

COERCED INTO CRIME? LEGAL AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF CO-  
ACCUSED WOMEN.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool  
for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Charlotte Barlow

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **COERCED INTO CRIME? LEGAL AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF CO-ACCUSED WOMEN.**

This thesis employs a case study approach to explore the ways in which women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplices) of committing a range of crimes are framed by British newspapers and compares such reportage with the record made in the legal proceedings of the same cases. Pseudonyms have been provided for the case studies analysed, due to the terms and conditions of the Privileged Access Agreement granted by Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Services, which enabled viewing access to the case file material. The case studies analysed are Jane Turner, Sarah Johnson, Alice Jones and Janet Young. The unique aspect of the case studies is that each of the women, either directly or indirectly, argued that they had been coerced into crime by their male partner/ accomplice.

Using a feminist methodological approach, this thesis explores the news media framing of the co-accused women and the case file material is utilised as a comparative tool. The British newspapers selected for analysis are *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Daily Star*, *The Express*, *The Mirror*, *The People*, *The Sun*, *The Times* (including Sunday published versions).

This thesis argues that the co-accused women are framed within a range of stock, gendered motifs and narratives which consequently silences, mutes and distorts their perspectives. Furthermore, the concept of 'coercion into crime' is also developed to better understand coercion as a pathway into criminality.

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# **COERCED INTO CRIME? LEGAL AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF CO-ACCUSED WOMEN.**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Female offenders are said to be ‘doubly deviant, doubly damned’, as they are viewed to have transgressed both the criminal law as well as the informal boundaries of femininity (Lloyd, 1995). Whilst there is a fascination with female criminality, there is also a revulsion about women who commit serious offences, which is in part influenced by the essentialist, Victorian discourses surrounding appropriate womanhood and femininity (Smart, 1975; Heidensohn, 1996; Worrall, 1990; Ballinger, 2000). The news media, being a main source of information to the public about crime and criminal justice issues, are required to make sense of such issues in a way that is comprehensible and easy to understand (Jewkes, 2009). However, due to the perceived abnormality of female offending, journalists often use over simplistic and gendered discourses and language to explain female criminality (Jewkes, 2009; Naylor 2001; Wykes, 1998).

The empirical aspect of this study explores the ways in which women who are co-accused with a male partner of committing a range of crimes are represented by both British newspapers and within legal proceedings and discourse. Pseudonyms have been provided for the case studies analysed, due to the terms and conditions of the Privileged Access Agreement granted by Her Majesty’s Court and Tribunal

Services, which enabled viewing access to the case file material. The case studies analysed are<sup>1</sup> Jane Turner, who was involved in the exchange of indecent imagery in an online paedophile ring; Sarah Johnson, convicted of perverting the course of justice in a child murder case; Alice Jones, who was involved in a range of fraudulent offences relating to her husband faking his own death and Janet Young, convicted of perverting the course of justice for knowingly taking her husband's speeding points. The unique aspect of the case studies is that each of the women, either directly or indirectly, argued that they had been coerced into crime by their male partner/ accomplice. Therefore as well as analysing the wider framing of the co-accused women, this study also explores the nature of the relationship between the co-offenders.

This study explores the news media framing of each of the co-accused women from the day that they were charged to two weeks following the sentencing and the case file material is utilised as a comparative data source. This contributes to the small body of literature which explores the framing of co-offenders (Grabe et al, 2006; Jones & Wardle, 2008) and also contributes to wider literature surrounding legal and news media representations of female offenders (Ballinger, 2012; Jewkes, 2009; Birch, 1996; Wykes & Welsh, 2009; Wykes, 1998). The chapter begins with providing a rationale for the study, followed by an outline of the structure of the thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that all case studies were required to be anonymised using pseudonyms due to the terms and conditions of the Privileged Access Agreement to view the case and court file material (further information to follow).

## **Rationale**

### *Aim*

To explore the ways in which women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplices) of committing a range of crimes are framed by British newspapers and compare such reportage with the record made in the legal proceedings of the same cases.

### *Objectives*

- To identify similarities and dissonances in the reporting and portrayal of women who are co-accused of criminal acts with a male partner (or accomplice/s), compared with the way in which events and testimonies are recorded in the relevant case and court proceedings (case and court files).
- To explore how the notion of ‘coercion into crime’ and the defence of marital coercion are constructed in newspaper reports of women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplice/s) and in legal argument during trial.
- To investigate the dominant frames and language used to describe women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplice/s) in both newspaper reports and court and case file documents, using a case study approach comprising four exemplary cases.
- To analyse the representation of the personal relationship between co-accused women and their male partner (or accomplice/s) in newspaper discourse and legal argument.

- To explore how women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplice/s) discuss their own involvement in criminal acts during police interviews and trial.

### *Background and context*

I became interested in this topic for two key reasons. Firstly, I was fascinated with the notorious Myra Hindley and Ian Brady case and more specifically, the ways in which Hindley's gender played an intrinsic role in her demonization and framing as being the most culpable in the co-offending partnership. This led me to critically consider the framing of female co-offenders more generally, both in a legal and news media context. I explored the news media framing of Myra Hindley, Rosemary West and Tracey Connelly for my undergraduate dissertation, which consequently led to the development of the current study. Secondly, my experience of being a Women's Aid volunteer enabled me to understand that some women's pathways into criminality are connected to a coercive and often abusive relationship with a male partner. This experience influenced my conceptual development of the notion of a 'continuum of coercion', which I critically consider when analysing the four case studies in the current study.

Female offenders are routinely placed into over simplistic categories in an attempt to explain their reasons for offending, such as 'victim and offender' and/or 'mad and bad' (Jewkes, 2009; Lloyd, 1995; Berrington & Hoksukia, 2002). The perceived extent of their level of agency is also often dichotomised and female offenders are either viewed as being wholly in control of their offending or 'out of control' of their offending behaviour (Maher, 1997). Yet this dichotomisation of agency does

not accurately reflect all women's pathways into criminality. Research suggests that in some instances, women can be coerced into crime by a male partner (Averlado, 2007; Brown, 2007; Kennedy et al, 2007; Welle and Falkin, 2000; Jones, 2008). With this in mind, this study introduces the concept of a 'continuum of coercion'. This suggests that a range of behaviours should be viewed as being potentially coercive within male-female co-offending intimate partnerships. Examples include physical and/or emotional abuse, control, economic abuse, obsession and/or love and rather than being viewed as separate forms of coercive behaviour, they would be better understood as being part of a wider 'continuum of coercion'.

It has been argued that news media representations of crime and deviancy to some extent influences public opinion, thus analysing how crime is reported is a significant area of inquiry (Beale, 2006; Wykes and Welsh, 2009; Pollack and Kubrin, 2007). Crime news confirms the moral boundaries of society and distinguishes the normal from the deviant and good from the bad, reinforcing notions of 'us' and 'them' and 'othering' (Wykes, 2001; Critcher, 2003; Young, 1999).

Conboy (2007) argues that representations of women reflect and strengthen preconceptions and stereotypes of women in society and serve to perpetuate and sustain their marginalisation. Reflecting crime as a masculine, typically male act, (Naffine, 1998; Heidensohn, 1996; 2002), this study argues that the representations of female criminality are governed by normative and traditional stereotypes of gender and femininity. It is argued that the news media reflects and confirms images of femininity and women's criminality which are prevalent in society (Jewkes, 2009; Ballinger, 2000).

By participating in criminal offences, female offenders, by their very nature, fail to adhere to the expectations of appropriate femininity. However the ways in which female offenders are represented or treated by criminal justice agencies, legal professionals and journalists in part, depends on the 'type' of woman that she is perceived to be (Worrall, 1990; Lloyd, 1995). Some female offenders are defined as 'mad' or in some instances not truly criminal. This can lead to such women being victim of what Worrall (1990) coins the 'compassion trap', as they cannot be separated from the presumptions of femininity and their supposed 'irrational' nature. On the other hand, some female offenders are categorised as inherently 'bad' or in extreme cases not really women, i.e. wilfully defiant of their gender role. Such female offenders are particularly seen to be a societal threat and are thus often cast as unexplainable 'others' in the absence of alternative explanations for their offending. Such categorisation extends to the news media portrayal of female offenders and they are thus often placed into essentialist categories confined by gendered discourses, such as 'bad mother' (Jewkes, 2009; Barnett, 2006), manipulators (Naylor, 2001; Jewkes, 2009) and mythical monsters (Jewkes, 2009; Birch, 1993).

In the current study, a feminist methodological approach (Letherby, 2003) is utilised to explore the news media framing of four case studies of co-accused women and the case file material is utilised as a comparative tool. Combining the news media analysis with an analysis of the case and court file material offered a novel dynamic to this study and allowed an in-depth exploration of the similarities and differences between the ways in which the co-accused women were framed in differing contexts, which produced a more nuanced understanding of journalistic practice. As highlighted by Surette (1998), the media and legal system should not be

viewed as being autonomous entities. The complex interactions and relationship between them should be closely examined. In addition, the combination of the two data sets also allowed the unique exploration of the ways in which the women's voices and perspectives were utilized in both the case file and news media material.

Furthermore, the newspapers framing of co-accused women warrants close attention because the public relies on the news media for information about crime and it reflects the attitudes that the newspapers and society hold towards the alleged offender (Chibnall, 1977; Critcher, 2003). In addition, whilst the news media portrayal of female offending has been explored elsewhere (Naylor, 2001; Barnett, 2006; Jewkes, 2009), the framing of specifically co-accused women has received much less scholarly attention (Grabe et al, 2006), therefore this study aims to contribute to this small body of existing literature. Critically exploring representations is important, not only for developing an insight into the ways in which gendered discourses influence framing, but as previously discussed, it has been argued that a great deal of public knowledge concerning crime and criminal justice issues is influenced by the media (Reiner, 2002) and the public perception of order and disorder is closely related with its media representations (Barak, 1994).

The unique access to the case and court file material enables the legal representation of the co-accused women to be explored through a 'feminist lens' in the current study, which will help to explore the male-defined nature of the legal process (Ballinger, 2000; 2012), thus allowing a more nuanced understanding of the women's perspectives and the ways in which they were marginalized within a legal context.

## **Overview of the study and contents**

Chapter 2 is one of the literature review chapters aimed at giving an historical context to the research conducted in this study. The chapter discusses the ways in which female victims and offenders are (mis)represented within traditional criminology. This lays a foundation for some of the interpretations of the findings made in subsequent chapters and explores the beginnings of the conceptual development of ‘coercion into crime’.

Chapter 3 is the second literature review chapter and discusses the issues and complexities surrounding the medias representation of women in news media in general, particularly in newspapers. The chapter also explores an analysis of crime news, with a particular emphasis on the news media representation of female offenders, victims and co-offenders.

The methodology of this study is discussed in chapter 4. The chapter begins by highlighting the study’s feminist epistemological standpoint and methodological approach, before outlining the mixed methods, case study approach adopted in the research. The chapter also discusses the methods of analysis utilized in the study, before finally documenting the researcher’s personal research reflections and subjectivity.

The following four chapters (5,6,7,8) undertake an in-depth analysis of four cases of co-accused women, namely Jane Turner, Sarah Johnson, Alice Jones and Janet Young. These chapters discuss the dominant frames which were utilized by journalists and legal professionals, which served to confine the women to existing gendered discourses, such as ‘mad’, ‘bad’, ‘bad mother’ and ‘manipulator’. These chapters also discuss the framing of the co-accused women in comparison to their



male partner and explore the ways in which they are often framed as being more to blame, irrespective of often differing levels of involvement.

Chapter 9 is the synthesizing chapter and discusses two of the key analytical frameworks developed in this study. The chapter discusses the ways in which the women's voices and perspectives were silenced, muted and distorted in both a legal and news media context, by developing the concept of 'layers of silencing'. In addition, a more in-depth discussion of the conceptual framework of 'coercion into crime' is discussed.

Chapter 10 draws together the key findings of the research and summarizes the main arguments and conclusions. It reflects on the aims and objectives of the study and discusses the extent to which these have been achieved and also highlights possibilities for future research projects.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **GENDER AND CRIME: CRIMINOLOGICAL AND FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to demonstrate some of the ways in which female victims and offenders are defined and (mis) represented within criminology, largely due to the presuppositions about the nature of womanhood itself. The chapter will highlight some of the ways in which feminism and women's activism have attempted to redefine women's position within criminology. Rather than attempting to be an exhaustive and complete overview of how various perspectives have defined the broad topic of 'gender and crime' this chapter intends to focus on how the various dichotomies that have emerged as a result of the differing, and often opposing, perspectives explain how women fit into the 'crime question'. Finally, the chapter will discuss the issues surrounding the notion of 'coercion' as a pathway into crime, highlighting the importance of understanding female offender's individual biographies and lived circumstances.

## **The dichotomies of ‘man’ and ‘woman’: An introduction to male-stream criminology**

The categories of man and woman are viewed as being in opposition of each other within criminology and many other academic disciplines, such as the natural sciences, psychology and sociology. This categorisation has led to women and men being understood in different ways. For example women have historically been defined by their nature, yet men continue to be defined as ‘rational and cultured’ beings (Sydie, 1987). This distinction has led to hierarchical social relations characterised by subordination and domination between men and women which, in turn, are seen to be natural, inevitable and unchangeable (Sydie, 1987). Such historical sex segregation has led to the pervasive view that women are inferior and defined by their ‘natural’ biology, whereas men are classified predominantly as reasonable and cultured knowers (Russet, 1989; Sydie, 1987).

Such distinctions between the ‘reasonable’ man and the ‘pathologically deficient’ woman have led to the development of additional, pervasive dichotomies between the sexes. For example, within Western societal discourse it is often asserted that men are active beings and knowers, whereas women are viewed to be subjective and passive (Sydie, 1987). Within the context of criminology, from the 19th century onwards, due to the birth of natural sciences, biology and Darwinism, positivism became the universal explanation of crime. This led to further biological based distinctions between women and men. According to Russet (1989), the most influential principle of ‘sexual science’ with regard to criminology during this period was biogenetics and its associated concept of atavism. Atavism “described a

situation in which an individual member of a species could be identified as a throwback to an earlier genetic period” (Walklate, 2001: 22). Lombroso and Ferrero were two of the lead thinkers within this area of thought and they argued that the criminal had a close biological relationship and resemblance to pre-historic savages.

Lombroso and Ferrero were predominantly concerned with understanding the male criminal and even when the concept of the female offender was explored by such thinkers, she was categorised as an aberration from the ‘normal’ woman and thus a deviation against the feminine ideal (Evans & Jamieson, 2008). If we consider this alongside the physical anthropological belief that women were anatomically more childlike and infantile in comparison to men (Ellis, 1984), it gives a clear indication of how women were considered within criminology during this period in particular. Victorian science viewed women as a ‘developmental anomaly’ (Russett, 1989: 74). Lombroso and Ferreo (1895) believed that women’s development was arrested at an earlier stage than men and that they subsequently did not have the same intellectual ability or power of reason.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century definitions and distinctions between the sexes remain to have significant influence today, particularly within criminological thinking, which shall be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. As highlighted by Walklate (2001: 24), Lombroso and Ferrero (1895) and other similar minded academics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have “framed the way in which thinking about males and females and masculinity and femininity has been constructed”, highlighting the reductionist nature of such male dominated theories (Naffine, 1987; Harding, 1981). Certain assumptions, such as female passivity and the denial of agency and creativity for female offenders, continue to resonate in more contemporary accounts of female offending (Evans & Jamieson, 2008).

The same can be said for the late nineteenth century criminological shift from physical anthropology to the psychology and personality of criminals. As highlighted by Russett (1989: 42), “if men characteristically thought, women characteristically felt”. Within psychology during the Victorian period in particular, women were defined by their emotions and the perceived dangers of this emotional tendency, which centred around the belief that women were more likely to break away from reason and in extreme cases, the result was believed to be hysteria and unreasonable temper (Russett, 1989). Freud argued that women’s emotional tendencies and frail temperament led them to be hysterical beings and psychologically weak in comparison to their male counterparts (Sydie, 1987). It has been suggested by a number of commentators (for example Lloyd, 1995; Ballinger, 2000), that such pervasive beliefs about women’s psychological inferiority led to particular treatment and perceptions of women who committed criminal offences. Such beliefs continue to resonate in more recent years, such as the suggested chivalry of men towards female offenders and the categorisation of the female offender as being ‘mad’ or ‘bad’ (discussed below). This dichotomisation is particularly applicable to the four women discussed in this thesis, as outlined in later analysis chapters.

This biased and male centred thought extended to sociological-criminological thinking. For example, within the sociological sub-cultural theories of the 1950s and 1960s, it was presumed that juvenile crime was a problem of men. Even if women were not totally absent from these studies, for example in Cohen’s (1955) work, it was presumed that the acquisitions of male and female characteristics were ‘given’ through the process of sex role socialisation (Naffine, 1987). Such perspectives failed to account for the notion that gender is a social construct, rather a biological

characteristic with masculinity and femininity socially assessed based on the performance of gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Furthermore, Cohen (1955) and other sub-cultural thinkers alike, argued that men are rational ‘doers’ who represent what is instrumental in American culture and women are on the margins and exist only in relation to men (Naffine, 1987). With this in mind, as argued by Bem (1993), contemporary society teaches people to understand gender through the lenses of androcentrism (male experience being the most significant), gender polarization (treating masculinity and femininity as opposite poles of the same dimension) and biological essentialism (a deeply rooted belief that differences between the sexes are natural).

From this overview, it is clear that both men and women have historically been defined by their biology within traditional criminological theories, but in differing ways. Women’s offending behaviour has been persistently reduced to their inferior nature and biology, even within theories which have no biological focus, such as the sub-cultural theories discussed above (Russet, 1989). Despite early criminological thinkers, such as Lombroso and Ferrero, discussing the atavistic male criminal, male offenders have historically been defined by their ability to reason, their creative energy and their criminal agency. The pervasive dichotomy of the ‘nature’ of women vs. the ‘reason’ of men (Sydie, 1989) has defined traditional criminological thought and has subsequently led to the male criminal to be viewed as the norm and the female criminal described as the abnormal, ‘other’, as exemplified by the four co-accused women analysed in this thesis. The following sections of this chapter will consider in more detail the ways in which such dichotomies have influenced criminological thinking, particularly when considering the female offender.

## **Gender, criminology and feminist challenges**

Gender is a key determinant of likely involvement in offending behaviour, yet the importance of gender has not always been reflected in the development of criminological thought, as such knowledge has always been based on the assumption that crime is men's work and not women's (Evans and Jamieson, 2008; Walklate, 2001). The study of the 'criminal man' has dominated the development of criminological thought and thus criminal women have mostly been excluded. The various deficiencies of malestream criminology previously discussed have been criticised by feminist thinkers, who have argued that a gendered perspective would make women more visible within criminology and would also "dismantle or fracture the limitations of existing knowledges, boundaries and traditional methodologies" (Gelsthorpe, 2003: 8; Walklate, 2001; Heidensohn, 1996; Smart, 1976).

Second wave feminism emerged in the 1960s and 70s and activists challenged a myriad of issues relating to women's subordinated position within society, such as unequal pay in the workplace and women's experiences of domestic and sexual abuse (Morash, 2006; Wykes and Welsh 2009). Second wave feminist theory and activism confronted a range of gendered discriminations and made significant challenges to women's position within criminological thought. A plethora of feminist scholars have argued that rather than criminology solely studying men, the lived realities of female victims and offenders should also be considered (For example, Smart, 1976; Heidensohn, 1968, 1996; Carlen, 1985; Lloyd, 1995; Ballinger, 2000; Walklate, 2001). The following section of the chapter will explore the constitution of women as victims and offenders within criminological thought.

## **The female victim**

Criminal victimization surveys repeatedly convey the messages that not only are men more often the perpetrators of crime; they are also more often the victims of crime, especially crimes of violence. However, as highlighted by Walklate (2001: 8) “if we move the victimological gaze away from crime as conventionally understood towards an incorporation of criminal behaviour which has traditionally been less visible in officially recorded crime rates e.g. rape and domestic violence, then we are left with quite a different picture of who the victims of crime are”. If we consider this point, despite women conventionally being considered secondarily within criminology, it is only in recent years, mostly due to feminist academics and women’s campaigns, that women’s status as a ‘victim’ of ‘private’ crimes, such as domestic and sexual violence, have been documented and explored (for example, Brownmiller, 1975; Dobash & Dobash, 1979, Smart, 1989; Stanko, 2003). Whilst groups such as Victim Support, played, and continue to play, a dominant role in supporting victims of crime, the feminist focus on the female victim of domestic and sexual violence highlighted the gendered dimensions to the experience of being a victim of crime (Walklate, 2007)

However, despite this, when many disciplines attempt to explain domestic and sexual violence, the result has been a considerable focus on explaining male perpetrator behaviour and in many cases, notably less attention is given to exploring the experiences of the female victim. This has once again led to much of the knowledge surrounding this subject to be ‘male-centred’, despite its origins being a topic which is ‘by woman, for women’ (Wykes & Welsh, 2009). Feminist theorists



and activists have made key contributions for exposing and redefining women's positioning as victims of domestic and sexual violence and also actively fought against such social problems via public campaigns and the creation of women's groups (Wykes & Welsh, 2009). This deconstruction of violence against women has served to illustrate the gendered nature of these crimes and the lack of power available to women within a culture and legal system imbued with normative assumptions regarding male power and female subordination (Brownmiller, 1975).

During this time period, most second-wave feminists strongly argued that the inequitable distribution of power in society, the oppression of women and men's need to dominate and assert power laid the ground for the widespread problem of domestic and sexual violence (Brownmiller, 1975; Stanko, 1985; Hoyle, 2007). This was a highly important acknowledgment, as it meant that women's experiences were no longer solely defined by white, middle-class, male academics, but instead women were able to explain their experiences as 'female knowers' (Harding, 1987). Many second-wave feminists strongly argued that domestic and sexual violence should be understood within its social context and utilised the concept of patriarchy. The definition of patriarchy is a highly contested subject, but Dobash and Dobash (1979) assert that it consists of two key elements: a structure and an ideology. Structurally, patriarchy is a hierarchical organisation in which men have more power and privilege than women. The ideology of patriarchy provides a political and social rationale for itself, namely, that both men and women come to believe that it is 'natural' and a 'right' that women have inferior positions within society (DeKeseredy, 2011).

Women's activism and the contributions of the work of feminist academics have pushed the debates surrounding women's experiences as victims of domestic and sexual violence forward in several key areas. For example, they foregrounded

familiarity as a central feature of domestic and sexual violence (Smart, 1989), they broadened the definitions of domestic violence to also focus on psychological and coercive forms of abuse (Hooks, 2000), they highlighted the invisible, endemic and routine nature of violence (Stanko, 2003), they helped to redefine the way in which female victims of domestic and sexual violence are understood and they highlighted that violence against women should be located within a broad socio-cultural context (Pahl, 1985). Furthermore, they exposed the failures of the state and its various services, namely doctors failure to view incidences of domestic violence as ‘real injuries’ (Smith, 1989: 73), police services reluctance to intervene in ‘private family matters’ (Reiner, 1992) and social services pre-occupation with child protection and the notion of ‘dysfunctional families’ (Hague & Malos, 2005; Pahl, 1985). In addition, postmodern feminist scholars and activists have discussed a range of additional vulnerabilities with regards to being a victim of domestic violence, such as sexuality (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) age (Ockleford et al, 2003), class (Renzetti, 2004; Fine & Weis, 2000), disability (Mays, 2006) and race & ethnicity (Mama, 1989; Benson & Fox, 2004; Raphael, 2002 ). By highlighting such issues, women activists and feminist scholars together began to demonstrate that violence against women is both an endemic and serious social problem and cannot solely be defined and explained by the victim’s or perpetrators ‘nature’ or psychology.

However, to be constituted as a *true* victim of crime is not a universally applied concept and is in part influenced by the extent to which the individual is constructed/ viewed to be an ‘ideal victim’ (Christie, 1986). For Christie, the ‘ideal victim’ is a young, weak, innocent female attacked by an unknown stranger. The consequential power of such “ideal images results in some people being viewed as deserving victims, that is, acquiring the label of victim’ very readily and easily, and other

people being viewed as undeserving victims who may never be labelled as victims” (Walklate, 2007: 28). Various myths and gendered discourses may influence the extent to which female victims of domestic and sexual abuse are constituted as ‘ideal victims’. For example, dominant rape myths, such as ‘she was asking for it’, ‘she was drunk’ or ‘it was consensual’ (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994) serve to minimise and disregard the experience of rape victims. Furthermore, blame is often placed on the female victim of domestic violence, by implying that ‘she was nagging too much’, ‘she failed to leave the relationship’ or ‘she had an affair’ (Bjorket & Morgan, 2010; Berns, 2009). With this in mind, despite the attention and increased public concern for female victims of domestic and sexual violence, most mainstream social and legal responses remain “inexplicably bound up with and shaped by incomplete and distorted representations of the nature, causes and effects of that violence” (Randall, 2004: 107). Such constructions of female victimhood highlight that becoming a victim is a complicated process and is not a label that is automatically and unquestionably prescribed.

### **The female offender**

The next section of the chapter will move on from talking about how women have been described as a victim within criminology and will instead discuss how women have been understood as offenders. As previously discussed, before feminist theory and women’s activism transformed the way in which women are understood within criminology, women were reduced to their nature, biology and inferiority (Sydie, 1987). Within criminology, such exclusion and biological determinism is perhaps no-

where more evident than when considering the ways in which female offending has been traditionally defined and explained (Smart, 1977).

It has been consistently found that during the last five years (Ministry of Justice, 2012) and more specifically over time (Rutter et al, 1998), women have committed less crime in comparison to men. However, as highlighted by Smart (1977), this statistical insignificance alone cannot fully explain why so little work has been traditionally attempted in this area. Furthermore, as highlighted by Simpson (1991: 129), “the simplistic explanation that males are violent and women are not contains a grain of truth, but it misses the complexity and texture of women’s lives”. Smart (1977) argued that the absence of work on crimes by women should be considered as symbolic of the nature of the discipline of criminology. As a result of this lack of interest, some of the classical works on female criminality still inform more contemporary works and are reflected in the treatment of female offenders (Smart, 1989; Lloyd, 1995).

As was previously discussed, early criminological theories (for example, Lombroso and Ferrero, 1895) argued that women were less evolved than men and therefore female criminality could be explained by their biological inferiority. Despite Lombroso and Ferrero’s (1895) work being published during the Victorian period, it provides a useful insight into the myths and prejudices that remain to have a significant impact on the study of women and crime today (Lloyd, 1995). Their ideology helped to establish many of the dichotomies between men and women that continue to ‘invade’ criminological thought. For example, the notion that men are active and women are passive, therefore a non-passive woman who engages in criminal activity is considered to be more masculine and thus deviant. Furthermore, Lombroso and Ferrero’s (1895) beliefs regarding women’s biology, namely that

women's ability to reproduce made them biologically inferior in comparison to men, continued to influence academic knowledge into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lloyd, 1995). For example, there have been many suggestions that menstruation is intrinsically connected to criminality (Dalton, 1961) and that female criminality is the result of physiological differences between the sexes. This suggestion has been linked to the fact that because women are capable of concealing sexual arousal, they are inherently more deceitful and therefore able to conceal their offending behaviour (Pollak, 1950).

Many early psychological theories also suggested that women's dysfunction and offending behaviour had a biological basis. For e.g. Freud attributed women's deviance to their inability to psychologically adjust to their biological inferiority to men (McIvor, 2004). As a consequence, he suggested that such women develop a masculine complex, exhibiting exaggerated masculine characteristics and behaviours, such as engagement in crime, as a way to compensate for their inferiority (McIvor, 2004). Furthermore, as previously highlighted, many sociological theories of crime such as Cohen's (1955) sub-cultural theories and Hirschi's (1969) control theory, largely regard the acquisition of male and female characteristics as being given through the process of sex role socialisation and such research focuses almost implicitly on male offending behaviour. Examples such as this highlight that traditional sociological and psychological theories not only render women invisible, but they also define them by their 'nature' and biology, even when there is no such biological focus for explaining male offending behaviour within such theories. This demonstrates the extent to which different rules apply to men and women within traditional criminological thought. This is particularly evident for the four co-accused women analysed in this thesis. For example, as discussed in chapter

5, Jane Turner was described as being ‘inherently’ evil, thus suggesting that her offending was the result of her unnatural biology and Janet Young was described as having ‘scorned woman syndrome’, again implying that her offending was due to a pathological deficiency.

All of this highlights that traditionally, female offenders have been considered to be somewhat of an anomaly to many theorists and their offending behaviour has predominantly been explained by their ‘abnormal nature’ and biology. Whilst all biological explanations of offending should not be completely ignored, seeking a singular explanation in the way that such perspectives propose does not provide an adequate account for all female offending. Within traditional criminological thought, the female offender is mostly explained by her ‘hysterical nature’ or is categorised as ‘pathologically evil’ and this subsequently leads to the belief that women’s offending and their nature/ nurture are explicitly linked (Smart, 1976; Naffine, 1996). The association of women with nature, or being closer to nature as was observed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular, pervades philosophical thinking. “Such a process of genderising science assigns women not only as a dangerous other (the nature to be controlled), but also assigns women a particular status as knowers in relation to men” (Walklate, 2001: 33). As highlighted earlier in the chapter, male knowledge is equated with rational knowledge and women’s knowledge is associated with emotional work (Sydie, 1989). Early criminology reflects these deeply embedded views and whilst the male offender is seen as the norm, the female offender is defined as the abnormal (Walklate, 2001). However, as the next section of this chapter will highlight, the work of early feminist criminologists sought to render female offenders more visible (Smart, 1977; Heidensohn, 1985; Naffine, 1987; Morris, 1987).

## **The Female offender: A feminist re-interpretation**

Following the pioneering works of Smart (1976) and Heidensohn (1968) who exposed the sexist ideologies that informed classical and contemporary accounts of female criminality, many other feminist theories of women's crime followed (McIvor, 2004). Such early feminist contributions sought to expose that historically, knowledge about female offenders had been written by men, who wanted to study and understand male criminality. Therefore any attempt to include or 'understand' female offending was mostly, if not exclusively, beset with myths and misconceptions, which often reflected ideological concern rather than objective knowledge (Smart, 1976; Heidensohn, 1996; Naffine, 1987).

However, as well as exposing such misconceptions, feminism had a range of other invaluable influences on criminology and the way in which female offenders were understood. As highlighted by Walklate (2001: 41), different feminist positions had various influences on the study of crime. For example, despite the interest of liberal feminists not centring on researching crime, they endeavoured to examine the sex differences associated with crime and they questioned the supposed 'good scientific practice' of traditional criminological and philosophical thinkers (Walklate, 2001). Also, socialist feminists argue that the forces of capitalism and patriarchy work in conjunction with each other to separate men and women according to the division of labour, namely the working, ruling man and the reproductive, ruled woman and they argue that power is essential to understanding criminality (Messerschmidt, 1993).

More recent feminist work has focussed on various social- structural influences which mark women's pathways towards crime. For example, Chesney-Lind (2004)

compares the differential experiences of young women and men who come into contact with the criminal justice system, highlighting the difficulties that many young, female offenders have faced prior to their offending, such as victimization, sexual abuse and difficult familial relationships. Furthermore, Messerschmidt (1993) discusses the relationship between masculinity and crime and highlights how social constructs and ideologies, such as hegemonic masculinity, can be utilised to explain that men's engagement in crime is a way of 'doing gender'. In addition, feminist scholars have also explored female offenders interactions with various criminal justice agencies (Worrall, 1990; Carlen, 1990; Gelsthorpe & Morris, 2002) and the following section will explore their experiences of being in court.

### **Female offenders in court**

Due to their expectations of being a wife and mother, which are embedded in other appropriate female behaviours, women are subject to greater social and informal controls in comparison to men (Carlen, 1985; Worrall, 1990; Heidensohn, 2002). Some women are unable or unwilling to conform to these social controls, hence they face a gendered scrutiny of treatment and experiences in their interactions with state institutions and agencies (Evans and Jamieson, 2008). It has been argued that if female offenders do not conform to all others aspects of approved societal stereotypes for women, they are at a risk of being treated harshly both within the criminal justice system and within society at large. As highlighted by Lloyd (1995), female offenders are 'doubly deviant, doubly damned' as they are not only judged for transgressing the criminal law, but more importantly, the laws governing



acceptable forms of femininity. It has therefore been argued that the criminal woman is judged both for the crime that she has committed, but also for the sort of woman that she is (Lloyd, 1995). Furthermore, Edwards (1984) argues that this notion can influence women's position in court, as she suggests that women are on trial for both their criminality, but also the extent to which they are feminine and are perceived to be a good wife and mother. Edwards (1984: 1) highlights that when processing female defendants in the legal system, the courts and criminal justice system draws on their 'everyday' assumptions about femininity and thus whether or not women fit within preconceived stereotypes has an influence on criminal justice professionals perception and judgement of female offenders.

In spite of this, many scholars have argued that women are the recipients of chivalrous treatment by the agents of the law (Adler, 1975). However, the chivalry thesis has been challenged by evidence of punitive police attitudes towards certain types of criminal women, particularly those who are perceived to completely disregard the 'feminine ideal' (Chesney-Lind, 2004). Furthermore, many commentators suggest that issues such as an increase in the severity of an offence or a perceived decline of women's morality often lead to such female offenders being treated with greater severity than male offenders who commit similar offenders (Ballinger, 2000; Edwards, 1984; Lloyd, 1995; Carlen, 1985). Women are judged against the 'reasonable man' of the law, therefore not only does this invoke the experiences and values of men upon women, (Naffine, 1987), but it also means that women are easily placed into the 'man-made' dichotomy of the 'mad' and 'bad' offender.

### The 'mad' or 'bad' female offender

Women who fall into the 'mad' category are viewed as hysterical and emotional beings, who are out of control of their own nature and biology (Lloyd, 1995). If such women are seen to be respectable (Kruttschnitt, 1982) and largely adhere to the expected ideologies of womanhood, then it has been argued that they will receive more chivalrous treatment by being defined as 'mad'. For example, Allen (1987) found that female offenders are twice as likely as male offenders to be given a psychiatric disposition by the criminal justice system. This supports the notion that women are viewed as being unable to make rational decisions and are therefore attributed as having 'diminished responsibility' much more readily than their male counterparts (Walklate, 2001). However, whilst it appears that this notion of 'treating' female offenders via psychiatric needs rather than punishing them serves women well, in fact, it completely denies women of agency and thus reinforces the notion that they are inferior to the rational male offender.

With this theme of agency in mind, Worrall (1990) highlights how experts within the criminal justice system endeavour to make sense of women's criminality in one of two ways. The first, defining women as not truly criminal, which often places them into the 'mad' category of the female offender, as discussed above. The other category defines criminal women as not really being women, i.e. inherently bad and wilfully defiant of their gender role, namely, the 'bad' female offender. Such female offenders pose somewhat of a threat to both society and traditional criminological explanations of female offending, as their engagement in crime cannot be readily explained by their emotional and hysterical nature. This feeling of threat is demonstrated by the various 'moral panics' that have emerged about the supposed upsurge of the 'violent woman' in recent years. This has led to an increase in the

number of women being dealt with via the criminal justice system, which has consequently led to an increase in women's imprisonment, (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2014) as well as more 'bad' behaviour by women being redefined as criminal, for example fighting (Worrall, cited in Evans and Jamieson, 2008).

Women who commit serious acts of violence both independently and with agency do not fit within the stereotype of the 'mad' female offender, therefore due to a lack of an available explanation for their offending behaviour, such women are often categorised as 'inherently evil' and thus beyond explanation (Naffine, 1987; 1996).

However, as highlighted by many feminist academics (Lloyd, 1995; Naffine, 1987, 1996) this over-simplistic segregation of the 'mad' or 'bad' female offender does not reflect reality. As outlined in the Sarah Johnson (chapter 6) and Janet Young (chapter 8) case studies, this dichotomisation of 'mad' and 'bad' is an unsophisticated conceptualisation and rather the women's experiences of offending need to be understood from the point of view of women offenders themselves. This would provide not only a unique standpoint, from the otherwise 'silenced' voice of the woman offender, but also a more informed account of their lived experiences (Harding, 1991; Carlen, 1985).

As highlighted throughout the chapter thus far, women are mostly placed in over simplified- categories in an attempt to explain their position within traditional criminological theory, for example, victim or offender, mad or bad. Furthermore, female offenders are frequently categorised by their perceived level of agency and the next section of this chapter will explore this issue further.

## Agency and the female offender

Carlen's (1985: 11) research highlighted that the female offenders interviewed for her research mostly rejected conventional gender roles and they suggested that their offending behaviour lifted them "from the social disabilities imposed on them as women". This study was pioneering, as it highlighted that women deliberately engaged in law breaking behaviour, thus emphasising their agency, rather than defining them as inferior to men and bound by their nature.

Maier argues that, "the positioning of women as victims constitutes an enduring stumbling block for feminist theory" (1997, 11), because it denies women agency. Some scholars (for example, Pearson, 1995; Morrissey, 2003) suggest that women offenders should be viewed as autonomous individuals **choosing** to commit crime as a conscious and deliberate act, in other words, exercising agency. In such situations, it is entirely inappropriate to suggest a defence of 'diminished responsibility' simply by virtue of being women. However other scholars have argued that female offenders have different motivations to commit crime, as some women may be influenced by issues such as personal circumstance, poverty or coercion (Carlen, 1988; Ballinger, 2000; Richie, 1996). It is therefore crucial to appreciate the specific contexts within which women commit crime so as to develop a more nuanced understanding of women's offending behaviour.

Furthermore, Maier (1997) suggests that female offenders are typically viewed to be either wholly independent agents or as being 'out of control' of their offending behaviour. However, this dichotomisation of agency is a reductionist approach, and does not apply to all female offending behaviour, as highlighted in the four case

studies of co-accused women discussed in this thesis. In addition, there has been evidence to suggest that in some instances, women can be coerced into crime by their male partner/ co-offender, which shall be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

### **Co-offending and Coercion**

There is a growing body of literature which supports the claim that women follow distinct and often gendered pathways into crime (Daly, 1992; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006), some of which are defined by their co-offending with a male partner. The act of committing crime alongside one or more accomplices, has received relatively little criminological attention (Carrington, 2002; Warr, 1996). Relatively few studies of co-offending exist and the majority are restricted to juvenile samples (McGloin et al, 2008), male offenders (Reis & Farrington, 1991) and particular crimes, for e.g. violence (Pettersson, 2005). Research has also explored the impact of co-offending on the type of offences that women commit, for example, Becker and McCorkel (2011) argue that women are more likely to engage in gender atypical offences when they co-offend with men, such as robbery and murder. Furthermore, Mullins & Wright (2003) suggest that women are often introduced to offences, such as residential burglary, by an intimate male partner. Koons-Witt and Schram (2003) argued that whilst women who committed crimes alone were more likely to be involved in aggravated assaults, those who co-offend with men usually committed more serious offences. Moreover, there has been substantial support for the idea that in specific instances of co-offending, men coerce women to commit a criminal act.

Most of the earlier studies within the area of co-offending suggested women occupied a secondary role. Ward (1979) concluded that female burglars were 'supporting players' whilst the men played the 'main part', yet there was little exploration of why the women occupied this role or whether they were coerced into criminality. Gilfus (1992) argued that many of the women he interviewed about their offending behaviour suggested that their involvement in crime was the result of their relationship with abusive and controlling men.

Moreover, the notion of being coerced has been found in certain types of criminal partnerships. For example, Averlato (2007) and Brown (2007) both argued that female gang members can often be coerced into crime by male gang members, particularly if they are in an intimate relationship. Brown (2007) found that many young female gang members were frequently forced to hoard drugs or take the blame for criminal offences on their partner's behalf. Furthermore, research suggests that the relationship between 'pimps' and female sex workers is often characterised by coercion. Kennedy et al (2007) argued that once women become involved in prostitution, male pimps can control many, if not all, aspects of the female sex workers lives, for example, managing their money and getting them involved in drugs. This leads to such women perceiving that they have few 'life choices' and many therefore remain within the sex industry. In addition, it has also been found that women who sexually abuse their own or other people's children alongside their male partner are often coerced to become involved in the activity by a male partner or accomplice (Syed & Williams, 1996). Matthews, Matthews & Speltz (1991) categorised female sex offenders and found that 'male coerced women' tended to view their relationship with their partner as more important than the well-being of the child victim. Furthermore, the male-coerced women in the

study were usually extremely dependent on their male partner and the men often encouraged them to believe that their co-offending behaviour was an integral part of their relationship. All of this research suggests that in specific instances, women can be coerced into illegal activity by their male partner/accomplice, particularly if they are involved in an intimate, personal relationship together.

### **The personal relationship between co-offenders: Fear or rapture?**

A relatively small amount of research has explored the nature of the personal relationship between co-offenders. Welle and Falkin (2000) argue that women who have a 'romantic' relationship with their male co-defendant are more vulnerable to manipulation and coercion. Welle and Falkin (2000) suggest that such women are likely to be victims of domestic violence, isolation and threats within this intimate relationship. Such women were victims of what Welle and Falkin (2000) coined 'relationship policing', as they argued that they became involved in criminality due to their fear of disappointing or disobeying their partner as opposed to making a fully 'rational' decision to participate. The authors concluded that "women with romantic co-defendants experienced a continuum of policing, in which abusive partners police women both at home and in public" (2000:61).

Furthermore, Richie's (1996) exploration of black women's experiences of being forced into crime by their male partner could also be applicable to a variety of coercive, intimate relationships. For instance, Richie (1996) suggests that the notion of 'gender entrapment' "helps to show how some women are forced or coerced into

crime by their culturally expected gender roles, the violence in their intimate relationships and their social position in the broader society” (1996: 133). Richie (1996) suggests that such concepts help to highlight why black women stay in relationships characterised by coercion and abuse, Such women often place greater emphasis on family loyalty and keeping their relationship together, rather than their own well-being and personal safety. However, whilst issues around gender and race are undoubtedly important aspects of the literature regarding coercion, it seems that rather than concepts such as ‘gender entrapment’ being applicable only to black womens experiences, they can also be re-applied to explain many women’s experiences of being coerced into crime more generally. For example, Carbone-Lopez & Kruttschnitt (2010) argued that irrespective of race, many of the imprisoned women in their research reported having male, intimate co-offenders who had been physically and psychologically abusive and coercive, which ultimately led them to comply and participate in offending behaviour.

Jones (2008) suggested that male-female co-offending relationships could be classified in various ways, for example, women who were in a coercive relationship with their partner, women who committed a crime through love and women who were ‘equal’ partners in their criminality. Jones (2008) argued that it was the nature of the personal relationship between the male and female co-defendants which determined why the women became involved in criminal activity. He recognised that whilst some women have agency and make a rational decision to offend, others are forced to do so by their controlling and abusive partners. Jones concluded that the high level of both mental and physical coercion reported by the women suggests that a substantial amount of female offending may be explicable on this basis (2008: p.160). Furthermore, in later research, Jones (2011) argued that the coercive nature



of such relationships helped to explain why many female prisoners had pleaded guilty to a crime that they had not committed, due to an excessive desire to protect their partners needs above their own or alternatively, because that they were coerced to do so by their male co-defendant.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Jones' (2008) research are the issues raised around committing a crime due to 'enthrallment' or 'fear' of ones male partner. In Jones' (2008) research, women who committed a crime out of 'love' or enthrallment and those who committed a crime out of fear could be separated into two, distinct categories defined by the kind of abuse that the women experienced. For example, Jones (2008) appears to suggest that because the women in the 'love' category experienced little, if any, physical violence by their male partner, they were not directly forced into crime. However, rather than dichotomising these experiences, an alternative way of understanding this notion is to consider love and fear as part of a continuum of coercive pathways into criminality. Whether the women reported committing a crime out of love or fear, both groups argued that they engaged in illegal activity to avoid disappointing or angering their partner. This notion is particularly applicable to the four women analysed in this thesis, as they each expressed differing levels of suggested coercion, which were collectively characterised by a combination of **both** love and fear. For example, Sarah Johnson's relationship with her male co-offender, David Fox, in particular highlights the ways in which separating 'enthrallment' and 'fear' in coercive, co-offending partnerships would fail to encapsulate the nature of the whole relationship and the potential impact of this on co-accused women's offending behaviour. With this in mind, it could be argued that irrespective of whether the women committed a crime out of fear or infatuation, they were both, to some extent, 'victims' of being coerced into

criminal activity. This notion of being a ‘victim’ within the concept of coercion and the idea of coercion being understood as a ‘continuum’ will be explored further in the next section of this chapter.

### **Coercion into crime: Coerced women as victims and/or offenders**

As previously established, not all female offenders define their pathway into crime as a rational choice and can in some instances be coerced into crime by a male partner, but in the same vein, they cannot be readily and easily defined as a ‘victim’ of crime. As highlighted by Walklate (2007: 25), despite the distinctions between being a ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving victim’ being concepts which belonged to the nineteenth century, they have become embedded into the twenty-first century policy and culture. Walklate (2007) suggests that due to the socially constructed nature of the term ‘victim’, becoming a victim of crime is not straight forward. Becoming a victim involves a process of both the individual recognising that they have been victimised and they must also be recognised as a victim both within policy and socially (Walklate, 2007). If we consider such complexities with regards to being defined as a victim, then it is clear why there has historically been such a profound dichotomisation between being a victim and an offender within criminological thought. Furthermore, if we consider this alongside Carrabine et al’s (2004) notion of a ‘hierarchy of victimization’, with ‘deserving’ victims, such as prostitutes being at the bottom of the hierarchy and ‘undeserving’ victims, such as the elderly being at the top, the difficulty in where the ‘coerced’ female offender would fit is evident. The ‘coerced’ female offender, such as those discussed in the

current thesis, cannot be easily placed into the victim category, as traditional criminological thought would argue that irrespective of how the offending behaviour came about, a criminal act was still committed. The next section of this chapter will further explore the restrictive nature of the categories of 'victim' and 'offender' when considered within the context of coercion and will also highlight how the concept of coercion into crime could be better understood within criminology.

#### Coercion in context: A 'continuum of coercion'

The extent of the issue of violence against women is well documented, with statistics suggesting that 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence over their lifetimes (Council of Europe, 2002), on average, two women a week are killed by a violent partner or ex- partner (Department of Health, 2005) and approximately 85,000 women are raped on average in England and Wales each year (Home Office, 2013). Furthermore, it has been suggested that there is a strong link between domestic violence, sexual abuse and women's offending behaviour (Daly, 1992; Norman & Barron, 2011). With this in mind, if Stark's (2007) definition of 'Coercive Control' is considered, namely, "calculated, malevolent conduct deployed almost exclusively by men to dominate individual women by intervening repeated physical abuse with three equally important tactics, namely intimidation, isolation and control" in conjunction with Kelly's (1988) notion of a 'sexual continuum', then the categories of victim and offender appear to be too simplistic to appropriately explain the concept of being coerced into crime. According to Kelly (1988), the continuum of sexual violence ranges from extensions of the myriad forms of sexism women encounter everyday through to rape or murder of women by men. She argues

that any form of sexual violence should not be tolerated, even if it is frequently excused as ‘typical’ male behaviour. Kelly (1988:75) argues that the concept of a continuum enables women to make sense of their own experiences by showing how “typical” and “extreme” male behaviours shade into one another.

Both Kelly’s (1988) ‘Sexual Continuum’ theory and Stark’s (2007) idea of ‘Coercive Control’ can be worked together to produce a new exploratory framework. They both argue that all forms of domestic and sexual abuse need to be considered as part of a ‘continuum’ and should not be viewed as being separate or independent of each other. Whilst Kelly’s (1988) and Stark’s (2007) ideas concern domestic and sexual abuse, their concepts can be redefined to explain the notion of a ‘continuum of coercion’ into crime. Rather than all women within the ‘women and crime’ question being categorised as either a victim or an offender, their personal context and biographies should be understood. Whilst it is not intended to deny the agency of all female offenders and to cast them all as victims, as it is recognised that some women make autonomous decisions to engage in criminality, it is argued that coercion should be viewed as being a distinct and often gendered pathway into crime.

Additionally, if Stark’s (2007) suggested range of abusive techniques involved in ‘Coercive Control’ are considered, then it could be argued that ‘coercion’ should also be viewed as being part of the wider continuum of domestic abuse as well as being understood as a continuum in and of itself. The study’s discussed above (for example, Welle & Falkin, 2000; Jones, 2008; Richie, 1996) highlight that many women who experience coercion into crime argued that they had been physically, psychologically and emotionally abused by their male partner, which suggests that

the act of coercion should not be viewed as being separate from the wider experience of domestic abuse.

If this notion of a continuum is considered further, Denzin (1989: 47) suggests that 'turning point moments are "moments of revelation in a life"'. Furthermore, Denzin (1989: 70) defines epiphanies as "interactional moments and experiences which leave marks in people's lives". He suggests that 'turning point moments' or 'epiphanies' are able to inform criminology about people's relationship to crime and interpret criminal lives by exploring how they are related to social structures. Goodey (2000) argues that rather than focussing solely on criminal careers, there should be a fluid interpretation of crime- centred and offender and victim centred epiphanies. Goodey (2000) argues that epiphanies can help to highlight the processes involved in individual adaptation, both by exploring the importance of powerful social structural forces, such as 'the family' and 'marriage' and the individuals particular circumstances, namely their biography.

With this in mind, the concepts of 'turning point moments' and 'epiphanies' are highly useful to highlight the importance of understanding women's individual contexts and biographies when considering the concept of 'coercion' as a pathway into crime. Such concepts help to demonstrate that rather than simply being categorised as a victim or an offender, such women's experiences of participating in crime should instead be redefined as being part of each individual's biography and lived experience. Collectively, all of this would not only help to highlight the biographical and social context in which coercion occurs, but it would also help to capture the virtually muted experiences of coerced women.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted the ways in which the various powerful gendered dichotomies which have informed criminological thought, such as the 'rational' man/ 'irrational' woman' and victim/ offender, have silenced women's experiences. This silencing has consequently rendered women virtually invisible within criminology. An additional dichotomy which is evident throughout this chapter is that of the 'normal' male offender vs. the 'abnormal' female offender. The implication of female criminality being linked to their 'inferior' biology is that female offending behaviour has persistently been explained as an abnormality of their nature, therefore placing them into the distinctly different category of the unexplainable other. This produces somewhat of a 'ripple effect' in the creation of additional dichotomies which serve to further constrain and categorise women's experiences of engaging in crime, such as the 'mad' and 'bad' female offender (Lloyd, 1995). Such restrictive and exhaustive categories are not able to encapsulate the experiences of all female offenders, yet they continue to pervade traditional criminological theory and thought.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the latter section of this chapter, such reductionist ideas have rendered invisible the experiences of many women who come into contact with the criminal justice system, particularly if they are coerced into crime by their male partner/accomplice (Jones, 2008; Richie, 1996). Women who have been coerced into crime are difficult to place within the traditional categories of 'victim' and 'offender', because whilst they have committed a crime, they cannot be fully defined as agents wholly in control of their offending behaviour (Maher, 1997),

yet conversely, they cannot be readily defined as 'true' victims of crime (Christie, 1986). Rather than continuing to mute such women's experiences, this chapter has attempted to offer a way to understand them by introducing concepts such as a 'continuum of coercion' and suggesting that such women's offending should be understood within the individual and personal context within which it occurs. This will undoubtedly be difficult to achieve, largely due to the powerful and pervasive nature of the dichotomies which exist within criminology. However, challenging these traditional binaries and attempting to understand the context of female offenders individual circumstances would lead to a more nuanced understanding and appreciation of coerced women's lived experiences.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE NEWS MEDIA CONSTRUCTION OF CRIMINAL WOMEN**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the ways in which the media routinely represents women and documents the various tropes and frames which are used to define women in particular ways and for specific purposes. The chapter considers the importance of analysing crime news (Chibnall, 1977; Crithcer, 2003; Machado and Santos, 2009) and also documents the significance of ‘news values’ for the creation of crime news stories (Chibnall, 1977; Jewkes, 2009). The chapter concludes with an examination of the news medias representation of women as victims of sexual and domestic violence, before moving onto to discussing women as offenders and co-offenders, highlighting the various discursive practices, discourses and narratives that are employed by journalists to construct such women in gendered ways.

#### **The stereotyping of women in Media**

From the 1970’s, second wave feminist activists and scholars worked to expose the ways in which media depicted gender relations and exposed its sexist nature. Tuchman (1978) coined the term ‘symbolic annihilation’ to describe how women are rendered invisible, trivialised, dismissed, confined to the home and symbolised



as childlike beings within various media outlets. This consequently serves to reinforce the gendered and essentialist discourses discussed in the previous chapter. Various scholars have since echoed the findings of this research and suggest that women continue to be confined to gendered discourses in media and are often represented in subordinated roles and positions in comparison to men (Carter and Steiner, 2004; Byerly & Ross, 2006).

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the media plays a pivotal role in the maintenance and creation of gender stereotypes. Taylor and Willis (1999: 41-42) define stereotyping as the selection and construction of undeveloped, generalised signs which categorise social groups or members of social groups. They argue that the 'signs' used to create stereotypes represent the values, attitudes, behaviours and backgrounds of particular groups of people. Stereotypes use general characteristics or 'points of difference' of a particular person or social group, which are consequently often used to define them as deviant or as being distinctly different (Pickering, 2001). Whilst stereotypes can be used positively to direct the activities of individuals and social groups (Naffziger and Naffziger, 1974), they can often be used to distort perceptions and attitudes (Pickering, 2001; Pillis et al, 2008). Stereotypes are selective descriptions and thus make certain features more salient which have particular ideological importance (Perkins, 1997). Hall argues:

Stereotyping... is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable',

what belongs and what does not or is 'Other' between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', *Us and Them*. (1996: 258)

It is argued that most gender stereotypes undermine and underestimate the ability of women and they are usually portrayed as nurturing, submissive, powerless and irrational (VanSlyke Turk, 1987; Fowler, 1991; Aksu, 2005). Kilbourne (1999) argued that in advertising in particular, women are often objectified, subjugated and demeaned and limited to child-like, gendered stereotypes. In addition, in films, women are cast in the stereotyped roles of "love goddesses, mothers, martyrs, spinsters, broads, virgins, vamps, prudes, adventuresses, she-devils and sex kittens" (Haskell, 1999, p. 291). With this in mind, Walker (2005) argues that these controlling images serve to communicate societal expectations for the role of women in relationships and life more generally and reinforce the stratified relationship of dominance and subordination between men and women. Cape (2003: 166) suggests that "it is not stereotypes as an aspect of human thought and representation that are wrong, but who controls them, defines them and what interests and uses they serve", hence they serve to maintain the patriarchal societal power structures and normalise the beliefs surrounding supposed 'appropriate' and 'idealised' versions of femininity. Furthermore, as media institutions have historically and continue to be run and co-ordinated by white, middle aged, middle class men (Burton, 2005; Ross, 2011), it is not surprising that the views of this dominant group about women continue to be reflected in the media. Having now provided an overview of women's representation in the media, the next section of this chapter will move on to discuss how crime news is constructed and represented.

## **Crime news and news values**

Crime news reporting is one of the key ways in which the public receives information about deviancy, criminality and law & order (Chibnall, 1977; Crithcer, 2003; Machado and Santos, 2009). Despite the public not being totally passive receivers of information (Ericson et al, 1991), the news media conveys a plethora of information about crime and is often the public's principal source of information about the issue (Reiner, 2002; Feilezer, 2007). It has also been suggested that news media professionals are definers of crime agents and thus, at least to some extent, define the boundaries of acceptable moral conduct (Surette, 1998; Reiner, 2002; Chermak and Chapman, 2007). The relationship between journalists and legal institutions is a case for considerable discussion, especially with regard to issues surrounding media impartiality (Naylor, 2001). Some research suggests that journalists will reproduce police crime reports without investigating their content or looking for further sources (O'Neill and O'Connor, 2008). Furthermore, many scholars argue that the media and the law should not be viewed as autonomous entities when it comes to reporting on issues such as crime and instead, the complex interactions between the two institutions should be closely examined (Surette, 1998).

However, in spite of this suggested reciprocal relationship, the media tends to favour certain types of crime stories over others (Jewkes, 2011; Kitzinger, 2004; Cohen, 1972; Graber, 1980). Research suggests a level of distortion in the content of crime news in comparison to official statistics (Reiner, 2002; Jewkes, 2011; Chermak and Chapman, 2007). Jewkes (2004: 37) argues that crime reporting "follows markedly different patterns to both the "reality" of crime and its

representation in official statistics”. Furthermore, reporting in the media suggests that the majority of crimes are ‘serious’ and violent, yet statistics show that most crimes are non- violent (Reiner et al, 2003). Findings such as this are concerning, as this over-representation of ‘serious’ crimes may lead the public to have an inaccurate understanding of crime and criminality and in particular, which offences should be taken more seriously.

Another key concept which is over-represented in news media in particular is the perceived public risk to ‘stranger danger’, which serves to indirectly highlights that anyone can become a victim of crime (Wykes, 1995; Naylor, 2001; Wykes and Welsh, 2009). This concept implies that individuals, particularly women, are more likely to be the victim of crime by an unknown perpetrator, however research suggests that there is a greater risk of becoming a victim by someone who is known to the individual, for example, a partner or a member of their family (Soothill and Walby, 1991; Wykes, 2001; Walklate, 2007). The misrepresentation of issues such as violence and ‘stranger danger’ have been argued to have caused ongoing and specific moral panics and media waves (Cohen, 1972; Chermak and Chapman, 2007), which highlights the extent to which the media is able to influence the public’s knowledge and understanding of crime and criminality.

With this in mind, it has been argued that journalists and editors determine what is newsworthy through tools and devices such as professional criterion, space allocation for different stories, time restraints, the rules of the news organisation and assumptions made about their audience (Wykes, 2001; Jewkes, 2011; Chermak and Chapman, 2007; Dimitrova and Stromback, 2009). Jewkes (2011) suggests that through the process of agenda setting, media professionals sift and select news items, prioritise some news stories over others and decide the overall tone of a news

story. She suggests that this collectively works to convey stories in a particular way, thus providing certain “pictures of the world”, which help to structure the audience’s frames of reference (Jewkes, 2011: 37). Furthermore, Jewkes (2011) suggests that the inclusion of ‘news values’ are also utilised by media professionals to construct an article in a specific way and for a particular purpose. Palmer (2000: 45) defines news values as a “system of criteria which are used to make decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of material”. News values are important as they reflect contemporary attitudes and concerns around issues such as gender and crime (Naylor, 2001). Furthermore, news values reveal important insights into the judgements that journalists and editors make about the public appeal of a story and whether it is in the public interest (Jewkes, 2011).

Chibnall (1977) in a study of journalistic practice in the post War period 1945-1975, developed a list of news values, which are applicable to Britain. Chibnall (1977) devised 13 news values, five of which were specifically related to crime news, which are visible and spectacular acts, graphic representation, deterrence and repression, sexual and political connotations and individual pathology. Chibnall’s (1977) values were later expanded by Jewkes (2004/ 2011) in the recognition that there have been many relevant societal, political, legal and policy changes since the 1970’s. Research suggests that news values are subject to change as the media and society changes (Naylor, 2001; Greer, 2007) and Jewkes (2011) acknowledges that there has been many ‘new crimes’ that have emerged in recent years that were either not known or were not taken seriously when Chibnall originally conducted his research, such as identity theft, child abuse and violence against women.

## Jewkes' (2011) crime news values

The next section of this chapter will document a number of the applicable twelve news values, which Jewkes (2011) argues are specifically relevant to how crime is reported in contemporary, British society.

### *1. Threshold*

Jewkes (2009) argues that events have to meet a certain level of perceived importance or drama to be considered newsworthy. Jewkes (2011) suggests that the threshold of a potential story varies according to whether the medium is national or local. For example, petty crimes, such as street robberies, are likely to feature in local press, but it takes greater magnitude offences of this kind to feature in national or international media. In addition, Jewkes (2011) suggests that once a story has reached the required threshold to make the news, it may then have to meet further criteria to stay in the news agenda, such as increased drama and risk and novel and bizarre angles being added to the story.

### *2. Simplification*

Whilst events do not have to be overly simple to make the news, they do have to be reducible to a number of parts or themes (Jewkes, 2011). For example, stories which are overly complex and strain the attention of the reader are often not desirable to media professionals. Jewkes (2011) notes that simplification means that crime stories are often represented in binary oppositions, emphasising good versus evil and normal versus deviant. However, in reality, crime and deviancy can rarely be reduced to such reductive, essentialist explanations and reporting on the issue in this way is likely to lead the public to develop an over-simplistic understanding of crime.

### *3. Individualism*

The news media favours crime news that shows individual responses to crime over those which involve more complex explanations (Jewkes, 2011). The media engage in personalisation to simplify crime stories and to give them a human interest appeal. In the context of crime, this leads to offenders often being constructed in terms of difference and represented as the ‘other’, which is a common feature of crime reporting (Jewkes, 2011, Young, 1999).

### *4. Sex*

Various scholars (Soothill and Walby, 1991; Greer, 2003; Jewkes, 2011) argue that sex is one of the most salient news values and suggest that newspapers over-report crimes of a sexual nature, thus distorting the overall picture of crime that the public receives. Jewkes (2011) argues that stories on sexual violence by strangers receive much more media attention, whilst stories of sexual violence that involve offenders known to the victim are reported on to a much lesser extent, which leads to such offences not being taken seriously, as will be discussed further later in the chapter.

### *5. Celebrity or high status persons*

This news value highlights that the level of deviance required to attract media attention is significantly lower for celebrities in comparison to ordinary citizens, because a certain threshold of meaningfulness has already been achieved (Greer, 2003). Jewkes (2011) suggests that convicted criminals can also become media celebrities by virtue of the notoriety of their crimes. Jewkes (2011: 50) argues that “sometimes, criminals are cast as folk devils” by the media and they are deemed to be newsworthy long after their conviction. Examples of such criminals include convicted murderers Myra Hindley and Rosemary West, who both continue to make

it onto the news agenda despite being convicted a number of decades ago (Rosemary West, 1980's, Myra Hindley, 1950's).

#### *6. Spectacle and graphic imagery*

Greer (2007) argues that due to the improvement of technology, crime news is selected not only on the basis of how it can be told in words, but also on how it can be portrayed visually. Jewkes (2011) argues that acts of violence in particular tend to have a strong visual impact and can be graphically presented, which increases its media coverage. However, violent crimes which are less likely to be accompanied by an image, such as those crimes which occur in the private sphere, become even more marginalised and invisible (Jewkes, 2011). Jewkes (2011) also suggests that the 'spectacle' of crime news reporting has blurred the lines between 'real' and 'fake' and has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between 'fact' and 'fiction'.

#### *7. Children*

Crime increases in visibility when children are involved and this is true whether children are victims or offenders (Greer, 2007). An example of child offenders who attained newsworthy status is that of John Venables and Robert Thompson, who murdered James Bulger in 1993. However, Jenkins (1992) argues that child victims not only guarantee newsworthiness, but can also ensure the news medias commitment to 'morality campaigns', particularly in paedophilic offences and/ or child murder.



### Potential implications of news values

Within the context of this study, news values created by the powerful serve to under- represent and misrepresent women (Wykes, 2001; Burton, 2005). As most of the news media is written, run and decided by white, middle class men (Burton, 2005; Ross, 2007), news values thus reinforce this dominant perspective. This leads to issues surrounding crime and deviancy to be reported on using a predominantly masculine and male-defined approach, thus serving to render women's experiences of criminality invisible in the news agenda. With this in mind, whilst women are potentially excluded from the news agenda due to their very nature, patriarchal ideas about women also mean that when they do feature in media discourse, they are more likely to be restricted to gendered roles, as victims and as objects of sexual pleasure (Gallagher, 2000; Ross, 2007). The next section of this chapter will discuss the representation of sexual and domestic violence and will also explore the news media construction of women as victims of such crimes.

### **The representation of domestic and sexual violence**

Ditton and Duffy (1983) found that when reporting assaults against women, the press frequently relate sex and violence so that the two are virtually indistinguishable. Furthermore, research suggests that news stories which discuss male sexual and/or domestic violence against women often minimise the man's involvement and emphasises the role of provocation and/ or female infidelity (Wykes, 2001, Berns, 2009). Wykes (2001) argues that female victims are often

blamed for failing to conform to patriarchal norms of femininity, for example, it is often suggested in news media that female victims of abuse ‘nagged too much’ or ‘were unfaithful’. Furthermore, Berns (2009) explores who is framed as being to blame in cases of male violence against women and suggests that in many instances, the female victim is often either directly or indirectly blamed for the violence they experience. Berns (2009) argues that whilst many male-orientated, conservative magazines openly blame women for their male partner’s violence, many women’s magazines often indirectly place the blame on women for reasons such as failing to leave the relationship and failing to protect their children.

Furthermore, Carll (2003) argues that within the news media, female domestic violence is framed as being less significant than other forms of violence. They argue that it is reported to a much lesser extent than other types of violence and it is predominantly incidents which result in serious injury or death which receive the most media attention, thus minimising the impact of the ‘everyday’ experiences of domestic violence, such as emotional abuse and control. By representing domestic violence as isolated and rare in this way, it is thus portrayed as being an individualised, pathological incident, which subsequently denies the social, endemic and gendered nature of violence against women.

In addition, the reporting of sexual violence in the media has also been a significant cause of concern for many feminist academics (Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Davies et al, 1987; Meyers, 1997; Kitzinger, 2004; Gill, 2007) and it has been suggested that the reporting of the issue has had a significantly detrimental effect on female victims. Similarly to the reporting of domestic violence, female victims of sexual violence are often directly or indirectly blamed for the abuse they experience. For example, they are often publically questioned for their provocative dress and

behaviour, chastised for being too intoxicated at the time of the assault (Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Gill, 2007) and are warned to avoid places which may put them at greater risk of being sexually assaulted (Stanko, 1990). Echoing the dominant reporting style of domestic violence, by placing the blame on the female victims in this way, the responsibility is removed from the male perpetrator and he is thus not held accountable for his violence and abuse (Wykes, 2001; Berns, 2009).

A further similarity to the reporting of domestic violence is that the news coverage of sexual violence often downplays the seriousness of the rape and/or assault by sexualising or minimising the violent nature of the offence (Lees, 1995; Meyers, 1997; Ross and Byerly, 2004). Furthermore, Carter (1998) argues that tabloid newspapers in particular often over-report on stories which contain rare instances of sexual violence, such as stranger rape, attempted murder and murder. This focus on rare instances of sexual violence is unsurprising, particularly when considered within the context that using the news values of sex and violence simultaneously increases the shock value and potential reader interest in a news story (Jewkes, 2011). However, as previously discussed, not only will such representations of sexual violence provide exaggerated and inaccurate frames of reference for the public, but it could also lead to more commonly experienced types of sexual abuse to be minimised and not taken seriously in everyday life.

Furthermore, Wykes (2001) suggests that one of the key devices that the news media uses to construct and frame female victims of sexual and domestic violence is the dichotomy of the good woman versus the deviant woman. Wykes (2001: 138) argues that whilst the good woman is passive, caring, dependent and fragile, the deviant woman is one who does not conform to the traditional, ideological standards of femininity, thus reinforcing the patriarchal assumptions about women's rightful

place within society (Meyers, 1997). Benedict's (1992) analysis on the coverage of sexual violence by newspapers in the USA, suggests that the printed press employ two narratives in their reporting. The first is the vamp, where the woman is framed as having driven the perpetrator to the sexual violence by her suggestive behaviour and immorality. The second is the virgin and within this narrative, the woman is framed as being pure and 'good', who was undeservingly attacked by an unknown, male perpetrator. Whilst the first narrative directly blames the victim for the violence she experienced, the second narrative also successfully reinforces the existing, gendered discourses discussed in the previous chapter, as it is a certain *type* of woman, adhering to the ideologies surrounding appropriate womanhood and sexuality, who is framed sympathetically and successfully within this narrative.

However, whilst female victims of domestic and sexual violence are vastly misrepresented and often negatively framed within the news media, irrespective of their experiences of victimization, perhaps the most sensationalised reporting and most significant evidence of misrepresentation occurs when women commit a criminal act, particularly an act of violence (Myers and Wight, 1996).

### **News constructions of the female offender**

Naylor (2001) argues that despite male violence against women being one of the most common forms of violence, violence perpetrated by women receives more press coverage. Naylor (2001: 188) suggests that this could be because female violence is viewed to be more deviant in comparison to male violence. Myers and

Wight (1996) argue that when a woman commits a criminal act, her sex is the principal factor through which all of her actions are seen and understood. They suggest that the sensationalised reporting of women's violence and crime can be viewed as a sign of social anxiety about women's roles and the demise of traditional femininity. So in an effort to make criminal women's actions appear less threatening and less of a concern to society, female offending is individualised, pathologised and explained by over-simplistic and deterministic explanations such as being inherently evil or psychologically impaired (Myers and Wight, 1996; Naylor, 2001; Barnett, 2006).

The representation of female criminals when considered within the context of both the news media and the law is complex, predominantly due to the influence of tradition, stereotypes and patriarchy in the understanding of crime and femininity. Furthermore, Morrissey (2003) writes about the relationship between media representations and what goes on in court and argues that in cases of female offending in particular, the media readily reify norms of femininity, which may influence judgements made in court about guilt, responsibility and authority. As discussed in the previous chapter, female offenders are routinely represented as being 'doubly damned' as they have offended both against the law and the informal laws surrounding appropriate femininity and womanhood (Lloyd, 1995; Wykes and Welsh, 2009). Despite the fact that women historically and contemporaneously commit less crime than men (Heidensohn, 1986; Wykes, 1998), Heidensohn (2002) argues that women who do engage in violent crime provide the media with some of the most compelling imaginings of crime and deviancy. Both the media and the public are fascinated by female criminality, due to its rarity and its conflict with the stereotypes of traditional femininity (Berrington et al, 2002). Furthermore, it has

been suggested that certain factors and intersecting vulnerabilities can influence how female offenders are reported within the news media. For example, Brennan and Vandenberg (2009) suggest that race and ethnicity can have a significant effect on how female offenders are constructed within crime news. They found that stories about white female offenders were more likely to contain neutralisers (for e.g. denial of responsibility) in comparison to stories about ethnic- minority female offenders. Whilst findings such as this are significant, the influence of race and other intersecting issues on the ways in which female offenders are represented in the media will not be explored in detail in this thesis.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Lloyd (1995) argues that despite it being suggested by the ‘chivalry hypothesis’ that all women receive more lenient sentences in criminal cases because they are viewed as being weak and irrational within the context of the law, it has been suggested that this sort of treatment is only extended to a certain type of criminal women, namely those who mostly adhere to the patriarchal expectations of womanhood and motherhood (Daly, 1994; Grabe et al, 2006). Female criminals who commit typically ‘unfeminine’ offences, such as violent acts or murder, are treated and represented harshly, particularly in the press (Grabe et al, 2006). Grabe et al (2006) explored the journalistic representations of female offenders and tested the chivalry hypothesis within a news media context. They argued that women only received lenient press coverage if their crime did not violate gender stereotypes and rather women who committed violent crimes or crimes against children were particularly harshly represented. They proposed a ‘patriarchal hypothesis’, which emphasises that it is the type of crime and how it is linked to gender expectations that shapes news coverage, rather than the sex of the offender (Grabe et al, 2006, cited in Jones and Wardle, 2008). This concept is

particularly relevant to this thesis, as the news coverage of the four co-accused women centred upon the extent to which they were perceived to have violated their gender role expectations, irrespective of the crime committed, which consequently led them to receive harsher journalistic treatment than their male counterparts.

Furthermore, the previously discussed discourses of 'mad' and 'bad' are often utilised in media and popular representations of female deviancy, as well as in criminological explanations (Ballinger, 2000; Naylor, 2001; Lloyd, 1995). As previously highlighted, whilst the 'mad' discourse limits explanations of female offending to irrationality and psychological impairment, the 'bad' discourse constructs female offenders to be inherently evil and an antithesis to 'normal' women (Heidensohn, 1996; Ballinger, 2000). Bad women in particular are demonised (Naylor, 2001; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002), masculinised (Grabe et al, 2006; Barnett, 2006) and chastised for their sexual deviance (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002) in the media. This was particularly relevant to the Jane Turner (chapter 5) and Sarah Johnson (chapter 6) case studies analysed in this thesis, as both women were defined, at differing levels, as bad women, which was partly exemplified by their suggested deviant sexuality. As highlighted by Naylor (2001), women's capacity to engage in crime, particularly violent crime, is often linked to their supposed irrationality, emotional tendencies, madness and/or 'badness' in the news media. Furthermore, in an analysis of the Israeli press coverage of mothers who kill their children, Cavaglion (2008) suggests that whilst some mothers were framed as 'mad' and were predominantly constructed as victims of their own irrationality, other mothers, particularly those who were economically marginalised and uneducated, were framed as 'deviant mothers' and any potential mental health issues were not considered, thus highlighting the relevance of this binary in non-

western cultures. As argued by Jewkes (2011), news media professionals often appeal to the public's prior knowledge to report on female offending, therefore rather than attempting to fully understand the personal circumstances of the women involved, they are routinely represented within over-simplistic and gendered myths and discourses.

Jewkes (2011) argues that there are a number of stock narratives which journalists use to build an image of the female offender and those which are most applicable to this thesis shall be discussed here. These narratives and frames form part of the dominant stereotypes and myths surrounding female deviancy and criminality. According to Jewkes (2011), female offenders are often constructed within gendered narratives of physical attractiveness. The media engage in a very particular construction of gender whereby certain aspects of femininity are valued over others, such as youth, slenderness and other such physical characteristics which serve the 'male gaze' (Wykes and Gunter, 2004). This is the case in advertising, women's magazines and tabloid newspapers, but it also extends to news discourses surrounding female criminality (Jewkes, 2011). According to Jewkes (2011), women cannot win within this narrative. If female offenders are conventionally attractive, they are described as femme fatales, who are able to manipulate with their looks yet if they are conventionally unattractive, they are often described as cold, detached and masculine (Jewkes, 2011).

A further key trope identified within Jewkes' (2011) typology is the 'bad mother'. The 'bad mother' motif is so pervasive, it often applies to all female offenders, whether actual mothers or non-mothers and irrespective of whether their crimes involve children (Jewkes, 2011). Barnett (2006) argues that journalists rely on gendered ideals surrounding 'good motherhood' to frame stories about women who



kill their children in particular. However, the analysis of the four women in the current thesis, particularly Alice Jones and Janet Young, highlights that the 'bad mother' motif is applicable to a range of criminal offences, extending beyond cases of child murder or those involving child victims more broadly. Furthermore, considering the previous narratives of 'mad' and 'bad', Naffine (1987) argues that women portrayed as 'mad', yet morally pure, are often viewed as 'good mothers' and their crimes are considered to be uncontrollable, irrational acts, which are usually the result of mental illness. However, in contrast, women characterised as 'bad' are portrayed as cold, evil mothers, who have often been neglectful of their children and domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, as previously suggested, even if female offenders do not have children of their own, yet commit a crime involving children, they are deemed guilty of not only breaking the law, but also of breaking every "culturally sanctioned code of femininity and womanhood" (Jewkes, 2004: 121).

Jewkes (2011) argues that one of the key ways in which women who commit serious crimes are represented in the media is as 'mythical monsters', such as witches, Satanists, vampires and as 'fallen women'. According to Jewkes (2011), two favoured figures from Greek Mythology which are used to describe criminal women are Medea and Medusa. Medea was an enchantress who, when spurned by her lover, murdered her children, whilst Medusa was a snake haired monster who turned her victims to stone with a stare (Jewkes, 2011). Tabloid newspapers have made use of both symbolic figures in the coverage of Myra Hindley, particularly via the usage of imagery (Birch, 1993; Boyle, 2005). Birch (1993) argues that due to the medias distinct and purposeful usage of imagery during the reporting of Myra Hindley, particularly the use of the now infamous mugshot, the image of her dyed

blonde hair and impassive stare, connotes “modern affectless evil in a way that the contemporary photograph of Brady never has” (French, 1996: 38). By comparing female criminals to mythical monsters in this way, the media ignite society’s darkest fears about women, which subsequently become interconnected with folk tales about supernatural monsters, thus transforming such women into almost fictional caricatures of themselves (Jewkes, 2011).

The final narrative from Jewkes’ (2011) typology of the media portrayal of female criminality which is applicable to the current thesis is the ‘evil manipulator’. This description, which echoes Pollack’s (1950) theory mentioned in an earlier chapter, suggests that women are inherently deceitful. In her analysis of the media coverage of the triple homicide at Orderud Farm, Skilbrei (2012) suggests that the two sisters involved, Kristen and Veronica, were framed as being ‘femme fatales’ who manipulated their male partners/ accomplices to become involved in the murders. Skilbrei (2012) demonstrates that whilst the femme fatale narrative can be utilised in such instances to portray the women as being powerful and in control of their lives, it simultaneously categorises them as manipulators who are able to use their femininity to pursue deviancy. Furthermore, Jewkes (2011) suggests that this narrative is particularly applicable to women who commit criminal acts alongside their male lover/ partner. Jewkes (2011: 128) argues that “women who form murderous alliances with men are the most problematic for the institutions that seek to understand them and communicate their actions to the rest of society”. Morrissey (2003) suggests that such female offenders represent an enigma to mainstream academics, mainly because it is often difficult to ascertain their role and culpability. This notion of the portrayal of female/male co-offenders in the news media shall be explored further in the next section of this chapter.

## **The representation of female/male co-offending**

The representation of women who commit crime with their male partner and lover has received relatively little scholarly attention (Grabe et al, 2006). As highlighted by Morrissey (2003) the construction of such criminal partnerships are difficult for the media to comprehend, as the women involved do not always readily fit within the pre-established narratives. Jewkes (2011: 128) suggests that whilst the men within the partnership are often presented as evil, the women are portrayed as being instrumental in unleashing the violence and depravity that the man has thus far contained. The archetypal female-male partnership in recent crime history could be argued to be Myra Hindley and her partner, Ian Brady, who were convicted of a number of child murders between 1963 and 1965. Despite Brady being the ‘mastermind’ in the offending, Hindley’s culpability is regarded with greater societal anxiety and distain (Jewkes, 2011; Jones and Wardle, 2008). Whilst some critics argue that women like Hindley seek out equally depraved men because they have similar desires (Birch, 1993; Morrissey, 2003), others argue that such women fall under the influence of controlling men and would not have become involved in such offences were it not for his influence (Richie, 1996; Wykes, 1998; Welle & Falkin, 2002). Despite such conclusions being made within academia, within the context of the news media, women are often constructed as being either equal accomplices (Jones and Wardle, 2008) or more culpable than their male accomplice (Kirsta, 1994) within instances of female- male co-offending.

In addition, Jones and Wardle (2008) suggest that the visual construction of Maxine Carr in the news media framed her in such a way that she was portrayed as

being an equal accomplice to her male partner and co-offender, Ian Huntley, despite her unequal involvement. Jones and Wardle (2008: 64) cite the following example from *The Daily Mail* (2003: 6-7), which detailed the following quote, said by Huntley, in the headline “I picked Jessica up, took her downstairs and went back for Holly. I put the bodies in my car and drove.” However, to the immediate right of the headline is a large colour image of Carr, therefore the visual construction of this article implies that it was in fact Carr, not Huntley, who played the larger role in the criminal offences (Jones and Wardle, 2008). This study demonstrates that irrespective of the role that Carr actually played in the murder of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, her involvement in the crime was enough to demonise her and construct her as being an equal accomplice to her partner, Ian Huntley, therefore the extent of her offending was exaggerated to reinforce pre-existing notions of ‘feminine evil’ (Jones and Wardle, 2008).

Furthermore, in their analysis of the news medias usage of the ‘chivalry hypothesis’, Grabe et al (2006) found that when women committed crimes which violated society’s expected gender norms, they received harsher journalistic treatment than men who committed similar crimes. Furthermore, they discussed what they coined the ‘Bonnie and Clyde effect’, which suggests that stories about men and women collaborating in crime are often associated with harsher journalistic treatment than stories about men and women acting without each other’s support (Grabe et al, 2006). They suggest that a potential reason as to why gender collaboration in crime received more sensational coverage is because that it deviates from behavioural expectations of both genders, “doubling the potential for journalistic titillation” (Grabe et al, 2006: 159). Whilst the construction of female-male co-offending within the news media has received relatively little scholarly

attention, research conducted so far highlights that due to the medias difficulties in trying to explain and comprehend the phenomena, journalists often use over simplistic narratives to explain such instances of such offending, thus leading to its misrepresentation and failure to understand the unique features of this type of criminality (Grabe et al, 2006; Jones and Wardle, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

As highlighted throughout this chapter, women are represented in stereotypical ways, often using gendered motifs, in the media (Ross, 2007; Carter and Steiner, 2004). Within crime news, despite women frequently being framed as victims, whether they are constituted as an ‘ideal’ or ‘true’ victim (Christie, 1986) is mostly dependent on the extent to which they adhere to the traditional expectancies of womanhood and femininity (Wykes, 2001; Berns, 2009). Furthermore, the news media framing of female offenders is largely confined to restrictive and essentialist narratives, such as the ‘mad’ and ‘bad’ offender (Lloyd, 1995; Jewkes, 2011), which are rooted within much more complex gendered discourses and myths. Depending on the nature of their crime, female offenders can occasionally be represented somewhat sympathetically if their acts of violence or criminality can be explained by hormones, irrationality and/or ‘madness’. However, for typically non-female crimes, such as crimes against children or violent acts, a range of journalistic techniques exist which emphasise the extent to which the women have deviated from ‘normal’ femininity.

Furthermore, this chapter has discussed the representation of female-male co-offenders and has highlighted the specific narratives which are often used to represent them, such as ‘equal accomplices’ (Jones and Wardle, 2008) or in some cases, the woman is often portrayed as being more dangerous than the male co-offender (Kirsta, 1994). However, research needs to explore this notion further in order to establish the distinct and specific ways that the news media frames and constructs female-male co-offenders. The representation of the women within such partnerships is particularly interesting to consider, as initial research suggests that they often receive much harsher journalistic coverage than their male counterpart, irrespective of their level of involvement in the criminality (Grabe et al, 2006; Jones and Wardle, 2008), thus further reinforcing the gendered nature of the news media coverage of female offending.

The next chapter discusses the epistemology, methodology and methods used for this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EPISTEMOLOGY, METHDOLOGY AND METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This thesis is concerned with exploring the ways in which British newspapers report on women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplices) of committing a range of crimes and utilizes the case and court file material of the same cases as a comparative tool. The chapter begins by highlighting the aims and objectives of the study before discussing the epistemological and methodological standpoint(s) and the methods used in the research. The chapter also describes how the data for the empirical aspects of the study were selected, interpreted and analysed. Finally, the chapter discusses issues surrounding researcher positionality and personal research reflections.

#### **Aims and Objectives**

##### Aim

To explore the ways in which women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplices) of committing a range of crimes are framed by British newspapers and compare such reportage with the record made in the legal proceedings of the same cases.

## Objectives

- To identify similarities and dissonances in the newspaper reporting and portrayal of women who are co-accused of criminal acts with a male partner (or accomplice/s), compared with the way in which events and testimonies are recorded in the relevant case and court proceedings (case and court files).
- To investigate the dominant frames and language used to describe women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplice/s) in both newspaper reports and court and case file documents, using a case study approach comprising four exemplary cases.
- To analyse the representation of the personal relationship between co-accused women and their male partner (or accomplice/s) in newspaper discourse and legal argument.
- To explore how the notion of ‘coercion into crime’ and the defence of marital coercion are constructed in newspaper reports of women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplice/s) and in legal argument during trial.
- To explore how women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplice/s) discuss their own involvement in criminal acts during police interviews and trial testimonies and to analyse how their perspectives are reinterpreted in legal argument and news reports.



## **Epistemological Standpoint**

This thesis defines epistemology as a “theory of knowledge” which “answers questions about who can be a knower”, “what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimised as knowledge” and “what kinds of things can be known” (Harding, 1987: 3). Significantly, an epistemological framework specifies not only what ‘knowledge’ is about, but who are the ‘knowers’ and by what means someone becomes one (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Letherby, 2003).

The approach adopted in this thesis is influenced by various aspects of a feminist epistemology. Many feminist scholars argue that the problem of sociology and science is that they both start from the standpoint of the dominant group (white, heterosexual men) which leads to knowledge being epistemically limited with respect to the standpoint of marginalised groups (such as women) (Oakley, 1981; Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Smith, 1987; Harding, 1991). Smith (1987:4) argues that “where there is society, there is gender and the gender division of labour is pervasive”. Smith (1987) suggests that gender is socially constructed and whilst men represent the desired masculine and neutral principles within science, women are confined to the subjective. This subsequently leads to women being excluded from power in relation to ruling and the creation of knowledge within traditional science and sociology (Smith, 1987). Harding (1987) highlights that because sociology, criminology, science and various other academic subjects, have historically focused on masculine concerns, there has been a persistent blindness to other areas of social reality and social structures in which women participate. Furthermore, various feminists argue that language is ‘man made’ and through language, men have

historically been able to dominate knowledge production, which has subsequently led to women's voices being silenced (Spender, 1980).

Smith (1987:21) argues that the exclusion of women from knowledge production is not just an example of sexism, but an illustration of how women have been excluded from the making of culture and what has become to be known as universal. Feminist epistemologies were therefore developed in response to such issues and criticisms of traditional, male-defined epistemologies (Harding, 1987). With this in mind, this research is developed from the perspective of women and argues that a "feminist epistemology is about the ways gender influence(s) what we take to be knowledge" (Anderson, 1995; 50).

When considering feminist epistemology more specifically, several competing standpoints have been developed in an attempt to remedy women's marginalisation as a voice of authority, the main perspectives being feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism (Harding, 1991; 1987). According to Harding (1991), feminist empiricism can be seen as the least threatening of the feminist epistemologies to the male academy, as it leaves intact much of science and philosophy's traditional understanding of the principles of adequate inquiry. This perspective seeks to use 'traditional' methods and approaches more appropriately, challenging the ways in which scientific methods are used rather than challenging the methods themselves (Letherby, 2003). However, Smith (1987) argues that women cannot simply be 'added in' to the existing, traditional science and sociology, as feminist beliefs cannot be added into those that they claim to challenge. Additionally, it has been suggested that feminist empiricism is unable to completely eliminate certain social biases, for example, androcentrism (Harding, 1991).

Alternatively, feminist standpoint epistemologists suggest a specifically feminist theory of knowledge and argue that research should start from the experiences of women, from their own point of view (Harding, 1987; Smith, 1987; Hartstock, 1983). Standpoint feminism draws on Marxist ideas about the role of the proletariat and argues that women are the oppressed class and as such, have the ability to not only understand their own experiences of oppression but also have a richer understanding of their oppressors and therefore the world in general (Millen, 1997; Hartstock, 1983). To achieve a feminist standpoint, standpoint feminists insist on starting from the objective location of women's lives and lived realities, which they argue produces a greater diversity of resources and a less biased account of social relations (Harding, 1991; 1993). Furthermore, standpoint feminists argue that reflexivity within research should be understood as being a scientific resource and the use of reflexivity leads to 'strong objectivity' (Harding, 1993). However, this epistemological standpoint has been criticised as it implies that the perspective of one group is more real, more accurate and better than others, thus suggesting that male supremacy is to some extent being replaced by female supremacy (Pinnick, 2005). Furthermore, it has been argued that women do not identify on the basis of gender alone and that all women's experiences are not the same (Hill Collins, 2000).

The final feminist epistemological perspective which shall be discussed in this chapter is feminist postmodernism. This perspective argues that there is no specific 'standpoint' and that "there are no overarching truths, no answers, only partial knowledges which are constructed in the specifics of time and place" (Millen, 1997: 7.6). Feminist postmodernists argue that there are a variety of contradictory and conflicting standpoints, none of which should be privileged (Millen, 1997 cited in Letherby, 2003: 52). This perspective argues that feminists should present

alternative accounts, rather than search for a specific truth or discovery (Millen, 1997). However, it has been argued that from a feminist postmodernist perspective, it cannot be claimed that it is wrong to oppress women because it is not known what is meant by 'women' nor whose criteria we are using to argue for oppression (Harstock, 1983; Abbott and Wallace, 1997). It has also been questioned how the absolute relativism of feminist postmodernism can resist the subordination of women (Harstock, 1990).

However, as questioned by Harding (1991: 136) why should we have to choose between feminist epistemologies? Harding (1991: 136) highlights that feminist epistemologists are locked in a dialogue which reflects a struggle between mainstream theories of human nature and feminist politics, but to choose is a risky decision, as we are shaped by what we reject as well as accept. With this in mind, the current research is influenced by various aspects of the epistemological positions previously discussed, particularly standpoint feminism and postmodern feminism. The epistemological perspective contends that whilst a feminist epistemology cannot claim epistemic privilege and is thus unable to reveal a 'truth', as argued by feminist postmodernists, feminist researchers should aim to illustrate women's experiences (Letherby, 2003). Collectively, this research aims to gain a more nuanced understanding of the mediated representations of the co-accused women by exploring the ways in which they are constructed and framed in various contexts.

Additionally, the feminist epistemological standpoint of this thesis argues against the strong objectivity advocated by standpoint epistemology and the complete relativism of feminist postmodernism and argues that the multiplicity of viewpoints and positions among women should be celebrated, whilst still acknowledging the importance of collectively between women (Letherby, 2003). Maynard (1994)

argues that whilst universal generalisations between women are not possible, it is possible to highlight similarities as well as differences in women's experiences. With this in mind, this research is therefore developed from the standpoint that it is important to understand and establish the common sources of oppression that women experience as a collective group as well as appreciate the differences, as there are sources of marginalisation which are common to all women's lives (Smith, 1974; 1983).

## **Methodology**

Methodology "is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed" (Harding, 1987: 3). Letherby (2003: 5) suggests that "thinking methodologically is theorising about how we can find things out; it is the relationship between the process and the product of research". Having been influenced by the feminist epistemology discussed previously, this research adopts a feminist methodology, which involves advocating a woman-centred approach to research (Letherby, 2003). A feminist methodology involves adopting a methodological position which does not 'add' women to research, but rather attempts to gain a more nuanced understanding of their experiences. As highlighted by Cook and Fonow (1990: 80) "feminist research is thus, not research about women but research for women to be used in transforming their sexist society". With this in mind, the ways in which the co-accused women's experiences and voices have been constructed and interpreted by journalists and legal professionals will be explored, which could reveal insights

into the assumptions that such framing encourages us to make about female offenders.

Furthermore, in line with the requirements of a feminist methodology (Harding, 1987; Letherby, 2003), this research also challenges the norms of traditional objectivity, which assumes that knowledge can be collected in an unbiased and uncontaminated way. The idealisation of objectivity in scientific research has meant that the influence of personal, subjective based knowledge has been historically ignored (Letherby, 2003). When adopting a feminist methodological perspective, critical reflexivity is understood as being an integral aspect of the research process and this study recognises the significance of researcher subjectivity and positionality (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Oakley, 1992; England, 1994; Mosselson, 2010; Letherby, 2003). As highlighted by Harding (1987: 9), the researcher is not an “invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but is a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests”. Harding (1987: 9) argues that it is only by being reflexive of ones position that researchers can hope to produce “understandings and explanations which are free (or at least more free) of distortion from the unexamined beliefs and behaviours of the social scientists themselves”. Nevertheless, as argued by Gelsthorpe (1992: 214), “a rejection of the notion of ‘objectivity’ and a focus on experience in method does not mean a rejection of the need to be critical, rigorous and accurate”. However, as recommended by Harding (1987), this research argues that by introducing the ‘subjective’ element into research analysis, research objectivity is increased as any inevitable research bias is made more visible. With this in mind, this research aims to provide a balance between engaging in rigorous research, whilst acknowledging the inevitable influence of researcher subjectivity. To achieve this balance, a number of triangulation techniques are used to minimise

researcher bias, which shall be discussed later in the chapter and it is also understood that researcher reflections and subjectivity are useful research tools and integral aspects of the research process. An overview of the researcher's personal reflections will be provided later in the chapter. This highlights the ways in which the researcher's subjectivity endeavored to be transparent throughout the research process.

### Case Study Approach

This study uses a case study method, using four cases of women who have been co-accused with their male partner (accomplice/s) of committing a range of crimes. Using a case study approach allows the researcher to fully engage with the cultural contexts and lived realities of those researched (Ferrell et al, 2004). Following the example of Yin (2009), this research uses multiple sources of data and adopts an embedded multiple case design to improve data triangulation and internal validity. It has been argued that using a multiple case design is a more robust and rigorous method in comparison to adopting a single case study design (Herriott and Firestone, 1983). Yin (2009) argued that analytic conclusions that have arisen from two or more cases are more powerful than those coming from a single case. The case study analytic technique used within this research was cross case synthesis. This technique initially treats each case as an individual case study and subsequently, the overlapping themes across each of the cases are explored and analysed (Yin, 2009).

Whilst using a case study approach has been criticised due to its perceived lack of rigor and generalizability, Yin (2009) argues that the aim of case study research is to expand and generalise theories, not to enumerate frequencies. Furthermore,

Flyvbjerg (2006: 226) argues that “formal generalization, whether on the basis of large samples or single cases, is considerably overrated as the main source of scientific progress” and the emphasis should instead be on the quality of the research. Thomas (2010) also suggests that such weaknesses of the case study method are not disguised, yet other design frames in social science which seek ways of calibrating and enabling generalization suggest the applicability of their study to other settings, when in fact this often does not reflect reality. Furthermore, Yin (2009) argues that to suggest that findings from case study research are not transferable to other cases or contexts is not an accurate reflection of reality. With this in mind, whilst this thesis does not attempt to be generalizable in the scientific sense, it is argued that the wide-range of criminal offences committed in the cases analysed, the breadth of data and in-depth analysis enhances the replicability of the findings to other cases.

Additionally, case study methods are often criticized for containing bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researchers preconceived notions. However, Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests that the question of subjectivism and bias applies to all methods, not just the case study. Furthermore, Beveridge (1951) concludes that there are more discoveries stemming from the intense observation made possible by case studies than from statistics applied to large groups, which highlights the potential value of this method. Overall, a case study design is a suitable approach for the aims and objectives of this research, as comparisons can be drawn between the various data sets, i.e. the case and court file data and newspaper articles, as well as between case studies.

The case studies used in this research were selected using two primary criteria. Firstly, each of the cases are high profile examples of co-accused women which



have occurred within the last ten years, therefore they received extensive media attention, which generated a viable volume of news coverage to analyse. Secondly, each of the co-accused women utilised the notion of ‘coercion’ (by their male partner/ accomplice/s) as part of their defence. This ‘blame’ or ‘coercion’ took various forms for each of the women, for example, being ‘obsessed’ and/ or in love with their partner, being the victim of emotional, psychological and physical abuse and in two of the cases, the women used the defence of marital coercion during their trials (case studies Alice Jones and Janet Young). Furthermore, a ten year time span was chosen in order to explore and establish the similarities and differences in the framing of co-accused women over a prolonged time period. The four case studies were selected due to the large amount of available data, the crimes committed ranging in seriousness and due to the availability of the case file material. Additional contemporary cases were attempted to be included, such as the Mick and Mairead Philpot case (both of whom were charged with the murder of their five children in a house fire, which was intentionally started as part of an insurance scam), but the case was active in court at the time in which the Privileged Access Agreement was obtained, therefore access to this case file material was denied.

## **Research Methods**

Methods are “research in action” (Carter & Little, 2007: 1318) and “techniques for gathering evidence” (Harding, 1987: 2). The methods used in this research are a combination of newspaper and case and court file material analysis. As discussed in the previous chapter, it has been argued that although the manner in which the

public receives information is not passive and uncritical, (Machado & Santos, 2009) a great deal of knowledge concerning crime and criminal justice issues is influenced by the media (Fox et al, 2007) and the public perception of order and disorder is closely related with its media representations (Barak, 1994). Combining the news media analysis with an analysis of the case and court file material allowed an in-depth exploration of the similarities and differences between the ways in which the co-accused women were framed in different contexts, which thus produced a more nuanced understanding of journalistic practice. As highlighted by Surette (1998), the media and legal system should not be viewed as being autonomous entities and instead, the complex interactions and relationship between them should be closely examined. With all of this in mind, the complex relationship between the news media and the legal system is explored in this research, with a view to considering what impact this has on the framing and representation of co-accused women.

Oakley (1998: 724) argues that the ‘gendered paradigm divide’, where solely qualitative work is associated with feminist values and quantitative work is linked with masculine/positivist approaches, should be avoided and suggests that the critical question remains the appropriateness of the method to the research question. Therefore this research is developed from the standpoint that “it is not a particular method or methods which characterise a researcher or project as feminist, but the way in which the method(s) are used” (Letherby, 2003: 81; Kelly et al, 1994).

With this in mind, the approach adopted in this research uses a mixed methods model, although the case and court file data are analysed using solely qualitative methods. A mixed methods approach was chosen for analysing the newspaper articles since a combination of “quantitative and qualitative methods can fulfil different yet complementary purposes within mixed-method designs” (Kelle, 2006:

309). Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for the newspaper articles has a number of advantages. Firstly, this approach acknowledges the impossibility of being fully objective (Pearce, 2012), therefore whilst this research aims to be rigorous, the influence of researcher subjectivity is fully acknowledged. Secondly, a mixed methods approach recognises that all forms of data can be 'transferable' or lead to the development of arguments for how discoveries "translate to other social moments and settings" (Pearce, 2012: 833; Morgan, 2007). As highlighted by Pearce (2012: 833) "in reality, it is unlikely that a study in one specific setting has no applicability beyond that setting, nor can one study be generalised to every possible historical or cultural setting". By including a quantitative analysis component of the newspaper articles, broad generalisations can be made about the data, whilst continuing to acknowledge the importance of understanding the more nuanced, qualitative framing of the individually gendered subjects of analysis. Finally, adopting a mixed methods approach for the newspaper articles improves triangulation, particularly when considered in conjunction with the significant volume of articles available for analysis within this study. Triangulation is based on the notion that multiple and mixed methods can be combined to test the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978). The aim of triangulation is to counterbalance the weaknesses inherent in one approach with the strengths of another. Furthermore, Smith (1975) argues that using multiple and mixed methods within research not only strengthens triangulation, but also increases the 'methodological imagination' of the project, thus encouraging the researcher to improve data quality and to consider using innovative and alternative research methods.

Despite using a mixed methods approach to interpret and analyse the news articles, the court and case file material and the overall approach of the study will be

principally qualitative. Qualitative analysis recognises the richness of data rather than volume and predominantly focusses on the socially constructed nature of reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Hornig Priest (2010) argues that whilst strict sampling in qualitative research is not necessary, the sample ought to be representative not in a statistical sense, but rather in a way that reflects important cultural values and symbolic forms relevant to the study. However, whilst interpretative qualitative research has been criticised for reading too much into texts (Berger, 2000), this study recognises that one's interpretation of a text is one of many, hence why aspects of this research will adopt a mixed and multi-method approach to corroborate findings (Jensen, 2002), as previously discussed.

### **Sources of data and data collection**

Newspapers were selected as the source of media data for this research for a number of reasons. Newspapers, unlike, for example, radio or TV, have archives that are easily accessible via both libraries and online facsimile archives. Furthermore, news is a cultural product that reflects the dominant cultural assumptions about who and what is important (Cole and Harcup, 2010) and as text is at the core of print news media, a close textual analysis is a useful way of understanding implicit and explicit meaning (Chibnall, 1977). Despite the internet now being a central site of news reporting, newspapers are still important sources of information for the public and they remain to be regarded as significant sources for opinion formation (O'Neill and O'Connor, 2008; Dimitrova & Stromback, 2009). Furthermore, despite the growth of online versions of newspapers in recent years, most of the headlines and

main stories available in digital versions of newspapers are the same, or similar, to printed versions.

A selection of both daily and Sunday publications were analysed, with a combination of broadsheet and tabloid newspaper titles. Broadsheet newspapers present themselves as providing serious news and usually have longer articles, whereas tabloids typically focus on entertainment value and the ‘human interest factor’ and often have shorter articles for quick reading (Franklin, 2008; Cole and Harcup, 2010). The following newspapers were selected for analysis, as they are among the highest circulation newspapers in the UK and due to their differences in ideological leanings: *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Independent on Sunday*, *Daily Star*, *The Express*, *Sunday Express*, *The Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror*, *News of the World* (for cases prior to 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012), *The People*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, *Sunday Times*.

Initially, the newspaper articles were collected using the online archive, Lexis Nexis, however, because this database only provided a textual version of news articles, a selection of hard copy articles, available in the British Library, were also analysed. Viewing hard copy versions allowed for a more in-depth analysis, as they contained both the visual images accompanying the article and copies of other stories which were ran on the same day, thus providing a context for the page placement and size of the story. The articles which were selected to be analysed in hard copy form were those which were published on important days of the case, since they generated a significant amount of coverage. Many of the significant days were the same for each case, for example, articles which were published when the co-defendants were initially charged and when they were sentenced.

Each of the co-accused women case studies occurred between 2003 and 2013 and all news articles related to each of the four case studies were analysed from when the co-defendants were accused and arrested, through to two weeks following their sentences and/or appeals (where applicable). This time frame was chosen, as it allowed useful comparisons to be made between the court and case file documents and the newspaper articles. Furthermore, the time period of analysis was extended to two weeks following the sentencing for the news articles, so that any stories which were published after the verdict had been announced could also be analysed.

As well as using newspaper data, this research also analyses the portrayal of co-accused women within case and court file documents. This material was explicitly sought so as to provide a way of exploring journalists decisions about what to report. A vast range of documents were included within each of the case files, including police interview transcripts, prosecution and defence arguments, sections of the trial transcripts and judges opening and closing statements. Exploring legal discourse is advantageous as it could provide insights into how legal and sentencing decisions are made and by whom during criminal case proceedings. Furthermore, in-depth analysis of legal discourse can reveal interesting observations about *why* decisions could have been made, as well as exploring how offenders are framed during case proceedings. Feminist theorists have noted that the law holds a symbolic superiority in the production of knowledge and truth (Inglis, 2003), owing to its claim to be objective, value free and apolitical (Ballinger, 2011: 109). It has been argued that the law is constructed according to male values, thus taken for granted legal terms, such as the ‘reasonable man of the law’, are socially constructed according to the characteristics of masculinity (Smart, 1989; Ballinger, 2012). Exploring the legal framing of the co-accused women through a ‘feminist lens’ (Ballinger, 2000; 2012),

encourages the researcher to be critical about the predominantly male-defined legal process, thus allowing a more nuanced understanding of the women's perspectives and the ways in which they were marginalized or ignored within a legal context.

Following a rigorous application process, a Privileged Access Agreement was granted by Her Majesties Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), which provided the researcher with a unique opportunity to access the case and court file material of the trials of the four co-accused case studies.<sup>2</sup> The case file documents were a source of material which very few people, other than those who were in attendance during the trials, would ever have access to. Many of the documents within the case file material were not dated or numbered, however as much detail as possible and appropriate titles are provided throughout the data analysis chapters. The range of documents available improved both data triangulation and also provided the opportunity to make novel comparisons between data sources.

However, it is significant to note that the documents within the case file material were stored at the conclusion of the trials by the court clerks, rather than being selected by the researcher for the purpose of this study. In spite of this, court clerks are encouraged to store all material relating to the trial and fortunately, each of the case files contained a vast range of documents, as previously discussed. Another relevant observation of the case file material is that each of the available trial transcripts were 'snapshots' that were transcribed for a specific purpose external to this research, for example, due to the perceived significance to the case. However, whilst it is useful to acknowledge the potential context in which these transcripts

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<sup>2</sup> Access was eventually granted following various negotiations with gatekeepers. This was mostly related to the level of achievable anonymity of individuals involved in each of the cases, along with the researcher's reassurance that the cases would be handled sensitively and considerately. Despite the initial uncertainty and to some extent hostility of gatekeepers, once access had been granted the support offered was invaluable.

were obtained and used during the case, the insights that they provided, particularly in terms of how the co-accused women were framed during their trials and how they discussed their lived realities during their testimonies, were invaluable to the study.

The process of accessing (and subsequently analysing) data from the case and court files involved visiting each of the courts where the files were held (i.e. where the trials originally took place) for a number of days at a time and taking notes. Due to the fact that none of the documents could be photocopied or removed from the room where the files were held, I had to make numerous judgments about which data to analyse in order to make the task more manageable. Such decisions were based upon which documents were most applicable to the aims and objectives. For example, the research was not attempting to answer questions about the accuracy of the sentencing decisions or to question the efficacy of the ways in which the trials were carried out, therefore the documents which were selected for analysis were those which directly concerned or related to the co-accused women.

## **Ethical Considerations**

This study gained ethical approval from the University of Liverpool Committee on Research Ethics. Whilst this research does not involve human participants, ethical approval was required for the purpose of the Privileged Access Agreement granted by HMCTS. The main ethical issue which was considered during the research process was to ensure that the sensitive information which was included in the case file material was dealt with appropriately. Furthermore, the Privileged Access



Agreement required that all individuals involved in the case, both directly and professionally (i.e. legal representatives) would need to be anonymized using pseudonyms, but all information surrounding the case, for example, details of the nature of the offences, were able to be included. It was recognized that full anonymity would be difficult to achieve, due to the high-profile nature of each of the cases and the high volume of press coverage which they each received. However, whilst conclusions may be drawn as to who the cases involve, pseudonyms have been provided for each of the cases.

### **Analytical Techniques**

As previously discussed, an approach combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, with an emphasis on the former, was adopted for the analysis of the newspaper articles. The quantitative analytical method used in this study is a form of content analysis. Kerlinger (2000) defines content analysis as a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic and objective manner for the purpose of measuring variables. Within the context of this research, basic counting of frequencies was conducted to generate a general sense of the data in terms of tone, orientation and story line emphasis. Appendix A,B,C and D show the various categories that were analysed, for example, sex of the journalist, size of the article and the overall tone of the articles analysed (i.e. positive, negative or neutral). The use of frequencies was also used in the key word analysis, which notes the number of times certain words and phrases, denoting dominant news frames, were used. It is significant to note that content analysis has been criticised for being overly

descriptive and for failing to make inferences about the significance of findings in the context of what they reveal about the production of ideologies (Gunter, 2000). However, the emphasis of this study was not on the volumes of data gathered and using content analysis allowed inferences to be drawn about how co-accused women are constructed within news reports, which served to strengthen the qualitative analysis.

A qualitative textual analysis based loosely on the form of framing analysis developed by Entman (1993) was used to complement the quantitative aspects of this study. Whilst content analysis allows the researcher to examine manifest meaning, qualitative methods of analysis are useful for revealing the latent meanings within a text. Entman (1993: 52) suggests that to frame is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993: 52). Furthermore, Tankard et al (2002) describes a news frame as the central organising feature for news content that supplies a context through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration. Entman (1993: 52) suggests that frames in the news can be identified by the “presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments”. Furthermore, Gamson (1992) suggests that framing should be viewed as a ‘signature matrix’ that includes various condensing signals (for example, catchphrases, taglines and metaphors) and reasoning devices (for example, causes and consequences and moral claims).

De Vrese (2005) argues that news frames should be understood as being either inductive or deductive. Inductive frames emerge from the text through the researchers own interpretation, whereas deductive frames are defined and operationalized prior to the investigation (De Vrese, 2005). To some extent, this research uses a combination of the two, as whilst deductive frames were occasionally used as a useful starting point, for e.g. The ‘mad’ or ‘bad’ categorisation of criminal women (Lloyd, 1995), these were not used as rigid guides throughout the research process and instead the researcher predominantly explored frames which emerged as the result of in-depth, qualitative analysis.

In line with the epistemological and methodological standpoint of this research, a feminist approach is adopted when conducting framing analysis, which serves to highlight that journalists’ often deploy specific news frames in their reporting which reinforce gender-related myths (Berns, 2009; Barnett, 2006). Feminist media researchers argue that such frames impact social policy decisions and reinforce common-sense assumptions that privilege men in the social hierarchy (Tuchman, 1978; Barnett, 2006; Vavrus, 2007). Many feminist media researchers argue that engaging in qualitative framing analysis has various benefits, including the interrogation of the researchers standpoint and the opportunity to explore latent content, both of which are “more amenable to the integration of feminist theory because of feminists’ acceptance that taken-for-granted understandings of reality reinforce patriarchy” (Hardin and Whiteside, 2010: 322; Barnett, 2006; Meyers, 1997). With this in mind, this study explores the various journalistic framing techniques, which served to frame the co-accused women within specific gendered narratives.

Furthermore, this study has also developed and invented an interpretive form of framing analysis, namely ‘character framing’, which explores how certain aspects of a person’s character, whether fabricated or real, are made more salient within the news media to frame and construct individuals in a particular way and for a specific purpose. This method of analysis is particularly useful for research which involves high profile cases involving individuals and/or cases which have featured in the news media for a prolonged period of time. ‘Character framing’ is used in this research to analyse how the co-accused women are constructed according to particular identities and to explore the potential reasons and purpose for such character construction.

It is significant to note that whilst the use of images in the newspaper articles analysed is discussed in applicable instances in later chapters, image analysis was not utilized as a key analytical technique. Although the author recognizes the significance of the use of images in crime news stories (Jewkes, 2011), due to the required anonymity of all individuals involved in the cases, this method of analysis was not logistically possible or plausible. Consequently, any discussion of images in the current thesis forms part of the wider framing analysis rather than being a stand-alone analytical technique.

The case and court file material acted as a control in this research, offering a more true-to-life version of the trial and overall case for each of the co-accused women case studies. The news frames, which emerged from an analysis of the newspaper reports, are compared with the ways in which the co-accused women are constructed in the case file material, to explore the similarities and dissonances in the framing of the co-accused women and use of language in the two data sources.

However, despite the case file material offering a more accurate version of the trial in comparison to the newspaper articles, some feminist scholars argue that the law and legal institutions are defined by gendered discourses (MacKinnon, 1989; Ballinger, 2000; 2012). Ballinger (2012), for example, argues that women are limited to subject positions in court and the gendered nature of the law and the pervasive male hierarchy of knowledge has particularly negative consequences for female offenders who stand trial. With this in mind, this research attempts to understand the co-accused women's testimonies in relation to the crimes they were accused of perpetrating and their relationships with their male partners or accomplices, by analysing their trial statements and police interviews. By rendering the women's perspectives more visible, the ways in which their versions of events were communicated, re/misinterpreted or silenced by legal professionals and journalists is also explored in this research.

Following the analysis of each of the case studies individually, overlapping themes between each of the four cases are analysed using thematic analysis (Deacon et al, 2007). Thematic analysis is a useful comparative analytic tool within qualitative research and it helps the researcher to move their analysis from a broad reading of data towards discovering patterns and developing themes (Deacon et al, 2007). Within the context of this study, thematic analysis improved cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2009) and highlighted the similarities and dissonances between the legal and news media framing of each of the case studies analysed.

## **Researcher Subjectivity and Research Reflections**

As previously discussed, this research is developed from the standpoint that the researcher is an integral aspect of the research process and that analysis is unavoidably influenced by the researchers interpretation and subjectivity (England, 1994; Letherby, 2003). The final section of this chapter will provide an overview of some of my personal research reflections.

### Accessing the court and case file data

Gaining access to the court and case file material was a significant moment in the research journey, as the data source allowed novel comparisons to be made between how the cases of the co-accused women were presented in court to how they were framed in the newspaper reports. However, gaining access to this data was a very difficult and long-winded process. I requested access from various agencies and pathways, including the Crown Prosecution Service, a number of charities and the solicitors who represented each of the women, however each of these initial access requests were rejected. I was aware that gaining access to the case file material would be a challenge, but I was overwhelmed by the difficulty of the process. Each of the trials had been open to the public, which led me to question why my requests as a researcher were being denied, in spite of the fact that I would have been able to witness the trial, in action, as a member of the public. In a number of instances, my access requests were refused outright with little opportunity for negotiation or

discussion, leading me to question my authority and ability as a researcher and academic.

However, despite these initial difficulties, following an application process, I was eventually granted a Privileged Access Agreement by Her Majesties Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). Interestingly, despite there being such extensive initial difficulties, once access to the case files had been granted and I visited the courts to view the material, I found all members of staff at each location to be very helpful and forthcoming and I was provided with more information than I expected. This led me ask questions, such as, would my request have been initially treated with such hostility by other agencies and should gaining access to the material have been so difficult? Overall, it seemed that once I became one of the ‘privileged few’ who was able to view the case file material, I was treated distinctly differently to when I was viewed to be a ‘PhD student’ making an ‘impossible’ access request.

#### Attending trial: Semi-ethnographic experience

Prior to the data collection phase, I attended the trial of *Janet Young* and *Edward Crouch*, which is one of the cases that is analysed in this study and whilst I do not consider this to be a formal research method in the context of this study, I do view it as being a semi-ethnographic aspect of the research. Janet Young was on trial for knowingly taking her husband’s, Edward Crouch’s, penalty points. I was able to attend most of the original trial and I found the experience to be a useful to reflect on when engaging with the analysis. The experience informed me about the ‘performance’ of a criminal trial (Burns, 2001) since having a written version of a trial transcript reveals little about the types of interaction which occur or how legal

arguments are verbally/ visually articulated. With this in mind, attending the trial informed me about the process of being in court and provided a useful context for the analysis.

Furthermore, the experience of attending a trial also provided a context for the complex nature of the relationships between journalists and legal representatives. During the trial, I sat in the same section of the courtroom as the journalists and I was shocked to hear the ways in which many talked about the defendants and the supposed 'rights' and journalistic privileges that they felt that they should have. Many of the journalists voiced their frustrations to the judge during the trial by handing over notes about their anger at reporting restrictions and there were a number of instances where some restrictions were varied due to such journalistic requests. Instances such as this highlight the complex interactions and relationships that exist between journalists and the judge in particular, which I had not fully understood before this experience. Attending the trial therefore allowed me to gain a more nuanced understanding of the varying levels of power and control which define such relationships and highlighted the ways in which journalists attempt to negotiate reporting restrictions.

I reflect on my experiences of being in court during the Janet Young data analysis chapter using footnotes. Overall, by providing a context for the analysis and by highlighting the often complex nature of the relationships between journalists and legal professionals, the experience of being in court improved my interpretation of the data and provided a useful insight into how trials are conducted.



### A personal research reflection

Although I discussed earlier in the chapter about how decisions were made when selecting case file documents for analysis, I felt that it was significant for the research process for me to reflect on the choices that I made when I decided to refrain from looking at specific documents for both personal and research reasons. Two of the files contained evidence documents, which showed disturbing images of the child victims involved in the cases, namely, blurred images of children being sexually assaulted in Jane Turner's files and images of the child victims burnt clothes and the spot where their bodies had been buried in those of Sarah Johnson. Folders containing these images had a warning sticker, which provided descriptions of the images. I made the decision not to look at these images for a number of reasons. Firstly, because I was concerned that looking at the photographs could potentially affect the rigour of the research. The images were undoubtedly disturbing, hence the warning sticker and I felt that viewing them would have hindered the research process rather than adding to it, as it may have led me to identify with the cases on a more emotional level. Furthermore, I was concerned that viewing the images may have affected me personally, which would have subsequently led to the consideration of additional ethical issues, such as potential personal harm to the researcher. Thirdly, I felt that viewing the images would have been somewhat voyeuristic and would have been disrespectful to the families of the victims. I felt that writing about the case for the purpose of research was distinctly different to seeing what had happened to the victims. Consequently, I concluded that viewing the images would not have contributed to the study and may have significantly affected both the rigor of the research and myself, as a researcher and human being.

In sum, this study combined content analysis with a qualitative analysis, broadly informed by a framing analytic approach. The analysis chapters will be separated into four case studies and an analytical framework/ synthesizing chapter will explore the similarities and dissonances between the representation and framing of the four women. The next chapter explores the representation of Jane Turner within both a legal and media context.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **JANE TURNER CASE STUDY ANALYSIS<sup>3</sup>**

#### **Jane Turner: The Background**

Jane was a nursery worker who was arrested and eventually convicted for distributing and taking indecent images of children in 2009. At the time of her conviction, Jane was 40 years of age and married with two children. She had no previous offending history. Jane met one of her accomplices, Simon, on a social networking site, where Simon eventually began to talk about his sexual interest in young children. Jane admits to being ‘obsessed’ with Simon and she eventually agreed to take indecent images of children at the nursery where she worked and sent the photographs to him online, in exchange for ‘love’ and attention. Also involved in the online network was Susan, who took pictures of herself abusing a child and sent them to Simon. Simon had recruited two other women to his ‘paedophile network’, Louise and Tracey, who also took indecent images of themselves abusing children and sent them to Simon. Whilst Jane and Susan knew about each other, they rarely communicated and neither knew about Louise or Tracey until after their arrest.

Simon was the first member of the network to be arrested and this was followed by Jane and Susan. The three went on trial together, but following the emergence of the images sent by Louise and Tracey a few weeks later, Simon was sentenced the

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<sup>3</sup> Note that as previously discussed in the Methodology chapter, all names had to be anonymised using pseudonyms due to the terms and conditions of the Privileged Access Agreement granted by HMCTS.

following year alongside the two women. Jane received a minimum sentence of seven years, Simon nine years, Susan five years, Louise seven years and Tracey four years. Having provided a background to the case, the remainder of the chapter will discuss the analysis.

### **Analysis: An overview**

As highlighted in the methodology and methods chapter, there were two sets of data which were analysed for each of the case studies, namely a selection of British newspapers and the case and court file material. The analysis for the newspaper articles had two stages, namely content analysis, and principally, qualitative framing analysis. In the Jane case study, a total of 491 newspaper articles were analysed using content analysis, which were obtained by using Jane's full name as the search term. The number of articles for each newspaper is shown in Table 1 (see below).

| <i>Table 1: Number of newspapers which mention 'Jane Turner' between the day she was charged, to two weeks following the sentencing.</i> |     |
|--|-----|
| Daily Mail   | 32  |
| Daily Telegraph  | 21  |
| Express newspapers   | 47  |
| Guardian   | 19  |
| Independent  | 19  |
| Independent on Sunday  | 4   |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday  | 73  |
| News of the World  | 1   |
| The People   | 17  |
| The Sun  | 132 |
| Sunday Express   | 14  |
| Sunday Telegraph   | 1   |
| Times  | 54  |

|              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>491</b> |
|--------------|------------|

The content analysis explored the size of the articles, sex of the journalist and the use of key words. Most of this material can be found in Appendix A. As recommended by Entman (1993) and Tankard (2002), this research argues that a news frame is the central organising feature for news content that supplies a context through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration. The frames identified in the current thesis were developed via the authors own analysis, rather than utilising pre-existing frames. Each of the key news frames were quantified to ensure their reliability and relevance.

The court and case file material was analysed using a qualitative textual analysis, based loosely on a combination of framing analysis (Entman, 1993; Tankard, 2002) and narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993). This analysis discusses the ways in which Jane was represented and framed within legal discourse and explores the ways in which Jane articulated her own perspective. Following on from the analysis of both sets of data as separate entities, the similarities and differences between the legal and news media framing of Jane Turner was also explored. This chapter is arranged according to the main frames and narratives that were used to describe Jane and each section will explore and compare how she was framed within both the news media and case file data.

## **The news media framing of Jane: Initial observations**

Before discussing the specific ways in which Jane was framed in both sets of data, the following section provides a wider context for how she was framed in the news media. Due to the extensive and prolonged media coverage of the Jane Turner case, it could be argued that this material served as a ‘tour guide’ (Altheide, 2003) for the public about the case, as this would have been their main source of information. This case became a topic of public interest, therefore it was considered to be valuable for the research to explore both the wider framing of the case along with the individual framing of Jane, to gain a more nuanced understanding of how the overall media portrayal may have affected public opinion.

Jane was predominantly defined within individualistic news frames in the media, however journalists used various tools and techniques which often interchanged the personalised reporting of Jane with wider criminal justice issues. This observation is concurrent with previous research on the media representation of sex offenders (Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1999; Ducat et al, 2009), which argues that there is often a disproportionate focus on criminal justice issues within such cases. In this case, this notion was particularly evident following the sentencing of Jane. During this time period, it was frequently suggested that Jane deserved a more punitive sentence, with some suggestion that she should “never be freed” from prison (*Daily Star*, 2nd October, 2009). Such punitive attitudes are unsurprising when considered within the context of the public outrage that Jane’s crimes produced. The discussion of criminal justice and sentencing issues within the both the headlines and main body

of articles suggests that this issue was viewed to be significant to the journalist, editor and reader (Belle, 1991)

In line with this observation, journalists often reported that Jane was likely to be granted a new identity when/if she was released from prison. The demonisation of Jane in the news media was very likely to have played a significant role in Jane's requirement of a new identity when released, as it was believed that she would be at major risk of being harmed. However, the news media framed this as an example of the criminal justice system being 'too soft' on sex offenders. This is shown in the following excerpts:

Nursery monster *Turner* is set to be given a new identity and home when she is freed-to protect her from public fury at her sick crimes (*The Mirror*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009)

*Turner* could get a new identity at taxpayers expense if she is ever released (*The Sun*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009).

She will enjoy a life of anonymity at the expense of the tax-payer (*Daily Mail*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009)

The way in which journalists framed this particular angle of the story made a clear distinction between the public and Jane, exemplifying the concept of 'othering' (Young, 1999). By framing the story as an issue of the taxpayer, thus an issue which would affect a large proportion of the papers readership, the narrative serves to reinforce public outrage not only due to the nature of the crime itself, but by also making it an issue which personally affected them. By setting Jane's offending against the decency and morality of the taxpayer, this exemplifies the previously

discussed 'news values'. Jewkes (2011) argues that whilst events do not have to be overly simple to make the news, they do have to be reducible to a number of parts or themes. It is argued that crime news stories are often represented in binary oppositions, such as the taxpayer vs the offender, which serves to offer an oversimplistic explanation of crime and criminal justice issues.

Journalists' use of specific tools and techniques to increase the newsworthiness of cases of paedophilia or child sexual abuse contributes to increasing the salience of the perceived risk, giving meaning to a threat that would perhaps not ordinarily affect people on a day to day basis (Ducat et al, 2009; Thomas, 2005). In this case, such techniques included the causal attributions between similar cases of female sexual offending, irrespective of their relevance or actual similarity. Following the arrest and conviction of Jane and her accomplices, many articles, particularly broadsheet editorial pieces, discussed the apparent increased risk in female child sexual offending. This is shown in the following extracts and headlines:

The evil that women do; The *Jane Turner* case is another example of society not accepting that females can commit horrific crimes (*The Times*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009).

Women may be responsible for around a fifth of sex offences against children (quote from psychologist expert, *Daily Mail*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009).

Disbelief and denial gave way to realisation that there are female paedophiles too (*The Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009).



The majority of people who sexually abuse children are male and it has been suggested that women are responsible for up to 5% of sexual offences committed against children (Bunting, 2005). It is believed that figures for female child sex abusers may be higher than those recorded, due to inadequate assessment and intervention with both female abusers and their victims (Findlater and Fyson, 2007). However, irrespective of this, the consequence of connecting Jane's case to wider criminal justice issues and other unrelated cases of female sexual offending is two-fold. Firstly, this framing implies that female child sex offending is vastly increasing, despite figures remaining to be significantly lower than male child sex offending. Secondly, by persistently mentioning Jane by name in unrelated female sexual offending articles, the news media is indirectly implying that she is somewhat responsible for this apparent 'increase' in female child sex offending. Overall, such framing resulted in a biased over-representation of female child sex offending, which may have consequentially increased the perceived risk of the offence.

Another general observation about the framing of this case centres upon the journalistic tendency to use the victims (namely the parents of the child victims and Jane's husband and children) as sources of information. In a large proportion of the articles that were selected for qualitative analysis, quotes from either or both the parents and Jane's family were used to support a particular claim made by the newspaper and/or were used as a tool to invoke and fuel public outrage and anger. For example, in an article discussing the "despicable" crimes that Jane committed, the *Daily Mail* (2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009b), used many quotes from parents which highlighted their anger towards Jane, such as "If I see anyone in town who remotely resembles her, I feel sick" and "We'd skin her alive and roll her in salt". Similarly,

following her first appearance in court, many articles reported the parent's reaction of seeing Jane in the dock and used quotes such as "look us in the face *Jane*" (*The Guardian*, 12 June, 2009) and "sick bitch" (*Daily Star*, 12 June, 2009). By using the emotive quotes from the victim's parents, journalists are able to make conscious selection decisions about which direction and perspective the article adopts, whilst simultaneously avoiding accusations of bias and one-sided reporting.

Furthermore, various newspapers used Jane's family, particularly her husband, as a source to justify certain claims that an article made. For example, *The Daily Star* (30<sup>th</sup> October, 2009) quotes Jane's husband stating "she's a bitch and she's callous" and in *The Express* (16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009) he is quoted as saying "unlock her twisted mind". Due to the long term marriage between Jane and her husband, over twenty years, editors were able to safely select him as a 'reliable' source, which simultaneously justified the claims and frames that were used within the article and thus reassured the reader that the angle and direction of the story was accurate. Using Jane's husband as a source in this way also served as a stark reminder that she was supposedly a 'happily' married woman and mother at the time of the offences, thus contradicting familiar images of offenders as being dangerous, troublesome individuals. This juxtaposition reinforced a number of Jewkes' (2011) news values, as Jane was in many ways ostensibly 'normal' and respectable, which thus rendered her involvement in the offences particularly concerning and shocking.

Perhaps most significantly, the news medias use of the victim's parents and Jane's family as sources in this way allowed for the familiar cultural myths of good versus evil to play out in front of the readers eyes (Jewkes, 2011). For example, when Jane refused to name the children that she had abused, there were many articles which centred around the fact that her husband pleaded with her to name the children,

evidenced by *The Daily Telegraph* (5<sup>th</sup> October, 2009) headline “husband pleads with ‘pure evil’ paedophile to identify victims”. By describing the ‘good’, caring character of Jane’s husband and the trusting nature of the victim’s parents, journalists were able to frame Jane as their ‘evil’ antithesis, thus firmly placing her into the ‘bad’ category of criminal women (Lloyd, 1995; Ballinger, 2000), which shall be discussed in further detail later in the chapter.

### **The framing of Jane**

Having now established some of the general ways in which Jane’s case was framed, the chapter will now discuss the specific news frames used to define Jane and compare them with the narratives and discourses evident in the case and court file material.

#### The main offender frame

Within the news media material, Jane was predominantly framed as the ‘main offender’, despite there being four other co-offenders involved in the offences, all of whom were convicted and received lengthy prison sentences. One aspect of this frame began in the initial stages of the reporting and centres on the fact that Jane was the main focus of the vast majority of news articles. On the day that Jane was charged, despite Simon being charged the previous day, she was the focus of every headline relating to the case during that time period. This is demonstrated by the following headlines:

Woman worker held at nursery over child porn (*Daily Mail*, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009)

Nursery worker charged with sex abuse (*The Times*, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2009)

Nursery woman in child porn enquiry (*Daily Telegraph*, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009)

This highlights that from early stages of the case, the intention was to frame Jane as the main offender, thus minimising the role and involvement of other members of the offending group. By focussing the attention on Jane in the initial stages of reporting, the reader is encouraged to not only see her as the ‘main offender’, but to rather see her as the ‘only’ offender, thus framing her as an individual offender rather than a co-offender.

Furthermore, an analysis of the use of imagery demonstrated that Jane featured in photographs to a much greater extent than her female and male co-defendants. There were many articles where the co-offenders did not feature in imagery at all, even when they were mentioned in the main body of the article. Simon in particular often only featured in much smaller sized images in comparison to Jane (For example, *Daily Mirror*, 16th December 2009; *Daily Express*, 16th June 2009) and when his image was larger in size, it was frequently placed directly next to a photograph of her. By using more images of Jane, the news editors successfully frame her as the main offender, who is most readily associated with the story.

Furthermore, when this frame was quantified, whilst Jane was mentioned in 491 articles, her co-offenders were mentioned by name to a much lesser extent, namely Simon 95 mentions (75 articles also mentioned Jane), Susan 55 mentions (52 also mentioned Jane), Louise 27 mentions (22 also mentioned Jane) and Tracey 26 mentions (9 also mentioned Jane). This demonstrates that not only was Jane directly

referenced to a much greater extent than her co-defendants, but they were most frequently mentioned alongside her, thus consistently framing her as the ‘main accomplice’.

This focus on Jane remained consistent throughout the period of reporting analysed and her co-offenders were usually only mentioned towards the end of the article. For example, *The Sun* (16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009) article, discussed the sentences given to Susan and Jane, yet Susan was only mentioned in the final paragraph and the remainder of the article talked about the “depraved” and “wicked” nature of Jane. This demonstrates that despite Susan and Jane both being charged and sentenced for child sex offences and irrespective of them both being part of the same criminal network, Jane was framed as the most culpable of the two. A potential explanation for this could be that whilst Susan was a former “prostitute” (*Daily Mail*, 16<sup>th</sup> December; *The Daily Telegraph*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009) who “was living in abject” “dirty” conditions in a “council house” (*Guardian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October), Jane was believed to be a “bubbly and friendly person” (*The Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009b) who had a well-kept home and respectable family. Therefore, the framing of Susan’s lifestyle as being ‘deviant’ before the offending served to portray Jane as being the most depraved and responsible out of the two, thus serving to over-emphasise Jane’s culpability. It could be argued that Jane’s participation in the offences was framed as being more unexplainable and deviant due to her criminality leading to the breakdown of an example of the ‘idealised’ institution of the nuclear family.

Furthermore, the framing of Jane as the main accomplice was also evident when other women involved in the criminal network were later identified. In many instances, despite the headline suggesting that the article would discuss the two recently arrested female accomplices, the main body of the story would principally

discuss Jane and her involvement. For example, the following headline from *The Sun* (13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009), details when Louise was arrested, “Mum of 8 held over paedo pics”. Yet despite this arrest being discussed in the article, there was an equal amount of discussion about Jane and her involvement in the criminal network, thus highlighting that Jane’s participation in the offences remained to be perceived as newsworthy. A potential explanation as to why there was an overwhelming focus on Jane’s participation in the offending is because that not only was she a woman and a mother engaging in child-sex offending, similar to the other women involved in the offending network, but she was also a nursery worker, thus making her gendered deviancy three-fold. Furthermore, she didn’t have the same ‘deviant’ and ‘troubled’ upbringing as the other women involved in the offending group, therefore there was less of a rational and ‘plausible’ explanation available for her offending. This notion will be explored further later in the chapter.

In addition, as well as being portrayed as the ‘main offender, the news media often took this further and framed Jane as the central, organising figure of the paedophile network, particularly in the stages of reporting prior to the trial. This is shown in the headlines and extracts below:

The ring was headed by *Turner* (*The Mirror*, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Pervert *Turner*’s paedophile ring (*Daily Star*, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009)

Woman at centre of paedophile ring refuses to name her toddler victims

(*Daily Mail* c, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009).

Tankard (2002) suggests that emphasising and elaborating on certain aspects of a case serves to frame a story in a particular way and for a particular purpose. By

framing Jane as the central figure, the news media is not only portraying her to be the most culpable co-offender, but is also simultaneously suggesting that she initiated, organised and controlled the criminal network. This is despite the fact that she had never actually spoken to or heard of two of the co-offenders before her arrest and she had only communicated with Susan via the internet on two occasions. This aspect of the frame was mostly evident during periods of reporting where Jane was particularly demonised, for example, when she refused to name her child victims and following the release of her police interview tapes by the CPS. By interchanging Jane as the ‘main offender and as the ‘central, organising figure’ of the criminal network, journalists were able to simultaneously exaggerate Jane’s offences whilst minimising the involvement of her co-offenders, thus framing her criminality as the most newsworthy and incomprehensible.

### The ‘Bad Woman’

The following section discusses the narratives and frames used to describe Jane within the context of her gender roles, namely as a woman, mother and nursery worker. The case file and news media material have been split into two separate parts for this section of the chapter, as this frame was articulated in different ways in the two contexts.

#### *“Plumbed new depths of depravity”: Case file material*

It has been suggested that the Victorian discourses of the feminine ideal and womanhood, namely domesticity, respectability, sexuality and motherhood, still

have significance even today, particularly when applied to female offenders (Smart, 1978; Ballinger, 2000). The discourses surrounding the feminine ideal suggest that women should be passive, selfless, physically attractive and inherently nurturing (Friedman, 1963; Ballinger, 2000).

In stark contrast to this notion of the ‘feminine ideal’, child sexual offences are viewed as being ‘crimes against morality’ (Hayes and Carpenter, 2013) and are understood as being ‘male crimes’ both by the public and often within the academic community (Gavin, 2009). However, this articulation of the normative frame of masculinity as a way of understanding and explaining the sexual abuse of children also essentializes women within a normative frame of femininity and transforms their experiences into a masculine, objective version of the offence (Hayes and Carpenter, 2013). Connected to this idealised image of womanhood is the belief that women have a natural, maternal instinct, which is biologically determined rather than socially learned (Naylor, 2001). With all of this in mind, due to the perceived rarity of female child sexual offending (Denov, 2004), combined with its transgressions of womanhood and motherhood, female sex offenders are often categorised as inherently evil women who have lost (or have never had) the female nurturing gene and have ‘gone to the other side’ (Hayes and Carpenter, 2013: 163). Therefore, due to the nature of Jane’s crimes, she was simplistically cast as a “wicked, cold and calculated” (*Judges Speech*, December 2009) woman in the case file material, who actively defied her gender roles as a woman, mother and nursery worker.

Her perceived lack of adherence to the feminine ideal was referenced on many occasions within the case file documents and took various forms. This particularly centred on the suggestion that she had an unhealthy obsession with sex, which



eventually led her to have “plumbed new depths of depravity” (*Judges Closing Speech*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009) by engaging in sexual offences involving children. Her supposed obsession with sex was often discussed within the context of the trial, as evidenced in the following quotes:

Your sexual appetite appeared to be insatiable (*Judge’s closing speech*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009).

You appeared to revel in sick sexual talk about what you had done or were minded to do to innocent, defenceless children (*Judges closing speech*, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2009)

She was what I would describe as sexually confident and completely open about her sexual exploits (*Jane’s witness statement*, June 2009)

It is significant to note that within the case file material, it was not Jane’s obsession with sex that served to frame her as a bad woman, but rather her obsession with *depraved* sex, or more specifically, her supposed interest in having sex with children. This contradicts Jane’s claim that she had “no sexual interest in children” (*Jane Police Interview*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2009), which shall be discussed further later in the chapter. Furthermore, Jane’s search for a more exciting sex life was described as her wanting “a bit of spice” (*Judges closing speech*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009; *Prosecution argument*, November 2009) and when this quote is considered within the context of her criminality, this ‘quest’ was thus framed as being both sinister yet superficial in equal measure. Naffine (1997) suggests that female offenders are often categorised within the Madonna/ whore dichotomy, dependent on their sexuality and sexual practices. By defining Jane as a sexually depraved woman, legal professionals were able to demonstrate the extent to which her sexual obsession deviated against the

expectations of the idealised image of the virtuous and sexually pure ‘Madonna’, thus firmly defining her as the ‘whore’ antithesis (Naffine, 1997; Ballinger, 2000).

Furthermore, another way in which she was defined within the bad woman’ frame in the case file material was as a neglectful wife and mother. As highlighted by Jacques & Radtke (2012: 444) “disentangling ideals of womanhood from ideals of motherhood is virtually impossible”. The definition of ‘womanhood’ as being directly connected to being a mother or desiring to be a mother remains to be a powerful force in women’s lives. Ideals of motherhood such as the ‘good mother’ (Villani and Ryan, 1997) appear to leave little room for anything beyond the possibility of motherhood. The good mother is idealised as being completely selfless, a natural protector of her children and having a great deal of tolerance (Naylor, 2001). Such discourses surrounding the image of the ‘good mother’ played an integral role in the representation of Jane during her case.

Jane was portrayed as a neglectful mother, who vested more time and energy into her online relationships and depraved sexual lifestyle, rather than being a mother to her two children. Integral to this neglectful mother narrative was the fact that she had transformed from a loving mother, who took good care of her family, to a woman who neglected all of the duties expected of a good mother. This is evidenced in the following quotes:

She was once the normal average mum. We did baking and cooking together  
(*Daughter’s witness statement*, June 2009).

There was nothing at home being done, I mean nothing: it was untidy, washing that hadn’t been done or washing that was done but wasn’t put away and it was

starting to look really run down (*Quote from Jane's husband, Transcript used in documentary*, October 2010).

The once hands on, loving mother had developed a sinister obsession, which would take her away from her husband and daughters. She neglected every aspect of family life (*Jane Trial transcript*, October 2009).

This transformation seemed to be particularly difficult for legal professionals to understand, as this demonstrates that she had the capability to be the good mother that she was expected to be, but instead it appeared that she actively chose to neglect her duties to satisfy her own sexual depravity. This led to Jane being constantly questioned as a mother, or more specifically, the mother that she once was. For example, a police officer questioned how Jane could be “prepared as a mother to abuse other people’s children, for only one aim and that was for her own sexual deviance”. The incomprehensibility of this transformation, namely how a ‘normal’ woman and mother could have been involved in sex offences against children, was emphasised in both the case file and news media material. However, by framing this as a shocking transformation, journalists were able to reinforce the news value of ‘individualism’, as Jane could be constructed in terms of her difference in comparison to the rest of society, thus ensuring that she was firmly represented as the ‘other’ (Jewkes, 2011). Furthermore, during her police interviews, police officers pleaded with Jane to reveal the names of the children she abused, using the discourses associated with motherhood. This is evidenced in the following extract: “*Jane please... for them... as a mother you’d want to know*” (*Jane Police Interview*, 21st June 2009). The persistent questioning of Jane as a mother led to her criminality and deviation against her gender roles to become inseparable, thus leading her crimes to be judged against the idealised image of the ‘good mother’.

Furthermore, the discourses surrounding Jane being a neglectful mother were directly linked to her being a neglectful wife within the case file material. The use of language within this discourse highlights that Jane was described as consciously destroying the hegemonic, nuclear family ideal. Jane and her family appeared to be the image of the idealistic family. Jane and her husband had been ‘happily’ married for over twenty years. They had two attractive teenage daughters and had a well-kept family home on a suburban estate. Jane’s husband spoke very positively about their marriage prior to Jane’s alleged participation in child sexual offending. This is evidenced in the following extracts from the case file material:

We actually properly courted, old fashioned, but, we courted, hand in hand and it was good, it was sweet you know (*Quote from Jane’s husband, used in TV documentary, October 2010*).

I thought I was set, I had my own home, two daughters, I’m married, what more do you want, you know, both in work, I had everything. I thought I was lucky to be quite honest. People always used to say that we were unbreakable, you know, nothing could get between us, set for life, you know, together, together forever I thought it was (*Jane’s husband, case file document, no date provided*).<sup>4</sup>

The consequences of Jane’s neglect of her role as a wife and a mother reached a climax when her husband attempted to commit suicide (*Case summary, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009*). He discussed how he felt overwhelmed by her betrayal and he couldn’t take the constant questioning from friends, family and the press. He stated “I feel like

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<sup>4</sup> Note, it is recognised that the extracts cited above are poorly spelt and grammatically incorrect, however, they are a replica of the notes available in the case file material.

I've got this big label, yeah I'm him. You know, I'm wearing this label and I know people don't look at me the way they used to" (*Quote from husband used in transcript of television documentary*, October, 2010). By juxtaposing Jane's husband's suicide attempt with her criminality, Jane is subsequently held solely responsible for his effort to kill himself, thus endowing her with further blame and culpability.

All of this highlights that within the case file material, Jane was framed within the 'bad woman' narrative not only due to the nature of the crimes that she committed, but also due to her transgressions against the expectations of femininity, womanhood and motherhood.

*"How could any woman be so depraved?": Newspaper material*

Entman (1993) and Tankard (2001) suggest that news frames often use stereotypical images to thematically reinforce facts and judgments about a particular phenomenon. Similar to the case file material, when considering the principal ways in which Jane was framed in the news media, there were three primary identities that were prescribed: the woman, the nursery worker and the mother. The three were often interchanged and many articles referred to Jane in relation to each simultaneously. When these identities were quantified, the term "nursery" was mentioned in 458/491 articles, "nursery worker" was mentioned 207, "woman" 194, "female" 71, "mother" 227 and "mum" 197, thus highlighting the prevalence of each of these identities (See table below)

*Table 2: Keyword table Jane Turner, “gendered identities”*

| Newspaper             | Nursery worker | Woman      | Female    | Mother     | Mum        |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Daily Mail            | 7              | 17         | 9         | 20         | 4          |
| Daily Telegraph       | 13             | 9          | 2         | 12         | 3          |
| Express newspapers    | 40             | 32         | 8         | 33         | 43         |
| Guardian              | 24             | 24         | 4         | 20         | 5          |
| Independent           | 12             | 7          | 6         | 5          | 1          |
| Independent on Sunday |                |            | 3         | 4          | 1          |
| The Mirror            | 27             | 28         | 4         | 21         | 44         |
| News of the World     |                |            | 1         | 8          | 1          |
| People                | 5              | 7          | 1         | 30         | 11         |
| The Sun               | 34             | 34         | 16        | 33         | 72         |
| Sunday Express        | 6              | 5          | 2         | 6          | 5          |
| Sunday Telegraph      |                | 1          |           | 1          |            |
| Sunday Times          | 5              | 4          | 2         | 8          | 3          |
| Times                 | 34             | 22         | 13        | 26         | 4          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>207</b>     | <b>194</b> | <b>71</b> | <b>227</b> | <b>197</b> |

In a similar vein to the case file material, due to the nature of Jane’s crimes, she was readily categorised and framed as a ‘bad woman’ within the news media, which is shown in the following extracts and headlines:

For the public, the most obviously shocking aspect of the case is the fact that *Jane Turner* was a woman, a mother and had therefore behaved in every way contrary to the instinctive nurturing role with which it is generally assumed that most women are born (*The Times*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009)

What possesses a woman like *Turner* to sink to such depravity (*Sunday Mirror*, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2009)

How could a mother abuse these kids? (*The Sun*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009).

As evidenced by the above extracts, journalists often posed this frame as a question to the reader, encouraging them to actively engage with the incomprehensibility of both a woman and mother engaging in such crimes against children. Furthermore, it was also often suggested that Jane and Susan were more ‘evil’ than their male counterpart Simon, which is evidenced by the following quote “they went against every possible maternal instinct, which for me, makes them even more disgusting than even *Simon*” (*The Sun*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009). This demonstrates that despite the judicial verdict eventually acknowledging that Simon was the controlling force behind the paedophile network, Jane and Susan were both framed to be more ‘depraved’ within the news media, due to the expectations that are attached to their roles as women and mothers. Whilst men who sexually abuse children may also be framed as ‘evil’ beings, they are not framed as unnatural in the same way as women.

However, it is important to note that Susan was only framed in this way when discussed alongside Jane, yet Jane was described within this frame irrespective of who else was mentioned in the article and what direction and angle the story adopted. This is demonstrated by the second quote highlighted above, as whilst there were three other female accomplices involved in the offending, it was specifically Jane who was most often questioned as a woman. This could be due to the fact that Jane’s depravity transgressed the gender role expectations to a much greater extent than her female co-offenders, as she appeared to have the most ‘ideal’ family life, she was a mother of two children and she also had a job as a nursery worker.

Furthermore, Jane was referred to as a “mother of two” or “mum of two” in a number of articles (for example, *Daily Mail*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009; *The Express*, 2<sup>nd</sup>

October, 2009; *The Sun*, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2009). By repeating this phrase, journalists highlight that Jane's crimes against children' are two-fold, as she harmed both her victims at the nursery, but she was also a mother herself, therefore her own children were also victims of the consequences of her crimes. This is particularly evident in *The Daily Mail* article (October 5<sup>th</sup> 2009), which discusses how Jane's daughters will "never call her mum again" and they think she is "pure evil". The article also details how Jane "never spent time in the kitchen" in the final few months before she was charged, as this "would have interfered with her texting", thus framing her as the 'neglectful' mother, which was also evident in the case file material. By using her daughters as sources to evidence her inability as a mother, the news media successfully frames Jane as a bad mother. This suggested lack of maternal instinct and care for her own children, accompanied by the suggestion that she is 'pure evil', provides a potential explanation for the reader about how a woman could have committed such crimes, as such descriptions place her within the category of 'the other'.

As previously highlighted, Jane's transgressions against womanhood were three fold, as not only did she deviate against the expected gender norms of femininity and motherhood, but she also abused her role as a nursery-worker. Jane was in loco parentis for a number of children at the nursery where she worked, therefore her abuse of her position to capture inappropriate images of children was deemed to be a particularly shocking aspect of this case. Within the first two days of the story breaking, Jane was persistently referred to as a "nursery worker" or "nursery woman" in a number of headlines. The focus on this identity within the headlines during this time period reveals which aspects of the case the editor believed to be the



most significant and thus reveals important insights into how they wanted the crime to be perceived.

Furthermore, this focus on her profession as a nursery worker was also evidenced by the use of images, as certain articles used images of Jane at work. For example, *The People* (4th October, 2009) ran a story which featured a large image of her smiling with her arms around a number of children, accompanied by the headline 'Monster at work'. This was a front page story and there was just a small section of text which accompanied this article. A similar story was ran in the *Daily Mirror* (5<sup>th</sup> November 2010) which featured an image of Jane with a number of children on a nursery playground, accompanied by the picture caption of "evil in the midst". The inclusion of such images by the editor serves as a visual reminder to the reader of the extent to which she abused her position of care and trust.

By referring to Jane in terms of her role, rather than who she is, from the beginning of the case, the news media successfully ensured that Jane and her role as a nursery worker became indistinguishable. During later periods of reporting, rather than Jane being referred to as a nursery worker, this changed to her being referenced as a "nursery paedophile" (*The Guardian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009) or a "nursery sex monster" (*The Mirror*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009). This demonstrates that as the reporting progressed, Jane was no longer solely defined by her role as a woman, mother or nursery worker and instead, these identities became intertwined with the crimes that she committed. Whilst this notion was not so obvious in the case file material, as Jane was not referred to using emotive terms such as "paedo" and "sex monster", legal professionals often used her profession as a nursery worker to evidence the extent to which she had transgressed her gender role expectations, therefore highlighting the significance of such identities in both contexts.

An aspect of the ‘bad woman’ frame which was unsurprisingly not evident in the case file material, but which played a significant role in the framing of Jane in the news articles, related to the sub-frame ‘Echoes of Hindley’. Myra Hindley is in many ways the archetypal female (co)offender and it has been argued that her notoriety has yet to be eclipsed by any other female offender (Birch, 1993). Despite hers and her partner Ian Brady’s crimes being committed in the 1960s, many serious female offenders continue to be compared to her. Jane was occasionally directly compared to Myra Hindley in the news media, as evidenced by the extracts below:

*Turner*, who has been compared to evil Moors murderer Myra Hindley (*Daily Star*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009)

She is no better than Myra Hindley (*The People*, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2009)

*Jane Turner* is right up there with Myra Hindley and Rose West in the malevolent club of vile and evil female monsters (*The Sun*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009).

The last quotation mentioned above is particularly significant, as whilst Jane was openly compared to Myra Hindley and Rosemary West, both notorious female murderers, Simon was not compared to their male counterparts, namely Ian Brady and Fred West. This suggests that whilst notorious female offenders are needed as points of reference to the reader to demonstrate the depraved extent of Jane’s crimes, due to the rarity of such offences, well known male offenders are not required as a comparative tool to evidence Simon’s depravity, perhaps due to male child sex offending being perceived to be more common and therefore less shocking (Hayes and Carpenter, 2013).

By making such comparisons between Jane and female offenders such as Myra Hindley, the reader is instantly directed to view Jane as being as evil as ‘the most hated woman in Britain’ in the same way as Hindley (Birch, 1993; Murphy and Whitty, 2006). Furthermore, whilst Jane was only directly compared to Myra Hindley in 10 articles, there are various indirect similarities between the reporting of Hindley and Turner, particularly when considering the use of language. For example, Myra Hindley was often referred to as being ‘pure evil’ and the ‘personification of evil’ (Birch, 1993) and similarly Jane’s criminality was also often explained by her ‘evil’ nature, for example, she was referred to as a “woman of purest evil” (*The Sun*, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010). Furthermore, similar to Hindley (Murphy and Whitty, 2006), evidence of Jane’s ‘evil’ nature was reinforced by various newspapers using authority sources, such as friends, family, neighbours and parents of the children, as previously discussed.

Additionally, one of the most common types of photograph that was used of Jane in the articles analysed was her identification photo, namely the mug-shot. The mug-shot of Jane is a close up image of her looking straight into the camera. Birch (1993) argues that in the case of Myra Hindley, her mug-shot was used as a tool to represent her as being synonymous with evil. Whilst the mug-shot of Jane did not achieve the same level of notoriety as the iconic image of Hindley, the photograph was used in a similar way in the news media. Even in articles which featured other photographs of Jane, the mug-shot image often featured somewhere in the article and this was particularly the case following her first date in court. For example, the *Daily Mirror* (13<sup>th</sup> October 2009) featured a large, coloured, yet blurred, image of Jane being interviewed by the police. However, directly next to this is a much clearer image of Jane’s mug-shot. In a similar way to Myra Hindley (Birch, 1993),

the news medias use of the mug-shot of Jane was used as a tool to persistently associate her with the crimes that she committed, thus rendering her inseparable from her offending.

Collectively, this highlights that the medias direct and indirect comparisons between Jane and Myra Hindley ensured that Jane was also categorised as being ‘pure evil’ and ‘beyond explanation’. Whilst Jane did not achieve the same levels of notoriety as Hindley, journalists used Hindley as a framing tool and point of reference so that the reader judged and understood Jane in a similar way.

### The Female Manipulator

A particular aspect of the gendered reporting of Jane as a ‘bad woman’ centred upon the notion of her being a ‘manipulator’. The ‘manipulator’ sub-frame was usually articulated against the back-drop of the wider ‘bad woman’ frame, but due to its significance and prevalence in both the news media and case file data, it warrants significant and individual attention.

Within the case file material, Jane being framed as a ‘manipulator’ centred on the fact that she had taken advantage of her role as a nursery worker to abuse the children in her care and thus betrayed the trust of the children’s parents. This notion of the ‘betrayal of trust’ played a significant role in Jane being defined as a manipulator within the legal discourse, which is shown in the following quotes:

“You gave those parents who entrusted their children to your care every reason to believe their children would be safe. How grossly did you abuse

their trust and the trust of those who employed you and worked with you”

*(Judge’s closing speech, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009)*

“Parents have to live with the memory of you coming out with a smile on your face to hand them back a child when in fact you may have been doing unspeakable things to that child; and when you may well have been thinking about sending the disgusting images you had storied on your phone to your partner in this paedophile venture” *(Judge’s closing speech, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009).*

Furthermore, this notion of ‘betrayal of trust’ was often expanded further and it was frequently suggested that Jane had led a “double life” *(Husband witness statement, June 2009)* and readily lied to everyone around her. By framing Jane as a liar, prosecutors were able to persistently question her version of the ‘truth’ therefore causing her point of view to be perceived as inaccurate and inconsistent.

Furthermore, Jewkes (2011) suggests that female offenders are often described within a ‘manipulator’ narrative and this often centres on the idea that such women use their femininity to deceive victims. This notion was particularly evident in the case file material, as it was suggested by the prosecution team that Jane used her status as a woman to lure both parents and children into trusting her. By highlighting Jane’s manipulation within this narrative, legal professionals were able to demonstrate that Jane is not a ‘natural’ woman, thus firmly placing her into the category of the other.

In the context of the news media material, Jane’s manipulation was framed in two principal ways. Firstly, similar to the case file material it centred on the fact that Jane abused her position as a nursery worker and thus abused the faith of the parents

who entrusted her with their children. This is shown in the quotes and extracts below:

She could pull the wool over anyone's eyes (*The Mirror*, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010)

We all got taken in by her, everybody (*The Guardian*, quote from parent, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009)

Everyone feels like they were completely duped into trusting her everyday with their kids (*Daily Mail*, quote from parents, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009)

Extracts such as this demonstrate that with regard to female sex offenders, there is a sense of betrayal and fear that is not evident in discussions about male sex offenders (Hayes and Carpenter, 2013). This is further evidenced by the fact that journalists often made open comparisons between the “friendly and bubbly” (*The Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009c) person that parents believed her to be, to the “paedophile monster” (*The Sun*, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009) that journalists suggested that she had become. Comparisons such as this, between the ‘was’ and the ‘now’, were a useful tool for journalists to frame Jane as both a deceiver and a manipulator.

The second way in which Jane was framed as a ‘manipulator’ centred upon her apparent refusal to name the children that she had allegedly abused. This specific aspect of the frame emerged at three key points in the reporting of the case, the first being the reaction to her initial refusal to name the children. There was clearly an expressed outrage at Jane’s initial refusal to name the children, which is evidenced by the use of emotive language, such as “sex fiend” and she was also referred to as “wicked” and “cruel” (*Daily Mail*, 2nd October, 2009c). The second time period

was following the release of Jane's police interviews by the CPS. During this stage of reporting, Jane was referred to as a "monster" (*The Sun*, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009b) and "callous" (*The Mirror*, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009) and it was suggested that she remained "calm and unemotional as she admitted abusing children" (*The Sun*, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009b). The final stage occurred following Jane's disclosure of several of her child victims names. However, it was suggested that Jane was doing this for her own gain, for example, *The Sun* quotes "Vile Jane was yesterday accused of 'playing games' by naming some of her tiny victims" (30th October, 2009) and *The Daily Star* headline stated "Beast wife names only six kiddies" (2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2009)

The above summary demonstrates that within this specific aspect of the story, irrespective of whether she revealed the victims' names or not, Jane would continue to be framed as a 'manipulator', as this image fitted with the story that the news media intended to create about her, namely that she had selfishly manipulated and abused her position as a woman and a nursery worker to take indecent images of children in her care. By applying this frame during three different time periods of reporting during the case, journalists successfully instilled that Jane was and remained to be a manipulator, thus highlighting the longevity of this particular frame. Furthermore, the interchange and connectivity between the 'bad woman' frame and 'manipulator' sub-frame served to firmly categorise Jane as a 'bad' rather than 'mad' offender in both sources of data.

### ‘Bad’ not ‘mad’ frame

As highlighted in earlier chapters, female offenders are often portrayed as either ‘mad’ or ‘bad’ in various contexts, such as the news media and within the law (Lloyd, 1995; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002). Feminism has led to an interrogation of the conditions under which criminal justice officials claim to possess knowledge about criminalised women and the processes whereby such claims are translated into practices that classify and define their behaviour (Worrall, 1990; Howe, 1994; Comack and Brickey, 2007). In raising these issues, such as how women are defined by dominant discourses (Smart, 1989, 1990; Naffine, 1997), feminists direct our attention to ways in which discursive practices, such as ‘mad’ and ‘bad’, frame our knowledge about criminalised women (Comack and Brickey, 2007). As well as being defined as a bad woman more generally, Jane was consequential firmly framed as a ‘bad’ female offender.

#### *“Wicked, cold calculated”: Case file material*

Within the case file material, Jane’s criminality was described within the existing, ideological framework surrounding the ‘bad’ female offender. There were a number of ways in which Jane’s offending was defined within this discourse. For example, in Jane’s psychiatric report, it was stated that she suffered from “no mental illness” and that she was “well aware of what she was doing” and she “derived emotional gratification in a perverse and destructive way” (*Psychiatric report*, July 2009). The consequences of this statement are two- fold. Firstly, this highlights that Jane did not fit within the existing discourses of the ‘mad’ female offender, as her offences were described as calculated and planned. Secondly, it suggests that she was distinctly



different from the average ‘decent’ person, thus placing her within the category of the ‘other’ and ‘bad’ female offender.

Perhaps the most exemplary instance of Jane being represented as a ‘bad’ female offender by criminal justice and legal professionals is when her portrayal is considered in comparison to that of one of her co-offenders, Susan. As previously discussed, Susan and Jane were both convicted at the same time alongside Simon, both for crimes involving child pornography, yet the ways in which they were defined within the ‘mad’ and/ or ‘bad’ discourses vastly differed. For example, as previously highlighted, Jane was described as “wicked, cold and calculated” in the judge’s speech, yet such language was not used to describe Susan. Instead she was described as caring “not a jot” for the daughter that she abused, which is undoubtedly a much less emotive summary of her actions in comparison to Jane.

Furthermore, in a case summary from a probation officer, Susan was described as being “lonely” and as having tendencies “to exhibit depressive symptoms” (*Probation officer report*, July 2009). Additionally, in Susan’s psychiatric report, whilst she was too described as having no mental illness, her depressive symptoms were acknowledged and were also mentioned in her defence. Furthermore, a police officer described Susan as being “very vulnerable and very lonely” and she “had never had any convictions for offences of this type”. Despite both Jane and Susan having no previous convictions of this type (Susan had a previous prostitution charge), it was only in Susan’s case where this issue was raised by a police officer within the case file documents. Whilst this was discussed by Jane’s defence team, it appeared to have been more significant to Susan’s case by external criminal justice professionals and was deemed to be less relevant to Jane’s case. The reluctance to mention this in Jane’s case demonstrates that legal professionals, particularly the

prosecuting team, wanted to ensure that she was portrayed as inherently ‘bad’ and as having no redeeming qualities.

Furthermore, the same police officer described how Susan was an “individual without very much resources in a very scarcely furnished house” (*Quote from police officer in trial document*, October, 2009). Susan’s living situation was often compared to Jane’s, who lived in a comfortable, suburban home with a loving husband and two children. By comparing the two contrasting living situations in this way, it exposes the distinct differences between the two women’s lives. As previously discussed, due to Susan’s situation being much more difficult than Jane’s, Susan’s engagement in criminality was constructed as being somewhat inevitable rather than a “shocking transformation”, as it was described in Jane’s case. Furthermore, Susan’s difficult living situation was often viewed in conjunction with her depressive symptoms and loneliness, therefore defining her offending as partially the result of such issues. This highlights that whilst explanations were sought for Susan’s reasons for her involvement in the offending, Jane’s participation was over-simplistically categorised as ‘beyond explanation’, which is a common feature of legal narratives which attempt to explain serious female offending (Ballinger, 2000; Lloyd, 1995).

Overall, whilst both women were generally placed into the ‘bad’ category of female offenders, due to their crimes involving children (Jewkes, 2011), the discourses and language used to describe Jane more firmly labelled her as ‘bad’ in comparison to Susan. Whilst criminal justice professionals rationalised their different representations of the women by using Susan’s circumstances and depressive symptoms as potential explanations for her involvement in criminality, explanations as to why Jane ‘suddenly’ became involved in such offending were not

explored to the same extent. When such explanations were discussed by Jane's defence team, they did not appear to have been perceived with any credibility, which shall be discussed further later. Overall, it seems that because Jane's deviation against her gender roles were threefold, namely wife, mother and nursery worker and due to the perceived lack of conceivable explanation for her behaviour, Jane was firmly placed into the 'bad' category of criminal women within legal discourse, whereas Susan's categorisation is not so clearly definable.

#### *The "nursery sex monster": Newspaper material*

Within the news media material, Jane was also clearly framed as a 'bad' female offender in various ways, perhaps even more so than in the case file material. For the following section, rather than discussing the general ways in which Jane was defined within this frame, the more specific ways in which this frame was applied will be explored. The use of language has been analysed and the key aspects of Jane's 'character', according to the news media, shall be explored to consider how such narratives may have impacted on her being framed as a 'bad' female offender.

The analytical technique used within this section is 'character framing', which is an interpretive type of framing analysis developed by the researcher. This concept was developed using Entman's (1993) framing theory and this method of analysis specifically explores how certain aspects of a person's character, personality or appearance are made more salient within a news media context to frame and construct individuals in a particular way and for a specific purpose.

The first general observation to make before discussing the specific aspects of Jane's character that journalists focussed on, is to highlight that Jane was frequently described as a 'monster' or other such terms by various newspapers, which served to frame her crimes as being 'unexplainable', thus firmly placing her within the category of the 'bad' female offender. When quantified, the term 'monster' was used to describe Jane in 81 instances in the news media and 'fiend' in 35 instances. Jewkes (2011) suggests that describing female offenders, particularly those who commit serious offences, as mythical monsters is a common reporting technique of the news media. Jane was often described using animalistic language, such as "she was caged" (*The Sun*, 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2011) and she was "free to prey on tots" (*The Mirror*, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010). By describing Jane using such language, the reader is reassured that she is distinctly different from the rest of society, thus firmly placing her into the category of the 'other'.

This is a useful observation to consider within the context of character framing, as the animalistic and mythical language that was used to describe Jane, was often used in conjunction with the various aspects of her character and appearance that journalists focussed on. The first aspect of the character framing of Jane which shall be discussed is the notion that she was 'obsessed with sex', which was used to frame her as a 'bad female offender'.

### *1. Sex obsessed*

Similar to the case file material, throughout the reporting of this case, the news media framed Jane as a woman, who had always been obsessed with sex, but this eventually "spiralled into sexual depravity" (*Daily Mail*, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010). This

‘sex obsession’ was the main aspect of Jane’s character that was reported on in the news media and when quantified, the term ‘sex’ was mentioned in 372 articles about Jane and similar to the case file material, this term was most frequently framed within the context of her child sexual abuse (see table below).

| <i>Table 3: Key word analysis Jane Turner, “sex”</i> |            |
|--|------------|
| Daily Mail   | 20         |
| Express newspapers                                   | 70         |
| Guardian   | 35         |
| Independent  | 15         |
| Independent on Sunday                                | 3          |
| The Mirror   | 60         |
| News of the World                                    | 1          |
| The People   | 8          |
| The Sun  | 95         |
| Sunday Express                                       | 12         |
| Sunday Telegraph                                     | 1          |
| Sunday Times   | 11         |
| The Times  | 41         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>372</b> |

It has been argued that sex is one of the most salient news values (Soothill and Walby, 1991; Greer, 2003; Jewkes, 2011), therefore the preoccupation with Jane’s supposed obsession with depraved sex reinforces this. Furthermore, Jane’s increased interest in sex was often evidenced by using ex- colleagues and friends as sources, therefore strengthening the claims made by the newspaper. This is shown in the extracts below:

She would openly discuss her sex life, using crude language (*Daily Mail*, quote from ex-colleague 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010)

She was in contact with up to 15 men at a time and would boast of her extra-marital sexual exploits to friends- who said she acted ‘like a bitch on heat’ (*Daily Mail*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009)

She had a really dirty mind. We all just saw it as an extension of her sociable personality (*Sunday Mirror*, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2009).

She began contacting men over the internet and boasted to colleagues about her encounters, including sex with a car mechanic in return for an MOT certificate (*The Times*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009).

However, as previously noted, what was most evident about this particular aspect of the reporting is that Jane was framed as not only being obsessed with sex in general, but specifically ‘depraved sex’, which was the aspect of the character framing which played an integral role in her being categorised as a ‘bad’ female offender. When her depravity was described, it was often in conjunction with the mythical and animalistic language discussed above. This is shown in the extracts below:

Child sex fiend, *Turner* (*News of the World*, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010)

Nursery paedo whore is caged (*The Sun C*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009).

Nursery sex monster *Turner* is set to be given a new identity (*The Mirror A*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009)

As previously discussed, her obsession with sex and specifically depraved sex was often explicitly linked to 'paedophilia' and the crimes that she had committed. By interchanging her obsession with sex and paedophilia in this way, journalists were able to frame Jane's interest in sex as an extension of her offences, thus rendering the two indistinguishable. For example, *The Daily Mail* (2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009a) interchanged Jane's sexual interest and her search for "excitement" with quotes such as "police believe she was now hooked on the idea of having sexual contact with children", thus suggesting that her desire for new and 'exciting' sexual activities involved children. This is despite the fact that as previously mentioned, Jane strongly argued that she received no sexual enjoyment from the crimes that she committed, more of which shall be discussed further later in the chapter.

By using her 'sex obsession' characteristic in this way, the news media were able to frame Jane as a 'bad' female offender, by transposing her interest in sex with her engagement in child pornography. By constantly referring to Jane as a paedophile or a 'paedo' (for example, *The Mirror*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009a; *The Sun*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009b; *Daily Star*, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2009; *The Mirror*, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009) the news media is ascribing the various stereotypical images and connotations to Jane that this identity carries, such as monster, corrupters of innocent children and a corruptive force (Kincaid, 1998; Davidson, 2008; Hebenton & Seddon, 2009). Furthermore, as previously discussed, female sexual offenders are considered to be particularly morally corrupt, as they deviated against their gendered expectations as a woman and mother (Denov, 2004). Therefore, by framing Jane as inseparable from her child sexual abuse crimes and her apparent 'sex obsession' in general, she is collectively framed as a 'bad' woman and mother who is by her very nature and character, a paedophile.

## 2. “Beast” Jane

As highlighted in a previous chapter, the media engage in a very particular construction of gender whereby certain aspects of femininity are favoured over others, such as slenderness and other such physical characteristics which suit the ‘male gaze’ (Wykes and Gunter, 2004). Jewkes (2011) argues that this notion extends to female offenders who feature in the news media. However, Jewkes (2011) suggests that such women cannot win within this narrative, because when conventionally attractive, female offenders are often described as being ‘femme fatales’, who are able to manipulate by their looks, however, if conventionally unattractive, they are often described as being unfeminine.

This notion is applicable to the journalistic reporting of Jane and she was consistently placed within the ‘conventionally unattractive’ category and was frequently described as being overweight. The specific use of journalistic language within the context of this narrative served to frame Jane as a ‘bad’ female offender. This is evidenced by the journalistic tendency to interchange descriptions about Jane’s weight with the mythical language discussed above, as evidenced by the following quote from *The Mirror* (5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010) “16 stone monster was free to prey on tots as young as 18 months”. Furthermore, Jane was often described using metaphorical language, such as “beast” (*Daily Star*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2009; *Daily Star*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009), in relation to her physical appearance, thus emphasising that her being overweight was used as a journalistic tool to place her within the category of the ‘other’.



The term ‘beast’ was used a total of 30 times (see Table below) in the reporting of Jane and was often used in conjunction with details of the crimes that she committed.

| <i>Table 4, Key word analysis Jane Turner, “beast”.</i> |    |
|---|----|
| The Sun   | 12 |
| Express Newspapers                                      | 13 |
| Mirror  | 4  |
| The Independent   | 1  |
| <b>Total</b>  | 30 |

This is evidenced by the following headline “Nursery abuse beast *Jane* to name her tiny victims” (*Daily Star*, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2009). The selection of the term ‘beast’ to describe Jane meant that she could simultaneously be described as visibly looking like a ‘beast’, due to her weight, whilst being defined as a ‘sex’ beast due to the nature of her crimes, thus rendering the two inseparable.

Jane’s weight was often stated in stones by various newspapers, which provided a context for the reader. In such instances, details of her weight were often provided as a side note and had very little to do with the actual story itself, thus highlighting that her weight was framed as an integral aspect of her character. This is shown in the various quotes below:

Tearful parents listened intently as new details emerged while *Turner*, who weighs 18 stone, sat in the dock (*The Express*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009)

Help to move abroad may be considered if lawyers deem it impossible for 18 stone *Turner* to avoid being recognised in the future (*Daily Mail*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009)

As parents struggled to come to terms with her betrayal, it also emerged that 18 stone *Turner* may be allowed a new identity to protect her from vigilantes if she ever came out of prison (*Daily Mail*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009c).

Furthermore, her weight was also framed as an aspect of her character/ appearance which Jane used to her own advantage to manipulate her victims, as it was often suggested that she used her ‘large frame’ to conceal the sexual abuse to the children in her care. This is shown in the quotes below:

The scenes of innocence are now tainted by the dark and brooding figure holding centre stage (*The People*, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2009).

18 stone *Turner* used her bulk to hide children from view as she carried out her sordid crimes (*Express*, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010).

Overall, journalists framed Jane’s weight to be a significant aspect of her physical appearance and used this as a tool to evidence other aspects of her character, for example being a ‘sex beast’ and a manipulator by using her large frame to conceal her crimes. To satisfy the male gaze, the female body is expected to represent femininity, thus appearing to be small, petite, frail and non-threatening (Orbach, 1978). Therefore, by framing Jane as being overweight and ‘beast’- like, the news media are highlighting that she does not satisfy the ‘male gaze’ and is thus not attributed the characteristics of a feminine woman. By using language such as “beast” and “monster” to describe Jane’s weight, journalists successfully framed her

as a ‘bad’ woman who is not only deviating against her womanhood and femininity due to the nature of her crimes, but also due to her perceived nonconformity to conventional attractiveness.

### The influence of Simon: Explaining Jane’s offending

Having now established the various ways in which Jane was framed as an individual in both sources of data, the next section of the chapter will explore the influence that Simon and her feelings towards him had upon her offending behaviour, as this was Jane’s suggested main reason for participating in the criminality.

The potential impact of Jane’s online relationship with Simon was rarely fully acknowledged as a possible explanation for her offending. As previously established, in the news media material in particular, Jane was predominantly portrayed as being the ‘main perpetrator’, which subsequently led to her being viewed as an individual offender rather than a co-offender.

Whilst the co-offending partnership was acknowledged to a greater extent in the case file material, the potential impact of their intimate relationship on Jane’s reasons for offending was not fully considered. They were predominantly defined as being ‘equal in their depravity’, which is exemplified by the similar language used in the judges closing speeches for both offenders. They were both described as being “wicked” and “calculating”.

However, if the impact of the relationship is explored by looking at Simon’s and Jane’s legal framing individually, then it is clear that the relationship was given

differential significance for both offenders. For example, in Simon's case, his potential impact on Janet's offending was acknowledged, evidenced by the following extracts:

Your influence over four separate women could be described as Svengali like (*Simon's Judge's closing speech*, January 2011)

You were a seriously corrupting influence over four women (*Simon's case close*, January 2010)

You were the hub of this paedophile wheel. Your attempts to paint these women as predators do not fool me for a moment, even though once drawn in they played a full part. If there is a predator in this, it is undoubtedly you (*Simon's case close*, January 2010)

The language used in these extracts is in stark contrast to the closing speech in Jane's trial, where the impact of her relationship with Simon was barely acknowledged at all. This suggests that rather than Simon's 'Svengali like' influence being used as a potential, partial explanation for Jane's involvement in the offending, it was instead used to highlight the extent of Simon's corrupting influence and the impact of this on the crimes actually occurring. Jane was legally framed as a rational and calculated woman, who made her own offending choices. The suggestion that she could have been manipulated and corrupted by Simon did not fit with the image that had been created about her by the prosecuting team and judge in particular. This will be explored further in a later chapter.

However, there were other documents within the case file material which suggested that the impact of Jane's relationship with Simon was considered. For

example, it was acknowledged that he was the “common denominator” in the offences and that “it could possibly be assumed that if Jane and Susan had not encountered him, they may not have gone on to abuse children in their care” (*CPS Pre-sentence report*, November, 2009). However, within the same documents, whenever such phrases were used, they were vehemently counter-acted with quotes such as “given that they have only ever shared cyber space contact and had no physical contact, it is hard to believe that he would have had such power” and “the evidence does not substantiate an argument that Simon, through either threats or an emotional strangle hold, manipulated the women into performing these acts” (*CPS Pre-sentence report*, November, 2009). Furthermore, whilst Simon’s influence was discussed by Jane’s defence team, it was not fully acknowledged within the wider case proceedings. This suggests that even in instances when the impact of Simon and Jane’s online relationship was recognised, it was never fully considered to be a believable potential explanation for Jane’s involvement in the offending. This could arguably be due to the perceived lack of a plausible explanation for female child sex offending more broadly (Gavin, 2009).

On the rare occasions when Jane and Simon’s relationship was discussed in the news media, the reporting largely centred on Jane’s ‘disturbing obsession’ with Simon. When quantified, the results indicated that search terms such as “obsession” and “obsessed”, used alongside Simon and Jane’s name, were mentioned in 24 articles. Whilst this quantification seems relatively low, as previously highlighted, Simon and Jane were principally framed as individual offenders, with Jane being the ‘main offender’. Jane’s infatuation was framed as sordid, yet infantile and ridiculous once again demonstrating journalist’s use of juxtaposition to highlight the

incomprehensibility of certain aspects of this case. This is demonstrated in the following extracts:

She seemed to be completely infatuated with Simon. She talked as if she was ready to leave her husband and the girls (Quote from colleague of Jane, *Sunday Mirror*, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2009).

She claims Simon urged her to take indecent images of children after they met on the social network site and she agreed in a bid to keep his attention (*The Express*, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009).

Within this narrative, Jane was framed as having lost her moral compass and as prioritising her obsession with Simon over protecting the children in her care. Journalists focussed on the fact that she was ready to leave her husband for Simon and that she committed her crimes to keep his attention. Consequently, their relationship was framed as a sordid infatuation, which encouraged the reader to question how Jane could have deviated so greatly against her position of care and trust for such a ‘meaningless’ relationship. However, due to the very nature of Jane and Simon’s crimes, the reader is reminded that this is not an infantile romance but it is rather a ‘depraved’ obsession. Furthermore, this disbelief also encouraged the reader to consider the incomprehensibility that a ‘normal’ and ‘respectable’ woman, like Jane, could have neglected her ‘happy’ married life for such an infatuation. This further reinforces the news value of ‘simplification’ (Jewkes, 2011), as complicated issues, such as coercion or pathways into criminality, are often placed into oversimplistic categories which fail to encapsulate the reality of the lived experiences.

Furthermore, journalists also used this news frame to highlight the disbelief that Jane could have developed this infatuation, despite the fact they she had never met

Simon in person. For example, *The Daily Telegraph* (16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009) highlights how the two lived “230 miles apart” and they “never saw each other until they were placed in court”. The idea that the two had only communicated on the internet and telephone, rather than in person, was used as a journalistic tool to highlight the incomprehensibility of the notion that Jane may have committed her crimes due to her obsession with Simon. However, there was no exploration of the reality of online relationships and how they progress, an issue which shall be discussed in a later chapter.

Overall, within both data sets, despite Jane and Simon’s relationship occasionally being discussed, it was framed within a back-drop of over-simplistic narratives. They were both predominantly framed as individual offenders whose criminality intensified when they met, which is despite the fact that Jane had no previous convictions and had never engaged in such criminality before she began talking to Simon, though he had previously been convicted for exchanging indecent imagery of children (*Case file document*, date not available). As highlighted in the discussion of Jane’s framing as the ‘main accomplice’, when Simon was mentioned in articles which discussed Jane, it was often as a side-note or towards the end of the article, thus minimising the potential relevance of their relationship on Jane’s offending.

What is clear from the summary of the analysis so far is that both journalists and legal professionals provided their own version of the offences and reasons for Jane’s involvement, whilst failing to acknowledge Jane’s perspective. The final section of this chapter will attempt to articulate Jane’s point of view, by using her police interviews and witness statements.

## Jane's perspective

What was undoubtedly most evident when analysing Jane's perspective, is the significance that she gave to her relationship with Simon. Jane stated in her police interviews that she had been "suckered in big time" by Simon (*Jane police interview*, June 2009) and she repeated this phrase three times at different points in her interviews. Within this context, Jane also stated that the reason why she took the photos and became involved in the criminality was not for her own sexual pleasure, but so that she would make Simon happy, which is evidenced by the following quote:

"I wasn't doing it for enjoyment or anything like that, I was just doing it for, just to take the photo, you know, to take the photo for *Simon*" (*Jane police interview*, June 2009)

It is important to consider this notion within the context of the way that she felt about Simon and Jane herself stated that she had very strong feelings for him. This is evidenced in the following quote:

I had formed and developed strong feelings for *Simon* and he said that he had as well. It was love and affection that I felt for him and I thought he felt this back. He said that he wanted me in his life and when I asked if there could ever be a future for us he said, yes definitely" (*Jane witness statement*, June 2009).

This demonstrates that for Jane, this relationship was much more than an exchange of online sexual fantasies involving children or a disturbing infatuation, as the news



media suggested and that she in fact thought that she and Simon had a future together. Jane went on to state that “I wanted to make him happy. At the time I would have done anything to make him happy” (*Jane witness statement*, June 2009). This highlights that Jane prioritised Simon’s happiness over the welfare of the children that she took care of at the nursery, thus highlighting the extraordinary lengths some women will go to in order to maintain a ‘relationship’ and interest of a male partner, whether virtual or not.

Jane’s feelings towards Simon were further demonstrated by the exchange of text messages that the two shared. The following extracts were obtained from a case file document:

“Shall we make a real go of it? No lies no secrets no cheating. Just 100% commitment and love 4 each other”

“U do make me sooo happy. You are my world my life and my man and I love you so much. I want us to be 2gether all the time. I just want u to be happy with me in every way.”

The above text messages demonstrate that Jane perceived that, to some extent, this was an actual relationship. Jane appeared to naively believe that both she and Simon had a future together, despite the fact that he had refused to meet her in person and that she knew that he was talking to other women online for similar purposes. With this in mind, the news medias framing of the relationship as ‘child like’ and ‘ridiculous’ infatuation was in stark contrast to Jane’s version of events, as she placed a much greater emphasis on this being a significant relationship.

Furthermore, Jane’s police interviews suggest that Simon often used the fact that he communicated with other women online to make Jane jealous, so that she would

provide him with more indecent imagery of children. For example, she stated “*Simon* used to message me saying he’d found another mum and she’s really dirty and filthy. I used to panic, so I’d send him more pictures” (*Jane police interview*, June 2009). This highlights that Simon actively capitalised on Jane’s feelings that she felt towards him for his own gain. However, this exclusion was a journalistic strategy to deny information that did not accord with the pre-determined story orientation.

Furthermore, whenever Jane sent emotional text messages, such as those cited above, Simon’s response would be either to ignore them or to respond with sexually aggressive language. These responses suggest that Simon did not have the same feelings for Jane, which he stated himself during his police interviews and witness statement, “I didn’t have any feelings for her in terms of affection, love or romance”. This is despite the fact that text messages and online messages from early on in their online relationship, demonstrated that Simon implied to Jane that he was ‘falling in love with her’ and that he wanted them to ‘run away together’. The case file material suggests that he shared similar exchanges with the other women who were involved in the co-offending, as a witness statement by Susan states that “I saw *Simon* as someone who I truly cared for and I believed that he cared for me” (*Susan witness statement*, June 2009). This suggests that Simon encouraged an emotional bond with each of his four female co-offenders, in order to fulfil his own sexual desires, whilst simultaneously encouraging the women to continue to provide the illicit material. This therefore highlights that rather than Jane in particular being simplistically framed as an individual offender and the ‘main accomplice’ within the news media material, Simon’s corruptive influence should have been acknowledged and explored to a much greater extent.

Furthermore, whilst much of the case file material suggested that it was Susan who was lonely, vulnerable and had low self-esteem, the text messages and online exchange between Jane and Simon suggest that she too had self-esteem issues, particularly about her weight. This is demonstrated in the following messages:

“Do you think I need to shed a few more pounds?”

“The only prob is I’m not skinny or pretty. I’ve got no confidence”

“Babe please say something really nice to me. Don’t want or mean to be a pain xx”

This suggests that whilst Jane was portrayed as a confident and calculating woman in the case file material, she in reality had relatively low self-esteem and she sought constant reassurance from Simon. Furthermore, witness statements from friends of Jane stated that she had an unhappy marriage with her husband, which is evidenced by the following quote:

She had an unhappy marriage with her husband. She told me they didn’t talk and that she only stayed with him because there was only six weeks left of their mortgage. She told me a few times a week when he was drunk, he told her he didn’t love her anymore and that he wanted a divorce (*Jane’s colleague witness statement*, June 2009).

This suggests that despite the fact that both the news media and much of the case file material suggesting that Jane had a happy marriage and she thus actively deviated against the nuclear family ideal by engaging in such criminality, Jane’s and other witnesses explanations suggest that their marriage was not a happy one and had not been for some time. By exaggerating the extent to which she had betrayed

her role as a wife and mother in this way, the news media were able to further frame Jane as a ‘bad’ woman, thus ensuring that the reader would perceive her in this particular way. However, the unhappy marriage coupled with her self-esteem issues could explain why Jane became so obsessed with Simon and the attention that she initially received from him, yet this explanation was not acknowledged in both sets of data. Jane’s acknowledgement of this influence is evidenced by the following statements:

I got suckered in big time (*Jane police interview*, June 2009)

I did it because I knew it would make him happy. I felt disgusted with myself, but I did it anyway (*Jane police interview*, June 2009)

I said to him ‘you’ve been grooming me’ and he replied, I didn’t need grooming because it was something that just needed to come out. I agreed with him because I knew that was something that he wanted to hear (*Jane police interview* June 2009).

The last quote in particular highlights that even at points when Jane acknowledged that Simon had been in her words ‘grooming’ her, she continued to ignore the issue to make Simon happy. This again is another example of how Jane prioritised Simon’s happiness over her own ability of recognising what is right and wrong. Another example of this is the following exchange from her police interviews:

Jane: He said all sorts of things to me, like, you know, if you take some pictures, or something like that and I said ‘well what would you do for me if I done that for you?’ Like joking.

PO: yeah

Jane: And I said ‘you’ll have to put a ring on my finger to make me do things like that and he was like ‘mmm’, so I did. Then of course the more photos you take the more you get back, you know, in interest” (*Jane police interview*, June 2009).

The trivialised language that Jane uses in this extract, such as her use of the phrase ‘just joking’ and her suggestion that taking more indecent photographs equates to more interest from Simon, highlights that her infatuation with him had led her to become somewhat desensitised to the enormity of her crimes. The naivety of Jane’s belief that her role in the offending would eventually lead to a marriage proposal further highlights the extent to which her relationship with Simon had transformed from a virtual world setting to her real life. Stanley (2001) argues that online interaction which involves emotion and intimacy is *of* the real world and is not separate from it. Therefore, rather than the news media and case file material paying a disproportionate level of attention to the fact that the two had ‘never met in person’, the potential impact of Jane’s feelings towards Simon could have been viewed with greater significance.

Overall, this thesis argues that the range of examples discussed previously, such as Jane’s need to make Simon happy, her low self-esteem, unhappy marriage and hope for a future relationship together, collectively highlights that Jane was enthralled by Simon and that this, at least to some extent, played a role in her reasons for offending. Jane’s perspective highlights that despite the fact that both journalists and criminal justice professionals minimised the impact of her relationship with Simon on her co-offending, she herself suggests that this obsession and relationship did play a significant role. This was also highlighted by Simon himself in the case summary, “he accepts that if it hadn’t have been for his presence

in these women's lives, they would not have gone on to abuse the children in their care" (*Pre-sentence report*, November 2009). This highlights that despite the fact that both Simon and Jane expressed the significance of his influence on her criminality, this was not viewed to be a believable potential explanation for Jane's involvement in the offences. This demonstrates that Jane's perspective was minimised and deemed to be insignificant in this case, thus her voice and point of view were rendered invisible.

## **Conclusion**

Rather than being viewed as self-serving, autonomous institutions, the complex relationship between the legal & criminal justice systems and the news media is explored in this thesis to develop a more nuanced understanding of how criminal justice matters are communicated to the public (Surrette, 1998; Brown, 2003).

Within the context of the current case, Jane was represented in specific ways in both the news media and the case file material. Jane was framed in the news media as being the 'main offender', thus implying that her offending was much more significant and of greater severity than her accomplices. The over-representation of issues such as the 'female sexual offender', or child sexual abuse in general, has been argued to lead to moral panics and media waves which do not necessarily represent an increase in crime (Cohen, 1972; Soothill & Walby, 1991; Kitzinger, 2004). Cohen wrote:

Societies appear to be subject every now and then to periods of moral panic.

A condition episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest (1972:9).

Due to the media being a main source of information about crime and criminal justice matters (Altheide, 2003), the public only received the news medias version of events relating to this story, which may have played a significant role in how Jane's case was perceived and understood..

Various journalistic practices, such as selection, exclusion, elaboration and the use of stereotypical images and metaphors (Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Tankard, 2001), were used to frame Jane as a 'bad' female offender, and as a woman who had deviated from the patriarchal ideal of femininity. Despite the case file material displaying a more balanced overview of the case, with the exception of her defence team, Jane was represented according to the discourses surrounding appropriate femininity and the Victorian ideals of respectability, domesticity and motherhood (Ballinger, 2000). This demonstrates that the ideologies surrounding such historical concepts are still evident and significant today. Jane's confinement to the roles of woman, mother and nursery worker are unsurprising, as research suggests that female offenders are often judged for their transgressions against the discourses surrounding femininity, motherhood and womanhood (Naffine, 1987; Ballinger, 2000). In news media discourse in particular, it was clear that Jane was not only judged for the crimes that she committed, but she was judged in equal measure as a woman who had deviated against her expected gender roles.

Furthermore, Jane's voice was mostly muted throughout the duration of the case, thus rendering her version of events invisible. As recommended by Ballinger (2012), rather than silencing female offenders in this way, the law should allow for their voices to be heard, from their own point of view, in order to ensure that the legal and criminal justice systems are adhering to the requirements of 'right to a fair trial' and 'due process'.

In addition, Jane's explanations and understanding of her relationship with Simon were not deemed to be significant by legal professionals (with, questionably, the exception of her defence) and journalists. Jane argued that her infatuation and feelings that she had towards Simon played a significant role in her reasons for becoming involved in the offending, namely, that she wouldn't have offended without him. This explanation was not fully acknowledged by journalists and legal professionals, which may have been in part due to their failure to understand or explore the potential impact of online relationships. Dombrowski, Gischlar and Durst (2007) suggest that in online relationships, people may be more inclined to share deeply personal information without ever meeting the other person.

Furthermore Barraket & Henry- Waring (2008) suggests that intimate, online communication can be an addictive type of communication, which intensifies with greater speed in comparison to face-to-face dating. Such issues were not explored by both journalists and legal professionals and they instead expressed their disbelief at the fact that Jane and Simon had never met in person, rather than attempting to understand the impact and significance of online relationships.

Furthermore, Simon acknowledged himself that each of the women would not have become involved in such offending were it not for his influence, yet as previously established, this was not acknowledged in Jane's Judge's closing speech.



Furthermore, each of the women had no similar previous offences and Jane in particular suggested that she received 'no sexual enjoyment' from her participation in the crimes, therefore highlighting that Simon's influence may have had a significant impact on her offending. Within this context, it is argued here that Simon's emotional manipulation and coercion played a significant role in Jane's involvement in the offending. Rather than discounting this explanation due to the lack of physical contact, the feelings that Jane had towards Simon coupled with her assertion that she would do anything to 'make him happy', could be understood as a being a potential 'coercive' pathway into criminality. This concept will be explored further later in the synthesising analysing chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SARAH JOHNSON CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

#### **Sarah Johnson: The Background**

In August 2002, David Fox was charged with the abduction and murder of two schoolchildren, Lucy and Katie. He was found guilty in December 2003 and was sentenced to life imprisonment for their murder. His girlfriend Sarah Johnson was charged with two counts of assisting an offender, but was cleared of these offences and was found guilty of conspiring to pervert the course of justice. Sarah was 22 years old at the time of the offence and had no previous offending history. She provided a false alibi for David on the night that the two girls were murdered, but she insisted throughout the trial that she did not believe, at any point, that David had murdered them. She received a three and a half year prison sentence. In 2005, Sarah Johnson was granted indefinite anonymity by the High Court. Three other individuals in the UK have been granted indefinite anonymity: Mary Bell, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables. Significantly, Sarah Johnson is the only one not to have committed murder (Jones and Wardle, 2008).

## **The news media framing of Sarah: General observations**

The case of Sarah Johnson received extensive and prolonged media attention, therefore, it was considered to be valuable to explore both the wider framing of the case along with the individual framing of Sarah, to gain a more nuanced understanding of the overall media portrayal of this case. The potential reasons for such sustained public and media interest are many. For example, Lucy and Katie's murder took place in a quiet town (Gerrard, 2004) and it was persistently questioned how David, who had been previously charged with having under-age sex with three girls between 1995 and 1998 (*Probation Officer Summary*, May 2003), had been employed as a caretaker in a school. Moreover, crimes which involve the murder and/or sexual abuse of children invoke a harsh and punitive response from both the media and public, particularly when involving female perpetrators (Morrissey, 2003; Kitzinger, 2004; Marsh and Melville, 2009). Marsh and Melville (2009) argue that in cases of child murder which involve female-male co-offending, the media attention is unequivocally focussed on the female offender, irrespective of their level of involvement in the offence. This observation could be extended to the current case, as Sarah received a similar volume of negative coverage in comparison to David, despite it being concluded in court that she was not directly involved in the murder or kidnap of the two children and she was also cleared of two counts of assisting an offender.

Between the period from when the story initially featured in the news media (4<sup>th</sup> August 2002) and two weeks following the sentencing of Sarah and David (31<sup>st</sup> December 2003), Sarah was mentioned in the newspapers selected for analysis on 1,680 occasions (See Table 5).

*Table 5: Amount of times ‘Sarah Johnson’ cited between day of charge and two weeks following the sentencing*

|                                 |             |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Daily Mail                      | 164         |
| Daily Telegraph                 | 119         |
| Express Papers                  | 354         |
| The Guardian                    | 119         |
| The Independent                 | 163         |
| The Mirror and Mirror on Sunday | 296         |
| News of the world               | 38          |
| The People                      | 18          |
| The Sun                         | 200         |
| Sunday Express                  | 30          |
| Sunday Telegraph                | 12          |
| Sunday Times                    | 10          |
| The Times                       | 157         |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>1680</b> |

Whilst certain key dates, such as David’s and Sarah’s first day in court and their sentencing, received more extensive coverage than others, reporting remained relatively consistent during this period. As outlined in Table 6, the overall framing of Sarah was overwhelmingly negative, with 1,240 having an overall negative tone and just 10 being positive (the remainder of the articles being either neutral or non applicable).

*Table 6: Overall tone of articles analysed*

| Newspaper             | Positive | Negative | Neutral | N.A |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|---------|-----|
| Daily Mail            |          | 137      | 23      | 4   |
| Telegraph             | 1        | 80       | 36      |     |
| Daily Star            |          | 119      | 23      |     |
| Express newspapers    | 1        | 173      | 37      | 1   |
| Guardian              | 5        | 51       | 62      | 1   |
| Independent           | 2        | 75       | 53      | 1   |
| Independent on Sunday |          | 25       | 7       |     |
| Mirror                |          | 245      | 49      | 2   |
| News of the world     |          | 36       | 2       |     |
| People                |          | 16       | 2       |     |
| Sun                   | 1        | 148      | 40      | 2   |
| Sunday Express        |          | 27       | 3       |     |

|                  |           |              |            |           |
|------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| Sunday Telegraph |           | 8            | 4          |           |
| Sunday Times     |           | 6            | 4          |           |
| Times            |           | 94           | 63         |           |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>10</b> | <b>1,240</b> | <b>408</b> | <b>11</b> |

Arguably, the news media would have been the main source of information for the public about this case, therefore the overall negative framing and the ways in which the articles were constructed would have had a potentially significant impact on how the public perceived the case and those involved (Greer, 2007; Altheide, 2003).

Significantly, there was a gap of over a year between the initial charging of David and Sarah and when their case eventually went to trial and during this period, the media reported extensively on the couple's history and made indirect suggestions that they were guilty before they were sentenced. Before the trial in November 2003, criminal justice professionals, particularly the Judge and defence teams, criticised the medias portrayal of the case and argued that many newspapers, particularly the tabloids, engaged in "prejudicial reporting" (*Outline of pre-trial hearing*, September 2003). Such concerns were evidenced by the organisation of a pre-trial hearing, which aimed to establish whether Sarah and David would be in a position to have a 'fair trial'. However the Judge eventually concluded that they were able to stand trial as "they are not the first notorious" offenders to be tried (*Outline of pre-trial hearing*, September 2003).

Furthermore, during the Judge's initial opening address to the jury during Sarah's and David's trial, he stated that "it would be idle to pretend that you have not read about (the case) or seen stories about it on the television", however "you are required to be impartial" and should be "uninfluenced and unprejudiced by anything you may have heard" (*Judge's opening address*, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2003). Whilst it is

not the intention of this thesis to establish whether or not the co-defendants were able to have a fair trial, the above extracts demonstrate the concerns and potential damaging impact of the reporting style that the news media engaged in throughout the progression of this case.

In addition, there were many stories, particularly following the sentencing, which provided extensive detail about David and Sarah's childhoods and lives, despite much of the content having very little to do with the case itself (*Daily Mail*, 18th December 2003a; *The Express*, 18th December, 2003; *The Times*, 18th December 2003). On the day following their sentencing, *The Sun* (18th December, 2003) included a free magazine about the couple, which provided details about their pasts and "personal traumas". Furthermore, certain stories, particularly tabloid articles, framed Sarah and David within a 'celebrity' and 'tell all' narrative. For example, *The Mirror* (17th December, 2002) ran the following article "Tearful *Fox* dumped by *Sarah*. Exclusive: Murder suspect devastated by split". The use of the emotive words "tearful" and "dumped" in this headline, coupled with the 'Exclusive' tag line, are not dissimilar to those found in celebrity magazines, which suggests that the public and media interest had extended beyond the crimes that they committed.

Drawing on the works of Jewkes (2011) and Haggerty (2009) this thesis argues that the extensive reporting of Sarah and David transformed the couple into 'anti-celebrities'. Jewkes (2011: 53) suggests that convicted criminals can become media 'celebrities' by virtue of the notoriety of their crimes. The extensive and prolonged media interest in David and Sarah, which detailed both their offending and personal lives, suggests that the couple achieved the 'anti-celebrity status' outlined by Jewkes (2011), as the public were both disturbed and fascinated by them in equal measure.

## **The framing of Sarah Johnson**

There were three dominant frames used to describe Sarah, her character and reasons for her offending, namely ‘the liar’, ‘the deviant woman’ and ‘the crazy woman’. ‘The liar’ frame will be explored in the first section of this chapter, as this is the most explicit way in which her reasons for offending and offending behaviour was framed in both the news media and case file material. The ‘deviant woman’ and ‘crazy woman’ frames and their various sub-frames are explored subsequently and detail the dominant ways in which Sarah as an individual or more specifically, a woman, was framed.

### Sarah ‘the liar’

The ‘liar’ and ‘deceiver’ frame was the most direct and explicit way in which Sarah’s reasons for her offending was framed in both the news media and case file material. Whilst this frame was to some extent expected, due to Sarah’s offending involving providing a false alibi for David, the following section will explore the various ways in which this narrative was articulated in both data sets.

Research suggests that female offenders continue to be constructed as inherent ‘deceivers’ and ‘manipulators’ (Naffine, 1997; Jewkes, 2011), serving to reinforce traditional explanations of female criminality, which argue that female offenders are inherently more deceitful than male offenders (Lombroso and Ferrero, 1895; Pollack, 1950). To evidence Sarah’s supposed natural and inherent capacity to deceive, the prosecution provided examples of her ability to lie in contexts outside

of her offending. For example, it was suggested that Sarah lied on her curriculum vitae, as she stated that she had a number of GCSE qualifications, “when in fact, she had not” (*Prosecution summary*, November 2003). By highlighting this falsehood, the prosecution were able to imply that Sarah had lied and deceived at other points during her life, thus framing this as a natural aspect of her character and her nature as a woman and not an isolated incident related to her offending.

Within the case file material, the debate surrounding the extent to which Sarah had lied was one of the main aspects of the case which was discussed throughout both the defence and prosecution arguments. Sarah was eventually charged with perverting the course of justice and significantly, was not charged with two counts of assisting an offender. This suggests that the jury believed that whilst Sarah had provided a false alibi on the night of the girls murder, she did not know that David had murdered them and she was not directly involved in the murders.

In any legal trial, there are a number of perspectives, for example, the defendant(s), the prosecution and defence teams, the Judge and the jury, therefore in any legal case, there is an ‘excess of interpretation’ and a number of competing points of view (Constable, 2008). With this in mind, unsurprisingly, the prosecution and defence teams framed the extent and reasons for Sarah’s lying in different ways, as whilst the defence argued that she had lied to “protect” David, the prosecution suggested that she was a “persistent liar” and a “natural deceiver” (*Prosecution opening statements*, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2003). The prosecution’s argument that Sarah was a “skilled” and “natural liar” implied that lying and deceiving were inherent aspects of her character, which therefore framed her offending and persona as being directly connected.



The judge also discussed Sarah’s ability to lie in his closing speech, as evidenced by the following extracts:

You had plenty of opportunity to refuse to persist in a course of lying and deception, you chose not to

(You lied) all too readily and all too glibly (*Judge’s closing speech*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2003).

The Judge’s closing speech predominantly focused on Sarah’s ability to lie and the ways in which her offending “compounded the misery” of the families. Therefore whilst the judge did not directly suggest that lying was an inherent aspect of Sarah’s character, as was suggested by the prosecution, his emphasis on Sarah’s ability to lie illustrates that she was defined as a ‘liar’ in other contexts throughout the trial and not only during prosecution arguments.

In the news media material, Sarah’s identity as a ‘liar’ was evident throughout the time period analysed, thus demonstrating the longevity of this particular frame (see keywords table 7 for quantification of the terms ‘lying’, ‘lie’ and ‘liar’)

| <i>Table 7: Key word analysis ‘lying’, ‘lie’, ‘liar’</i> |       |     |      |
|--|-------|-----|------|
| Newspaper  | Lying | Lie | Liar |
| Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday                            | 30    | 9   | 4    |
| Daily Telegraph  | 20    | 11  | 2    |
| Express Newspapers (including Daily Star)                | 51    | 22  | 11   |
| Guardian   | 10    | 8   | 3    |
| Independent  | 18    | 10  | 1    |
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror                                 | 32    | 24  | 1`2  |
| News of the world  | 2     | 2   |      |
| The Sun  | 24    | 12  | 7    |
| Sunday Express   | 3     | 1   | 1    |
| Sunday Telegraph   | 1     |     |      |
| Sunday Times   |       | 1   |      |

|              |            |            |           |
|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| The Times    | 11         | 10         | 4         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>202</b> | <b>110</b> | <b>45</b> |

Sarah's prescribed identity as a 'liar' was often supported with additional descriptives to emphasise the extent of her ability to lie and deceive. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

Snivelling, selfish liar (*The Sun B*, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2003)

The Evil liar (*The Express B*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

Compulsive liar (*The Express C*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

Whilst broadsheet newspapers also used this emphasis technique, they often used direct quotes from the trial, as evidenced by the following:

The judge condemned her as a selfish woman and a glib liar (*The Times*, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

And you have been a persistent liar from Tuesday morning (August 6, 2002) onwards, haven't you? (Direct quote from prosecution, *The Times*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

*Sarah* was hardly a reluctant liar (Direct quote from prosecution, *Daily Telegraph*, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2003).

However, when comparing the reporting strategies and content between the tabloid and broadsheet articles referenced above, many of the differences were due to linguistic felicity rather than a demonstration of significant difference in terms of perspective or point of view. Both placed significant emphasis on Sarah's ability to lie and the extent to which she was able to deceive, which thus served to frame her

as a ‘natural’ liar. Furthermore, another aspect of Sarah’s framing as a liar in the news media was the assertion that she lied to protect both herself and David. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

“*Sarah Johnson* lied for *Fox* to preserve her bright future with him” (*Daily Mail*, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2003).

“*Ms Johnson* continued to lie for *Mr Fox* to protect him because she believed he had suffered a nervous breakdown after being wrongly accused of a crime in the past” (*The Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2003)

“The trial heard how *Sarah* repeatedly lied to help *Fox* throughout the investigation into the girls' disappearance, despite mounting evidence of his involvement. And it became clear during the hearing that conniving *Sarah* was prepared to keep up her deception -right until her own freedom was at stake” (*The Sun B*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

By framing Sarah’s lies as self-serving and as a method of protection not only for David, but also for herself, her decision to lie was thus framed as a rational choice which served her own self- interest. Furthermore, whilst the notion of ‘standing by your man’ is traditionally viewed as an expectation of being a woman and a ‘good partner’, this was not how Sarah’s deception was framed in the news media, particularly in the tabloids, for example:

Many women, out of mistaken loyalty, might tell a porkie to protect a partner. But not if they happened to live where two 10-year-old girls had just mysteriously disappeared (*Daily Star*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2003).

Due to Sarah's protection of David occurring within the context of providing a false alibi for child murder, whether knowingly or not, the idea of 'standing by your man' was framed to be of minimal significance and she was instead questioned as a woman who prioritised her own and her partners well-being over the protection of children (Naylor, 2001).

### Sarah 'the Deviant Woman'

Similarly to the Jane Turner case, many of the frames and narratives used to describe Sarah centred upon her deviations against her gender role expectations. Sarah's deviancy was thus framed as being two fold, as she was judged for the crime that she committed and for her deviations against the patriarchal expectations of femininity and womanhood (Lloyd, 1995). However, Sarah's framing as a deviant woman was less straightforward than the Jane Turner case, as in many ways, it could be argued that she appeared to be the 'ideal woman'. She was a self-titled "house wife" (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002), she was "obsessive compulsive" about cleaning (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002), was subservient to David and she was willing to lie to protect him because she "loved him very much" (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). The following section of the chapter will explore the ways in which the news media in particular attempted to frame Sarah as a 'deviant woman'. Due to the various levels and facets of this frame, this section has been divided into a number of sub-frames to highlight the ways in which this frame was utilised in both the case file and news material. It is important to note that rather than these sub-frames being viewed as being separate from each other, they were often used interchangeably by journalists

and should be understood as framing techniques and part of the wider ‘deviant woman’ narrative.

### *Good woman vs. bad woman*

One of the tools which both legal professionals and particularly journalists, used to frame Sarah as a deviant woman was the dichotomy of the ‘good woman vs. bad woman’ narrative. One of the ways in which this was achieved was by making direct or indirect comparisons to other ‘good’ women who featured in the case. Within the news media context, this was particularly evident following Sarah’s first appearance in court. When Sarah arrived at court, she was faced by more than “500 people” most of whom supported banners containing phrases such as “rot in hell forever” (*Daily Mail*, 22nd August 2002), thus demonstrating the extent to which she had become a public hate figure. The use of imagery further emphasised this public outrage, as a number of articles used images of the protests to visually demonstrate the anger of the public. During this period of reporting, the media justified the public’s anger by highlighting that many of the protestors were parents and ‘mothers’, who felt anger and disgust towards Sarah. One image in particular used in *The Mirror* (22nd August, 2002), which was a close up shot of a woman shouting, highlights that whilst this image would have typically been viewed as overly aggressive, its placement next to the headline “*Johnson* faces rage of mob” provided a context for the anger, thus framing the behaviour as justifiable. This notion is further highlighted by the following extracts and quotes from mothers:

There was reasoned anger too. Many of those who wanted to vent their feelings in this very public way were mothers with young children (*Daily Mail*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2002)

I'm here because I'm a mother and I can't imagine what those parents are going through (*The Sun*, 22nd August, 2002)

A mother of six, said: "I got up this morning and decided to come down to be with people who are feeling the same .I find it so hard to come to terms with it, that those two little girls are gone. It's taken over my life - I can't seem to get on with anything. It's really hard (*Daily Telegraph*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2002).

By making these indirect comparisons between the 'good' mothers and Sarah, the media successfully framed Sarah as a 'bad' woman, who is distinctly different from the nurturing and maternal protesting mothers. The mothers anger was thus framed as being justified, as despite the fact that they were "throwing eggs" (*The Guardian* 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2002), "banging" on the "sides of the police van with their fists" (*The Sun*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2002) and many took their children to the protests, this behaviour was juxtaposed with the 'unthinkable' crimes that Sarah was involved with.

Furthermore, Sarah was also framed within the 'good woman, bad woman' dichotomy in the news media, due to her role as a teaching assistant. Sarah was the teaching assistant of Lucy and Katie prior to their murder and when quantified, the search term "teaching assistant" was mentioned in 366 of the articles analysed (See table 8).

| <i>Table 8: Key word analysis Sarah Johnson, “teaching assistant”</i> |            |
|---|------------|
| Daily Mail  | 35         |
| Daily Telegraph   | 34         |
| Express newspapers  | 83         |
| Guardian  | 29         |
| Independent   | 47         |
| Mirror  | 59         |
| News of the World   | 4          |
| The People  | 5          |
| The Sun   | 26         |
| Sunday Express  | 6          |
| Sunday Telegraph  | 2          |
| Sunday Times  | 4          |
| The Times   | 31         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>366</b> |

Significant to this aspect of the news frame is that her identity as a teaching assistant was frequently juxtaposed with descriptions of her involvement in the offending. This is exemplified by the following extracts:

Her role had won the affection of the 10 year olds” (*The Independent*, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003) and later in the same article, the journalist quotes “she admitted telling a string of immoral lies to newsmen and police after *Lucy* and *Katie* died”

They were very close to me. They wanted to be bridesmaids when I got married” followed by the quote “*Sarah Johnson* had to re-shoot a TV interview after talking as if *Lucy* and *Katie* were dead before their fates were known (*Daily Star*, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2003)

As highlighted by the extracts above, Sarah’s betrayal of trust within the context of her teaching assistant role was framed as being particularly abhorrent due to the ‘close’ relationship that she shared with Katie and Lucy. For example, it was suggested that the “girls asked to be *Sarah*’s bridesmaids” and “they even discussed

what dress they would wear” (*The Express*, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2003). The use of imagery played a significant role in this context, as various articles used an image taken of Sarah during the search for the girls, where she was holding a homemade card that Lucy made for her. For example *The Daily Telegraph* (20<sup>th</sup> August 2002) used this image in conjunction with the headline “Rootless and troubled lives of couple suspected of killing *Lucy* and *Katie*”. Therefore, due to the expected nurturing and caring personalities of female teaching assistants, Sarah was thus framed as a ‘*doubly* bad woman’ as she deviated against both her role as a woman, but also her role as a teaching assistant. Similarly to the previously analysed Jane Turner case, if female offenders are viewed to have transgressed more than one gendered role or identity (for example, woman, mother and/or a loco parentis role) then their deviancy is viewed to be more significant and abhorrent.

Another example of the ‘good woman, bad woman’ frame in the context of the news media is the indirect comparisons that were made between Sarah and the mothers of Lucy and Katie. This was particularly evident following Sarah’s and David’s first appearance in court together. The use of imagery played a significant role in the development of this aspect of the news frame, for example, *The Sun* (17<sup>th</sup> April, 2003) ran the headline “Did you kill our girls?” next to two adjacent images of the girl’s parents and Sarah and David. By juxtaposing these two images in this way, the news media allowed the familiar myths of ‘good versus evil’ to play out in front of the readers eyes. Furthermore, following the trial, *The Mirror* (29<sup>th</sup> December, 2003) ran a story with the headline “I want to sit down with *Johnson* woman to woman; how could she do what she did?” (*The Mirror*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 2003), which was a direct quote from Katie’s mother. By using the voice of the victim’s mother to question Sarah as a woman in this way, the reader is encouraged



to make direct comparisons between the archetypal mother/ woman and the ‘deviant’ Sarah.

Comparisons between Sarah and the victims’ mothers were also evident in the case file material, however this was much more indirect. The prosecution often made broad comparisons and associations between Sarah and the victim’s parents. For example, in the prosecution opening statement it was said “You persistently lied and gave no thought or consideration to the parents of those girls. I question how you, as a woman, could have done this” (*Prosecution opening speech*, November 2003). Despite *directly* making comparisons to the victim’s parents, by referring to Sarah’s sex in this way, the prosecution *indirectly* encouraged comparisons to be drawn with the victim’s mothers specifically. Furthermore, the prosecution goes on to state that Sarah “prolonged their (the parents) suffering to an unimaginable” level (*Prosecution opening speech*, November 2003). By highlighting the suffering that she caused the parents, Sarah is successfully framed as a ‘bad’ woman, who is the antithesis of the idealistic parents, or more specifically mothers, of the victims.

#### *Obsessive cleaner vs. Clean-up*

Another dichotomy, which was evident in the context of the current ‘deviant woman’ frame, was the complex framing of Sarah within the familiar ‘housewife’ narrative. As previously noted, Sarah described herself as a “housewife” and as the person who “picked up after David” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). In the case file material, both her testimony and defence team suggested that she was “very house-proud” and that she was an “obsessive cleaner” who cleaned the house “everyday” (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, December 2003). This

complements the notion discussed earlier in the chapter as in many ways, Sarah appeared to be the ideal partner to David, as in many ways she adhered to the idealistic discourses surrounding being a ‘housewife’ and subservient partner.

However, both the prosecution and journalists adopted a different perspective in relation to Sarah’s cleaning habits and alternatively, argued that Sarah’s implied ‘obsession’ with cleaning was contextually determined and related to her offending. The prosecution in particular argued that because Sarah was seen cleaning the house during the days following the girls murder, this evidenced that she engaged in a ‘purposeful’, rather than routine, cleaning of the house to help David cover up his offences. This is demonstrated in the following quotes:

You helped *Fox* in the ultimate spring clean of your house (*Prosecution cross examination*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

That house had been subjected to the most careful clean up by you and *David* (*Prosecution cross examination*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

Whilst it is unsurprising that the prosecution adopted this perspective, as their aim was to implicate Sarah as guilty, the news media also adopted a similar standpoint, suggesting that Sarah’s clean-up of the house was to cover up evidence, rather than part of her routine (See keyword table 9 for quantitative analysis of this frame).

| <i>Table 9: Key word analysis Sarah Johnson “clean up”</i> |    |
|--|----|
| Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday                              | 15 |
| Daily Telegraph  | 8  |
| Express newspapers   | 21 |
| Guardian   | 8  |
| Independent  | 16 |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday                                | 18 |
| News of the World  | 1  |
| The People   | 1  |
| The Sun  | 6  |

|              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| The Times    | 11         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>105</b> |

This is evidenced in the following quotes:

She rubbed so hard the paint came off the tiles (*Daily Star*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2003)

The cottage was subjected to an intensive clean-up(*The Independent*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

The pair washed and vacuumed the home they shared in "a massive clean-up". They were so thorough that not a head hair, a fingerprint nor blood nor saliva to give DNA from either girl was found (*Daily Telegraph*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

With this in mind, within the context of the prosecution and more specifically the media, rather than Sarah's cleaning being used to frame her as the 'housewife' that she suggested she was, it instead served to frame her as a crazed 'Lady Macbeth' character, a common identity prescribed to demonstrate feminine evil (Heidensohn, 1996), frantically cleaning the house to hide David's crimes. This highlights that despite Sarah suggesting that she was a doting partner, housewife and an 'obsessive cleaner', the nature of her offending meant that she was framed as a 'deviant woman' in most, if not all, aspects of her life not only in relation to her offending, but also in instances which may have normatively served to frame her as an 'ideal' partner and woman.

## *Myra Mark II*

The direct and indirect comparisons between Myra Hindley and Sarah Johnson were particularly significant to Sarah's framing as a 'deviant woman' within the context of the news media. As previously discussed, Hindley has become a folk devil who "connotes affectless evil" in a way that Brady has never achieved. The outrage of a woman being involved in child murder undoubtedly played a significant role in her infamy (Birch, 1993; Ritchie, 1988).

Whilst comparisons to Hindley were also made in the Jane Turner case, such comparisons were much more prevalent in Sarah's case, potentially due to the notable similarities between the two women. For example, both women co-offended with their male partner, both argued that they were 'under their partners spell' and both of their crimes involved children. Despite not committing a violent crime herself, Sarah experienced "guilt through association, not just from *David Fox*, but from Myra herself" (Jones and Wardle, 2010: 62). Jones and Wardle (2010) explored the visual construction of Sarah Johnson and found that photographs of Hindley were often used in articles discussing Sarah, to directly highlight the suggested similarities between the two women to the reader. Within the context of the current sub-frame, it is important to note that the 'Myra Mark II' narrative was predominantly evident in the tabloid material, rather than the broadsheet articles analysed. On the occasions when Hindley was mentioned in broadsheet articles, it was mainly to highlight that during Sarah's testimony, she had stated that fellow prison inmates had branded her "Myra Hindley the second" (*The Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003b). However, the differences between the tabloid and broadsheet reporting of this sub-frame were mostly examples of differing methods of articulation and language use, rather than differing perspectives and ideologies.

The most entrenched template for representing female offenders is the monster (Smart, 1977; Carlen, 1985; Birch, 1993; Ritchie, 1988; Morrissey, 2003) and in the context of the contemporary history of women who have killed their own or other peoples children, the archetypal ‘monstrous’ woman remains to be Myra Hindley. By making associations between Sarah and Myra Hindley, the news media thus framed Sarah as being as bad as ‘the most hated woman in Britain’ (Birch, 1993). This label is routinely invoked to high profile female offenders as a journalistic strategy to encourage the reader to draw upon familiar images of female criminality. As well as using imagery, (Jones and Wardle, 2010) the news media also used specific linguistic framing techniques to make this association. This is evidenced by the following extracts:

*Sarah: Why I believe she’s the new Myra (Daily Mail, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2003)*

Like Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, the names *David Fox* and *Sarah Johnson* have become bywords for evil (*The Express*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003d)

Just as her police photo resembled Hindley’s in the strong face marred by a surly stare and in the circumstances, obscene-defiance, so there was something about her performance at the Old Bailey, a hardness between the self-obsession and self-pity, that raised uncomfortable echoes of the 1966 trial of Myra Hindley (*The Express*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003e)

By making the comparisons highlighted above, the news media firmly framed Sarah as a ‘deviant woman’ not only due to the crimes that she committed, but also due to her associations and similarities with Myra Hindley. The comparisons with Hindley, who remains to be the archetypal ‘deviant’ and ‘monstrous’ woman, enabled journalists to make a clear distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, thus

exemplifying Young's (1999) concept of the 'manufacture of monsters'. Young (1999) argues that the mass media play a key role in the othering and demonization process of offenders, therefore Sarah's indirect affiliation with Hindley and direct association with David ensured that she was framed as an equal accomplice in her co-offending, despite her unequal involvement and was consequently represented as a deviant woman and monster.

### *Virgin vs. Whore*

The final sub-frame within the 'deviant woman' frame, which was evident in both the case file and news media material was the 'virgin/ whore dichotomy'. Benedict (1992) argues that there is a narrow range of typifications for female offenders, one of which being the 'virgin/whore' dichotomy. Heidensohn (1996) suggests that the 'fallen woman' narrative extends beyond prostitution and female offenders whose criminality involves sexual offences and it is frequently applied to most, if not all, female offenders, particularly those who commit unfeminine crimes, such as crimes against children. Similar to the Jane Turner case discussed previously, Sarah was framed as a 'whore' within the 'virgin/whore dichotomy', particularly within the news media. Within the context of the case file material, Sarah was frequently questioned about her sex life during her police interviews. This is demonstrated by the following extracts and questions from police officers:

PO: How soon after you knew *David* did you have sex with him?

Sarah: Couple of days

PO: How regularly would you say...

Sarah: quite regularly

PO: What would you call quite regularly? (*Sarah Johnson Police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002)

Police: who normally initiates sex between you?

Police: Do you watch or look at porn together?

Police: Do you ever talk about sex together?

Police: Do you and *David* share sexual fantasies?

Police: Have you ever shared sexual fantasies about children *Sarah*?" (Sarah responded no comment to each question, *Sarah Johnson Police interview*, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2002).

Even when Sarah suggested that she had a "much more emotional relationship with *David* rather than a physical one" (*Sarah Johnson Police Interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002), she was still probed on the subject. The questioning on the subject became so excessive that her Solicitor interjected to state "Haven't we explored this enough" (*Sarah Johnson Police Interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). Whilst asking questions about the nature of Sarah's relationship with David would have been standard police procedure, the extent to which she was interrogated about their sex life and the explicit nature of the questions is particularly significant. David received similar questioning, however this could be argued to be expected, due to the potential sexual nature of his offences and due to his history of sexual violence (he had numerous previous sexual offending charges, including having sex with a minor and rape, but he was never convicted) (*David Fox police interviews*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). However, Sarah was not being charged with crimes of a sexual nature or with the murder of

the girls, yet her questioning on the subject of sex was not dissimilar to David's and the nature of the questions, particularly those which questioned her 'sexual fantasies' and whether or not she had a 'sexual interest in children', implied that she was potentially sexually deviant (*Sarah Johnson Police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). There are a number of reasons as to why Sarah may have been persistently questioned on the subject of sex, for example, due to the 'standard police procedures' previously mentioned. However, when considered within the wider context of her framing, this narrative served to further frame her as a 'deviant' and 'fallen' woman, not only due to the nature of her offences, but her implied 'perverse' sex life, regardless of the fact that she provided no comment to all such questioning.

Within the context of the news media material, when quantified the term "sex" was cited in newspaper articles discussing Sarah on 288 occasions. However, when analysed further, 112 of these articles made direct references to Sarah's sex life, 150 discussed 'sex' and David, in which Sarah was only mentioned on one occasion and 26 articles detailed unrelated incidents (See Table 10).

| <i>Table 10: Keyword analysis Sarah Johnson, "sex"</i> |            |            |           |
|--|------------|------------|-----------|
| Newspaper  | Sarah      | David      | Other     |
| Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday                          | 20         | 13         | 5         |
| Daily Telegraph  | 9          | 11         | 1         |
| Express papers   | 21         | 35         | 2         |
| Guardian   | 14         | 15         | 1         |
| Independent  | 11         | 16         | 6         |
| Mirror   | 14         | 23         | 6         |
| News of the World                                      | 2          | 5          |           |
| The People   | 6          | 1          |           |
| The Sun  | 7          | 10         | 4         |
| Sunday Express   |            | 4          |           |
| Sunday Telegraph                                       | 2          | 1          | 1         |
| The Times  | 6          | 16         |           |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>112</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>26</b> |



Sarah's sex life was predominantly discussed in the tabloid newspapers and when mentioned in broadsheet articles, it was often in the form of direct quotes from the trial (for example, *The Guardian*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003; *The Independent*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003). A potential explanation for this is that tabloid newspapers in particular often report on personal issues which serve to individualise/ personalise crime actors (Jewkes, 2011) as well as sensational aspects to appeal to alleged 'human interest'. In the tabloid newspapers in particular, Sarah's sex life and behaviour was described as extrovert and "wild" (*Daily Star*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2002), particularly on 'nights out'. For example, it was suggested that she loved to "show off her bumblebee tattoo on her left breast" (*Daily Star*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2002) and "after a couple of drinks she would get up on the tables and start dancing and flashing her boobs" (*Daily Mail*, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2002). By following phrases such as those discussed above with descriptions of her sexual habits, the news media framed Sarah's supposed 'party life style' and her sex life as being directly associated. Furthermore, one of the dominant narratives used within the context of this frame was that Sarah was obsessed by sex or 'sex mad'. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

*Johnson* couldn't get enough sex- the raunchier and riskier the better (*The People*, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2003).

She reinvented herself as a sex crazed vamp (*Daily Mail*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003a)

Partygoers said that she drank heavily and was hungry for sex (*The Sun*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003c)

The extracts above echo the 'sex obsessed' discourses discussed in the Jane Turner case study, highlighting the cross-case relevance of this framing. The majority of the

content of the tabloid articles relating to Sarah's sex life consisted of extracts from various 'interviews' with Sarah's ex-partners. Whilst the news media used this as a tool to strengthen the claims made in the articles, the reliability of such sources can be questioned. Whilst police statements were taken from a number of Sarah's ex partners, many of which were used as 'sources' in the articles cited above, they were not used as witnesses during the trial, which questions their relevance to the overall case. This therefore suggests that whilst Sarah's sex life and supposed 'sex obsession' was not deemed to be significant during the trial itself, the news media framed this to be a significant aspect of Sarah's personality and lifestyle. This also highlights the journalistic tendency to place disproportionate attention to personal and individualised aspects of a criminal case, irrespective of their relevance to the trial and wider case proceedings (Jewkes, 2011; Nobles and Schiff, 2004).

Another aspect of this sub-frame within the context of the tabloid reporting centres upon the suggestion that Sarah enjoyed "wild", "weird" and "bizarre" sex (*The People*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2002). This facet of the sub-frame was used to evidence her 'depraved' nature, which served to frame Sarah as a 'deviant women' who wilfully defied her gender role expectations (Ballinger, 2000). This is evidenced by the following quotes:

Weird sex, scratching, biting and stilettos... our hell in bizarre world of Sarah (*The People*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2002)

She only got pleasure out of being dominated and humiliated and doing wilder and wilder things in bed (*The People*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2002)

In bed, she liked to keep her stilettos on, and nothing else. She liked rough sex (*Daily Mail*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

Randy raver *Sarah Johnson* howled so loudly during a sex romp in a conservatory horrified neighbours had to keep their kids indoors (*Daily Star*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

The use of animalistic language to describe Sarah's sexual practices, such as "scratching", "rough" and "wild", implied that her sex life was both depraved and different from the 'norm', which served to frame Sarah as a 'fallen' woman and thus the antithesis of the idealised, virginal image of 'Madonna'. Furthermore, the sources of these assertions are somewhat questionable, as most were referred to as 'ex boyfriends', 'neighbours' or simply as 'a source', within the article rather than being identified individuals directly involved in the case or trial. As previously discussed, just one of Sarah's ex-boyfriend's was a witness during the trial, so the relevancy of many of the 'sources' listed above to the wider case proceedings is somewhat partial.

Collectively, the frame 'deviant woman' illustrates that similar to Jane, certain identities and character frames were prescribed to Sarah to frame her as a 'bad' female offender (Lloyd, 1995; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002), particularly within the news media stories. Having now provided an overview of the ways in which Sarah was framed as a 'deviant woman', the following section will explore the ways in which various gendered assumptions were utilised to frame her within the familiar discourses of 'mad' and/ or 'bad'.

### ‘Crazy Sarah’

Particularly in the news media material, one of the ways in which Sarah’s character and behaviour was framed was as being ‘crazy’ or ‘crazed’. Whilst this frame and the various sub-frames were not as dominant as the ‘deviant woman’ frame discussed previously, many of the narratives were significant to the wider framing of Sarah and were set against the backdrop of the ‘deviant woman’ frame previously discussed.

The following section will attempt to explain the complicated ways in which Sarah’s behaviour was framed within the mad/bad female offender dichotomy. The naming of this frame as the ‘crazy woman’ was a purposeful decision, as whilst ‘mad’ female offenders are typically described as being ‘insane’ and having a ‘weak mind’ (Lloyd, 1995), the term ‘crazy’ has a number of additional connotations, for example, purposeful foolishness and acting ‘weird’ or ‘wild’. Therefore, within the context of this frame, the term ‘crazy’ is used to demonstrate that whilst Sarah’s behaviour often appeared to be described within the ‘mad’ woman narrative, particularly within the news media material, the language used to describe her frequently implied that this ‘madness’ was ‘feigned’ for self-serving purposes and that she thus made an active decision to engage in ‘crazy’ behaviour. Therefore rather than separating madness and badness into two distinct categories, it is argued here that the framing of Sarah’s behaviour within this context is more accurately described as a *scale* or to some extent a *continuum* of mad and bad.

This wider frame has been separated into two sub-frames, namely ‘Miss Jekyll and Hyde’ and ‘a cry for help or a cry for attention’ to highlight and differentiate the

ways in which this frame was utilised in different contexts. The ‘Miss Jekyll and Hyde’ sub-frame was evident only in the news articles.

### *Miss Jekyll and Hyde*

Whilst Sarah was only directly referred to as ‘Miss Jekyll and Hyde’ on ten occasions in the news media material (See Keyword Table 11), journalists often indirectly referred to the ‘two sides’ of her personality by highlighting that she was able to transform from a ‘shrinking violet’ to an ‘extrovert’ within a short space of time.

| <i>Table 11: Keyword analysis Sarah Johnson, “Miss Jekyll and Hyde”</i> |           |
|---|-----------|
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror  | 3         |
| Sun   | 2         |
| Express newspapers  | 2         |
| Independent   | 1         |
| Daily Telegraph   | 1         |
| Guardian  | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>10</b> |

*The Sun* (19th August 2002) ran the headline “Miss Jekyll and Hyde” and the main body of the article detailed how she was a “girl of many personalities” and that she could quickly change from being “quiet” to “wild”. However, such articles and others alike frequently framed Sarah’s ‘split’ personality as purposefully intended and due to her ‘excessive’ drinking rather than ‘madness’. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

*Sarah* displayed a wild, flirtatious side when drunk and titillated one boyfriend by having a bumblebee tattooed above her left breast. ‘*Sarah* was a real Jekyll

and Hyde: an extrovert one minute, a shrinking violet the next,' said *Jason Brown* (*Daily Telegraph*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

On the surface she looked like butter wouldn't melt" but "after a couple of drinks, she would get up on the tables and start dancing (*The Sun*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2002)

She had a bubbly and lively personality but she didn't show it until she had a drink. She could be wild with it (*The Express*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2002).

As evidenced by the quotes cited above, this frame was often articulated by using Sarah's ex- boyfriends as sources and journalists thus made use of these comments to evidence her changing personality. The use of such sources and comments also allowed Sarah's 'split personality' and instability to be framed as the result of her drinking habits, thus suggesting that her 'Jekyll and Hyde' character was due to a self-inflicted loss of control. Furthermore, the news media also implied that the changing nature of Sarah's personality caused her to "fly into drunk fuelled rages" (*The People*, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2002), thus suggesting that her supposed 'party girl' persona hid a more sinister side to her personality. However despite such terms appearing to evidence Sarah's 'unstable' and 'unhinged' personality, the specific use of language to describe her behaviour such as "strange" (*The Sun*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2002) and 'wild' served to frame Sarah's changing behaviour as 'crazy' and 'bizarre', rather than the result of madness and loss of control.

*A cry for help or a cry for attention?*

When alluding to Sarah's mental health or the suggested extent of her 'craziness' the main issues which were discussed were her eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia and her suicide attempts. Whilst these were not the main issues that were discussed within the wider context of the case, such issues received a significant amount of press attention in particular, despite the lack of direct relevance to the case. Within the context of the case file material, Sarah's Psychological Report (*Psychological Report*, September 2002) acknowledged the following:

The defendant has suffered, since childhood, from a variety of psychological and related health problems, including panic attacks and eating disorders and her treatment has included hospitalisation and a variety of psychiatric care over the years (*Psychological Report*, September 2002).

Despite Sarah's history of mental health problems, psychological tests revealed that she was fit to stand trial. However, the impact of her eating disorder and other psychological issues were discussed by her defence team during trial. Sarah's defence team suggested that David often capitalised on Sarah's self-esteem issues and used this to his advantage to control and psychologically abuse her (Sarah's defence outline, November 2003). By making such assertions, Sarah's defence team implied that her vulnerability, due to eating disorders and other related psychological issues, caused her to be at significant risk of manipulation from David, which may have thus played a role in her reasons for offending and providing the false alibi. Alternatively, the prosecution paid little, if any, attention to Sarah's eating disorder and rather than framing her as a potentially vulnerable

woman, they portrayed her as ‘cold’ and ‘rational’ (*Prosecution opening and closing speech*, November/ December 2003). Whilst minimal attention was paid to Sarah’s eating disorder during the trial, journalists placed a disproportionate emphasis on this within the context of the news media.

When quantified, the term ‘eating disorder’ was mentioned alongside Sarah’s name in the articles analysed on 47 occasions and ‘anorexia’ was mentioned 55 times (See Keyword Table 12).

| <i>Table 12: Keyword analysis Sarah Johnson, “eating disorder”</i> |                 |           |
|--|-----------------|-----------|
| Newspaper  | Eating disorder | Anorexia  |
| Daily Mail   | 8               | 9         |
| Telegraph  | 3               | 4         |
| Express newspapers   | 14              | 9         |
| Guardian   | 3               | 4         |
| Independent  | 1               | 4         |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday  | 10              | 18        |
| The Sun  | 2               | 3         |
| Sunday Express   | 4               | 2         |
| The Times  | 2               | 1         |
| Sunday Times   |                 | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>47</b>       | <b>55</b> |

Whilst these numbers appear to be relatively low, as previously highlighted, Sarah’s eating disorder was mentioned to a much lesser extent in the case file material, thus demonstrating that the news media placed unequal significance on this aspect of Sarah’s character. The news medias over-reporting of this issue again highlights its tendency to focus on sensationalised and personal aspects of a criminal case, or more significantly, the aspects of the case which they perceive to be the most newsworthy (Nobles and Schiff, 2004; Jewkes, 2011).

Initial analysis suggested that Sarah’s eating disorder was to some extent accurately reported on in the context of the news media as it was suggested that she



appeared to be “wasting away” (*Daily Mail*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2002), that she “has a history of the disorder which has put her in hospital before” (*The Guardian*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2002) and that there were “serious concerns about her dramatic weight loss” (*Sunday Mirror*, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2002). This suggests that at least to some extent, Sarah was portrayed somewhat sympathetically within the context of this sub-frame. However, in many articles Sarah was described as visibly looking like a “picture of health” and that “she didn’t appear to be much thinner than when she was arrested two months ago” (*The Mirror*, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2002), thus implying that Sarah had exaggerated the extent of her eating disorder. In a similar vein, it was also frequently suggested that Sarah used her eating disorder to get ‘special treatment’, which is evidenced by the following quotes:

(Whilst in hospital) *Sarah* was given priority over the waiting patients (*Daily Mail*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2002).

*Johnson*- who two weeks ago was briefly rushed to hospital suffering from the effects of the eating disorder anorexia- is now being given special food to build her up (*Sunday Mirror*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2002)

The above extracts suggest that rather than Sarah’s eating disorder being framed as a psychological disorder, it was alternatively framed as a bid for sympathy and special treatment. A similar narrative was also used when Sarah attempted suicide in prison, as it was suggested that “it was a bit half-hearted, but there were scratches on her arms (*Daily Star*, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2003) and that it was “regarded as a cry for attention rather than a suicide bid” (*The Sun*, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2003). As evidenced by the extracts above, the tabloid newspapers in particular adopted this angle of the news frame, yet broadsheet newspapers reported on Sarah’s eating disorder with a

more objective reporting style. For example, a number of broadsheet articles used her eating disorder to illustrate that she had a troubled childhood, as evidenced by the following quote, her eating disorder “testifies that here was a young woman who had trouble with growing up” (*The Independent*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003b). However, as evidenced by Table 6, the tabloids reported on Sarah’s eating disorder to a much greater extent than broadsheet newspapers, therefore the ways in which this frame was articulated within the context of the tabloids represents the dominant perspective of this narrative.

In most instances, Sarah’s history of eating disorders and other related psychological issues would have been used to frame her more sympathetically, rather than her disorder being framed as an active sympathy bid, as evidenced in the tabloid material in particular. However, there was little room for true sympathy for Sarah due to the nature of the crimes that she committed and due to her being framed as a ‘deviant woman’ in other aspects of her life, as previously discussed. This section of the analysis therefore argues that rather than Sarah’s suggested mental health issues and eating disorders being used to place her within the ‘mad’ category of female offenders, by minimising the extent of her issues and framing her behaviour as a ‘choice’ and a bid for attention, her framing within this sub-frame is more readily defined as ‘crazy’ and thus to some extent, both ‘mad’ and ‘bad’.

Collectively, both of the sub-frames explored above highlight the ways in which the news media engaged in a process of purposeful selection, exclusion and exaggeration (Entman, 1993) to ensure that Sarah was framed as ‘crazy’, but in a purposeful and to some extent, controlled way. Within both sub- frames in the news media, specific reasons and explanations were provided for both aspects of her behaviour, namely ‘drinking excessively’ caused her personality to change and her

eating disorder was an exaggeration and an example of her attention seeking behaviour. By framing these aspects of her supposed ‘character’ in this way, the media ensured that Sarah was viewed as a ‘deviant woman’, thus leaving little room for explanations of her behaviour from Sarah’s perspective.

### **Sarah’s perspective**

Having now provided an overview of the dominant ways in which Sarah was framed in the case file and news media material, the following section will provide a summary of her explanations for her offending behaviour and the ways in which she defined her relationship with David.

Sarah talked extensively about her relationship with David throughout the duration of the case, however the language she used to explain their relationship differed in her police interviews and testimony in court. During the police interviews, Sarah expressed a number of conflicting narratives to explain the nature of her relationship with David. For example, despite initially suggesting that she and David “hit it off right away” and that it was “love at first sight” when they met, Sarah revealed later in the interview that David was “erm, well, he was sort of seeing my friend for a while at the same time” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). Also, despite describing their relationship as “good” and a “team effort”, Sarah also suggested that they argued and “rowed” a lot and that they frequently broke up “because of my (Sarah’s) eating” disorder (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). Furthermore, Sarah initially suggested that

David was very “thoughtful” with regard to her eating disorder and that he would “often ring me throughout the day to check I’d been eating”, however later in the interview, she described that he often broke up with her stating that “oh, it’s never going to work, you know. You’ve got an eating disorder, it’s never going to work” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). It is the suggestion of this thesis that Sarah’s often contradictory explanations of her relationship with David during her police interviews could be explained by a combination of the following interpretations. Firstly, the contradictory statements could be interpreted as examples of Sarah attempting to portray their relationship in a better light to “protect” David and secondly, they could also suggest that she was to some extent ‘blinded’ by her love for David which thereby led her to rationalise the negative aspects of their relationship, which was also recognised by police officers, as they stated in interview “open up your eyes Sarah, can’t you see what is happening?” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002).

To support this point further, during the police interviews, Sarah attempted to make excuses for David’s controlling behaviour. For example, she stated that “according to *David*” she was “not bright enough to decorate the house” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). She then went onto state that David “doesn’t want her to work” despite her describing earlier in the interview that she had “been a lot happier” since she had been working as a teaching assistant because it “got her out of the house” and “took her mind off things” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). She also stated that David believed that it was her “job” to do all of the cleaning in the house, whilst he “slouched” on the couch. Despite each of these examples implying David’s controlling nature towards Sarah, she justified his actions by suggesting that “he likes me to be the housewife” and

that he is “the old fashioned sort” and “that’s just the way he’s been brought up” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). This suggests that as well as being ‘blinded’ by her love for David, as previously discussed, this could also be explained by an expression of underlying but unacknowledged manipulation and control, which was internalised and unconscious. In addition, the patriarchal expectations of womanhood and femininity, namely being passive and taking care of the house and family, allowed Sarah to rationalise David’s behaviour and expectations. This is somewhat ironic, as the news medias framing of Sarah centred upon the fact that she was a ‘deviant’ woman who defied her gender roles.

A further example of this rationalisation is that Sarah described how David had locked her out of the house following an argument, where he stated that he was “sick” of her “because of (her) eating” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). However, she defended his behaviour by stating that “it was my fault, I was a right cow” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). The following exchange also supports this point:

Sarah: I can’t really remember what the argument was about, but he just slapped me across the face and because of my bone structure it bruised, but it wasn’t like a fist in my face or anything, it was just like a sort of slap sort of thing, to shut me up really.

PO: and how did you react?

Sarah: shocked, it shut me up and he was very sorry about it, he just couldn’t stand me banging on

PO: when you say he couldn't stand you banging on, do you feel that you deserved the slap that you go then?

Sarah: I can't answer that question, at the time I know, well, I can understand the other side of it as well.

PO: So did you accept his behaviour?

Sarah: Yeah. (*Sarah Johnson Police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002).

The above exchange suggests that Sarah accepted David's physical abuse, as she minimised his behaviour by arguing that it was her fault. Research suggests that this is a common deflective tactic that victims of domestic abuse use to rationalise and excuse their partner's violent behaviour (Wood, 2001; Eckstein, 2011). Furthermore, despite Sarah initially suggesting that David had only hit her on one occasion, described in the above exchange, later in the interview she revealed that he had "kicked me before" in an argument and that "apart from that just normal pushing" (*Sarah Johnson Police interview* 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). This suggests that whilst Sarah recognised that David had been violent towards her during their relationship, she accepted his behaviour because that she blamed herself for provoking it.

However, during Sarah's testimony in court, the ways in which she described her relationship with David differed to the explanations she provided during her police interviews. Significantly, there was a sixteen month gap between when Sarah was initially questioned by police officers to when she was eventually sentenced. During her testimony, Sarah stated that "I've got a mind of my own now I have had 16 months away" (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, 3rd and 4th December 2003), thus suggesting that she no longer felt controlled by David. Furthermore, whilst Sarah

stated on three occasions during her police interviews that “I love him very much” and also that it was “love at first sight”, when she met David, during her testimony, she changed the verb to “loved”, which suggests that her feelings towards him had changed.

Furthermore, Sarah was more directly vocal about David’s controlling and abusive nature during her testimony, stating that “no-one had any idea what sort of relationship I had with that man” and he “had a very controlling attitude towards me” (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003). She also suggested that David regularly emotionally abused her, particularly by targeting her weight and self- esteem issues (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

Furthermore, Sarah also argued that David was controlling and obsessive and would get “angry” if she didn’t vacuum clean the carpets correctly and he didn’t like her going out with friends or seeing her family (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December). Each of these examples highlight that Sarah’s time apart from David led her to recognise the extent to which he abused and controlled her. Research suggests that the decision to stay or leave an abusive relationship is a process (Lerner and Kennedy, 2000; Eckstein, 2011) and it is often only when the victim has decided to permanently leave the relationship that the extent of the abuse and control that they experienced is truly recognised.

With regard to Sarah’s role in the co-offending, Sarah and her defence team suggested a number of key reasons as to why she provided the false alibi for David on the night of Lucy and Katie’s murder. The main reason provided was that she lied to protect David and Sarah used this explanation in both her police interviews and trial testimony. She stated in both contexts that she lied to “protect him” as he had “been accused of attacking a girl” in the past, which caused him to have a “nervous

breakdown” and she “couldn’t see him go through that again” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). During her police interviews, Sarah argued that she believed David to be incapable of murder, as she stated that “I know him inside out, he’s a very emotional person, he wouldn’t be capable of doing that” (*Sarah Johnson police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). She also stated that she believed him “100%” and that “I know he wouldn’t hurt anybody” (*Sarah Johnson Police interview*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002). During her trial testimony, Sarah also argued that she had “no idea” that David murdered the girls and that she “lied to protect the man (she) loved very much” (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003). Sarah’s explanations that she lied to protect David because that she loved him are supported by previous research, as Jones (2008) argued that women often commit crime on behalf of and/or with their partner out of love.

An additional explanation that Sarah and her defence team offered for her providing the alibi for David is that Sarah felt “pushed into a corner” to lie for him (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003). For example, she stated that “I was scared. I was going home to that man at the end of the day, it’s very embarrassing to be in a relationship like that” (*Sarah Johnson testimony*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003). This highlights that in such instances of co-offending, all aspects of the offender’s relationship need to be explored to gain a broader understanding of how this may impact on the offending behaviour. This notion will be explored further in a later analytical chapter.

As previously discussed, the ways in which Sarah’s perspective was utilised by legal and news media professionals will be explored in a later chapter, however, the following section will explore the main way in which Sarah’s reasons for offending was framed in both contexts.



## **The framing of Sarah's offending: 'Equal offender, equally bad'**

As evidenced above, as an individual, Sarah was predominantly framed using gendered narratives both within the case file and news media material, which served to frame her as a 'deviant' and 'crazy' woman. The following sections of the chapter will explore the framing of Sarah's involvement in the offending and more specifically, her role as an accomplice to David and will also explore the ways in which her relationship with David was framed in both the news media and case file material. Rather than being understood as a distinct and separate frame, the following section will highlight the ways in which the overall tone of both the legal and news media framing of Sarah served to portray her as being, in many ways, an equal offender to David.

In the case file and particularly the news media material, Sarah was framed to be as bad, if not worse, than David and in many instances she was framed as being his accomplice, despite being found not guilty of assisting an offender. Despite Sarah's crime being essentially providing an alibi for her partner, her involvement elicited far stronger mediated public reaction than a charge of perverting the course of justice would usually merit (Jewkes, 2011: 143). The following section will explore this frame in the context of both sets of data.

### "You acted as a team": Legal framing

Whilst the 'equal accomplice, equally bad' frame was much less evident in the case file material, the prosecution in particular over-emphasised Sarah's role in the

offending. For example, the prosecution argued that Sarah's involvement "substantially delayed the murder charge of *Fox*" and she thus "played a significant role in the harm and suffering of the victims parents" (*Prosecution closing statement*, December 2003). However, her defence team argued that Sarah providing the false alibi delayed David's arrest by only a few days and that he would have been found out and eventually arrested irrespective of her false alibi, due to the overwhelming evidence against him (*Summary of defence arguments*, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2003). Furthermore the 'harm' that Sarah caused to the parents was also discussed in the Judges closing speech as he stated:

Your intelligence and strength of mind could have been used to ease the suffering of those families, but you used them to compound their misery (*Judges closing speech*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

The harm that was caused to the victim's parents was mentioned more frequently in the context of Sarah's prosecution when compared to David's. This highlights the gendered nature of the blame, as due to Sarah being a woman and thus supposedly having a 'natural' maternal instinct (Naffine, 1991) her deceit towards the parents of the victims was framed as being more 'deviant' and more unpalatable than David's. By framing the parents as the victims of Sarah rather than David, she was framed as having played a more significant role in the offending than she did in reality.

Furthermore, the language used in David's and Sarah's prosecution closing statements was very similar. For example, they were both referred to as "persistent and convincing liars" and they were frequently referred to as a "team" (*Prosecution closing statement*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2003). Furthermore, this point is particularly exemplified in the following quote:

As we suggest with *Fox*, her actions exhibit all of the features of a cold, rational decision that was made by her (*Prosecution closing statement*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003).

This collectively highlights that although Sarah was charged with much less serious offences than David, they were both judged and described according to the same narratives. Whilst Sarah's defence team successfully countered this argument, as she was eventually found 'not guilty' of two counts of assisting an offender, the language used by the prosecution and in some instances by the Judge, served to frame Sarah as not only guilty of the charges made against her, but as being, in some ways 'equally as bad' as David.

#### "She put him in the state of mind to kill": News articles

Within the context of the news media material, this frame was evident following David and Sarah's initial questioning by police officers, as it was frequently implied that Sarah had been charged with murder, as evidenced by the following quotes:

His girlfriend, *Sarah Johnson*, was still being held in custody on suspicion of murder, and officers indicated that charges against her were likely (*The Express*, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2002)

Couple charged over girls murder (*The Times*, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2002)

Troubled lives and couple suspected of murdering *Lucy* and *Katie* (*Daily Telegraph*, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2002)

Whilst the couple were initially held on suspicion of murder, it was only David who was eventually charged with the murder of Lucy and Katie. However, the above extracts highlight that Sarah was initially framed as being an equal accomplice to David, thus exaggerating her role in the offending. Furthermore, an article in *The Mirror* (21<sup>st</sup> August 2002) contained the headline “Charged” next to a large image of Sarah and David. However, later in the article, it detailed that only David had been charged with murder, whereas Sarah had been charged with perverting the course of justice. However, the page layout of the article and the image placement implied that Sarah, like David, had been charged with murder, despite this not being the case. Additionally, an article ran in *The Sunday Mirror* (3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2002), used the headline “She’s got it too easy” and suggested that Sarah was having “special treatment” whilst on remand in prison. However, this article again points to Sarah’s guilt, as the case had not gone to trial when the article was published. This collectively highlights that the media used a combination of selective language and use of imagery placement to associate Sarah as ‘guilty’ before the trial had even begun.

A further example of Sarah being framed to be equally guilty to David centred upon the notion that she was often indirectly blamed for the deaths of Lucy and Katie. This was evidenced in two key ways. Firstly, Sarah was blamed for triggering David’s anger and the news media concluded that this led him to murder Lucy and Katie. It was suggested that following a phone call conversation with Sarah in the early evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2002 (the night the girls were murdered), David became very angry as he didn’t want Sarah to go out with her mother. The following extracts exemplify this:

I know what *Sarah* can be like when she's had a few drinks. She gets a bit loud and flirty sometimes (*Daily Telegraph*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2003).

Detectives believe that she put him in the state of mind to kill (*Daily Star*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003b).

The above extracts highlight that despite Sarah not being in the area on the night that David murdered the children, the news media alluded to her involvement by blaming her for his anger. Whilst the news media did not directly blame Sarah for the girls murder throughout the period of reporting during and after the trial (as she was not charged with their murder), by making such indirect associations of guilt, Sarah is thus framed as being somewhat to blame for Lucy and Katie's murder.

The second example of indirect blame towards Sarah emerged following the revelation that she had been spotted kissing another man on the night that David murdered Lucy and Katie. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

This is the sickening moment that sex-mad *Sarah Johnson* cheated on lover *David Fox* as he killed young school girls *Lucy* and *Katie* (*Daily Star*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003b)

So much for love... this is how *Sarah Johnson* cheated on killer *David Fox* the night he murdered *Lucy* and *Katie* (*The Express*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003e)

Here is *Sarah Johnson* snogging a man on a wild night out- the same evening that *David Fox* killed *Lucy* and *Katie* (*The Sun*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003c)

*Sarah Johnson* told police she was in the bath the night *Lucy* and *Katie* died. This is what she was really doing (*Daily Mail*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003c).

Each of the above extracts were accompanied by an image of Sarah kissing a man (who was not David), which was placed directly underneath or next to the main headline. The tabloids in particular combined the image with headlines such as “He killed whilst she was kissing” (*Daily Star*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003b) and “Kiss of death” (*The Sun*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003c), which again served to implicate Sarah as being indirectly guilty for the girls murder.

Overall, the news media in particular framed Sarah as being ‘equally bad and equally guilty’ to David irrespective of their unequal involvement. It is the suggestion of this thesis that this disproportionate blame could be due to a combination of the medias fascination with female-male co-offenders (Jewkes, 2011) and because dissimilar to David, Sarah was additionally blamed for being a ‘deviant woman’ and for transgressing her gender role expectations, as previously discussed. The medias solution to the problem of women who appear to be equal partners, or at least, go along unquestioningly with their male partner’s wishes in a very serious crime, “is to place the burden of guilt on their shoulders” (Jewkes, 2011: 143). The media therefore framed David as a man capable of extreme cruelty, but without the actions of ‘submissive’ Sarah, he would not have been able to attempt to get away with his crimes. This ‘version’ of Sarah’s role in the offending significantly differed from Sarah’s explanations of her role and involvement in the criminality, as previously discussed and the ways in which her voice and perspective was silenced and muted in both a legal and news media perspective will be explored in more detail in a later chapter.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Sarah was framed according to a number of dominant narratives within the context of both the news media and case file material, namely, ‘the liar’, ‘deviant woman’ and ‘crazy woman’. The analysis of these frames suggests that similar to the Jane Turner case, Sarah was judged principally as a woman who had deviated against the normative and patriarchal notions of appropriate forms and practices of femininity and womanhood. Sarah was therefore framed as being “doubly deviant” (Lloyd, 1995), as she was judged against both the criminal law and the expectations of appropriate womanhood. Such framing led Sarah to be judged as David’s ‘equal’, particularly within the context of the news media, despite her unequal involvement in the offending. This is significant, as the media are a main source of information for the public about crime and criminal justice matters (Altheide, 2002), therefore the news medias over- emphasis of her role may have had a significant impact on how she was perceived and understood by the public. Furthermore, as evidenced in Appendix B- Table 3, whilst there was some neutral reporting evident in the news media material, particularly by broadsheet newspapers, on the whole the coverage was overwhelmingly negative, thus highlighting the overall tone of Sarah’s framing.

When comparing the news media and case file material, there were numerous differences between the two data sets, as outlined throughout the chapter. For example, despite the extensive and prolonged coverage of the case, the news media predominantly focussed on the sensational and personal aspects, which is a common feature of trial reporting (Nobles and Schiff, 2004). Furthermore, certain aspects of

the case were exaggerated and given overstated significance in the news media, such as Sarah's eating disorder and journalists often failed to accurately utilise Sarah's perspective and version of events.

Furthermore, the ways in which Sarah defined her relationship with David in many ways differed to the explanations offered by legal professionals and particularly journalists. Both Sarah and her defence team argued that David controlled and abused her throughout their relationship, which they suggested played a significant role in her decision to provide a false alibi. However, this was not fully considered by (unsurprisingly) the prosecution, in some instances, the Judge (*Judges closing speech*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2003) and the news media. This could arguably be due to this explanations lack of applicability to the 'monstrous', 'other' stereotype already prescribed to Sarah. Furthermore, this demonstrates both a lack of understanding of the nature of controlling and coercive relationships within both the law and news media. Rather than using overly simplistic narratives to define both her offending and character, particularly within the news media, it is argued in this thesis that a more nuanced explanation of her offending and experiences could have been sought to understand the significance of her coercive relationship with David.



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **ALICE JONES CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

#### **Alice Jones: The background**

In March 2002, Chris Jones, with the help of his wife Alice Jones, faked his own death by fabricating that he had drowned at sea in a canoeing accident. Alice was aged 53 at the time of the offence and had two adult sons with her husband Chris. Alice had no previous offending history. The Jones' argued that this decision was due to the extensive and mounting debt that they were experiencing. Shortly after his initial fake disappearance, Chris returned home in disguise and continued to live in the area where he managed to secure a passport and driving licence by using a false identity. Significantly, the Jones' sons, family and friends did not know the truth about Chris's fabricated disappearance. Alice Jones secured a death certificate for Chris and was thus able to claim his life insurance funds, pension and various other financial gains. In 2007, the couple moved overseas to begin a 'new life' together. However, in December 2007, for unconfirmed reasons, Chris Jones entered a UK police-station and stated that "I believe I am a missing person" and claimed that he had been suffering from amnesia. In the months that followed, both Chris and Alice admitted that they had been involved in the fraud and they were both charged with various fraud charges, including: obtaining money by deception, money laundering, transferring and converting criminal property. Whilst Chris pleaded guilty to the 15 charges he faced, Alice Jones pleaded not guilty to all of her charges and suggested

that she had been coerced by Chris to be involved in the offending, citing the defence of ‘marital coercion’. The defence can be used by a wife against her husband in the defence to any charge, other than murder or treason, if she committed it “in the presence of, and under the coercion of, her husband” (*Defence statement*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008). However, Alice Jones was eventually found guilty of 13 counts of fraud and deception and was sentenced to 6 and a half years imprisonment and Chris Jones was sentenced to 6 years and 3 months imprisonment. Both Chris and Alice Jones appealed against their sentences, however, both appeals were dropped (*Case summary document*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008).

### **The news media framing of Alice: General observations**

For this case study, a total of 430 newspaper articles were analysed using content analysis, which were obtained using Alice’s full name as the search term. The number of articles for each newspaper is shown in *Table 13*.

| <i>Table 13: ‘Alice Jones’ keyword search</i> |    |
|---|----|
| Newspaper                                     |    |
| Daily Mail                                    | 76 |
| Daily Telegraph                               | 35 |
| Express Papers                                | 43 |
| The Guardian                                  | 33 |
| The Independent                               | 19 |
| Independent on Sunday                         | 8  |
| The Mirror and Mirror on Sunday               | 99 |
| News of the world                             | 2  |
| The People                                    | 6  |
| The Sun                                       | 58 |
| Sunday Express                                | 6  |
| Sunday Telegraph                              | 5  |
| Sunday Times                                  | 6  |
| The Times                                     | 34 |

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| <b>Total</b> | 430 |
|--------------|-----|

A significant initial observation is that unlike the cases previously analysed, the media played an active role in the initial criminal investigation of this case. Firstly, after Chris's reappearance at a UK police station, there was intense speculation in the British Press about what had happened to Chris during his missing years and many sources were interviewed and were subsequently used as witnesses during the trial.

Secondly, the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Mail* secured a number of exclusive interviews with Alice Jones whilst she was out of the country following Chris's reappearance, which detailed her 'shock' and 'delight' at her husband's return (*The Mirror*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007; *Daily Mail*; 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007). Extracts from these interviews were later used during the trial of Alice Jones, to evidence her ability to lie and deceive, which will be explored later in the chapter. Finally, on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007, the *Daily Mirror* was the first newspaper to publish a photograph of Mr and Mrs Jones posing happily together, just a few months before Chris returned to the UK, which alluded to the guilt of both Chris and Alice. Whilst it is often the case that journalists will attempt to play the role of 'investigator and judge' during crime news reporting (Surette, 1998), within the context of this case, the media played an active role in the initial stages of the investigation.

Whilst this case did not receive the same amount of public reaction as the previously analysed cases, the extensive and prolonged media coverage highlights that it was a story which significantly aroused public interest. The potential reasons for the public and media interest in this case are many, as will be discussed throughout the chapter. However, one reason is due to the fascination of the 'bizarre'

nature of the crimes (see for example, *Daily Telegraph*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2007; *Daily Mail*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007) and the unusual involvement of a seemingly ‘normal’ couple in such elaborate fraudulent offences (see Table 14 for key word frequencies).

| <i>Table 14: ‘Ordinary vs. extraordinary’ keyword frame.</i> |          |        |         |
|--|----------|--------|---------|
| Newspaper  | Ordinary | Normal | Bizarre |
| Daily Mail   | 3        | 11     | 5       |
| Daily Telegraph  | 1        | 3      | 1       |
| Guardian   |          | 2      | 1       |
| Independent  |          | 1      |         |
| The Mirror   | 5        | 7      | 7       |
| The People   | 1        |        |         |
| Sunday Telegraph   |          | 2      | 1       |
| The Sun  | 1        | 2      | 5       |
| Sunday Express   |          |        | 1       |
| The Times  |          | 1      | 1       |
| Sunday Times   | 1        | 1      |         |
| <b>Total</b>   | 12       | 30     | 22      |

This is evidenced by the following quotes:

If appearances are anything to go by, *Alice Jones* is an unlikely fugitive from justice. But the story of how a meek 55 year old avowed Christian with a fondness for wildlife and walking became the focus of a suspected life insurance fraud could have skipped off the pages of a Graham Green Novella (*The Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2007).

How could this ordinary, middle class couple have become such cynical tricksters? (*The People*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007).

The *Jones*’ - grey, ordinary plodders trapped in a grinding life of debt- were the most unlikely couple to become criminal masterminds (*The Sun*, 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2008).

Such examples highlight that rather than the newsworthiness of this case being solely due to the ‘bizarre’ nature of the crime itself, it was also due to the involvement of two ‘ordinary’ people in such an ‘extraordinary’ crime. This juxtaposition exemplifies the news value of ‘threshold’ (Jewkes, 2011), as this ensured that the crime met a certain level of perceived importance or drama in order to be considered newsworthy. The disbelief of the involvement of Alice and Chris Jones often led to the media reporting style being comparable to a story-telling prose, which during the early and latter stages of reporting in particular, served to frame the story as unbelievable and shocking rather than a factual crime account. This

### **“All eyes on Alice” frame**

Having now discussed the role of the media during the case and highlighted some of the general tools and devices that journalists used to construct the case in particular ways, the chapter will move on to discuss some of the specific ways in which Alice was framed as an individual and co-offender in both the news media and case file material.

From the initial stages of case to the time period following the verdict, Alice was consistently the focus of criminal justice professionals, journalists and thus the public’s attention, whilst Chris remained to be somewhat of an enigma. The following section will explore how this frame was evident in both the case file and news media material

“It was a solo performance”: Case file material

Significant to Alice’s framing within the context of this narrative, is that it was only she who faced a full trial for her involvement in the offending, as Chris pleaded guilty to all offences. This meant that within the context of the trial, the focus was disproportionately on Alice, which thus served to frame her as the most culpable offender. This is evidenced by the following extracts:

A considerable amount of guile, convincing pretence, persistence and guts was required of *Alice* to carry out her crimes (*Prosecution statement*, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2008)

It was also a solo performance, which you carried out with superb aplomb” (*Prosecution statement*, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2008)

I assert that you, *Alice Jones*, are a lying, cheating hypocrite (*Prosecution statement*, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

The above extracts suggest that despite the fact that Chris himself argued that “the plan was my idea. I gave her no choice but to go along with it” (*Chris Jones Police interview*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2007) and that “I was the one pulling the strings” (*Chris Jones police interview*, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2007), Alice was irrespectively framed as the most to blame and culpable offender, particularly within the context of the prosecution. However, this notion of Alice being framed as more to blame was also evident in the Judge’s closing speech:

You, *Alice Jones*, perhaps initially unconvinced, played an instrumental role.

You contributed to its success and you played your part efficiently. Without

you, this fraud would never have been carried out so convincingly and wholeheartedly (*Judges closing speech*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

This suggests that even though both Alice and Chris were present for the Judge's summary, which detailed the extent of both of their involvement, disproportionate attention remained to be focussed on Alice and her role in the offending. In addition, Alice significantly received a longer prison sentence for her involvement in the offences (3 months longer) and it was suggested that this was due to Chris's guilty plea. Whilst it is not the intention of this thesis to debate sentencing decisions, the disproportionate focus on Alice during trial closing statements and throughout the trial questions the notion of universal chivalrous treatment towards all female offenders and rather argues that this notion depends on the type of woman they are perceived to be (Lloyd, 1995; Morris, 1987). Furthermore, it has been argued that issues such as an increase in the perceived severity of an offence, inexplicable reasons for women's involvement in offending or a perceived decline of women's morality may lead to female offenders being judged with greater severity than male offenders who commit similar and/ or the same offences (Edwards, 1984; Ballinger, 2000). In addition, Heidensohn (1996) argues that because the law is predominantly made by men, it is structured to serve men's interests, therefore women who come into contact with the law are often restricted to stereotypical assumptions and dichotomies surrounding 'proper' and 'ideal womanhood. With all of this in mind, due to the fact that Alice was framed as having an active role in the offences, the implication that she had 'wilfully' deceived and lied led to her morality and femininity to be questioned. Consequentially, this analysis argues that Alice was judged for transgressing both the criminal law, but more importantly, the laws governing acceptable forms of femininity (Lloyd, 1995).

“Alice was behind this all along”: Newspaper material

Upon initial analysis, it appeared that Chris may have been the focus of the news media reporting to a greater extent than Alice, as whilst the search term ‘Chris Jones’ produced 500 articles during the time period analysed, ‘Alice Jones’ produced 430 articles (see table 13, above, for outline).

However, when analysed further, most of the articles were the same for both search terms and significantly, 375/ 430 articles focussed predominantly on Alice, 36/430 discussed both Alice and Chris, with an emphasis on the former and just 19 articles mentioned both Chris and Alice equally (this analysis was determined by which offender featured more prominently in both the headline and main body of the article, see Table 15).

| <i>Table 15,: Number of articles which focussed on either Alice, John or both</i> |            |              |   |
|---|------------|--------------|---|
| Newspaper   | Alice      | Both equally | Alice and Chris, with an emphasis on the former |
| Daily Mail  | 71         | 2            | 3   |
| Daily Telegraph   | 32         | 1            | 2   |
| Express newspapers  | 39         | 2            | 2   |
| The Guardian  | 20         | 3            | 10  |
| Independent   | 16         | 1            | 2   |
| Independent on Sunday   | 7          |              | 1   |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday   | 92         | 3            | 4   |
| News of the World   | 1          |              | 1   |
| The People  | 6          |              |   |
| The Sun   | 51         | 4            | 3   |
| Sunday Express  | 6          |              |   |
| Sunday Telegraph  | 4          |              | 1   |
| Sunday Times  | 4          |              | 2   |
| The Times   | 26         | 3            | 5   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>375</b> | <b>19</b>    | <b>36</b>                                       |



Furthermore, most of the additional articles relating specifically to Chris featured during the initial four days of reporting and following the guilty verdict and there were significant lapses in reporting about Chris, particularly during the trial. However, the focus of reporting was consistently on Alice throughout the time period analysed. In spite of this, it is important to note that whilst a number of articles provided a balanced overview of the case and predominantly used a non-sensationalist reporting style (For example, *The Guardian*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2007) and a small number of articles, particularly opinion pieces, even portrayed Alice somewhat sympathetically (For example, *The Mirror*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007), on the whole, the portrayal of Alice was predominantly negative (see Appendix C, Table 3 for outline of article tone). This disproportionate and negative focus on Alice meant that her involvement in the offences was often exaggerated and viewed to be much more serious and significant in comparison to Chris's offending. There are a number of possible explanations for this harsher media treatment, for example, because she was a woman and serious female criminality is viewed as being more 'deviant' and a double transgression when compared to male criminality (Lloyd, 1995; Ballinger, 2000); or because she was found to be a liar at a number of points during the case and therefore it was assumed that she was consequently lying about her innocence. Such potential explanations will be explored in more detail later in the chapter.

There were various tools and techniques which journalists utilised to focus their reporting disproportionately on Alice, for example, the use of images. In the articles analysed in hard copy form (see methodology for further details), Alice featured to a much greater extent in the images accompanying the articles in comparison to Chris. When images of Chris did feature, it was often in photographs alongside Alice, for example, the photograph of them together that exposed their involvement, as

previously discussed (For example, *Daily Telegraph*, 5<sup>th</sup> December; *Daily Mail*, 5<sup>th</sup> December; *Daily Mirror*, 5<sup>th</sup> December). However, Alice featured more frequently in large close up photographs or on the front page of newspapers, particularly tabloid articles (For example, *Daily Mail*, 8<sup>th</sup> December; *The Mirror*, 8<sup>th</sup> December; *The Sun*, 10<sup>th</sup> December). The more frequent use of photos combined with the larger images of Alice meant that the emphasis was disproportionately visually placed on her, thus alluding to her guilt. By using images of Alice in this way, journalists were able to visually frame her as the more culpable offender. Furthermore, as well as the use of imagery, journalists frequently used distinctly different language to describe Alice and Chris, often within the same news articles:

“Chris is an exemplary father figure who is now a broken man. He has been bullied in the 233 days he has so far spent in police custody and is taking medication for depression” (*The Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008- quote from defence barrister) / “She is a compulsive liar and her behaviour towards her children is despicable” (quote from police officer).

“The family man who faked his own death”/ “heartless Alice, who hoodwinked her sons” (*Independent on Sunday*, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2007)

A further example of this differential use of language is that whilst Chris was frequently compared to “Reggie Perrin” (For example, *Daily Star*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2007; *The Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007; *Daily Telegraph*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2007), a character from a British Comedy series who faked his own death, Alice was comparatively likened to the historical, manipulative female character of ‘Lady Macbeth’ (*Daily Mail*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007; *Sunday Telegraph*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2008), who “fulfilled almost all the requirements of a criminal woman imbued with evil”

(Heidensohn, 1996: 91). This differential language served to perpetuate the narrative that not only was Alice more to blame than Chris, but she was potentially more deviant and a societal concern. As highlighted by Heidensohn (1996) organised crime and fraud is more readily associated with male criminality, therefore Alice's involvement in the fraudulent offences was more of a difficult concept for news media professionals to explain. This lack of understanding led to her involvement and role in the offending to be reduced to over-simplistic and gendered, stereotypical narratives, which are typically used to define female deviancy.

Another tool which journalists used to focus disproportionate attention on Alice's involvement in the criminality, was the use of specific 'sources' to highlight the extent of her offending. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

"How could our mam continue to let us believe our dad was dead when he was very much alive?" (The couples son's; *Daily Telegraph*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

"I think *Alice* was behind this all along. She manipulated *Chris* throughout their marriage, not the other way around like she claimed" (Chris' elderly father, *Sunday Mirror*, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2008)

"She was despicable and I don't have the time of day for her. She has put a lot of people through a lot of heartache and a lot of expense as well. She has been a compulsive liar throughout this inquiry and was involved from the outset" (Police officer, *The Mirror*, 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2008)

The consequence of using such sources to evidence the extent of Alice's involvement is two-fold. Firstly, by selecting specific sources, namely the couple's

children, close relatives and criminal justice professionals, journalists were able to frame their explanations as reliable due to their criminal justice knowledge or their close relationship with Alice. Secondly, because such sources were rarely used to evidence the extent of Chris's offending, the occasional exception being their sons, Alice was consequently framed to be the most culpable and actively involved offender. This supports previous research, which argues that within male/female offending partnerships, particularly those involving violent offences, the female offender is more likely to receive negative and disproportionate media coverage in comparison to the male (Grabe et al, 2006; Jewkes, 2011). However, this case study suggests that this notion could also be extended to non- violent offences.

### **Alice's 'character' and key identities**

As well as the focus of the case and news media reporting being on Alice, she was also defined within stock narratives and identities. The 'character framing' analysis, outlined in the methodology, highlighted that Alice was represented using two aspects of her implied 'character' namely, that she was an excellent 'actress' and that she was a 'bad mother' and both frames were evident in the case file and news media material. Similarly to the previously analysed case studies, these frames were often utilised simultaneously and interchangeably, particularly in the news media material.

### The ‘bad mother’

Jewkes (2011: 135) argues that the ‘bad mother’ motif is “so pervasive that it is ascribed to virtually *all* women, whether victims or offenders, actual mothers or non-mothers and whether they are involved in the murder of children or commit other crimes but also happen to *be* mothers”. The ‘bad mother’ motif was evident in both the case file and news media material for this particular case.

#### *“You’ve torn those boys to shreds”: Case file material*

Significant to this frame, is that both Chris and Alice lied about Chris’s ‘faked death’ to their sons, which led to them to believe that their father had died. Due to this deception, Alice’s status as a ‘bad mother’ was often directly referred to by both the prosecution and judge, as evidenced by the following quotes:

*Alice Jones* clearly thought nothing of lying to her sons and convincing them that their own father was dead in order to see this fraud through to its conclusion (*Prosecution statement*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

*Alice Jones*: All I wanted to do was keep my family together

Prosecution: What sort of hypocrisy is that? You’ve torn those boys to shreds (*Prosecution statement*, 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2008).

You inflicted great pain on your sons, whose lives you crushed (*Judges closing statement*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

It has been argued that the Victorian discourses of the feminine ideal, namely domesticity, respectability, sexuality and motherhood, still have significance even

today, particularly when applied to female offenders (Smart, 1976; Heidensohn, 1996; Ballinger, 2000). As highlighted in the previous chapters, directly connected to this idealised image of womanhood is the belief that women have a natural, maternal instinct, which is biologically determined rather than socially learned (Naylor, 2001). Mothers are expected to be natural nurturers and to put the needs of their children above their own (Smart, 1976; Naylor, 2001), thus any transgression against this ideal leads to the label of the ‘bad mother’, particularly within the context of offending. With this in mind, irrespective of the fact that Alice’s crimes were not committed directly against her sons, as her offences were technically classed as ‘victimless’ crimes, because that they had been hurt and affected in the process, she was subsequently framed as a ‘bad mother’. This suggests that Alice was judged not only for her offending, but also for her failure to be a ‘good mother’ to her sons.

Alice’s framing as a ‘bad mother’ within the context of the trial also appeared to have significantly affected the sentencing decisions of the judge, as highlighted in the following extract:

Although the sums involved are not as high as some reported cases, the duration of the offending, its multifaceted nature and in particular the grief inflicted over the years to those who in truth were the real victims, your own sons, whose lives you crushed, make this a case which merits a particularly severe sentence (*Judges closing speech*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

This suggests that it was Alice’s failure to be a good mother to her sons which was viewed to be the most significant deviant behaviour, rather than her involvement in the fraud itself. Furthermore, during the post sentence write up (17<sup>th</sup> August, 2008),

the Judge elaborated on various points relating to his sentencing decisions. When discussing his reasons for Chris's sentencing, the Judge highlighted that the decision was due to the 'duration' and elaborate nature of the offending, yet for Alice, he stated the following, "this decision was made due to the duration of the fraud and in particular due to the cruelty she inflicted on her sons" (*Post sentence report*, August 2008). This suggests that the gendered expectations of womanhood and motherhood may in some instances impact upon the severity and length of sentencing decisions, thus contradicting the supposed 'balanced', 'fair' and 'reasonable' nature of the law (Edwards, 1984; Ballinger, 2000). This therefore highlights that the essentialist assumptions about women's biological purpose can condemn them to differential treatment in the law (Heidensohn, 1996; Gelsthorpe and Morris, 2002). Furthermore, as previously outlined, the Judge placed much less emphasis on Chris's deception of his sons and he was not framed as a bad father throughout the trial. This implies that whilst being a 'bad mother' is viewed to be deviant behaviour, this notion is not extended to 'bad fathers', thus highlighting the gendered nature of this motif. This supports Lloyd's (1995) notion of 'double deviancy', as Alice was judged not only for her role in the offending, but also due to her transgression against womanhood and particularly motherhood.

*"How could any mother stoop so low?": News media articles*

This frame was also evident in the news media material and Alice was directly referred to as 'mother' (115 instances), 'mum' (65) or 'mam' (42) in over half of the articles which mentioned her (see table 16) and significantly, the majority framed her as a 'bad mother'.

| <i>Table 16, Key word analysis Alice Jones “mother, mum, mam”</i> |            |           |           |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Newspaper   | Mother     | Mum       | mam       |
| Daily Mail  | 29         | 4         | 10        |
| Daily Telegraph   | 12         | 3         | 4         |
| Express   | 3          | 5         | 2         |
| Guardian  | 9          |           | 2         |
| The Independent   | 6          | 2         | 2         |
| Independent on Sunday   | 5          | 1         | 1         |
| Mirror  | 25         | 38        | 12        |
| News of the world   | 1          |           |           |
| People  | 1          | 2         | 2         |
| The Sun   | 7          | 10        | 2         |
| Sunday Express  | 2          |           |           |
| Sunday Telegraph  | 3          |           |           |
| Sunday Times  | 2          |           | 1         |
| The Times   | 10         |           | 4         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>115</b> | <b>65</b> | <b>42</b> |

Similar to the case file material, on numerous occasions Alice was openly questioned as a mother:

How could any mother stoop so low? (*Daily Telegraph*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

Across the country, all parents were echoing the same, heart rendering question; how could she?”(*The People*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

How on earth did she live with the boys grief? How could she reconcile her furtive lies with her children’s pain? (*Daily Mail*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

All the time their appalling mother was lying to them and planning a ritzy retirement in the sun with her man (*The Times*, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

Mothers are expected to lie, cheat and perjure themselves in the defence of their sons, and often do, even when those sons are guilty of rape or murder, such a mother would be forgiven by the public more readily than *Alice Jones* (*The Guardian*, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2008)



The last quote in particular highlights that similar to the case file material, Alice was judged more readily for the informal and unofficial crimes against her sons, rather than for her actual offending. This therefore suggests that Alice's trial, in both the courtroom and in the media, was two-fold, namely for both the fraudulent offences and for being a 'bad mother'. The use of the terms 'boys' and 'children' is particularly significant, as this language implies vulnerability, despite her sons being adult men. Furthermore, Alice's status as a 'bad mother' was also evidenced by the use of imagery, as articles which discussed her 'failure' as a mother often included a photograph of her and her two sons during their wedding days. For example, in *The Mirror* (6<sup>th</sup> December, 2007), this image was placed directly next to the headline "we never told the kids their dad was alive... they'll hate me", which served to juxtapose the visual image of 'ideal motherhood' with the contradictory linguistic explanation of the extent to which Alice had transgressed such expectations. A further example of Alice's status as a 'bad mother' being judged to be more deviant than her actual offending, is that journalists often referred to the sons as the 'real victims' of the offences, as evidenced by the following quotes:

Duped sons were the real victims (*The Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2007)

When people talk about this crime having no victims, they forget their sons.

They were the real victims in all of this (*The Mirror*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2007)

As highlighted by Jewkes (2011), crimes are viewed to be much more newsworthy when there are clearly identifiable victims involved, thus it could be argued that typically 'victimless' offences, such as fraud, would not usually merit such extensive and prolonged media attention. However, by framing the sons as the

‘victims’ of Alice’s transgressions against the ideals surrounding ‘good motherhood’, the news value of the story was thus significantly increased.

In addition, similar to the case file material, whilst the motif of ‘bad mother’ was readily and frequently applied to Alice, Chris was not framed as a ‘bad father’ in the same way. One of the ways in which journalists reinforced this aspect of the narrative, was by using the Jones’ sons as sources to evidence Alice’s ‘bad motherhood’:

The wife of *Chris Jones* was flying back to the UK last night to face her two sons, who said they had been left ‘astonished’ and angry that their mother had let them believe their father had died in a canoe accident when she knew he was alive (*The Guardian*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

How could our mam continue to believe that our dad had died when he was very much alive? *The Mirror*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007).

My mam will do anything to save her skin, she lied in court so many times, she can’t stop herself. Her maternal instincts didn’t kick in for a second (*The Mirror*, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

These extracts highlight that similar to the case file material, despite the fact that both Alice and Chris lied to their sons, it was only Alice who was framed as a ‘bad mother’. On the few occasions when Chris’s bad parenting was referred to, it was always alongside Alice, thus he was framed as a ‘bad parent’ *with* Alice, rather than specifically a ‘bad father’ (For example, *The Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007; *Sunday Telegraph*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007).

The ‘bad mother’ frame was evident throughout the whole time period of reporting and was manifest in both the case file and news media material to a greater extent than the details of her fraud, thus questioning the nature of the ‘offending’ and deviancy that Alice was being judged for.

### The Actress

On the occasions when Alice’s involvement in the actual criminality, rather than the ‘unofficial’ offences against her sons, was discussed, it was often framed within over-simplistic narratives and explanations. The main narrative that was used to define Alice within this frame was that she was an ‘excellent actress’ and a ‘natural deceiver’ and this was evident in both the case file and news media material.

#### *“You played the role of the grieving widow”: Case file material*

When providing details of Alice’s offending, the prosecuting team and Judge focussed on the extent to which she was able to play the role of the ‘grieving widow’. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

It was a scheme in which *Alice Jones* not only played an equal and vital role, but it was a role that she played with superb aplomb (*Prosecution statement*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

You played the role of the grieving widow with unnecessary enthusiasm didn’t you? You threw your arms around your sons when they thought they were comforting you, you threw flowers into the sea on the anniversary of

your husband's supposed bereavement. You carried out your role superbly  
(*Prosecution statement*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

You played the role of the grieving widow and its victory was intrinsic to the  
success of the fraud (*Judges closing speech*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

Within the context of the trial, the emphasis was placed upon her deception, particularly towards her sons and her ability to act the role of the 'grieving widow', rather than on Alice's complex involvement in the fraudulent offences. This supports the notion that female offending is often explained using over-simplistic and stereotypical narratives, which are often rooted in gendered expectations and assumptions (Ballinger, 2000). Furthermore, criminal justice professionals, particularly the prosecuting team, also emphasised the extreme extent of Alice's deception and acting ability, as evidenced by the following quote:

There were so many people who were taken in by her performance. *Alice Jones* clearly thought nothing of lying to her sons, convincing them that their own father had died. Police officers were taken in by a heart rendering appeal she made begging her husband's body to be found. Insurance companies, who coughed up a fortune which Alice salted away. The list goes on. She continued to do this for five and a half years until the fraud was discovered  
(*Prosecution statement*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

By highlighting the extent of Alice's ability to deceive those around her, this served to frame her as not only an excellent actress, but also as a natural manipulator. Smart (1976: 176) talked of the "myth of the evil woman whose physiology is the source of her ability to deceive and manipulate" and Heidensohn (1996) argued that Victorian discourses which attempted to explain female

offending, such as the deceiver and manipulator, have continued to pervade contemporary explanations of female criminality. This therefore suggests that even complex criminal offences, such as fraud, are also reduced to over-simplistic explanations within the context of female offending, which offer very little in terms of providing an adequate explanation for such women's reasons for being involved in the offences.

Furthermore, by continually emphasising Alice's acting ability throughout the trial, the prosecuting team in particular were able to render her defence virtually incomprehensible by using phrases such as "You lie easily don't you? You are good at acting aren't you and you continue to be an actress even today, don't you?" (*Prosecution statement*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 2008). Such statements were often supported with examples of Alice's ability to lie and deceive, thus serving to strengthen the prosecutions arguments. This meant that even though Alice's voice was heard during the trial, any explanations for her offending that she offered were questioned and rendered inconceivable due to her being pervasively framed as a consummate actress and deceiver.

*"She is a rival to Meryl Streep in the acting stakes": News media material*

Within the news media material, Alice's role in the offending was also explained using similar stereotypical frames emphasising her deception and acting ability, but this was even further over-simplified within this context (see Table 16 for key word analysis).

| <i>Table 16: Keyword analysis Alice Jones, ‘actress’</i> |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Newspapers   | Actress   | Widow     |
| Daily Mail   | 2         | 20        |
| Independent  |           | 7         |
| Independent on Sunday                                    | 1         | 1         |
| The Mirror and Sunday Mirror                             | 6         | 5         |
| News of the world  |           | 1         |
| The Sun  | 2         | 10        |
| Sunday Telegraph   | 1         | 1         |
| Sunday Express   |           | 2         |
| The Times  | 1         | 15        |
| Sunday Times   |           | 1         |
| Daily Telegraph  |           | 10        |
| Guardian   |           | 4         |
| Express newspapers                                       |           | 14        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>13</b> | <b>91</b> |

Whilst Alice was only referred to as an ‘actress’ on 13 occasions in the news media, her acting and deceptive ability were often alluded to in much more subtle and indirect ways. For example, she was referred to as a ‘widow’ on 91 occasions and the extent of her deception and acting ability were both frequently mentioned, as outlined in the examples below:

It is apparent that she is a rival to Meryl Streep in the acting stakes (*Daily Mail*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

As the grieving widow of a husband lost at sea, *Alice Jones* gave the performance of her life...” “...She fooled everyone. She hoodwinked the police who investigated her husband’s disappearance and the coroner who recorded an open verdict at his inquest 13 months later. Her two adult sons, themselves devastated and worried that she wasn’t eating or sleeping enough. Her colleagues thought she looked so drained when she returned to work that

they told her to take more time off. It was all an elaborate fiction, a web of lies and deceit spun to make money (*The Times B*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

She put on one hell of a show. And *Alice Jones* managed to win over her audience time and time again. The list of people who saw this conniving woman's magnificent acting performance is long and varied (*Daily Mail*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

As evidenced above, journalists linguistic framing techniques within the context of this narrative were much more sensationalised in comparison to the case file material, which is particularly evidenced by the direct comparisons to well-known actresses and the suggestion that Alice's role in the offending was 'the performance of her life'. Furthermore, there was even less exploration of the complex nature of Alice's fraudulent offences in the news media material and the focus of reporting was instead on her 'excellent' acting abilities and deception. As highlighted by Jewkes (2011), the news media will often over-simplify complex crimes, such as fraud, to make them easier and straight forward for the audience/ reader to understand. However, journalists over-simplified Alice's criminality to such an extent that it could be argued that the reader may have found it difficult to understand the crimes that she had actually committed. Whilst her deception and acting ability did play a role in her offending, her *actual* offences, such as money laundering and illegally obtaining life insurance and property, were rarely explained or articulated in detail.

Alice's acting ability was also evidenced by the suggestion that she had 'changing faces', or that she was able to transform her character and persona to serve her own interests:

She would come across as a caring person with other elderly people, but she never bothered about me. She wouldn't even pop in for a cup of tea (Quote from Chris' elderly father, *Sunday Mirror*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007).

On the surface at least, her personality matches her appearance. She is small and a bit fragile. She speaks slowly with a soft North-Eastern accent. She is very likeable and if there is a callous, scheming witch in there, I have to say she hides it well. But inside that slightly hunched body is a woman of considerable steeliness (*Daily Mail*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007).

By alluding to Alice's 'changing faces', journalists framed her as a woman who is capable of using her frail, innocent looking outward appearance to manipulate those around her. The above examples highlight that as well as using Alice's suggested deceptive and acting abilities to over simplify her fraudulent offences, as previously discussed, such aspects of her supposed 'character' were also used to frame her as a 'dangerous' and manipulative woman. Female offenders have historically been categorised as inherent deceivers, who are able to manipulate with their charm and innocent, feminine appearance (Lombroso and Ferrero, 1895; Pollack, 1950; Smart, 1976). Therefore, by framing Alice within this familiar stock motif (i.e. manipulator), her potential reasons for offending are minimised and ignored.

### **The framing of Alice's perspective and the defence of marital coercion**

As previously discussed, criminal justice professionals, jurors, journalists, readers and the public heard Alice's Jones' voice and perspective to a much greater extent



than the two women in the case studies previously analysed. Alice was interviewed by journalists prior to being arrested, she spoke candidly to police officers and she also testified during trial. However, rather than serving to benefit Alice and her case, due to the fact that she changed her story on numerous occasions when speaking to journalists during the initial stages of the case, her perspective and version of events was subsequently not taken seriously and was thus in many ways disregarded. This was particularly the case within the context of her defence of marital coercion, as will be discussed.

#### Alice's perspective and defence.

During both her police interviews and trial, Alice argued that Chris had manipulated and forced her into the offending and she cited the defence 'marital coercion'. This defence has only been used six times over the last eighty years and provides that a wife has a defence to any charge, other than murder or treason, if she committed it "in the presence of, and under the coercion of, her husband" (*Defence statement*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008). Alice provided numerous examples of Chris's manipulation and 'bullying' throughout their relationship, as evidenced by the following extracts:

It wasn't easy, but as I said *Chris* was very manipulative and from the day he came home, I'd tried to persuade him to come clean about it and you know, to put an end to it, but he said he couldn't. He wouldn't. He said that if I did (*say anything*) he would say that I was in it from the beginning. Before that he said he would try and keep me out of it, he said you'll be alright and you'll have no charges against you. He said if anything's found

out, it will be me that pays the price. I mean, I know now it was, it was stupid, but once I'd set out along the road it was difficult to turn back (*Alice police interview*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

*Chris* wasn't violent, but he could be very manipulative. If anything was discussed he would always end up getting his own way. He had a habit of making me feel quite small and inadequate, in fact, I would say to him at times you treat me like I'm a second year pupil that you used to teach, it was just the effect he had on me" (*Alice Jones testimony*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

He would stand next to me and tell me what to say or write notes. He would drill me with what I had to say and do. I could not go against *Chris*. He had a domineering effect on me (*Alice Jones testimony*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

He knew how to make me feel insignificant. He made me feel like I didn't really count. All the major decisions were made by him. Whatever he wanted to do, I did (*Alice Jones testimony*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

In court in particular, Alice argued that she had been bullied and manipulated by *Chris* over the course of their 35 year marriage and she also talked of him having an affair with a woman that he had met on the internet. However, in spite of this, both journalists and criminal justice professionals failed to truly acknowledge or give credibility to her perspective. Whilst this was undoubtedly influenced, at least in part, by the fact that Alice had changed her story several times in the initial stages of the case, in both the case file and news media material, there was a distinct refusal to accept the legitimacy of coercive and abusive relationships.

*“An intelligent woman who had a choice”: Case file material*

Whilst Alice Jones and her defence team talked extensively about her defence of marital coercion and Chris’s manipulation and bullying (as evidenced above), her defence was not taken seriously by, unsurprisingly, the prosecution but also by the judge, as evidenced by the following quotes:

Despite your efforts to put all the blame on your husband with your defence of marital coercion, I am convinced that you played your part in the fraud efficiently and wholeheartedly (*Judge’s closing speech*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

I argue that your supposed defence of marital coercion is just another one of your lies (*Prosecution statement*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

You played an equal role in this offence, you are not a victim (*Prosecution statement*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

As well as directly minimising the applicability of the defence, as highlighted above, the prosecution and police officers in particular appeared to fail to understand the nature of abusive and controlling relationships, as evidenced below:

Prosecution: If *Chris* had said to you, ‘*Alice*, I want you to go and jump off a cliff’, are you saying you would have said ‘yes’ because *Chris* told you to, even if you didn’t want to, because he had overborne you against your will?

Alice: I think that is a very unfair comparison. You have no idea how I lived” (*Prosecution statement*, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

When you look at this photo you will have to consider whether she was a woman whose own will had been overborne or whether in fact, that picture is

indicative of a woman who was very happy at the prospect of enjoying the fruits of this fraud” (talking about the picture which exposed the couple, *Prosecution statement*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

PO: Alice, you’re an adult

Alice: I know

PO: You’re an intelligent woman and you had a choice didn’t you?

Alice: No, I don’t feel like I did (*Alice Jones Police interview*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007)

The above examples evidence the lack of understanding, within the context of this case, which criminal justice professionals displayed about the nature of coercion. Furthermore, in the appeal documents for Alice Jones, details were provided about the woman who Chris allegedly had an affair with. The woman stated that their relationship had begun as a business quest, but later turned ‘personal’ and this is when Chris became “abusive and threatening” towards her and she argued that “he would go to any lengths to get his own way” (*Outline of grounds for appeal*, August 2008). However, in spite of these assertions, these details were not included in the original trial as there was concern that it would “have influenced the jury’s view of the ability of Chris Jones to coerce his wife” (*Outline of grounds for appeal*, August 2008). It is unclear from the case file material as to why this character reference and supporting email evidence were not included during the trial, as this provided invaluable additional support for Alice’s coercive claims.

With all of this in mind, there were a number of issues with the ways in which criminal justice professionals (with the exception of the defence team) handled the

defence of marital coercion as well as coercion and controlling relationships more generally. Firstly there was both a lack of understanding about the nature of abusive relationships, as well as a refusal to accept alternative explanations. This could be because such explanations lie outside of personal experience, thus highlighting a lack of empathy as well as understanding. As highlighted by Stark (2007), any woman, whatever age, class or ethnicity, can experience 'coercive control' and abuse within an intimate relationship and this is not always characterised by physical violence, but rather it is dominance and control elicited by the perpetrator which can often produce the most psychologically damaging and long term effects. This thesis argues that irrespective of the fact that Alice was an 'intelligent woman', or that the prosecution argued that she did not 'look' coerced in the evidential photograph, this does not necessarily mean that her relationship with Chris was not characterised by control and at times abuse, which could have thus affected her decision to offend.

Secondly, the prosecuting team, police officers and Judge failed to adequately account for and explore the whole 35 year marriage, but rather focussed on the nature of their relationship during the five year period that Chris was missing. Furthermore, in addition to Alice's testimony, various witness statements and witnesses in court alluded to the fact that Chris was controlling and domineering throughout their marriage, yet such examples were not adequately acknowledged in court. However this thesis and various other scholars (Richie, 1996; Welle and Falkin, 2000) argue that when attempting to understand coercive relationships, it is important to look at the whole relationship, rather than the specific moments leading to the offending behaviour to gain an adequate understanding of the nature of coercion.

Finally, it is undeniable that the defence of marital coercion is flawed in various ways. For example, a woman would have to be married to cite the defence and a plethora of research argues that abuse and control can occur outside of marriage (for example, Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Smart, 1989; Stark, 2007). Furthermore, the offences need to have been committed in the presence of the husband for this defence to be cited, yet it has been found that the control elicited by abusive men towards their female partner in an intimate relationship can affect the women's behaviour and thought processes even in their absence (Stark, 2007; Welle and Falkin, 2000). However, the prosecution and judge used the 'weakness' of the defence itself to minimise and deny Alice Jones claims, yet failed to acknowledge that this was the only defence available which at least attempts to account for women who are coerced into crime by a male partner. Therefore, this thesis argues that the criticisms of the defence itself should not have been used as a source to ignore the potential influence of the manipulation and control that Alice Jones suggested that she had experienced by Chris throughout their marriage, which will be explored further in chapter 9.

*"Equal partnership and equal marriage": News media material*

On the rare occasions when Alice's defence was mentioned in the news media material, similar to the case file material, there was usually a significant emphasis on the "unusual" (for example, *The Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008) nature of the defence of marital coercion (see Table 18). By using such language to describe the defence, the weakness of its applicability is thus alluded to. One of the main linguistic tools that

journalists used to imply the lack of relevance of the defence for Alice Jones' case is by emphasising that the couple were a 'team' (see keyword Table 18).

| <i>Table 18: Key word analysis Alice Jones, "coercion" or "equal" partners</i> |           |                      |           |           |
|--|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Newspapers   | Coercion  | Coercion and unusual | Equal     | Team      |
| Daily Mail   | 7         | 2                    | 7         | 7         |
| Daily Telegraph  | 4         | 1                    | 2         |           |
| Express  | 2         | 1                    | 1         | 6         |
| Guardian   | 6         | 2                    | 3         | 2         |
| Independent  | 7         | 1                    | 1         | 1         |
| Independent on Sunday  | 2         |                      |           |           |
| Mirror   | 6         |                      | 5         | 3         |
| Sun  | 1         |                      | 2         | 4         |
| Sunday Times   | 1         | 1                    |           |           |
| Times  | 6         | 2                    | 1         | 3         |
| Sunday Telegraph   |           |                      |           | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>42</b> | <b>10</b>            | <b>22</b> | <b>27</b> |

This is evidenced by the following quotes:

It was suggested in court that the couple, as a team, carried out the fraud together (*The Independent*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

They had an equal marriage and an equal partnership (*The Sun*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

By emphasising that they were a 'team' and 'equal partners', the news media framed Alice as a fully willing partner in the offending, even before the verdict of the trial and failed to account for the manipulation and control that Alice suggested she had experienced during her relationship with Chris. Furthermore, similar to the case file material, journalists extensively reported on the fact that Alice did not appear to be a coerced woman and specifically reported on an email exchange that occurred between the couple whilst Alice was out of the country, as evidenced by the following quotes:

Chatty emails seem to show a woman who was at ease with her 57 year old husband, jurors heard (*The Mirror B*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

The couple exchanged raunchy emails, such as “get your bum over here fast. I have something for you and its hot” (*Daily Star*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

On this particular day of reporting, most newspapers, particularly the tabloids, extensively reported on this email exchange, despite this forming a very minor part of the prosecution and it was only discussed in court for a short amount of time. Various other witnesses and aspects of the case, some of which formed part of Alice’s defence, featured in court on this particular date, yet were reported on to a much lesser extent and in many news articles, were not mentioned at all.

One of the reasons why this is particularly significant is because that in the news media material, the defence of ‘marital coercion’ was only ever explained within the context of the prosecution rather than the defence. Furthermore, other than the one day in which Alice gave evidence in court, the news media only reported on the case from the perspective of the prosecution i.e. using cross examination quotes or quotes from the prosecution opening and closing statements. The opening and closing statements for the defence were not published in the newspapers analysed, therefore the reader only received a partial and one-sided version of the trial. This therefore meant that readers received a very limited explanation of coercion and controlling relationships, which may have thus impacted on their understanding of such issues. This will be explored in more detail in a later chapter.



## Conclusion

Overall, Alice Jones was framed in specific ways in both the news media and case file material. The focus of both criminal justice professionals and journalists was disproportionately on Alice, rather than Chris, throughout the whole duration of the case. Whilst it could be argued that this emphasis may have been due to Alice facing trial alone, Chris appeared in court for the sentencing and Judge's closing speech, therefore it would be expected that his crimes would be given equal weight to those of Alice. This disproportionate focus on Alice could be explained by the fact that female deviancy is judged more harshly than male offending within the context of both the law (Edwards, 1984) and the news media (Grabe et al, 2006).

Furthermore, various journalistic techniques, such as selection, exclusion, elaboration and the use of metaphors and images (Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Tankard, 2002), were used to frame Alice within stereotypical and pre-existing narratives surrounding female deviancy. Jewkes (2011: 127), argues that "such tried and tested narratives often keep aspects of the women's involvement in the crime hidden, or only partially represented, allowing the public to dip into their cultural reservoir of symbolic representations and fill in the gaps as they see fit". Alice was framed as a 'bad mother' in various ways in both the news media and case file material, yet Chris was not framed as a 'bad father', despite them both deceiving and lying to their sons. As highlighted throughout the chapter, it has been argued that the Victorian discourses surrounding the feminine ideal, particularly motherhood, are still applicable to the framing of female offenders today, which serves to portray any woman who transgresses these expectations as deviant (Smart, 1976; 1989;

Heidensohn, 1996; Ballinger, 2000; Naylor, 2001). The 'bad mother' motif was so pervasive within the context of Alice's framing, that it was in many ways portrayed to be more of a significant deviancy than her actual offending, thus causing her criminality to be judged as being two-fold. In addition, Alice was also framed to be a consummate actress and natural deceiver, thus offering an over-simplistic and gendered explanation for her role in the fraudulent offences. As highlighted previously, whilst Alice's deception and acting ability did play a role in her offending, her actual fraudulent offences were rarely explained, particularly by journalists, thus serving to frame her offending within pre-existing and stereotypical explanations of female offending behaviour (Jewkes, 2011).

Furthermore, this analysis argues that despite hearing Alice's voice at various points and in a number of contexts during the case, this did not benefit her situation. Alice's defence of marital coercion was ridiculed and diminished by both journalists and legal professionals. Overall, rather than reducing Alice's offending to over-simplistic narratives and explanations which have traditionally and historically been used to attempt to explain female deviancy, the unique aspects of her case and Alice's individual experiences could have been better understood.

## CHAPTER 8

### JANET YOUNG CASE STUDY ANALYSIS<sup>5</sup>

#### Janet Young: The Background

In 2011, Janet was interviewed by police officers over allegations that in 2003, she had accepted driving licence penalty points actually incurred by her then husband, Edward Crouch. This transpired as Janet disclosed to the British Press in 2011 that Edward had forced an unnamed individual to take his penalty points. This incident, coincidentally or not, followed a public divorce between the couple following Edward's disclosure of an affair. Despite aiming to remain anonymous, it eventually emerged that it was Janet who had taken the penalty points on her husband's behalf. In 2012, both Janet and Edward were charged with perverting the course of justice. At the time of her arrest, Janet was 62 years old and she had no previous offending history. Janet entered a plea of not guilty and cited the defence of marital coercion at trial. Initially, Edward also pleaded not guilty, but eventually admitted to his involvement in the offence prior to going to trial. During the original trial, the jury could not come to a unanimous decision about Janet's case and the Judge was concerned that they displayed "a basic lack of understanding of what was required of them" (*Judge's address to original jury*, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013), therefore the case was

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<sup>5</sup> As outlined in the Methodology chapter, this chapter includes a number of footnotes which reflect on my personal experience of being in court during the trial of the current case.

subject to a re-trial. In March 2013, Edward and Janet were convicted of perverting the course of justice and both were sentenced to 8 months imprisonment.

### **The news framing of Janet's story: General observations**

For this case study, a total of 1,630 articles were analysed using quantitative content analysis, which were obtained using Janet's full name as the search term (see table 19).

| <i>Table 19, Amount of times 'Janet Young's' full-name was used in articles analysed</i> |             |
|--|-------------|
| Daily Mail   | 175         |
| Daily Star   | 30          |
| Telegraph  | 184         |
| Express  | 142         |
| Guardian   | 105         |
| Independent  | 87          |
| Independent on Sunday  | 27          |
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror   | 252         |
| People   | 37          |
| The Sun  | 201         |
| Sunday Express   | 23          |
| Sunday Telegraph   | 25          |
| Sunday Times   | 95          |
| The Times  | 247         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1630</b> |

The articles which were selected for a more in-depth, qualitative analysis were those which featured on key dates of the case, namely the first day the story broke in the press, when Edward and Janet were charged, the first day of both the original and re-

trial, the two days (four including the re-trial) when Janet Young testified in court, the summing up of the case and the sentencing/ Judge's closing speech.

The level of seriousness of the crime involved in the current case was much lower than those previously discussed and typically, a case involving falsely taking someone's speeding points would not make it onto the news agenda. However, one potential reason for the public and media interest in this case is due to both Janet and Edward being known public and political figures. Edward was a well-known politician and Janet an established economist. Jewkes (2011) suggests the level of threshold required for a crime story to make it onto the news agenda is much lower for celebrities and high profile individuals, as a level of newsworthiness has already been achieved.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, journalists utilised the newsworthiness of two high-profile, well-educated, upper class individuals being involved with a criminal offence of this nature. To ridicule and emphasise the couple's personal situation and criminality, journalists often used linguistic techniques to emphasise the differences between the couple and the rest of society, as evidenced by the following quotes:

Two uber-brains needlessly but inevitably brought down by arrogance, vanity and ruthless ambition and her grief, callousness and thirst for vengeance. How the mighty have fallen (*Daily Mirror*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

One in three marriages, *Janet* and *Edward*, ends in divorce and the reasons for the divorces are seldom joyous. You're not special at all: you're a statistic.

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<sup>6</sup> NB: From my experience of being in court in the press box, it is clear that the journalists reporting on the case also recognised the significance of two high profile individuals being involved in any kind of criminality, irrespective of the perceived level of seriousness. Before the trial began, one journalist speaking informally with a colleague said, "this is gold-dust isn't it".

Normal people soldier on and try to do their best by each other and by their children - through gritted teeth, with the aid of antidepressants, by becoming good at acting, whatever it takes. Because normal people realise that the end of a marriage doesn't have to mean the end of a family (*Sunday Times*, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2012)

Had you or I lied to the police like this, we'd have lasted about two minutes before our feet weren't touching the ground (*The Sun*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

As highlighted in previous chapters, female offenders are frequently framed as 'others', particularly in the news media and are cast as monstrous, mythical creatures (Young, 1999; Jewkes, 2011). However to some extent, a different type of 'othering' also happened in the current case. The above extracts highlight that journalists utilised the language of 'us and them' based on the couples class and high status societal position, rather than focussing explicitly on their criminality or perceived monstrous nature. Research suggests that poor, working class individuals are subject to a range of negative stereotypes in the press and that upper class individuals are often placed in a superior position (Kendall, 2005; Heider, 2004). However, whilst this is undoubtedly usually the case, for the current case, journalists used collective language to emphasise the differences between the well-educated, high status couple with the 'normal', working class citizen to reinforce the disbelief that they had become involved in the crime in the first place. Due to Edward's political affiliations, this frame was also set within a political and economic backdrop, for example, there was often an emphasis on how much the couple were worth financially, "their £2million townhouse" (*Daily Mail*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013), on their well-educated status, "he was privately educated in Oxford" and she "had built a

formidable professional reputation as an economist” (*The Guardian*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013) and on Edward’s political “downfall” (*The Times*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011; *Independent*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013). The juxtaposition of the couple’s privileged position with the nature of their crimes, along with the uncertain political and economic context in which this case occurred, meant that the press were able to encourage their readers to feel angered by the couple’s motivations and reasons for their involvement in the offences irrespective of the level of seriousness.

### **The framing of Janet: “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned”**

The frame of Janet being a ‘scorned’ and revenge driven woman was the most dominant narrative evident in both the case file and news media material and there were various facets to this frame. The key word analysis highlights that ‘scorned’, ‘revenge’ and ‘bitter’ featured frequently in the news media material for this case, evidencing the prevalence of this frame (See keyword tables 20).

| <i>Table 20: Keyword analysis Janet Young, “scorned, revenge and bitter”</i> |         |         |        |
|--|---------|---------|--------|
| Newspaper  | Scorned | Revenge | Bitter |
| Daily Mail   | 25      | 36      | 21     |
| Daily Telegraph  | 17      | 22      | 14     |
| Express  | 22      | 19      | 17     |
| Guardian   | 10      | 15      | 6      |
| Independent  | 12      | 22      | 5      |
| Independent on Sunday  | 3       | 1       | 1      |
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror   | 32      | 42      | 29     |
| Sun  | 10      | 25      | 13     |
| Sunday Express   | 2       | 2       | 4      |
| Sunday Telegraph   | 5       | 3       | 1      |
| Sunday Times   | 3       | 15      | 5      |
| Times  | 15      | 36      | 17     |

|              |            |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>156</b> | <b>256</b> | <b>133</b> |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|

Unlike the other cases previously analysed, the ‘scorned woman’ frame dominated the overall framing of the case and revenge was portrayed as being the main motivation for Janet’s involvement and disclosure of the points- swapping action nearly 10 years after the original incident took place, whereas the women involved in the previously analysed cases were framed in a number of complementary narratives. It is significant to note that there was arguably some level of revenge involved in Janet’s motivation for initially reporting Edward Crouch and the penalty points swapping offence to the police. As shall be discussed later in the chapter, Edward Crouch had been having a long-term affair and when this became public knowledge (and was widely reported upon in the media), Edward eventually asked for a divorce from Janet Young. Janet admitted that she had felt embarrassed and angry about this (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013) and she acknowledged that these feelings did play a role in her effectively putting herself at risk by disclosing the points swapping incident to the police. Although, as will be discussed throughout this chapter, Janet Young argued that revenge was not the only factor that motivated her disclosure. However, what is significant for this section of the chapter are the ways in which this revenge was framed within gendered assumptions and discourses. The ways in which this frame was evident in both the news media and case file material has been separated into a number of sub-headings in the next section of the chapter, to distinguish the various ways in which journalists and legal professionals utilised this narrative.

The notion of being or feeling ‘scorned’ is a gendered phenomenon, with phrases such as ‘hell hath no fury like a woman scorned’ being familiar expressions



originating in Greek mythology and Renaissance literature (Simpson and Speake, 2009). Within the context of the current case, the ‘scorned woman’ frame was articulated within the established mad/ bad narratives in both the case file and news media material (Lloyd, 1995; Naffine, 1997; Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002). However, rather than Janet being placed into either dichotomous category, as is often the case for female offenders, her framing as a scorned woman against the backdrop of these narratives is more accurately described as a continuum, as her revenge was defined as both ‘mad’ and ‘bad’, mostly dependent on the angle and direction of the story and the image of Janet that was being portrayed.

#### Crazed and irrational: Framing Janet as mad

The notion of Janet being ‘crazed’ with the desire of getting revenge on her ex-husband, Edward Crouch, was one of the key ways in which the current frame was articulated in the news media material, as evidenced by the following quotes:

The desire for revenge is one of those primeval urges that is impervious to logic and rationality, and never more so than when linked to rejection in love. Perfectly respectable, sane individuals will, on finding themselves dumped or cheated on, scratch obscenities into car bonnets with their house keys or post intimate photos of their exes online (*The Times*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2011)

Her screaming voice, haranguing her husband, reverberated around the courtroom during her trial. The self-confessed fiery Greek apologised to the jury for the repeated swearing (*The Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

In whichever case, one has to ask what was going through the mind of this bitterly maddened woman. (*Daily Mail*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013b)

Revenge has consumed everything that might once have been sweet and loving about this woman and left a bitter husk of a creature in its wake (*Daily Mirror*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

The notion of being ‘scorned’ and ‘crazed’ with vengeance is a stereotypical way in which women who are seeking revenge, often for a partners infidelity, are defined and portrayed within popular culture and literature, for example, the infamous motion picture *Fatal Attraction* (Berland & Wechter, 1992), thus this framing served as a useful reference point for the newspapers’ readers. The crazed and irrational scorned woman evident in such popular culture examples bears resemblance to the ways in which Janet was portrayed in the news media, as evidenced by the following quotes:

The silly woman joins a long line of vengeful ex- wives who try to destroy the men whom they vowed to take for better or worse (*The Express* 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011)

Young’s hunger for revenge after her husband left her for another woman was supposed to bring his career crashing down by exposing a speeding points scam, while leaving her to bask in his comeuppance. Instead, her determination to "nail" the former energy secretary, as well as his attempts to cheat justice, created a whirlwind of toxic allegations that sucked in all those close to them, including their children whose loathing of Crouch was exposed painfully to public view day after day in court. (*Daily Telegraph*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

So *Janet Young's* kamikaze mission is accomplished. Her ex-husband's career is ruined and he's packing his bags for a good stretch in jail. For this she has paid dearly... for she too is now ruined. (*Daily Mirror*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

The above extracts imply that Janet's desire for revenge forced her to lose her ability to think rationally and intelligibly. With all of this in mind, this narrative reinforces the Victorian, patriarchal discourses surrounding traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. Bem (1993) argues that contemporary society teaches people to understand gender through the lenses of androcentrism, gender polarization and biological essentialism. As highlighted by Klein (1970: 151), thinkers such as Lombroso and Freud have suggested that "women have many traits in common with children; that their moral sense is deficient; that they are revengeful and jealous". Furthermore, the dichotomy of man being reasonable and rational and women being irrational remains an influential and significant ideology (Russet, 1989; Comack and Brickey, 2007), particularly when considered within the context of stereotypical, gendered narratives, such as the scorned woman. This notion was also evident in the case file material, with the prosecutor referring to Janet's motivations for being involved in the offending as a "classic case of scorned woman syndrome" (*Prosecution cross-examination*, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2013). This type of language essentializes not only Janet's experiences, but the experience of women more generally, by implying that 'scorn' is a pathological, psychological deficit explicitly experienced by 'irrational' women and not 'reasonable' men. Overall, by framing Janet's 'thirst' for revenge as irrational and crazed, her motivations were successfully portrayed as being the result of her 'mad' tendencies and thus an inherent aspect of her nature as a woman.

### Medea and manipulator: Framing Janet as bad

However, rather than the concepts of ‘mad’ and ‘bad’ being understood as a dichotomy within the context of the current frame, similarly to the Sarah Johnson case, Janet was at least to some extent framed as being in control of her ‘crazed’ desire for revenge, rather than being totally out of control. It was this aspect of her motivation which was framed as being dangerous and devious in both the case file and news media material, as evidenced by the following quotes and extracts:

Not for her the "revenge" cliché of cutting up his suits or delivering his favourite wine to the doorsteps of local villagers. No, this is far more subtle yet deadly. It hits him where she knows it will really hurt - his political career (*The Sun*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011)

The high-profile economist was a "clever, subtle" woman who tried to bring maximum damage to her husband while trying to protect herself from prosecution after the break-up of her marriage (*The Independent* 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

She engaged in sophisticated plot to destroy his career, irrespective of the cost (*Prosecution summary*, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

You, I have no doubt, were motivated by an implacable desire for revenge and with little consideration of the position of your wider family; you decided to set about the dual objective of ruining *Edward Crouch* whilst protecting your own position and reputation in the process. This was your weapon of choice”(*Judge’s closing speech*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

Central to this aspect of the frame is that Janet allegedly actively attempted to avoid incriminating herself by seeking to remain anonymous in the press and she disclosed the points-swapping over 10 years after the incident took place, therefore suggesting that her revenge was not the result of irrationality or a spur of the moment act and was thus framed as being a conscious and pre-mediated revengeful decision, particularly by the prosecution.

Furthermore, in the *Judge's Closing speech* (10<sup>th</sup> March 2013) Janet's revenge was described as being "controlling, manipulative and devious", again highlighting that her behaviour and involvement in the crime was not solely explained as an irrational desire for revenge within the legal narrative in particular but rather she was framed as having some level of control over her 'crazed' behaviour.

Manipulation and deviousness are typical, essentialist discourses used to define and describe female offenders (Pollack (1950) and in spite of various feminist scholars reinterpreting the ways in which such dominant discourses are constituted (Smart, 1977; Klein, 1970; Heidensohn, 1996), such ideologies are still influential today when thinking about the representation of female offenders. This is particularly evident if we compare the differential use of language in the Judge's closing speech for the current case. Whilst Janet was defined using the language discussed above, Edward's criminal involvement and motivations were described as him attempting to "lie his way out of trouble" (10<sup>th</sup> March 2013). This differential use of language is particularly noteworthy when considered in conjunction with the assertion that the Judge also acknowledged in his closing speech that Edward was the "more culpable of the two" (*Judge's closing speech*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013). This therefore suggests that irrespective of perceived culpability, women are more readily and openly chastised for their deviancy, which within the context of the current case

served to frame Janet and her desire for revenge as being more dangerous. Both the media and the law are based on male experiences and scholars such as Carline (2005), Naffine, (1996), O'Neill and Seal (2012), Ballinger (2012) have argued that therefore by their very nature, women's experiences fall outside the 'normal' parameters of such institutions. With this in mind, the gendered language used in the Judge's Closing speech in particular is not surprising, given the male defined legal context in which it was articulated.

Furthermore, within the news media material, Janet was often described using animalistic and mythical language, as evidenced below:

It is all too easy to cast the pair as Medea and Jason in this Greek tragedy: the woman scorned who destroyed her own family in order to wreak her fatal revenge on her absconding lover (*Mail on Sunday*, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2013)  
*Young* brought down by her hunger for vengeance (*The Express*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

During it all, it was the savagery of her vengefulness that shocked us to the core (*Daily mail*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned and all that, but she has behaved like a vindictive banshee and destroyed herself as well as her cheating, lying husband. (*The Sun*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

Beware the vengeance of a political ex (*Daily Telegraph*, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011)

The use of mythical language here highlights the relevance of the concept of a continuum or scale of mad and bad for explaining the framing of the scorned narrative for this particular case. Rather than this type of language being used to

frame her as explicitly ‘bad’, as was the case with the previously analysed case studies, language such as “savagery”, “hunger for vengeance” and “banshee” also lends itself to the notion of crazed madness, as previously discussed. Furthermore, as highlighted by Jewkes (2011:123), the images of women that still prevail in the media derive from “pagan mythology, Juedo-Christian theology and classical art and literature”. As exemplified above, journalists often openly compared Janet to Greek mythological characters, such as Medea, who when neglected by her lover consequently murdered her children. By comparing Janet to Medea and other ‘mythical monsters’ in this way, patriarchal fears about female offenders become entangled with folk law myths about monsters and mythical creatures and characters, thus serving to firmly place her into the category of the ‘other’ (Jewkes, 2011).

One of the key ways in which journalists framed Janet as devious and manipulative against the backdrop of the scorned woman frame, is that a quote said by Janet in an email exchange to a journalist, namely, “I want to nail him” (*E-mail exchange*, dated February 2011), was often utilised as evidence of her desire for revenge. The quantitative content analysis revealed that the quote “ nail him” was used 110 times in the newspaper articles analysed and was utilised throughout most of the key dates of reporting during the trial (see table 21)

| <i>Table 21: Keyword analysis Janet Young, “nail him”</i> |            |
|---|------------|
| Newspaper   | “Nail Him” |
| Daily Mail  | 15         |
| Daily Star  | 2          |
| Daily Telegraph   | 18         |
| Express   | 4          |
| Guardian  | 8          |
| Independent   | 10         |
| Independent on Sunday                                     | 2          |

|                          |            |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror | 13         |
| Sun                      | 14         |
| Sunday Express           | 0          |
| Sunday Telegraph         | 0          |
| Sunday Times             | 10         |
| Times                    | 14         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>110</b> |

Examples of uses of the quote are evidenced below:

“I want to nail him, said *Young* after *Crouch* left her for aide; Cabinet minister's wife set out to destroy his career after he ended 26-year marriage, jury is told (*Daily Telegraph*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

“I want to nail him: *Crouch* wife 'plotted her revenge” (*The Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

“*Edward Crouch*’s scorned wife set out to "nail him" by exposing their driving penalty points scam, a court heard yesterday (*The Express*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

By utilising the quote in this way, journalists were able to suggest that Janet herself acknowledged that she was motivated by revenge, particularly due to the harsh and vengeful use of language, thus serving to indirectly imply that this was her sole motivation. However, during her testimony in court, Janet suggested that the ‘scorned woman’ narrative did not accurately encompass her motivations for offending:

I was being painted as a scorned woman in the press which just isn’t true. I didn’t feel scorned, I felt abandoned, badly treated, that’s different (*Janet Young testimony*, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013)



I was still married to him... this shouldn't have been something for me to be attacked about. I was called a scorned wife and that label sticks with you. They were clearly trying to make him look like the good guy in comparison to me"

*(Janet Young testimony, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013)*

DC: Why did you go to the press?

Janet: I wanted his true character to be revealed. I wanted to tell my side of the story to make people see him for what he really was. I wanted to do it without my identity being revealed, but that didn't happen. I'm sure there is an element of me that wanted him to understand what he had done and get revenge in that way, I won't deny that. But I wasn't this scorned woman that I was made out to be

DC: Did you want to nail him?

Janet: The points were a big issue for me. In reality, if I wanted to bring him down, I could have done lots of other things. The points was a low point for me in my life and I felt that it was a good description of what he could be like and what he was capable of. Part of me did want revenge, yes, but did I want to 'nail him' or 'bring him down', no" (*Court transcript, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2013*).

The last extract in particular suggests that whilst Janet acknowledged that revenge was a partial explanation for her motivations for disclosing information about the offences, this did not fully encapsulate her motivations. Therefore by framing Janet's motivations as one dimensional and over-simplistic, both journalists and legal professionals did not adequately account for or fully consider Janet's explanations and perspective.

### Consequence of this framing: Blaming Janet

One of the key consequences of the framing of Janet as a scorned, vengeful woman is that not only was she blamed for her role in the offences, but Janet and her desire for revenge was also inadvertently blamed for a number of issues external to the offending, notably for ruining Edward's career and the potential impact that the revenge had upon her children. The notion of Janet being blamed for ruining Edward's career was particularly evident in the news media material, as highlighted below:

Ms *Young*, 60, then embarked on a vengeful campaign to bring *Crouch* down, jurors heard. (*The Times B*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

Furious *Janet Young* hoped to inflict "maximum and probably fatal damage" to the politician's high-flying career, the court was told. (*The Sun*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

It was *Crouch's* decision one month later to walk out. It was *Young's* vengeful response thereafter that would lay waste everything they had worked together for. (*The Guardian*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013).

However, whilst Janet's disclosure of the point swapping offence did undoubtedly have an impact on the 'downfall' of Edward's career, there was very little accountability placed on Crouch for his role in the offending and the potential impact that his actions had upon Janet's career, particularly in the press. Janet suggested that she had to make "many sacrifices" (*Janet trial transcript*, 26<sup>th</sup> February) for Crouch and his career, as evidenced below:

DC: What was your attitude to his political ambitions?

Janet: I was very proud of him, but it was tough. I was leading a busy life too, I had an important job and it was difficult to take care of the children with him being away all the time. I feared for my marriage. I had to make the choices about my career, I took a downgrade to further his career and to hopefully save our marriage (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

Whilst Janet had an established and successful career as an economist, she stated that “I had to make certain career decisions to benefit my husband and family” (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013), however Edward did not share these same responsibilities, due to the gendered nature of family and private sphere duties (Bernard, 1981). However, due to Edward’s career ‘downfall’ fitting with the prescribed ‘scorned woman’ narrative and Janet’s supposed all-encompassing desire for revenge, this was the dominant focus of the press reporting within this context.

Furthermore, Janet was also blamed for the perceived damage that her role in the offending had upon her children, as evidenced by the following quotes from the case file material:

You were motivated, I have no doubt, by an implacable desire for revenge, and with little consideration of the position of your wider family (*Judge’s closing speech*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

You engaged in a calculated course of conduct that was disastrous for your family (*Prosecution cross examination*, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013).

As highlighted by Jewkes (2011) the bad mother motif is so pervasive when defining female offenders, that they are often described in this way irrespective of

whether or not their offences involve children. The idealistic discourses surrounding motherhood played a key role in representing Janet as an antithesis of this narrative and consequently as a woman consumed by revenge. This aspect of the frame was also particularly evident in the news media material, as evidenced below:

*Janet Young* might care to reflect on whether setting out to destroy her children's father was the act of a loving mother or the petty vengeance of a woman who should have known better. A few speeding points and now everything is lost. (*Daily Telegraph B*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

But what sort of mother would inflict more hurt on her child with those abortion allegations, simply to get back at her ex? (*The Sun*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

But how could a career woman as clever and accomplished as *Young* not realise the destruction of her family would almost certainly be a consequence of that? How could her obsessive hatred of Crouch blind her as to how her "grand plan" to destroy him, might also destroy and humiliate her children? (*Daily Mirror*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

And here's where it got really horrid. Here's where she sacrificed her children in pursuit of her own defence. Long after this case is dead and buried in the law books, long after most of us have remembered how to spell *Crouch*, there will remain the stench of this sacrifice (*Daily Mail*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

In addition, all five of Janet's children were over the age of 20 when the case went to trial (two of whom were over thirty), therefore as discussed in the previously analysed Alice Jones case, the use of language such as "children" and "child" to describe them in the news media material is particularly noteworthy. By describing

them in this way without identifying their ages, journalists were able to allude to their vulnerability and thus Janet’s irresponsibility as a mother, irrespective of the fact that they were adults at the time of the offences and disclosure.

By alluding to a number of consequences of Janet’s ‘scorned’ behaviour external to the offending, legal professionals and journalists were able to exaggerate the impact of her revenge. Overall, the representation of the wider ‘hell hath no fury like a woman scorned’ frame against the backdrop of the continuum of the ‘mad/ bad’ narrative, led to ‘revenge’ being framed as the sole motivation for Janet’s disclosure of the speeding points offence. Whilst Janet herself acknowledged that revenge did play a role, the notion of her being a crazed and devious scorned woman did not accurately reflect her explanations and instead, served to restrict her perspective to essentialist, gendered narratives.

### **“She’s no quivering jelly”: The framing of marital coercion**

Another key way in which Janet and her explanations for offending were framed in both the news media and legal material was within the context of her defence of marital coercion. The term ‘marital coercion’ was cited 319 times in the news media material (as evidenced in table 22) and the qualitative, textual analysis revealed that this frame was communicated within specific narratives and contexts.

| <i>Table 22: Key word analysis Janet Young, “marital coercion”</i> |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Newspaper  | Marital coercion |
| Daily Mail   | 24               |
| Daily Star   | 3                |
| Daily Telegraph  | 23               |

|                          |            |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Express                  | 22         |
| Guardian                 | 28         |
| Independent              | 23         |
| Independent on Sunday    | 2          |
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror | 65         |
| People                   | 4          |
| Sun                      | 35         |
| Sunday Express           | 0          |
| Sunday Telegraph         | 0          |
| Sunday Times             | 13         |
| Times                    | 77         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>319</b> |

### Janet's defence and perspective

Janet's explanations for her offending did not fit within the 'scorned woman' narrative, she talked in detail about the nature of her relationship with Edward Crouch and the potential impact that his bullying and forceful persona had and these formed the basis of her defence of marital coercion. As well as discussing the effect that Edward's control had upon her participation in the offending, she also disclosed the influence this had on her marriage more broadly. Examples are highlighted below:

DC: What was his attitude towards your achievements?

Janet: on the surface, he was pleased but he dismissed everything. I did have a certain profile, I was asked to comment on certain things or appear on TV as an expert and he would say things like "why on earth would they want to speak to you"? He was very arrogant and overbearing and he made me feel like I didn't matter. He was good at controlling me and my feelings.

DC: did he regard you as an equal?

Janet: no, definitely not. No matter what facade he put on in the press, he did not see me as his equal (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

Janet: I made it very clear that I didn't want to be involved. He was constantly on at me about it, saying it would be my fault if I ruined his career and our stability as a family. He said it would ruin his image (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

DC: Tell us about when he forced you to sign the form.

Janet: I was very angry, I wanted nothing to do with it, but he said, you're going to have to sign this now. If you don't the implications will be disastrous

DC: what did you do?

Janet: he was by implication threatening our marriage. I had no choice. If I didn't return the form, it would be an offence, if I had said that I had lied, it would mean prosecution for my husband which would have consequences for the whole family. I had to sign to preserve our marriage. He would have blamed me forever and I didn't want another failed marriage behind me. I felt pushed into a corner and incredibly worn down by his constant pressure and control. The person that people see in the public eye and in the press is not the same person that I saw at home (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

Janet argued throughout her testimony that Edward had been controlling and forceful during their 20 year marriage and that he was "a fiercely ambitious and ferocious man" and would "not let anything stand in the way of his career" (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013). However, in spite of her assertions, both

journalists and criminal justice professionals failed to fully consider her explanations and attempted to render her defence insignificant and implausible in two key ways, namely by ridiculing the defence of marital coercion itself and by questioning how a woman 'like Janet' (i.e. intelligent and educated) could be susceptible to male control.

### Ridicule of the defence

Both the prosecution and journalists ridiculed and questioned the relevance and applicability of the defence of marital coercion, both in the context of the case but also more broadly, as evidenced below:

The idea that someone's criminal liability depends on whether they are man or a woman, or are within a marriage or a long-term cohabitation, is to all modern sensibilities absurd (*Prosecution summary*, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

He asked if it was conceivable that *Ms Young* could be put in a position in 21st-century Britain where she was unable to make an independent decision (*The Independent*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

*Janet Young* relied on a defence of marital coercion dating from the Middle Ages that lawyers say is "to all modern sensibilities absurd" (*The Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013b)

There's something curiously old-fashioned about the defence of marital coercion - essentially the legal formulation of "he made me do it" - and the clue is in that "he". The defence is only available to wives, never husbands,



because it's rooted in an era where the very idea of a man being pushed around within a marriage was unthinkable. (*The Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013c)

As highlighted in the previously analysed Alice Jones case study, there are a number of issues with the defence of marital coercion, such as a woman has to be married to cite the defence, the husband has to be present at the time of the offence, thus contradicting research which suggests that coercive control can occur without the physical presence of the controller (Stark 2007, Welle and Falkin, 2000) and it could be argued that the defence denies women agency. However, as argued by Yeo (1993), the majority of legal defences have been developed on the basis of male experiences and definitions and therefore despite defences such as marital coercion having a number of issues, developing defences specifically for women at least attempts to account for the differences between men and women's experiences of offending and criminality.

Furthermore, by focussing on the notion that the defence is a "legal relic of the middle ages" (*The Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013b) and on the implied lack of applicability to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both journalists and unsurprisingly, the prosecution placed emphasis on the weakness of the defence itself rather than focussing on Janet's perspective and explanations for her involvement in the offending. In addition, this ridicule led to a lack of acknowledgement that this was the only defence available which at least attempts to account for women who suggest that they have been coerced into crime by a male partner. For example, whilst the defence of duress concerns defendants who have been threatened with death or serious injury to commit the offences for which they were charged, this fails to account for non-physical threats which women can often be subject to, such as psychological

pressures and moral threats (Yeo, 1993). With all of this in mind, similarly to the Alice Jones case study, this thesis argues that the criticisms of the defence of marital coercion should not have been used as a reason to minimise the potential influence that Edward's controlling behaviour had upon Janet's reasons for offending. Whilst it is unsurprising that the prosecution adopted this perspective, journalists could have attempted to provide a more balanced overview of Janet's reasons for citing the defence, rather than ridiculing the defence itself.

“Make up your mind about what sort of person she is”

Within the context of the current frame, in both the news media and case file material there was an overwhelming focus on the ‘type’ of woman Janet is and the potential influence that this may have had on her capacity to be coerced into taking the speeding points on behalf of her ex-husband. Within a legal context, the prosecution in particular focussed on this notion:

The most important fact of this case is to keep in mind who she is. She is not married to a lorry driver with five kids who would lose their job and go hungry if they didn't take the points. She wasn't threatened with violence or threatened at all. She was persuaded to do something that was a sensible solution for the family (*Prosecution opening speech*, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

You have to make up your mind if she is a weak minded woman, whose husband exerted a pull on her, or a strong minded and manipulative woman acting of her own free will (*Prosecution opening speech, original trial*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

She is a woman who has spent her life making important decisions and choices. She is a very influential woman who has had a glittering career as an economist, she is a visiting lecturer at a number of universities, she has been a chief economic advisor, she earns a 6 figure sum and has ran for the equal right to choose. Do you really think that she would do something because some man told her to? (*Prosecution opening speech*, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

Is she a pushover? Is she the kind of woman who has been coerced by a man who reduced her to mental paralysis? (*Prosecution opening speech*, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

The above examples highlight that Janet's status as a well-educated, intelligent 'career woman' were used to portray her as an individual who was unlikely to be coerced or controlled. Significantly, the jury were reminded to 'keep in mind the type of woman she is' on seven occasions during the re-trial prosecution opening speech, highlighting the perceived significance of her character and capacity to be coerced for the prosecution's main arguments. Journalists also adopted a similar narrative, as cited below:

*Young's* defence of "marital coercion", claiming *Crouch* forced her to sign a form accepting his points, was meant to paint her as a woman who kowtowed to her domineering husband. The jury didn't buy that for one minute and realised this was all about revenge (*The Sun*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

*Janet Young* seemed a much tougher character: a woman who has made it big in the male world of economics; a woman who should have been a role model for schoolgirls everywhere. But she denied all such female achievement

because her hatred for her ex-husband is greater than her pride in anything she has achieved. Instead, poor, silly, little ol' her settled for presenting the pathetic excuse: He told me to (*Daily Mail*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

They were asked to consider if she had been bullied into taking the points or whether she was a "manipulative woman who is very capable of making up her own mind" and doing what she wants. (*The Sun*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

<sup>7</sup>Significantly, there was an emphasis in the news media material about the 'type' of woman Janet was from the perspective of the prosecution, yet just 10 newspaper articles analysed discussed Janet's offences and the defence of marital coercion from the point of view of the defence team. Whilst a number of journalists reported on Janet's testimony in court, this was mostly within a gendered context, and revealed little detail about Janet's assertions that Edward was controlling during their marriage. By limiting explanations of Janet's character and capacity to be coerced to the perspective of the prosecution, journalists were therefore able to imply that Janet did not have an adequate defence or at the very least, that it wasn't worth listening to.

Furthermore, in the news media material, the fact that Janet had cited 'marital coercion' as her defence was often communicated in conjunction with details of her career and education, as evidenced below:

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<sup>7</sup> NB. From my experience of viewing the trial from the press box in court, journalists talked extensively and openly about the fact that it was "embarrassing" and "ridiculous" that a woman like Janet had cited the defence of marital coercion, thus highlighting that many of those reporting on the case discounted her defence and alternatively focussed on the 'type of woman' she was.

*Ms Young* - a talented and highly successful economist - claimed that her former husband believed that he was "above the law" and bullied her into agreeing to take three points for her licence (*The Independent*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

Can a gifted woman who advises on the affairs of nations become so subjugated in a marriage that she has no freedom of choice? (*Sunday Times*, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

*Edward Crouch's* ex-wife, *Janet Young*, is "one of the most powerful, talented, intelligent and trusted women in the country" who wishes a jury to think she took his speeding points because "she had no real choice", a court has heard (*The Guardian*, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

The economist, with a glittering academic record, had tried to claim the millionaire had pressurised her into accepting his penalty points. But yesterday the jury of seven men and five women decided she was dishonestly hiding behind the rare defence of marital coercion" (*The Express* 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

Furthermore, the keyword 'intelligent' was used 64 times in a context which served to refute the extent to which Janet was coerced. In addition, the term 'economist' was used 222 times during the trial reporting (537 in the total time period analysed) and 174 articles used the term in conjunction with either the defence of marital coercion, or to minimise Janet's claims of coercion. By juxtaposing Janet's career accolades with her defence of marital coercion, journalists were able to further emphasise the suggested implausibility that a woman of her reputation and intelligence could be coerced, which will be discussed further in a later chapter.

Furthermore Janet suggested during her testimony that Edward implied that she would be “failing” their marriage if she did not take the speeding points on his behalf and as his wife and mother to his children, she felt that she had a “moral obligation” to take the speeding points (*Jane Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013). This therefore suggests that irrespective of her intelligence and well-educated status, her role as a wife and mother and the wider control and bullying that she suggested she experienced by Edward throughout their marriage at least to some extent influenced her decision to participate in the offending. Research suggests that whilst men’s moral judgement is defined by rationality, justice and individual rights, women’s moral judgement is more readily associated with care and responsibility for others (Gilligan, 1977; 1982), thus highlighting the potential gendered nature of Janet’s perceived moral obligations within her marriage. With this in mind, it could be argued that legal professionals and journalists could have attempted to gain a more in-depth understanding of the nature of Janet’s relationship with Edward irrespective of her privileged position, rather than focussing on the ‘type’ of woman she was and how this may have influenced her capacity to be coerced.

Overall, as previously discussed, whilst Janet acknowledged herself that revenge did play a role in her reasons for disclosing details of the offence a number of years after the criminality initially took place, during the relationship and the context of the offence itself, Janet suggested that Edward’s control and bullying had an influential impact on her decision to offend. In spite of this, the prosecuting team, Judge and journalists failed to adequately account for and explore the whole 20 year marriage when considering the extent to which Janet was coerced. However, this thesis and various other scholars (Richie, 1996; Welle and Falkin, 2000) argue that when attempting to understand coercive relationships, it is important to look at the

whole relationship, rather than the specific moments leading to the offending behaviour to gain a more nuanced understanding of the nature of coercion.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Janet was framed in specific ways in both the news media and case file material. Various journalistic techniques, such as selection, exclusion, elaboration and the use of myths and metaphors (Entman, 1993; Tankard, 2002; Jewkes, 2011) were used to frame Janet within stereotypical, pre-existing narratives surrounding female deviancy, irrespective of the low level of criminality involved in the offences. As highlighted by Jewkes (2011: 127), “such tried and tested narratives often keep aspects of the women’s involvement in the crime hidden, or only partially represented, allowing the public to dip into their cultural reservoir of symbolic representations and fill in the gaps as they see fit”.

Whilst the ‘othering’ process also took differing forms for this particular case, the familiar use of animalistic and mythical language to firmly separate ‘us’ and ‘them’ on the basis of biology and pathology was also evident, thus serving to frame Janet as a “deviant other” (Young, 1999) as well as an ‘other’ within the context of class differences. This suggests that irrespective of the perceived level of seriousness of the crime, the ‘othering’ process will still take place within the context of various types of female offending, due to them being viewed to be an ‘other’ by their very nature and involvement in deviancy.

The dominant way in which Janet was framed was as a 'scorned woman' seeking revenge, which was articulated against the backdrop of the continuum of mad and bad. By framing Janet as both crazed with revenge and devious she was effectively essentialised and pathologised and her reasons for offending were reduced to over-simplistic, gendered explanations. Whilst Janet acknowledged that revenge did play a role in her reasons for disclosing information about the speeding offences, this explanation did little to explore her motivations for offending in the first instance.

Furthermore, Janet's defence of marital coercion was ridiculed and diminished by both journalists and legal professionals, which served to mute and minimise her suggested experiences of bullying and control. As well as ridiculing the defence itself, legal professionals and journalists questioned how a woman like Janet, namely well- educated and intelligent, could be 'coerced' or controlled by her husband, which served to discredit her explanations. However by implying that only certain 'types' of women are able to be coerced, journalists and legal professionals failed to adequately understand the nature of abusive relationships and the fact that privileged, well educated women are also able to be controlled and abused (Weitzman, 2000; Berg, 2014).



## **CHAPTER 9**

### **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS: ‘LAYERS OF SILENCING’ AND ‘COERCION INTO CRIME’**

#### **Introduction**

Having established the key ways in which the co-accused women were framed in the case file and news media material, the following chapter will provide a synthesis and analytical framework for these case studies. This will explore two key aspects. First, the ways in which the women’s voices were silenced, muted and/ or distorted in legal and media discourse and the potential consequences of this. Second, ‘coercion into crime’ and how utilising this framework may lead to a more nuanced appreciation of the circumstances of coerced, co-accused women.

#### **Silencing the other: ‘Layers of Silencing’**

One of the key consequences of being framed within the stock motifs and gendered narratives discussed in previous chapters, is that each of the women’s voices and perspectives were silenced, muted and/ or distorted, particularly in a news media context. Foucault (1981) suggests that silence is never outside of discourse and as argued by Ward and Winstanley (2003:133), “discourses authorize who can speak, what can be spoken about, how it is spoken about and what should be taken

seriously; whilst simultaneously marginalizing and disqualifying other voices whose speech remains forbidden or derided”. This conceptualization highlights the social power structures that privilege some voices whilst simultaneously excluding others. Women as both victims and offenders are often silenced, such as victims of sexual violence (Brownmiller, 1975; Kelly, 1988; Kelsall & Stepakoff, 2007; Jordan, 2008) and domestic violence (Gill, 2004; Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Furthermore Ballinger (2012) also explores the silencing of female offenders within a legal context and utilizes Mathieson’s (2004) concept of ‘silent silencing’, which details “the actual silencing of opinions and actions which in fact continually takes place... is hidden both to the participants themselves and to the spectators”(Mathieson, 2004: 24-25).

This chapter will explore the conceptual framework of ‘layers of silencing’ developed for this thesis, in which female offenders voices are silenced, muted, distorted and/or misrepresented, particularly in a news media context. This will be split into two sections, the first explores the actual silencing of the women’s voices (i.e. the reader/hearer/ listener is not given the opportunity of hearing the women’s perspectives) and forms of indirect, ‘hidden silencing’, or the ways in which the women’s voices are muted and/ or distorted as opposed to being overtly silenced.

#### Actual/ direct silencing

For each of the case studies, journalists focussed more readily on the perspective of the prosecution rather than the defence. For example, as previously discussed, in the cases of Janet and Alice, journalists frequently reported on the defence of marital coercion from the perspective of the prosecution, which led to the women’s

suggested reasons for citing the defence to be ridiculed, minimised and/ or ignored. The journalistic emphasis on the weakness of the defence itself served to silence the women's perspectives, as journalists were able to imply that all defence claims made by the women were weak and not plausible.

In the Jane Turner case in particular, there was an overwhelming focus on the prosecution in the news media material and out of the 491 articles analysed, just 8 mentioned her defence and this was often in the form of a short paragraph at the end of an article which provided a summary of the overall trial. This consequently implied that Jane did not have a defence or at the very least, that it was not worth listening to. As previously discussed, in the case file material and in court, Jane's defence team offered potential explanations for her reasons for offending. For example, Jane had never offended before having met Simon, she received no sexual gratification from the indecent images that she distributed to him and significant emphasis was placed on his influence and the need and pressure that she felt to make him happy because that she was in love and obsessed with him. However, the news reader was not given this context, which the judge himself acknowledged during the closing speech of Simon's trial, stating "Your influence over four separate women could be described as Svengali like. You were a seriously corrupting force" (*Judge closing statement*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2011). The information available in the media is one of the main ways in which the public accesses information about crime and deviancy (Altheide, 2003) and in this instance, the reader was provided with a partial account of the case.

Focussing on the perspective of the prosecution was also evident in the case of Sarah Johnson. Due to the vast amount of coverage during the trial period of reporting for this particular case, a more in-depth quantitative analysis was

conducted to explore the extent to which journalists adopted the perspective of the defence or prosecution during key dates of the trial, such as the case opening statements, Sarah's testimony and the Judge's closing speech. Table 23 highlights that the news media consistently adopted the perspective of the prosecution during the opening statements and did not report on the opening arguments of the defence.

| <i>Table 23: Headline focus of opening statements for Sarah Johnson case</i> |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Newspaper  | Arguments of prosecution | Arguments of the defence |
| Daily Mail   | 3                        |                          |
| Daily Telegraph  | 3                        |                          |
| Express Newspapers   | 8                        |                          |
| Guardian   | 2                        |                          |
| Independent  | 2                        |                          |
| The Mirror   | 5                        |                          |
| The Sun  | 3                        |                          |
| The Times  | 4                        |                          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>30</b>                | <b>0</b>                 |

Furthermore, the news media focussed on specific themes when reporting on Sarah's testimony, such as how she felt about being compared with Hindley and her relationship with Lucy and Katie (see Table 24).

| <i>Table 24: Reporting themes for Sarah Johnson's trial testimony</i> |           |                      |          |                |                       |
|---|-----------|----------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Newspaper   | 'Hindley' | 'woman in the house' | Lied     | Lucy and Katie | She didn't believe... |
| Daily Mail  | 1         |                      |          | 1              |                       |
| Daily Telegraph   |           | 1                    | 1        | 1              | 1                     |
| Express newspapers  | 2         |                      |          | 2              |                       |
| Guardian  | 1         |                      |          |                | 1                     |
| Independent   |           |                      |          |                | 1                     |
| Mirror  | 1         | 1                    | 2        | 1              |                       |
| The Sun   | 1         | 1                    |          |                |                       |
| The Times   | 1         | 1                    | 1        |                |                       |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>7</b>  | <b>4</b>             | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b>       | <b>3</b>              |
| <b>Overall total: 23</b>  |           |                      |          |                |                       |

This therefore suggests that despite Sarah's testimony and cross-examination lasting two days, the news media focussed on topics which reinforced the sensational aspects of the case, such as the involvement of child victims and the similarities to the notorious Hindley and Brady case, which served to undermine the various other explanations and interpretations offered by Sarah.

This notion of focussing on sensational aspects of the trial was also evident in the Jane case study and is a common feature of trial reporting more broadly (Nobles & Schiff, 2004). When looking at how this case seemingly progressed according to the news media, very little appeared to have happened in court between the first day Jane stood trial and when she was eventually sentenced, therefore giving the impression that a 'guilty' verdict was obtained by the jury in an over-simplistic manner. The news media established early on in the case what made Jane's story newsworthy, namely that a female nursery worker had taken indecent photographs of the children in her care and sent them to an online paedophile network, therefore most aspects of the case that were reported on fitted within this narrative.

By generally offering a one-sided version of the cases and trials, journalists provided a partial account of each of the cases and the women's reasons for offending, which consequently served to silence their perspectives, voices and defence. Whilst this direct silencing process was evident in each of the cases, it was particularly manifest in the Jane and Sarah case studies. This could arguably be due to the serious nature of the offences, as both involved child victims, thus exemplifying the ultimate deviation against women's supposed natural, maternal instinct, which consequently led both women to be more readily framed as 'deviant others' or more specifically, as a distinct and uncontested outgroup (Young, 1999)

### Hidden Silencing: muting techniques

As well as being directly silenced, each of the women's perspectives were muted, particularly in a news media context. This section highlights instances in which despite being given the opportunity to speak, the women's voices may have been articulated in specific contexts or reinterpreted for particular purposes.

An example of this was evident in the Jane case study, as various articles used the quote from an SMS message sent by Jane to Simon where she calls herself a "paedo whore mumma". For example, the *Daily Mail* (16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009a) quotes "from a bubbly, happy mother to 'your paedo whore mumma'" and *The Sun* (16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009b) quotes "vile Turner shamelessly dubbed herself 'your paedo whore mum'". This quote was a useful tool for journalists and editors to frame Jane as 'the other' and thus silence her actual explanations for offending. Due to the fact that this was a direct quote from Jane herself, journalists were able to use this as direct evidence of her depravity. However, this is one of the few occasions where the reader actually hears her voice in the context of the media. Therefore it could be argued that this is an example of journalists utilising this quote to reinforce the partial and essentialist image that they had created of Jane, namely as a 'beast', paedophile and a monstrous woman, whilst simultaneously discrediting any alternative potential explanations offered. However, within the case file material there were various examples of text message exchanges between Simon and Jane and the example cited above was one of the only occasions in which Jane used this type of language. Conversely, she overwhelmingly focussed on her feelings towards Simon and how she hoped that they had a future together. This exemplifies the concept of 'hidden silencing' as the reader is given the opportunity to hear her voice, yet it is in a gendered context. This complements the monstrous 'other' image

already created of Jane and the use is entirely at the discretion of journalists, who chose which quotes best support their argument.

This muting technique was also evident in the Sarah case study, as despite Sarah arguing in her defence that David was abusive and controlling towards her, as previously discussed, the news media did very little to explore this, particularly as a potential explanation for her offending. For example, prior to the couples sentencing, the main instance of abuse which was discussed in the news media was that David had “only hit (her) once” (*Daily Telegraph*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2003). As previously highlighted, an analysis of her police interviews revealed that Sarah did allude to other instances of physical abuse and various witness statements highlighted other examples of physical violence (*Four witness statements*, August & September 2002). In addition there was very little discussion of the ongoing emotional and psychological abuse that Sarah argued she had experienced throughout her relationship. By minimising the extent of the abuse that Sarah experienced to one instance of physical abuse, journalists thus misrepresented and muted both Sarah’s perspective and the nature of her relationship with David. Furthermore, despite the news media briefly reporting on David’s abuse of Sarah following the sentencing (For example, *Daily Telegraph*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003), it was often framed against a backdrop of a ‘desperate woman’ narrative as evidenced by the following quote:

Once *Sarah* got her hands on *David*, nothing- not his infidelities, his cruelty, his slobbish exploitation of her vulnerabilities- would persuade her to let go (*The Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003c)

This extract highlights that Sarah's explanation that she was the victim of David's abuse and control was muted in the context of the news media, thus suggesting that even in instances when her abuse was discussed, Sarah's perspective and interpretation of the control was not articulated from her own point of view. Furthermore, whilst David's abuse towards Sarah was framed in this way, the news media reported widely on his violence towards other women and past girlfriends. The following extracts were quotes from three of David's past girlfriends:

He tried to kill our baby by punching me in the stomach and throwing me down the stairs (*News of the World*, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2003)

David made me eat cat food when he didn't like what I had cooked him for dinner (*News of the World*, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2003)

David kept me prisoner in his flat (*Daily Mail*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003d).

The above extracts highlight that David's abuse and violence were used as a tool to frame him as a 'monster' for what he did to other women, rather than to Sarah. This suggests that Sarah was not classified as the same type of 'woman' as those mentioned above, as her participation in the offending and her framing as a 'deviant' woman meant that she could not be framed as an 'ideal victim' (Christie, 1986) or a 'true' victim of abuse.

Similarly, both journalists and legal professionals engaged in a range of less obvious linguistic and discursive techniques which served to mute Janet's voice. Unlike the other cases discussed in this thesis, there were occasional expressions of sympathy offered for Janet, particularly during the early stages of reporting. Female offenders are rarely portrayed sympathetically, as they are perceived to have



transgressed both the criminal law as well as the informal laws surrounding appropriate femininity (Lloyd, 1995; Worrall, 1990; Ballinger, 2000). However, if the female offender is able to demonstrate that they adhere to the patriarchal expectations of womanhood and femininity in other aspects of their life outside of the context of their offending, then the perceived extent of their deviancy can, in certain instances, be reduced (Heidensohn, 1996; Carlen, 1985; Smart., 1976; Ballinger, 2000).

However, on the occasions where sympathy was offered to Janet, it was usually within a gendered context. Whilst Janet was most frequently framed as a scorned, educated, devious woman, as previously discussed, on occasion, both her defence team and certain articles (often opinion pieces written by female journalists), portrayed her as a weak and fragile woman, who had been unceremoniously deserted by her ex-husband, as evidenced by the following quotes:

She was a broken, weak woman (*Defence argument*, 25th February 2013)

I want to talk about the state of mind of *Janet Young* at the time. If I suggested that she was fragile and a broken woman would that be fair? (*Defence question to witness*, 25th February 2013)

The wife deserted by political minister tells of sacrifices she made for a man driven by ambition (*Sunday Times*, 8th May 2011)

*Janet Young* was left practically suicidal after *Edward Crouch* left her (*The Sun*, 28th February 2013)

By framing Janet as a weak and fragile woman, particularly by her defence team, these narratives are feeding into the pre-existing ideologies and discourses surrounding appropriate womanhood and femininity, thus highlighting the gendered nature of the sympathy (Russett, 1989; Sydie, 1987). However, Janet's explanations for her behaviour during the divorce did not directly coincide with those previously discussed. For example, during her testimony, Janet stated that "I put on a brave face for the sake of my family. I wanted to be strong for them" (*Janet Young testimony*, 25th February 2013) and "I refused to cry in front of him whenever I saw him. I wanted to be strong" (*Janet Young testimony*, 25th February 2013). This suggests that Janet made a conscious decision to not be painted as a 'fragile' woman, thus suggesting that both the press and her defence team in particular attempted to redefine her explanations to fit with the dominant, pre-existing version of femininity. Furthermore, Janet was not portrayed sympathetically within the context of the control and bullying that she suggested she had experienced by Edward, thus again highlighting the purposeful, gendered nature of the sympathy, which collectively led to the muting of her perspective.

In addition, a particular instance in which gendered sympathy was used to silence Janet's voice was evident in the news media reporting of Janet's assertion during her testimony that Edward had forced her to have an abortion during their marriage. Whilst this was evidenced by Janet's defence team as an example of Edward's controlling behaviour, the issue was not discussed in significant detail during trial, yet it was the subject of every main headline of the articles analysed on this particular day of reporting (8th February 2013). Examples of the reporting of this instance are outlined below:

Tearful *Young* says *Crouch* made me have an abortion (*The Times*, 8th February 2013)

*Janet Young* broke down in tears as she said that (he) told her to terminate the pregnancy in 1990. "I obviously wanted to keep the baby because it was healthy, in fact I quite like babies, that's why I have so many, the mother of five said (*The Times*, 8th February 2013)

*Edward Crouch's* ex-wife wiped away tears yesterday as she told a court how the disgraced politician tried to force her to have a second abortion (*The Mirror*, 9th February 2013)

During Janet's testimony, the fact that Edward had allegedly forced her to have an abortion was the subject of just four questions by the defence and was not discussed in detail, yet it was the focus of all news reports on the day in question. This highlights the news medias tendency to focus on sensational and personal aspects of a criminal case, which consequently offers a partial account of what happened during the trial (Nobles and Schiff, 2004).<sup>8</sup>

The final example of muting the women's voices was that in each of the cases, there was an over-emphasis on 'rational choice' as an explanation for the women's

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<sup>8</sup> N.B My observations of being in court whilst Janet gave evidence in many ways contradicted the news reporting of this aspect of her testimony. Despite it being asserted in a number of news reports that Janet had "broken down" in tears whilst talking about the abortion, in reality, it was not noticeable that she was getting upset until a member of court staff offered her a tissue and she remained on the whole composed whilst talking about this, This therefore suggests that journalists exaggerated and distorted aspects of Janet's testimony to reinforce the fragile and unstable image previously discussed, which served to strengthen the gendered notion of female offenders being restricted to their psychological well-being and pathology (Russett, 1989; Cormack and Brickey, 2007) and thus further serving to mute her experiences within this context.

offending. A selection of quotes from the case file material of each of the cases, which were also utilised in news media reports, which exemplify this notion have been outlined below:

JANE CASE STUDY: This was not an isolated incident committed on the spur of the moment. This was wicked, cold, rational, calculated, repeated offending, which for any decent person defies belief. You made the choice” (*Judges Closing speech*, December, 2009).

ALICE CASE STUDY Despite your efforts to put all the blame on your husband with your defence of marital coercion, I am convinced that you played your part in the fraud efficiently and wholeheartedly. The choice was yours” (*Judge’s closing speech*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

SARAH CASE STUDY: Sarah made a cold and rational decision to back David up (*Prosecution opening statement*, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2003)

SARAH CASE STUDY: You had plenty of opportunity to refuse to persist in a course of lying and deception, you chose not to (*Judges closing speech*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

JANET CASE STUDY: You were readily persuaded and chose to go along with it to your mutual benefit (*Judge’s closing speech*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

JANET CASE STUDY She plays an important role in the running of our country, yet she was unable to reject the suggestions of her husband? She did something because she chose to do it (*Prosecution opening speech*, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013)

This emphasis on rational choice in each of the cases highlights that legal professionals, notably the Judge in particular, failed to understand, or rather chose to ignore or disbelieve, the alternative explanations provided by the women and the context in which their ‘choices’ were made. However, each of the women’s

explanations for their offending did not fit with this concept of 'rational choice', as outlined below:

JANE CASE STUDY: I wanted to make him happy. At the time I would have done anything to make him happy. Looking back at the situation, I'm fuming with myself really- I am because it's like the epitome isn't it, it's like absolutely disgusting and I know, you know, it's just awful (*Jane police interview*, 19th June 2009).

SARAH CASE STUDY: I was scared. I was going home to that man at the end of the day, it's very embarrassing to be in a relationship like that (*Sarah testimony*, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

SARAH CASE STUDY: I lied to protect him. I loved him very much (*Sarah testimony*, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003)

ALICE CASE STUDY: He knew how to make me feel insignificant. He made me feel like I didn't really count. All the major decisions were made by him. Whatever he wanted to do, I did (*Alice Jones testimony*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

JANET CASE STUDY: It didn't look to me like I had a choice at all in the matter, so I took the form and signed it. I had been worn down over a long period of time and it looked to me like it was the only thing I could do to get him off my case and keep my marriage together (*Janet testimony*, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013).

As previously discussed, the perspectives offered by each of the women did not fit with the male defined version of rationality or rational choice, so therefore they

failed to have their version of events truly acknowledged in both court and the press and their perspectives were thus redefined to fit with male, objective definitions of rationality (Yeo, 1993; Ballinger, 2012). As previously mentioned, the way in which the women's perspectives regarding their 'choice's' were so readily disregarded by the Judge in particular highlights the ways in which choices can be extracted from their social context (Daly, 1994). As outlined by Daly (1994: 451, cited in Cormack and Brickey 2007: 27) "It is important to acknowledge, however, that choices are never free and open, that the ability to 'choose' will be affected by broader social conditions". Thus by reinterpreting the women's perspective with regard to the context in which their offending 'choices' were made, legal professionals consequently muted their voices and explanations for offending.

#### Hidden Silencing: Distortion/ misrepresentation

The final silencing technique which was utilised by journalists was the notion of distortion, which details examples in which the women's voices and / or defence were misrepresented, taken out of context and/ or reinterpreted. This exemplifies 'hidden' forms of silencing, as the women's voices are being heard, but it is usually within contexts which serve to reinforce the existing frames and identities that the media had already prescribed to the women.

When reporting on Jane's police interviews, *The Daily Mail* (16th December 2009) used the following quote from her police interviews as their main headline "I love children". The article used quotes such as 'she's got a nerve' and suggested that

this phrase demonstrated her ‘lack of remorse’. However, in the actual police interview itself, the quote featured as follows:

I’m disgusted with myself. I can’t believe what I’ve done. I love children, or I mean, I love working with children (*Jane police interview*, June 2009)

This is an example of journalists actively misrepresenting Jane’s voice and perspective, which served to reinforce the pre-existing monstrous and essentialist image of Jane created by journalists, thus strengthening her framing as a ‘deviant other’. In another example, the *Daily Mail* (16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009b) ran an article which detailed the full outline of the case following Jane’s sentencing. It described how the defence team stated that Jane “was caught up in a double life where she both cared for children and was abusing them” and that she was “overborne with obsession and infatuation towards Simon”. Following this, the same article used a quote from the Judge which stated that Jane’s barrister had “made her abuse sound as forgettable as a ‘cup of coffee’”. Whilst the judge did say this quote, it was not articulated within the journalists suggested context and was in fact stated following Jane’s barristers assertion that she couldn’t remember which children she had taken images of. This epitomises Nobles and Schiff’s (2004) concept of ‘misreading’, which highlights that the media often misreads and misinterprets the law for its own purpose. The consequence of the misrepresentation of this quote is that it implies to the reader that even the ‘expert’ judge does not consider Jane’s defence to be relevant or significant, thus further rendering her version of events invisible.

Furthermore, in Alice’s case, there were a number of instances in which she attempted to show remorse for her actions, for example, by questioning “what sort of mother am I?” when being interviewed by news media professionals prior to her

arrest. However, in the write up of such interviews, journalists often responded with phrases such as “the sort of mother who loves money more than her sons, who values being debt- free and living the life of luxury more than the fear of hurting them with lies of their father’s debt” (*The Sun*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007). It was also often implied in such articles that she was attempting to portray herself as a victim by openly questioning her ability as a mother, thus implying that she was not capable of displaying any genuine signs of remorse. This example highlights the strength of gendered narratives such as the ‘bad mother’, as any attempt that Alice made to apologise was distorted or misrepresented as being the result of selfish concerns, rather than concerns for her sons.

In addition, journalists used very few direct quotes said by Sarah during her testimony and police interviews. For example, the most frequently cited quote from Sarah’s testimony was “I am not going to be blamed for what that thing in that box did to me and those children”, as evidenced in Table 25 and this was used in eleven out of a total eighteen articles which discussed the second day of her testimony.

| <i>Table 25: Focus of Sarah’s testimony and defence quotes during trial</i> |                                 |                             |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Newspaper   | “I’m not going to be blamed...” | “Please, please release me” |
| Daily Mail  | 1                               |                             |
| Daily Telegraph   | 1                               | 1                           |
| Express Newspapers  | 2                               | 3                           |
| Guardian  | 1                               |                             |
| Independent   | 1                               |                             |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday   | 1                               |                             |
| Sun   | 3                               | 1                           |
| Times   | 1                               | 1                           |
| <b>Total</b>  | 11                              | 6                           |



However, the news media framed this statement as “astonishing” (*The Sun*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003) and an example of Sarah “finally losing her cool” (*The Times*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003b), highlighting that despite being a direct quote from Sarah, its context was reinterpreted by journalists, thus again suggesting that Sarah’s wider perspective was not truly acknowledged. This notion was also evidenced in the reporting of the defence teams concluding arguments, as six out of eight articles which reported on this focussed on Sarah’s defence lawyers use of the Englebert Humperdinck lyric “please release me, let me go” (see Table 25). The defence lawyer used this song to illustrate that Sarah had once been enthralled by David, but she no longer loved him, yet the news media framed this as a “bizarre” plea, thus framing Sarah’s defence as trivial and ‘ridiculous’. This potentially encouraged the reader to conclude that Sarah’s perspective was irrelevant, which served to silence her perspective and defence. Issues such as this exemplify the journalistic practice of selection and exclusion (Entman, 1993), whereby certain quotes from a trial are used to frame a story in a particular way.

Collectively, journalist’s utilisation of specific quotes from the women appeared to provide the reader with the opportunity of hearing the case from the perspective of the women themselves. However, rather than attempting to gain a nuanced appreciation of the women’s perspective, the silencing techniques previously discussed served to reinforce existing stock motifs and frames already prescribed to the women by journalists.

## **A continuum of coercion**

Both journalists and legal professionals utilised pervasive and over-simplistic binaries, such as victim/ offender and mad/ bad to explain the women's offending and individual persona. As previously discussed, in each of the cases there was a disproportionate focus on the women within the offending partnership irrespective of their level of involvement. This was particularly evident in the Jane Turner and Alice Jones case studies. However, this study suggests that rather than limiting the women's reasons for offending to one-dimensional dichotomies which leads to the silencing, muting or distorting of their perspectives, the notion of a 'continuum of coercion' could better explain the women's pathways into criminality. This concept argues that a range of behaviours could be considered as being potentially coercive within male-female co-offending partnerships, particularly those which are characterised by a personal relationship, such as physical and/or emotional abuse, control, economic abuse, obsession and/ or love and rather than being viewed as distinct and separate forms of coercive behaviour, they would be better understood as being part of a wider 'continuum of coercion'. This conceptual framework suggests that within the context of such co-offending partnerships, the whole relationship should be explored when attempting to understand the women's reasons for offending, rather than focussing solely on the offending act itself.

Each of the women alluded to such coercive techniques during their police interviews, witness statements and court testimonies. For example, whilst Jane was not physically forced into crime by Simon, her police interviews and key defence arguments suggest that she was emotionally coerced by him, thus highlighting the

usefulness of viewing a range of behaviours as potentially coercive. Jane argued that she “loved” Simon and would have “done anything to make him happy” (*Jane Turner Police interviews and witness statement*, June 2009). She suggested that Simon encouraged her to view the exchange of indecent imagery of children as an integral aspect of their relationship and consequently a way to make him happy. The notion of viewing child sex offences as a significant aspect of a relationship is a familiar technique used by male child sex offenders who co-offend with a female (Matthews, Matthews & Speltz, 1991). However, whilst Simon suggested to Jane that he also had emotional feelings towards her, following his arrest he admitted that he had never had such feelings, thus implying that he used her ‘obsession’ with him to obtain the indecent imagery of children for his own gain. In addition, Jane’s case adds a complex third dimension to the ‘continuum of coercion’, as Jane and Simon’s relationship was restricted to online rather than face to face communication. However, if this notion is considered within the context of previously discussed research, which explores the significance of online, emotional relationships (Dombrowski et al, 2007; Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008), the fact that the two had never met in person would not minimise the potential coercive impact of their relationship on Jane’s offending.

Sarah’s case is arguably the most typical example of a coercive relationship out of the four case studies analysed. This case highlights the relevance of viewing coercion into crime as a continuum, as it encompasses various aspects of the coercive behaviour mentioned previously. For example, Sarah argued that throughout her relationships with David he was both emotionally and physically abusive and that “no-one “had any idea what sort of relationship (she) had with that man” (*Sarah court testimony*, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003). Previous research

suggests that fear is a strong motivator in women's co-offending behaviour (Richie, 1996; Welle and Falkin, 2000; Jones, 2008), as is committing an offence out of love for one's partner (Jones, 2008; Jones, 2011). Sarah argued that she provided the false alibi for David both out of fear and love for him. This thesis therefore argues that love and fear should not be viewed as two distinct pathways into crime, but such experiences should be understood as part of a continuum of coercion into criminality.

Both Alice and Janet cited the defence of 'marital coercion' during their trials, thus highlighting the suggested significance and influence of their husbands' coercive behaviour. Both women suggested that it was their husband's control and emotional abuse which led them to be coerced into crime, thus again highlighting the importance of considering the impact of a range of abusive behaviours within the continuum of coercion. Janet argued that she felt "pushed into a corner" and "worn down by (Edward's) constant pressure and control" (*Janet Young testimony*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013), whilst Alice argued that Chris was "manipulative" and "had a habit of making (her) feel quite small and inadequate" (*Alice testimony*, 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2008). However, it was questioned by both journalists and legal professionals (with the exception of the their defence teams) how two intelligent, privileged women could be coerced into crime by their male partner, yet, by implying that only certain 'types' of women are able to be coerced, there was a failure to adequately understand the nature of abusive relationships. Weitzman (2000) suggested that society is less willing to accept that upper class women experience abuse, domestic violence and/or control and that even abused, privileged women themselves do not recognise domestic abuse in their own relationships due to their internalisation of stereotypes about abused women. Furthermore, Berg (2014) suggests that privileged

women who have influential careers and are thus seen to be in control of various aspects of their environment are likely to blame themselves if they are unable to control and sustain their marriage. Berg (2014: 148) states that “their lived reality has taught them that if they work harder they can reach their goal, in this case by ending abuse to save their intimate partner or family. Domestic violence is frequently experienced as personal failure”.

With all of this in mind, despite Alice and Janet in particular being intelligent, well- educated and in Janet’s case, privileged women, this does not mean that they are devoid of the capacity of being controlled, abused and coerced by a male partner/ husband. Understanding their cases in the context of the ‘continuum of coercion’ acknowledges that their experiences of manipulation and control throughout the duration of their relationships could have been fully considered when attempting to explain and understand their suggested experiences of coercion, rather than simply exploring the nature of their relationship within the context of the offending period.

Feminist scholars argue that women offenders should be viewed as autonomous individuals **choosing** to commit crime as a conscious and deliberate act thereby exercising agency. However, other scholars have argued that female offenders have different motivations to commit crime, some of which are fully autonomous, yet others may be influenced by issues such as personal circumstance, poverty or coercion (Carlen, 1988; Ballinger, 2000; Richie, 1998). Therefore as argued by Maher (1997) this thesis argues that rather than dichotomising agency, namely viewing women as being either fully independent agents or as being ‘out of control’ of their offending behaviour, female offenders individual circumstances could be better understood.

In the case studies analysed for this thesis, whilst each of the women ultimately made a choice to offend and are not devoid of agency, they each argued that their decision to offend and ‘choice’ was at least to some extent influenced by their relationship with their male partner. This therefore suggests that the male defined concepts of ‘rationality’ and ‘choice’ do not accurately account for the experiences of women who claim to have been coerced into crime by a male partner. Legal and traditional definitions of ‘choice’ and rationality are male-defined concepts and fail to reflect the reality of many female offenders more generally (Ballinger, 2012) and in particular, women who have been coerced in to crime.

Collectively, rather than the concept of a ‘continuum of coercion’ being viewed as an exploratory framework to deny female responsibility or agency, it should alternatively be viewed as a way of attempting to gain a more nuanced understanding of specific co-offending partnerships, which are characterised by abuse, control and/or obsession and love. However, as highlighted in the case study chapters, the individual circumstances of female offenders are rarely explored by journalists in particular. Such women are routinely framed within stock narratives, which are used to form judgements and appropriate blame as a way of making sense of the ‘deviant’ acts of women, thus leading to the direct or indirect silencing of their perspective and voices.

## Conclusion

Framing the women within stock motifs and gendered narratives led to their voices and perspectives to be readily and easily silenced. Journalists emphasised the ‘otherness’ of the women by focussing on the nature of their offending, the perceived ‘weakness’ of their cited defence (marital coercion) and/ or their deviation against their gender roles. It is acknowledged in this thesis that journalists are required to communicate crime news stories in accordance with key news values to maintain and increase readership (Jewkes, 2011). However, it is argued that the transforming, minimising and/or ignoring of female offenders perspectives and explanations has potentially significant consequences for public understanding of such criminality.

The ‘layers of silencing’ framework highlights the various techniques and tools utilised by journalists to silence, mute and distort the voices of female offenders in both overt and hidden ways. Significantly each of the ‘layers’ (silencing, muting and distortion/ misrepresentation) were evident in the four cases analysed, thus highlighting that the minimisation of female offenders perspectives is applicable for a range of offences and cases. Jane and Sarah were more readily directly silenced, arguably due to the serious nature of their offending. Women’s involvement in serious offending, particularly offences involving child victims, is viewed to be ‘unexplainable’ and the ultimate deviation against women’s ‘natural’ nurturing and caring instincts (Naylor, 2001; Lloyd, 1995; Heidensohn, 1996). Consequently, the perceived abnormality of Sarah’s and Jane’s offending led to their perspectives to be silenced and distorted with very little questioning. However, the silencing of Janet

and Alice is particularly significant to this paper, as these cases suggest that the silencing of female offenders also extends to typically less serious offending. In both cases, on the occasions when the women's voices and perspectives were utilised by journalists, it was taken out of context and distorted to reinforce existing, stereotypical images of female offending more broadly. This suggests that the 'layers of silencing' framework is applicable to a range of female criminality and highlights the various techniques used by journalists to silence and disregard the voice of the female criminal.

However, silencing the women's perspective does very little in terms of understanding the nature of their relationship with their male partner and co-offender and here it is argued that choosing one framing over another carries potential consequences. In the case studies, there was little exploration of the personal relationship between the co-offenders, particularly in the news media material, so removing the offending behaviour from its social context. Here it is argued that co-offending partnerships which are characterised by physical and/or emotional abuse, control, economic abuse, obsession and/or love, could be differently framed as being potentially coercive relationships and understood as being part of a 'continuum of coercion'. Viewing each of these cases within the context of this continuum would: enable the women's emphasis on the influence of their male partner to be better understood, lead to a more nuanced contextual understanding of 'choice' and 'rationality' and enable a better understanding of the significance of the whole relationship between the co-offenders and the potential impact that this had on their reasons offending, rather than focussing solely on the offending act itself.



## **CHAPTER 10**

### **CONCLUSION**

This thesis endeavours to explore the ways in which women who are co-accused with a male partner or accomplice of committing a range of crimes are framed by British newspapers and compared such reportage with the record made in the legal proceedings of the same cases. Combining the news media and case and court file material offers a novel dynamic to this study and allows an in-depth exploration of the similarities and differences between the ways in which co-accused women are framed in differing contexts. This then produces a more nuanced understanding of journalistic practice and more specifically, the ways in which criminal justice issues are reported in the press. In addition, whilst the news media portrayal of female offending has been explored elsewhere (Naylor, 2001; Barnett, 2006; Jewkes, 2011), the framing of specifically co-accused women has received much less scholarly attention (Grabe et al, 2006), therefore this study contributes to this small body of existing literature.

In the methodology chapter of this thesis, five objectives were outlined and the extent to which these were achieved will be discussed here. The first objective aimed to ‘identify similarities and dissonances in the reporting and portrayal of women who are co-accused of criminal acts with a male partner (or accomplice/s), compared with the way in which events and testimonies are recorded in the relevant case and court proceedings (case and court files)’. By comparing and contrasting the two sources of data, this study was able to explore the ways in which journalists report on and frame the legal aspects of the case. In each of the cases analysed,

unsurprisingly the personal, sensational aspects of the cases were more readily reported on, which supports existing research (Nobles and Schiff, 2004; Jewkes, 2011). However, having the comparative tool of the case file material allowed a more in-depth exploration of the specific ways in which the legal process and trial is reported on and which aspects are included or excluded in news media material. Furthermore, this study highlights that focussing on limited and sensational aspects of the cases had a number of potential consequences. For example, journalists often reported more readily from the perspective of the prosecution rather than the women's defence. This served to offer a one-sided, partial view of the case. In addition, many aspects of the case and trial that were reported on, reinforced the existing identities and motifs that had been prescribed by journalists to frame the women within gendered, often negative narratives. This highlights journalists' propensity to select and exclude information to portray a story in pre-determined ways (Entman, 1993). Furthermore, from my personal experience of being in court during the trial of one of the cases analysed, I observed that many journalists did not attend the full trial (they usually came for the opening speeches and returned for the day close), which thus questions the extent to which some journalists are able to provide a full account of legal cases. A potential consequence of this behaviour was that such journalists arguably provided an incomplete picture of the trial, as they were only able to fully report on the aspects which were discussed whilst they were actually in court and thus perceived to be the most interesting or 'newsworthy'.

Taken together, this leads to wider questions regarding the extent to which journalists engage in objective reporting of criminal justice cases, particularly those which involve high profile female offenders. Although the manner in which the public receives information is not passive (Machado & Santos, 2009), a great deal of

knowledge concerning crime and criminal justice issues is influenced by the media (Fox et al, 2007). Arguably, it would be somewhat naïve to assume that all journalists, working for both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, engage in fully objective and impartial reporting. However, the examples of distortion, exaggeration and exclusion of information highlighted in this study suggests that greater accountability and responsibility could be expected of journalists when reporting on crime stories, particularly those involving female offenders, than appears to be the case from the findings here.

The second objective endeavored to ‘investigate the dominant frames and language used to describe women who are co-accused with a male partner or accomplice/s in both newspaper reports and court and case file documents, using a case study approach comprising four exemplary cases’. In both the case file and news media material, each of the women were represented according to the discourses surrounding appropriate femininity (Smart, 1976; Heidensohn, 1986; Ballinger, 2000). Within the news media material, various journalistic practices, such as selection, exclusion, elaboration and the use of stereotypical images and metaphors (Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Tankard, 2002), were used to frame the women in gendered and essentialist ways, which were often based on stereotypical assumptions surrounding female offending. Similar to previous research on female offending (Jewkes, 2011; Naylor, 2001; Wykes, 1998), the representation of the female co-offenders in this study suggests that journalists have a stock number of narratives for female offenders, which they use, often interchangeably, as strategies of guilt or blame in order for the reader to attempt to make sense of ‘deviant’ women. In the current study, a number of frames and narratives emerged which support existing research, such as ‘bad mother’ (Jewkes, 2011; Barnett, 2006),

manipulator/ actress (Jewkes, 2009; Heidensohn, 1996) and sexually deviant (Jewkes, 2011; Heidensohn, 1996; Edwards, 1984), all of which framed the women within motifs which were principally influenced by their gender.

Furthermore, both journalists and legal professionals utilised the familiar dichotomy of 'mad/ bad' to explain and define the women's offending behaviour (Lloyd, 1995; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002). However, whilst Alice and Jane were readily placed into the 'bad' category, with Jane in particular being defined as a 'monster' and 'beast' in the news media material, Sarah and Janet were not so clearly placed into either category. For example, Janet's framing as a scorned woman was defined as both mad and bad, as she was simultaneously described as being crazed and irrational and a calculated manipulator, which was mostly dependent on the angle of the story. Furthermore, whilst Sarah appeared to be described within the 'mad' woman narrative, the language used to describe her frequently implied that this 'madness' was an active, self-serving, rational decision, rather than the consequence of out of control behaviour. Therefore whilst previous research emphasises the dichotomous nature of the mad/ bad narrative, this study argues an alternative perspective. The representation of female offending in both legal and media discourse is in certain cases more accurately described as a scale or continuum of madness and badness, which is largely reliant on the nature of the offences and the type (for example, class) of woman involved in the offending. This has potentially damaging consequences for the ways in which female offenders are perceived, as the all-consuming nature of this type of continuum would enable journalists to more readily resort to over-simplistic and essentialist framing techniques, rather than having to choose between categories.

A key similarity between the ways in which each of the women were portrayed, is that they were all framed in varying forms as ‘others’, who are distinctly different types of people, or more notably women, to the rest of society. Constructing ‘the other’ as a distinct group marks the normative boundaries of society, where the ‘other’ is mostly excluded, which thus enables the creation of the confines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Riggins, 1997). An understanding of ‘otherness’ helps to explain why identities are often characterised by polarization, such as ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’ (Greer and Jewkes, 2005). Young (1999: 104) argues essentialism is vitally important when creating ‘others’, as “it separates out human groups on the basis of their culture or nature”. With this in mind, whilst it could be argued that all offenders, particularly those who engage in serious criminality, are viewed to be ‘others’, in the current study, the women were more readily given this label in comparison to their male partners irrespective of their level of criminality and/ or involvement.. This could arguably be due to the perceived rarity and abnormality of female offending and the consequential lack of a simple and familiar explanation for such behaviour. Framing the women as ‘others’ was a common tool utilised by journalists in the current cases and was manifest in a number of ways, such as framing the women as being more to blame than their male accomplices, the use of monsterization and demonization language and by framing them as being the antithesis of ‘good women’. By routinely framing female (co)offenders within this ‘other’ category, journalists in particular are failing to offer an adequate and satisfactory explanation for the women’s offending behaviour, thus questioning journalistic practice when reporting on this issue.

The third objective aimed to ‘analyse the representation of the personal relationship between co-accused women and their male partner or accomplice/s in newspaper

discourse and legal argument'. In all of the cases analysed, each of the women were framed to be more or at least equally to blame in comparison to their male co-offender, irrespective of their level of criminal involvement. For example, Jane was framed as being the 'main offender', whilst her co-offenders were rarely mentioned in news media discourse. Sarah was portrayed to be as bad, if not worse, than David and was framed as his accomplice, despite being found not guilty of assisting an offender and was often indirectly blamed for motivating him to commit the offences. Whilst the focus on Alice in legal discourse was unsurprising, as her husband did not face a full trial due to his guilty plea, the disproportionate focus in news media discourse meant that her involvement in the offences was often exaggerated and viewed to be much more serious and significant in comparison to his offending. Finally, whilst Janet and Edward were on the surface framed as being equal offenders, when analysed in-depth, Janet's scorn and supposed thirst for revenge was framed as being the main catalyst for the offending and their consequential 'fall from grace'.

The disproportionate blame placed on each of the women could be due to a combination of the medias fascination with female-male co-offenders (Jewkes, 2011) and/ or due to the women's perceived transgressions against their expected gender roles, as male offending is not viewed to be a societal threat or as newsworthy as women's criminal participation due to its perceived commonality (Ballinger, 2000; Lloyd, 1995). The medias solution to the problem of women who are equal partners, or at least, appear to go along unquestioningly with their male partner's wishes to commit criminal offences, "is to place the burden of guilt on their shoulders" (Jewkes, 2011: 143). Whilst the male co-offenders are also demonised, their masculinity was not questioned, whereas the perceived

compromise of the women's femininity was the focus of both legal and news media discourse. This supports existing literature, which argues that criminality is generally constructed as a masculine act (Naffine, 1987; Ballinger, 2000; Jewkes, 2011), therefore men's offending is normalised to a greater extent than women's criminality, irrespective of whether they commit crime together or individually.

Furthermore, the influence and impact of the personal relationship between the co-offenders was minimised in each of the cases. Jane's relationship with Simon was framed to be a 'wicked obsession' and was diminished due to their communication being restricted to an online relationship. The abuse and control that Sarah allegedly experienced in her relationship with David was not acknowledged as a potential influencing factor in the news media material and the impact of Alice's and Janet's controlling relationships were rarely acknowledged in news media discourse in particular. Rather than attempting to understand the nature of the relationships between the co-offenders, both journalists and legal professionals resorted to oversimplistic narratives, which were mostly endowed with concepts such as 'rationality' and 'choice' to explain the women's reasons for offending, which served to restrict explanations to familiar, masculine motifs.

This links to the fourth objective, namely 'to explore how the notion of 'coercion into crime' and the defence of marital coercion are constructed in newspaper reports of women who are co-accused with a male partner (or accomplice/s) and in legal argument during trial'. As previously discussed, the potential influence of the personal relationships between the co-offenders was rarely acknowledged in legal discourse, (with the exception of the women's defence teams) and the news articles, despite the fact that each of the women either directly or indirectly argued that they had become involved in the criminality due to the coercion, control and love that

they felt and/ or experienced by their male partner. In each of the cases, the offending was removed from its social context, as whilst the women each ultimately made a choice to offend, they argued that this choice was, at least to some extent, influenced by their personal relationship with their male partner. In the cases of Alice and Janet in particular, their defence of marital coercion was ridiculed in both legal and news media discourse and it was openly questioned how intelligent, privileged women could be coerced into crime. However, by implying that only certain ‘types’ of women can be coerced, there was a distinct failure to adequately understand the nature of abusive relationships, as previous research suggests that privileged women with successful careers can also experience control and abuse in their personal relationships (Weitzman, 2000; Berg, 2014).

With this in mind, rather than limiting the women’s reasons for offending to oversimplistic binaries or explanations, this study utilises and reapplies Stark’s (2007) coercive control theory and Kelly’s (1988) ‘continuum of sexual violence’ to develop a new conceptual framework, ‘a continuum of coercion’, which attempts to better explain the women’s pathways into criminality by utilising the women’s own accounts and perspective on the relationship and offending. This argues that a range of behaviours should be considered as being potentially coercive within male-female co-offending partnerships, particularly those which are characterised by a personal relationship, such as physical and/or emotional abuse, control, economic abuse, obsession and/ or love. This also argues that within the context of such co-offending partnerships, the whole relationship should be explored when attempting to understand the women’s reasons for offending, rather than focussing solely on the offending act itself. This framework critically considers the notion of agency and choice within coercive co-offending relationships and argues that such male defined



concepts do not accurately account for the experiences of women who have been coerced into crime by a male partner.

Each of the cases analysed fits within the ‘continuum of coercion’ in different ways. Jane’s case highlights the potential power of obsession and love within coercive co-offending partnerships. Jane argued that the feelings that she had towards Simon, combined with the pressure that she felt to ‘make him happy’ to sustain his interest, impacted upon her decision to offend. Furthermore, Jane’s case adds a third dimension to the ‘continuum of coercion’, as her relationship with Simon was restricted to online communication. Here it is argued that the significance of this should not be undermined, as research suggests that strong, emotional bonds can develop via online relationships (Dombrowski et al, 2007; Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008). Sarah’s case encompasses a range of coercive behaviour, such as control, emotional abuse and some instances of physical violence. This case highlights the significance of viewing fear and love as part of the same continuum of coercion, rather than understanding them as being distinct coercive behaviours. Finally, the Alice and Janet case studies fit within the ‘continuum of coercion’ in similar ways, as both women cited the defence of marital coercion during their trials and both suggested that it was their husband’s control and emotional abuse which led them to offend. Both of these cases also highlight the importance of gaining an understanding of the nature of the whole relationship/marriage within coercive partnerships, rather than focussing on the relationship within the offending period. Whilst ‘coercion into crime’ is applied to the four case studies in the current study, the concept also has implications for thinking about coercive co-offending partnerships more generally. Furthermore, this thesis suggests that ‘coercion into crime’ should be viewed as being part of the

wider experience of domestic abuse, therefore domestic violence services could also potentially utilise this concept in applicable cases.

The final objective endeavoured to ‘explore how women who are co-accused with a male partner or accomplice/s discuss their own involvement in criminal acts during police interviews and trials and to analyse how their perspectives are reinterpreted in legal argument and news reports’. Each of the women alluded to the coercive techniques previously discussed during their police interviews, witness statements and court testimonies. In the current study, the concept of a ‘continuum of coercion’ has been considered for each of the cases in an attempt to understand the women’s reasons for offending from their own perspective, rather than restricting their explanations to essentialist narratives which rely on gendered common sense assumptions.

A key consequence of limiting female offenders to stock motifs and gendered explanations was that in both the legal and news media material, each of the women’s voices were readily and easily silenced or disregarded (Ballinger, 2012), which has implications for the ways in which female offenders/ co-offenders are represented and perceived more generally. This study developed the framework of ‘layers of silencing’, which details the ways in which the co-accused women were both directly and indirectly silenced, meaning that their voices were muted, distorted and misrepresented, thus exemplifying Mathieson’s (2004) concept of ‘silent silencing’. Whilst each of the women were silenced by journalists in particular, the extent to which this was direct varied, with Jane being the most overtly silenced. This could arguably be due to the serious nature of Jane’s offending, the broader perceived ‘inexplicability’ of female child sex offending and the consequence of her not giving evidence during trial. However, all four of the women were inadvertently

silenced by the use a variety of techniques. For example, the selective use of the women's voices, reinterpreting their reasons for offending to masculine definitions, such as 'rationality' and disproportionately focussing on the prosecution arguments. By silencing and muting the women's perspectives, their experiences were thus rendered invisible and consequently, journalists in particular were able to imply that the women did not have a plausible defence and were rather characterised as a distinctly different outgroup and an unexplainable 'other'.

As outlined by Hunt and Wickham (1994: 133), discourses authorize who can speak, what can be spoken about, how it is spoken about and what should be taken seriously; while simultaneously marginalizing and disqualifying other voices whose speech remains forbidden or derided". Historical myths, such as 'Philomela' and 'Titus Andronicus' involve the physical silencing of women by cutting out their tongues and whilst society is not completely reliant on Greek or Roman ideology, societal debates, conventions and rules around public speaking and who has the authority to speak is still "very much in the shadow of the classical world" (Beard, 2014). Women's voices, by their very nature, are viewed to be less significant, important and knowledgeable than men's, therefore the silencing of the women's voices within the context of their cases is hardly surprising when considered within the wider societal context of the silencing of women's voices.

### Limitations and reflections

Whilst this study achieved its objectives and overall research aim, there are inevitably some limitations. Firstly, as highlighted in the methodology chapter, the documents within the case file material were stored at the conclusion of the trials by

the court clerks, rather than being selected by the researcher for the purpose of this study and some information and trial transcripts were missing from the bundles. However, in spite of this, the novel contribution that the case file material provided, particularly in terms of being able to explore how the co-accused women were framed during their trials and how they discussed their experiences during their testimonies, were invaluable to the study. Secondly, having to anonymize the data proved to be difficult, as the cases are high profile examples of co-offending and thus anonymizing the cases fully would have been virtually impossible. However, because that it was only requested that pseudonyms be provided for those involved in the case, the anonymisation did not prove to be too much of an issue.

Conducting this study has also provided me with a number of valuable lessons as a researcher. Firstly, due to my various attempts at accessing the case file material via a number of avenues, I have learnt to persist with and attempt to overcome access challenges and practical issues within research more generally. Access was originally requested via various agencies and pathways, however each of these initial access requests were rejected. Issues such as this highlight that the helpfulness of ‘gatekeepers’ and key individuals within organisations should not be underestimated and are often integral to the potential success of access negotiations (Burgess, 1984; Noaks & Wincup, 2004). In addition, due to having a limited amount of time to view each of the case files, I had to learn to concentrate on the research aims and objectives in question which encouraged me to remain focused on the study throughout the data collection phase in particular. Finally, as discussed in the methodology chapter, this study also encouraged me to critically consider the potential emotional harm of viewing or reading disturbing content, as some of the case file material contained upsetting imagery. Whilst there are many examples of

studies where researchers have written extensively about the emotional impact of primary data sources, such as interviewing vulnerable participants (Scott, 1998; Grinyer, 2004), there is relatively little comment about the impact on researchers working with secondary sources, such as documents (Fincham et al, 2008). However, the existing research suggests that working with documents can produce 'pain by proxy' (Moran- Ellis, 1997) and disturbing data can emotionally impact and personally affect researchers in ways which are not dissimilar to primary data sources (Fincham et al, 2008). With this in mind, the current study critiques the association with documents as a 'dry' source of data, which have little researcher impact and argues that this is not always an accurate reflection of reality (Fincham et al, 2008). The extent to which ethical issues such as 'potential harm to the researcher' need to be considered within document based analysis depends, at least to some extent, on the types of documents utilised and the nature of their use. Case and court file documents can contain potentially disturbing information, which is dependent on the nature of the case, therefore I found it useful to reflect on the potential impact and significance of such content and how viewing this may have consequently affected me as a researcher and human being. Collectively, I endeavour to transfer these valuable skills and experiences to future research.

## Conclusion

As a result of this study, further research could be conducted which explores the notion of the silencing of female offenders voices within legal and news media discourse more broadly, which would contribute to the small body of existing literature (Ballinger, 2012). In addition, in future research, I endeavour to explore in

more detail the potential impact of the relationship between co-offenders on female co-offending behaviour and pathways into criminality, potentially by interviewing female co-offenders. Whilst Jones (2008) explored the relationship between co-offenders, the focus of this study was principally on the offending act itself, rather than exploring the potential impact of the whole relationship and the women's lived experiences more broadly. Therefore future research could contribute to this literature by attempting to gain a more in-depth understanding of the women's co-offending and pathways into criminality.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature which explores the legal and news media representation of female co-offenders and female offending more broadly (Grabe et al, 2006; Jones & Wardle, 2008; Ballinger, 2012; Jewkes, 2011; Birch, 1996; Wykes & Welsh, 2009; Wykes, 1998). However, this study offers a range of novel contributions to the field, including comparing the legal and news media data of the same cases to explore similarities and differences in representation and focus; it has developed the framework of 'layers of silencing', which explores the ways in which female offenders voices are silenced, muted and distorted in legal and news media discourse and it also endeavoured to develop the concept of a 'continuum of coercion', which aimed to better conceptualise coercion as a pathway into criminality. This thesis argues that rather than restricting the co-accused women's reasons for offending to existing ideologies, which serve to silence and mute their experiences, attempting to understand their point of view and perspective would lead to a more nuanced appreciation of their lived experiences.

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## APPENDIX A: JANE TURNER TABLES

*Table 1: Word count for Jane Turner newspaper articles*

|                              | <b>0-100</b> | <b>101-500</b> | <b>500-1000</b> | <b>1001 words +</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Daily Mail                   |              | 7              | 13              | 12                  |
| Daily Star                   | 10           | 34             | 3               |                     |
| Daily Telegraph              | 1            | 12             | 6               | 2                   |
| Sunday Telegraph             |              |                | 1               |                     |
| The Express                  | 3            | 37             | 7               |                     |
| The Guardian                 | 1            | 10             | 7               | 2                   |
| Independent                  | 5            | 5              | 4               | 5                   |
| The Mirror and Sunday Mirror | 9            | 56             | 8               |                     |
| News of the World            |              | 1              |                 |                     |
| The People                   | 1            | 10             | 6               |                     |
| The Sun                      | 26           | 89             | 9               | 8                   |
| Sunday Express               | 1            | 10             | 3               |                     |
| Sunday Times                 |              | 8              |                 | 3                   |
| The Times                    | 17           | 15             | 12              | 9                   |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 83           | 294            | 79              | 41                  |

*Table 2: Sex of Journalist for Jane Turner newspaper articles*

|                             | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Both</b> | <b>Not stated</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Daily Mail                  | 20          | 8             |             | 4                 |
| Daily Star                  | 17          |               |             |                   |
| Daily Telegraph             | 14          | 4             | 3           |                   |
| Guardian                    | 8           | 7             |             | 4                 |
| Express/ Sunday Express     | 27          | 7             | 4           | 6                 |
| Independent                 | 7           | 8             | 2           | 2                 |
| Sunday Telegraph            | 1           |               |             |                   |
| Independent on Sunday       | 3           |               |             | 1                 |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday | 52          | 8             | 3           | 10                |
| News of the World           |             |               |             | 1                 |
| People                      | 10          |               |             | 7                 |
| Sun                         | 95          | 15            |             | 22                |
| Times                       | 32          | 8             |             | 14                |
| <b>Total</b>                | 286         | 65            | 12          | 71                |

*Table 3: Tone of reporting for Jane Turner*

|                       | <b>Positive</b> | <b>Negative</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>N/A</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| Daily Mail            |                 | 30              | 2              |            |
| Daily Telegraph       |                 | 17              | 4              |            |
| Express newspapers    |                 | 47              |                |            |
| Guardian              |                 | 14              | 5              |            |
| Independent           |                 | 19              |                |            |
| Mirror                |                 | 69              | 4              |            |
| People                |                 | 17              |                |            |
| Sun                   |                 | 125             | 7              |            |
| Sunday Express        |                 | 14              |                |            |
| Sunday Times          |                 |                 |                |            |
| Independent on Sunday |                 | 4               |                |            |
| Sunday telegraph      |                 | 1               |                |            |
| Sunday Times          |                 | 40              | 45             |            |
| The Times             |                 | 44              | 9              | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>          |                 | 441             | 76             | 1          |

## APPENDIX B: SARAH JOHNSON TABLES

*Table 1: Word count for Sarah Johnson newspaper articles*

|                             | <b>100 words or less</b> | <b>101-500 words</b> | <b>501-1000 words</b> | <b>1000+ words</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Daily Mail                  | 2                        | 41                   | 60                    | 61                 |
| Daily Telegraph             |                          | 43                   | 64                    | 12                 |
| Express Papers              | 36                       | 171                  | 103                   | 44                 |
| Guardian                    | 5                        | 39                   | 53                    | 22                 |
| Independent                 | 10                       | 53                   | 67                    | 33                 |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday | 26                       | 126                  | 84                    | 60                 |
| News of the World           | 9                        | 14                   | 8                     | 7                  |
| The People                  | 3                        | 7                    | 5                     | 3                  |
| The Sun                     | 20                       | 104                  | 49                    | 27                 |
| Sunday Express              | 1                        | 17                   | 7                     | 5                  |
| Sunday Telegraph            |                          | 2                    | 6                     | 4                  |
| Sunday Times                |                          | 2                    | 6                     | 2                  |
| The Times                   | 5                        | 64                   | 62                    | 26                 |
| <b>Total</b>                | 117                      | 683                  | 574                   | 306                |

*Table 2: Sex of journalist for Sarah Johnson newspaper articles*

|                             | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Both</b> | <b>Not specified</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Daily Mail                  | 107         | 24            | 1           | 32                   |
| Daily Telegraph             | 73          | 17            | 29          | 3                    |
| Express papers              | 220         | 21            | 3           | 97                   |
| Guardian                    | 53          | 46            | 19          | 1                    |
| Independent                 | 41          | 71            | 27          | 24                   |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday | 208         | 29            | 19          | 40                   |
| News of the World           | 17          | 5             | 1           | 15                   |
| The People                  | 7           | 3             | 6           | 2                    |
| The Sun                     | 142         | 3             | 10          | 45                   |
| Sunday Express              | 11          | 12            | 4           | 3                    |

|                  |      |     |     |     |
|------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Sunday Telegraph | 7    | 2   | 3   |     |
| Sunday Times     | 8    |     |     | 2   |
| The Times        | 116  | 7   | 1   | 33  |
| <b>Total</b>     | 1010 | 240 | 123 | 294 |

*Table 3: Tone of reporting for Sarah Johnson*

|                       | <b>Positive</b> | <b>Negative</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>N.A</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| Daily Mail            |                 | 137             | 23             | 4          |
| Telegraph             | 1               | 81              | 36             |            |
| Daily Star            |                 | 119             | 23             |            |
| Express newspapers    | 1               | 175             | 37             | 1          |
| Guardian              | 5               | 51              | 62             | 1          |
| Independent           | 2               | 75              | 53             | 1          |
| Independent on Sunday |                 | 25              | 7              |            |
| Mirror                |                 | 249             | 50             | 2          |
| News of the world     |                 | 36              | 2              |            |
| People                |                 | 16              | 2              |            |
| Sun                   | 1               | 150             | 40             | 2          |
| Sunday Express        |                 | 27              | 3              |            |
| Sunday Telegraph      |                 | 8               | 4              |            |
| Sunday Times          |                 | 6               | 4              |            |
| Times                 |                 | 95              | 63             |            |
| <b>Total</b>          | 10              | 1240            | 408            | 11         |



## APPENDIX C: ALICE JONES TABLES

### Appendix 3: Alice Jones tables

*Table 1: Word count for Alice Jones newspaper articles*

|                             | <b>100 words or less</b> | <b>101-500</b> | <b>501-1000</b> | <b>1001+</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Daily Mail                  | 8                        | 26             | 23              | 19           |
| Daily Telegraph             | 2                        | 10             | 18              | 5            |
| Express papers              | 9                        | 28             | 6               |              |
| Guardian                    |                          | 12             | 15              | 6            |
| Independent                 | 2                        | 4              | 7               | 6            |
| Mirror and Mirror on Sunday | 11                       | 42             | 33              | 13           |
| News of the World           |                          | 1              |                 | 1            |
| The People                  | 1                        | 4              | 1               |              |
| The Sun                     | 23                       | 20             | 15              |              |
| Sunday Express              |                          | 4              | 2               |              |
| Sunday Times                | 2                        |                | 1               | 3            |
| Independent on Sunday       |                          | 3              | 3               | 2            |
| Sunday Telegraph            |                          | 2              | 2               | 1            |
| The Times                   | 4                        | 10             | 14              | 6            |
| <b>Total</b>                | 62                       | 166            | 140             | 62           |

*Table 2: Sex of Journalist for Alice Jones newspaper articles*

|                   | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Both</b> | <b>Non-specified</b> |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Daily Mail        | 13            | 42          | 4           | 17                   |
| Daily Telegraph   | 1             | 31          | 3           |                      |
| Express papers    |               | 32          |             | 11                   |
| Guardian          | 12            | 16          |             | 5                    |
| Independent       | 2             | 13          |             | 4                    |
| Mirror            | 8             | 65          | 3           | 24                   |
| News of the world | 1             |             | 1           |                      |

|                       |    |     |    |    |
|-----------------------|----|-----|----|----|
| The People            |    | 5   | 1  |    |
| The Sun               | 12 | 24  | 4  | 18 |
| Sunday Express        |    | 3   |    | 3  |
| Sunday Times          |    | 4   |    | 2  |
| Independent on Sunday | 2  | 2   |    | 4  |
| Sunday telegraph      | 3  | 1   |    | 1  |
| The Times             | 11 | 15  |    | 8  |
| <b>Total</b>          | 65 | 253 | 16 | 97 |

*Table 3: Tone of reporting for Alice Jones*

|                       | <b>Positive</b> | <b>Negative</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>N/A</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| Daily Mail            |                 | 61              | 15             |            |
| Daily Telegraph       |                 | 26              | 9              |            |
| Express newspapers    |                 | 42              |                | 1          |
| Guardian              | 2               | 14              | 17             |            |
| Independent           |                 | 16              | 4              |            |
| Mirror                | 2               | 87              | 10             |            |
| News of the world     |                 | 2               |                |            |
| People                |                 | 6               |                |            |
| Sun                   |                 | 46              | 9              |            |
| Sunday Express        |                 | 6               |                |            |
| Sunday Times          |                 | 5               | 1              |            |
| Independent on Sunday |                 | 5               | 2              | 1          |
| Sunday telegraph      |                 | 4               | 1              |            |
| The Times             |                 | 26              | 8              |            |
| <b>Total</b>          | 4               | 346             | 76             | 2          |

## APPENDIX D: JANET YOUNG TABLES

*Table 1: Sex of Journalist for Janet Young newspaper articles*

| <b>Newspaper</b>         | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Both</b> | <b>Not stated</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Daily Mail               | 114         | 30            | 8           | 23                |
| Daily Star               | 21          | 2             |             | 5                 |
| Telegraph                | 112         | 25            | 15          | 32                |
| Express                  | 67          | 32            | 11          | 32                |
| Guardian                 | 45          | 49            | 3           | 7                 |
| Independent              | 73          | 7             | 2           | 5                 |
| Independent on Sunday    | 19          | 6             | 2           |                   |
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror | 139         | 18            | 6           | 89                |
| News of the world        | 2           |               |             | 4                 |
| People                   | 25          | 3             |             | 9                 |
| The Sun                  | 103         | 22            |             | 76                |
| Sunday Express           | 10          | 12            |             | 1                 |
| Sunday Telegraph         | 14          | 3             |             | 6                 |
| Sunday Times             | 30          | 44            | 5           | 16                |
| The Times                | 112         | 64            | 21          | 40                |
| <b>Total</b>             | 886         | 317           | 73          | 345               |

*Table 2: Word count for Janet Young newspaper articles*

| <b>Newspaper</b>         | <b>100 words or less</b> | <b>101-500</b> | <b>501-1000</b> | <b>1000+</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Daily Mail               | 1                        | 46             | 70              | 58           |
| Daily Star               | 7                        | 20             | 3               |              |
| Telegraph                | 7                        | 66             | 58              | 14           |
| Express                  | 14                       | 84             | 27              | 9            |
| Guardian                 | 1                        | 38             | 52              | 14           |
| Independent              | 12                       | 6              | 46              | 23           |
| Independent on Sunday    |                          | 8              | 9               | 10           |
| Mirror and Sunday Mirror | 48                       | 139            | 47              | 18           |
| News of the world        | 2                        | 5              |                 |              |
| People                   | 13                       | 21             | 2               |              |
| The Sun                  | 58                       | 116            | 22              | 5            |
| Sunday Express           | 3                        | 16             | 13              |              |

|                  |     |     |     |     |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Sunday Telegraph |     | 5   | 6   | 15  |
| Sunday Times     | 9   | 36  | 33  | 16  |
| The Times        | 32  | 106 | 75  | 34  |
| <b>Total</b>     | 207 | 712 | 463 | 216 |

*Table 3: Tone of reporting for Janet Young*

|                       | <b>Positive</b> | <b>Negative</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>N/A</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| Daily Mail            | 18              | 127             | 30             |            |
| Daily Star            |                 | 26              | 4              |            |
| Daily Telegraph       | 4               | 78              | 100            | 2          |
| Express newspapers    |                 | 118             | 22             | 2          |
| Guardian              | 19              | 25              | 58             | 3          |
| Independent           | 7               | 58              | 22             |            |
| Mirror                | 2               | 197             | 53             |            |
| People                |                 | 37              |                |            |
| Sun                   | 2               | 160             | 34             | 5          |
| Sunday Express        |                 | 19              | 4              |            |
| Sunday Times          |                 | 5               | 1              |            |
| Independent on Sunday | 2               | 18              | 7              |            |
| Sunday telegraph      |                 | 10              | 15             |            |
| Sunday Times          | 5               | 40              | 45             |            |
| The Times             | 9               | 153             | 85             |            |
| <b>Total</b>          | 68              | 1071            | 479            | 12         |