depicted a full-body photograph. The head-only photos included mug-shots of Saenz or a close-up of her face coming out of the courtroom. The full-body photographs were primarily of her exiting the courtroom with police or her lawyer.

CASE C: AMANDA LOGUE, THE SEX WORKER WHO KILLED

Amanda Logue appeared to be living the "American Dream." A 28-year old woman, living in Georgia, she was a married, churchgoing mother who later owned a lingerie shop. Logue's interest in the sex work industry grew exponentially and she soon began performing in pornography videos as well as at sex parties. While working on the set of a pornography

film, under the name “Sunny Dae,” Logue met her soon-to-be boyfriend, 27-year old porn star and DJ, Jason Andrews. The couple spent time in Florida where on the night of May 15th, 2010, Logue was paid by tattoo artist Dennis Abrahamsen to conduct a sex party and to perform sexual acts on him. Together, Logue and Andrews carried out the murder of Abrahamsen, who was stabbed and bludgeoned to death with a sledgehammer immediately after the sex party. The motives involved in this case were described as sexual gratification and financial gain. Following the murder Logue and Andrews were seen on surveillance cameras shopping with Abrahamsen’s credit card. While it was reported that *both* Logue and Andrew actually murdered Abrahamsen, there were some discrepancies in the reporting of the case. However, both pleaded guilty to murder. Logue received 40 years in prison for second-degree murder whereas Andrews received a life sentence for first-degree murder. While it is more common for sex workers or prostitutes to be murdered by their clients, this was not the case for Logue. This case was particularly interesting because of the gendered differences between media depictions of Logue compared to Andrews. The same articles were used to analyze both Logue and Andrews; however there was less information available about Andrews.

Table 4 shows variables related to media sources about Logue and Table 5 depicts comparable variables for Andrews. Logue’s physical appearance was discussed in 7 (38.9%) of the articles, compared with 5 (27.8%) articles for Andrews. For example, “Logue, a 28-year-old thin blonde, blue-eyed mother and sex fetish model, was a suspect in his murder” (Sullivan, 2010). Logue was primarily discussed as a “...bleach-blond Georgia woman” (Martinez, 2010a). In comparison, the appearance of Andrews was described at length by a coworker, “...He was very clean cut, broad shoulder, dressed in a suit, not a suit and tie, but more of a ‘Miami Vice More of a GQ appearance’” (Associated Press, 2010). The articles emphasized the physical appearance on both Logue and Andrews; however, Logue’s physical appearance was described in ways that “emphasized femininity”, whereas descriptions of Andrew’s “emphasized masculinity” (Kimmel, 2000, p. 11). Kimmel’s (2000) concept of emphasized femininity and masculinity is linked to traits that are viewed as extreme examples of gender performance. For Logue, her adherence to femininity is portrayed in the news articles as a way to communicate her sexual desirability to heterosexual men, which gains the public’s attention. This is evident in the news articles in which Logue’s physical

Table 4. Depictions of Logue in News Articles

Case C: Amanda Logue (n=18)	
Variables	Number of Articles (%)
Physical Appearance	7 (38.9%)
Race	0.0%
Age	11 (61.1%)
Socioeconomic Status	0.0%
Education	0.0%
Motherhood	5 (27.8%)
Mental Health	0.0%
Caring Labor Role	18 (100.0%)
Emotional State	3 (16.7%)
Personality Characteristics	4 (22.2%)
Sexuality	18 (100.0%)
Spouse and/or Sig. Other	8 (44.4%)
Method of Murder	18 (100.0%)
Motives	13 (72.2%)
No Motive	1 (5.6%)
Plea (guilty/not guilty)	6 (33.3%)
Victimized	9 (50.0%)
Villain	6 (33.3%)
Personal Statement	12 (66.7%)
Head-Only Photograph	12 (66.7%)
Full-Body Photograph	3 (16.7%)

Table 5. Depictions of Andrews in News Articles

Jason Andrews (n=18)	
Variables	Number of Articles (%)
Physical Appearance	5 (27.8%)
Age	10 (55.6%)
Race	0.0%
Socioeconomic Status	0.0%
Mental Health	1 (5.6%)
Caring Labor	13 (72.2%)
Emotional State	5 (27.8%)
Personality Characteristics	3 (16.7%)
Sexual Orientation	5 (27.8%)
Plea	7 (38.9%)
Victimized	5 (27.8%)
Villain	8 (44.4%)
Mastermind	3 (16.7%)
Accomplice	14 (77.8%)
Personal Statement	11 (61.1%)
Head-Only Photograph	9 (50.0%)
Full-Body Photograph	2 (11.1%)

appearance is described in conjunction with her sexuality, yet this is not the same for Andrews.

The race and socioeconomic status of Logue and Andrews were absent from all of the articles. The decision to become involved in the sex work industry was depicted as a choice rather than as a need for survival for both of them. Yet, the fact that they stole Abrahamsen's credit card insinuated that the couple was in need of money and went to desperate lengths to

get it. Logue's age was mentioned in 11 (61.1%) of the articles and that of Andrews in 10 (55.6%).

The educational level of Logue was not mentioned in any of the articles, yet text messages between Logue and Andrews contain misspelled words and incorrect grammar, making them difficult to comprehend. Andrews was described as having been in the military, but no other background information was available.

Five (27.8%) articles mentioned that Logue was the mother of a daughter, yet provided few details about Logue's daughter and their relationship. The articles commonly stated that "...she [Logue] was the mother of a 9-year-old girl" (Harwell, 2010). It was evident that while Logue had overlapping caring labor roles as a mother, wife, and sex worker, news reports of Logue did not emphasize all of the components equally.

While media reports commonly questioned women murderers' sanity, this was not the case for Logue. None of the articles provided information about her mental health; this could be due to the idea that Logue was simply a "bad" woman rather than a "mad" woman. However, 1 article (5.6%) mentioned Andrews' mental health. The article stated that "...Andrews brought up the frustrations of post-traumatic stress disorder" but did not offer any other information (Harwell, 2010).

All of the articles described Logue's caring labor as a prostitute, porn star/actor/actress, fetish model, adult film star, or sex worker, whereas 13 (72.2%) described Andrews in these roles. For example, Logue was described in one article as a "...porn actress hired prostitute..." (Sullivan, 2012) while Andrews was said to be Logue's "porn actor boyfriend" (Campbell, 2012). The emphasis placed on Logue's role as a sex worker not only created sensationalist news articles, but depicted sex workers as immoral, powerless victims who could be led to murder. In contrast, Andrews was described simply as a porn star, not a prostitute. This may be attributed to the hegemonic belief that being a prostitute is a "women's role," one in which men are the consumers of women's bodies. This term insinuates a lack of power and control, which are vital components of masculinity. Therefore, media reports were content with labeling Logue as a prostitute because it was assumed that she was powerless and referred to Andrews as a porn star to demonstrate his powerfulness and masculinity.

Logue's emotional state was represented in 3 (16.7%) articles compared to 5 (27.8%) for Andrews. Logue's emotional state in all of the accounts was in relation to her religious beliefs; for example, "On Sunday in Leesburg, Ga., 300 miles north of the mess in Florida, she and her husband went to church. She walked to the altar, crying" (Sullivan, 2010). There was no mention of Logue being regretful or apologetic about her actions. In contrast, Andrews was quoted in one article for apologizing to the victim's family: "...It was a terrible thing I did. I will never be able to live with myself" (Sullivan, 2012). It was clear that both people were emotional about the crime they committed; however Andrews' emotional state was discussed more so than Logue's and in different contexts. This likely contributed to Andrews' position as an innocent accomplice in Logue's murderous plans. By depicting his emotional state more frequently than Logue the articles depicted Andrews as a vulnerable and remorseful man who was caught up in Logue's master plan.

Logue's personality was discussed in 4 (22.2%) articles while Andrews' was described in 3 (16.7%) articles. One article by Harwell (2010) stated that "Logue was helpful and personable... 'She was a typical sweet, downhome kind of girl'... 'She's a good woman'." Andrews was described as having problems controlling his temper and as having had "an unstable element about him" (Harwell, 2010) and as being "obnoxious and brash. He often bragged about his military service..." (Associated Press, 2010). It was apparent from these articles that Logue was not described as someone who was be capable of committing a murderous act, whereas Andrews was depicted as emotionally unstable, impulsive, and potentially violent.

For Logue, her sexuality was a major component in 18 (100%) of the articles. While she was described as a sex worker in all of the articles, the variable of sexuality included many reports about her sexual acts and/or the love triangle between her, her lover, and husband. There was a great amount of detail, such as, "...Logue was inside 'servicing' Abrahamsen while Andrews waited outside with the sledgehammer" (Campbell, 2012). The love triangle was represented in one article by Martinez (2010a) that stated, "Logue and Andrews met on the set of a porn video late last year and fell in love- even though Logue was married to a man in Georgia." In comparison, Andrews' sexuality was discussed in 5 (27.8%) of the articles, which focused on his sexual orientation. For example, one article stated "Andrews was straight, but filmed explicitly homosexual scenes, an industry term

known as ‘gay for pay’” (Harwell, 2010). Similarly, another article offered this description: “Jason Andrews was a bisexual Chicago DJ with a British accent, whose chiseled jaw and good looks landed him roles in countless gay porn videos” (Associated Press, 2010).

Logue was described as a married woman in 8 (44.4%) of the articles. The articles emphasized Logue’s relationship with Andrews more so than her marriage to her husband. Little information was provided with regards to Logue’s husband, their marriage was not described in detail, and rather it was just a distant component of her identity. Since Andrews was not married, this variable was not used to analyze media portrayals of him.

The method of murder involved in this case was described in 18 (100%) of the articles, consistently depicted as the bludgeoning and stabbing of Abrahamsen while he was face down on a massage table. One article stated that “Amanda Logue the defendant, struck Dennis Abrahamsen in the head with a hand held sledge hammer then proceeded to stab him multiple times in the back, causing his death” (Skiba, 2010). The motive in the murder was discussed in 13 (72.2%) of the articles that described the items stolen from the victim’s residence and/or the sexual gratification the couple experienced from the murder. For example, “Investigating the killing, police reported that about \$6,000 in cash, a laptop computer, a video camera, a digital camera and a Home Depot credit card were missing from the residence” (Skiba, 2010). In contrast, only 1 (5.7%) article stated that no motive had been released by authorities. It was unclear whether the motives were determined for both Logue and Andrews or if each perpetrator had different motives in the murder.

While Logue pleaded guilty to second-degree murder charges and Andrews to first-degree murder, 6 (33.3%) of the articles discussed her plea whereas 7 (38.9%) mentioned his. This included articles that discussed the couple’s decision to plead guilty, for example: “A porn actor accused with her boyfriend of killing a tattoo parlor owner during a sex party has pleaded guilty to a reduced charge that will get her 40 years in prison” (WTSP, 2012). Similarly, one article stated that “Andrews pleaded guilty to first-degree murder in January, and agreed to spend the rest of his life in prison without possibility of parole” (Campbell, 2012). While Logue was presented more in media articles, Andrews actually received a longer sentence than she did. This indicated that media viewed Logue’s role in the murder as more shocking because she was a women. In contrast, Andrews’ acts of violence were more normalized due to the assumption that men are more violent than women, therefore, limiting

his presence within media. Logue and Andrews received different prison sentences for the murder, reflecting the sexist notion that women are not physically capable of carrying out such as murder. This indicates that women would require the assistance of a man in order to physically harm or kill another human being. In essence, even though media indicated Logue to be the primary perpetrator, the justice system relied on gendered assumptions when sentencing the couple.

The victimization variable included articles that described Logue as the victim of a volatile relationship with Andrews. She was described as being forced to murder Abrahamsen by Andrews, who threatened her life as well. Logue was presented as the victim in 9 (50.0%) articles. One article by Sullivan (2010) stated:

. . . Logue said Andrews killed Abrahamsen after seeing her have sex with him in a hot tub. Logue said after murdering Abrahamsen, Andrews ‘grabbed the back of her hair then twisted her arm around her back,’ court documents state. Logue said Andrews forced her to look at the man’s ‘crushed skull and told her that’s what would happen to her if she told anyone.’

Logue was not described as a survivor of mental health problems or addiction; rather, she was depicted as a survivor of a possible domestic violence situation in which her lover threatened her and verbally abused her. In contrast, Andrews was presented as the victim of Logue’s murder plan in 1 (5.6%) of the articles in which he was remorseful and apologetic about his actions. It was clear that Logue was victimized more often than Andrews within new reports, due to the assumption that in order to a women to commit murder, she must be the victim of domestic violence and suffer from past abuse. Furthermore, it reinforces the normative notion that women are victims and men are perpetrators of violence.

The villain variable was used to examine any descriptions of Logue and Andrews as inherently evil and merciless in the murder of Abrahamsen. Six (33.3%) of the articles stated that Logue was a villain, not a victim. For example, Logue was described by one of the victim’s family members as “She [Rella] said torturing and murdering Abrahamsen shows she is an evil person” (Waxler, 2012). Andrews was presented as the villain in 8 (44.4%) of the articles, which included quotes from the victim’s family stating ““you should rot in hell... You shouldn’t breathe the same air we breathe”” (Sullivan, 2012). While Logue was more likely to be presented as a victim, Andrews was more likely to be depicted as a villain.

There were two variables specifically used to analyze Andrews. This included whether he was portrayed as the mastermind or the accomplice in the murder of Abrahamsen.

These variables included articles that outwardly stated that Andrews was Logue's accomplice as well as others that described Andrews' desperate attempt to satisfy his lover's wishes. Andrews was described as the accomplice in 14 (77.8%) articles, while 3 (16.7%) described him as the mastermind who had planned the murder. This included statements such as "Logue's accomplice in the killing, Jason Richard Andrews. . ." (Tbo.com, 2012) and others like ". . . Andrews participated in the slaying too. . ." (WBIR, 2010). It was evident throughout most of the articles that while Logue stated that she was forced to participate in the murder because of Andrews' threats, she was in fact more often depicted as the mastermind behind the murder.

An interesting component of this case were the large number of articles that included the actual text message conversations between Logue and Andrews. There were 12 (66.7%) articles that presented text messages from Logue and 11 (61.1%) from Andrews. For example, one text message from Logue to Andrews stated "I'm (expletive) excited (sic). . . I want to (have sex) after we kill hum (sic)" (Gilmour, 2010). While the text messages and other statements from Logue and Andrews contained misspelled words, they consistently discussed being excited to commit the murder and how Logue was becoming sexually aroused from the thought of having sex with Andrews after the murder. Andrews' personal statements were presented in the text message conversation as well where he said "Just get him on his face either bash or tell me to get in and. Where to go" (Alfano, 2010). Unlike Logue, Andrews also had personal statements in which he apologized to the victim's family and communicated feelings of shame and guilt.

When examining the presence of photographs of Logue and Andrews, 12 (66.7%) articles included a head shot or mug shot of Logue compared to 9 (50.0%) of Andrews. There were 3 (16.6%) articles that showed full-body photos of Logue in comparison to 2 (11.1%) for Andrews. These pictures included photos of Logue and Andrews together, while the full body photos of Logue were of her scantily clad, wearing lingerie or bikinis, and Andrews with his shirt off. Other than the mug shots of Logue and Andrews, most of the photos were personal pictures that were posted on social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. The results indicated that the articles included more photos of Logue than of Andrews.

SUMMARY

In gathering these variables, it was evident that media sources strategically emphasized certain traits over others, presenting a subjective view of these murder cases and the women's identities. It was important to examine these variables within news sources that are allegedly "objective" and "unbiased." By analyzing the presence of particular variables, I was able to generate specific ways that media depict women who commit murder and how they contribute to sustaining gender norms. The variables utilized in this research demonstrated the multitude of ways in which women's identities have been unfairly categorized and described by media. These media depictions were widely distributed and read by the masses. As a result, the news articles were analyzed in order to gauge how nontraditional women are currently being represented to the public through media.

Within the context of feminism, it was vital to question the presumed "objectivity" of U.S.-based media. With women being constantly objectified and sexualized by media, it was imperative to observe exactly how this occurs and how it is linked to femininity and caring labor. In doing so, this research provided the support necessary to alter media representations and therefore public perceptions about women. By selecting women who appear to be "normal" and women who transcended into "abnormal" women through their criminal acts, it allowed me to examine the opposite sides of the spectrum with regards to women's fulfillment of normative gender roles. The murder cases allowed me to analyze women who blurred the lines of gender and in doing so determined the ways in which media commonly portray women who challenge hegemonic notions of gender. In collecting data from the news articles, common themes were established, which provided insight into how media utilized femininity and caring labor roles to describe women murderers.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARISONS AND COMMON THEMES

Analyzing media articles offered an opportunity to explore the similarities and differences among the three female murderer cases. While the women in each of the cases varied, as did their crimes, there were many attributes that media sources emphasized, deemphasized, or simply ignored. This chapter will examine some of the common themes in which U.S. media depict women murderers.

LACK OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The lack of an intersectional approach to describing the women murderers was a frequent occurrence and shortcoming in all of the articles. The news reports ignored the components of these women's identities that gave them certain privileges that many other female offenders lack. Furthermore, the articles did not describe how different components of the women's identities were interlocked and contributed to their overall position in society as well as to the crimes they committed.

Not one of the news reports mentioned the race or ethnicity of Kalina, Saenz, or Logue. Because all three women were white, media reports did not consider this to be an important factor in the reporting of the case. This insinuated that race played no role in the women's identities, ignoring the fact that race contributed to these women's social positions within society. Had any of the murderers been women of color, this attribute would have likely been emphasized by media sources when describing the offenders. As Peggy McIntosh (2009) discusses, the privileges associated with being white remain largely invisible, which is evident in media depictions of Kalina, Saenz, and Logue. McIntosh's (2009) point is particularly reflected within the U.S. where most people "... do not see 'whiteness' as a racial identity" resulting in whiteness becoming an invisible privilege, one that people of color do not have (p. 17). The absence of the women's whiteness in media indicates that these women had racial privileges that other women murderers do not have. Furthermore, in making the women's race invisible, media disregarded research conducted in this field,

which found that murder and other violent crimes were most often committed by white women (Brennan & Vandenberg, 2009; Messing & Heeren, 2004). The present research discovered that white privilege remains invisible within media. This invisibility of white privilege is communicated to mainstream white society, which remains unaware of its privileges and continues to reinforce racist ideologies.

Similarly, the socioeconomic status and educational level of Kalina, Saenz, and Logue were not discussed in the majority of the articles. While it was implied that all of the women were employed and therefore receiving an income, there was no discussion about how class related to their positionality nor how it affected the crimes they committed. It was assumed that they had completed at least high school, unless otherwise specified, such as in the case of Saenz. This lack of visibility within media again assumes that these women were privileged, having had access to education and economic opportunities. In doing so, media reaffirmed classist notions, assuming that if you are white, then you are more likely to be educated, employed, and middle class.

The news reporting of the women murderers exemplified the value society places on women's age. For all the women, their age and physical appearances were described in the news articles, which were utilized to determine their attractiveness and to sensationalize them as victims and villains. A woman's age is viewed in relation to her sexual attractiveness and desirability because it is assumed that younger women are more capable of bearing children in comparison to older women, who may no longer be in their child-bearing years. For example, Kalina and Saenz were depicted as less desirable due to their older age, whereas Logue, the youngest woman, was described as being physically desirable. Youth and desirability were pertinent topics within media depictions of these women and contributed to their positions as villains and victims. The older women, Kalina and Saenz, were presented as evil villains, while Logue was presented as a helpless victim in the case. Media sources utilized Logue's physical attractiveness and age to create a marketable story that depicted a beautiful young woman whose youthfulness and naiveté positioned her as a victim rather than a villain in the crime. In contrast, statements such as ". . . She got what was due unto her. She's of age and she's held accountable for what she does" demonstrate the ways in which media hold older women responsible for their actions, while excusing the behaviors of younger women (Spears, 2012). Essentially, Kalina and Saenz were both depicted as villains

who, at their age, should have known better than to deliberately violate the law. This in many ways demonstrates the discrimination women experience as a result of their age within a society that values beauty and youthfulness. Ageism was particularly evident due to the inequities in how media differentiated between the three women who had committed murder. With all of the women having murdered another human being, it would be expected that they would all be portrayed as villains; however, this was not the case. Rather the older, less attractive women were represented more negatively than the younger more attractive woman. In doing so, media reinforced ageism and communicated to the public that discrimination against women on the basis of age is acceptable.

MEDIA REINFORCEMENT OF THE GOOD VS. BAD WOMAN DICHOTOMY

Femininity and the idea of a “good” woman are linked to being passive and having introverted personalities. Media sources depicted the personality characteristics of Saenz more so than for Logue or Kalina. This insinuated that Saenz had a stronger personality and was, therefore, considered to be less feminine. Furthermore, media implied that this contributed to her murderous acts and that Saenz was someone who was more likely to commit murder because she was “deceitful” and “disgruntled.” In comparison, Kalina and Logue were depicted as women who were less likely to commit murder because they had more introverted and passive personalities.

Mental Health: “She Must Be Crazy!”

The mental health of women murderers was repeatedly emphasized in media reports and created an underlying assumption that women who kill must be mentally ill. While Kalina and Saenz were thought to be mentally ill “mad” women, Logue was depicted as perfectly sane and emotionally stable. Logue’s sanity was not viewed as a contributing factor in the murder, which is likely due to the fact that her accomplice, Andrews, was portrayed as being mentally unstable, having been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The perceived mental health of the women was established by media sources in order to distinguish “normal,” nonviolent women from “deviant,” mentally ill, violent women. Media sources were able to construct the women in particular ways by limiting their voices as well as their credibility.

Giving Women Murderers A Voice: Personal Statements and Motives

While some of the articles included personal statements from the women murderers during or after their trial, none of them contained apologies to the victims' family. Kalina was the only woman who communicated a sense of remorse, yet she discussed her murderous actions as accidental rather than as premeditated infanticide. This is evident in a statement from Kalina in which "She (said she) might have wrapped the baby too tightly with a towel so that the baby couldn't breathe" (McFadden, 2011). Articles on Kalina's case contained multiple personal statements, in comparison to Saenz who had fewer. The articles that depicted Logue's case contained the most personal statements as a result of an extensive text message conversation prior to the murder. Giving women murderers a voice allowed them the opportunity to discuss and/or defend their actions and communicate their motives. This freedom to express themselves was afforded to Kalina and Logue, but not Saenz. Media representation of the women's motives for murder portrayed Saenz as having "no motive," whereas the motives of Kalina and Logue were described in depth.

Motherhood: What Makes A "Good" Woman?

The value placed on motherhood is high within our patriarchal society as it is women's primary responsibility to reproduce. In fulfilling their "maternal instincts," women are classified as "good" women, whereas women who do not are viewed as violators of femininity and womanhood. The common theme of motherhood emerged from media articles and while Kalina represented the only woman in the sample that killed her own children, the news reports revealed that each woman was a mother. However, the news articles emphasized this characteristic more frequently for Kalina and Saenz than for Logue. This could be due to the fact that Logue was the youngest woman who worked at a less conventional job, whereas the other women were older and had traditional occupations.

Women who kill their own children are viewed as the *most* evil in comparison to women who kill other intimates. This is likely due to the hegemonic belief that women are innately maternal and have a strong desire to give birth and care for their offspring. When women murderers go beyond these maternal boundaries, they are stepping outside of the law as well as their prescribed gender roles as women. Additionally, the women's mothering skills were described positively in the news articles, in which they were portrayed as loving

mothers who would do anything for their children. Media sources emphasized the women murderers' feminine traits to create a drastic contrast between how these women were seemingly moral law abiders and later became immoral lawbreakers. This dichotomy was utilized to construct a rarer and more sensationalist story of a woman who suddenly snapped, yet still remained within the boundaries of femininity. For example, if the news articles described a murder case in which the woman had a lifelong history of law-breaking and/or violence, the fact that she murdered someone would not have equal shock value compared to a seemingly "normal" woman who was a caring wife and mother. By emphasizing the characteristics of motherhood, media established their traditional and narrow perspectives about women and the roles they are expected to perform.

Marital Status: "Bad" Wife, "Bad" Woman

The autonomy of women is commonly lost in media representations that describe women in relation to men. Men are presented as the subjects and women are the objects or "others" in men's lives. This was no different in media portrayals of women murderers, in which all of the women in these cases were in heterosexual marriages. While the women and the crimes they committed were the focus of the articles, they were still depicted as the wives or "others" in relation to their husbands. It was evident that the women murderers were represented as having been "good" wives and "good" women who transitioned into "bad" wives and "bad" women when distinguishing themselves from their husbands. For both Kalina and Logue, their extramarital affairs and presumed hypersexuality made them into "bad" wives, whereas Saenz's strong personality and mental health issues counteracted the ideal, obedient wife. It seemed that their morality was not called into question by their murderous actions, but rather by violating their marriage contract by not catering to the needs of their husbands.

In addition, both Kalina and Logue's sexuality was discussed in all of the articles, while Saenz's sexuality was entirely absent from media sources. The women were all married at the time of their crimes, yet, Kalina and Logue were depicted as hypersexual women who sacrificed their marriages to satisfy their sexual desires, whereas Saenz's marriage was rarely mentioned. This large discrepancy could be attributed to the belief that society enjoys reading details about the sexuality and sex life of physically feminine and

“attractive” women, but not of seemingly masculine, “unattractive” women. According to societal beauty standards, Kalina and Logue fulfilled more “attractive” physical attributes and were represented as more petite and feminine in appearance, with longer hair and makeup. In contrast, Saenz, of average size with short dark hair, was depicted as “unattractive” and as having less feminine attributes. Media focused on the physical appearance of Kalina and Logue through a number of photographs that were included in the articles. Articles that described Logue included the largest number of photographs, which were graphic and sexualized, while the articles covering Kalina and Saenz incorporated fewer photos that were mostly mug shots. Though the presence of photographs could be related to the women’s youthfulness, attractiveness, or simply the availability of photographs, it is clear that women who ascribe to feminine beauty standards receive more media attention.

Sexuality: Love Triangles, Sexual Behavior, and Murder

A woman’s body and sexual behavior are commonly presented in media as taboo topics, yet ones that gain national attention. This remained consistent for women murderers whose sexuality was frequently mentioned in media reports and whose bodies were similarly objectified. Many of the articles described that the love triangles, affairs, and sexual acts that the women participated in were occurring outside of their marriages. Because these sexual acts were in violation of monogamy and marriage (and seemingly for pleasure rather than reproduction) the women’s sexuality was depicted by media as immoral. By hegemonic societal standards, women’s sexuality is only acceptable within the context of heterosexual marriage and for procreative purposes only. Therefore, the descriptions of the women’s sexuality were framed as deviant, in which the women were not only “bad” for committing the crimes, but also “bad” for having sexual relations outside of marriage.

The news articles presented the women’s sexuality in heteronormative ways and implied that because they were women, their sexual behaviors were directed at men. Media sources took violent, murderous criminals and made them into sexually “promiscuous” women whose crimes appeared trivial and individualized. Having described the women in relation to their sexual behaviors, media were able to create a more scandalous news story in

which the women's crimes and punishments were depicted as mere consequences of them being a "bad girl."

Method of Murder: Violence and Aggression

The methods of murder utilized by the women were described extensively by media as premeditated, aggressive, and violent. This is consistent with most media analysis, in which highly graphic and gory scenes are depicted and distributed to the public. These women were not only "bad" because they took the lives of other people, but also because they were breaking societal gender norms surrounding aggression. The murderous actions of these women were portrayed as particularly outrageous and newsworthy because women are expected to be nonviolent, submissive, passive, and peaceful. Media sources focused on the method of murder because it was shocking to the public to think that women, especially mothers and wives, could pose a threat to society and perpetrate violent crimes.

The Bad, the Evil, the Villain

In mainstream media, women are traditionally viewed as helpless victims who need to be saved by men, yet this was not the case for women murderers. Within media reports, women murderers were generally portrayed as villains rather than victims. The complexities in the news articles emerged when women who are victimized are depicted as feminine women who have suffered at the hands of others and should be saved. In contrast, women who are villainized are described as less feminine, "bad" women who violated traditional notions of gender with regards to their appearances and behaviors. For example, Logue, the most feminine appearing woman, was the only murderer who was depicted as a victim rather than a villain. By presenting women murderers as villains, media differentiated "normal" women who would be victims from "abnormal" villainous women who commit murder and violate gender norms.

Caring Laborer: The "Good" Woman

While the prevalence of women committing murder is significantly less than that of men, it appears that caring labor roles are linked to the actions of women murderers. These commonalities provided further information with regard to how media utilized the caring

labor roles of these women in order to create profitable topics for public consumption that then reinforced normative notions of gender.

Specifically, in order to be “good” women, they must fulfill the emotional, physical, and sometimes sexual needs of others. While the news articles did not describe the work performed by the women as caring labor, it was evident in media coverage that those roles were an important component to the murder cases. I propose that because caring labor is traditionally viewed as a feminine job performed by women, media emphasized these roles in order to depict women murderers as having fulfilled their appropriate gender roles regardless of their violent crimes. It cannot be ignored that the oppressive conditions of caring labor could have potentially led them to murder, yet this was not directly stated in the news articles. Yet, the news articles did focus on the women’s caring labor roles and specified that none of them murdered at random, but rather strategically murdered those who they were supposed to care for. For Kalina, this meant murdering her children that she would have been forced to raise. For Saenz, this entailed the murdering of her dialysis patients that she cared for on a daily basis. In Logue’s case, this included murdering a man who saw her as nothing more than a sexual object for his consumption. While no conclusions can be drawn from this research as to the reasons behind the murders, it is plausible that because women perform more oppressive caring labor roles, their victims are more likely to be dependents. By showing that these women were originally “good” women who cared for others, their crimes were viewed as more shocking to the public and, therefore, more newsworthy and profitable. As the women participated in what is generally considered feminine labor and because the violent actions of these women challenged hegemonic beliefs about femininity, the news articles depicted their fulfillment of femininity more so than their violation of these roles.

By societal standards, women are primarily responsible for caring for others; therefore their roles as caring laborers are commonly perceived in relation to femininity and what it means to be a “good,” compassionate, and nurturing woman. While Kalina and Saenz performed more conventional caring labor tasks as mothers and nurses, their roles were not depicted differently than Logue’s unconventional caring role as a sex worker. According to Folbre (1995), “virtually any form of labor can be described as ‘caring’ in the sense that it results in activities that help meet the needs of others” (p.74). Regardless of the type of caring labor being performed by the women, the news articles presented these caring labor

components as the main source of Kalina, Saenz, and Logue's identities. In doing so, media were able to re-instill the hegemonic belief that caring labor is "woman's work" and in order to be a "good" woman, she must perform these roles. While Kalina's primary caring labor role *was* motherhood, this was not the case for Saenz and Logue. Kalina's crimes were particularly horrifying because she killed five of her newly born infants. Kalina not only rejected her role as a mother, but did so at the expense of her children's lives, so media sources depicted her as the most sinister of all the women. However, Saenz's role as a nurse, who was expected to care for her patients, resulted in the most media coverage. Her strange method of murder created public distrust in the medical establishment as well as a media frenzy that questioned the regulation of medical clinics. The case of Logue was also extremely unusual and received a significant amount of press coverage as well. Media sources were not only interested in Logue's murder case because she was viewed as an "All American Girl" (attractive, middle class, young, and white), but also because she was a sex worker. This made the crime she committed more shocking, simply because she did not "look" like someone who would commit murder. These women appeared in many ways to fulfill the role of a "good" woman, yet failed to comply with the multitude of other factors necessary in the construction of the ideal woman.

SUMMARY

Women murderers were most frequently depicted by media sources as caring laborers-- mothers, wives, sex workers whose physical appearance and sexuality were central components of their identities. While these commonalities cannot be generalized to all women murderers, they provide awareness into the ways media frame women who violate prescribed gender roles. The characteristics associated with normative femininity have been discussed as a "performance" or mask that female-bodied individuals put on in order to demonstrate adherence to patriarchy (Butler, 1990). Within the U.S., normative femininity is related to numerous characteristics, many that were seen in media depictions of Kalina, Saenz, and Logue. To be feminine, women are expected to wear clothing that has been traditionally designed for women, which includes dresses, skirts, bright colors, tightly, or scandalously fitting outfits. Discussions of women's physical appearance are focused on being flawless and sexually attractive to men. Features commonly favored in this system are

having soft, petite features, large breasts, and a thin, yet womanly, body type. The behaviors and actions of “feminine” women include being inactive, passive, quiet, doting, accommodating, and obedient. Additionally, normative femininity is also linked to the type of work women perform as De Beauvoir (1952) mentioned. For example, to be feminine, women are expected to work at a job that does not hold much power, especially over men. This is work that utilizes women’s “innate” skills as mothers, teachers, or caregivers. These professions are frequently female-dominated and low-paying. In essence, a woman would violate normative femininity if she worked in a high-paying job where she held power and control over others.

It is clear that all of these women fall within this spectrum of femininity because they fulfilled many feminine attributes, which were highly emphasized by media. However, they also rejected others through their aggressive, violent, disobedient acts and non-monogamous sexuality. It is important to note that femininity, like masculinity, is not a universal or fixed concept for all women. Rather, it is flexible and open to many interpretations and expressions, which is evident in these cases. Various attributes of normative femininity were at one point fulfilled by all of these women. The oppressive conditions of habitually performing caring labor duties, as well as satisfying their roles as mothers and wives, likely contributed to the women’s sense of entrapment. Yet, this can only be assumed because how or if these women felt trapped by their feminine gender roles was not communicated by media reports.

In this research, I have argued that media have subjectively and partially depicted women who violate normative femininity through their acts of murder as feminine, caring laborers in order to perpetuate hegemonic and heteronormative notions of gender. In doing so, media were able to reinforce the idea that even violent, villainous women are in many ways feminine, motherly, nurturing, and caring. By depicting women who challenge hegemonic notions of gender as adhering to femininity, media were able to reaffirm that women are intrinsically feminine caregivers.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This research has emphasized the need to critically evaluate U.S.-based media, especially with regard to depictions of women who challenge hegemonic notions of gender by committing murder. To do this, I concentrated on women who provided examples of the complexities of being both a caring laborer *and* a violent murderer. In this research, connections between caring labor roles and women murderers were the focus, which have been unexamined in past research. While generalizations about women murderers and the factors contributing to their crimes cannot be confirmed by solely evaluating media, this research provides a perspective that enhances preexisting literature that has critiqued media.

Each of the women murderers selected (Case A: Michel Kalina, Case B: Kimberly Saenz, and Case C: Amanda Logue) was a caring laborer (mother, nurse, and sex worker) and was generally depicted in news reports as fulfilling normative feminine gender roles. Furthermore, these women represented an example of Kelleher and Kelleher's (1998) typologies of women murderers. Kalina provided an example of a *Black Widow*, a woman who murders family members, while Saenz was categorized as an *Angel of Death*, a woman within the medical field who killed her patients (Kelleher & Kelleher, 1998). Logue and her accomplice reflected the category of *Team Killers* and *Sexual Predators* based on the sexual gratification they expressed after the murder (Kelleher & Kelleher, 1998). While each of these women "fits" into a typology, this study makes it clear that many of these typologies are related to women performing caring labor and other traditional feminine gender roles. In various ways this research has questioned the usefulness of these typologies and critiqued their sexist, demeaning, and trivializing nature. Like media depictions of women murderers, these typologies offer a simplistic view of women who challenge notions of gender through acts of murder. The typologies are a seemingly effective way to categorize women murderers; however, in doing so they essentialized and oversimplified women's experiences and identities. Furthermore, many of the typologies are belittling because they link women's crimes to sexuality and their roles as caregivers. It is evident that these typologies are

consistent with media representations of women murderers in which they are trivialized and feminized, whereas male murderers are normalized.

After selecting the murder cases and the U.S.-based news articles, a feminist discourse analysis was used to evaluate each news source. The news articles were analyzed using 21 variables and coded to determine their frequency. The variables were paired with sample quotes taken directly from the news articles in order to support the coding process. This methodological approach was effective in studying women murderers and media. It allowed for a critical and interpretive feminist analysis that sought not to obtain absolute objectivity or the “truth,” but to research a marginalized group that has primarily been depicted through the limited perspectives of media and popular culture. In using a feminist discourse analysis to code and interpret these data, I was able to utilize an interdisciplinary approach that drew strengths from multiple research methods and allowed for a critical examination of media.

In this research, I have argued that U.S.-based media have played instrumental roles in reporting a seemingly “objective” perspective on women murderers in which they strategically depict women who violate normative notions of gender as feminine, caring laborers. Furthermore, media utilize women murderers to establish their “objective” position, informing the public that they have described the murder cases and murderers truthfully, accurately, and neutrally. In doing so, media were able to reinforce their positions as powerful, profitable, and patriarchal structures that inform the public’s opinion. Therefore, the women murderers’ fulfillment of femininity, through their physical appearance, sexuality, and caring labor, becomes the “truth,” as shown by media. While women murderers were also presented as violent, hypersexual, villains, media were able to strengthen the notion that even women who commit murder are likely to look, act, and work in ways that are consistent with normative femininity, which reiterates women as inherently feminine and nurturing. Through their reductive and partial depictions, media covertly support sexist, racist, classist, and ageist notions about women that sustain patriarchy and perpetuate gender inequality. If women who clearly violate femininity in the worst, most violent ways are depicted in media as feminine and caring, it is evident that patriarchy and sexism remain foundational components of U.S.-based media. Moreover, if women who challenge normative notions of

gender are still presented in media as ascribing to them, then it appears to the public that women are content with their marginalized status in society.

While the findings from this study offer insight into the connections between caring labor and the ways in which media depict women murderers, there were also limitations to this study. First, three cases provide only a small sample size of the entire women murderer population. Due to the small sample, the findings from this research are not comprehensive or speak to the entire women murderer population or their experiences. Another limitation to this research was the number of articles analyzed. With some murder cases having more publicity than others, it was imperative to use news articles that contained both local and national news sources, some of which were written by the same author or from the same news source. While these articles offered a variety of information, it is important to note the origins of the articles and recognize the limits of using media sources for analysis. Furthermore, the women were included in this sample based on numerous factors, including their visibility in media, which tend to focus on the crimes of white women rather than women of color (Brennan & Vandenberg, 2009). As a result, the women in all of the murder cases were white, which restricted a complete examination of race within media. Yet, in many ways it offered the opportunity to examine the invisibility of whiteness and how it contributes to the societal belief that white women are more caring and less violent than women of color. Furthermore, conducting a discourse analysis and coding the variables inhibited my ability to engage extensively with the factors and motives involved in women committing murder. However, because access to women murderers was unavailable, relying on news articles provided the most valuable alternative for this research.

The findings have been an effective entry point for future feminist criminological research. More specifically, it would be beneficial for future research to examine the proportion of women murderers who also performed caring labor roles. Interviews with women convicted of murder would also contribute greatly to this field of knowledge and provide women murderers the opportunity to speak about their motives and experiences, rather than interpreting the partial perspectives of media reports. As a feminist, I believe that we cannot disregard a marginalized population such as incarcerated women that have committed murder simply because it makes us uncomfortable. Rather, this discomfort is what creates progress, diversity, and change. If we do not push ourselves outside of our own

boundaries as feminists, we will be unable to advocate for the deconstruction of oppressive and marginalizing boundaries created by our heteropatriarchal society.

It becomes apparent that focusing on media depictions of women who challenge normative notions of gender is a feminist issue, even for women who do so in the most atrocious and violent of ways. As incarcerated criminal offenders, women murderers represent a marginalized group whose stories and identities are told through the partial and divisive perspective of U.S.-based media. This is also visible in the television shows that were described previously in which women murderers are often portrayed as hypersexual, feminine, and glamorous. Women murderers have traditionally been silenced within the criminal justice system, yet their identities, stories, and lived experiences have been constructed through media representations whose goals are to create profit and sustain gender inequality. Detailed descriptions of these women's physical appearances, sexual behaviors, relationships, children, marital status, mental health, motives, etc. have been announced to the public by media sources without their own standpoint or consent. While feminists have been critical of representations of women in media, this research was innovative because it gave visibility to a topic that is commonly ignored both within Women's Studies and in more traditional academic disciplines.

Throughout this research, I have not denied my interest in empowering women and deconstructing institutions that sustain patriarchy and hegemonic notions of gender. As a result this research is empowering to women as well as for myself, because it has provided awareness about how media contributes to oppressive and divisive societal perceptions about women. It encourages women to view media critically and to recognize that even women who do challenge normative notions of gender in the most extreme ways, are presented in media as feminine, caregiving, wives, and mothers. When women murderers are presented in media as fulfilling the feminine gender roles that are devalued and subordinated, it insinuates that *all* women are complacent with their subjugated status. Women must challenge this complacency and advocate for U.S.-based media to recognize their influential role in sustaining mainstream society's sexist, racist, classist, and ageist views of women. In essence, this research dares women to challenge hegemonic notions of gender, not through violence or aggression, but through critiquing how media reports on marginalized groups

Women murderers remain a taboo topic that is worthy of feminist exploration. This is likely due to the uneasiness many people experience with viewing women as perpetrators of violence rather than victims or survivors of violence. In doing so, it requires researchers as well as society to reevaluate foundational notions of gender that construct men as active and aggressive and women as passive and nurturing. As a feminist, I struggled to think beyond this binary as well, especially since violence against women has been such a significant site of feminist activism and research and has improved the lives of many women. Furthermore, I also maintain that women murderers and female acts of violence in general remain a forbidden topic because feminists are concerned with the backlash of such research. For example, conclusions from Alder's 1975 research created a societal concern that women's liberation and gender equality increased women's criminal behavior. Having learned from past literature on this topic, I was cautious in the framing of this exploration in order to avoid linkages between feminism, gender equality, and women murderers. This research in no way condones the wrongful acts committed by women murderers, nor argues that women who may experience oppressions are more likely to commit murder. Rather, it brings attention to the ways in which oppressions can in some instances manifest into unspeakable acts of violence and how media depictions prevent the public from gaining an accurate view of oppressed groups. Allowing for the topic of women murderers to remain taboo will not prevent women from committing future acts of violence nor will it deconstruct oppressive gender norms. Instead, silencing this topic will insinuate that women murderers are not a "real" threat to society and are not a concern in preventing future violence. Women have and continue to commit acts of violence against children, men, other women, as well as themselves. Therefore, from a feminist perspective I feel that feminist criminology must continue to de-stigmatize this subject matter. Furthermore, feminist criminologists and society as a whole must be critical of the power and influence media have on our views of women as well as our views on gender equality. In doing so, we can effectively eliminate harmful and oppressive gender roles that assist in reinforcing patriarchy and marginalizing non-dominant groups.

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