

Women who commit murder: the public intellectual versus the court of
public opinion

By

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DECLARATION

I, Anika Espag, hereby declare that the dissertation "*Women who commit murder: the public intellectual versus the court of public opinion*" in fulfilment of the degree MA (Criminology) at the University of Pretoria is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at another university. In addition, I declare that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged.



2023/11/03

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Date

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List of abbreviations

CJS – Criminal Justice System

DCS – Department of correctional services

GBV – Gender-based violence

Abstract

Throughout history, women are often observed as being the victims of crime rather than the offender. Therefore, when women are the offenders of violent crimes, they tend to be observed as being abnormal, evil, bad or sad women. These perceptions often tend to cause tension between the public intellectual (an individual who is considered to be an expert in their field) and the court of public opinion due to the influence media has on public perception. The study aims to investigate the interaction between the public intellectual and the court of public opinion regarding the development and nature of labels used to describe women who commit murder as well as the tension between the two entities.

The research that was conducted was qualitative research based on the subjectivism paradigm. Since there is a lack of study on the phenomenon, basic, exploratory research was conducted. Because the study made use of lived experiences and events, case studies were selected as the main research design. Two sets of participants, namely, female offenders and public intellectuals, were identified by making use of purposive, snowball and referral sampling. The online commentary was identified by selecting well-known South African murder cases where the offenders were women. Personal interviews were conducted in person, by email or via videocalls depending on the availability of the participants. Content and thematic analysis were used to analyse written data. A classification scheme was used to assist in the analysis of online data.

The main findings of the study were that the public intellectual and the court of public opinion tend to have conflicting opinions as the public tends to be misinformed about female criminality, specifically women who commit murder. The main reason is that the public tends to be directly influenced by the media. Furthermore, negative media labels and perceptions tend to develop due to gendered expectations which directly influence the development of public perceptions. It is easier for the public to accept labels than it is for them to understand female criminality. It was also determined that women who commit murder often take on a celebrity role due to the sensationalism of female offenders.

It is therefore evident that the media creates tension between the public sphere and the public intellectual regarding women who commit murder due to sensationalism, the need to sell their media and the media misinforming the public. The media is further responsible for developing and shaping public opinion on women who commit murder as the media tends to blur the line between fact and fiction of female offending. There is a need for more research on female offending as the public lacks knowledge regarding the phenomenon, which further accounts for the tension between the public and the public intellectual.

Chapter 1: Background and purpose

1.1. Introduction

The study at hand is focused on analysing the development of labels in the media regarding women who commit murder as well as the conflict these labels might cause between the court of public opinion and the public intellectual. It has long since been believed that the media directly influences the development of labels within the public sphere; however, due to the development of social media, the court of public opinion has been allowed to share their personal opinions with a larger audience and in turn this develops a collective mindset. However, the media still has a direct influence on the development of sometimes false labels and information specifically relating to women who commit murder as the public tends to observe them as abnormal due to societal gender roles and the media tend to sensationalise these women due to the rarity of women who commit murder. The study at hand follows the qualitative approach as the main focus is on the experiences and opinions of the public intellectual, women who commit murder and the court of public opinion. The aim is to better understand the interaction between the court of public opinion and the public intellectual regarding the development of labels of women who commit murder.

1.2. Origin and rationale

According to Farber (2019:1), “women are not paragons of virtue who cannot commit murder”. Nor are women always insane when they do deliberately cause death. Women with ‘blood on their hands’ are not “homogeneous”. Criminality or violence is often not a characteristic associated with femininity due to a women’s genetic makeup and social roles, such as being labelled as passive, caring, gentle, angelic and nurturing (Easteal, 2001:22; Easteal, Bartels, Holland & Nelson, 2015:1, 2; Haffejee, Vetten & Greyling, 2005:41; Steyn & Hall, 2015:82). Because of the belief that violence is considered to be purely male contributes to the lack of research conducted on women who engage in violent crimes such as murder (Schneider, [sa]:2). Many women who murder are viewed and labelled negatively by society. In some instances, the views and labels that are held by the public sphere and, in some cases, even a few public intellectuals, are not accurate because there are many different reasons why a woman commits murder. Women who commit murder are often referred to as evil, aggressive, pathological, the survivors of gender-based violence (Qhogwana, 2019:691, 692), “bad women” (Easteal et al., 2015:14), inferior mothers, or individuals who can be considered insane (Easteal et al., 2015:9, 12; Oberman, 2003:493). Other women who do commit murder are often observed as masculine and unfeminine (Schneider, [sa]:2) and are often labelled by society as different and atypical. The statement can be observed in many high-profile cases where a woman has committed murder. Many

women are often portrayed negatively in the media by terms such as “Flabba’s killer” (Shange, 2016) or “Lesbian mother” (Dayimani, 2021).

Some of the reasons why women commit murder might include self-defence (Hesselink & Dastile, 2015:338), the fear of being cast out by their families (Craig, 2004:58; Lutya, 2011:259) or mental illnesses (Craig, 2004:57). However, the opinions regarding women who commit murder that can be observed in newspapers and other media platforms in many cases cause the public to be misinformed and therefore they tend to be harsh towards women who have murdered without taking into consideration of what the actual reasons for the commission of the crime might have been. Women are also seldom viewed as being offenders due to the societal stigmas which are attached to femininity; however, when women do commit murder, they are often labelled by society as women who do not abide by societal norms.

There is a belief that women are responsible for more violent crimes than men. The belief is referred to as the ‘iceberg’ thesis (Heidensohn, 2000:40), where the bulk of violent offences committed by women are not clear. However, the incarceration inequality between men and women states otherwise. There were only 4649 incarcerated females in South Africa as compared to the 152 407 incarcerated males (Department of Correctional Services, 2022/23:66); therefore, it is evident that there is an incarceration inequality between males and females. The incarceration inequality can be observed not just in South Africa but also worldwide since female incarceration remains lower than that of males (Steyn & Booyens, 2017:34). Women make up only 6.9% of all prison population worldwide (Fair & Walmsley, 2022:14). There has also been a 22% increase in South Africa’s murder rates during the first few months of 2022 (Cele, 2022), yet fewer women compared to men commit murder. There is a lack of research on women who murder family members other than their intimate partners and children as well as women who murder non-family members in South Africa as the majority of the studies are focused on the murdering of intimate partners or children by women.

Violent crimes, especially murder, committed by women are observed to be very rare (Plevin, 2019:352) and, therefore, their crimes often carry more shock value than others (Seal, 2010:1). When women who murder are reported on in the media, the media tends to focus on the shock value and other types of characteristics to determine whether the crime can be observed to be news-worthy (Peelo, Francis, Soothill, Pearson & Ackerley, 2004:257; Pelvin, 2019:351). When women who commit murder are reported on, many negative stigma and stereotypes are often associated with their crime (Easteal et al., 2015:32; West, 2004, 2005:5). Negative labels and stigmas in the media have the potential to negatively influence

the opinion of the public (Collins, 2016:297; Steffensmeier, Schwartz, Zhong & Ackerman, 2005:356) which leads to negative responses to the opinions of the intellectuals (Dahlgren, 2013:400). Because of shock value, media labels can directly influence the court of public opinion due to their ability to give way to negative labels when reporting on women who commit murder.

Little to no research has been conducted on how the opinions of the public intellect compare to the opinions of the public sphere which are in many cases displayed online regarding high-profile cases of women who commit murder as only one similar study was conducted in South Africa in 1995 (Munnik, 1997) which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 on page 51. The study was focused on the public perceptions of female offenders and the results stated that the majority of the participants felt that women who commit murder were more likely to choose either their husband or their children as their victims. Furthermore, less than half of the participants felt that female offenders tend to receive more lenient treatment than their male counterparts during court proceedings.

Both the public and the public intellectual will voice their opinions regarding the matter. However, the opinions do not always portray similar ideas which in many cases leads to conflict between the public intellectual and the public. The court of public opinion tends to have very negative opinions and responses to the opinions of the public intellectuals (Dahlgren, 2013:400). Individuals in the public tend to react negatively to women who murder by labelling them or by producing hateful commentary, news headings and calling them names. However, public intellectuals are often observed to have different views on such cases (Allen, 2001:40) which in many cases is also made known by making use of similar networks to the public sphere since both the public and public intellectuals tend to make use of the media to make their opinions known (Melnyk, 2015:19). However, due to the time period and the population group, the study conducted by Munnik (1997) is outdated in modern-day South Africa. This emphasises the need for the study as it will assist in filling the knowledge gap on how the court of public opinion, the public intellectual and the media interact in terms of the development of labels that are placed on female offenders.

Research on the interactions of the public and the public intellectuals regarding women who have committed murder has been under-studied internationally and within a South African context. To determine why the conflict occurs, it is important to determine how the opinions of the public intellectual contradict or compare to the opinions of the public sphere. It is therefore important to determine why these opinions, in some cases, may differ.

This study forms part of a larger project titled *The public intellectual in times of wicked problems* (funded by the Mellon Foundation) in the Faculty of Humanities, The University of

Pretoria, on the public intellectual. The study aims to develop a better understanding of who forms part of the public intellectuals, the opinions of the public intellectuals as well as the role of the public intellectuals. By addressing the interaction between the opinions of the public sphere and the public intellectual and by observing the labels that have been given or attached to women who murder, the following research question can be answered: How do the opinions of the public intellectual contrast and compare to the court of public opinion regarding women who commit murder?

1.3. Aim and objectives

The study aims to explore and contrast the opinions of public intellectuals and those of the public regarding women who commit murder. The objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the often-conflicting views between the public intellectual and the public sphere concerning women who commit murder.
- Identify the nature of the labels and commentary produced by the public sphere with a focus on women who murder, especially in high-profile cases as viewed on online platforms and media.
- Determine why the opinions of the public intellectual and the public differ from one another.

1.4. Value of the study

Research similar to the present investigation could not be found; therefore, by conducting the study, new knowledge will be obtained and new light will be shed on the different types of labels used to describe women who commit murder and why the court of public opinion might differ from the opinions of the public intellectual. The research also has the potential to explain why the media labels used are responsible for opinions formed by the court of public opinion. Furthermore, the study has the ability both to add to growing knowledge surrounding female criminality and to raise awareness on the impact of labels.

The study gives way to Criminological theory building in future practice as there is a lack of theories that can adequately be used to explain the interaction between the public intellectual and public opinion. There are theories available to assist with explaining the development of labels; however, the study gives way to improving on the theories already available.

The study is valuable as the study can lead to the training of media personnel to improve reporting as an attempt to elevate using certain labels and the development of false perceptions which they can use in their careers. The study further can potentially influence policy implications of media outlets as the study discusses the role of the media in the

development of public opinion in depth and how these labels can potentially be prevented by only reporting on facts and true information.

1.5. Summary of research design and methods

The study uses qualitative research as the study was focused on the lived experiences (Flick, 2018:4) of female offenders and public intellectuals. The study further makes use of qualitative research as there is a further focus on the experiences of the public opinion as reflected in written, online commentary (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015:46). Following the qualitative research route, the research was exploratory as little is known about the topic of study in South Africa (Swaraj, 2019:666). The research paradigm of the study was subjectivism as this is focused on obtaining the experiences and opinions of individuals and are often linked to human senses (Leung, 2015:324). Further, the study was conducted as basic research due to the lack of knowledge on the topic (Neuman, 2014:26; Palys, 2008).

The study made use of case study research design as it is focused on answering the why and how questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545). Non-probability sampling was used to conduct the study as not all individuals had an equal chance of being selected to form part of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morris, 2007:110; Etikan & Bala, 2017:1). The study population was made up of two main groups of participants, namely, female offenders and public intellectuals. Data was also gathered from social media pages and newspaper articles. Furthermore, the research made use of purposive sampling as the sampling method was used to identify and reach specific participants who might be hard to reach (Neuman, 2014:273). Additionally, both referral sampling and snowball sampling were used to identify participants. Data collection was carried out through personal interviews as it was effective in analysing the subjective nature of the data (Hopf, 2004:203).

The data was analysed by making use of content analysis and thematic analysis. The online data was analysed by making use of an adapted classification scheme (Madden, Ruthven & McMenemy, 2013). Furthermore, trustworthiness was ensured by making use of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191; Shenton, 2004:63, 64). To ensure that the study was ethically approved, ethical clearance was obtained from both The University of Pretoria and The Department of Correctional Services.

1.6. Definition of concepts

To be able to define a female offender, one must look at the two words and their definitions individually. First, an offender can be described as a person who is guilty of committing a crime (Offender, 2023). Secondly, females, or women, can be defined as individuals who are either assigned female sex at birth or a person who has divined herself as a woman

(Woman, 2023). Therefore, a female offender is an individual who is either born female or who identifies as female and has been found guilty of the commission of a crime.

Murder has been defined as the unlawful and intentional killing of another person (Bezuidenhout & Klopper, 2011:182). Murder, also referred to as homicide, involves the unlawful killing of another person (Terblanche, 2011:1). Therefore, murder can be defined as the unlawful and intentional killing of another human being.

Media is viewed to be a reflection of the society in which an individual lives and how society functions. Media takes on a variety of forms such as print form and electronic form (Singh & Nity, 2017:127). Media is also considered to be a traditional mass communication system and content generator as well as other technologies which are responsible for the mediation of human speech (Paul & Rai, 2021:1). Therefore, the media is a communication system, both print and electronic form, which is used to create content regarding important occurrences within society and has the potential to mediate human speech by resolving disputes.

Intellectuals are often viewed as individuals who produce culture through their involvement in the endorsement or the criticising of cultural objects (Brym, 2015:277). Another definition of an intellectual is someone who spends much of their time studying and thinking about complex ideas (Intellectual, 2023). An intellectual can therefore be defined as an individual who has been trained in a specific discipline and often has a role of contradicting or agreeing with certain aspects identified within their field of expertise.

A public intellectual is defined as an intellectual who is often a noted specialist in a specific field who has become very well known to the general public for a willingness to comment on current affairs or events (Collins, 2021). Public intellectuals are also often described as individuals who can contribute to decisions that are made within a society (Sowell, 2009:282). For the study, a public intellectual is an individual who has specific knowledge regarding women who commit crimes, specifically murder.

Public opinion can be described as a cluster of individuals' beliefs, attitudes and views regarding a specific topic or situation which is often expressed by the majority of a specific community (Davison, 2019). Furthermore, public opinion can be defined as the opinions and attitudes of the public regarding specific matters (Collins, 2023). For this research, public opinion will be defined as the collection of opinions from the public as it is reflected within the online media sphere.

1.7. Structure and layout of the report

The dissertation will mainly consist of six chapters. Chapter One emphasises the aim and the objectives of the research study which is being conducted. The chapter also describes why the research will be valuable within a South African context. A summary of the research methods is provided and key concepts are defined and operationalised.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on women who commit murder, the public intellectual and the court of public opinion. The literature is focused on the nature and extent of women who commit murder globally and in South Africa as well as the origin and the role of the court of public opinion and the public intellectual. Emphasis is placed on the interaction between the court of public opinion and public intellectuals with specific regard to women who commit murder.

Chapter Three focuses on the theoretical frameworks that are effective when it comes to understanding the development of labels and opinions regarding female offenders. Specific emphasis is placed on theories that can be effective in explaining why specific labels are developed and often used within the media and the public sphere to explain the reasons why women commit murder.

Chapter Four will explain and discuss the methods selected by the researcher to conduct the study. Specific emphasis is placed on the qualitative research approach as well as research methods that go hand in hand with the qualitative approach. Further emphasis is placed on the two main population groups, their selection and the identification of an online data set. The data analysis and quality as well as the ethical considerations are also discussed in depth.

Chapter Five will represent the data as it presents itself after the data analysis process. The main aim of the chapter is to represent the main themes and sub-themes of the data that was identified during the analysis. The data will be represented in direct quotes in line with the qualitative data approach. The data that will be represented was gathered from three main sources, namely, the public intellectual, currently incarcerated female offenders and online commentary gathered from a variety of sources.

Chapter Six aims to explain the research aim and objectives by comparing the literature gathered in Chapters Two and Three with the interview and online data presented in Chapter Five. The literature will be explained in terms of whether or not the study population groups as well as the court of public opinion agree with the data and with another.

1.8. Summary

Research on women who commit murder has previously been conducted in South Africa; however, there is a general lack regarding the opinions of the public intellectual and the court of public opinion on women who commit murder. There is also a lack of understanding of how the opinions from the two entities interact within the media as well as the tension that might exist due to conflicting opinions on women who commit murder. The conflicting opinions might be a result of the influence that media has on society. Labels used in high-profile cases to describe women might have the potential to influence the court of public opinion. There has also been a lack of understanding of how these labels and opinions of the media, the court of public opinion and the public intellectual influence currently incarcerated female offenders in South Africa. By conducting the study, the aim of the study, which is to explore the dynamics regarding the opinions of both individuals who are viewed as public intellectuals and opinions of people in the public sphere specifically regarding women who commit murder, will be achieved.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature concerning this research study to facilitate the interpretation of the empirical results. The literature discussed in this chapter is in line with the research aims and objectives which are to provide an understanding of women who commit murder and the public and public intellectuals' views on the phenomenon. Among others, journals, books, online sources and newspaper articles were examined to present the literature review.

Chapter 2 focuses on the two main aspects of the research, namely, women who commit murder and the interaction between the court of public opinion and public intellectuals regarding women who commit murder. Thus, the literature review aims to explain why, due to their position in society and the gender norms assigned to women by the communities in which they grew up, women are seldom seen as criminals but rather as victims (Agboola, 2014:1; Dastile, 2010:95; Prinsloo & Hesselink, 2015:67). The literature review provides a global overview of the types of murder committed by women and the nature and extent of female criminality, with a specific focus on South African women who have committed murder.

Chapter 2 also aims to highlight the lack of research conducted on women who commit murder (Heidensohn, 2000:30). Examples of South African women who commit murder, as well as popular commentary observed in mainstream media and the court of public opinion, are discussed. By providing a clear explanation of the differences between the views of the court of public opinion and public intellectuals, a better understanding of the dynamic between the two entities is provided. The chapter further attempts to explain the impact of online media and social media platforms on both the court of public opinion and the public intellectual by addressing the public sphere as an online platform.

2.2. Women as victims and women as murderers

A common historical trend is that women are more likely to be portrayed as the victims rather than the perpetrators of crime (Agboola, 2014:1; Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:142; Dastile, 2010:95; Prinsloo & Hesselink, 2015:67). This trend has led to the phenomenon of female violence being less researched than male violence (Heidensohn, 2000:30), both in South Africa and worldwide. However, one cannot doubt a woman's potential for violence, violent nature and involvement in conflict (Heidensohn, 2000:32).

One of the main reasons why women are seldom viewed as the perpetrators of crime is because women are often not expected to commit any form of crime (Brennan & Van den

Berg, 2009:145). Another reason is that gender is often viewed to be the best predictor of who might be a criminal (Steyn & Booyens, 2017:33). Early ideas surrounding female criminality attempted to describe it in terms of individual characteristics and women who were considered to be born criminals tended to have masculine characteristics and characteristics that were often considered to be the worst the female gender had to offer (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008:12; Dastile, 2010:96; Haffejee, Vetten & Greyling, 2005:41).

Female violent behaviour and the act of murder have been explained as side effects of premenstrual tension or syndromes. However, this theory is problematic because the natural acts of female fertility, such as menopause and menstrual cycles, are, in turn, criminalised by the belief (Heidensohn, 2000:40).

Historically, female criminals were believed to be women whose roles in society allowed them to commit – and get away with – their crimes. The roles that female criminals occupied included nurses, wives, shoppers, mistresses and homemakers (Dastile, 2010:96; Reckless, 1957:3). It was also often believed that the criminality of women was determined by their position in the social hierarchy, their psychological components and any physiological disabilities (Dastile, 2010:96). Female criminals were often viewed to be temptresses and manipulators who specifically made use of their sexuality to both commit and conceal their crimes (Bond-Maupin, 1998:31; Dastile, 2010:96; Estep, 1982:153).

The stereotypes associated with criminal behaviour tended to be observed as being masculine (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:145; Willemsen & Van Schie, 1989:635), which further influenced society's interpretation of the behaviour they observed (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:145; Willemsen & Van Schie, 1989:625). The representations of women are often based on stereotypes of what is considered to be proper conduct for women and based on the beliefs of where women belong in society (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:144).

The understanding of what is considered proper female behaviour and violence often causes society stress as they cannot make sense of the conflicting concepts (Pelvin, 2019:350; Seal, 2010:1). Women are usually portrayed by society to be passive, caring, gentle, angelic and nurturing individuals who listen to and obey their husbands. These beliefs stand in strong contrast to the image painted of women who commit crimes (Easteal, 2001:22; Easteal et al., 2015:1-2; Haffejee et al., 2005:41; Pelvin, 2019:350; Steyn & Hall, 2015:82). One of the main roles that is believed to be purely female is that women are viewed as being responsible for the bearing of children and should focus only on the domestic aspects of their households (Barnett, 2013:506; Vasquez, 2010:24-25).

Women who fail to conform to these gender-role expectations tend to be seen as abnormal and are viewed negatively by society (Brennan, 2002:11; Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:144; Huckerby, 2003:152). In comparison to the stereotypes of what women are considered to be, men are usually stereotyped, as well as socialised, to be more aggressive and dominant, which, in turn, explains why men are more violent than women (McCluskey, 2019:1).

The view of women as perpetrators or offenders is often ignored by society (Dastile, 2010:95; Van der Hoven & Maree, 2005:70). Criminality is a characteristic that is often not associated with women but rather with men. Therefore, women who are criminals are believed to be genetically closer to males than to other females. Women who commit either violent or criminal acts tend to be viewed mainly in terms of their gender because some women attempt to use their sex as a way to explain the acts they have committed (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:50; Wight & Myers, 1996:xi-xii).

Another belief is that a woman's biology is and should be, enough to prevent her from committing any type of crime (Dastile, 2010:96; Haffejee et al., 2005:41). This belief can be substantiated by looking at the genetic makeup of men. Men are more likely to engage in direct or verbal violence due to their genetic makeup (Singh, Mohanty, Lalrhiatpuia, Haobam & Saini, 2014:10). The belief that violence is purely male can be seen in the lack of research focused on women who commit violent acts or crimes (Schneider, [sa]:2)

Lombroso (1895) was one of the first theorists to describe women who were considered to be criminals as displaying physical differences from women who were not criminals (Pelvin, 2019:349). Lombroso further believed that deviant women were mentally unwell and required treatment for their pathological tendencies (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895:43). Another belief regarding female criminality was demonstrated by Freud and Pollak. They believed that women committed crimes because they were unhappy with their gender and wanted to become more masculine to feel as if they were closer to men (Dastile, 2010:96).

Being a woman is often viewed as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, femininity is viewed to consist of self-control and independence; on the other hand, femininity is viewed as fragile and a sign that a woman is incapable of protecting herself (Worral, 1990:33). If a woman engages in crime, she is automatically observed to be unfeminine or even masculine by the community and the public around her (Schneider, [sa]:2). As a result, women who are considered violent tend to be viewed as exceptional, unnatural or doubly deviant (Easteal et al., 2015:32; Pelvin; 2019:351).

Violent women are described as doubly deviant as they have not only broken the law but have also gone against the idea or image of what an ideal woman should be (Berrington &

Honkatukia, 2002:50; Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:145; Collins, 2016:11; Easteal et al., 2015:1). The fact that women are viewed as doubly deviant leads to the belief that women who commit murder are extra deviant (Easteal et al., 2015:32).

Double-deviance can also be used to explain the treatment of female offenders during court trials. Historically, when women were criminalised and comments were made about their criminalisation, the comments were often observed to be not only an anti-feminist tool that was used to hold women accountable but also that they were deviant members of society as female crimes were observed to be more serious and horrific than crimes committed by males (Whitehead, 2022). Thus, women who commit criminal acts often receive harsher sentences than their male counterparts who have committed the same or similar acts of violence (Malon, 2020:9).

Because women who commit murder contradict the gender norms of a patriarchal-dominated society, explanations to explain their behaviours lead directly to the labelling of women as mad, bad, or sad (Weare, 2013:338). It is important to keep in mind that many female offenders who have been victimised for the majority of their lives often turn to drugs to help them cope with the stress of the events. Furthermore, female inmates often suffer from severe mental health consequences due to a history of drug usage and victimisation (Moloney & Moller, 2009:431; Steyn & Hall, 2015:83).

Men tend to commit more violent crimes than women. Men are more likely than women to use weapons such as guns during the commission of violent crimes (Agboola, Appiah & Linonge-Fontebo, 2022:2). The victims of women who commit murder tend to be people known to them – intimate partners, family members, or sometimes even friends – as opposed to males who in many cases murder people whom they do not know (Agboola et al., 2022:2).

Past research has determined that both men and women tend to experience life differently, and therefore women tend to have specific life experiences that tend to shape their offending patterns (Yingling, 2018:181). Research conducted by Daly in 1992 and 1994 was very effective in understanding why women commit crimes. Four main themes were identified that can be observed to be common denominators between the pathways of female offenders. Firstly, female offenders tend to be abused or neglected as children and these women often develop mental illnesses. The second theme was that they often worked as prostitutes after they had run away from an abusive home and they were often also addicted to illegal substances. The third theme was that female offenders were often abused by their intimate partners and they often used drugs to deal with the abuse. The last theme is that female offenders are very often introduced to illegal substances by family members or intimate

partners and they often end up becoming part of the drug manufacturing, selling and trafficking business (Yingling, 2018:182). In summary, society tends to believe that women cannot commit violent crimes purely based on their gender and gendered expectations; this belief is evident in the general lack of research conducted on female offenders. Women tend to be described as caring and nurturing individuals who are very soft, angelic and gentle; thus, when women do commit crimes, they are very often observed to be doubly deviant as they not only transgress gendered expectations but also the law. They are more often observed to be masculine or as having masculine features. Additionally, when women do commit violent crimes, their methods are not as violent as those of men.

2.3. Research on women who commit murder

According to Belknap (2007:2), women and girls, as both victims of crime and offenders, have historically been left out of research; in many situations, where they have been included, it tends to be in a sexist or stereotypical way. Further, the general belief is that the lack of research on women who commit crimes is due to the lack of female criminologists in the field; this lack results in the paucity of studies on women (Agboola, 2014:1; Hughes in Belknap, 2007:2).¹ Because there are fewer women in the field of criminology, male criminologists tend not to focus on female crime (Agboola, 2014:1). Therefore, studies on female crimes and, in this case, women who commit murder are lacking.

In South Africa, research on female offending and criminality tends to be lacking in comparison to research on male offending and criminality due to two main reasons: there are significantly fewer female offenders than male offenders and there tends to be less than enough subject matter to justify the need for research on female offenders and criminality (Dastile, 2011:288; Scott, 2009:1). However, even though research on female offending which is focused on criminology and criminal justice is neglected in South Africa, in the global context, the trend is that female offending is often more researched than male offending (Agboola, 2014:2; Dastile, 2011:288).

Furthermore, it is unfortunate that, in most cases, new and up-and-coming global researchers attempt to explain female crime and offending by making use of male-orientated theories. This is problematic as these theories are often not suited to explain female offending due to gender differences (Dastile, 2011:288-289). Moreover, it is very important to note that no two female offenders are alike and that female criminality varies from male criminality, as well as among female offenders (Agboola et al., 2022).

¹ The original source was unfortunately not available.

2.4. Nature and extent of women who murder – a global view

The 'iceberg' thesis developed by Pollak (1950) argues that women are responsible for more violent crimes than men because their position within society allows them to commit crimes and go undetected (Heidensohn, 2000:40). The incarceration inequality between men and women is reflected worldwide as, despite the recent increase in female incarceration, the global female incarceration rates remain lower than the incarceration rates of males (Hagan, 2009:33; Steyn & Booyens, 2017:34).

When the crime rates of men exceed that of women, it is referred to as the gender ratio problem (Heidensohn, 2000:39-40). One of the main reasons why the incarceration rates are lower for females than for males is because women do not present criminal behaviour to the same extent as men (Dastile, 2010:97) which indicates that women usually commit fewer murders and violent crimes than men (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008:109; Santos-Hermoso, Quintana-Touza, Media-Beuno & Gómez-Colino, 2021:2; Weare, 2013:338).

The trend of female offenders making up significantly fewer of the correctional centre population than men can be observed nationally and internationally. The United States of America (USA) has the highest female prison population rate at 64 females per 100 000 of the national population and Thailand comes in second with 47 female offenders for every 100 000 of the national population (Fair & Walmsley, 2022:2). However, there has been a 60% increase in the worldwide numbers of female detainees, including both girls and women (Fair & Walmsley, 2022:2). Table 1 provides an overview of the current global incarceration rates, which further emphasise that men make up the majority of the population of correctional centres (World Prison Brief Data, [sa]).

Table 1: Overview of the latest global incarceration rate statistics of males and females

Country	Year of latest statistics	Female incarceration percentages (%)	Male incarceration percentages (%)
Nigeria	2023	2.3	97.7
Namibia	2022	2.9	97.1
India	2021	4.1	95.9
Mexico	2023	5.7	94.3
Germany	2022	5.6	94.4

Table 1 continued

Jamaica	2021	4.0	96.0
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Source: World Prison Brief Data [sa]

When addressing homicide patterns there have been multiple differences between homicides committed by males and those committed by females (Sea, Youngs & Tkazky, 2018:3408). Murders committed by women are only 5%–15% of all murders committed worldwide (Santos-Hermoso et al., 2021:1). During the year 2011/12, 121 murder convictions occurred in Wales and England; of the 121 murders, only 13 were committed by women (Weare, 2013:338).

Women tend to murder individuals within their family settings, whereas, males tend to murder acquaintances and strangers (Santos-Hermoso et al., 2021:3; Sea et al., 2018:3410). Men tend to murder in more public places compared to women who prefer private locations (Pretorius & Morgan, 2013:393; Sea et al., 2018:3409). The majority of women who commit murder tend to murder men in comparison to men who tend to murder both men and women (Santos-Hermoso et al., 2021:8).

In a study conducted by Santos-Hermoso et al. (2021:8) in Spain, 76.8% of their sample's female offenders murdered men and 23.2% murdered other women; in comparison, 57.4% of their sample's male offenders killed other men and 42.6% of their victims were female. When addressing women's victims, 5.4% of their victims were strangers, 19.6% were acquaintances, 48.2% were family members and 26.8% were either a partner or an ex-partner. Men were more likely to kill acquaintances (36%) and partners or ex-partners (26.4%) (Santos-Hermoso et al., 2021:9). Of the 48.2% of family murders committed by women, 35.7% were the murder of a partner, 35.7% were the murder of a child, 11.9% were the murder of a parent and 16.7% were the murder of another family member (Santos-Hermoso et al., 2021:9-10).

Research conducted in Korea by Sea et al. (2018:3149) shows that 60.4% of the homicide victims of women tend to be male whereas 59.6% of murder victims of men tend to be women. Women in Korea tend to murder mainly family members (46.8%), such as their children or spouses, or acquaintances (38.3%), such as friends, whereas men are more likely to murder acquaintances (39%) or their family (22.2%) (Sea et al., 2018:3149). Both men (39.5%) and women (41.6%) prefer cutting by making use of sharp objects as their main method of killing. The second most likely method is making use of blunt objects such as hammers and bats – 22.9% of men and 20.8% of women prefer this method (Sea et al., 2018:3422).

When looking at the 2021 homicide offence rates of the USA, of the 14 941 homicide offenders, only 1 682 offenders were female and 1 585 offenders were unknown which in short means that only 11% of all homicide offenders in the USA were female (Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer, [sa]). Data from 2016 show that 1 112 adult females were arrested for murder and non-negligent homicide and 207 adult females were arrested for manslaughter (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016a). In comparison, in 2016, 66 juvenile females were arrested for murder and non-negligent homicide and 13 were arrested for manslaughter (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016b).

In summary, the statistics indicate that global female incarceration rates remain lower than male incarceration rates. Furthermore, there are a variety of differences when comparing male and female homicide. Research indicates that males are more likely to commit murder than females as their homicide incarceration rates are higher than those of their female counterparts. Additionally, women are more likely to murder men whereas men are likely to murder both men and women. Research also indicates that although women are sentenced for homicide, male offenders remain the main perpetrators of homicide.

2.5. Nature and extent of women who murder in South Africa

Very little research regarding women who commit murder in South Africa has been undertaken; the majority of the research has been conducted in the USA or Europe (Pretorius & Morgan, 2013:393). According to the most recent 2022/2023 statistics released by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), sentenced juveniles made up 1.48% of the sentenced offender population of which only 35 offenders were female and 0.03% of the population were children of which only one was female. Furthermore, female offenders made up 2.66% of the prison population and men made up 97.34% (Department of Correctional Service, 2022/2023:68).

The total number of female offenders decreased from 2015 to 2022 from 4 118 to 3 724 (South Africa, [sa]). Research conducted in South Africa in 2013 by Pretorius and Morgan (2013:396) found that 32.7% of the victims of female offenders were their husbands or ex-husbands and 33.77% were their children. Only 3.0% of the victims were acquaintances of the women and 1.30% of the victims were strangers to the women. The most used murder weapons were the knife (30.91%) and the gun (26.64%).

A later study conducted in 2015 by Hesselink and Dastile in South Africa focused on intimate partner murder committed by women (Hesselink & Dastile, 2015:336). The sample group consisted of 15 participants and the ages ranged between 22 and 62 years of age. The study concluded that the female offenders made use of different methods and weapons to commit their offences. In some of the cases in the study, the offenders also made use of

more than one method to kill their partners, such as combining assault and strangulation to commit murder. It was determined that five offenders made use of handguns, two of poison, two of arson, four of knives, one of strangulation, one of an axe, one of a panga and one of assault to commit their crimes. Furthermore, ten of the participants stated that they had hired or instructed outsiders to commit the murders of their intimate partners (Hesselink & Dastile, 2015:337).

An earlier study conducted by Haffejee et al. in 2005 focused on the experiences of women and girls who were incarcerated in three different Gauteng correctional centres (Haffejee et al., 2005:40). The study included sample groups from the Johannesburg, Pretoria Central and Heidelberg Correctional Centres; a total of 348 women were interviewed to participate in the study (Haffejee et al., 2005:42). When participants were asked about the crimes they had committed, 38% of the participants reported that they were sentenced for murder or attempted murder, 18% for robbery, 18% for theft, 12% for assault and only 8% for drug-related crimes (Haffejee et al., 2005:43).

Research conducted in South Africa in 2010 found that in the ten years before the research was conducted, the incarceration rates of females in South Africa increased by 68% (Dastile, 2010:97). Artz et al. (2012:28-29) made use of the 2004 and 2008 DCS offences categories to determine which crimes were more likely to be committed by women. They determined that 46% of crimes committed by women were aggressive, 39% were economic, 11% were drug-related, 2% were of a sexual nature and 6% did not fall within these categories. Artz et al. (2012:38-39) further determined that murder (32%) was the offence committed most by their respondents. Approximately 38% of the female prison population were incarcerated for murder or attempted murder (Artz et al., 2012:129).

Research conducted on 64 female offenders in Gauteng, South Africa also focused on the crimes female offenders tended to commit (Steyn & Hall, 2015:82). Steyn and Hall (2015:91) determined that of their participants, 30.2% were incarcerated for theft, 27% for fraud, 17.5% for drug-related offences, 15.9% for murder or attempted murder, 6.3% for robbery and 3.2% for assault.

A study conducted by Steyn and Booyens (2017:33) stated that from a sample group of 120 female offenders in South African correctional facilities, 4.2% had been placed in reformatory or secure care and 26.1% had been arrested before. Of these participants' previous arrests, 30% had been for aggressive crimes, 60% for economic crimes and 10% for narcotics-related crimes (Steyn & Booyens, 2017:44). However, when the participants were asked if they had previously been sentenced for their crimes, only 20 said they had previously been sentenced. Of these 20 participants, 40% had been sentenced for aggressive offences, 52%

for economic offences and 8% for narcotics offences (Steyn & Booyens, 2017:45). However, when the participants of the study were asked about their current sentences, 18.2% stated that they were serving sentences for aggressive offences, 51.5% for economic-related offences, 18.9% for narcotics-related offences and 11.4% for other offences (Steyn & Booyens, 2017:45).

A more recent example of South African research on female offenders was conducted by Dziejanski (2020). The research focused on the experiences on 21 female gangsters and their commission of violent street crime in Cape Town, South Africa (Dziejanski, 2020:438). It was determined that marginalised females will often join gangs to survive due to poverty (Dziejanski, 2020:445). Dziejanski (2020:455) found that women often tend to violence and gangs as a way to counteract their marginalisation as street culture is often associated with security, empowerment and economic opportunities. Furthermore, it was also determined that women often commit crimes as a way to regain agency as they tend to be burdened by patriarchy (Dziejanski, 2020:455).

Another study, conducted by Qhogwana (2019:692) was focused on the representation of maximum-security female offenders incarcerated in a correctional centre in Johannesburg. The study determined that maximum-security offenders are often dehumanised and treated as objects who do not deserve empathy (Qhogwana, 2019:698). These women are further silenced through victimisation, their feelings tend to be ignored and they are also denied any sense of agency. Furthermore, maximum security offenders further tend to be observed and labelled as angry individuals (Qhogwana, 2019:699).

The general lack of research conducted on women who commit murder in South Africa made it hard to identify more recent statistics regarding the nature and extent of women who commit murder. This motivated the use of earlier studies in the literature review to emphasise the need for further research within the South African context.

Little is also known about female incarceration in South Africa (Artz et al., 2012:1). Of the 243 correctional centres in South Africa, only nine are dedicated to women offenders (DKay, 2021; Khumalo, 2023). According to the latest statistics available from the DCS, there are currently 4 649 female offenders incarcerated in South Africa (Department of Correctional Services, 2022/23:67). However, in March 2023 there was a total of 157 056 sentenced and unsentenced inmates incarcerated in South Africa; of these, only 2 691 sentenced offenders, 1 956 unsentenced offender and two state patients were female (Department of Correctional Services, 2022/23:67). Therefore, in line with global statistics, the incarceration rate of males is far greater than the incarceration rate of females (Hagan, 2009:33; Steyn & Booyens, 2017:33).

The South African statistics are in line with global trends as South Africa's incarceration rate for female offenders is lower than for males. The low female incarceration rate is further reflected in the minimal number of female correctional centres – only nine – in South Africa. Furthermore, the lack of research conducted on female offenders in South Africa is reflected in the small number of studies discussed in the section. Moreover, the most recent study discussed above was conducted in 2017. The studies reveal that violent crimes are often the most common crime committed by female offenders in South Africa and that women make use of a variety of different methods to commit murder.

2.6. Types of murder committed by women

The next section provides a detailed explanation of the types of murder most committed by women as well as the potential reasons female offenders might engage in the act of committing murder.

2.6.1. Women who murder their intimate partners

Women are more likely to kill an intimate partner than other individuals in their lives (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013:463). One of the main reasons why women commit murder is commonly observed in case studies where women murder their abusive intimate partners (Belew, 2010:769) because they have been exposed to persistent and serious physical, emotional and sexual abuse (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013:467). The murder rates of men killed by their female intimate partners make up a very small percentage of male homicide rates and are very often the response of women who are abused by their intimate partners (Bruce, 2019).

The rates of women murdering their intimate male partners have increased over the past few years (Venäläinen, 2019:2). In some cases where a woman murdered her abusive spouse, it occurred during a physical confrontation (Belew, 2010:769; Hesselink & Dastile, 2015:335). Therefore, it has been argued that women murder to protect themselves (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013:467). There are however exceptions; some women will kill their abusive spouses while the spouse is asleep. Many women who murder their abusive partner suffer from battered woman syndrome (BWS) (Belew, 2010:770) and are often described as being victims of their partners (Easteal et al., 2015:33; Pelvin, 2019:351). BWS was developed by Lenore Walker in an attempt to provide a reason women kill (Weare, 2013:338).

Because some women do suffer from BWS, it is argued that women who murder their intimate partners more often than not suffer from mental illnesses or mental imbalances rather than focusing on alternative explanations for their violence (Pelvin, 2019:351). The concept of BWS is built on two main precepts, namely, 'the cycle theory' and 'learned

helplessness' (Weare, 2013:338-339). The cycle theory is often referred to as 'the cycle of violence' which states that offending and victimising are linked to each other – thus, experiencing violence at one point in one's life will lead to the commission of violence (Reckdenwald, Mancini & Beauregard, 2013:466). Learned helplessness occurs when women who are repeatedly battered by their husbands become very passive, with low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. In many instances, these women blame themselves for their partner's abuse (Weare, 2013:339).

It is very important to note that intimate partner homicide is gendered; women and men kill their intimate partners for different reasons (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013:463). One of the reasons women murder their partners is because they often experience a lack of agency and control in their relationships and murder is viewed as a method to regain what they feel they have lost or what they feel they lack (Easteal et al., 2015:33). Women also murder intimate partners because they feel scared and are desperate to escape isolation (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013:463).

Other notable motives that can lead to the murder of a spouse are jealousy, financial benefits and revenge. Because of the abuse women might have experienced, they feel helpless and desperate in their relationship or their marriage might not be filled with love (Hesselink & Dastile, 2015:338). Men are often also killed by women because they are abusive to their children or other household members (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013:467). When men are murdered by their intimate female partners, they are often viewed as being victims of both gender norms and assumptions, as well as of their female intimate partners (Venäläinen, 2019:7). When women murder family members, they tend to commit the murders alone rather than in a group (Lynch, 2015:56; Mouzos, 2003:190).

In summary, women most commonly murder their intimate partners because they have suffered various forms of abuse at their hands. Many of these women suffer from BWS which leads to the commission of murder. However, BWS is not the only reason women murder their partners. They will often also commit murder because they lack agency and control, feel isolated, are jealous, seek revenge, are desperate, or desire financial benefits.

2.6.2. Women who murder their children

It has recently been determined that motherhood is often observed to be central to stories of incarcerated females in South African correctional centres (Parry, 2022:274). Motherhood has been idealised as being a calling, a blessing and an achievement in many cultures as well as during different periods (Barnett, 2005:11). Women are also expected to protect their children at any cost. Women are not expected to be just mothers; there is an expectation that all mothers have to be good mothers (Weare, 2017:204). When a woman murders her

children, she is very often viewed as betraying the myths and beliefs of motherhood, motherly love and maternal grace (Huckerby, 2003:151) and violating the cultural and social foundations of motherhood (Seal, 2010:2). By murdering their children, mothers are often demoted from mother to a woman in the pre-maternal state of their life because they have gone against what is considered behaviour that is normal for a mother (Huckerby, 2003:151). Therefore, mothers who murder their children are viewed as being bad women or mothers as they have destroyed the ideal narrative of what it means to be a mother (Weare, 2013:204-205).

Women who murder their children are often viewed as being inferior mothers or as women who are insane (Easteal et al., 2015:9, 12; Oberman, 2003:493). There is a variety of reasons why women will kill their children (Lutya, 2011:259). Mothers sometimes kill their children because they feel that they are unable to care for them (Häefele & Malherbe, 2014:45; Lutya, 2011:259). Another reason why a mother might kill her child is that some mothers suffer from mental illnesses as a side effect of giving birth (Craig, 2004:57).

Women tend to kill their children by battering, shaking, suffocating, beating, committing arson, drowning, or abandoning them (Pretorius & Morgan, 2013:294). A child is more likely to be murdered by their parents in the first year of their lives (Friedman & Resnick, 2007:137). One of the main types of murder women commit against their children is maternal filicide which is described as the murder of a child by their mother; in comparison, infanticide is described as the murdering of the child within the first year of their life (Friedman & Resnick, 2007:137).

Infanticide can be divided into four sub-categories. The four sub-categories are neonaticide, assisted or coerced infanticide, neglect-related infanticide and mental illness-related infanticide (Lutya, 2011:259). Neonaticide is the killing of a child by a parent within the first 24 hours after the birth of the child (Friedman & Resnick, 2007:137; Lutya, 2011:259). Some women commit neonaticide because they fear that their families will reject them because of their pregnancy due to cultural and religious beliefs (Craig, 2004:58; Häefele & Malherbe, 2014:44; Lutya, 2011:259; Oberman, 2003:495-496). Mothers who commit neonaticide tend to be younger than those who commit other forms of infanticide (Pretorius & Morgan, 2013:394).

Assisted or coerced infanticide is the killing of a child by a mother with the assistance of their partner or a loved one. Some women will murder their children in an attempt to convince an abusive partner to stop abusing them (Lutya, 2011:259; Oberman, 2003:497-498). Neglect-related infanticide is the death of a child that occurs because a parent assaults the child. In some instances, the assault occurs as an attempt to discipline the child with violence (Lutya,

2011:259). The last type of infanticide is mental illness-related infanticide. The child who falls victim to this type of infanticide is often murdered as a side effect of their mother's mental illness which might leave the mother feeling helpless or incapable of looking after her child (Lutya, 2011:259; Sea et al., 2018:3410).

Despite the belief that women who murder their children are bad mothers, there is often a sympathetic view and a greater understanding of these mothers if it is observed that they might have mental issues (Seal, 2010:2). The most common mental illnesses which lead women to murder their children are postpartum 'blues', postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis (Bartol & Bartol, 2017:299-300).

Symptoms of postpartum blues include excessive crying, quick irritability, anxiety, confusion and drastic mood changes. Postpartum blues are easily confused with postpartum depression, however, postpartum depression does not have the same symptoms. Postpartum depression is characterised by depression, a decrease in appetite and sleep disturbances. These women tend to be fatigued, to suffer from suicidal thoughts, to be indifferent towards their babies and to not show interest in their daily lives (Bartol & Bartol, 2017:299). The last type of mental illness mothers often face is postpartum psychosis. The symptoms of postpartum psychosis are very closely related to bipolar depression and these women are at risk of suicide attempts and attempts to kill their babies (Bartol & Bartol, 2017:299-300).

There are five main reasons why women might murder their children. The first reason is known as altruistic filicide which is when a mother will murder her child out of love, strongly believing that killing her child is the best thing she can do for them. The second reason is mental illness-related and is described as acute psychotic filicide. A mother is observed to be either psychotic or delirious and there is often no reason as to why these women murder their children. The third reason is when a child is murdered by their parents due to maltreatment which is often referred to as fatal maltreatment filicide. An example of this would be a child dying as a result of a mother's neglect or when a mother is suffering from Munchausen syndrome by proxy.² The fourth reason why a mother might murder her child is that she sees the child as a burden; this can often be referred to as unwanted child filicide. The last reason why a mother might murder her child is due to revenge where the mother murders her child to get revenge on the child's father. This type of murder is referred to as spouse revenge filicide (Friedman & Resnick, 2007:137).

² Munchausen syndrome by proxy is often observed when mothers produce histories of illnesses for their children and they support their made-up histories by falsifying symptoms and physical signs of the illness in their children. These mothers further might falsify or alter laboratory tests (De Sousa Filho, Kanomata, Feldman & Neto, 2017:516).

In conclusion, a variety of different types of infanticide can be identified when a child is murdered and is often based on the age of the child. One can distinguish between a variety of different filicides, namely, neonaticide, assisted or coerced infanticide, neglect-related infanticide, mental illness-related infanticide, altruistic filicide, acute psychotic filicide and fatal maltreatment filicide. Furthermore, a variety of motives lead women to kill their children, including mental illness, revenge, feeling the child is a burden, maltreatment and cultural beliefs.

2.6.3. Women who murder non-family members

There is little known about women who murder individuals outside of their family (Lynch, 2015:2; Santos-Hermoso et al., 2021:2) as these types of murders are viewed as atypical (Lynch, 2015:2). Non-family members tend to include acquaintances, friends and strangers (Lynch, 2015:4). Women who murder someone who is not their family are very often viewed or portrayed as being bad women (Easteal et al., 2015:36), observed to be sexually deviant (Collins, 2016:305-306; Easteal et al., 2015:36) or as masculine regarding either their physical physique or their personality (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:53; Easteal et al., 2015:36; Heidensohn, 2000:40-42).

Women might murder non-family members because they feel the victims are treating them or individuals close to them badly. Other potential reasons might include revenge, financial gain, or, in some instances, for no reason (Kirkwood, 2003:204; Lynch, 2015:41). A few reasons why women might kill males who are not part of their family are because of conflicts, disagreements, drug addiction and debt (Lynch, 2015:43; Mouzos, 2003:252). When women murder other women, it might be due to jealousy, a need to eliminate a rival sexual partner, or to have control over their intimate partners (Lynch, 2015:43). When women murder individuals who are not their children or intimate partners, there is a belief that these women transgress the boundaries of what is considered proper female behaviour (Seal, 2010:3).

2.7. Media portrayal of women who commit crime

The media plays an important role when it comes to informing the public about crimes and justice issues (McCluskey, 2019:1). Newspapers tend to focus mainly on selling newspapers in a way that increases their profit. This is often observed as 'market-driven journalism' and emphasises the reporting of crimes in a selective way (Brookes, Wilson, Yardley, Rahman & Rowe, 2015:62). In many situations, cases that are reported are chosen because they are believed to make a good story in the media (Brookes et al., 2015:63).

The media and media reporters tend to make use of a variety of ideologies, as well as social and cultural forces, to shape their decisions regarding how they are going to report crime;

they search for reason or predictability (Cavaglione, 2008:271-272). Two main components that influence the media's portrayal of women are framing and language (Easteal et al., 2015:32; Jewkes, 2004:1423-1429) which can influence the creation of myths and stereotypes (Barnett, 2013:508; Easteal et al., 2015:32; 34; Mead, 1997:6; West, 2004/2005:1, 5). However, there has been little research conducted on the media's portrayal of females who commit crimes (Barnett, 2005:9; Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:143; Grabe, Trager, Lear & Rauch, 2006:138; Pelvin, 2019:350).

The lack of research can be attributed to the fact that women are less likely than men to commit crimes; females make up a smaller number of convicted individuals and are seldom convicted of serious and violent offences (Brennan, 2006:61; Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:143). The result is that men are over-represented in the media for similar cases (Skilbrei, 2012:140). Furthermore, crime reporting in the media tends to emphasise the moral and mythical dilemma of good versus evil (Grabe et al., 2006:138).

In different crime types, women tend to be portrayed as victims (Grabe et al., 2006:138); an example of this is cases relating to HIV non-disclosure.³ Even though women might be portrayed as the victims, there are cases where they are also the perpetrators. However, there is a lack of research on females who have been convicted in non-disclosure cases in literature (Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:280). In many of these cases, emotions tend to shape media content (Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:288).

When crimes are reported, specific characteristics of the crime will be focused on to determine the value as well as the likelihood of media coverage (Pelvin, 2019:351). The media places a strong focus on the belief that women who commit crimes are more masculine than other women and are attempting to act more like men (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008:14). If so, men start to question what is believed to be traditional femininity and women risk being observed to be more masculine and sexually 'looser' (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:31).

In many cases of female criminality, the media tends to exhibit female offenders as embodying pariah femininity and develops narratives of the female offenders' deviant identities – they are being sexually aggressive, dangerous, toxic and contaminating (Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:288). These pariah femininities tend to be described as contaminating the relationship between masculinity and femininity (Schippers, 2007:95) as women who have been labelled with pariah femininities often tend to engage in behaviour that is more

³ HIV non-disclosure occurs when an individual knows their HIV-positive status and engages in sexual acts with the intent to transmit HIV to their sexual partner and succeeds. In some countries, if found guilty of intentional HIV non-disclosure, offenders can be charged with murder, manslaughter and even assault with a deadly weapon (UNAIDS, 2013:2-3).

often associated with hegemonic masculinities (Fielding-Miller, Dunkle, Jama-Shai, Windle, Hadley & Cooper, 2016; Schippers, 2007:95, 96).

Hegemonic masculinities often engage in promiscuity and emotionally detached sexual relationships. When women with pariah femininities engage in similar behaviour, they are often observed as challenging male dominance (Fielding-Miller et al., 2016:25; Schippers, 2007:95). If these women have specific characteristics which contaminate the relationship between masculinity and femininity, they are often labelled negatively in terms of their sexuality by being called sluts, bitches or cock-teasers. Due to their ability to contaminate the relationship between masculinity and femininity, they are often observed to be socially undesirable as they tend to be viewed as having the ability to contaminate the social life around them (Schippers, 2007:95).

Pariah femininity is often used by the media to make the audience experience feelings of shock, fear, anger and disgust (Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:288). In the cases of the females' non-disclosure of their HIV status, the media often focuses on these female offenders by addressing their HIV status. Describing them as hypersexual threats stigmatises them and undermines their sexual freedom and expression and can be seen as 'containing' women who do not fit cultural expectations and who exhibit the hegemonic and dominant characteristics often associated with masculinity (Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:287-288; Schippers, 2007:95).

Gender representations in the media often tend to blur the boundaries between the fact and fiction of acceptable gender roles and representation (Consalvo, 2003:29; Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:281) and, therefore, women tend to be portrayed differently to men (Collins, 2016:297). Due to the rarity of women committing murder, cases involving females as the perpetrators are often stigmatised and simplified which leads to female offenders being observed to be more 'unbalanced' than male offenders (Cavaglioni, 2008:272).

Women, more specifically mothers, who commit murder in Israel tend to be labelled as 'insane' because of the cultural assumptions and knowledge regarding women, sexuality and crime (Cavaglioni, 2008:272). There have been multiple cases from 1992 to 2000 in Israel where women who murdered their children were labelled and portrayed as mentally unstable or in need of psychiatric assistance by the media. The blame often fell on the health care system which in the eyes of the media "failed the women who committed murder" (Cavaglioni, 2008:273-274).

In many media cases, when women are the offenders in a crime, the main focus tends to be on gender norms (Collins, 2016:297; Eastaugh et al., 2015:32; Sandman, 2022:243), the reproductive ability of females which influences public opinion (DeKeseredy, 2011:53;

Sandman, 2022:243) and what is observed to be acceptable femininity and behaviour for women (Sandman, 2022:243).

Collins (2016:306) determined that female offenders tend to be described as being less violent than their male counterparts who have committed similar crimes. Female offenders further tend to be described as poor and little information is given about their occupations. The crimes of female offenders tend to be rationalised less than those of male offenders. Furthermore, media articles tend to describe the crimes committed by women as more unorganised, uncontrolled and unrestrained than the crimes committed by men.

The reporting done in the media further develops a strong gendered narrative when it comes to female offenders. Men are often described as being crazy and unstable whereas women are described as evil, devious and methodical and are very often sexualised by the media (Collins, 2016:306). Furthermore, women who are observed to be lesbians, promiscuous, sexually unavailable, lacking sexual desire, or who are observed to be aggressive tend to be stigmatised by society and, in turn, observed to be a threat to male dominance (Schippers, 2007:95).

The representation of female violence is often identified, viewed and found in what can be considered popular discourses as well as theorising (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:51). Media representations of women who commit murder often focus on the cultural ideas of femininity within a specific society (Pelvin, 2019:349-350; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007:3, 23). Many women who are incarcerated or who commit crimes are portrayed as being poor, uneducated and not qualified for formal employment (Qhogwana, 2019:693) or sick, deviant and dangerous (Mackie, 2016:1). Such portrayals of women can contribute to the negative stereotypes and myths surrounding incarcerated women. Therefore, it can be determined that women who go against what is considered traditional femininity when they are committing a crime are often portrayed by the media as being more like men than women as they are more likely to be violent and sexually promiscuous (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:31; Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:283).

Literature, social media and the criminal justice system (CJS) tend to describe women who murder as either women who are pathological and aggressive, which makes them purely evil, or as women who are victims of gender-based violence. Because women's voices are not heard and their stories are not told accurately, women are often judged negatively by society (Qhogwana, 2019:691-692). These women are, therefore, viewed as being either bad, mad, or sad (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:50; Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:145; Pelvin, 2019:350).

Women who are considered 'bad' are often labelled as such because femininity is denied when women commit violent acts (Pelvin, 2019:350). However, bad women believe that they are willing to defy their assigned gender roles by making intentional choices (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:145). Thus, these women are observed to be deliberately responsible for their actions which, in turn, causes the belief that women deserve their punishment (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:145; Gandy, 1997:39).

The responsibility of women who are considered to be 'mad' or 'sad' is usually viewed as being neutralised (Pelvin, 2019:363). In short, these women are portrayed as not being able to be held responsible for their actions. Narratives tend to blame the actions of these women on external factors and, therefore, they are viewed as being victims of their circumstances. (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:146). Women are very often described as 'mad' or 'bad' because popular stigmas and myths are used to provide what can be considered a compass to make sense of events that are not easy to understand (Barnett, 2006:414; Pelvin, 2019:351, 363).

In a study published in 2010, Noh, Lee and Feltey (2010:117-118) aimed to track the discourse of how women who commit murder due to BWS are portrayed in newspapers in both the USA and Canada. The study made use of 212 newspaper articles drawn from a variety of internet-based newspaper indexes. The study found that in 38.7% of the cases where women committed interpersonal homicide, they were portrayed by newspaper media as irrational or insane due to the side effects and symptoms of BWS or similar mental illnesses and psychological pathologies; 30.4% were portrayed as rational, manipulative, cold-blooded murderers because the media painted women who suffer from BWS as women having reasons to gain retribution and vengeance (Noh et al., 2010:120; Pelvin, 2019:352). BWS is also often painted as a way for women to get away with murder (Noh et al., 2010:120).

The media makes use of a narrative that is focused on the power struggle between what is considered good and what is considered evil because it makes the structure of the story easier to understand (Morrissey, 2003:17; Pelvin, 2019:351). The power struggle is often observed when women kill their intimate partners. Women, who were believed to be good, turn 'mad' because of the abuse they suffered at the hands of their intimate partners (Easteal et al., 2015:33; Pelvin, 2019:351).

Describing women who commit murder as being either good or bad limits one's understanding of femininity and how femininity can be applied to violence (Morrissey, 2003; Pelvin, 2019:352). Typologies and labels portrayed in the media tend to force women into categories to which they do not belong. They are forced into a generalised profile of what a

woman who commits murder is believed to be which is often based on both the reasons why women murder as well as gendered assumptions (Easteal et al., 2015:32; Maras, 2014:31). Because the media is focused on stigmatising women who commit crimes, they tend to face double stigmatisation from the media because they are viewed as criminals and not as submissive women (Collins, 2016:197).

It has been observed that female offenders who commit violent, unwomanlike acts are treated more harshly than offenders who still conform to the beliefs of what a woman is supposed to look like (Grabe et al., 2006:138), therefore, violent crimes committed by women tend to be punished and publicised more (Chesney-Lind in Grabe et al., 2006:138).⁴ It has been determined that the gender of female offenders is more likely to be mentioned in crime reporting headlines than that of their male counterparts (Grabe et al., 2006:148).

A study conducted in 2006 by Grabe et al. in Bloomington, Indiana focusing specifically on media representation of crime by making use of a census of hard copies of the *Herald Times* (Grabe et al., 2006:143), determined that 22.89% of the stories involving female offenders made specific reference to their gender in the headings as opposed to the 17.4% of cases of male offenders that referred to their gender. In cases where males and females committed crimes together, 29% of the cases mentioned the female offender in the headlines and only 5% of the cases mentioned the male in the headlines. Moreover, it was determined that male criminals were also presented more positively than their female counterparts in the media (Grabe et al., 2006:148). Furthermore, 6.5% of front-page news coverage was about women who committed violent crimes and only 0.7% was about women who committed non-violent crimes. Similar trends in the lead stories about women who committed crimes were observed (Grabe et al., 2006:149).

The study further determined that women who committed violent crimes were often observed to be self-interested offenders because they did not adhere to stereotypical gender expectations. In the reporting of the violent crimes committed by women, 35.6% of the cases included motives for the women's crimes in comparison to 7.2% where non-violent crimes were committed by female offenders (Grabe et al., 2006:149). Therefore, it is believed that journalists have a habit of trying to vindicate violent female behaviour. In short, it was determined that women who commit violent crimes that violate gender expectations are treated more harshly in the media than those who do not (Grabe et al., 2006:150).

In summary, the media, including newspaper media, are responsible for the development of media labels. The use of language and framing by the media tends to develop a variety of stereotypes and labels. Media labels tend to portray female offenders as being violent,

⁴ The original source for this reference is not available online and buying the book is too expensive.

aggressive and evil because women who commit murder often go against societal gender norms. In the majority of the cases when media labels are developed, the media in many cases focuses on sexualised comments to describe these women. Further emphasis tends to be placed on labelling female offenders as mentally ill, evil, mad, bad, or sad due to the gendered narrative that often appears in the media. Thus, when the media reports on female offenders, it places heavy emphasis on their gender and motives for violent crimes.

2.8. Media portrayal of women of colour and minorities

The media tends to portray minority women more negatively than white women. In cases involving white women, their responsibility for their behaviour tends to be neutralised indicating that the media more likely felt that white women were not as responsible for their criminal behaviour as minority women. The media also believes that minority women are less likely to reform than white women (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:164-165; Huckerby, 2003:152). Even with regards to motherhood and when women kill their children, mothers are divided into two groups, namely, good mothers who consist of white middle-class women and out-group mothers who consist of women of colour, lesbians and poor women (Huckerby, 2003:152).

The masculinisation of female offender behaviour is also predicted by the class and race of the woman (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008:3). Chesney-Lind & Eliason (2006:43) also find that certain women, specifically women of colour and lesbians, tend to be portrayed as being more masculine and violent in the media because these women tend not to exhibit the behaviour typically associated with females (Brennan, 2006:63). Stereotypes surrounding minority women are very often produced by culture, history and society (Brennan, 2006:63). It is therefore evident that the media sees women of colour who are violent as being more masculine than white women (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:35). The media further tends to use imagery of woman and girls of colour when addressing violence portrayed by females (Irwin & Chesney-Lind, 2008:838).

The concept of intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw and is mainly focused on the multi-dimensionality of marginalised individuals (Crenshaw, 1989:139; Nash, 2008:2). The term was coined in the late 1980s and started to gain fame in critical race studies conducted until around the early 1990s (Nash, 2008:2). It is an ideal manner to theorise both race and gender as social processes (Crenshaw, 1992:403; Nash, 2008:2). The main focus of the term intersectionality is to highlight racial and gendered variations observed within the race of individuals whose identities go against both race and gender categories (Nash, 2008:2-3).

Intersectionality, also referred to as intersectional analysis, can be used to explain why minority women who commit murder are treated more harshly than other women. Intersectionality is the notion that the ability to be subjective is influenced by the reinforcement of race, gender, class and sexuality constructs (Agboola et al., 2022:4; McCluskey, 2019:27; Nash, 2008:2). Intersectionality also emphasises that the identities mentioned above cannot be addressed separately as they are interconnected with one another and, therefore, need to be observed as a whole entity (Agboola et al., 2022:4). Furthermore, intersectionality successfully addresses and acknowledges the fact that different systems of oppression, for instance, racism and patriarchy, cannot exist without each other (Dhamoon, 2015:29; McCluskey, 2019:25). However, intersectionality seldom attempts to address class inequity through identity and left-liberal discourses due to the influence legal discourse has on intersectionality (Dhamoon, 2015:29).

Women who identify as lesbians also often come under severe scrutiny from the media. Lesbians who commit murder are often portrayed as being dominant since they are viewed to be directly aggressive. In many instances, the word 'masculine' is used as a synonym to describe lesbians in the media. A good example of how women who are lesbians are portrayed in the media is the movie *Monster*, based on the life of the serial killer Aileen Wuornos. The main idea of the movie attempts to frame her as a masculine serial killer who targeted men, without taking into consideration that Wuornos might have suffered from BWS (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:37). Due to the understanding of the interaction between femininity and masculinity, it is, therefore, evident that women who are lesbians are often viewed as being more masculine and, therefore, more prone to being described as violent in the media (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:38).

There is also a belief that lesbians tend to adopt a more masculine appearance – strange hair growth, deep voices, small breasts, the way they dress and the fact that these women tend to be more aggressive than non-lesbian women. The main reason lesbians are observed to be more masculine is that these women have too much testosterone (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:40; Fishbein, 2000:68). Thus, the media plays on the idea that women who are lesbians tend to be more masculine than women who are not.

In Israel, the media often does not use the same labels for Jewish mothers who murder their children and other mothers. Those mothers who are observed to be marginalised, uneducated, young, unwed and who belong to marginalised ethnic groups, including Arabs and North African Jews, are labelled differently than Israeli mothers who murder their children. The media fails to include psychological explanations and rather focuses on

assigning these women negative attributes because Israeli culture often tends to discriminate against them by labelling them as deviant and criminal (Cavaglion, 2008:274).

The attitude of the press also often tends to be more negative regarding marginalised women and to ignore or deny the potential of mental illnesses playing a role. In many cases, Arab women are often observed to be abusive and bad due to cultural patterns and beliefs (Cavaglion, 2008:275). It is, therefore, evident that cultural stereotypes influence the media language used to describe marginalised groups of female offenders.

Deckert (2020:337-338) noted that there is been a general increase in the incarceration rates of Māori women in New Zealand. The increase for Māori women between 2009 and 2017 was 31% in comparison to the 2% decrease for Māori males. Despite the increase of research on women in New Zealand, female offenders remain under-researched (Deckert, 2020:338). Deckert (2020:345) analysed a sample of 43 newspaper articles that pertained to women as the offenders of crime. The media are often more likely to misrepresent Māori women in the media as media reporting does not accurately reflect the correct demographics of Māori and Pākehā women. Māori women make up 65% of the population, however, 63.9% of the female crimes reported were on Pākehā women, which gives the impression to the public that Māori women are not affected by crime (Deckert, 2020:345). It was also determined that when reporting on Māori women, the media is 1.5 times more likely to address whether they were good mothers or not (Deckert, 2020:350).

In the United States of America (USA) it was noted that black women have often been portrayed as masculine and big-built or heavy set, as sexually promiscuous, angry and standoffish. Lazy, dirty and dependent on welfare (Slakoff, 2019:3). Latina women are often portrayed as very similar to black women. Middle Eastern women are often a source of fascination for American media and very often tend to be portrayed as women who wear hijabs and who are passive to their husbands (Slakoff, 2019:4). Native Americans are often portrayed as vicious and violent savages by mainstream American media (Slakoff, 2019:5). Asian women are observed to be both exotic and submissive (Slakoff, 2019:6). In conclusion, women of colour and minority status tend to be treated more harshly in the media than women who are observed to be traditional women. Such women are also more likely to be portrayed as being more masculine and violent than their traditional counterparts. Intersectionality can be used to understand the concept of women of colour and minorities being treated more harshly in the media as oppression often plays a part in the development of labels. The unfair treatment of minority groups can be understood when addressing lesbians, Arabs and North African Jews as they tend to be treated more harshly due to cultural beliefs and discrimination.

2.9. Media sensationalism of women who commit murder

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the study of women who commit murder is an under-researched topic and, because of the limited research on women who commit murder, the public often does not hold the correct perceptions. The reason for this is that because of the remoteness of the subject, the public and their perceptions regarding this subject are very often shaped by media imagery (Cecil, 2007:304; Surette, 2007:152). Women who commit murder are few and fascinate both the media and the public (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:59). When women commit murder, their acts tend to be observed as newsworthy because women who commit murder are very rare. Additionally, the fact that they challenge traditional gender roles increases the fascination (McCluskey, 2019:18).

The media's sensationalism of both women's violence and aggression is not a new phenomenon (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008:1-10; Collins, 2016:296; Mackie, 2016:1). Women who commit murder tend to provide sensation for the media (McCluskey, 2019:18; Noh et al., 2010:11). There are very often high levels of scrutiny of the behaviour of these women in the media due to the stereotypes and labels these women have been attributed (Pelvin, 2019:350; Skilbrei, 2012:141). The shock value of the crime will determine if the crime is reported or not, as well as where the news coverage of the crime is placed in the media (Peelo et al., 2004:257; Pelvin, 2019:351). For the reason that violent crimes committed by women are extremely rare, they are often observed to be more newsworthy than other crimes (Pelvin, 2019:352).

Because women are believed to be doubly deviant and in many instances resort to extreme violence, the newsworthiness as well as the sensationalism of their cases in media reporting increases (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:50). Due to the paucity of cases of females who commit murder, these cases tend to be objects of fascination to the media (Collins, 2016:297; Sandman, 2022:242-243; Skilbrei, 2012:141).

In many instances, violence is sensationalised by making the female offender the victim (Collins, 2016:297). The reason for this is that, due to the lack of effort that has been made in the past to understand each female offender's case as well as their own circumstances, there are what can be observed as 'universal categories or depictions of women' in the media. Furthermore, women do not tend to tell their own stories, which can often lead to generalisation in the media (Dastile, 2013:5297).

In some instances, offenders, especially female offenders, tend to be categorised as a sort of 'celebrity' in the media (Middleweek, 2017:85), which also contributes to the sensationalism of female offending. The phenomenon is often referred to as "the criminal

celebrity” (Penfold-Mounce, 2009:92). However, little is known on the topic of the linkage between female offenders and celebrity status (Middleweek, 2017:85).

A good example of a female criminal celebrity is Lizzie Borden. Despite the case having taken place in Massachusetts, America in 1892, it is still one of the best-known cases of a female murderer in the world. Lizzie murdered her stepmother and her father with a hatchet. Despite her being the only suspect in the murder, she was released due to gendered stereotypes and her family’s wealth. More than 100 years later, her innocence has still not been proved. Lizzie’s celebrity status first became evident when a children’s rhyme about her crime was created (Conforti, 2019). Furthermore, a variety of movies, series and documentaries – falling under the crime, drama, horror and thriller genres – were made about the crimes committed by Lizzie Borden. The most recent movie, *Lizzie*, was released in 2018; in the movie, Lizzie Borden is portrayed by Chloë Sevigny (Lizzie, 2018).

As observed in cases involving women incarcerated in correctional centres in the USA, female offenders often tend to be sexualised by society (Cecil, 2007:304-305) which also contributes to the sensationalising of female offenders. The sexualisation of female offenders is very often observed in mainstream literature and the entertainment media (Cecil, 2007:305). When addressing media portrayals of female offenders in correctional centres, the narrative rarely tends to be depicted in the media. However, when women are depicted, their stories tend to influence public perception (Cecil, 2007:305-306; Freeman, 2000:46).

Furthermore, due to the sexualisation of female offenders in such films and mainstream media, the narratives tend to be very detrimental because they nullify issues surrounding women in prison (Cecil, 2007:306). These programmes have blurred the lines between fact and fiction because of the way the media and entertainment narratives have combined the news, the drama genre and, in some cases, even the horror genre (Cavender, 1998:82-83; Cecil, 2007:307). This has led the public to believe that the portrayals in entertainment media have to be factual and true (Cecil, 2007:307).

Evidence collected in this chapter indicates that a strong emphasis is placed on sexual undertones when the mainstream and entertainment media focus on women who commit murder. Women who are considered to be dangerous have always had an unreasonable effect on the imagination of the public. They further attract attention as they are not only offenders but also go against the typical stereotypes of what is considered feminine or the ideal woman; because women who are dangerous and lethal are often rare, they tend to be at the mercy of the press and the tabloids (Bartlett, 2006:91).

The media tends to sensationalise and focus on specific female crimes, such as murder, as female offenders tend to be fascinating to the public. Whether or not the crime will be reported is very often based on the shock value of the crime. The main reasons why women who commit murder tend to be observed as newsworthy is because they are rare and because when women commit murder, they are very often observed to be doubly deviant, disobeying both the law and gender roles. Furthermore, in many cases, due to the sensationalism of women who commit murder, they often tend to be either sexualised in the media or, in some instances, to gain celebrity status.

2.10. Public comments on women who commit murder

Several local cases of women who have committed murder are found in the media and receive public commentary daily. The following cases of woman murderers are presented in the literature study because of their popularity in the media. The cases are used as examples to explain common opinions expressed in the media and further emphasise the need for the current study. Supplementary exploration of the labels such as those in the following cases that have been encountered in the media was undertaken. The information that was acquired is gathered, analysed and presented in Chapter 5.

2.10.1. Daisy de Melker

Daisy de Melker, born Daisy Louisa Hancorn-Smith, came from a big family of 11 children. Daisy gave birth to five children but only one survived into his teenage years (Tomlins, 2009). When Daisy was young, she enrolled in nursing school in Boksburg and, once she finished her studies at the age of 22, she worked in a hospital in the Cape Colony where it was said that she was liked by both patients and co-workers alike (Tomlins, 2009).

During the years 1923 to 1932, Daisy de Melker was accused of murdering two of her husbands as well as her only living son (Daisy de Melker ..., [sa]). She killed her victims by poisoning them (Daisy de Melker is ..., 2019). It is believed that Daisy married and murdered her husbands purely for financial gain (Daisy de Melker is ..., 2019) and murdered her son because he wanted his inheritance from his father as he was almost 21 years old. Daisy was, however, only convicted of the murder of her son and not of her two deceased husbands because there was insufficient evidence. She was sentenced to death and was hanged on 30 December 1932 (Daisy de Melker is ..., 2019).

Daisy quickly gained the title of South Africa's first serial killer (Tomlins, 2009). Daisy has been referred to as "infamous" and as an "insurance collector"; she was observed to be both "conventional" and "odd" (Trapido, 2020). She was often referred to as a "cold-blooded

murderer” (Farber, 2019:11, 26) and as “relentless” (Farber, 2019:12). Daisy was also considered to be a “black widow” (Daisy de Melker ..., [sa]).

2.10.2. Zinhle Maditla

Zinhle Maditla was born in 1994 and was 24 when she was sentenced for her crimes. She was a housewife and a saleswoman before the commission of her crimes (Walubengo, 2021). She murdered her four children by poisoning them with rat poison in 2018. According to Zinhle, the main reason why she killed her four children was that she struggled to look after her children by herself (Wahinya, 2021) as she was single and unemployed (I deserve life sentence ..., 2019). Zinhle committed these acts in her house in Mpumalanga, South Africa (Mabona, 2019).

At the time of the killings, her daughters were aged 4 and 8 and her sons were aged 7 and 11 months (Mabona, 2019). When the police found the children’s bodies they were already decomposed and the small room which she rented was filled with flies. Zinhle admitted that she murdered the children after finding out that the father of two of the children was with another woman which led to a fight during which he hit her (A ‘sorry’ Zinhle Maditla ..., 2019; I deserve life sentence ..., 2019). She wanted him to pay for his actions, which is why she bought the rat poison in the first place (Walubengo, 2021). She was arrested on 30 December 2018 after she had handed herself over to the police at the Vosman Police Station (Mabona, 2019). Zinhle was sentenced to four consecutive life sentences after she took a plea in court (Walubengo, 2021) on 9 September 2019 (Mabona, 2019). It is said that she had the intent to kill and she lacked real remorse for the murder of her children (Mabona, 2019).

Zinhle was described in the media as a “killer mom” or as a “killer mother” (Wahinya, 2021). During the court case, the judge stated that her children suffered a horrendous death at the hands of their mother whose responsibility was to care for her children and keep them safe; the murder was described as a “horrid action”, “a gruesome act of killing” and “shocking” (Mabona, 2019; Wahinya, 2021; Wicks, 2019). When Zinhle showed remorse in court for her actions, the media proceeded to use headlines such as “A ‘sorry’ Zinhle Maditla wants the court to give her a minimum sentence” which almost seems ironic (A ‘sorry’ Zinhle Maditla ..., 2019). Furthermore, she was also referred to as “the mother who fed her four children rat poison” (I deserve life sentence ..., 2019). Zinhle was also referred to as a “child killer” and as being “depressed” in newspaper media (Wicks, 2019).

2.10.3. Busisiwe Labi

Not a lot of information is available on Busisiwe Labi's background, however, it is widely known that she is a lesbian. However, as her mother and family are homophobic, she engaged in sexual activities with men to please her family and mother because her mother wanted grandchildren (Dayimani, 2021; EC mother handed..., 2021). Busisiwe murdered her two sons, aged one and six, by suffocating them with plastic bags and pillows after she informed the children that she was going to kill them (Francke, 2021; Isaacs, 2021) in September 2020 (Dayimani, 2021). One of the reasons Busisiwe murdered her children was because she wanted to make her mother sad due to the relationship Busisiwe's mother shared with the children and because she felt angry and betrayed (Francke, 2021). She felt that her mother preferred her younger brother over her (Child-murderer mother..., 2021). Busisiwe was found guilty of the murder of her two children in September 2020 (EC mother handed..., 2021) and was sentenced to two sentences of 22 years and 6 months each running concurrently (Dayimani, 2021).

Busisiwe is portrayed as "a lesbian who slept with men" and it was further stated that "she did not want to be a mother"; she was also often described as a homosexual (Dayimani, 2021). Busisiwe was described as a "child-murderer" and headings such as "child-murderer mother gets 22 years behind bars" were used during the case (Child-murderer mother..., 2021). The offences committed by Busisiwe were described as being "spine-chilling" and "horrific" (Dayimani, 2021). During her prison sentencing, the judge assigned to the case, Belinda Hartie, stated that Busisiwe never really wanted to "be a mother" (Child-murderer mother..., 2021; EC mother handed..., 2021) because of her homosexuality (Child-murderer mother..., 2021).

2.10.4. Sindisiwe Manqele

Sindisiwe Manqele was born in South Africa in 1989 (Yates, 2021). She grew up in Kempton Park and received her education at Griffin College which is a college in Dublin, Ireland. Due to the crime, she committed, the murder of rapper Flabba, she was unable to continue her education there; however, she did finish her studies at the University of South Africa during her incarceration (Yates, 2021).

Sindisiwe fell in love with Flabba in 2006 when she was only 17 years old; Flabba was already married at the time (A look at Flabba's ..., 2015). Sindisiwe killed Flabba by stabbing him in the chest to defend herself during an altercation that occurred at his house (Manuel, 2018) during a drunken feud (Duba & Mlamo, 2022). She was sentenced in 2015 (Mackenzie, 2016), receiving 12 years in prison for the murder in 2016 (Manuel 2018). In 2018, Sindisiwe graduated with honours in business management, however, her graduation

was met with conflicting opinions in the court of public opinion. Some supported her in her quest to educate herself further and others felt it was not fair that she was provided with an educational opportunity despite the act of murder that she had committed (Manuel, 2018). Furthermore, she was released on parole in May of 2022 (Duba & Mlamo, 2022).

During the murder trial, she was referred to as “Flabba’s killer” by news media (Shange, 2016). News media further called her “Flabba’s girlfriend” (Manuel, 2018). When Sindisiwe graduated with her degree in 2018, she was referred to as “Flabba’s convicted killer” (Exclusive: Flabba’s convicted...., 2018). Another article referred to her as “Flabba’s killer girlfriend” (Flabba’s killer girlfriend asks for..., 2017).

2.10.5. Dr Lauren Dickason

South African mother, Dr Lauren Dickason, was a doctor in Pretoria before she moved to New Zealand (Monama, 2021) with her husband, Dr Graham Dickason (Allen & Zorzut, 2021). Before the conception of their first daughter, the couple was reported to have been struggling to fall pregnant, however, they were loving, dedicated parents. At the time of the commission of her crime, Lauren was 40 years old (Allen & Zorzut, 2021). She was on chronic medication before her move to New Zealand, but she stopped taking her medication because she felt it would interfere with her immigration process (Serra, 2022). Unfortunately, not much information on her background is available.

Lauren was charged with the killing of her three children soon after they moved from Pretoria, South Africa to New Zealand Island (Woolley, 2021). The murders occurred on 16 September 2021 (TimesLIVE, 2023). She murdered her three children by making use of cable ties (Serra, 2022). After the commission of her crime, Lauren spent time in custody at a psychiatric centre to be evaluated and thereafter appeared in the high court on 1 June 2023 (TimesLIVE, 2023). During the initial trial, Lauren pleaded not guilty to all charges (Serra, 2022). She was however found guilty of the murder of her three children but is still awaiting sentencing (Nqunjana, 2023) which will take place on 19 December 2023 (Le Roux, 2023).

Article headings often read “SA doctor accused of killing her 3 children” (Mthethwa, 2021). The media further referred to the murder that Lauren allegedly committed as a “family horror” (Allen & Zorzut, 2021). Lauren was also referred to as “Doctor” (Allen & Zorzut, 2021; TimesLIVE, 2021b). Rather than referring to Lauren as a mother, she was often referred to as a “medical practitioner” (TimesLIVE, 2021a). In news articles about the incident, Lauren was described as being “unwell” when her mental state was mentioned (Geldenhuis, 2021; Monama, 2021). Further media comments often referred to how she dressed in court, emphasising the “light grey hoodie and black trousers” she wore (Allen & Zorzut, 2021). After

Lauren was found guilty, there was a public uproar which showed support for her and the public demanded a retrial as they felt that Lauren should not have been found guilty due to her questionable mental health (Nqunjana, 2023).

2.10.6. Nomia Rosemary Ndlovu

Nomia Rosemary Ndlovu was born in 1978 in Tembisa, Gauteng and is a former policewoman. Rosemary received training to be accepted into the South African Police Services. She was posted at Tembisa Police Station and was later promoted to sergeant. Rosemary was a gambling addict and often did not attend work for fear of being found by the loan sharks from whom she often borrowed money to support her gambling addiction (Imo, 2023). Rosemary was accused of murdering five family members as well as her boyfriend as she arranged her family's murders (Seleka, 2021) to claim their insurance money (Africanews with AFP, 2021). She obtained R1.4 million in insurance pay-outs from policies that she secured for the deaths of her family members (Baloyi, 2022; Maphisa, 2021; Seleka, 2021).

Rosemary was caught in 2018 (Maphisa, 2021; Seleka, 2021) and sentenced to six life terms for arranging the murders of her family; she was further sentenced to five years for defeating the ends of justice, ten years for four fraud counts, ten years for each of her seven incitements to commit murder and another ten years for attempting to murder her mother (Shange, 2021a). Rosemary was also charged with conspiracy to commit murder. She attended court trials in April 2023 after the hitmen she hired to murder her now ex-husband warned him about the plan. She pleaded not guilty to the charges she faced (Shange, 2023). At the time the study was completed, Rosemary was expected back in court on July 12 (Montsho, 2023); however, she was caught with a phone in her cell on 9 July (Chabalala, 2023). It is unclear whether her court appearance was moved due to the incident as no further information was available on her court trial at the time of the study.

Media articles referred to Rosemary as a "killer cop" (Baloyi, 2022; Shange, 2021a; Shange, 2021b) and as a "danger to society" (Shange, 2021a). She was further referred to as a "convicted ex-cop" (Seleka, 2021). Rosemary was also called the "Insurance Killer" (Maphisa, 2021) and was even featured as the "Moegoe of the week" which loosely translates to 'idiot of the week' or 'fool of the week' in *Sunday World* (2021).

2.10.7. Cecilia Steyn

Cecilia Steyn was born on 22 December 1980 (Marx, 2020:6). During the commission of Cecilia's crime, she was married to Andries Steyn, a South African police officer (Singer, 2021) and they lived in a small two-bedroom flat with their son and daughter, in Consanna

flats, Krugersdorp. It is alleged that Cecilia often used drugs (Gules, 2022). Cecilia stated that she worked at a creche before her marriage but after that, she did not work again (Booyesen, 2022:206).

Cecilia claimed to be a survivor of a Satanic church where she was a victim of ritualistic abuse since she was a baby; she alleged that her evil father and witches were trying to force her to return to the church (Booyesen, 2022:15). Cecilia claimed to be a 42nd generational witch, to be the bride of Satan (Singer, 2021), to have occult powers, to be able to turn into a werewolf and also to be a vampire (Marx, 2020:18-19; Singer, 2021). Cecilia further claimed to have had a dissociative identity disorder (DID) (Marx, 2020:33) to cope with her trauma (Singer, 2021). However, experts state that it is not likely that Cecilia suffered from DID and her different personalities are more likely to be made up (Marx, 2020:33).

Cecilia turned multiple individuals into murderers by convincing them that they should murder to protect her from the influence of the Satanic church (TimesLIVE, 2021c). Cecilia is best known for her role in both the 'Devilsdorp' killings as well as her involvement with the Electus Per Deus cult responsible for the killings (Singer, 2021). Cecilia was also involved in the 'appointment murders' that formed part of the Krugersdorp killings, also referred to as the 'Devilsdorp' killings (TimesLIVE, 2021c). The murders occurred between 2012 and 2016 (Modise, 2020). On 19 August 2019, Cecilia was found guilty of murder, robbery with aggravating circumstances, robbery, running a criminal enterprise, fraud, theft, malicious property damage, conspiracy to commit murder and the possession of unlicensed firearms as well as ammunition and was sentenced to 13 life sentences and 152 years (Booyesen, 2022:201).

Cecilia was referred to as a "puppet master" (Singer, 2021) or as the 'mastermind' behind the Krugersdorp murders (TimesLIVE, 2021c). She was further referred to as a "cult mastermind" (Grbich, 2021). She was also viewed as a "murder cult leader" ('Ninja Killer' was 'counselled' by..., 2022). She was also described as being part of the "Krugersdorp killers" (Watch| Krugersdorp Killers: This is the worst case I have presided over – judge, 2019).

2.10.8. Marinda Steyn

Marinda Steyn was a former English teacher at Jan de Klerk High School (Booyesen, 2022:16; Mueni, 2019) After her second divorce, Marinda started to use drugs and became sexually promiscuous (Marx, 2020:41). Marinda lived in the same flats as Cecilia with her two children Marcel and Le Roux Steyn (Booyesen, 2022:137). Marinda was also a member of the Electus Per Deus cult that terrorised Krugersdorp (Singer, 2021). She claimed that the main reason why she started to commit murder was that she wanted to experience the

feeling of killing someone. She claimed to feel relieved once she had committed her first murder (Pretorius, 2018).

In the case of the murder of Mikeila Valentine, Marinda, with the help of her daughter, smashed her victim's head with a blunt object and then proceeded to stab her multiple times (Grobler, 2019). During the court trial, Marinda desperately tried to defend Cecilia (Pretorius, 2018). On 16 May 2018, Marinda pleaded guilty to all charges brought before her and she received 11 life sentences and 115 years (Booyesen, 2022:195). She was charged with murder, racketeering, robbery, fraud, accessory after the fact and unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition (Jordaan, 2018). Marinda was described as being aggressive and arrogant by the investigating police officers during the investigation (Booyesen, 2022:110).

Marinda was often referred to as one of Cecilia's "marionettes" (Singer, 2021) and as a puppet in Cecilia's plan (Mueni, 2019). Marinda was also referred to as a "convicted murderer" (Pretorius, 2018). In a similar way to Cecilia, Marinda was referred to as one of the "Krugersdorp killers" (Head, 2018). The group of which Marinda was part was referred to by the judge during the court trial as "elected by Lucifer" (Mueni, 2019).

2.10.9. Madeleen Bredenhann

Although not much is known about the history of Madeleen Bredenhann, she was described as doing very well in school and that she had never had or shown any signs of being violent or exhibiting anti-social behaviour (Venter & Sapa, 2004). On 13 April 2003, Madeleen murdered her mother and grandmother in their family home in Dorandia, Pretoria ('Damning evidence' leads to..., 2004; Venter, 2008). The two women were asleep in their beds when they were killed by being struck with an axe multiple times, however, the axe recovered at the crime scene did not have any fingerprints ('Damning evidence' leads to..., 2004).

During her court appeal in December 2006, two of the three judges determined that she was part of a conspiracy to kill her mother and grandmother, however, they did not believe that she swung the axe that killed them. The judges believed that Madeleen assisted the offenders by allowing them access to the house (Venter, 2008). However, the blood spatter and DNA evidence found on Madeleen's clothing indicated that she must have been involved in the murder ('Damning evidence' leads to..., 2004). Madeleen insisted that she was innocent and her uncle Ludwig Wambach was the real offender ('Damning evidence' leads to..., 2004; Venter, 2008; Venter & Sapa, 2004).

In November 2004, Madeleen was convicted of the murder of her mother and her grandmother ('Damning evidence' leads to..., 2004) and was sentenced to two life terms for the murders (Venter & Sapa, 2004) when she was only 29 years old (Venter, 2021). After

-serving 17 years of the correctional sentence, she obtained an honour's degree in tax law (Venter, 2021).

Madeleen was observed to be "soft-spoken" ('Damning evidence' leads to..., 2004; Venter & Sapa, 2004) and "gentle" during the court trial (Venter & Sapa, 2004). Madeleen has further been referred to as an "axe killer" (Axe killer's sentence upheld, 2006) or as the "double axe killer" (De Land, 2006). When addressing her case, the media referred to it as being the "axe murder" ('Damning evidence' leads to..., 2004). The media often also commented on Madeleen's appearances such as referring to her as a "dark-headed woman" (Venter & Sapa, 2004).

2.10.10. Summary of case studies

When looking at the above-mentioned cases, a variety of commonalities and differences become evident. One obvious difference is that women do not have just one victim type – women murder their husbands, their families, their children or, similar to the case of the Krugersdorp killings, women can even murder acquaintances or individuals unknown to them. Daisy de Melker, Rosemary Ndlovu and Madeleen Bredenhann murdered their families. Zinhle Maditla, Busisiwe Labi, Daisy de Melker and Lauren Dickason all murdered their children. Cecilia and Marinda Steyn murdered acquaintances and individuals unknown to them and Sindisiwe Manqele murdered her boyfriend.

It is evident that some of the above-mentioned women – Daisy, Lauren, Rosemary and Marinda – held well-respected job titles and through their titles, they could be observed to be nurturers, protectors or caretakers. In Zinhle and Cecilia's cases, both were unemployed and Sindisiwe was a student. The similarities between Daisy and Rosemary are unavoidable as both Rosemary and Daisy murdered their family for financial gain. In Daisy's case, it was for the inheritance and with Rosemary, it was for insurance money. Furthermore, both Rosemary and Zinhle suffered from financial strain which directly influenced their decision to commit murder. Another obvious similarity is between Busisiwe and Zinhle; both of these women murdered their children to spite other people – Zinhle murdered her children to spite her children's father and Busisiwe to spite her mother.

Another obvious difference between the above-mentioned cases is the method of killing. In some of the cases, the offenders made use of 'non-messy' methods – Lauren and Busisiwe suffocated their children by placing items over their faces or strangling them. In the cases of Daisy and Zinhle, they made use of poison. Rosemary hired a hitman and Cecilia had her followers do the murdering for her. In comparison, some of the other women, such as Sindisiwe and Marinda, who stabbed their victims and Madeleen, who murdered her family members with an axe, made use of violent methods.

Lastly, there is a similarity between Lauren and Rosemary. When both of these offenders' cases appeared in the media, the media reported on them in terms of their occupation. Lauren was often referred to as a doctor and Rosemary as an officer. Many of these women were labelled negatively in the media. Lauren and Zinhle were labelled as mentally unstable. Sindisiwe was only reported on in terms of her victim – she was never referred to as a person but rather as 'Flabba's killer', thus, depersonalising Sindisiwe and placing emphasis on the victim. Furthermore, reports involving Lauren and Madeleen often included comments regarding their looks. Some of the women were also labelled as black widows and bad mothers.

2.11. Interaction between the Criminal Justice System and women who commit murder

The CJS is mainly based on frameworks that focus specifically on males and not females (Artz et al., 2012:1). Women are therefore often viewed to be out of place in the CJS (Wilczynski, 1997:420). Historically, the CJS tends to treat female criminals differently from male criminals; the belief that women are treated more leniently than men stems from the same period (Wilczynski, 1997:419; Willemsen & Schie, 1989:624). However, women tend to be treated in a discriminatory manner by the courts because their sentences are often influenced by the degree to which they go against typical gender standards and norms which further elucidates the belief that, in these cases, women are treated more harshly than men (Wilczynski, 1997:419).

In many instances, women receive lighter sentences than males. This phenomenon is often called the chivalry hypothesis (McCluskey, 2019:43). When addressing the chivalry hypothesis, there are two main views on how the CJS tends to react towards women who commit crimes. It is proposed that there are two main causes for gender disparity in the proceedings of the CJS, namely, selective chivalry and differential discretion (Chase, 2008:42; Farnworth & Teske, 1995:23).

With regard to selective chivalry, it is suggested that the CJS knowingly participates in the disproportioned sentencing of white women as opposed to women of colour. In comparison, differential discretion states that chivalry only applies when informal decisions are taken and does not have an impact on more serious decisions such as final sentencing (Chase, 2008:42; Farnworth & Teske, 1995:23). It is often stated that the chivalry hypothesis exists as there is a belief that decision-makers have paternalistic and non-punitive attitudes towards women during court cases (Wilczynski, 1997:419).

Despite this argument, many individuals believe that the chivalry hypothesis does not exist in reality. There have been many studies that oppose the chivalry hypothesis (Chase, 2008:42,

44). Some individuals feel that chivalry, as well as leniency, is not provided to women who commit extremely violent crimes such as murdering their children (Chase, 2008:45). Furthermore, in studies where it was postulated that the chivalry hypothesis did not exist, it was determined that there was no difference in the treatment of offenders due to their gender; in some cases, the studies even determined that women were treated more harshly than their male counterparts (Herzog & Oreg, 2008:48).

A study conducted by Spohn (1999:380, 382) that was focused on the lenient sentencing of female offenders on drug-related charges argues against the chivalry hypothesis. Spohn determined that female offenders do in fact receive lighter sentences and are sentenced less in general in comparison to their male counterparts. However, this was not due to their gender but rather because women commit less serious crimes in general and women tend to have less serious prior criminal records (Spohn, 1999:380, 382).

The CJS further tends to both ratify and enforce what is considered to be gender, racial, sexual and class order by making use of processing and punishment regimes which are an effective method of controlling women (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:29, 43; Easta et al., 2015:33). It has been concluded that race and/or ethnicity have a very strong influence on the CJS, especially in sentencing, due to stereotypes developed by the public and different societies (Brennan, 2006:62).

Women can be victimised during court proceedings (Darling, 2021). This is very often observed in cases where women kill their abusive husbands. In the majority of the cases in the USA where women murder their abusive husbands, women tend to be convicted of manslaughter or murder. A very small number of female offenders are acquitted on grounds of self-defence. It has been determined that the courts do not tend to take a gender-informed, trauma-informed approach to female self-defence cases due to the normalisation of the culture of misogyny which is very often reflected in violent pornography. Furthermore, many women who do not claim self-defence in the murder of the abusive spouse will rather claim either 'loss of control' or 'diminished responsibility'; unfortunately, in many cases, the jury will rather convict for manslaughter (Darling, 2021).

It is important to note that in instances where women kill their children, they are not all treated the same by the court. Their treatment is dependent on whether or not they might meet the ideal norms of what is considered motherhood (Huckerby, 2003:152). These women tend to be viewed as mad within the CJS (Wilczynski, 1997:421). In general, evidence indicates that women might receive either chivalrous or more severe treatment in court (Heidensohn, 2000:31).

Mental illnesses, such as BWS, are very seldom viewed to be a reliable defence during a woman's trial and, therefore, victimisation as a factor to determine a woman's culpability is very seldom considered (Women who kill their abusers..., 2016); they would therefore be convicted of murder or manslaughter rather than self-defence and the chance for a woman to appeal her sentence is very, very slim (Howes, 2021). Due to widespread misogyny which influences both society and the CJS (Darling, 2021), it is also believed that women often kill because the CJS has failed to provide them protection (Darling, 2021; Howes, 2021). The court often tends to focus on myths and stereotypes surrounding women during court trials (Howes, 2021).

2.12. The public intellectual

The literature in the following sections critically describes the origin and role of the public intellectual by first defining the public intellectual and then describing their role within the public sphere and their interaction with the media.

2.12.1. Origin and role of the public intellectual

The term 'public intellectual' was created in 1958 by C. Wright Mills (Wright, 1958:124) however, those considered to be public intellectuals existed long before this term was created (Marshall & Atherton, 2015:70). There have been multiple definitions for the term and, although the term is ever-changing, it can best be defined by defining the word 'public' and 'intellectual' individually. Most definitions tend to be either too broad or too narrow to define what the ideal public intellectual is (Marshall & Atherton, 2015:70). It is believed that 'the Age of Enlightenment' gave birth to the concept of what society now observes to be a public intellectual (Crick, 2006:128).

A public intellectual is defined as an intellectual who is often a noted specialist in a specific field and who has become very well-known to the general public for their willingness to comment on current affairs or events (Collins, 2021). An individual will be viewed as an intellectual only if that individual chooses to adopt specific causes, identities and very specialised interests (Collins, 2005:23). An intellectual has been described by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Lightman, [sa]), who lived more than 150 years ago, as an individual who observes ideas from the past, reworks the ideas and then creates a brand-new idea. The ideas are then shared with the world and not just with other intellectuals. Public intellectuals often engage in the learning process out of an obligation to themselves rather than an obligation to their community or society (Lightman, [sa]).

Another explanation of what a public intellectual is, was proposed by Edward Said in 1993 (Lightman, [sa]). Said states that the mission of an intellectual is specifically to enhance the

freedom and knowledge of humans. In modern days, an intellectual is an individual who is trained in a very specific discipline. If an intellectual openly writes or speaks to a larger audience about a phenomenon, they are identified as a public intellectual (Lightman, [sa]).

When looking at public intellectuals, one tends to be able to make a clear distinction between two types of public intellectuals. The first group of public intellectuals are generalists and the second group are specialists. A generalist public intellectual tends to address a wide variety of issues; they do not tend to place too much focus on pre-existing knowledge but rather on the ability to reason, engage and make arguments. Therefore, the generalist tends to be very flexible. In comparison, a specialist public intellectual is focused specifically on a particular field (Dahlgren, 2012:97). The specialist further tends to be described as normative and less directed towards what can be observed to be a grand idea (Dahlgren, 2012:98).

For an intellectual to become a public intellectual, they have to engage with the media. However, due to the constant cooperation with the media, it is believed that public intellectuals have to sacrifice their academic styles (Melnik, 2015:19). Nevertheless, the history of modern democracy has been influenced strongly by public intellectuals. The ability of the public intellectual to address matters which are of concern at a specific time in space tends to play an important role in determining and influencing public opinion. In most cases, public intellectuals do not tend to seek either power or political careers when they share their opinions with the public (Dahlgren, 2013:400).

In many cases, the public tends to have intense negative responses to the opinions or statements made by public intellectuals (Dahlgren, 2013:400). Public intellectuals who attempt to express their views often struggle when they come face to face with societies that do not consider their arguments valid and, therefore, attempt to render the public intellectuals as servants (Collins, 2005:23). However, public intellectuals are in fact not talking down to the public from an outside perspective but are rather members of society and the public sphere. Therefore, public intellectuals cannot be observed to be more or less important than their fellow individuals who make up the public sphere (Crick, 2006:136). The only thing that differentiates public intellectuals from the general public is their ability to produce intellectual work which can have long-term impacts on the consciousness of the public sphere (Crick, 2006:137).

Being a public intellectual is not considered to be a job or a career but is better described as being a specific role that someone will assume (Dahlgren, 2012:99). The public intellectual has a very prominent position within modern culture and the media. Due to the position the

public intellectual holds within society, they tend to influence a society's culture (Marshall & Atherton, 2015:69).

The public intellectual also plays a very important role in how public opinion works (Dahlgren, 2013:400). Public intellectuals tend to focus on the truth and, in some cases, portray minority opinions which, in turn, can sway the court of public opinion. Their role as intellectuals who can share their opinions reaches a bigger audience, thus, public intellectuals influence the court of public opinion (Dahlgren, 2013:400).

Public intellectuals have important qualities. The thoughts and behaviours that they use to maintain a normal life within society are also used to confront issues when and if they arise (Crick, 2006:136). The public intellectual tends to address topics that are often viewed as embarrassing or which are just ignored by both the public and, in some cases, even the government (Reddy, 2021). Because the public intellectual addresses topics by stating what they believe is the truth based on what they know or have experienced due to their field of expertise, the public often contradicts their opinions (Dahlgren, 2013:401). It is further believed that by making use of both philosophy and science, public intellectuals can directly influence public opinion by encouraging growth which, in turn, replaces what is observed as 'traditional' with 'rational'. Therefore, public intellectuals can also be observed as information conveyors between the greatest minds and the general population (Crick, 2006:128).

Public intellectuals operate on 'materiality' which is often observed to be both the institutions and technologies used to develop and share opinions and ideas with others. Classically, materiality is newspapers, articles and books but, in modern times, materiality includes online media platforms and multiple digital tools (Basaure, Joignant & Théodore, 2022). The statement made by Basaure et al. (2022) shows just how the public intellectual needs to evolve and has evolved for modern-day technology. One example of a platform which can be used by public intellectuals in the modern day is Project Syndicate which enables multiple public intellectuals to come together and share their opinions. Project Syndicate is the world's largest global, digital platform and op-ed website and has over 500 media outlets in 150 countries (Basaure et al., 2022).

In summary, a public intellectual can be defined as an individual who has knowledge on a specific topic and who often engages with the media to share their opinion, reaching bigger target groups to influence opinions. In many cases, public intellectuals attempt to influence public opinion in a manner in which they do not seem more or less important than their fellows in the public sphere. The public intellectual tries to influence the opinions of the public by producing opinions based on the truth; sometimes they may also present minority

opinions. However, it has been observed that not all public intellectuals' opinions are welcomed or accepted by the court of public opinion.

2.12.2. The public intellectual and the media

Throughout history, an obvious relationship between public intellectuals and the media has existed, however, due to the shortcomings of the news media in the past, public intellectuals have had difficulty expressing their opinions. Therefore, the public intellectuals' opinions, as well as their relationship with news media, were often ignored within the public sphere. The relationship between public intellectuals and the media became more significant in the public sphere when television media became more popular (Ming, 2018:294).

In modern-day societies, the presence of public intellectuals tends to be magnified when they make use of the internet. However, due to the increase in online public intellectuals, it is hard to decide who is and who is not considered to be a public intellectual as they might digress from what is considered a traditional public intellectual. Individuals who are most commonly considered public intellectuals tend to be either journalists, experts or academics in specified areas (Dahlgren, 2013:402). The influence of the internet has created a difference between who was historically considered to be a public intellectual and who a public intellectual is today. Historically, public intellectuals were focused on important and philosophical questions; today, public intellectuals are more focused on the details of events (Dahlgren, 2012:97-98; *The Philosopher's Eye*, 2011).

Due to the growing use of global digital platforms, it is safe to assume that the global digital public intellectual exists as the current technological stage and the public intellectual are dependent on each other (Basaure et al., 2022). It is believed that the future of public intellectualism lies in improving the digital public sphere. To improve the digital public sphere, public intellectuals need to improve their interactions within the digital sphere (Murphy, 2020).

Furthermore, in modern society, public intellectuals can be regarded as media intellectuals. Media intellectuals are intellectuals who have developed a very close relationship with the media. These individuals tend to have the ability to interact with both mass media and internet media and, therefore, have the potential to influence the public sphere by producing and transmitting information by using the media (Yihong, in Ming, 2018:295).⁵

Public intellectuals in the past also tended to say more offensive and amusing things which would sometimes lead people to think about a specific issue or topic. In comparison, modern public intellectuals tend to be focused specifically on matters of philosophy that they believe

⁵ The original source is not available in English.

only they, themselves, have ever thought about which makes the average person feel as if the public intellectual is insulting them (The Philosopher's Eye, 2011). Therefore, it has in some situations been determined that both the role and importance of the public intellectual have declined due to the growth of digital spaces (Murphy, 2020).

Dahlgren (2013:401) notes that during the current digital age of mainstream media, a large increase in discussion forums has occurred; this has led to the flourishing of opinion expression. The digitalisation of what is considered the public sphere where public intellectuals share their views has become extremely important. As there are more, although smaller, public spheres for them to access via media, their opinions have been amplified (Dahlgren, 2012:101, 103). The public intellectuals' text is being shared on online media pages, providing them with visibility and prominence within the public sphere (Dahlgren, 2012:103). However, the rise of online media platforms is a cause of concern for public intellectuals as the public intellectuals are now less unique than they once were (Dahlgren, 2012:102).

2.13. Public opinion

2.13.1. The public sphere

News media is often used simultaneously with the term 'the public sphere' specifically in what is considered to be Western cultures because it works to create a sphere that represents the society in which it is present (Marshall & Atherton, 2015:72). However, the public sphere can no longer be contained to what is considered to be traditional media but now focuses on including social media such as Twitter⁶, which, in many instances, can be described as a 'network public sphere' (Marshall & Atherton, 2015:72-73).

The public sphere exists in traditional media, specifically books and journalism; however, it has been modernised to include online writing as well. This has led to the rise of 'opinion journalism' due to the ability of journalism to be used specifically for advocacy. Alternative news networks are often used to publish opinion journalism (Dahlgren, 2012:100-101).

Anyone can engage in the public sphere (Dahlgren, 2012:103). The media and all of its social media and communication networks are the ideal space for public opinion to develop as it is an ideal space where public intellectuals can easily connect with their audiences (Dahlgren, 2012:99). It is important to note that, although public intellectuals can voice their opinions and views by making use of digital media, they in no way have the monopoly of the media. Entities, such as journalists, share the public sphere with public intellectuals

⁶ Twitter was renamed in 2023 and is now known and referred to as 'X'.

(Dahlgren, 2012:101). Due to its availability and potential for interaction, the public sphere can be considered a platform for the development of public opinion.

2.13.2. Origin and role of public opinion

During the 17th century, John Locke coined the term 'public opinion', however, 'vox populi' is a Latin concept meaning 'voice of the people' that existed long before Locke was born (Leka & Kosumi, 2017:46-47; Naqvi, 2015). Public opinion means the opinion of the public. However, public opinion is considered to be a 'shared aggregate phenomenon' (Shamir, 2005). A more modern way of defining public opinion is by describing it as a shared judgement regarding political issues, policies, individuals or institutions that is commonly exhibited by people (Naqvi, 2015).

Despite having been defined in the 17th century, the involvement of public opinion as an important part of daily life is quite a new phenomenon (Leka & Kosumi, 2017:47). Public opinion is very important when it comes to issues of a political nature as well as social organisation (Leka & Kosumi, 2017:46). During the 1950s, public opinion was observed to be formulated by experts in communications propaganda, polling and political predictions (Wilson, 1954:323). Public opinion in many high-profile cases confronts the opinions of public intellectuals because public opinion is often misinformed by the media (Allen, 2001:40).

In the public sphere, the media strongly influences the development of misperceptions and misunderstandings surrounding, for example, crimes that have been committed (Allen, 2001:40). People who have been wrongly informed tend to be harsher when speaking about or addressing potential punishments for crimes that have been committed because many people stigmatise all criminals as evil monsters (Allen, 2001:40).

The public tends to express opinions by making use of mainstream media, social media platforms, such as Facebook and discussion forums. The main reason the public sphere makes use of the internet is that the internet has taken the form of a central institution. The public is no longer just viewed as being the audience; they can now actively produce their own opinions which, in turn, encourages the public to continue to generate networks, mini-public spheres and social movements and to engage in mobilisations within the public sphere (Dahlgren, 2013:401).

One of the main places on which public opinions often appear is Twitter. The platform offers a lot of opinions regarding the CJS (Coulling & Johnston, 2017:5). Social media platforms are further also used by the court of public opinion to produce counter-hegemonic discourses regarding incidents which do not always agree with the discourses of legal

systems, politicians and journalists. These opinions can focus either on the true value of the incident or on the negative aspects of the incident (Coulling & Johnston, 2017:6).

Public opinion is also very dependent on social factors such as social class, age, education, race, region, gender and ethnic groups. The main reason these factors have the potential to influence public opinion is that society is not always homogeneous and is made up of different elements which lead to individuals viewing the world differently from one another (Naqvi, 2015). Thus, public opinion is a multidimensional phenomenon (Shamir, 2005).

Public opinion is often influenced by news organisations due to the power news organisations have to influence the opinions and views of people (Taylor & Sorenson, 2002:121). Negative portrayals and labels of women who commit murder tend to adversely influence the court of public opinion, policy (Collins, 2016:297; Steffensmeier, et al., 2005:356) and the understanding of public health issues (Taylor & Sorenson, 2002:121).

Public opinion can adjust or completely change certain policies that have been passively observed by a group of citizens within a society. Public opinion further carries a lot of power when it comes to politics and democracies because theoretically, a government official needs to consider the opinions of the public before making changes to or finalising plans for the future (Naqvi, 2015). Public opinion is important within society as it aims to arbitrate as well as aid social integration and change. Public opinion further supports integration and stability and, in some instances, can even facilitate social and political change. Public opinion can even be considered a tool for conflict resolution (Shamir, 2005).

2.13.3. The role of public opinion about women who commit murder in the media

Citizens, who determine public opinion, make use of social media – such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs – to engage in discussions regarding specific topics or political agendas. Due to the nature of online media, the expression of opinions has blossomed (Dahlgren, 2013:401) and even caused a shift in the dynamics of public opinion and commentary (Gattone, 2012:176). The media has provided a system for online societies in which individuals can break free from both institutional and political powers and freely offer their opinions (Coulling & Johnston, 2017:8). Therefore, the media has also become a fundamental installation for the public sphere to voice their opinions and produce different opinions. This, in turn, empowers the public to create networks, social movements and mini-public spheres and to engage in social rallies (Dahlgren, 2012:99; Dahlgren, 2013:401-402). Public opinion further tends to harbour a lot of emotions about criminals, the CJS and representations from the media regarding issues relating to crime (Coulling & Johnston, 2017:5).

Due to the availability of a platform for public opinion to grow, the public can participate in discussions about women who commit murder. The court of public opinion tends to have a distorted and exaggerated view of women who commit murder (Gattone, 2012:176). The court of public opinion tends to frame women who commit murder as being very hostile and labels them harshly (Chesney-Lind, 1986:78). Through shaming, social media platforms are often used as a form of punishment for many perpetrators (Coulling & Johnston, 2017:6).

A study conducted by Munnik (1997:60-61)⁷ focused specifically on the perceptions the public held regarding female offenders in Pretoria, South Africa. The study was focused on the opinions of the white general public (Munnik, 1997:61). Munnik (1997:60) focused on the following perceptions about female offenders: patriarchal perceptions, the modus operandi of female offenders, the victims of female offenders, the nature of female offenders, the lenient treatment of female offenders, ethical aspects of female crime and the socio-economic aspects of female crime.

In the study performed by Munnik (1997), participants were asked whether or not they agreed with specific statements regarding female offenders. When asked about the patriarchal perceptions of female offenders, which were focused specifically on the ability of female offenders to function properly, 53.3% of participants did not feel that female offenders were more masculine and 48.1% felt that due to their strict and narrow-minded upbringing, females often tended to commit less crime (Munnik, 1997:61-62).

When the participants were asked about their perceptions of the modus operandi of female offenders, 42.2% of participants felt that female crime was not an individual phenomenon, 43.2% felt that women did not commit crime due to the abuse of alcohol, 42.4% did not feel that women were impulsive offenders and 50.6% felt that female offenders did not usually use a knife as a murder weapon (Munnik, 1997:62-63). When the participants were asked about their perceptions of the victims of female offenders, 41.1% of participants stated that they felt women made use of poison when they killed their victims, 83.5% agreed that when women commit murder, they often choose someone close to them, such as a child or a husband and 48.1% felt that the victims of female murderers were often unable to defend themselves due to their being ill, asleep or drunk (Munnik 1997:63-64). With regards to their perceptions of the lenient treatment of female offenders in the CJS, 42.2% of participants felt that law professionals tended to treat female offenders very leniently and 38.88% did not know if female offenders served shorter sentences than their male counterparts (Munnik, 1997:65).

⁷ Munnik's study is outdated as it was conducted in 1997 and only focused on white participants' opinions which does not apply to the current state of affairs in South Africa. However, the study is still important as no similar studies have been conducted in South Africa – further emphasising the need for the current study.

2.14. Interaction between the public intellectual and public opinion

Conflict between public intellectuals and public opinion has occurred since the end of the Middle Ages and during the early Renaissance period. It was even observed historically between the Greeks and the Romans – in practical and philosophical issues related to democracy (Wilson, 1954:328-329). Thus, conflict between public intellectuals and public opinion has been present for many years and is still observed in society.

At times, the public intellectual and the public have agreed on issues or specific beliefs, however, there have also been times when they have disagreed with each other. Even if the public intellectual and the public agree, there are still differences between the way the intellectuals argue their opinions and what the state traditionally believes (Wilson, 1954:328).

Public intellectuals were often portrayed as peacekeepers and distributors within the public sphere (Korom, 2014:229). However, the networked public sphere has developed a different idea as to what and who are considered to be intellectuals (Korom, 2014:229; Marshall & Atherton, 2015:73). One of the main reasons why different opinions of who the public intellectual is has developed is because there tends to be more than one public sphere and each produces different opinions (Korom, 2014:229). In some cases, public opinion has been influenced by public intellectuals due to the public intellectuals' ability to address issues that are of concern. This tends to result in either agreement from the court of public opinion or in harsh criticisms and negative responses (Dahlgren, 2012:96; Dahlgren, 2013:400). In other instances, public opinion often ignores the public intellectual (The Philosopher's Eye, 2011).

Public opinion has in many instances been viewed to be vulgar in comparison to the opinions of the public intellectuals. The public intellectuals have felt that the court of public opinion needs to be reformed, which has caused tension between the two (Wilson, 1954:321). Another reason why there is a conflict between public opinion and the public intellectual is that public opinion has started to influence psychology, sociology and politics (Minar, 1960:31), which might cause the public intellectual to feel inferior to the court of public opinion.

One of the main issues which causes conflict between the public intellectual and public opinion is women who commit murder. The public intellectual tends to look to rational explanations for women who murder by referring to facts and, in some cases, evidence gathered from research. However, labelling and the stigma of women who murder which is portrayed in the media cause different opinions within the public sphere. Both the public and the public intellectuals voice their opinions regarding the matter. However, the opinions do not always portray similar ideas, which often leads to conflict between the public intellectuals

and the public. One of the main reasons why the opinions might differ is because the court of public opinion tends to be misinformed by the media coverage of high-profile cases (Allen, 2001:40). The media can influence the development of misperceptions and misunderstandings (Allen, 2001:40) as it tends to influence what and how people think about specific phenomena (Taylor & Sorenson, 2002:121). Research on the interactions of the public and public intellectuals regarding women who have committed murder has been under-studied internationally and more so in the South African context. By conducting the current study, new knowledge will be gleaned and new light will be cast on the different types of labels used to describe these women.

2.15. Summary

Chapter 2 presented the literature relevant to the current study. An explanation of women as offenders, as well as the diverse types of murders committed by women, were discussed in depth. The chapter also explained how women who commit murder are often portrayed as either mad, bad or sad in the media. Case studies of South African women who commit murder and how the media and public commentary tend to label and explain these women's cases were also discussed. It was further determined that media labels exist because of the gender roles women have in society and that when women kill, they tend to be observed as doubly deviant because they are not only transgressing the law but also their assigned gender roles.

The chapter further explained the origin and the role of public opinion and the public intellectual within the online public sphere as well as their interaction with the media. Emphasis was placed on how public opinion interacts with the opinions of the public intellectuals regarding women who commit murder and how these opinions might cause conflict between the two entities. Furthermore, how the media might be able to influence the opinions of the court of public opinion by using labels in their reporting was discussed.

Chapter 3 critically discusses the theories that are applicable in explaining the interaction of the public intellectual and the court of public opinion in the media and the public sphere regarding the labelling of women who commit murder. Focus is placed on theories, such as the evil woman and pretty privilege hypotheses, to explain the development of these theories. The sex role and labelling theories are also discussed to explain the phenomenon of labelling in depth.

Chapter 3: Theoretical application

3.1. Introduction

This study focuses on explaining the interaction between the comments and opinions of the court of public opinion and public intellectuals about women who commit murder. To explain the phenomenon, it is important not only to discuss criminological theories regarding female criminality but also to include theories that can explain why the labelling process, as observed when addressing the opinions of the court of public opinion and public intellectuals, might occur. Thus, the theories that are discussed focus on theories of female criminality as these theories have the potential to highlight why women who act violently are labelled differently by the court of public opinion and public intellectuals.

Emphasis will be placed on explaining why violent women are observed through a specific lens by making use of the labelling theory, the feminist theory, the sex-role theory, the masculinisation theory, the evil woman hypothesis and the theory of pretty privilege. The feminist theory, alongside the sex-role and masculinisation theories, is used to describe why women commit crimes and the pathways women follow in the commission of violent behaviour.

The theoretical application further attempts to explain the reasons for labelling as well as the type of labelling that might occur when women who commit murder are reflected in the media. The theories presented even explain to some extent the reason the court of public opinion, public intellectuals and the media think women might commit murder.

Although all of the below-mentioned theories are relevant to the study at hand, the theories which were the most relevant and that were used during the discussion of the research in Chapter 6 are as follow: the labelling theory, black feminist theories, the sex-role theory, the masculinisation theory, the evil woman hypothesis and the pretty privilege hypothesis.

3.2. Labelling theory

The labelling theory, which originally emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s (Greer & Reiner, 2013:1), was developed from the idea that the labelling of specific behaviours as deviant contributes to continuous deviance or deviant behaviour (Petrunik, 1980:214). The labelling theory started due to the perception enforced by the government that offenders are different from the general population and that crimes that are committed are distinctive from what was observed as criminal justice (Greer & Reiner, 2013:1). Over the years the act of labelling became more evident in terms of becoming part of the thinking of a variety of individuals including, but not limited to, government officials and social control officials (Petrunik, 1980:214).

The labelling theory is a sociological approach that focuses on how labelling can contribute to the prevalence of criminal and deviant behaviour (Bernburg, 2009). The theory states that both criminal and deviant behaviour occurs because of multiple causes and reasons, however, once an individual has received a specific label, they often react in a way that is normal for the labelled behaviour (Becker, 1963; Bernburg, 2009; Lemert, 1967). Therefore, deviant and criminal behaviour occurs because of the label given to the individual (Bernburg, 2009).

Howard Becker had the most influence on the development of the labelling theory when he wrote his 1963 book *Outsider: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. In the book, Becker addresses concerns that individuals who are often labelled as deviant tend to be rejected from society and are often observed as 'outsiders' (Sjöström, 2018:15). Furthermore, the labelling of an individual as deviant is not often a decisive factor but rather a reaction from another person who will label the individual as deviant. Therefore, Becker argues against the belief that one is deviant because deviancy comes from within but rather that deviancy comes from the beliefs and opinions of others. Deviance can also be constructed differently depending on the legal powers, social structures and hierarchies of a given time or space. In other words, deviance can change. Furthermore, features that are used to explain an individual's identity are often used in labelling and the use of labelling someone as deviant due to their identity can in many situations lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Sjöström, 2018:15-16).

The labelling process usually only occurs once a criminal has been caught (Schrag, 1971:89-90). The labels and the beliefs that each individual has free will can lead to both the condemnation and rejection of offenders (Wellford, 1975:333). The use of both deviant and criminal labels often leads to a stigma which might result in the negative stereotyping of offenders (Bernburg, 2009).

Wellford (1975:333) identifies the main theorists, whose writings influenced the labelling theory, as Becker, Lemert, Quinney, Schrag, Tannenbaum and Turk. The labelling theory consists of three main components: the writings of Lemert, the writings of the Chicago school and the writings of Garfinkel which are embedded in both phenomenological sociology and ethnology (Petrunik, 1980:216-217). These three components led to the development of what is now known as the labelling theory.

Lemert's approach was developed by focusing on both primary and secondary deviance (Petrunik, 1980:217). Primary deviance is focused on the characteristics, experiences, beliefs and behaviours that do not adhere to social norms; however, the acts are not considered criminal and are, therefore, tolerated by society. They are identified as 'minor

deviations'. Secondary deviation can be described as the response of others to the individual's behaviour. Secondary deviance occurs when the individual themselves or other individuals have labelled them as being deviant which might lead the individual to involvement in troubling acts. The Chicago school, which had a large influence on the development of the labelling theory, was focused mainly on how either a group or an individual is labelled and how the process of labelling occurs. Garfinkel focused mainly on phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology (Petrunik, 1980:217-219).

The media is very important in labelling as it plays a very prominent role when it comes to the general understanding of both crime and criminal justice. It has been determined that an act can only be observed as criminal once it has been labelled as criminal within legal precepts. In the labelling of an act as criminal, the media needs to help shape what can be observed as conceptual boundaries and record the volume of the crime that was committed. Therefore, the new role that the media adopted in developing new categories of crime, as well as deviance, led to the shifting of the boundaries of criminal law concerning labelling that were becoming more prominent (Greer & Reiner, 2013:2-3).

The media can also influence labelling by what is referred to as a 'trial by media' (Greer & McLaughlin, 2010:27). A trial by media can be defined as a "dynamic, impact-driven, news media-led process by which individuals – who may or may not be publicly known – are tried and sentenced in the 'court of public opinion'" (Greer & Reiner, 2013:7). In these cases, the media tends to be observed as the main source of information and forms the judgement of the court of public opinion which in turn leads to the development of labels. Individuals who are found guilty in the court of public opinion tend to be subjected to both 'naming and shaming' and are also faced with ridicule (Greer & Reiner, 2013:7).

3.3. Feminist theory

Feminism attempts to expose male domination while it attempts to obtain equal rights for women, commensurate with their male counterparts. In reality, women want to be observed as humans in their own right and not as the right of men (Thompson, 2001:8). There are six main strains of feminist theories in criminology: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, postmodern feminism, socialist feminism and black feminism. These strains attempt to make use of feminism to recognise that gender has an influence on the world and the experiences of every human being and, therefore, attempt to explain it purely from a female perspective.

The feminist theory which is focused on gender differences and patriarchy can be effective in addressing crime because crime has long been viewed as predominantly male (Belknap, 2016:291; Danner, 1989:51). However, feminist theories are relatively new theories to

academics as they only became part of the academic framework in the 1980s and 1990s (Baehr, 2017:1).

The first feminist theory to be examined is liberal feminism. Liberal feminist theories are aimed at explaining how unequal rights might lead to female oppression and that the only way to prevent the oppression from occurring is by providing women with legal equal rights (Jones & Budig, 2008; Priyadharshini, Mohan, Hariharasudan & Sangeetha, 2021:46). These theories are focused mainly on a female's ability to obtain and maintain equality through her behaviours, actions and choices (Priyadharshini et al., 2021:55).

Liberal feminism highlights stereotypes that arise due to traditional gender roles (Vito & Maahs, 2017:188). Women are often observed to be the main instrument for the welfare of both men and children, however, liberal feminism aims to prove that the statement is neither accurate nor true (Priyadharshini et al., 2021:47).

Liberal feminism further states that crime is committed due to gender socialisation (Lilly, Cullen & Ball, 2019:470). Gender socialisation in some instances can potentially be viewed as influencing crime. Males and females commit crimes that are in line with the expectations of each gender (Lilly et al., 2019:439). However, as women and men become more equal, they will start to commit more similar crimes; the number of crimes committed will also increase as equality improves (Lilly et al., 2019:470).

The second type of feminism is radical feminism. Radical feminist theories state that women are oppressed due to their biological makeup. Women are oppressed within a patriarchal society due to how women are treated by focusing mainly on medicine and gender. The only way to end the oppression is to take control of their bodies and the things that come with it (Jones & Budig, 2008; Vito & Maahs, 2017:188).

Radical feminism further attempts to look at the roots of female oppression (Rowland & Klein, 1996:9) and views crimes as being biologically male because men are born to be both more dominant and more aggressive (Lilly et al., 2019:439). Radical feminists observe the world, as well as the culture of the world, to be male-dominated in terms of values and perceptions and are concerned with any forms of oppression that affect the life and dignity of women (Thompson, 2001:20, 133).

Radical feminism also emphasises the belief that men tend to be more aggressive and dominant and are often observed to use their commission of most crimes as a way to assert their control over women (Lilly et al., 2019:470). Furthermore, radical feminists believe that all women are oppressed and constantly fear violation by men (Rowland & Klein, 1996:10). In the past, radical feminism has been explained, explored and discussed by Daly (1978:39-

40) who believes that radical feminism means embracing one's femininity and one's female birthright.

The third type of feminism is Marxist feminism. This theory was developed based on the principles of Charles Marx regarding materialism, class societies and capitalism to describe issues regarding women's oppression, liberation class, race discrimination and gender and sexuality issues (Luxton, 2014:144). Marxist feminist theories believe that the oppression of women occurs due to how men exploit them within a capitalist society and, therefore, believe that to end patriarchy, capitalism should be ended (Jones & Budig, 2008; Lilly et al., 2019:439).

The crimes that women commit can also be viewed as being mainly influenced by capitalism (Lilly et al., 2019:439). Marxist feminism states that women are oppressed by capitalism and tend to take on roles observed as subordinate within society and their communities; they are very often exploited both in the workplace and at their home and their subordinate position is very obviously observed when looking at both their victimisation and their criminality (Lilly et al., 2019:470). It is important to note that Marxist feminism is very closely linked to socialist and radical feminism because some of the views and beliefs are similar (Luxton, 2014:144).

The fourth type of feminism is postmodern feminism. This type of feminism dismisses Marxist feminism, as well as Marx's theory and uses a discourse of determinism that is not based on social analysis or political action (Gimenez & Vogel, 2005:6). Postmodern feminist theories believe that if the gender norms, roles and characteristics of being a woman are challenged, gender inequality will be eradicated; the main focus of postmodern feminism is on gender (Jones & Budig, 2008). Postmodern feminism further attempts to deconstruct class, gender and race stratifications that are often observed to be a result of Western and modern civilisation crime (D'Unger, 2005:563; Lilly et al., 2019:469) and focuses on the constructed images relating to women who commit crime (Lilly et al., 2019:496).

The fifth type of feminism is socialist feminism – observed to be an alternative to Marxist theories (Ferguson, 1999:1-2). Socialist feminists believe that women are oppressed and exploited due to economic reductionism and that capitalism-controlled politics controls women (Ferguson, 1999:1). Socialist feminism theories place focus on capitalism, exploitation and female biology as reasons to explain why women are oppressed. The theory states that the increasing desire for profit prevents women from existing independently of the economic system (Ferguson, 1999:2-3).

The creation of socialist feminism also led to the creation of the social reproduction theory which focuses on both the cultural and the economic analysis of capitalism and how it influences the exploitation of women (Armstrong, 2020). Socialist feminism observes that

both capitalism and patriarchy are intertwined with the main aim of exploiting, as well as oppressing, women (Masterclass, 2021).

The final type of feminism is black feminism and was developed to explain how specifically black women deal with the current gender identities in society as black women are part of a minority group and feel that Western-centric theories surrounding feminism are not accurately applicable to them (Lewis, 2008:1-2). This theory states that a woman is a product of the society in which she lives and grows up (Rahmani, 2015:61). Black feminist theories further believe that black women cannot challenge class, gender and race oppression without first being empowered (Amoah, 1997:84).

Central to the black feminist theory is the fact that black women are shaped by their society, their experiences, the experiences of other individuals around them and their ancestors and is, therefore, better described as a shared consciousness (Amoah, 1997:97, 100). During the 1980s in South Africa, gender equality increased drastically for women due to the pressure exerted by the majority of women and anti-apartheid movements. The main idea of these movements was to increase gender equality for not only white women but also women from minority groups (Lewis, 2008:2-3). Black feminist theories believe that by eliminating the notion of power and class in apartheid, as well as in post-apartheid South Africa, gender inequality for women will decrease and their opportunities will increase (Lewis, 2008:5).

3.4. Sex-role theory

The sex-role theory emphasises the biological origins of both males and females by addressing behavioural roles known as sex roles. Sex roles are determined by society and the type of socialisation observed. Sutherland and Parsons were instrumental in the development of the sex-role theory. Sutherland believes that criminal behaviour is learned by observing other behaviour. He also believes that boys are more likely to exhibit behaviour viewed to be criminal or delinquent than girls. The main reason for the occurrence is identified to be the strict control and socialisation of girls and because boys are more likely to be taught to be aggressive and tough (Walklate, 2007a:91-93).

The sex-role theory, therefore, focuses more on sex roles within a community and socialisation practices to explain female criminality and is less focused on biological and constitutional factors that may contribute to female criminality (Gora, 1982:8-9). Sex roles can also be observed in the roles women and men take on when they are adults and within the domestic sphere.

Sex-role theory can be observed as a theory that is rooted in the idea that men and women are biologically different. The biological differences are viewed as a reason men and women

are socialised differently. Sex, therefore, is a mechanism that indicates which type of learning needs to take place. The learning process of sex roles is different for both women and men. The roles can in many instances cause problems because a male cannot be too feminine and a female cannot be too masculine (Walklate, 2007a:92). Furthermore, sex roles will also influence the types of skills that women possess to commit crimes (Gora, 1982:10).

The sex-role theory as proposed by Nye (1958) states that women as well as girls lead a more restricted life than boys and men, respectfully and both their families and environments tend to have more control over their lives which leads to women being less violent than men. However, once these women are not as influenced by their environment, they will become more violent and commit more crimes than before. Nye further notes that women's violent behaviour is often more influenced by the behaviour of their fathers than their mothers as men do not follow the general pathways of parenting that women do (Gora, 1982:9).

Another influence on sex-role theory was that of Hoffman-Bustamante (1973) who believes that women commit crimes due to five main factors (Gora, 1982:10; Hoffman-Bustamante, 1973:117):

- Role expectations for men and women are different
- The difference in social control and socialisation patterns are focused on sex alone
- Different opportunities to commit different types of crimes
- Access to criminally-orientated cultures as well as careers due to gender
- Sex differences in crime itself.

Sex roles can also produce gender personalities by being carried over from one generation to another (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985:555). The gender personalities of women are often more focused on expressive interests, their needs and their functions. They tend to take on tension-managing, supportive and integrative roles as opposed to men who are more focused on instrumental interests, needs and functions taking up more judicial, technical and executive roles in society (Carrigan et al., 1985:555-556; Parsons & Bales, 1956:101).

Sex roles associated with women also include economic dependency on their partners as well as the fact that they carry almost all of the familial responsibilities (Crew, 1991:60-61). It is also believed that women who do not obey typical and traditional sex roles are very often considered to be harsher or more violent offenders than men who have committed a similar crime (Crew, 1991:60).

3.5. Masculinisation theory

The masculinisation theory of female violence believes that as women are freed from societal norms, beliefs and the constraint of their gender, they are increasingly influenced by the same forces that produce violence in men, which will in turn cause women to act more violently. The theory also allows the foundation of what is observed to be good and bad femininity which successively produces the demonisation of certain females, both girls and women alike, if they do not portray what is expected to be ideal or true of womanhood. Therefore, the belief exists that any women who go against what is considered traditional femininity or gender roles tend to be observed as being more masculine; they are often viewed as more violent and sexually promiscuous and indicates that women are becoming more like men (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:31).

These women and girls are often observed to be 'escaping their femininity' by embracing the violent behaviours and acts of their male counterparts as women can gain equal footing in places previously considered male-dominated areas or domains (Irwin & Chesney-Lind, 2008: 838-840). The masculinisation theory of female violence can thus be observed to be a theory based on gender similarities due to the belief that the same factors that influence violence in men will influence violence in women (Irwin & Chesney-Lind, 2008:389-840).

The masculinisation theory implies that theories specialising in the behaviours of women who commit a crime are not necessary but rather that the same theories used to explain the crimes of men can be used to explain crimes committed by women due to their masculine behaviour and acts (Irwin & Chesney-Lind, 2008:840). Another belief is that women who are empowered tend to be involved in more serious crimes than women who are not empowered (Islam, Banarjee & Khatun, 2014:5).

Throughout history, it is very obvious that the masculinisation perspective tends to be the dominant perspective in literature, theory and the media to explain why both women and young girls are becoming more and more violent; this, in turn, places these women in a very bad position within the CJS. The media further tends to focus only on the bad aspects of women – the development of a masculine identity due to women leaving the constraints of femininity behind (Irwin & Chesney-Lind, 2008:840).

The masculinisation theory was developed based on the book *Sisters in Crime: The Rise of a New Female Criminal* by criminologist Freda Adler. Adler's main idea in the book is that women tend to commit more, as well as more serious, crimes due to opportunities available to women that were not previously available and not because women's nature has changed or been altered. This belief further draws inspiration from Freud's 'penis envy' and is often

considered to be the new explanation of what the masculinity complex is (Islam et al., 2014:3).

Penis envy is often observed in young girls around the age of three when they realise that they do not have the same genitals as their male counterparts – often observed to be a wound to a woman's self-esteem (Chodorow, 1989:94; McMahon, 2012:44). As a result of the discovery that women lack the same genital parts as males, women in many cases tend to develop a masculinity complex in which they are said to fantasise about having a penis and about being male (Freud, 1931:4; McMahon, 2012:44). It is believed that some of these women will even manifest homosexual object-choice (McMahon, 2012:44). Therefore, women often engage in masculine behaviours and acts because they feel the need to compensate for their lack of masculinity and maleness (Islam et al., 2014:3); women are observed to be attempting to become men (Islam et al., 2014:3; Klein, 1973:17).

Before the modern masculinity theory was developed, Lombroso, the father of the biological doctrine, developed a masculinity theory based on the biological similarities of men and women who appear masculine in appearance. These masculine-appearing women were often observed to be more criminal and closer to men than women who did not appear masculine (Islam et al., 2014:3; Weis, 1976:17).

Lombroso (1895) observed that criminal females have a more masculine cranium, tend to have a lot of body hair, a brain capacity often associated more with men and constitutional anomalies (Weis, 1976:17). Lombroso did a lot of research on the skulls of women who committed crimes and determined that the average skull size of women who commit crimes was closer to the cranium sizes of men and far larger than those of women who were not criminal and who were considered average (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895:1-26). Examples of some of the main physical anomalies tend to be heavier lower jaws, narrow foreheads, abnormal nasal bones and passages, prominent cheekbones and a virile face (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895:28).

Lombroso (1895) further determined that women, especially women who commit murder, had more pathological anomalies than normal women but less than those of males. Therefore, females who possess more male characteristics in their personality and physical appearance tend to be more involved with crime than women who do not (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895:27). However, it is important to note that Lombroso's masculinity theory tends to be less accepted due to its gender bias (Islam et al., 2014:3; Simpson, 2000:4) and because not all men are criminals regardless of their masculine appearances and personalities (Herrington & Nee, 2005:4; Islam et al., 2014:3).

3.6. Evil woman hypothesis

The evil woman hypothesis assumes that when a woman is convicted of a certain type of crime, she tends to be treated more harshly than a man who has committed the same offence (Crew, 1991:60). This hypothesis is sometimes referred to as the selective chivalry hypothesis. It further attempts to explain the types of transgressions women commit against what is considered to be traditional gender roles and the types of responses observed to these transgressions (Embry & Lyons, 2012:148). The evil woman hypothesis also states that women who transgress their assigned gender roles tend to be treated more harshly than others, especially women who commit more violent crimes which are observed by society to be more masculine (Embry & Lyons, 2012:148; Rodriguez, Curry & Lee, 2006:332).

When women do not violate their gender role when committing a crime, they tend to be treated more leniently (Rodriguez et al., 2006:321). One of the main reasons some women are treated more harshly is that they do not only transgress the law but also the gender roles assigned to them by society (Rodriguez et al., 2006:322); thus, women who commit crimes are labelled as doubly deviant (Tillyer, Hartley & Ward, 2015:706). This causes violent women to be treated more harshly than their male counterparts who are also violent (Tillyer et al., 2015:706) even though their behaviour might be similar to or the same as their male counterparts (Gavin, 2014:3).

When women are observed to flout their traditional gender roles, they are often classified as being evil (Nagel & Hagan, 1983:135; Spohn & Spears, 1997:32) and tend to be treated unchivalrously (Tillyer et al., 2015:706). However, women who commit feminine non-violent crimes are not observed to be evil women as they do not transgress the role of what is considered to be an ideal woman in society (Spohn & Spears, 1997:32). The sentencing and treatment of women tend to be based on the degree to which they deviate from their gender roles and identities (Tillyer et al., 2015:706). The evil woman label, as observed in the evil woman hypothesis, is applied to women who commit murder but who are not labelled as mentally ill (Gavin, 2014:3).

3.7. Pretty privilege

Many people make judgements about individuals based on their looks (Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam & Smoot, 2000:408; Talamas, Mavor & Perrett, 2016:1). This concept has given way to what is known as pretty privilege. Pretty privilege has many different names and is often referred to as beauty privilege (Rohanah, Adhani & Aini, 2021:190), attractiveness privilege (Yonce, 2014:10) or attractiveness bias (Talamas, Mavor & Perrett, 2016:2).

Pretty privilege is very often observed in the workplace as people who are considered 'pretty' tend to get more attention and have a better chance of getting work. It has further been determined that an individual's attractiveness tends to have a positive impact on their life experiences (Rohanah et al., 2021:190). Attractiveness is often used as a judge of academic abilities, occupational abilities and social skills (Langlois et al., 2000:400; Yonce, 2014:22).

It has been determined that individuals who are considered pretty are often treated better or more special than others; individuals who are considered to be less attractive than their counterparts often tend to be treated normally and, in many instances, less sympathetically than others (Rohanah et al., 2021:190). It has further been determined that when individuals are observed to be beautiful or pretty, they receive a variety of privileges (Rohanah et al., 2021:192). Society is also more likely to assign certain attributes to attractive individuals due to their looks (Marson & Hessmiller, 2016:60).

Stratification often occurs in cases where individuals are observed to be more attractive than their counterparts (Gordon, Crosnoe & Wang, 2013:1-2). Furthermore, this type of stratification can, in many cases, even be observed in high school students with regards to their education; better-looking individuals are usually expected to achieve better marks than their counterparts who are not as attractive (Gordon et al., 2013:2). Moreover, being unattractive can even be seen as a disadvantage due to the privileges attractive individuals receive (Gordon et al., 2013:4).

Yonce (2014:10) states that there are three premises of pretty privilege. Privilege can only exist if there is a dominant group and a subordinated oppressed group by addressing subordinated groups and dominant groups as a single entity (Case, Iuzzini & Hopkins, 2012:3, 5; McIntosh, 2012:195; Pratto & Stewart, 2012:30). Certain individuals are judged to be more attractive than other individuals based purely on attractiveness standards observed in society (Agthe, Spörrle, Frey, Walper & Maner, 2013:183, 190). They are treated in a more positive light than individuals who are not considered to be attractive (Benzeval, Green & Macintyre, 2013:1, 6).

An example of how pretty privilege ties into criminology is that pretty privilege often plays into what is considered the ideal victim. The ideal victim is likely to be observed as innocent (Smolej, 2010:70; Walklate, 2007b:28) and, due to cultural as well as popular discourses, is often observed to be young, white, stereotypically pretty and either as virginal or as a married woman who is a mother to young children (Cavender, Bond-Maupin & Jurik, 1999:645; Smolej, 2010:70).

It has been noted that the ideal victim type, as reflected by the media, is an individual who is vulnerable and innocent (Smolej, 2010:81; Walklate, 2007b:76-77). If individuals fit this ideal

stereotype, they are more likely to receive support from support workers and the media (Smolej, 2010:81; Walklate, 2007b:77). If the victim is labelled as a 'marginalised, alcoholic man', he will be less likely to receive feelings of compassion from the individuals who are reading about his case or watching it on television as he will not be perceived as blameless (Smolej, 2010:82).

Counter to pretty privilege, one often experiences a 'beauty penalty', which can be described as a backlash. It occurs when someone, who is observed as attractive does something wrong and fails to live up to the expectations other people have of them, is punished more severely and harshly than individuals who are not observed to be attractive. Furthermore, if pretty people experience any hardships, they often do not receive any sympathy as pretty people are often observed to be 'stuck-up', 'entitled' or, in some cases, 'deserving' of the hardships they face (Markman, [sa]:2-3).

3.8. Summary

This chapter examined a variety of theoretical frameworks about female criminality. By looking at these frameworks, it is obvious that the development of labelling is highly influenced by the media as the perceptions and labels used by the media to describe offenders as deviant individuals can lead to negative perceptions and stigmatisation of the individual by the public; this can lead to the development of labels with negative connotations. Furthermore, central to a variety of theories discussed in the chapter is the belief that women tend to be criminals due to their no longer being oppressed and finding freedom; this also leads to the development of perceptions and opinions about female offenders.

The sex-role theory explains how women who go against traditional and biological gender roles can be observed as being more violent or aggressive than their male counterparts due to double deviancy; this also leads to the development of stigmas and the adverse labelling of female offenders. The general belief is that women who move away from traditional femininity and are observed as being more masculine in terms of both their behaviour and their looks engage in criminal and violent behaviours similar to men. Additionally, these women who go against gender expectations are more likely to be treated and stigmatised harshly. In comparison, females who are observed as being traditionally pretty are in many media and court cases treated less harshly than women who are not traditionally pretty.

Chapter 4 focuses on the research methodologies that were used during the completion of this study. The research approach, design and methods are discussed in detail and the benefits of the selected approaches to the study are outlined. The identification of the study

population and the interview and data analysis processes are presented in depth. Furthermore, all ethical considerations which were observed during the study are discussed.

Chapter 4: Research methods and design

4.1. Introduction

Chapter Three focused on providing an overview of the theoretical framework which is relevant to the study and which gives way to the research methodologies used to conduct the study. Chapter Four is therefore focused on explaining the research process and how the research was conducted. The chapter will focus on providing reasons as to why certain approaches were chosen and how they were beneficial during the research process. Focus will be placed on the research approach, research paradigm and the type of research that was selected to conduct the study. Furthermore, the research design will be described in depth and an explanation will be given on why case study research best suited the study. Sampling methods as well as the two different population groups that were selected for the study will be explained. Emphasis will also be placed on why a third data set that includes online commentary regarding women who commit murder was selected to form part of the study at hand. The data analysis processes and the ways in which data quality was ensured will be discussed. Lastly, ethical considerations will be explained in depth and emphasis will be placed on why they are important in terms of the study.

4.2. Research paradigm and approach

The subjectivism paradigm was selected for the study due to the focus being on the experiences and opinions of individuals; however, these experiences tend to be linked to human senses and their subjectivity (Leung, 2015:324). Subjectivism is also focused on the individual experiences with their social reality and climate (Slawewski, 2018:17). Therefore, the study is focused on three groups, namely, currently incarcerated females, the public intellectual and written public opinion. Within each of these groups are individuals from different legs of life which will have an influence on their subjective opinions and experiences.

Qualitative research involves the collection of non-numerical data and is mostly obtained by making use of interviews, the analysis of written information and the characteristics of the individuals being interviewed (Christensen et al., 2015:46). It is focused on gathering data from real-life situations and people's surroundings with the aim of describing and explaining social phenomenon in society (Flick, 2018:4). Because the study was focused specifically on lived experiences of female offenders and the public intellectual regarding labels used in the media to describe women who commit murder, qualitative research was selected as labelling is often observed within the current climate of society. The researcher becomes an observer who understands the opinions of the participants and who links the responses from the interview to the purpose of the study. Qualitative research was effective in gathering online

commentary as it allowed the researcher to gather and represent phrases from online sources to reflect the true nature of the narrative and the labels used to describe women who commit murder.

Because of the participants sharing their opinions and personal experiences, there was a need to use open-ended questions (Creswell, 2013:76-77). No two participant stories, experiences, truths or opinions were the same, which made qualitative research effective due to its subjectivity (Creswell, 2013:80). Because of the risk of harm related to the questions asked, the study was conducted in a natural and neutral setting (Christensen et al., 2015:46) in an attempt to reduce the stress levels of the participants, specifically the female offenders. By making use of qualitative research, the study used data triangulation to develop a better understanding of the phenomena (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, Dicenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014:545). Two main types of triangulations were used, namely, data source triangulation and theory triangulation (see 2.6.4. Data Quality) (Carter et al., 2014:545). Furthermore, since little information was available on the topic of study, there was a need to conduct more in-depth research to fill the knowledge gap and to help develop a better understanding of the topic.

4.3. Research purpose

Based on the qualitative approach and the lack of research on the interaction of the public intellectual and the public sphere regarding labels of women who commit murder, it was important to develop a better understanding of the phenomena. Therefore, the purpose of the research was exploratory as it is used when little is known about an unfamiliar topic (Swaraj, 2019:666). Furthermore, the research was focused on developing new ideas concerning the topic (Neuman, 2014:38). There is a general lack of understanding as to why there is a difference of opinions between the public and the public intellectual regarding women who commit murder, the development of labels and the effect of labelling on female offenders due to researchers neglecting female criminality. By utilising exploratory research, a foundation was developed for a better understanding of the phenomena and assisting in developing new ideas which can be used in future studies.

4.4. Type of research

The type of research best suited for the research study was basic research. The main aim of basic research is to develop a foundation and a better understanding of the phenomenon. The only way to ensure a better understanding is by advancing the fundamental knowledge on the topic (Neuman, 2014:26; Palys, 2008). Because of the lack of understanding surrounding the role of public intellectuals within the public sphere in a South African context, basic research was best suited for the study since an increase in fundamental

knowledge was needed to understand how the opinions of the public intellectual on women who murdered, have an influence on the public outcry and how opinions might differ. The study also developed a better understanding of the short-term and long-term effects of labelling on female offenders. Basic research will allow more research to be conducted on the topic in the future, giving way to the development of new theories once enough basic research has been completed to explain the phenomenon within a South African context (Neuman, 2014:26; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:24, 25).

4.5. Research design

The best-suited research design was a case study design. Since the public intellectual and its interaction within the public sphere surrounding women who murder has not been a main topic of research within South Africa, the general understanding and knowledge on the topic remains underdeveloped. More research was therefore needed to increase the understanding of the topic and to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Case studies are effective in addressing the “why” and “how” questions about topics that are not well-known; they enable a deeper understanding to be developed (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545; Njie & Asimiran, 2014:36). Furthermore, based on the qualitative design and the subjective nature of the research, case studies were selected due to their ability to be subjective (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545; Lucas, Fleming & Bhosale, 2018:219) which was important as the study deals with subjective feelings and opinions. Instead of making use of only one single case study, multiple case studies were conducted since the research population includes women who commit murder and public intellectuals (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:271).

The type of case study which was most effective for both groups was instrumental case study. An instrumental case study attempts to provide insight into a specific phenomenon and can be used to adjust or create more theoretical information with regard to the topic (Christensen et al., 2015:377). Therefore, instrumental case studies were effective in advancing the knowledge of the public intellectual, the public sphere and the understanding of labelling practices by the media and the court of public opinion in South Africa and will also form part of a framework for future research on the phenomena.

One of the main advantages of case study research is that it tends to take the descriptive interpretive elements very seriously and they also attempt to determine what causes the phenomenon. Case studies can effectively be compared (Christensen et al., 2015:379; Given, 2008:68-69) to look for patterns, which are similarities or differences by making use of cross-case analysis (Christensen et al., 2015:379). The case studies conducted were compared and analysed to identify some of the main themes that stood out as well as to determine how the opinions of the public intellectual might differ from both that of female

offenders as well as the court of public opinion. Case study research tends to have a heuristic impact because it provides further learning on a topic and assists in making sense of theoretical frameworks (Neuman, 2014:42). There is a lack of theories that can be used to effectively explain the interaction between the court of public opinion as well as the public intellectual regarding labelling of women who commit murder. Using case studies gives the opportunity for research to develop new opinions and theories to explain the study at hand. Case studies can also measure aspects such as lived experiences (Neuman, 2014:42) which is in line with the qualitative research approach as qualitative research is focused on lived experiences of the participants.

What is worth noting is that case study research has a few disadvantages which were counteracted by making use of alternative methods to improve the quality of the study that was conducted. One main disadvantage of case study research is that case study research has the potential to lack rigour, meaning that the researcher could allow their own opinions or views to influence both the research conclusions and the findings of the research. Another disadvantage of case study research is that it is difficult to generalise because of the small samples that are often present when conducting case study research. Some researchers also feel that case study research is difficult to conduct since case studies tend to take longer to complete (Krusenvik, 2016:6-7). The disadvantages were combatted by first addressing researcher bias. Researcher bias was combatted by making use of *Otter*, a mobile app that was developed to transcribe interviews verbatim instead of selective transcribing that could be influenced by the researcher discriminatorily deciding which data to transcribe. The study also attempted to ensure transferability by approaching two correctional centres, Johannesburg Central Correctional Centre and Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre, to interview women who committed murder. However, the offenders at Kgosi Mampuru II declined to participate in the study. A variety of different public intellectuals were approached, namely, academics, journalists, presenters, podcasters, criminologists, editors and police officials. By including a larger and more diverse study population for the public intellectual from a variety of different careers, the research will be more transferable. The public intellectuals were also from different geographical areas in South Africa.

4.6. Research methods

The sub-section that follows will provide an in-depth discussion of the research methods used to identify each study population, the methods and instruments used, how the data analysis process took place and what methods were used to ensure data quality.

4.6.1. Study population and sampling

The study population consisted of two separate groups. The first group consisted of public intellectuals who had an informed opinion on gender and the media and the second group consisted of incarcerated female offenders who have committed murder. The aim of selecting public intellectuals to participate in the study was to understand what their opinions are and how their opinions can cause conflicts in the public sphere. The study aimed to identify at least 12 individuals from the public intellectual group to participate in the study. The second study population group was female offenders who were incarcerated at the time the study was conducted because they had committed murder. The aim was to conduct research in both Johannesburg Central Correctional Centre and Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre and to have at least six female offenders who were incarcerated for murder at the time of the study. The study made use of non-probability sampling and three main types of sampling methods, namely, purposive sampling, referral sampling and snowball sampling.

Non-probability sampling was selected due to having two specific participant groups as not all individuals in the community have an equal chance of being included in the sample; thus, the researcher determined who they wanted to include in the study and who they did not want to include (Cohen et al., 2007:110; Etikan & Bala, 2017:1). Because of the limitation on the study population, individuals who did not fall within the above-mentioned population group did not have the same chance of being included in the study as individuals who fell within the selected population.

When selecting public intellectuals to participate in the study, purposive sampling was selected. Purposive sampling techniques have been defined as a non-random sampling technique that is focused on identifying and reaching specific individuals who might be hard to reach but whom the researcher would like to include in the study (Neuman, 2014:273). It is important to note that purposive sampling does not accurately reflect the entire population but rather is focused on only specific and sometimes unique cases which are observed to be informative (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020:653-654; Neuman, 2014:273). The public intellectuals were identified due to their interaction with the media where they were able to share an informed opinion. Purposive sampling is also effective when conducting exploratory research (Neuman, 2014:273). Purposive sampling requires an inclusion and an exclusion criterion of the preferred participants. The inclusion criteria required the individual to form part of the public intellectual community and to have an informed opinion regarding gender and the media. These intellectuals were identified by reading up on cases in newspapers and online media sources

to determine if they have specific views about women who commit murder. The exclusion criteria for the public intellectual were as follows: the individual needed to be viewed as a public intellectual; if they were not and they did not have an informed opinion regarding gender and the media, they were also excluded from the study. After the participants were identified through purposive sampling, invitation letters were sent out. The public intellectual interviews that were gathered consisted of 13 interviews in total, of which four were completed through email due to not having time to conduct the interview online or in person. Two interviews were conducted in person and six were completed online through a virtual call because the individuals lived too far to be able to meet in person or they did not have time to meet in person. Multiple invitations were sent out to individuals from diverse racial groups and backgrounds and all individuals that agreed to participate were interviewed for the study.

Finally, snowball sampling was employed to identify participants in the public intellectual group. This approach was chosen due to the difficulty in establishing contact with potential participants. Most of the individuals initially identified either did not respond to invitations or declined participation due to time constraints. Snowball sampling is a non-random sampling method. In this technique, the researcher commences with a case study and subsequently enquires whether the participant is aware of other individuals who meet the inclusion criteria and are willing to participate in the research (Christensen et al., 2015:171; Neuman, 2014:275). Snowballing typically begins with a modest initial sample and then expands through the networks of the research participants (Etiken & Bala, 2017: 2; Neuman, 2014:275). Subsequent to their interviews, participants were asked about their ability to recommend another individual who aligns with the specified inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The selection of female offenders followed a similar procedure to that used for the public intellectuals. Female offenders were purposively sampled due to their cases being reported in the media and their firsthand experience with the process of labelling. The inclusion criteria mandated that participants were either women or identified as women and they must have been incarcerated at either Johannesburg Correctional Centre or Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre at the time of the study. A third criterion required that the women had been incarcerated for any type of murder.

Exclusion criteria for currently incarcerated female offenders were as follows: first, female offenders not incarcerated for murder were excluded from the study. Secondly, female offenders not incarcerated at either Johannesburg Correctional Centre or Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centres were also excluded. Thirdly, female offenders no longer serving their sentence at the time of data collection were ineligible to participate. However, none of the

participants from Kgosi Mampuru II agreed to participate and the study was conducted exclusively at Johannesburg Correctional Centre (see challenges and limitations for further information).

The correctional centres were approached and the inclusion and exclusion criteria were explained to social workers and psychologists on duty. Through referral sampling, potential participants were identified and referred. Referral sampling is considered a sampling method aimed at gaining trust and providing access to a previously inaccessible population of participants (Mendez, 2020:2). It focuses on accessing individuals who are considered experts in their fields to solicit referrals (Mendez, 2020:3). This approach was crucial to the study, given the incarceration of female offenders and it was necessary to establish trust with the personnel as they were responsible for referring the female offenders for the study. After the participant interviews, snowball sampling was also employed to identify additional female offenders. Snowballing proved effective in building trust with some of the inmates, thereby increasing participation among the women.

The sampling of online commentary began by initially identifying prominent cases. This was achieved by entering “South African women who commit murder” into the Google search bar. Some of the most well-known cases were found on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and various newspaper articles. Once a few notable South African cases were pinpointed, their names were used as search terms on the respective online platforms and relevant pages where public comments were located. These comments were then quoted and incorporated into the study. Collecting online comments held significance as they often serve as a means of self-expression, emotional support, reminiscence, grieving and offering advice. Additionally, the comments often contained direct remarks related to the study’s topic (Madden et al., 2013:694).

4.6.2. Data collection method and instrument

The most appropriate data collection method for this study was personal interviews. Personal interviews were chosen to effectively analyse the subjective data collected from participants (Christensen et al., 2015:73; Hopf, 2004:203). One key advantage of personal interviews is the ability for the researcher to ask follow-up questions based on the participant’s previous responses, which can yield more accurate and in-depth data (Babbie, 2010:320; Christensen et al., 2015:73). This approach allowed the researcher to gather additional information on specific topics and fill gaps that may not have been adequately addressed during the initial questioning. Furthermore, personal interviews are highly effective in establishing a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants (Schweitzer, 2013:87). Building trust was essential as participants from both research

populations needed to feel comfortable in order to provide effective and honest responses due to the sensitive nature of the study.

However, one primary drawback of conducting interviews is the potential for researcher bias (Christensen et al., 2015:73; Cohen et al., 2007:246). Researcher bias involves selectively including data that supports the desired research outcome while omitting data that does not (Christensen et al., 2015:87; Cohen et al., 2007:246). To mitigate this bias, the study employed multiple data analysis methods, namely, content and thematic analysis (Baldwin, Pingault, Schoeler, Sallis & Munafò, 2020: 4). Another challenge associated with interviews is their time-intensive nature as the data collection, transcription and analysis processes can be quite lengthy (Boyce & Neale, 2006:4; Christensen et al., 2015:73). To streamline the research interview process, the study initially used semi-structured interviews, allowing for estimation and adherence to a specific time frame for each interview. Additionally, transcription tools were employed to expedite the transcription of interviews.

The study utilised semi-structured interview schedules (Appendix G and H), employing two different schedules due to variations in content for each specific research population group. These schedules encompassed questions related to the main study topic – the development and influence of media labels – as well as enquiries about the participants' history, background and demographic information (Galletta, 2013:45). The questions were designed to focus on specific topics, enabling the researcher to explore further and pose follow-up questions if the participants' opinions were unclear (Mannan, 2020:2).

4.6.3. Data analysis

To analyse the study at hand, various narrative data analysis methods were employed for both the interviews and the online commentary. First, content analysis was utilised to examine a range of sources, predominantly audio and textual data (Stemler, 2015:1). This method was appropriate for the study as it involved collecting both textual and audio data although the audio data was first transcribed into textual format before analysis. Content analysis was also applied to group online commentary for subsequent analysis. Content analysis focuses on language usage, emphasising content and contextual meaning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278; Krippendorf, 2019:88). This approach effectively identified pertinent content aligned with the study's questions and subject matter, ensuring that only relevant data was subjected to thematic analysis, thereby excluding irrelevant information.

The second effective method for data analysis was thematic analysis, characterised by the systematic identification and organisation of information, revealing specific patterns or themes within a collected data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012:57; Dawadi, 2020:62). Thematic analysis is geared towards uncovering significant events and experiences that have

influenced research participants at various points in their lives. By employing thematic analysis, important and prominent themes emerged, which were observed to be unique to the group of individuals who participated in the study (Parcell & Baker, 2018:1071). Thematic analysis proved effective in examining both the data gathered from the interviews and the online commentary, allowing for the identification of key themes reflected within the data.

To analyse the online commentary, it was crucial to classify the comments. Classifications help in identifying relationships and connections among various pieces of information (Dotsika, 2009:407; Madden et al., 2013:698). An adapted classification scheme developed by Madden et al. (2013) was employed to analyse the online data. This classification scheme was originally designed for analysing YouTube commentary (Madden et al., 2013:694). However, in the context of this study, it was modified to analyse online commentary from various sources including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and online newspapers. Sub-categories were introduced to enhance the analysis of online commentary as the initial scheme was considered too broad and lacked specificity. The classification scheme is rooted in qualitative content analysis, aimed at identifying potential categories for grouping online commentary (Madden et al., 2013:699). Initially, the classification scheme comprised 10 overarching categories and 58 sub-categories (Madden et al., 2013:700). However, it was refined to better align with this study. Table 2 presents the classification scheme used in this study, consisting of four categories and 12 sub-categories. These categories and sub-categories were chosen to analyse online commentary effectively. Following the categorisation of online comments through content analysis, thematic analysis was employed to identify the primary themes that emerged from the public's comments.

Table 2: Categories and sub-categories used to analyse online commentary

Category	Sub-category	Explanation of sub-category
Information	Make comparison	A comparison between two items
Advice	Give	Offering suggestions, offers ideas and/or assistance
Impression/opinion	General	Expressions of immediate reactions
	Positive	Expressions of an immediate reaction and positive sentiments
	Negative	Expressions of immediate reaction and negative sentiments
	Give (Mixed)	Expressions of a combination of negative and positive sentiment

Table 2 continued

Category	Sub-category	Explanation of sub-category
	Insult	Hurtful and offending commentary
	Criticism	Picking on the faults of something or someone
	Speculate	Speculations or hypotheses of an event
Expression of personal feelings	General	Expressions of personal feelings and/or emotional response
	Positive	Expressions of positive personal feelings and/or emotional response
	Negative	Expressions of negative personal feelings and/or emotional response

4.6.4. Data quality

Based on the qualitative research approach, the data quality of the study was ensured by making sure that the study is trustworthy. To ensure that the study had a high level of trustworthiness, four elements were tested, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Connelly, 2016:435; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191; Shenton, 2004:63-64).

Credibility has been described as the confidence that a researcher can place in the truth of the research findings. Credibility ensures that the findings are plausible and that the data is based on the participants' original data and views (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:121). The main methods of ensuring data credibility were member checking and data triangulation. Member checking has been defined as returning to the sample of the participant to corroborate the findings by feeding the data back to the participant to ensure the researcher understood what was meant (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:198; Kortstjens & Moser, 2017:121). Member checking was conducted with regard to the female offenders incarcerated in Johannesburg Central. After the analysis of the data was complete, the participants were gathered in group format and the data was shared with them to ensure that all of their concerns were dealt with effectively and their opinions were represented correctly in the study. Out of the participant group, only three attended the session due to religious and academic reasons; however, the printed-out versions of the data were shared with the other participants and the findings were explained to them after the session. The participants agreed with all of the findings and were happy with the way the findings were presented. The participants also thanked the researcher for returning to share the findings with them before the data was published.

Two main forms of triangulation were used to ensure the study's credibility, namely, data source triangulation and theory triangulation. Data source triangulation is the collection of data from different participants as a way of obtaining different opinions and perspectives as well as to validate the data (Carter et al., 2014:545; Korstjens & Moser, 2017:121). A variety of individuals were consulted during the study by either conducting a personal interview with the female offenders and the public intellectuals or by means of consulting online commentary where individuals from different social groups and life stages shared their opinions. Theory triangulation makes use of different theories to both analyse and interpret the data findings (Carter et al., 2014:545). Because of the study making use of different data sets and different perspectives, different theories were consulted in an attempt to explain how and why certain labels have developed and how these labels interact with the court of public opinion and the public intellectual.

Transferability is the degree to which the research findings can be applied or are useful in the context of the theory, practice and even future studies. The main way to ensure that a study has transferability is by determining if the study can be applied to another setting (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195; Kortstjens & Moser, 2017:121; Shenton, 2004:69). The online data was gathered from a variety of different sources that have comments from individuals from all over South Africa which ensured that the data was transferable as it was applied to a variety of different sources. To ensure that transferability did occur, a thick description was used. A thick description includes not only the description of the behaviour and the experiences of the participant but also includes the context of the experiences and behaviour (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121). This is because the study dealt with the true live events and experiences of the labelling of female offenders. The study aimed to ensure transferability because the study was focused specifically on how and why the events occurred and not just what the events were. Questions were included in the interview to develop a better understanding of the event of labelling and why specific labels were used. A thick description was applied to both participant groups. Transferability was enhanced further by the way in which study participants were identified in terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria (Campbell et al., 2020:657).

Dependability refers to how stable the findings will be over time and during the study (Connelly, 2016:435; Korstjens & Moser, 2017:121) and is dependent on the nature of the study (Connelly, 2016:435). The interviews conducted with the female offenders ensured the dependability of the study as the interview process remained the same. The dependability of the study was further determined by data evaluation, the interpretation of the data after it had been evaluated and the recommendations made by the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:121). The data was analysed by making use of thematic analysis, content analysis and

an analysis framework for online data; however, due to shortcomings in the research, the researcher made recommendations on how similar research can be improved in future. With the recommendations and making use of similar research methodologies, future researchers should be able to replicate the study and get the same or similar data and results (Cope, 2014:89; Shenton, 2004:71). Another way to ensure that the research was dependable was to create an audit trail (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:198; Korstjens & Moser, 2017:121). Audit trails were maintained by keeping a written, detailed account of the research and the procedures in the research methodologies of the study (Connelly, 2016:435; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:198). Audit trials were important as they ensured that individuals, such as other researchers, who were not part of the study would be able to keep up with the research process (Ghafouri, 2016:1917; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195).

The last element is **confirmability**. Confirmability is the ability of others to confirm the study's findings as consistent (Connelly, 2016:435; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195) and the ability to repeat the study (Connelly, 2016:435). The study and findings must have a clear link (Cope, 2014:89; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). Therefore, the data was analysed by identifying the main themes in the answers which were relevant to the questions asked as well as only gathering online data from relevant cases. It is important to ensure that the findings reflect the data that was gathered in the study and to make sure that no data was made up by the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:121). To ensure this, the study makes use of direct quotations from internet sources and interviews which were transcribed by making use of *Otter*. Therefore, the opinions or the views of the researcher did not determine the research results (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:122; Shenton, 2004:72). Audit trials were maintained which further increased the confirmability of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:121).

4.6.5. Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted and is described as a small study that is conducted before the actual research to test the research methods and to determine if the process is effective (Hassan, Schattner & Mazza, 2006:70; Junyong, 2017; Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001:467; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). A pilot study was used to ensure the feasibility of the study and to ensure that the researcher understood the study processes that would be used during the study (Junyong, 2017). The pilot study ensured that no errors or miscommunication were present in the study and ensured the method of data gathering was appropriate due to the study's sensibility and ability to cause harm (Van Teijling & Hundley, 2001). The pilot study was important to explore limitations regarding the recruitment of participants due to accessibility restrictions such as accessing female offenders and identifying public intellectuals (Janghorban, Roudsari & Taghipour, 2013:4). An internal pilot study was

conducted as the research findings were included in the study (Junyong, 2017). The first interviews of each participant group were regarded as the pilot study; however, due to the small number of participants, the data could not be excluded from the study as it would influence the transferability of the study. The pilot study was successful and nothing was changed.

4.7. Ethical considerations

The first step in ensuring the study remained ethical was to obtain ethical clearance for the study at hand. Ethical clearance was first obtained from the Ethics Board of The University of Pretoria (Appendix A) by submitting a research proposal. Once initial clearance was obtained, ethical clearance was obtained from The Department of Correctional Services (Appendix B) as the study dealt with vulnerable groups.

Over the last few years, any research involving incarcerated offenders has often been central to research controversy due to public scrutiny and anger regarding how offenders tend to be treated. Therefore, it is very important to strive to protect incarcerated offenders to ensure that they do not become invisible and to prevent certain individuals from making choices that might influence our most vulnerable (Spencer, 2017:974). Therefore, it is important to always put a lot of emphasis on research ethics, especially in cases where offenders are often involved.

Ethical considerations were very important in the research to avoid causing the participants harm as the participants should not intentionally be caused harm during the study. Not causing a participant harm is known as non-maleficence (Christensen et al., 2015:120; Cohen et al., 2007:58). Because the study had the potential to cause emotional distress for the participants, in particular the female offenders, it was important to lean on four main ethical considerations which assisted in not causing harm to the participants, namely, informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and debriefing.

Informed consent was obtained before the individual participated in the research study. Informed consent is the process where a participant is informed about all the facts and processes relating to the research that can influence their choice of participating in the study (Christensen et al., 2015:123, 125; Cohen et al., 2007:52; Gelling & MunnGiddings, 2011:104). Therefore, an informed consent leaflet was read and explained to each participant (Appendix E and Appendix F). Each participant was given the opportunity to ask any questions before the interview started and before they provided their informed consent. Informed consent was obtained in the study by requesting the participants to sign an informed consent form or to have the researcher sign on their behalf if they conducted the interview virtually (Bhattacharjee, 2012:138; Christensen et al., 2015:127-128; Fields &

Calvert, 2015:3). The informed consent letter did not obtain any personal information and will be kept separately from the data gathered. Informed consent was however not obtained from the online commentators as their comments were online in a public forum (Christensen et al., 2015:136-137).

Voluntary participation, which goes hand in hand with informed consent, required that the participants in the study be made aware that the choice to participate is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study whenever they liked without any negative consequences (Bhattacharjee, 2012:137; Christensen et al., 2015:133). Because the research was purely voluntary, no participant was forced to participate and they were allowed to decline their participation. The main reason why the participants in the study had to agree to voluntarily participate was because the study is focused on human aspects of their lives such as personal feelings and experiences and there is a need to respect their humanity (Babbie, 2010:64; Kiliç & Firat, 2017:1469) as there is a potential for the study to cause harm. As mentioned before, potential participants at Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre declined the invitation to participate in the study and their wishes were respected.

Because of the nature of the study, the public intellectuals who participated in the study had experiences with the media and the female offenders' cases were publicised in the media, making it challenging to ensure their anonymity. However, since many individuals who participated in the study were concerned with their privacy, they were assured that their personal information would be kept **confidential**. No personal information was shared with anyone outside of the research group and in the study publication (Cohen et al., 2007:65; Christensen et al., 2015:135; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). To ensure their privacy, a confidentiality agreement was included in the informed consent form to explain that their personal information would be kept private (Appendix E and Appendix F). Confidentiality was ensured by providing vague descriptions of the participants' demographic information and by providing the participants with a number. The identity of the commentators from the online source will remain confidential; however, it might be easy to identify them due to the online nature of the commentary which limits the ability to ensure their privacy (Christensen et al., 2015:137). Therefore, no commentators' names were listed with the comments and the cases and the sites on which the comments were found were combined.

Debriefing was also important in the study due to the sensitive nature of the study. Debriefing only occurred after the participants had participated in the research and was used to discuss any consequences and lingering feelings of discomfort the participants felt after the interview (Christensen et al., 2015:131-132; Given, 2008:200). Debriefing was important to ensure that the study did not cause any unnecessary harm or lingering feelings of

negativity for the participants (Babbie, 2010:70; Christensen et al., 2015:131). A social worker assisted with the debriefing process of both the public intellectuals and women who murder. Two participants from the female offenders' group decided to partake in the debriefing session.

It was also important to keep the safety of both the researcher and the research participants in mind during the COVID-19 pandemic as the study commenced when masks were still mandatory and COVID-19 was still a concern to society as new strains kept appearing in early 2022. The researcher therefore adhered to all COVID-19 requirements put in place during the time of study. The researcher also ensured that all of her COVID-19 vaccinations were up to date. Alternative interview methods such as Zoom, FaceTime and calling were also used where possible.

After the commission of the interviews, the female offenders asked if it was possible for them to have access to the data once the study was completed. The researcher provided the participants with the necessary data requested. The female offenders were provided with a hard copy of the female offenders' data analysis chapter to ensure that their information was confidential and that the data accurately reflected what they said. Some of the public intellectual participants asked that they be provided with the dissertation or journals after publication so that they could read the articles to increase their own knowledge. Therefore, once the researcher is able to, the researcher will provide the participants with the requested information.

4.8. Challenges and limitations

One limitation of the study was when the researcher approached the female offenders in Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre; they declined to participate due to their previous research experiences. It was stated that a study was recently published and the way the participants' demographic information was represented by making use of a Google search, the participants were easily identified due to their cases being well-known in the media. The potential participants further felt that researchers only make use of them for personal gain and do not really care about their feelings. Furthermore, Kgosi Mampuru II is one of the main correctional centres that is used for research studies due to its proximity to universities and the offenders are tired of participating in studies which could have contributed to their decline.

A challenge occurred during the identification process of female offenders at Johannesburg Central Correctional Centre. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were not understood by the correctional centre staff and instead of identifying only female offenders who committed murder and whose cases were publicised in the media, the correctional centre staff identified

female offenders whose cases were publicised. Therefore, when some of the participants agreed to participate, it was unknown to the researcher that they did not commit murder. The participants who did not commit murder were informed that the study was only limited to women who committed murder. However, to ensure the trust between the researcher and participants, they were given the option to still go through the interview despite that their data would not be used in the study. All three of the participants agreed to participate which increased the time frame for the interview process.

When potential public intellectual participants were identified and the invitations were sent out, many participants initially agreed to participate but when they were approached to determine a suitable date for the study, they decided to withdraw or declined. Many other potential participants ignored the invitation despite follow-up emails or messages. Because of the decline, the participants' demographic was not substantially inclusive as the majority of the public intellectual participants were white females, despite sending out invitations to an inclusive group of individuals. Moreover, all participants who agreed to participate in the study were included in the interview group. Despite various efforts to make the participant group more inclusive, there were only three males, two black participants and one coloured participant which influenced the trustworthiness and transferability of the study.

Another challenge is that the study was not able to completely ensure the confidentiality of online commentators. There is a potential that the data gathered from online sources might lead back to the identity of the commentators when doing a Google search; however, steps were taken to ensure confidentiality such as not specifying which comments were taken from which online sources and not including links to where the data was found.

Because of the lack of research on female criminality and specifically females who have been involved in murder, it was hard to obtain appropriate and relevant information for the literature review. When one types in expressions such as "women who commit murder", the findings are very focused on women as the victims rather than women as the perpetrators. Therefore, literature search results were often focused on gender-based violence (GBV) where women were murdered by their abusive partners.

There is a general lack of studies conducted on the representation of the court of public opinion and their interaction with public intellectuals regarding women who commit murder in South Africa and globally. One study of a similar nature was conducted by Munnik in 1997. However, in South Africa today, the study is not transferable or relevant as the study is outdated as it is purely focused on the opinions of white South Africans regarding women who commit crimes. As motivated in the rationale, the current topic is severely under-

researched and the researcher had difficulty finding material regarding the intersection between women who commit murder and the public intellectual.

When keeping the female offender participants in mind, the study is geographically limited only to the Johannesburg or Gauteng area. This is because the study was conducted in only one correctional centre due to participants from Kgosi Mampuru II declining to participate in the study which makes the study hard to transfer to other settings.

The sample of female offenders was also not representative of the current demographics of the South African population as the study was not designed to obtain a quota sample of participants, but rather to reach female offenders whose stories were portrayed in the media.

One other limitation is that the dependability of the study was influenced by the manner in which the study was conducted with the public intellectuals. This differed as some participants participated over email, others participated through Zoom or FaceTime interviews and lastly participants participated in in-person interviews. The last limitation of the study was evident when addressing the online commentary and perceptions. The examples taken from online media do not accurately portray all eleven of South Africa's official languages and focus predominately on English and then followed by Afrikaans as the researcher was only proficient in those two languages.

4.9. Summary

The chapter critically analysed the research methodologies which were used when conducting the study. The chapter further explained how making use of qualitative research directly influenced the methods as it follows a qualitative route. Emphasis was further placed on the need for qualitative and explorative research processes as there is a general lack of research studies that have been conducted on the interaction between the public intellectual and the court of public opinion regarding women who commit murder. The chapter furthermore placed focus on the three data sets and how each of the data sets were gathered, analysed and how data quality was ensured. Emphasis was placed on the need to make use of an adapted framework to assist in the data analysis process of the online data that was gathered. The chapter further placed emphasis on the need for ethical considerations as the study at hand has a risk of causing participants harm; therefore, it was important to make use of a variety of ethical considerations to ensure that the risk of causing harm was decreased significantly. Furthermore, emphasis was placed on the need for debriefing sessions in situations where participants were caused harm. The chapter also critically discussed the limitations and challenges of the study at hand as it was needed to improve future research on the topic.

Chapter Five will represent the empirical results by explaining the results of each question and by making use of themes and direct quotes. Themes will be identified, explained and emphasised by means of direct quotations. The demographic information of the two participant groups will be summarised shortly to ensure confidentiality. Furthermore, the online data will be represented in table format while keeping Table 1 in mind. Important themes will also be identified within the table.

Chapter 5: Empirical results

5.1. Introduction

Chapter five presents the empirical results of the study and is divided into three sections, namely the data gathered from the public intellectual (PIs) and the incarcerated female offenders (FOs), as well as the information gathered from online commentary on women who commit murder. Each section discusses the main themes and sub-themes that prevailed during data analysis. Prior to each section, the main themes and sub-themes will be represented in table format after which each theme and sub-theme will be discussed in detail by indicating direct quotes from either the interview or online commentary. The results are presented as direct quotations to ensure that participants' opinions and online commentary are evident and to ensure that the data is not influenced by the opinion of the researcher in order to counteract any bias.

5.2. Public intellectuals

The section that follows explains the themes and themes identified after the public intellectual data set was transcribed and analysed. The themes are in line with questions asked during the interviews.

5.2.1. Profile of participants

The ages of PIs ranged between 27 and 62. Most of the PIs were women as only three of the 13 participants were men. The racial demographics of the participants amounted to ten who identified as White, two as Black and one participant who identified as Coloured. Of the 13 participants, three had doctoral degrees, three had master's degrees, one had completed a post-graduate degree, two had bachelor's degrees, two had completed at least one diploma and two participants had completed Grade 12. The eleven participants who had a tertiary education disclosed their majors as Psychology, Criminology, Music, Education, Journalism, Sales Management, Criminal Justice and Theology. Some of the participants mentioned two or more majors as they might have completed multiple diplomas or degrees.

When addressing the participants' **employment** at the time of the study, four were employed as academics, one was employed as a newspaper editor, one was a podcaster, one was a retired police captain, one was a consulting criminologist, four were journalists and one was a news presenter. When the participants were asked how they started their journey as public intellectuals, six routes were identified. One participant explained that they became a PI by writing **online publications**. Three participants stated that they started their journey as a PI through their involvement in the **academic community**. Six participants indicated that they became public intellectuals through their involvement in **journalism**, while two of the six

participants also authored crime books. One participant stated that they started a **podcasting** channel and later authored their first book. One participant stated that they joined **law enforcement** where they had to often interact with the media. One participant stated that they had started their PI career as a **radio presenter** which led them to later become a well-known public figure.

The table below provides an overview of the themes that emerged from the interviews with the PIs.

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes emerging from the public intellectuals

Main themes	Sub-themes
Reasons why women commit murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not one specific, but a variety of reasons • Personal and financial gain • Economic strain • Psychological or emotional distress or illness • Altruistic factors • A culture of violence • Abuse, self-defence against abuse and battered women syndrome • Revenge or passion • Similar reasons to men
Labels that describe women who commit murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially motivated • Gendered or sexually loaded comments • Untraditional women or evil entities • “Black Widows” or sexy, mythical beings • Labelled as creepy women vs angelic women • Comments that carry negative connotations • Good women who often didn’t mean to commit murder • Comments of justification • Concern for mental health disorders

Table 3 continued

Main themes	Sub-themes
The influence of the media on the court of public opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendered stereotypes • Minimisation of crime and sympathising with the FOs • Sensationalism (leads to development of labels used by public) • The development of a collective mindset • The potential for labels to ruin an offenders' public image • Labels to facilitate understanding the reasons behind murder • Influencing the public's initial opinions or swaying them to not always believe what they read
The influence of the media on the CJS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courts tend to act chivalrous • The media can influence the importance of the case • The media can place pressure on the CJS
Reasons why the media attach labels to women who commit murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using labels is an approach to journalism • To sensationalise their crime and to ensure their media sells • Labels are used for comfort and due to the media's personal biases • Labels place emphasis on the facts of the crimes • Society's gender roles • The aesthetics of womanhood can directly influence perceptions
Reasons why the public attach labels to women who commit murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to gendered roles and social expectations • Because FOs is observed as strange and abnormal • Sensationalism (public can't move away from sensationalised labels) • Because the media directly influences the public • In an attempt to explain away the crime or because they can sympathise with female offenders • Because society compares people
Media influence on the opinions of the public intellectual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIs often look at their own views and biases • PIs had to become aware of gendered representations • PI believes that comments should only be made on topics that you are informed about • PI has to focus on the facts and finer details of a crime • PIs have to improve society's knowledge by correcting labels

Table 3 continued

Main themes	Sub-themes
The influence of public and media labels on women who commit murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labels encourage women to break free from societal norms • Encourages criminal behaviour • Some offenders enjoy the media attention • Labels might lead offenders to believe that their attractiveness gives them an advantage/more sympathy • Development of negative emotions and psychiatric symptoms • The influence of labels will be dependent on the reasons behind the murder • Media labels have no effect on offenders
Preventing labels on women who commit murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of media reporting strategies • Media reporting need to only focus on the facts • There is a need to move away from labels and stereotypical language • There is a need to move away from traditional gendered stereotypes • The public need to be educated • One must develop one's own opinion as the case progresses

5.2.2. Common beliefs regarding the reasons why women commit murder

The PIs were asked why they think women commit murder and they discussed nine main reasons. Five participants placed emphasis on the fact that women do not murder for one set reason, but that **there are a variety of reasons and factors** that may cause women to commit murder.

PI5: *Well, there are so many. My opinion is that you know, one should be careful to consider one single-dimensional reason.*

PI9: *I think that each situation varies and it will be dangerous possibly to stereotype or to assume that the underlying motive is the same for all women.*

PI12: *Sjoe, I think it's a very loaded question. I think. Obviously, there's a pathology whether it is female or male, at some point, there's a person that's wired and that's literally just waiting for the correct environment to let this evil evolve.*

Seven participants believed that women might murder for **personal or financial gain**.

PI1: *I think female murderers desire some kind of personal gain when they kill somebody. Maybe they are involved in criminal activity and murder because certain opportunities arise to satisfy their extrinsic need for gratification or their need for some personal gain. Maybe they are extremely desperate to find money for something.*

PI9: *I'm stereotyping but just looking at the statistics, whereas men are more likely to kill for power and sex, women are more likely to kill for things like insurance money or a deceased estate or something like that. So, there's a sense of, you know, sort of gathering resources rather than them for sex or for power.*

One participant believed that women commit murder due to **economic strain**.

PI12: *I mean, cases in South Africa where a woman killed her children because of social economic circumstances she finds herself in not being able to care for them, look after them and then feel that murder them is the only way out ...*

Five participants attributed one of the reasons why women commit murder to **psychological or emotional distress or illness**.

PI5: *Consider something like a woman that has got a psychotic episode. Maybe, you know, I am always talking about post-partum depression as one reason why a woman could commit murder...and then obviously for different psychological reasons. From depression, especially major depression or bipolar where they go into the darker side of their depression and not the manic phase. You know, sometimes, they can do something irresponsible as I have said.*

PI7: *There are cases where women kill as a result of abuse but this is usually in self-defence. One woman I assessed was very violent and she had already killed more than one man (not intimate partners). This behaviour stemmed from her own abuse experienced during her childhood and the deeply dysfunctional relationship she had with her unstable mother whilst growing up.*

Two participants suggested that women murder due to **altruistic factors**.

PI2: *If we talk about the mom in New Zealand with her kids, the mom in England; both South African women by the way; that was almost like extended suicide, it was for altruistic reasons because they felt sorry for their kids and they believed it was their jobs to protect their children against a very cruel world. So, they killed their children because they love them so much.*

PI5: *Other women commit murder out of altruistic reasons. Consider a mother a mother that murders her children because they have got some defect. So, unfortunately, there is something wrong with them and they murder the children because of altruistic reasons.*

Two participants felt that the **culture of violence** in South Africa leads women to commit murder.

PI2: *If we think about girls or women who are involved in gangs, we know that is for different reasons, it is violence, it is a culture of violence. Although it is not very common.*

PI5: *I suppose in South Africa, the culture of violence plays a role. Where people use violence as a form of communication. Many believe it is the twelfth non-official language which we have is violence.*

Six participants identified **abuse, self-defence against abuse and battered women syndrome** as one of the reasons why women might commit murder.

PI3: *... because of intimate partner violence and self-defence... it has come to light that women are convicted of murder when they put up a self-defence case. They try to defend themselves from husbands who have threatened to kill them, who were beating them ...*

PI5: *Other reasons might be because she is a battered woman, she has been abused over a long time and then one day she snaps, finally, she snaps and then, you know, retaliate and murder the male or the husband.*

PI9: *You get women who have been physically, emotionally and financially abused who then kill their partners.*

Five PIs stated that they believed women might murder due to **revenge or passion** for something that the victim might have done to them.

PI9: *But I do feel that on the one hand, you get women who commit murder out of a sense of revenge... You also get a woman who kills in a crime of passion.*

PI11: *Most of the time the cases that I've done, it's been crimes of passion. You and your partner are fighting. You found some messages on his phone and you kill the person.*

One participant believed that women murder for the **same reasons as their male counterparts**.

PI3: *It is like asking why men commit murder. It is the same reason that men do, right?*

5.2.3. Labels that describe women who commit murder

Nine main categories emerged regarding the phrases or labels that the public use to describe women who kill. Two participants identified **financially motivated** labels that were often used to describe women who commit murder.

PI6: *Fortune seekers, gold diggers ... stuff like that.*

PI8: *Greedy ...*

One participant noted that the comments observed in the social sphere to describe women who commit murder tend to be more **gendered or sexually loaded** than other comments.

PI3: *Ag, you know it is a usual pejorative statement that applies to women. "That Bitch this" ... Like you know, "that bitch", "evil whore". You know, it is always these sexually loaded things where men are not, you know given the same sort of opprobrium ... it is more harshly than men who commit the same crimes.*

Five participants stated that they have experienced labels in the public sphere that often describe women who kill as **untraditional women or evil entities**.

PI1: *Female killer are typically depicted as evil, macabre monsters.*

PI2: *I think one of the most common labels you'd hear at the beginning when a case breaks in the media would be that "she's a monster, she's evil, what kind of woman does something like this?" ... And the Krugersdorp women... They stay evil, they stay bad women. Bad to the core. I mean, you see many series about these women and it just emerges how bad to the bone they were.... No-one says "I can put myself in her shoes" because they are not traditional. That is untraditional for women to act that way.*

PI11: *With titles, you find words like "vicious, vicious mother kills five children", or "monstrous woman stabs husband to death".*

Four participants stated that they often see women who commit murder being described as **"Black Widows" or sexy, mythical beings** in the media.

PI4: *It is always the sort of label that almost makes the female offender this sort of dangerous, sexy entity which is very interesting.*

PI9: *A very typical one is a black widow, which obviously refers to the black widow spider who kind off kills her mate after mating with him ... There is also the one of like the what's the word? Like a sort of like vamp or a vampire or kind of that you know, a sultry woman ... Then you also get your "Femme Fatales" which is a very common phrase that is used to describe a woman that sort of uses her sexuality...*

One participant noted that there are two different narratives used to describe women who commit murder which is represented as the idea of **"creepy women versus angelic women"**.

PI9: *And then you also get your sort of creepy nurturing types. So that will be in real life, someone like Daisy de Melker who is in a kind of nurturing role, you know, it can be a Sunday school teacher or a nurse... But then they are very creepy and they kind of administer pain to others and it is hidden behind a facade of being nurturing ... and then you also get your sort of baby face butchers that is someone who kind of comes*

across as all sweet and angelic and maybe has like curly hair and like red cheeks and big blue eyes but they are actually lethal killers. And in my book that will be Charmaine Philips, you know as she was young and quite sweet-faced but behind that, it was again a very lethal woman.

Two participants noted that there is a common thread of describing women who murder by using words that often carry **negative connotations**.

PI7: *Because it is not “expected” of females to be violent, society tends to label them – also traditionally – as “mad”, “bad” or “sad”.*

PI8: *...abused, fed up, jealous.*

One participant stated that they have noticed that when ‘traditional women’ are sometimes initially faced with backlash and facts start to emerge, they are often identified as **good women who often didn’t mean to commit murder**.

PI2: *If you for example look at the New Zealand case and the UK case of the two mothers who killed their children... Initially, “evil women, bad women, women don’t do things like that” and when the facts emerge “she was a good mother, she took care of her children, she was actually a fantastic woman”. So, if she emerges in the media as what we would describe as a traditional woman ... there is definitely a sway when people become less harsh.*

Four participants stated that they have identified a common narrative of disbelief when women commit murder and that there is also an **element of disbelief and justification** linked to the narrative.

PI3: *...there is just a lot of disbelief and incredulity, like how can that woman actually kill her kids?*

PI10: *Society and the public are very quick to try and justify what could possibly have driven a woman to commit murder because to society this is an unnatural thing. So, they wanted to actually either find out what the reason could be because this is not a maternal thing... So, the words that could have been used to describe women who commit murder are usually much gentler, much softer... Men who have committed murder, we write them off as they are evil.*

Linked to mental health challenges as causal factors to women who kill, one participant stated that they have observed a narrative that involves concern for **mental health disorders** when a woman has committed murder.

PI10: *So, it's" that poor woman. O my goodness. There must have been mental health issues and she must have been so isolated and she must have been abandoned. You know, did she receive the help that she needed? What drove her to this?"*

5.2.4. The influence of the media on the court of public opinion.

When the participants were asked to explain how they felt the media and the labels represented in the media influenced the court of public opinion, seven main themes came to light. Three participants felt that the media and the labels used in the media might produce a variety of **gendered stereotypes** surrounding women who commit murder.

PI1: *Social media comments frequently simplify complicated and incoherent events into easy storylines and, in the process, effortlessly reinforces stereotypes such as gender stereotypes.*

PI9: *Well, I think they push women into stereotypes and I think there's very seldom a sense of a woman just killing because you know, exactly like a man she wanted to commit murder, so she committed murder. I think sometimes women are often labelled as being mad if they commit murder... So, when a woman commits murder, she is seen as being deviant, not only because she has committed an illegal act, but also because she hasn't been defying the notion of being a nurturer.*

One participant felt that the labels used in the media has the potential to **minimise the crime and it allows the public to sympathise with the offender**.

PI4: *... we see these labels seem to minimise what the offenders have done.*

PI10: *But the public opinion has always been more empathetic to women who kill and in and it's interesting because these women haven't even spoken out yet. The court of public opinion doesn't even need to hear the woman's reasons to hear justification yet... It will be an anonymous woman who killed her partner or her children and that is all that the public needs to say "Do you know what that woman was? That she*

must have a reason? I sympathize with her. You know we need to support women before it gets to this point”.

Three participants noted that the **sensationalising** of certain cases in the media might lead to the production and reproduction of false information and facts.

PI1: Many female murder stories are sensationalised by the media...The public share sensationalised media stories on social media platforms and write from their own point of view, so they end up reproducing the original false sensation the media have produced.

PI11: ... words matter ... sometimes people don't even read into the article. They just read the catchy headline ... so, they do matter. And then now people end up being guilty of things they haven't been trailed on, because of the simple words you use. They play a huge role because now people will form opinions without reading deeper into the story without getting the context of the story.

Three participants felt that media labels might lead to a **collective mindset** in the public sphere.

PI1: Social media creates a collective mindset through which the public can unite to take a stand on issues like crime.

PI3: Well, it becomes the court of public opinion. I mean, where is the court of public opinion to be found? It is on twitter and Facebook depending on which social group you are looking at... they are their own little echo chambers ... So, you will find people on their own little Facebook groups saying stuff to each other. So, people don't generally go to public forums that are hostile to them or don't include them. So, people will stick to their own people on social media as well.

One participant felt that media labels can **ruin the accused's public image** because she will remain judged by society regardless of their trial outcomes.

PI8: Using labels before the truth is revealed is extremely dangerous as perpetrators are judged in a 'trial by social media and not by the judicial system. There have been instances where women are acquitted on charges but due to public opinion, their reputations are scarred for life.

Three participants stated that they felt labels are often used by the media because it is **easier than attempting to understand the reasons** behind the act of murder.

PI7: Public opinion is fickle. Women who kill in self-defence would be seen in a much more positive light and their behaviour would more likely be justified, than women who kill for any other reason – especially those that kill their own children. The latter will be vilified and shunned. This is because it is easier to comprehend someone acting in self-defence than it is to even attempt to understand why a woman would kill their own child/children.

Two participants felt that the labels used in social media can **influence the public's initial opinion or sway them to not always believe what they read** and believe regarding women who have committed murder.

PI2: I think people, in this lit-age, are getting very conscious of the fact that you just don't believe everything that you read in the media.

PI5: Public opinion, I would say, the media unfortunately has a lot of influence on what people think about someone immediately. The human brain is wired to make things less complex immediately. So, if you hear about something you assume that is what it is.

5.2.5. The influence of the media on the Criminal Justice System

The participants were able to identify three main themes regarding the influence the media has on the CJS. One participant stated that they felt that the **court reacts very chivalrous** towards women who murder with regards to the labels that are used to describe these women.

PI5: Your court system is still in a way chivalrous, in other words in terms of females with children. So, there is more, in my opinion, a chivalrous approach towards our women... but often the system will take everything into consideration because it is maybe a lady with children and she is a nurturer, they will rather go for a softer approach with females.

One participant believed that media coverage **can influence the importance of the case** for judges or court personnel.

PI12: *Well, I think I think the media really takes the narrative out there... And the judges will say, "No, we don't read newspapers", but they all do. And I really think that the public opinion can influence trials... do you think if a case gets a lot of media coverage, it's often seen as more important than perhaps others.*

One participant stated that they felt the labels and opinions used in the media have the ability to **place pressure on the CJS** to conclude the trial which might lead to unfair or harsh sentences.

PI11: *... let's say it's a story and it catches the attention of politicians because the public is talking about it and the politicians also are talking about it. These politicians have the ability to put pressure on our legal system... And then because there's so much pressure on the magistrate or the judge the person ends up getting an unfair sentence or being punished harshly. Whereas if this case was not public... this person would have been charged that same way...*

5.2.6. Reasons why the media attach labels to women who commit murder

There is overlap between the current theme and the next theme that will be discussed under heading 5.2.7., however there is a need to differentiate between these two headings. The media and public opinion are two separate entities and according to literature the media has the ability to directly influence the opinions that developed within the public sphere (Taylor & Sorenson, 2002:121). Therefore, the reasons why the media choose to associate certain labels with women who commit murder will have a direct impact in how and why public opinion might develop in a certain way. When the participants asked why certain labels were used by the media to describe women who commit murder, six main themes were identified. One participant felt that the media tends to use specific labels to describe women who kill because it is just an **approach to journalism**.

PI12: *I just think it's the approach in journalism... The way of writing in the way of engaging with family members.*

Five participants stated that they felt the media used certain labels to **sensationalise the crimes and to ensure that their media products sell**.

PI1: *There has long been a need for eye-catching headlines and stories that interest readers in order to persuade them to buy newspapers ... Labels for female*

murderers create sensation. Sensationalism has been used throughout history to sell papers by creating stories that will get the audience's attention... Sensationalism is used today to gain readership, top ratings and, of course, to make lots of money.

PI5: *So, by using labels and catchy phrases... They have to lure you to listen or to read. So, a nice catchy label helps a lot in selling the story...*

Two participants felt that the media uses certain labels to describe women who kill for **comfort and due to the media's personal biases** as it is hard to understand why women commit violent crimes.

PI4: *... I think in many of these cases you know we see these labels being used to make ourselves more comfortable... It is so hard for us to imagine that women could do these things. That it makes it easier for us if we have these sexy sorts of intriguing labels for them.*

One participant felt that the media uses specific labels to describe women who commit murder just to place **emphasis on the facts of the crime** that occurred.

PI8: *As a media professional, labels are not given until facts have been placed on the table. Most times, when labels are used on women perpetrating crime, it is to highlight the heinous and horrendous act perpetrated.*

Five participants felt that the media uses certain labels to describe women who commit murder due to **societal gender roles**.

PI2: *I think as much as women believe that we live in a time of liberation and yes, things have changed, but traditional gender stereotypes and expectations, they have not changed. So, if a woman behaves violently, she is behaving in a manner in which she was not hardwired to behave. So, a woman is supposed to be soft, caring, nurturing, motherly and if she kills someone, she is not that.*

PI9: *I think when a woman commits murder, her gender becomes almost the most important aspect of her demography that people focus on. Because, you know, more than 90% of murders are committed by men. So, people see it as something out of the ordinary and then a focus on that and they become obsessed with it.*

PI11: *Um, I think it's because media is a bunch of people who have biases... So, you have biases, because of frame of reference, where you come from, the society you come from, you find a lot of people have biases and because of those biases, you will see it seep through their work and that is why sometimes media publications will label a person a certain way...*

One participant noted that the media often use the **aesthetics of a woman** who has committed murder to directly influence the public's perception of the incident.

PI9: *And I think one of the things that frame the perception of female murderers is how the media often focuses on the aesthetics of the situation.... You know, the media will comment on you know, she was standing in the dock with bright red lipstick on or, she appeared in the courtroom with you know, a tired face without a stitch of makeup on whereas, with male murderers, there's never any discussion...*

5.2.7. Reasons why the public attach labels to women who commit murder

When the participants were asked why they think the public sphere associates certain labels with women who commit murder six main themes were identified. Six participants felt that the public sphere associates specific labels with women who commit murder due to the **gendered roles and social expectations** they are used to.

PI1: *Society tends to believe that women cannot do terrible things. Women are only thought of as caregivers and kind home makers. It is widely assumed that females are naturally caring, very emotional and maternal. The public have therefore been socialised into the mind-set that it is normal for a man to offend but abnormal for a woman to do so.*

PI10: *I think it's very deeply rooted in age-old, stereotypical gender roles that we are all very comfortable with... still this very moment, we're still grappling with gender roles, gender identity and stereotypical roles. So, it's very comfortable for us to always fall back on the fact that men are the leaders they are strong in their household, they are virile... They're the aggressors and you know, we are comfortable with that for men and women are supposed to be fragile and delicate. We're supposed to be maternal and we're supposed to be warm and loving and subservient in some way.*

Two participants stated that the public tends to use specific labels to describe women who commit murder because they observe the act and these women as either **strange or abnormal**.

PI11: *I think with the public it's anomalies. They are not used to it. It's something that does not happen that much.*

PI12: *I think because it's strange for South Africa. Where, I don't know, I can't give you figures because I'm not sure how many women commit murders in comparison with males but it's definitely less than males and I think it's just strange...*

One participant noted that the public does not look at women who kill in a similar manner to that of PIs and they are therefore stuck in the **sensationalism** of women who commit murder.

PI9: *I think for public intellectuals, their perception of female murderers might be very much shaped by whatever they feel that expertise is ... But I think for the public, those kinds of nuances fall away and it becomes more about whether we like to admit it or not, the salacious details and the sensationalism of a female murderer and they're less likely to look at it through the lens of feminism or revenge or financial abuse or whatever. And then more likely to look at it through the lens of the intrigue.*

Three participants felt that the public sphere only uses specific labels to describe women who commit murder because the media **directly influences the public** as they form part of the public or they directly feed the public with information.

PI2: *Because the media is just an extension of the public. Who works in the media? The public... So, it is not two different entities, the media is represented by normal people who have these traditional gender expectations.*

PI4: *... I think that the media is going to feed the public ...*

Two participants felt that the public uses specific labels to describe women who commit murder to attempt **to explain away the crime or because they sympathise** with the women.

PI4: *...the public, in general, wants to explain away these actions by women because no man wants to believe their wife is capable of killing him and I think that is the very same dynamic that is happening there in the public domain where we are trying to explain away why these women may have done it and to also make it less brutal.*

PI12: *...sympathy will immediately go to the woman that he perhaps abused, did he look for it and did he have it coming. I just think people tend to sympathise more with a woman perhaps giving them more benefit of the doubt until the case is proven.*

Two participants felt that the public uses certain labels to describe women who commit murder because society tends to **compare people**.

PI5: *... what people do and that is the process in human thinking and human behaviour is to compare themselves with other people. So, let's say a lady that has been in a very difficult relationship will read or listen to someone else's story. And she will compare her position with that person and then she will feel better about herself.*

PI6: *Unfortunately, the public thrives on another person's misfortune, because it makes them forget about their own misfortune and the comparison that people make with each other.*

5.2.8. Media influence on the opinions of the public intellectual

When participants were asked if they felt that the labels used in the media to describe women who commit murder have ever influenced their opinions, seven stated that they felt they were never influenced by the media labels and six responded that they felt that they have been influenced by these media labels at some stage in their life. When the participants were asked how they would often react to these labels, five main themes emerged. Two participants stated that they look at their **personal views and biases** when they encounter labels in the media regarding women who commit murder.

PI1: *I do not view criminals and female murderers as evil monsters who are for example unnatural and unfeminine. I do not view them as contravening the laws of nature. I do not view them as evil, monstrous, or wicked. I do not de-humanise female murderers.*

PI10: *I've had to go through a lot of my own biases, particularly around the subject of a woman who killed. Then you need to look back on everything else to report and be very conscious and aware that I need to strip away any of my reaction, emotions and feelings. Because I need to just look at the facts.*

Three participants stated that they **have had to become aware of potential gendered representations** in the media and due to their own personal biases and the effects they might have.

PI1: *I realise murderers in newspapers and on social media are represented differently according to their gender. I also realise women who murder are frequently categorised as mentally ill and they are being sexualised.*

PI12: *...I think where there is a case where someone was unfairly treated on social media or comment sections or whatever, just because they were female that is a problem. A killer is a killer, whether they are male or female, they offer certain things, certain boxes to be ticked...You know, the fact that she killed someone it weighs a bit less than the fact that she was abused.*

One participant stated that they felt **comments should only be made on topics that you are informed about.**

PI2: *I am very careful about expressing those opinions as a so-called public intellectual. Most of the time I just say no. I do not want to comment and what scares me about the so-called public intellectual is that they do not hesitate. If I am not going to say anything, they will find someone who is willing to express an opinion and I say, based on what? ... So, I try to be very guarded because it is a very important responsibility that you have as a public intellectual.*

Four participants felt that they had to **focus on the facts and finer details of a crime** when the media labels women who kill in a specific way in order to have a better understanding of the incident and not only depend on how the media frames certain information.

PI9: *Well, sometimes I find myself understanding why a member of the public is so fascinated by case and the couple of salacious details, but I have also had moments where I have reacted very strongly against the way something has been the way someone has been labelled or framed in the media. And the best example I can give*

is women who are arrested for abandoning a unwanted baby ... And then when you look at the details of the fact that it's a woman who's living in a shack, she's got no running water, no electricity ... And she abandons the baby either knowing that it'll die of exposure or hoping that some will find the baby... yes, technically she is a murderer and she is arrested for murder, but she's very different to someone who has committed murder in cold blood...

PI10: *... when we have to cover a story of a woman who killed the husband my knee-jerk reaction was immediately to start thinking. "I'm sure he was abusive...". Because I'm coming from South Africa our gender-based violence numbers are astronomical, men are raping women and they cut our bodies up so I'm thinking "stick to him girl". And then I travelled and I went and you find out what the details of the story and you speak to people who knew her and you get involved in those stories and it's a very uncomfortable feeling when you realize that you are wrong in your prejudgments.*

Four participants stated that they felt it was needed to **improve society's knowledge by exposing incorrect labels** on the topic of women committing murder to eliminate potential stigmas.

PI1: *I try to improve society's understanding of the inconsistencies regarding the way female and male criminals are discussed. I correct negative language that can cause further stigma by sharing accurate information.*

PI4: *Now, I will not use those labels myself and if I hear anyone else using them I'll call them out on it in a way that I could hopefully educate them about why using those labels can be harmful.*

5.2.9. The influence of public and media labels on women who commit murder

When the participants were asked how they felt media labels and comments in the public sphere might influence women who commit murder, seven main themes emerged. One participant stated that they believed that such labels might lead women to conform to gender expectations and they commit murder to **break free from society's boundaries**.

PI6: *I think when it comes to females keeping up with the roles plays a big role as well as the history role... Some women will commit murder to get power and other to break free from the boundaries that was set on them.*

Four participants felt that certain labels might **encourage further criminal behaviour or it might encourage other women to engage in criminal behaviour.**

PI1: *Women who murder and have been stigmatised usually have lower self-esteem and may even behave more criminal as a result of these negative labels. These stigmatised women may find it easier to come to terms with the labels rather than fight their criminal behaviour.*

PI4: *I think that for many women, the way they see the public reacting to other female murderers will certainly encourage them to have those sorts of murderous intent to go ahead with their crimes because they are seeing how other female murderers are being treated in the media and in the public domain and they are probably also seeing that many female murderers are getting lower sentences than their male counterparts.*

Two participants felt that some women might **enjoy the media attention** they receive regardless of specific labels that they might be faced with.

PI9: *I know that there have been some female murderers who have almost enjoyed being a spectacle in court and getting dressed up for the occasion. And it's almost I think they've almost been affected after the fact with the kind of sense of being a celebrity...*

PI12: *... if you look at someone like Cecilia Steyn, she's a narcissist. So, she likes to, she likes the media coverage even though it's not promoting her in any way ... I think there are people that belief ... there might people that feel empowered.*

Four participants felt that the labels used to describe women who commit murder might encourage them to use their looks to their advantage or their **attractiveness often gives them an advantage and they will be shown more sympathy.**

PI4: *And I think that for females who are attractive and who have gone through their lives perhaps with that privilege, that has already emboldened them. They have probably gotten away with a lot in their lives up until that point and you know they have received quite a lot of privilege up until that point simply on the basis of them being attractive... race plays into this as well.*

PI10: *Women will press the buttons that need to be pressed. You know if I'm cute and pretty and sweet looking and I tell people I'm a Christian. They will not think it was X who killed that person. And they know they will get sympathy. They know it.*

Two participants felt that the labels and phrases used in the media might sometimes lead to **negative emotions and effects such as psychiatric symptoms** in women who commit murder.

PI1: *I think negative public perceptions cause feelings of shame, hopelessness and further isolation. Stigmas and discrimination can also make possible existing mental health problems much worse and delay or stop them from getting help. The effects of public influences may also include lower self-esteem, reduced likelihood of staying with treatment, increased psychiatric symptoms and increased complications with social relationships.*

PI11: *... sometimes because this person is already being vilified, they might also feel hopeless... it's the same as when you are on social media and people keep putting negative comments and you start to question yourself. You start doubting yourself, you might even doubt your own story ... because you are depressed and those sorts of things.*

One participant stated that **the influence a crime might have on a woman will be dependent on the reasons behind the murder** she committed and in turn this might influence the public's perception and not the other way around.

PI7: *This depends entirely on the motivation for their crime... A woman who killed in self-defence would feel more "justified" in her behaviour, but will probably have far more remorse – making negative public perceptions more uncomfortable.*

Four participants felt that the labels used to describe women who commit murder has **no effect** on the women who have already committed murder or that it will not prevent women who might be planning to commit murder.

PI3: *I don't think it is that much of a consideration. I don't think it prevents women from committing murder.*

PI7: *Again, the female offenders who have crossed my path do not care what the public think about their deeds. Like most criminals, they believe their behaviour is justified and cannot understand why others do not feel the same way. They do, however, know that their behaviour is wrong but use cognitive dissonance or redefinition or justify it.*

5.2.10. Preventing negative labels on women who commit murder

When the participants were asked about preventing negative public opinions and perceptions about women who commit murder, six main themes were identified. Three of the participants felt that the **media need to improve their reporting strategies** in order to be responsible and to not only focus on the sensational aspect of a crime.

PI1: *We know female killers are typically depicted as evil, macabre monsters in newspapers and social media. Journalists should be taught and trained not to use obvious and subtle ways to increase the entertainment value of women who murder.*

PI3: *So, I think it is going to start with you know, the media ... anyone who is creating content for public consumption. There needs to be shift where we start... and we also need to stop using these terms that give this undue grace to an offender...*

Three participants noted that **focusing only on the facts** of a case can improve the reporting of certain crimes which in turn will improve the labels and phrases used in the media to describe women who commit murder.

PI10: *... I think if the public understands what facts we are working with and it is just the facts are presented, perhaps that will go in some small way in changing people's perception around how and why these women do what they do and that they are murderers.*

PI11: *You must just lay out the facts. Leave out the scandalous and glamorous words. Write the story and deliver it to the people and the people will definitely engage with what you wrote...*

Two participants felt that it was important to **move away from labels and stereotypical language** used to describe women who commit murder to improve the reporting on such cases.

PI9: *The first one is that we have to move away from the stereotyping of women who commit murder.*

PI12: *Well, I think you need to steer away from the Black Widow, Rosemary Ndlovu as Daisy de Melker ... I think we tried to understand, the people we are dealing with and the way we tried to understand it is by comparing them with known other killers... to rather treat each individual as they are the individual who committed a crime...*

Two participants felt that it was needed to **move away from traditional gendered stereotypes** as it could prevent certain views and opinions from forming regarding women who commit murder.

PI10: *But until we understand that those gender roles and stereotypes are not always true and we let those go, which will take a long time for public perception to be changed. I think people will still in some way, be influenced by the language media uses, gender roles that they understand and adopted.*

Two participants stated that they felt it was important for the PI to help to **educate the public** to make correct and informed opinions about women who kill.

PI1: *We are all aware that education and information is power and social media is a key means of distributing correct information. Education of the public is therefore a powerful way to prevent stigma.*

PI2: *So, as a public intellectual you have a responsibility to help form the correct opinions... I just think that as a public intellectual we have a responsibility to, with integrity, try to influence public opinion.*

One participant felt that there is not much one can do to prevent these labels and opinions from forming other than allowing the public to **develop their own opinions as the case develops**.

PI7: *I do not believe much can change the public perceptions of any murderers ... It is only as their court cases drag on and more information becomes available, that the fickle public may develop more or less hatred or fascination for the individual murderer and soften their label.*

5.3. Views and experiences of female offenders

The section that follows represents the themes and sub-themes identified after the data gathered from female offenders were analysed. The main themes are in line with questions asked during the interviews.

5.3.1. Background information of participants

At the time of the study, the participants ages ranged from 32 years to 49 years. All the women were South African nationals. Two of the participants were White, three were Black and one was Indian. Two of the female offender participants were married, two were widowed, one was divorced and one was single. Only one participant did not have children. The five remaining female offenders who had children had between one and three children.

Four participants stated that their financial situation was stable before their incarceration and two stated that their finances were unstable. The same four respondents who stated that their finances were stable before their incarcerations were employed at the time and the two who stated that their finances were unstable were not employed before their incarceration. In terms of their education levels, one participant stated they had completed their Grade 10, two completed Grade 12, one held an undergraduate degree and two indicated that they had completed a master's degree.

When the female offenders were asked about the length of their sentences, four stated that they were serving life sentences. Of the four, two had already served about twelve years, one had served four months and one had served four years. The two remaining participants stated that they were serving 25-year sentences; both participants had served about two years of their sentences at the time the study was conducted.

During the interviews, the female offenders were asked specific questions which relate to a variety of topics. The table below indicates the main themes as well as the sub-themes that were identified during the data analysis process.

Table 4: Themes and sub-themes from the interviews with female offenders

Main theme	Sub-themes
Online labels attributed to women who commit murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evil entities and black widows • Gold diggers • Jealous girlfriend • Desperate or fake • Killer mom • Wolf in sheep clothing • Party animals
The emotional impact of labels on female offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant felt like a villain • Participants felt like bad mothers • Participants were depressed • Participant felt judged and rejected • Participants experienced anger • Participants felt that they were targeted • Participants felt they could not speak out regarding their experiences • Participants felt their identity and personalities were altered • Participants experienced negative thoughts regarding their future and experienced stress for family members
Media labels and court proceedings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familial ties in media lead to harsher narratives • Court cases and media reporting are one sided. • Court proceedings are unable to remain impartial • High profile cases are often used as an example for other offenders
Impact of labels on lives of female offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labels directly influence mental health • Labels develop feelings of fear • Media labels can influence an offenders' familial relationships • Offender will only be known for committing murder
Impact of labels on self-perception and self-worth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offenders feel they do not have a good relationship with themselves • Offenders experience self-doubt • Offenders experience feelings of judgement

Table 4 continued

Main themes	Sub-themes
Labels and female offenders' future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labels might influence relationships • Labels might influence careers • Participants feel they will always be treated differently • Participants feel the need to prove themselves • Feelings of hopefulness
Reasons for negative media and public perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinions are directly influenced by the media • Labels and stigmas are easy to believe • Perceptions are developed because bad news sells • Perceptions develop because women who commit murder is abnormal • Perceptions are developed due to lack of communication
Suggestions and observations regarding the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The media goes to extreme lengths to get information • The information the media uses puts offenders' lives in danger and makes them feel unsafe • The media has the potential to cause harm and drive offenders to consider suicide • The media should have an obligation to only share correct and true information • Offenders should have a say in what is published about them • The media talks badly about participants' family • The offenders feel there is a need to provide offenders with psychological assistance during the trial

5.3.2. Online labels attributed to participants

When the participants were asked to provide an overview on the labels they were faced with as women who committed murder, seven themes were identified. Three participants stated that the media were quick to label them as **evil entities and black widows**.

FO1: *A lot of people changed the story that I was a monster.*

FO2: *Bad, they used to call me that they used to call me Black Widow.*

FO5: *And they're painting me as this devil's child.*

One participant stated that the media called her a “**gold digger**” because there was a general belief that the murder was financially motivated.

FO2: Like some would call me gold digger or something like that... Then the issue said my X was killed, but they cannot find the motive. So, they just speculated that maybe I killed my X for money...

One participant stated that she experienced the media labelling her as being a **jealous girlfriend**.

FO6: So, I did speak to the media and I tried to tell them that I was not his girlfriend the way the media portrayed it, that I was the girlfriend... I was a Jealous Girlfriend.

Two participants described the media stating that they were **desperate or fake** and that was why she committed her crime.

FO1: A lot of people tend to call me fake...

FO6: ... they still made it seem that out of desperation that I planned it to get his X killed because I needed to settle down with him and that was it.

One of the participants stated that the media was quick to describe her as being a “**killer mom**” who was out for vengeance.

FO4: So, I was a killer. I was a killer mom who was out for vengeance, wanted to get back at my husband for God knows what it's because it never came up... I was this this horrible mother who wanted and planned and did it intentionally or killed her kids intentionally.

One participant noted that the media described her as being a “**wolf in sheep clothing**”.

FO5: There was a lot of labelling... [the media] called me a wolf in skaaps kleure (a sheep in wolves clothing)”.

One participant noted that the media portrayed her as a **jealous party animal that was sleeping around**.

FO1: *A lot of things were said they'd say firstly, so saying I was sleeping around... So actually, the first thing they said is that I go to party a lot and that was not the case.*

5.3.3. Emotional impact of labels on participants

When the participants were asked to explain how the labels and narratives made them feel, nine main themes emerged. One participant stated that the labels used in the media often made her feel like she was a **villain**.

FO5: *They painted me as this villain this murderous conniving villain thats out there like I killed ten people, you know, that's how they made me feel.*

Two participants stated that the media labels made them feel like they were **bad mothers**.

FO1: *It made me feel like a bad mother and everything.*

FO4: *...being not even seen but just perceived as this horrible mother... I genuinely believe I was purposed to be a mother. You know, from childhood... So, for the media to now all of a sudden, just over a day, switch that whole entire belief about myself to being this killer mom, to being this miserable person that wanted to kill her children just to get to somebody else. That broke me down.*

Five participants stated that they felt **depressed and they experienced other negative emotions due** to the media labels.

FO1: *Terrible, because I know that's the last thing that I always say to everyone. Just if you would have been my shoes just for a week.*

FO2: *You are already in depression, you are already you know, your mind is all over the place.*

FO3: *It makes one feel worthless and they only have their side of the story not mine... I have anxiety attacks as well. I'm on medication, antidepressants, because of all of the things that they saying about me and the media.*

Two participants stated that they often felt **judged and rejected** by those around them and there is a need to protect themselves due to the media labels.

FO2: *I think what I felt more is like rejection... And then it just makes you want to build this wall that will resist and you want to fight you want to protect yourself because if you're the media have went along the ahead before you... So, they've already come in with that judgmental so your life now you have to live to prove yourself which is not nice.*

Two participants stated that they felt **angry** due to the information and labels used.

FO5: *There's so many information there that is completely untrue ... And they gave information about my childhood and things that was completely wrong.... And that made me feel a lot of anger, a lot of hatred ...*

FO6: *During the process I was very angry, I was angry at myself.*

One participant felt that the media narrative, labels and release of her information made her a **target** within the correction centre for people to extort.

FO1: *Putting everything out there in the media, about how strong I am and my financials is putting me as a target in here.... he threatened me with my kid's life because he just wanted R2000. And if I don't deliver, he would have sent people to my kids and whatever. So, he doesn't know me, it's because of what he reads and that places me as a target.*

Two of the participants stated that they felt that they **could not speak out** about their cases and therefore they felt like they were not heard.

FO1: *... it felt to me no matter what I say I'm not going to being heard no matter what I do or how I tried to protect myself is not happening.*

FO5: *...I feel I didn't have a say. I didn't ever have a say. No one asked me what happened.*

One participant stated that they felt the labels can **change your personality or identity as a person**.

FO2: *And you became something that you are not because when people talk about you and then you ask “Is this really me?” ... You don't remain the same. So, you became a very different person.*

One participant stated that she had very **negative thoughts regarding her future and that they were stressed for their families** due to the labels used in the media.

FO1: *So, for me, it doesn't matter what the world thinks about me, it matters to me is my kids ... it will affect them very badly, because they don't want to hear things like their mother was a party animal, their mother was sleeping around and things like that... How do you get back into life?*

5.3.4. Media labels and court proceedings

When asked if the participants felt that the media labels and narratives might have had an influence on the proceedings of their case, five participants agreed with the statement and one participant disagreed. Four main themes emerged regarding how and why they felt the media narrative and labels might have influenced their court proceedings. One participant stated that if the **victim has family who works in the media, the media narrative tends to be harsher** which in turn influences the proceedings of the court case.

FO2: *I will say that my X used the politicians and the media for himself by serving the journalism... I think the journalist who has to print whatever will please my X, they will never come and protect me...*

Two participants stated that they believed the court and **the media is very one-sided** which might influence court proceedings and sentence lengths.

FO3: *it's one sided. Everything they say is one sided... So, they don't consider everything else that happened ... in most cases, the media influences in the wrong way and we end up staying here for longer periods of time because they've already labelled you so the judge will just refer to that as well... and to impress the media...*

Three participants stated that judges and prosecutors are faced with the media daily and therefore in some cases they are **unable to remain impartial** which led the offenders to having unfair court proceedings.

FO2: *It was on TV, in the media, magazines, newspapers, they were in court and everything... I don't believe that [the judges] don't watch. They do watch... So, I believe it's contributed to the me to being found guilty and being sentenced.*

FO6: *... I remember the public prosecutor was even saying, the media is now having a lot to say about the whole thing because the media now has an outcry because they want them sentenced. So, to me I felt it did have an impact.*

One participant stated that she felt the media **uses high profile cases to make an example** for deterrence purposes.

FO4: *When I look and not just at my case, but cases that make it to the media, it's as if the judiciary want to use that podium now to make a point ... So, that idea around deterring society and making an example.*

5.3.5. Impact of labels on the lives of female offenders

When the participants were asked how they felt the media narratives and labels has directly influenced their lives, four main themes were identified. Three of the participants stated that the labels and narratives as used in the media has a direct **effect on their mental health**.

FO3: *I was depressed... I was on heavy medication... Because I like I told you, I had anxiety attacks ... So, they affect me in a very, very negative way and it affects my health as well, I'm on anti-depressants only to cope...*

FO5: *Emotionally, I was completely in a dark, dark place...*

One participant stated that they have experience **feelings of fear** regarding the media narratives and how the labels reflected in the media will influence their experience in the correctional centre.

FO5: *And I believe in the beginning I was very scared that this is the thing that's going to walk with me and it's going to be alright, I was even scared to come to prison.*

One participant stated that she felt the media labels has had a direct influence on her **relationship with her children and family**.

FO6: *I think it still does, because I've reached out to my kids, many times. I mean, it's X years later, then obviously these labels are affecting them. They don't want their current families or friends to know about it. So therefore, I can't have a communicating relationship with my kids.*

One participant stated that she felt she will only be **known for committing murder** and that she will be hated by society.

FO2: *As I said that immediately when you see somebody you don't know and address you with the name... He knows about my case. Maybe he knows something else... on the other side people can just develop hatred for you...*

5.3.6. Impact of labels on self-perception and self-worth

When the participants were asked to explain how they felt the media labels and opinions might have influenced their perceptions and feelings about themselves, three main themes were identified. One participant stated that she felt she **does not have a relationship with herself** anymore as she has a problem with who she is.

FO5: *I do have a problem with myself... I've got a huge problem with myself and it's difficult. I don't know how to explain it to you but I have no relationship with myself.*

Four participants stated that they felt that they have developed a form of **self-doubt** due to the media labels and narratives that arose during their cases.

FO5: *... sometimes you will sit and you will think or maybe it will just come up that you know, you remember hello, you're a murderer. You're a killer. You're a horrible person. And to get away from that it's difficult because I have to live with myself now.*

FO6: *I sometimes question myself, how stupid can I actually be? How foolish can I be someone that has actually abused me that have driven me to a point where I'm lost my children, how could I have actually though I loved this person?*

Three participants stated that there is a constant feeling of **judgement** hanging over them that they have to try and live with which affects their feelings about themselves.

FO2: *Yes, you feel judged. Let's say there was a time where when you go to court, in the paper, they'll put in your dress code everything. That clothes, they say, labelling*

you, you dress cheap, today she put my makeup today, she didn't, today she did nails. Like, I felt like now it is no longer about the case it is about you.

FO5: And you know, X, he said to me, "you will burn in hell and you will die in hell" and how they will never be forgiven. You know? All these things, it attaches to you and you carry it with you...

5.3.7. Labels and female offender's future

When the participants were asked to explain how they felt the media labels influenced their life in the future, five main themes were identified. Four participants felt that their **future relationships** will be influenced due to the labels and narratives reflected in the media.

FO1: ... somewhere down the line the someone will come to them and you know how people are talking to each other, saying but do you know X? X was actually in the prison the whole time, she was committing crime, she murdered her husband.

FO6: I think I think it definitely would. I mean, especially with my children and my grandchildren. Definitely, it already has, I mean, I've tried many times to reach out through different pastors, you know, from Muslim to Christians, having my family, my mom, my brother tried and reach out. It's a no go.

Three participants stated that they felt the media labels and narratives around their cases will have an influence on their **future careers** after they have served their prison sentences.

FO3: Because let's say when I go out to maybe seek employment, if they punch my name, then I'm going to appear in the database... And you'll get people that will recognize you as well, from television and stuff.

FO5: Or if I go for a job interview and the person remembers that you're here for an interview but you're a murderer. "I'm not going to hire you".

Two participants stated that they felt they will always be **treated differently** by society due to the stigmas and opinions that were ascribed by the media.

FO4: ... when I now go home, the society knows me as that girl that the media told them I am. So, stigmas will never go away. We will always be treated as the others,

as the evil because that's what the media portrays us to be without getting to know the person and understanding their circumstances or trying to find the truth.

One participant stated that there will always be a need to **prove herself**.

FO2: ... sometimes there's a need to prove myself that sometimes you do have the attitude that I'm coming up. I want to prove to you that I wasn't a gold digger to do things Things are hard and everything but still I want to prove to myself that I can still make it.

One participant stated that she **feels hopeful** when she thinks of the future because she is trying to make something of her life despite the influence the media labels have and might have on her life.

FO2: I'm [years of age], 60 is like [x] years to come so rather than thinking 60 is coming What can I do? Okay, if I do the PHD, I can lecture. This field can take you further. Even if you're old I can still do something I can go and work ... I can still do things at the old age. Being a researcher and something then I can do that.

5.3.8. Reasons for negative media and public perceptions

When the participants were asked why they think the media and the public tend to have certain ideas and beliefs about women who commit murder, five main themes were identified. Two participants stated that they felt the **publics' opinions were directly influenced by the media** which lead to certain ideas and believes developing surrounding women who commit murder.

FO4: I mean, the society doesn't have access to me except through the media...the only version of me they know is what is given by the media. So, the media has that much power and People in general are lazy to think, they just read and believe.

FO5: Because they only have the information that they've been fed...

One participant stated that they felt these labels exist because media **stigmas and labels are often easy for the public to believe**.

FO1: ... and with the things placed in the media, obviously everyone, your friends even that you had was looking with different eyes at you because [the media] said

you are a liar so what was actually the truth. So, what, they said you were cheating. So how and how much did you cheat and things like that. So, people will never look with the same eyes.

Four of the participants stood by the phrase “**bad news sells**” and they believed that is why the media associated certain labels and narratives with women who commit murder.

FO3: To make a profit. I don't think they care, just to sell whatever to make a profit to get as many listeners, viewers, whatever it may be. I don't think they actually care. There's something there's no other reason besides them making money.

FO5: People rather read about murder and people killing each other and instead of you know reading about people helping each other that that is and the media feeds off of that... That's how people are and I the media feed off of that.

One participant stated that she feels certain stigmas are developed as women who commit murder are considered **abnormal**.

FO5: I think it's a woman behind bars. You know, we are this alien species. It's almost, this alien species. We are normal people... I think that the public and the media, they try to make you this monster out of a movie so that the people think that you're so dangerous.

Two participants felt that the media and the public have certain ideas and believes about them because they don't really know her due to a **lack of communication**.

FO1: I think because no one knew me so well or my house or my family. My close family knew that I was not happy, they knew that there's something I'm not open about with the other people.

FO2: ...what I realise is that people do not have courage when you're going through to just ask you what is happening. We'll just see everybody distance themselves from you. And also difficult for you to approach and explain what I went through, so if there were communication and people like a friend who did not just desert you, people just talk about you.

5.3.9. Suggestions and observations regarding media labels

When the participants were asked if they had any suggestions or general observations regarding their experiences with the media. Seven main themes were identified. One participant stated that media employees go to **extreme lengths to obtain information** to run their stories and that they should not do so.

FO1: *The media will even do a fake booking, things like that. Media is not allowed in prison. So, they pretend that the day when my brother came to visit me here from X ... And when I got there, it was another man, it was not my brother. And he pretended to be my brother to be able to just see with his own eyes. I am here so he can place it in the media.*

One participant stated that the media tends to **put people's lives in danger and makes the offenders feel unsafe** due to the information that they share in the media.

FO1: *...but now I need to be worried for my own safety. I also need to be on the lookout because the things that is placed [in the media] is making me a target inside ... And so the media don't realise that they are actually making your life hell inside by what they place, especially when it gets to finances.*

Two participants felt that the media labels and narratives have the ability to influence people to such an extent that some women might **cause women harm and some might attempt suicide** due to media labels.

FO3: *People even attempt suicide because of all of the things said. I am telling you about my friend... she was broadcasted everywhere.... When I saw her, she said "If you were not there, if I didn't know I was coming into you, if I didn't know, I was going to kill myself. The reporters made me want to kill myself". There are people who actually want to take their lives because of the things these people said.*

FO6: *I understand they think a hot story would sell but they don't realise that they are hurting people.*

Two participants felt that the media has an **obligation to share correct and true information** with the public.

FO2: ... [the media] *needs to be trusted to take information to the people... You must write the truth. Still, you write the lie. Why are you misleading the world? If people need to rely on the media, that if we can't reach the information, we must attend to them and believe that they will bring the information in our houses let it be the truth.*

FO6: *I think, you know, before the media makes judgements, they should know their facts. They should know the truth behind it... the media should actually honestly get facts straight and not make assumptions.*

One participant stated that a point should be made that **they should have a say in what gets published** in the media and there should be a process for reporters to follow.

FO3: *I just wish there was maybe a process for them to follow, rather than them just coming in and ambushing us by course. I wish we could be given an opportunity to say yes, I want to media there or not... I wish they can give us a chance to say our story and then they print theirs and then let the people decide.*

One participant stated that she did not appreciate how the **media brought up her family** in the case and how they were quick to judge them.

FO4: *It's not even about me as per se, but my husband is a X. And my case had X issues involved and the judgment that he received from people who don't even know him, who don't know the situation as to how can he help the nation if he couldn't help his wife and you know, just how much he was thrown into the bad light, that kills me.*

One participant stated that she felt it is important to offer women who kill **psychologic assistance during the court trial** as there is not always an opportunity for women to speak to someone without being ridiculed.

FO6: *I honestly think you know, when it comes to cases like this, there should be psychiatrist and psychologist involved and maybe then, you know, I could have had an opportunity to talk out because I've never had that opportunity.*

5.4. Online commentary on women who commit murder

When the online data was gathered and analysed it became evident that the data could be grouped into four main categories with 12 sub-categories became evident. The data was further analysed within each sub-category and various themes were identified. The data will be represented and discussed in table format (which also depicts the categories and main themes). The tables below, which is based on table 2 in Chapter 4, will represent comments directly quoted from online sources as well as the main themes that became evident during the data analysis process. The comments represented in the table were grouped into categories and sub-categories which best describe the content of each comment.

5.4.1. Information

The main sub-category that was identified in the Information category was 'Comparison'. The 'Comparison' sub-category is focused on describing comments which makes a comparison between two or more individuals, situations or things. Nine main themes of comparison were identified to describe the different types of comparisons which were used to describe women who commit murder.

Table 5: Categories of information

Category	Comment	Main themes
Make comparison	The similarities between her and Rose Ndlovu...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison with other murderers (real or fictional) • Comparison with other murderers by using labels (black widow, angel of death, femme fatal, gold digger, clown, psychopaths and assassins) • Comment on physical appearance • Comparison to dark forces (evil, the devil, witches and monsters)
	Is this Lori Vallow reincarnated? The way she is smiling without a care in the world/a couple of husbands that are dead/and her child that also dies.	
	I know I've said this before but Daisy appears to be a real-world Agatha Christie villainess.	
	Everyone around Daisy seemed to sicken and die...a real "Angel of Death", wasn't she?	
	There is a famous saying here in South Africa when your hair is very unkept, 'you look like Daisy de Melker. My mom used to say it a lot when I was young.	
	"She still a horrible person..... A Black Widow Spider"	
	Merciless mother.	
	Witch!	
	Heartless Mother I ever imagine, Mothers are there to love no matter what.	
Shes really a monster.		

Table 5 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	So u punish and kill your children because of the fathers doings. Yhuuu hay the devil walks wearing a G-string. Haibo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison to social gender roles (being a bad mother) • Sentence comparison • Gendered comparisons • Comparing cases in terms of race and class • Comparison to celebrities
She would have got a chair in America...		
Shades of a female version Jeffrey Dahme.		
If she was a man, would she get the same treatment?		
Sandisiwe Manqe was given 15 years for the same reason that gave Oscar 6 years the difference is colour justice!! Hai eSouth Africa!!		
so she is now a celebrity,sly queen.i see rosemary here plus shes also from Tembisa.		
She killed a person and was only given 12 years but Mampintsha is still being crucified for just slapping babes wodumo.		
Why were women not described as a trash when mulalo Sivhidzho killed her husband Mr Avhatakali Netshisaulu,I don't agree with those women who are controlled by emotions than facts.		
This evil devil must rot in jail.		
Good one.I still remember the case.She is Satan.This was heartbreaking. She must stay there.		
Just like Mulalo Sivhidzho before her, #rosemaryndlovu appeared in court for heinous crimes and for some reason thought she was an A list celebrity. Only for judges to knock some sense back into her greedy head. You can perform for media but journalists aren't judges.		

Table 5 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	The smiling assassin.	
	Demoniese gemors.	
	Rich White doctor kills all her children. SA media - feel sorry for her! Poor POC does the same - witchhunt media ensues or there's DEAD silence. Yawn. Horrific what she did. No excuses. Best bit I heard was that she did it because she didn't have maids. Are you freaking serious?! While we're on the subject END SLAVE MHIV now and clean your own house!	
	black-widows also live pofadder.	
	what does being poor has to do with the killing of babies. A mother in Sandton can be as sick as a mom in Alex. This is not about class, but a mental illness. I think the dad is within his right to decide when he wants to forgive his wife. He lives with her, he knows how sick she is. He probably feels he should have protected his babies. Feel sorry for this dad.	
	Psycopaths can't see the wrong in their thinking or the wrong of their ways They are without conscience.	
	She reminds me of Ted Bundy. Very confident with zero visible anxiety, while being accused of killing so many people. She needs to be locked away, somewhere far away from normal people. Yikes.	
	Femme fatale.	
	Sy lyk satanisties en vol demone.	

Table 5 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	Ek kan noe glo wat ek lees nie dit klink soos a Hollywood draaiboek . As hulle in Amerika gebly het, het almal nou doodstraf gekry.	
	She even has horns on her head. Evil personified.	
	She really decided she's Marlena Evans.	
	Don't know who is more evil between her and cicelia.	
	Gold digger.	
	Die NAR is boser as boos.....sy verdien nie die lug wat sy inasem nie.	
	SA's very own Charles Manson.	

5.4.2. Advice

The main sub-category in the advice category was that of 'Give' which describes comments that offer advice regarding women who commit murder or situations involving or surrounding women who commit murder. Seven main themes of advice were identified.

Table 6: Categories of advice

Category	Comment	Main themes
Give	It is heartbreaking to hear such.. First of all, how did she go about having 4 kids at such a young age? I would also hope they look into mental health, no woman in her right mind would do such a thing.. the kids suffered but the has to have been some clues along the way.. what a tragedy all the way around.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising that female offenders need mental evaluation • Advising that female offenders should not be given mercy • Advising that women should rather give their children up for adoption and divorce their husbands • Advising that female offenders should seek religious help to free them from dark forces
	The question here is why she didn't put her kids up for adoption or better yet ask a family member to take care of the kids whilst she deals with whatever she was dealing with at the time. Or to give the kids to the father seeing she wanted no part in him and his kids. This is when you really realize that the women who opt for the above actually do have some care for their kids otherwise they could actually do the same and murder them.	
	Why should she get any mercy, when she showed absolutely none to her children?	
	No excuse to kill a child just give to people who can't conceive. It's takes a nation to raise a child.	
	She needs our prayers this is the devil' s doing. We might blame her and all but she wasn't herself an evil spirit overtook her. No mother in her right senses can do that. May you find peace dear.	

Table 6 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>So sad. But anyone who can do this clearly has some mental issues. We need some sort of support system for women and men who may be feeling overwhelmed or severely stressed for whatever reason. We can't keep on reacting as a society instead of leading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on sentencing (bringing back the death penalty or suggesting longer sentences) • Advising others not judge women too harshly • Advising the media on better reporting
<p>It's crime to take someone's life but don't be harsh on her because you don't know what prompted her to do that.</p>		
<p>Why is the sentence sooooo light. She should be receiving 2 life sentences. Lots of people hv bad upbringing but they don't kill.</p>		
<p>She should have given them up for adoption. May their souls rest in everlasting peace.</p>		
<p>This video is bias. She murdered Flabba. Your attempt to make Flabba's death, somehow his own doing because of his "insecurities", is really lame. You are painting her as a victim, SHE'S A MURDERER in this story and Flabba is the victim. We understand your role is to protect the image of women, but be neutral in your narratives.</p>		
<p>Mr Rahlaga - your expression at the end, says it all. This woman committed gender-based violence but eNCA covers her story like she's some sort of hero. I guess, we all have a job to do.</p>		
<p>The high court should've increased her jail sentence instead.</p>		

Table 6 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>Seems like she was already suffering with depression before they left & had little to no support in NZ. This tragedy could have been avoided. In my opinion mental health checks should be mandatory when undertaking these sort of moves, especially when kids are involved.</p>	
	<p>Rosemary better seek devine intervention to rid yourself of the devil in you its not too late to change and see the light ditch the devil.</p>	
	<p>As hulle dan nou moet tronk toe aangesien die doodstraf lankal afgeskaf is, moet hulle in isolasie geplaas word en dalk een uur 'n week die son sien. Hulle moet elke dag en nag met hulle gedagtes sit en oor en oor dink oor dit wat hulle gedoen het. Die sel moet so donker wees dat hulle dag en nag nie kan onderskei!!</p>	
	<p>dan skei jy eerder of loop in die nag weg.</p>	
	<p>Hulle moet glad nie die son ooit weer sien nie. Die oorledens gaan ook nie die lewe se son kan sien en geniet nie.</p>	
	<p>Nee! Die doodstraf is te genadelik! Hul moet elke dag vir die res van hul lewe die kans gegun word om die keuses wat hul gemaak te heroorweeg.</p>	
	<p>This is why we need the death penalty! People are not afraid of going to prison anymore, it's like an all expenses paid holiday. #bringbackthedeathpenalty.</p>	

5.4.3. Impressions and opinions

There are seven main categories under the impression and opinions group. The seven main categories are: general, positive, negative, mixed, insult, criticism and speculation. The impressions and opinions group is focused on a variety of different opinions and outlooks of the court of public opinion regarding women who commit murder. A variety of sub-themes were identified within the seven main categories.

Table 7: Categories of impressions and opinions

Category	Comment	Main themes
General	Jesus what a mother.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations of events • Observation the link between money and murder • Confusion around the reason why women commit murder • Observations on the mental health of the offender • Sarcastic commentary
	It's not ordinary She might be under a spell.	
	You bring to this world four beautiful lives and decide to take them away just because you've found their father cheating on you? This man is going to continue with his affair when she is in the prison. She is the one who will be more affected by this. She lost her life, kids and partner. There's no justification for killing children. RIP little Angels.	
	Relationships go sour all the time, what Zintle did was the worse thing to do to vent out your revenge or anger. We as women go through this cheating drama with the fathers of our kids. If this was the way to go, there would be no children in the country. Please talk, depression over strained relationships is real. I know.	
	I have no words how does a mother kill her own children.	
	There is no excuse for murder. Especially that of innocent children.	
	Why not life sentence?	
	Moord bly moord en n mens is mens. Voor God is ons almal gelyk. Ons kan nie ons skouers optrek en se ons gee nie om nie. Die is ons naaste.	

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	The fact that she tried to commit suicide shows how unstable she was either from that relationship or past relationships walking away from an abusive relationship may not be easy but necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence observations • Observations regarding making excuses for and judging offender • Observation of offenders' appearance • Comments on the influence of external forces • Observation of offenders' behaviour • Referring to offenders as murderers
Only God can judge.	Where is she getting the weave and make up in prison?	
She should lie low... People don't like her very much...	Imagine a rubbish that was never there during your struggle to financial independence comes into your life just to kill you for your money and life insurance payout in less than 24 months of marriage. Mxm.	
if you do crime you must be willing to do Time...	I hope as South Africans we're not obsessed with female killers. Some people couldn't have enough of Mulalo Sivhidzho. Of course she didn't n't miss opportunity to put up a show.	
Some of us still pray our Grandmother's were still alive and she killed hers for what SASSA and her accounts.	MURDERERS!!!!	
So sad. What happened to a mother's mind and heart at that crucial time she murdered her daughters. If she did???????	Its such a sad and tragic turn of events.	

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>Mental issues are a real problem. Imagine if a health professional can be so adversely affected by mental health issues, imagine the wo/man on the street.</p> <p>Wow different strokes for different folks.</p> <p>So so hartseer. Dit maak nie sin nie. Altwee ouers is mediese dokters Wie pas na NZ geimigreer ht. Nee iets moes gebeur ht. Sterkte aan die families.</p> <p>Dit is so ongelooflik hartseer. Ek kan net vra hoekom? Waarom?</p> <p>She murdered multiple people and hired a hitman to murder her family...that obviously screams life in prison.</p> <p>Is this person a serial killer? The evidence seems to point in that direction.</p> <p>Damn!!! The way she casually describes the killing of the pastor... Wow!!</p> <p>Sal nooit sê sy's 'n moordenaar, met daai engel gesiggie nie.</p> <p>Scary how normal a psychopath looks like and act.</p> <p>She shows more emotion when she disagree with what someone said than when she tells about someone fighting for his life.</p>	
Positive	<p>Really believe she was a chronic poisoner. Yes both of her husbands and her son as well. Daisy got what she deserved.</p> <p>she deserve a second chance to live normal life.</p> <p>She didn't mean to kill , she probably was angry it's so unfortunate she reached a point of no return with her hasty decision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of sentencing • Supporting and defending offender •

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	Love you cindy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing of affection for offenders • Observation of offenders' looks • Sexually loaded comments
<p>Woah! She looks damn good for a person in prison. Damn sis, she glowed up well, even got a degree! At least she's still pursuing her goals despite being locked up! Some people go to prison and wallow away their time there!</p>		
<p>You can't break this Manqele chick.</p>		
<p>She is beautiful inside and outside.</p>		
<p>The world is a much safer place with her in jail, she must stay there.</p>		
<p>My poor Swazi very Intelligent and genuine...was with her for a month ...God knows y she did it thou shall not judge ...I remember the words she gave me when I was going to court for my sentencing..Sweetheart pray tht God gives u strength to accept whatever years they give I did tht today I'm free ..Luv Swazi ...miss her lots.</p>		
<p>Caring human soul who is also a victim of circumstances beyond her control. I will forever remember Lauren as a good and caring doctor. I hope her family will have resources to visit her in prison even once a year i believe that will make a big difference in her.</p>		
<p>Dear Dr Lauren Dickason kindly be informed that you will forever be in our hearts and we wish you all the strengt . So sad that she is left alone now in New Zealand with no visible support around her. We call upon all our compatriots in New Zealand to support Lauren throught this difficult journey she is faced with.</p>		
<p>The new hairdo every time though you go girl, she really likes herself even in this difficult times.</p>		

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>I won't mind to take a risk for a night then ran away before the insurance matures.</p> <p>She is glowing,When are they introducing conjugal visit.</p>	
Negative	<p>"So very sad. She could have been surrounded by her three children, potential grandchildren and all that joy. And yet, she favoured a few thousand pounds. Pathetic."</p> <p>Wow she was killing for the meager insurance money pathetic sad she was a straight up psychopath.</p> <p>I could understand her murdering her husband far more than her son who she actually gave birth to and was her own flesh and blood but then again she was a narcissist who lacked empathy for any form of humanity.</p> <p>Zinhle was suppose to be hanged why killing innocent souls.</p> <p>She is one of those women who doesn't love their children, she is one of those who love men over their children. The way I worry about my kids, she deserves to rot in jail. When things get tough ur children give you strength just by looking at them, no matter how hard or tough things must have been for her, there is no excuse for what she did. This women is a monster period!</p> <p>She should be abused in that prison coz who is she to take those bundles of joys life's.</p> <p>What is this world coming to where mothers instead of protecting their children are either selling them or murdering them!it is an end times world this!</p> <p>So she's a celebrity nw.wow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disapproval of financial gain as motive • Negative labels associated with women who commit murder • Mental health critique • Critique of offenders for their selected victims • Critique of sentences • Religious comments and comments relating to evil forces • Critique of mothers who commit murder

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes	
	Women are only defending her because she's pretty. Pretty privilege is real. If she wasn't good looking I'm sure most of these comments would be different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique of offenders' celebrity status • Critique of society's beliefs relating the killing of men • Comments of the appearance and mannerisms of female offenders • Critique of offenders' behaviour • Comments on the race of the offender 	
	Disgusting 🤢🤢🤢 ..Killed Flabba and now making money out of it...I wonder how his family is feeling about this....		
	You kill and you become a celebrity in South Africa if you are a woman neh. What about the victims family or it doesn't matter as the victim is male? Masepa fela.		
	Fokon devil opens up. Is like man who rapped a child by mistake. Car Accidents r mistakes not pulling a knife and repeatedly fffffk u killed him.		
	She killed a CA, this ugly faced woman!		
	Hoe vreeslik wreed!!!! Hoe vermoor 'n mens jou eie BLOED???!!!!!!!		
	Doodstraf! Niks minder! Satans kind! Dan nog daai boodskap op Debbie se fb blad pos om jousef beteer te laat voel.		
	3 daughters are no more. Puckin monster (s).		
	yal delusional.. depression won't make you kill 3 kids with cable ties, meaning she killed one kid at a time. You telling me nothing clicked in her mind after she killed the first one? The second one?		
	What is there to say..... Rest in peace you poor babies weren't even given a chance your not there mother your a monster.		

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	Senseless , cant understand this . The God given gift to procreate life and them to snuff it out like a possessed demon.	
	Nah, I hate anyone who murder kids regardless of the skin colour.	
	She should have better killed herself and spared the lives of 3 innocent girls.	
	"Good riddance to bad rubbish" Voel jammer vir haar selmaats!	
	Kry maar die straight jacket gereed vir dié een.	
	Did this fucktard not see the undercover footage of herself? Or did the devil make her do it? F\$cking liar.	
	No remorse. No emotion. That's the trouble. No sadness. No shame. No empathy. No anger. Nothing inside. Void. Even the devil gets mad, right?	
	What's wrong with her hair?	
	She legit looks like the local tannie who runs an arts and crafts store and owns 3 chihuahuas. Evil truly has no face.	
	Dis nou hier waar daar public execution moes gebeur het.	
	By Demons Be Driven. Religion is a mental disease.	
	Cecilia Steyn (Devilsdorp) has an interesting accent.	
	Die a lonely, horrific death, bitch. Never again will you see your children.	

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>So afriforum won't say a word on this cz the mastermind is a white basted.</p> <p>NEE VOK Die vrou is so mal soos n haas...ek hoop sy kry silent treatment sy moet aleen vreeeeeeeeek NO SOUL.</p> <p>The white b÷#/ch should be extradited to her ancestral land (the land of apartheid colonial racist land thieves) where hanging is still in force to dealt with accordingly.</p>	
Mixed	<p>lovely young woman, but the evil began to take over her features in later years.</p> <p>She was such a beautiful young woman. Too bad she was so rotten.</p> <p>Being unemployed and having 4 children to feed can be stressful and disheartening. Her actions were not justified, however I can imagine the guilt that she feels for taking her children.</p> <p>What she did is very wrong, Yes!!! But let us not judge her because she was driven by the very same spirit that always drove you and I to the sin, no matter how small the sin is but hell is one. Now the mercy of God can be upon that lady's life and change her for better cause what the devil has done even Holy Spirit ddnt like, and most of us youth of South Africa we have taken our own bad ways rather than seeking the Kingdom of God. Start praying for your self till you know and feel that u are safe.</p> <p>Sad story sad on Flabba's side cause he felt disrespected ,made less of a man and eventually lost his life....also Sad for Sindi because she was so young and it all ended like that for her.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments regarding offenders' appearance • Not condoning offenders' behaviour, but rather understanding the behaviour • Not judging offender but suggesting the offender should focus on their religion

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>i still think that sindisiwe was defending herself. If Flabba didn't die that night. this girl was gonna get killed by him. Where did she get the knife to kill him??? But all of that doesn't make it right to kill him. Killing is a sin, is not right. Only God can judge....</p> <p>I think them both being doctors should have given them a better ability to see that there was a growing problem but I don't think labeling her a psychopath is fair. To all other accounts, she was a perfectly normal person with a good family life.</p> <p>On one hand one feels sad and angry for the babies, on the other one knows that the mother was more likely not even aware of what she was doing at the time.</p> <p>Just a very sad situation (even though sickening too).</p> <p>Geen verskoning vir moord gaan soek hulp of maak jousef dood may she rott in hell.</p> <p>she is a smart criminal, but a hiddeous human being.</p> <p>she kinda looks cute but inside she is ugly,cruel,evil,full of white lies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sympathising with victim and offender • Comments about media labels • Complimenting the offenders despite their dislike
Insult	<p>Then us what she do with the money, she couldn't pay fi fix her face.</p> <p>Fuc u wena murder.</p> <p>Despicable excuse of a human.</p> <p>wtf kyk eeder dalk na di bloed wat op jo hande is wat nooit sal kan af was ni...jho jys pathetic.</p> <p>Greedy bitch.. Hopenlik sluit hulle jou en jou vieslike man toe en gooi weg die sleutels... Julle albei is oxygen thiefs en behoort nie in ons society nie...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insulting offenders' looks • Swearing at offenders • Negative labels associated with offenders

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>Your love for money led you to do the most terrible thing. Your sister did not deserve to die. You are satan in the flesh.</p> <p>Hoer.</p> <p>VUILGOED MAG JULLE VROT IN DIE TRONK !!!!!</p> <p>jou stupid stupid vrou! Jy is sielsiek.</p> <p>You mean " Insurance Serial Killer Cop ".</p> <p>Kukus.</p> <p>The devil's soulmate!</p> <p>Yhoo this woman is evil crazy.....</p> <p>This person is nothing but a pure definition of Devil or will I say Demon.</p> <p>Lelike etter, as ek so gelyk het sou ek ook n cult begin het.</p> <p>This woman looks as if she is chronically constipated.</p> <p>Sy getroud? Met 'n man.</p> <p>Check daai ding se nek! 🤪 Haar adams appel het n appel!</p> <p>You hideous lunatic.</p> <p>That hair is straight out of hell, all she needs is a pitch fork and she's set to return home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using religious imagery to compare offenders with evil forces • Insulting offenders' sexuality • Insulting offenders' mental health
Criticism	<p>25 with 4 kids. Where was her family? Things can get overwhelming without support.</p> <p>Depression is real. Those poor children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticisms of offenders' families • Criticism of the CJS

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>She had choice, termination of pregnancy or contraceptions for free, murder is not the solution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticism of the offenders' choice to commit murder • Criticism of offenders' behaviour • Criticism of treatment of offenders due to a variety of factors • Criticism of commentators blaming victims for their murder • Criticisms of media reporting • Criticism of offenders' mental health • Criticism of public for judging offender
<p>South African man you're on your own, when a man kill a woman he's called a murder he must get death sentence, when a woman kill a man it was a self defense she must not go to jail.</p>		
<p>What I don't like about most SA women is that they blame a man for his own death because the doer is a woman, a woman is never wrong in SA and that is unfair, talk about gender inequality. This woman should stay in jail!</p>		
<p>Sandisiwe Manqele (flabba's killer) gets harsher sentence bcz she's black and female. White male killed a woman and gets lighter sentence WTF.</p>		
<p>So is prison the only free university institution. Free study's, free food and free accommodation. Why don't I will someone.</p>		
<p>You won't see feminists here coz one of their own is a killer. Gender based violence activists ism waiting for your input or are you numb mouthed?The one sided law is the main contribution to all the femicide.</p>		
<p>I was always expecting that the victims, being men, will always be blamed. The experts do not disappoint for sure. With the other side though "you are the victim here, don't blame yourself." The unfortunate truth though is that until South Africa stops these stereotypical diagnose of a very serious societal problem the country is not going anywhere. For example in the scheme of things where does greed fit in?</p>		

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>Insensitive reporting about a seriously depressed mother, deprived of her chronic medication and thrown into a strange, hostile environment ! My sympathies to her remaining bereaved family.</p> <p>This is dreadful sensationalist reporting.</p>	
	<p>The unbearable sympathy with a child murderer has no bounds. Wish we could have this mentality in the social and political landscape in SA. All problems will be solved overnight. I'm a very humane and compassionate person, but cannot get my head around people being more sympathetic to the killer than the innocent kids, sorry.....</p>	
	<p>Time to stop making excuses for this lady doctor just because she is middle class. She killed her children- they are the victims, not her. You do not see this drivel trying to explain away gbv, hijacking, race based murder, or any other violent crime.</p>	
	<p>Yoh this woman don't feel ashamed. She can even dress up. God almighty what is wrong with people. Are they human to murder and stand with a strait face. And dressed up as well. Than jail is to good and comf for her. She should be sleeping in the cold and suffer the pain the family is going through with the loss. Mo words to speak out the anger.</p>	
	<p>Huh!? £69,000?? Six people ? You had your family killed for that amount! Were u that desperate lady!</p>	

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>If she has been convicted how come she is so posh. Why is she not wearing prison clothes. What's going on.</p> <p>These whites must stop these satanic beliefs nonsense. We have no room for their sadistic fantasy nonsense.</p> <p>If she's a Christian, how many Gods do she believe,tattoos, Egyptian God, Jesus, Chinese Dragon, Wolf, Parrot many others.</p> <p>Why do the media always call the worst criminal a "mastermind"?</p> <p>Dan moet ons belastingbetalers nog hierde bouse "mense" voer elke dag...belaglik!!</p> <p>Agree ¹⁰⁰ ...what has her beauty or color of her eyes for example anything to do with the story???</p> <p>Julle oordeel vinnig. Was een van julle in hulle binnekamers om te weet wat daar aangegaan het.</p>	
Speculate	<p>Reason for her crimes ? Greed good old fashion plain old greed.</p> <p>Just imagine if her ex brother in law didn't tell anyone of his suspicions. Look at her waving and smiling. She was so guilty!!! How cold blooded was she to kill her only child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speculating offenders' motive for murder

Table 7 continued

Category	Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main themes
	<p>I think she was just an extremely cold hearted woman liking the fact that she got away with killing her children liking the attention she got and then offcourse Having gotten away with it it was a kicker for her and she never was caught. Then with the men she met she was only after the money. She murdered her son because he was going to go to the police she had to get rid of him. She liked the fact that she could get away with it. Just an evil cold hearted woman with an evil heart and possessed by the devil.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speculating that murder was committed to protect the offenders' children • Speculation of offenders' sexuality
<p>This case is very sad and shocking. As well as the fact that her fiance and two of her husbands died, all five of her children died, which suggests to me that all of these cases could be due to Munchausen by proxy.</p>		
<p>What a beautiful woman but heartless, I believe she was possessed with evil spirit no one who think right could kill her own kids.</p>		
<p>MAYBE SHE WAS DRUNK . IT WAS NOT HER INTENTION I THINK SO.</p>		
<p>such a waisted soul. Devil make her do it. Shame maan.</p>		
<p>Tragically depressed mother, who believed that she is protecting her children in wrongfully believing that death would provide better protection for them than life.</p>		
<p>Seems Ndlovu's sangoma is failing her on this one. She needs to go and ask for a refund.</p>		
<p>Definitely witchcraft killings.</p>		
<p>What a vile thing she is! Was she in a romantic relationship with Cecilia? She constantly protects her from being involved! EEEEEUUW!</p>		

5.4.4. Expression of personal feelings

The expressions of personal feelings category focus on commentators' expression of very personal feelings. There are three main categories, namely general, positive and negative. Various sub-themes were identified in each of the three individual categories.

Table 8: Categories of the expressions of personal feelings

Category	Comment	Main themes
General	I can't imagine how anyone can kill their child. I lost a daughter to cancer at 21 years old. I'd have done anything to have saved her yet people like this murder their own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion and shock • Solidarity, empathy and understanding • Offenders' mental health • Influence of Covid-19 on female offenders • Both offender and victim are at fault
	My God, what does trigger somebody to be so evil and manipulative with no conscience to kill even your own son?	
	I understand why she did it, raising children alone while unemployed is very difficult both physical and emotional, we're not the same we don't deal with difficulty and or suffering the same way. I have my days where i break down because i have nothing and a mouth to feed.	
	I,m convinced she wasn,t totally in contact with reality and thinking logically when she murdered her beautiful daughters.Let,s wait for the psychiatric evaluation report.	
	Sulke pragtige kinders! Ek is geskok ... innige meegevoel aan naasbestaandes.	
	Ek dink 'n ouer wat hul einde bereik het psychologically en onbeplan iets doen het al vantevore gebeur. Wat ongewoon is is dat sulke ma's gewoonlik nie soveel ondersteuning geniet nie en mense wat verstaan nie. Covid se isolasie bevele is uniek maar daar was al baie ander voor haar wat deur geweldige isolasie en druk gegaan het agv hul persoonlike omstandighede.	
	Ek is nie oortuig dat dit wél sy was wat die kinders vermoor het nie.	

Table 8 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>I don't judge her I feel sorry for her.</p> <p>The fact is he was abusive, he beat her and she grabbed a knife and stabbed him once in the chest and he died.</p> <p>He was talented but if he didn't put his hands on her he would be alive.</p> <p>She was found beaten up, face bruised with also broken ribs.</p> <p>They are both to blame.</p> <p>As someone who suffers from mental illness (depression and anxiety) and is a mental health advocate it makes me so sad that people feel like they have to hide the fact that they need help to fit into certain specifications. I hope that if she did stop taking her meds to get into the country that it brings to light that there's a fault in the New Zealand "requirements". My mom made an interesting point that moving is incredibly stressful, as you mentioned and arriving there during lock down and maybe not having the help with the kids she had in South Africa caused a huge amount of extra stress.</p> <p>Very sad and curious.</p>	
Positive	<p>Eish is very sad but who doesn't make mistake in life? No one so me I forgive her.</p> <p>It's a very sad experience, this killing was deliberate but I'm profoundly happy with the decision taken by court of law.I think justice has been served.</p> <p>All the best sis,nobody is perfect.You apologised,kubuhlungu kodwa we all deserve a second chance.</p> <p>She's so beautiful.</p> <p>Where did she get the knife from? From him. So I believe her. Wish her all the best</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiving offenders and understanding that everyone makes mistakes • Approval of decisions taken by the court of law

Table 8 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	<p>Awwww. I'm rooting for her, she seems to have learnt from her mistake and I hope she does get released when her parole comes up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of second chances • Believing the offenders and their stories • Offenders' appearances
	<p>She looks so good for someone who's in prison.</p>	
	<p>I don't know but somehow I believe her! It teaches us to walk away from insecure and abusive men.</p>	
	<p>She is human it does not mean she will do the same mistake again plus she has never had a criminal record before just love gone wrong people deserve a second chance isn't what the good book says she still has a of regret and guilt on what she has done.</p>	
	<p>Is it possible to marry a convicted murderer, who is serving a sentence....she's cute..</p>	
Negative	<p>IMO she was a sociopath. I wonder what caused her personality to develop this way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique of offenders' mental health • Critique of the offenders' choice of victim and intent • Critique of sentencing • Critique of gender norms • Negative labels
	<p>When women do bad the world is so fast to forgive and move on but if it was a man shit would have been even worse, man are dying slowly cause we not even taught to voice out our opinions.</p>	
	<p>Ok, I take it back she was an evil shrew. Wicked, Wicked, Wicked. Glad it turned out the way it did.</p>	
	<p>She killed her only son because of money. Despicable.</p>	
	<p>Ooof, Daisy didn't age well.</p>	
	<p>I would never forgive a child abuser / killer wtf.</p>	
	<p>She's a bad mother I have four kids but my husband left me and kids and went to another women.</p>	

Table 8 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	She was selfish why did she rather kill herself. Terrible!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique of offenders' appearance • Critique of commentators who support, sympathise and defend offenders • Bad mothers • Commentators encouraging offenders to commit suicide • Critique of offender's behaviour • Statements of hate and dislike towards offender • Critique of law enforcement and correctional centres
Very typical ! If it's a man he must die in jail he is evil ! But bcs it's a woman she has mental issues <u>#the</u> hypocrisy mxm ! That's why I don't support this GBV thing ! It's one sided.		
I hate her she killed Flabba.		
You just can't take someone's life and "make up" for it. She can get 100 degrees but she will never make up for taking his life. Getting a qualification doesn't mean a damn thing to Flabba's family, so she must not get it twisted.		
Girlfriend is now graduated and a lawyer while the family still lives in horror...I protest that she should have not been given education in prison so she can come out as a low life tht she is...this is wrong someone kills ur daughter and gets out with a physics degree? She must be put to rest too.		
It's crazy how I don't like you. Flabba was my favorite rapper even now. May his soul RIP.		
This is a clear cut crime of passion. I don't believe she intended to kill Flabba. She did however have every intention to hurt him which unfortunately resulted in Flabba's death. Would I then call it an accident? No.		
This is sickening.. GBV. Flabba is gone left his children. And now this one gets to Shine and gain recognition and now talkin about Documentary basically gaining fame over this shit.		
only 12 years? you killed flabba jou poes.		

Table 8 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	Only 12years for taking a person's life???Jerrrrrrr Jesssssss!	
	She looks evil nje... with that smile.	
	Dit gaan my verstand te bowe! Hoe vermoor 'n mens jou eie BLOED? En dan nog iemand wat so broos en kwesbaar is! GEWETENLOSE MONSTERS!	
	Hierdie vrou is sielsiek!	
	Hoop jy vrot in die tronk, JOU GEMORS!!!!!!!!	
	Hoop jy en jou trawant brand in die hel! Jou vieslike ondier!	
	This Woman is Evil and deserves to get the Death Penalty.	
	Sy is skuldig en moet swaar gestraf word. Sy is die naam Ma werd nie.	
	She's no different to Rosemary Ndlovu but I think she's worse by killing her own babies....SIES I have no symphy for such witches, she deserve to hang or burned.....F@ck that possess bullsh!t, she is just another evil psych0 b!!!!latch.	
	Of course, everyone is human - including mothers. But being human does now exempt us from taking responsibility. Being mentally unstable is no excuse for murdering someone, especially innocent little children, in my opinion. NO excuse.	
	I will never understand why these people kill the kids. I don't understand why people would kill themselves - but they do, so I accept that, but the kids as well - unforgivable imo.	

Table 8 continued

Category	Comment	Main themes
	Nah wrong answer, she is a murderer (3x) needs to be beheaded.	
	she could took her on live and let the poor kids enjoy there's! She must be hung.	
	Absoluut demonies!!	
	Gerespekteerde se wat? Moordenaar ja, nou moet ons vir haar sorg lewenslank, hang haar.	
	Put the thing on slow poison ,finish en klaar.	
	Yeah, piece of pig s#\$t... s#@t mother... she should have her ovaries ripped out.	
	She must be locked up and the key, thrown away.	
	I can't believe it. Truly reprehensible. I cannot stomach the fact that someone can do this. Will someone please tell her this haircut is atrocious I don't know how people live like that sheesh.	
	Can someone please explain to me who this arrogant little lesbian is?? Back chatting a judge, very poor manners.	
	Het hy daai stuk gemors wat soos n man lyk sy vrou genoem?	
	Grinds my soul that MY tax money is now feeding this criminal daily....	
	this women loves talking about what she has done. almost sounds like she is bragging. its actually sickening.	
	Ek sal met liefde met my belasting geld betaal dat die klompie nooit weer die buitekant van 'n tronk sien nie.	
	Ek dink nie hulle het 'n gewete nie, sal hulle seker nie eers pla nie.	

5.5. Summary

Chapter 5 presented the analysed data in line with the qualitative research approach. The data consisted direct quotes to explain the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the analysis phase of the research. Direct quotes were used so as to not lose the essence of the participants' experiences, perceptions and feelings, as well as to ensure that the researcher did not misinterpret the information at hand. Emphasis was placed on the type of labels which females who commit murder might experience. It was observed that the majority of labels tended to focus on the offenders' femininity and they were often portrayed as being monstrous individuals. Furthermore, labels often tend to focus on financial motives and many women tend to be labelled as black widows. In other cases, the offenders were often labelled as bad mothers or as women suffering from mental illnesses. There is a general belief between the public intellectual and the female offenders that labels exist in the public sphere due to media reporting and due to incorrect or false reporting for sensationalism of the crimes that were committed. Many individuals stood by the phrase "bad news sells".

The data obtained from online sources were represented in table format in line with the adapted data analysis tool used to analyse online commentary. Main themes were identified with regards to the theories. Some of the main themes that were observed concerned with the labels linked to female offenders. They were often referred to as evil, mentally ill, bad mothers and wives and the comments surrounding female who commit murder tended to be more negative and, in some cases, sexually loaded. However, there were opinions and comments where the public sympathised with the offenders or even offered them support.

Chapter six will focus on discussing and explaining the empirical results by making use of literature represented in chapter two as well as theories represented in chapter three. Furthermore, the literature and theories will be used to explain the process of labelling as well as how the labels are developed which can clarify the interaction between the court of public opinion and the public intellectual regarding women who commit murder.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

Chapter Six will critically discuss the data findings by comparing the data to both literature and theoretical applications to attempt to explain the data findings as well as the potential reasons why specific data has been identified within the section. The findings represented in Chapter Six are in line with the study outcomes and aim to explain the aims of the study. The chapter will also focus on recommendations for future research as well as ways to improve the interaction between the public sphere and the court of public opinion.

The main aim of the study was to explore and contrast the opinions of public intellectuals and the public relating to women who commit murder. The objectives of the study were to determine the conflicting views between the two groups regarding women who commit murder, the nature of the labels and commentary produced by the public sphere and the reason why there might be a difference between the opinions of the public and public intellectuals.

6.2. The conflicting views of the public and public intellectuals

The public intellectuals, in some cases, form part of the media sphere and therefore often share their opinions and perceptions in the media. However, there is a belief reflected by online commentary that states the public often tends to not agree with the opinions of public intellectuals. Because the public often does not agree with the public intellectuals' perception in the media, the public tends to critique the manner in which the media reports on certain cases. The public opinion notes that media reporting tends to be biased as they state that "*This video is biased*". The literature reflects the sentiment and noted that the public often experiences negative emotions when they engage with the opinions of public intellectuals (Dahlgren, 2013:400). Similar undertones are reflected by the findings of the female offenders as they noted that "*Everything [the media] say is one sided*". In order to alleviate the tension caused by the public reacting negatively to public intellectuals, the online commentators reflect the belief that journalists should improve their reporting strategies. Biased opinions reflected in the media can lead to the development of tension between the two entities. In order to improve reporting strategies, public intellectuals noted that there is a need to focus only on the facts of the crime and to "*leave out the scandalous and glamorous words*".

Media, social media and communication networks are an ideal space where the public can engage with the court of public opinion (Dahlgren, 2012:99). However, the public opinion does not have the only say in these spaces as they share it with journalists (Dahlgren,

2012:101), which often leads to conflict between the public opinion and public intellectuals. Public intellectuals noted that *“the media is going to feed the public”*, indicating the public is dependent on the media. The female offenders also reflected that *“[the public] only have the information that they’ve been fed”*. However, there are times when the media reports on case facts that are not always true, which can influence the public perception and lead to the public being misinformed on specific facts (Allen, 2001:40). The findings from public intellectuals therefore noted that they *“are very careful when expressing those opinions”* and that they *“just say no”* when they are asked to comment on cases which they are not informed about. The findings further indicate that to correct misinformed opinions, it is important to *“call them out on it in a way that I can hopefully educate them”*. Because of the public’s ability to share their opinions and ideas on social media, public intellectuals’ opinions are observed as being invalid (Collins, 2005:23) because the public now has the ability to also partake in discussions (Gattone, 2012:176).

The findings from the female offenders noted that *“There’s so many information [in the media] that is completely untrue”*. This indicates that the media does not always report on correct facts. The media’s main aim is to sell their media in a way that increases their profit; therefore, they tend to be focused on reporting crimes in selective ways (Brookes, Wilson, Yardley, Rahman & Rowe, 2015:62). Furthermore, cases tend to be reported on due to how likely they are to make a good story (Brookes et al., 2015:63). The literature is supported as the female offenders stated that the media’s main aim is *“To make a profit...there’s no other reason besides making money”*. Therefore, the media might report false facts for sensationalism and to ensure that their media sells. Public intellectuals noted that they *“just think it’s the approach to journalism”*. This is important because literature indicates crimes and specific characteristics of a crime will be focused on to ensure media coverage (Pelvin, 2019). The female offenders further reflect that *“bad news sells”* by stating, *“People rather read about murder and people killing each other”*. The media feeds off human curiosity to ensure a profit. Humans are complex creatures and often have a morbid curiosity which the media outlets feed on by feeding the public what they want. This way the media can ensure that they stay in business, which directly influences the development of public perceptions.

Public intellectuals are noted as specialists in a specific field (Collins, 2021). Therefore, public intellectuals are more informed on specific topics, such as women who commit murder, than their counterparts, which was reflected by the female offenders as they stated that *“the issue said my X was killed, but they cannot find the motive. So, they speculated that maybe I killed my X for money”*. However, because of the ability the media has to influence public opinion due to the power news media has (Taylor & Sorenson, 2002:356), public opinion may also speculate on the motive for the crime. The online commentary made

speculative observations such as *“maybe she was drunk”* and *“all of these cases could be due to Munchausen by Proxy”*. Public opinion therefore uses mainstream media to produce their own opinions and speculations (Dahlgren, 2013:401). The speculations made by the court of public opinion tend not to be focused on the facts of the crimes in comparison to opinions as public intellectuals are focused on producing intellectual work (Crick, 2006:137). Therefore, there is severe tension between the two entities as the opinions of the public opinion are not based on facts such as the intellectual work of public intellectuals.

There is further belief that public opinion tends to be vulgar when comparing them with the opinions of public intellectuals. Therefore, public intellectuals have felt the need to reform public opinion (Wilson, 1954:321). Vulgar language as observed in the findings from online commentary often include statements such as *“Witch”*, *“the devil walks wearing a G-string”*, *“Fokon devil”*, *“ffffk u”*, *“F\$cking liar”* and *“good riddance to bad rubbish”*. Based on the comments from public opinion, public intellectuals feel that there is a need to improve societal knowledge regarding female offenders. To prevent the development of labels and vulgar opinions, public intellectuals feel they need to *“correct negative language that can cause further stigma by sharing accurate information”* on negative labels used. The act of public intellectuals correcting public opinion might cause more tension as public intellectuals often hold minority opinions (Dahlgren, 2013:400), which might lead public opinion to feel that public intellectuals are demeaning the public sphere. However, public intellectuals feel that the public also renders their opinions invalid (Collins, 2005:23) by using negative and incorrect terms.

6.3. Nature of labels on women who commit murder

The section that follows discusses the nature and the type of labels encountered by the court of public opinion, the public sphere and female offenders alike as well as potential reasons for the development of certain labels and perceptions.

6.3.1. The labelling of women who commit murder

The labelling theory is important when addressing the types of labels which develop in the media. Offenders who tend to be labelled as deviant are often observed as being outsiders (Sjöström, 2018:15), which is in line with the data findings from the online commentary and public intellectuals. Public intellectuals noted that the public often observes women who commit murder as *“anomalies”* and *“strange”*, therefore making offenders different from the rest of the public (Greer & Reiner, 2013:1). Similar undertones are reflected by the online commentary as these women are observed to be *“evil”* and *“psychopaths”*, which indicates that these women are outside of normal societal boundaries as violent behaviour is not often associated with femininity due to their assigned gender roles (Easteal, 2001:22; Easteal,

Bartels, Holland & Nelson, 2015:1-2; Haffejee, Vetten & Greyling, 2005:41; Steyn & Hall, 2015:82). Because women who commit murder tend to be labelled as being different from the rest of the general public, the development of labels are observed because women who commit murder have been labelled once before, making it acceptable to develop more labels.

However, to an extent, findings from both the online commentary and public intellectuals contradict the above literature and data findings. Public intellectuals noted that there have been times when women who commit murder have been described as *“a good mother, she took care of her children”* as facts started to emerge. The sympathetic view is often more observed in cases where women who murder their children are observed as having mental issues (Seal, 2010). The public opinion reflected what is in literature as they stated that they *“hope [authorities] look into mental health ... the kids suffered but there has to have been some clues along the way”* and *“she didn’t mean to kill”*. It is hard for society to believe a mother can murder her children; therefore, the public often tends to focus on alternative explanations which would explain why women commit murder and also excuse their commission of violence. Public intellectuals further noted that by describing women in a way that gains sympathy, their crimes tend to be *“minimised”*. Therefore, the public excuses the commission of the crime and attributes murder to external factors which the offender had no control over.

Public intellectuals have also noted that *“there is definitely a sway”* in the media once female offenders are observed as being traditional women. The statement made by public intellectuals is supported by literature. When offenders are observed as ‘traditional women’, their behaviours are more acceptable, as the media labels focus on the cultural ideas of femininity (Pelvin, 2019:349-350; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007:3, 23). Women who commit murder tend to be observed negatively in the media; however, when they have more attributes, such as being a good mother or being a homemaker, the public opinion will be more likely to treat them with more respect. Therefore, labelling female offenders as either traditional or non-traditional women might be because the public tends to associate negative labels with women who murder as they do not understand female criminality due to lack of research (Schneider, [sa]:2), which leads to stigmatisation of female offenders (Mackie, 2016:1). Public intellectuals further determined that labels are used because *“public opinion is fickle”* and it is easier to use labels than it is to attempt to understand the reasons behind the commission of the murder.

6.3.2. Sexually loaded commentary

Women tend to be labelled negatively since the media makes use of sexually loaded labels (Schipper, 2007:95). Sexually loaded comments were observed in the public commentary as they stated that they “*won’t mind to take a risk for a night*” with the female offenders. The online commentary also made statements such as “*she is glowing. When are they introducing conjugal visits?*” These statements play directly in the sexualisation of female offenders by the public and the media. Women who commit murder are further observed as being both temptresses and manipulators who make use of their sexuality to commit their crimes (Bond-Maupin, 1998:31; Dastile, 2010:96; Estep, 1982:153). Public intellectuals, therefore, stated that women who commit murder tend to be painted as being mysterious beings such as “*black widows*”, “*femme fatales*” and “*vamps*”, which often carries the belief that these women are “*sexy*” individuals who are mysteries to men.

The development of sexualised labels might be due to media reports describing women who commit murder in terms of their sexuality as devious and methodical (Collins, 2016:306). The portrayal of female offenders by making use of these mysterious labels tends to make women who commit murder more desirable, especially when they are attractive. The sexualisation of female offenders can be observed clearly in both mainstream literature and entertainment media (Cecil, 2007:305). In many cases, these types of labels tend to be associated with characters such as Natasha Romanoff (nicknamed Black Widow) in the Marvel Cinematic Universe who specialised in murder before becoming an Avenger. She is often dressed in very sexualised clothing and she uses her looks to manipulate and get her way. The representation of such characters tends to blur the line between what is fact and fiction due to the combination of different movie genres (Cavender, 1998:82-83). The blur between fact and fiction directly leads to the development of incorrect opinions as these stories directly influenced public perceptions (Cecil, 2007:305-306; Freeman, 2000:46) because the public believes these portrayals of female offenders are correct and factual (Cecil, 2007:307). Public intellectuals therefore struggle to draw the line between where fact becomes fiction as mainstream media have already influenced the public.

The representation of female offenders in mainstream and entertainment media also leads to the public sphere comparing real female offenders with fictional offenders. One commentator noted that she “*kan [nie] glo wat [sy] leen nie dit klink soos [’n] Hollywood draaiboek*” (cannot believe what she is reading because it sounds like a Hollywood playbook). Another commentator noted that a specific female offender considers herself as “*Marlena Evans*”, a fictional character from the television series *Days of Our Lives*, which further indicates the

ability of entertainment media to influence the court of public opinion by portraying female offenders in a specific way.

The online commentary further described women who commit murder as “*sluts*” and “*hoere*” (whores), which plays into the sexuality of female offenders. The media tend to label women who kill as being pariah femininities as these women are observed as promiscuous (Fielding-Miller et al., 2016; Schippers, 2007:95-96). The statement is supported by public intellectuals as they stated that the media describe women as “*evil whore*”. Public intellectuals also further noted that men are not labelled with similar labels, which contradicts the perspective that men are more promiscuous than females (Fielding-Miller et al., 2016; Schippers, 2007:95-96). The female offenders stated that when their cases were reported on in the media, the media tended to focus on their sexuality and often stated that they were “*sleeping around*”. The main reason for using sexualised commentary can be attributed to the media intentionally using the idea of pariah femininity as a way to draw feelings of fear, anger, shock and disgust from audiences (Kilty & Bogosavljevic, 2019:288). By drawing these emotions, the media outlets ensure that people are talking about specific cases and that other individuals become interested and read their media publications.

6.3.3. Gendered expectations and racial stereotypes

The sex-role theory states that gender personalities can be produced when it is carried on from one generation to another (Carrigan et al., 1985:555). Therefore, women often tend to be labelled negatively due to societal gender roles (Schippers, 2007:95). The sex-role theory is effective when addressing the development of labels due to gendered expectations. The labels often include describing female offenders as mad, bad or sad (Weare, 2013:338).

Online commentary emphasises the belief that women who commit murder tend to disobey their assigned gender and are labelled as bad. Women who commit murder are described as being “*bad mothers*”. These women tend to be treated very harshly by the public by using phrases such as “*Jesus, what a mother*”. There were even calls for these mothers to “*be abused in prison*”. Some commentators even stated that the offender should have rather “*killed herself*” than her children. Another commentator stated that they “*hated*” anyone who murdered their children. One of the main reasons why women who murder their children are treated so harshly by society is because women are expected to be good mothers (Weare, 2013:204) due to their assigned gender roles and genetic makeup, therefore violating the foundations of motherhood (Seal, 2010:2) and betraying the myths and beliefs of motherhood (Huckerby, 2003:151). The betrayal of these gender expectations tends to shock the public, which directly leads to harsh comments and observations.

Because of societal gender roles, women who commit murder are doubly deviant as they tend to disobey gender expectations and the law (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:50; Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:145; Collins, 2016:11; Easteal et al., 2015:1) and are labelled as evil (Qhogwana, 2019:691-692). Public opinion agrees that “*female killers are typically depicted as evil, macabre monsters*”. Similar beliefs are reflected by the female offenders as they stated that “[*the media is*] *painting me as this devil’s child*”. Furthermore, the online commentary tends to make use of labels such as “*monsters*”, “*evil*” and “*devil*” to describe female offenders. One reason for the usage of the above-mentioned labels might be because it makes the structure of a story easier to understand (Morrissey, 2003:17; Pelvin, 2019:351). The statement is confirmed by public intellectuals as they state that “*society and the public are very quick to try and justify what could possibly have driven a woman to commit murder*”. However, public intellectuals themselves do not reflect similar sentiments about women who commit murder. One participant stated, “*I do not view criminals and female murderers as evil monsters who are for example unnatural and unfeminine.... I do not view them as evil, monstrous, or wicked. I do not dehumanise female murderers*”.

The belief that women who commit crime are evil can easily be linked to the evil woman hypothesis. The theory states that when women violate their assigned gender roles, they tend to be treated more harshly than those who do not (Embry & Lyons, 2012:148; Rodriguez et al, 2006:332), which then directly links to the women being labelled as evil (Nagel & Hagan, 1983:135; Spohn & Spears, 1997:32). By using these types of labels, women are often dehumanised and rather linked to evil, mysterious entities such as the devil and demons. The reason for this is that when women are linked to evil entities, the public does not need to think about the reasons for the commission of the crime. Public intellectuals understand that women who commit murder are not evil entities but rather normal individuals who have the ability to make the same mistakes as their male counterparts.

There is a belief that minority women tend to be portrayed as worse than white “traditional” women (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008:3) as white women are observed to not be responsible for their crimes and are more likely to reform than minority women (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:164-165; Huckerby, 2003:152). The above statement is supported by the online commentary data. One commentator noted, “*rich White doctor kills all her children. SA media – feel sorry for her! Poor POC does the same – witchhunt media ensues or there’s DEAD silence*”. The comment above indicates that white middle-class women are observed as being good mothers and women of minority status are not (Huckerby, 2003:152).

The stereotypes surrounding women of minority status are based on and produced by culture, history and society (Brennan, 2006:63). Because of South Africa's background, historical and outdated stereotypes surrounding women who commit murder tend to develop within certain population groups. Therefore, minority women are more likely to be observed as violent and masculine (Brennan, 2006) due to the influence and long-lasting effect apartheid had on the population of South Africa. To eliminate the idea that minority female offenders are more violent, there is a need for South Africans to address their own racial biases. The long-lasting effects of apartheid are reflected in the media commentary as comments are often racially loaded. One commentator stated, "*The white bitch should be extradited to her ancestral land (the land of apartheid colonial racist land thieves) where hanging is still in force to be dealt with accordingly.*" The opinions of the media and the public can be addressed by looking at black feminist theories as they aim to eliminate the notion of power and class in post-apartheid South Africa (Lewis, 2008:5).

Representations of traditional women tend to be heavily reliant on stereotypical beliefs of proper behaviour for women and their place in society (Brennan & Van den Berg, 2009:144). Public intellectuals feel that the traditional gendered expectations observed in the public sphere directly lead to the development of negative labels and stereotypes surrounding women who commit murder. Women are often described as being gentle, nurturing and obedient to their husbands (Easteal, 2001:22; Easteal, Bartels, Holland & Nelson, 2015:1-2; Haffejee et al., 2005:41; Pelvin, 2019:350; Steyn & Hall, 2015:82). Any behaviour that goes against the typical depiction of women, the public sphere tends to experience uncomfortable feelings. Public intellectuals, therefore, noted that female offenders are often labelled in order to "*make ourselves more comfortable*" as it is hard to believe that women have the ability to commit murder due to the social expectations, labels and stereotypes placed on them. As women are observed to be soft, nurturing individuals who look after others, women who commit murder directly contradict the expectations of who and what women are observed to be. By labelling female offenders, the public sphere feels that they have the ability to control "uncontrollable" situations, which has the potential to lead to severe discomfort. The statement above support literature that states the public experience stress when they are confronted with female violence as they cannot process and make sense of the phenomenon (Pelvin, 2019:350; Seal, 2010:1).

6.3.4. Labels regarding female offenders' mental health

The media tend to place emphasis on mental illnesses as women who commit murder are labelled as insane (Noh et al., 2010:120; Pelvin, 2019:352). Online commentary thus noted that women who kill are not sound of mind. One commentator stated, "... *Die vrou is so mal*

soos 'n haas...' (The woman is as crazy as a rabbit). The belief might stem from the age-old perspective which was stated by Lombroso. Lombroso observed that deviant women tend to be mentally ill and they do require treatment for their mental illnesses (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895:43). However, it is important to note that when the statement was made by Lombroso, female criminality was observed as being rare and unheard of due to the time period and the lack of study on the phenomenon. Furthermore, in some cases where women do commit murder, they might suffer from a variety of mental health issues which may have contributed. Some women who commit suffer from illnesses such as BWS (Belew, 2010:770), postpartum 'blues', postpartum depression, postpartum psychosis (Bartol & Bartol, 2017:299-300) and Munchausen syndrome by proxy (Friedman & Resnick, 2007:137).

However, evidence contradicts the statement made by Lombroso that all women who commit murder are mentally ill as modern research indicates that there are a variety of different reasons why women commit murder. Public intellectuals noted, "*I think that each situation varies and will be dangerous possibly to stereotype or to assume that the underlying motive is the same for all women*" and "*one should be careful to consider one single-dimensional reason*". Public intellectuals then identified other potential motives for murder such as personal and financial gain, economic strain, altruistic factors, a culture of violence, self-defence and revenge. Hesselink and Dastile (2015:338) noted that not all female criminality is similar as women also commit murder for a variety of other reasons, which supports the findings from public intellectuals. One main reason for the labelling of female offenders as insane can be due to cultural assumptions and knowledge available to the public regarding women who commit murder (Cavaglioni, 2008:272). However, the labelling of female offenders as being mentally insane is directly dependent on cultural expectations and the gender roles of female offenders. Until cultural and gender stereotypes are addressed and improved, women who commit murder will continuously be labelled as being mentally unstable. Thus, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, there is a dire need to improve societal knowledge of female criminality.

6.3.5. Labels regarding female offenders' appearances

The masculinisation theory states that female offenders become more masculine and violent as they break free from societal beliefs and, in turn, they become more like men (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:31). One of Lombroso's theories is at the heart of the masculinisation theory. Lombroso's theory stated that women who commit crime and go against ideal femininity (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006:31) tend to have more masculine features (Weis, 1976:17). The online commentary reflects similar statements when addressing the appearance of female offenders. The public tends to make comments such as "*haar adams*

appel het 'n appel” (Her Adam’s apple has an apple) with reference to the offenders’ perceived masculine appearance. The perception that female offenders tend to be more masculine very obviously leads to stigmas, expectations and labels of female offenders. A reason that female offenders might be observed as looking more masculine could potentially be due to female offenders “not being attractive” to society in a traditional manner. However, this also once again carries psychological aspects. The public might observe female offenders as being masculine because they do not want to believe such cruel individuals have the ability to be attractive to them. This belief once again plays on the comfort of the public as they may experience discomfort if they observe female offenders as attractive.

Another theory which can be used hand in hand with the masculinisation theory is pretty privilege. Pretty privilege states that people often make judgements of individuals based on their appearances (Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam & Smoot, 2000:408; Talamas, Mavor & Perrett, 2016:1). Findings from public intellectuals stated that “*Women will press the buttons that need to be pressed. You know if I’m cute and pretty and sweet looking and I tell people I’m a Christian. They will not think it was X who killed that person. And they know they will get sympathy*”. This comment therefore addresses the way some female offenders will use pretty privilege to their advantage during their cases. Online commentary further supports the statement by addressing two main ideas of pretty privilege. First, the public commentary tends to be less harsh in their commentary as attractive individuals receive better treatment and more sympathy (Rohanah et al., 2021:190). Comments such as “*she’s beautiful inside and outside*”, “*sal nooit sê sy’s ‘n moordenaar, met daai engel gesiggie nie*” (you’ll never say she is a murderer with that angel face) and “*women are only defending her because she’s pretty. Pretty privilege is real. If she wasn’t good looking, I’m sure most of these comments would be different*”.

In comparison, female offenders are observed to be less attractive; society tends to either treat them normally or be less sympathetic (Rohanah et al., 2021:190). Online commentary noted comments such as “*...this ugly-faced woman!*”, “*What’s wrong with her hair?*” and “*Sy lyk satanisties en vol demone*” (she looks satanic and full of demons). Because of the social expectations of what women have to be, any offender who is addressed as being a traditional, beautiful woman will be treated better as they fulfil society’s expectations of ideal womanhood. Thus, any woman who is observed as being non-attractive and who is an offender threatens the idea of the ideal woman, which will cause the public to treat them more harshly. Therefore, it is evident that attractive individuals are observed to receive better treatment and more sympathy than others (Rohanah et al., 2021:190).

6.3.6. Financially motivated labels

When women commit murder, it is often for financial reasons (Hesselink & Dastile, 2015:338; Kirkwood, 2003:204; Lynch, 2015:41). Therefore, the media tend to place much focus on the financial aspects of a murder, which can be observed when looking at media portrayal of Daisy de Melker and Rosemary Nomia Ndlovu. Daisy de Melker was first referred to as being an “*insurance collector*” (Trapido, 2020) and she was further labelled as a “*black widow*” (Daisy de Melker ..., [sa]). The black widow label is very often also associated with women who murder their husbands or lovers for financial benefit. Because Daisy murdered two of her husbands for their insurance payouts, the media focused on the motive of the crime. Despite De Melker passing away almost 100 years ago, these labels are still associated with her and it set the scene for the labelling process of women who commit similar crimes. This is reflected in Rosemary Nomia Ndlovu’s case. Rosemary murdered her family to obtain their insurance money (Africanews with AFP, 2021; Seleka, 2021) and was labelled as the “*Insurance Killer*” (Maphisa, 2021). The label is very similar to the labels used in Daisy’s case due to the financial undertones. Public intellectuals emphasised similar notions as they stated they have previously heard similar labels in the media, which included “*fortune seekers*”, “*greedy*” and “*gold diggers*”. All of these labels have very strong financially motivated undertones. Similar undertones were reflected in the findings from the court of public opinion as the public opinion placed a strong focus on financially motivated crimes by using phrases such as “*Imagine a rubbish that was never there during your struggle to financial independence comes into your life just to kill you for your money*” and “*Wow she was killing for the meager insurance money pathetic sad*”.

The development of financially motivated comments can be explained when looking at both Marxist and socialist feminism. Marxist feminism states that women often commit crimes due to the fact that they are severely influenced (Lilly et al., 2019:439), exploited and oppressed by capitalism (Lilly et al., 2019:470). Socialist feminism builds on Marxist feminism and states that women tend to be oppressed as well as exploited by economic reductionism (Ferguson, 1999:1). Therefore, women might commit murder due to the fact that their resources have been limited and they need financial assistance to obtain these limited resources. The media therefore observed female offenders as being money-hungry and greedy individuals whose main aim in life was to obtain money. However, in most cases, female offenders might feel impoverished and oppressed by their family or partners as they might be financially dependent on them. Unfortunately, financially motivated labels do not always reflect the true nature of female offending.

It is further important to note that not all women who commit murder due to financial strain do so for financial gain, which contradicts popular media portrayals of “financially motivated murderers”. This can be observed when looking at the case of Zinhle Maditla. She murdered her children as she was unable to look after them (Wahinya, 2021) because she was unemployed and single (I deserve life sentence..., 2019). Public intellectuals further note that “*in South Africa where a woman kills her children because of social economic circumstances she finds herself not being able to care for them, to look after them and then feel that murder is the only way out*”. Literature supports the above perspective that mothers sometimes murder their children because they are not able to care for them (Häefele & Malherbe, 2014:45; Lutya, 2011:259). It is therefore evident that not all financially motivated murders are due to financial gain but rather poverty. When mothers murder their children due to poverty, they are often not labelled with financial undertones but rather as bad mothers (Weare, 2013:204-205). Where women struggle financially and commit murder in order to provide better alternatives to their families, no financially motivated labels were used. Rather, the focus was placed on her being a bad mother. Therefore, the circumstances of each individual crime is also important for understanding the development of labels when it comes to financially motivated crimes.

6.3.7. Comparison of cases leading to the development of labels

The court of public opinion tends to label women who commit murder by comparing them to similar cases committed by men. The media noted that certain female murderers are “*Shades of a female version of Jeffrey Dahmer*”, “*She reminds me of Ted Bundy*” and “*SA’s very own Charles Manson*”. One main reason for the comparison of female offenders to male offenders might be due to the rarity of females who commit murder (Pelvin, 2019:352). Female offending is quite a new phenomenon and, therefore, there are not always similar cases to which the public can compare female offending to make sense of it. It is easier for the public to attempt to understand female criminality by comparing female offenders to cases they are well informed on, despite the gender of the offender. There has also been a general lack of research on female criminality (Heidensohn, 2000:30). Furthermore, the lack of research on female offenders can also be observed in South Africa first because there are fewer female criminologists so the focus is not placed on female criminality. Secondly, there are fewer female offenders than male offenders, which does not justify the need for research on female offenders (Dastile, 2011:288; Scott, 2009:1). Because of this, female criminality is often explained by making use of theories designed to explain male criminality, which tends to be ineffective in explaining female criminality due to gender differences (Dastile, 2011:288-289). Therefore, ineffective labels might also be developed such as the labels mentioned above.

Another important aspect to take note of is the fact that no two female offenders are the same (Agboola et al., 2022). Despite this, online commentators tend to compare female offenders to one another in an effort to explain the crimes due to the rarity as mentioned above. The public tends to make sense of female offending by comparing cases to well-known cases that they already have background and a general understanding of. Furthermore, because of the complexity of female criminality, it is easier for the public to understand cases when looking at already known cases. Therefore, they tend to make comments such as “*The similarities between her and Rose Ndlovu*”, “*Is this Lori Vallow reincarnated?*” and “*Just like Mulalo Sivhidzho before her, #rosemaryndlovu appeared in court for heinous crimes*”. Public intellectuals noted that in order to eliminate the development of labels, it is important to “*steer away from the Black Widow, Rosemary Ndlovu as Daisy de Melke*”. By referring and labelling female offenders by comparing them to other female offenders, incorrect labels tend to be developed because criminality not only differs between men and women but also amongst female offenders (Agboola et al., 2022).

6.4. The reasons behind why opinions might differ

The section that follows discusses the reasons why public opinion and opinions of public intellectuals might differ by addressing the development of certain misperceptions, celebrity statuses, the media sphere and court proceedings.

6.4.1. The influence of the media on the development of public opinion

The media tend to influence the public sphere, which leads to the development of misperceptions and misunderstandings surrounding female criminality (Allen, 2001:40). The above statement is supported by data from public intellectuals as they state that “[*the media*] play a huge role because now; people will form opinions without reading deeper into the story without getting the context of the story”. Therefore, the manner and language used to sensationalise media leads to the development of false facts and information. Public intellectuals further note that “[*the public*] just read the catchy headlines” and the public will believe all of the information reported even if the information is not factual. The media is the main form of communication for the public regarding true life events that concern society. Therefore, the public places their faith in the media to inform them of correct information and therefore they take all media output as fact. The female offenders have also noted that it is important that “[*the media*] needs to be trusted to take information to the people” and thus it is important for the media to report facts. Therefore, reporting false facts leads to the public being misinformed (Allen, 2001:40).

When the public sphere is misinformed, their opinions are harsher surrounding women who kill and potential punishment as offenders are often labelled as being bad and evil (Allen,

2001:40). By making out female offenders as bad and evil, their humanity is stripped from them. Therefore, it is easier for the public to be harsher as they are, to an extent, not observed as human beings. The call for harsher sentences can be observed in the online commentary. Some comments included statements such as “*The evil devil must rot in jail*” and “*#bringbackthedeathpenalty*”. A reason that the public might react to female offenders in such harsh ways is that female offenders are observed as doubly deviant, but due to the violent nature associated with murder, women who commit murder are taken to be extra deviant (Easteal et al., 2015:32). Because women who commit murder go against societal norms, many individuals often feel betrayed and hurt by the act of murder, which can directly lead to the development of harsh statements.

The media sphere has become a platform where the public can share their opinions, which creates networks, movements and a mini-public sphere (Dahlgren, 2012:99; Dahlgren, 2013:401-402). The public therefore noted that “*Social media creates a collective mindset through which the public can unite to take a stand on issues like crime*” and “*there is no excuse for murder*”. However, the literature indicates that the public harbours distorted and exaggerated perspectives of women who commit murder (Gattone, 2012:176).

The main reason why the public harbours distorted opinions is due to media influences. The public will then engage in the shaming of perpetrators on social media as a main form of punishment for these women who commit murder (Coulling & Johnston, 2017:6). The public commentary often made use of statements such as “*No remorse. No emotion. That’s the trouble. No sadness. No shame. No empathy. No anger. Nothing inside. Void*”, which indicates manners in which women are shamed. However, online commentary does not fully agree with the statement above. The media often reflects comments such as “*may you find peace dear*” and “*it’s a crime to take someone’s life but don’t be harsh on her because you don’t know what prompted her to do that*”. One reason for the difference in opinion might be because the online sphere is not one unchangeable group but rather a variety of groups with different opinions who engage with one another. Different groups within the public sphere have different opinions and views based on their history, culture and their surroundings. These differences have the ability to produce a variety of different opinions within the public sphere.

6.4.2. Celebrity status

It has been observed that the media often associates celebrity status with female offenders (Middleweek, 2017:85). The Public intellectuals group noted that in some cases media attention leads to the female offenders becoming a “celebrity” in the media. Public intellectuals stated that “*there have been some female murderers who have almost enjoyed*

being a spectacle in court and getting dressed up”, which has led the offenders to believe that they are some kind of celebrity. In cases such as these, the female offenders tend to be known as “*the criminal celebrity*” (Penfould-Mounce, 2009:92). A female criminal celebrity might exist due to the rarity of female murderers and because of the fascination the media and the public have with them (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002:59). Female offenders are therefore sensationalised by both the media and the public as they awaken a type of curiosity which makes them newsworthy. Therefore, public opinion tends to be heightened in certain cases. The online commentary reflects the existence of female celebrity comments such as “*sly queen*” (slay queens), which is often associated more with commentary when interacting with female celebrities, “*...for some reason thought she was an A list celebrity*” and “*You kill and you become a celebrity in South Africa if you are a woman*”. These types of comments are often observed. Female offenders tend to draw media attention as well as public attention, which is similar to attention celebrities get when something significant happens. Sensationalism associated with the celebrity status of female offenders can develop a bigger media presence and can lead to the releasing of documentaries and movies such as the most recent Showmax films “*Rosemary’s Hitlist*” and “*Devilsdorp*”. The way offenders who have received “*celebrity status*” are often portrayed in such documentaries can directly influence the development of opinions and perceptions in the public sphere. The female offenders tend to further be sensationalised on media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and in newspaper articles where their cases are often discussed, approved or critiqued by the public sphere, similar to when significant events happen in a celebrity’s life.

6.4.3. Court interactions and the media

There is a general belief that women often receive lighter sentences than their male counterparts; the phenomenon is described as the chivalry hypothesis (McCluskey, 2019:43). A public intellectual has noted that the “*court system is still in a way chivalrous*”. They further noted that the court proceedings are chivalrous because “*the system will take everything into consideration because it is maybe a lady with children and she is a nurturer, they will rather go for a softer approach*”. However, the belief is not supported by the findings from the female offenders. The female offenders determined first that “*When I look and not just at my case, but cases that make it to the media, it’s as if the judiciary want to use that podium now to make a point*”. Therefore, the courts will not react chivalrously to high-profile cases as they want to use their cases for deterring purposes. This has the ability to lead to different opinions within the public sphere and public intellectuals as there might be different observations about the sentences and leniency. The female offenders further determined that “*it was on TV, in the media, magazines, newspapers, they were in court and*

everything... I don't believe that [the judges] don't watch. They do watch". It is very important for the judicial system and officials to remain objective and impartial regarding cases they are trialling. Thus, when they do engage with the media regarding cases they are working on, they tend to be directly influenced by public perceptions as it is human nature. However, it is important that all offenders receive a fair trial and if the media influences fairness, it can lead to the development of contradictory opinions between the public opinion and public intellectuals as the public then perceives these women as being guilty in the court of law, when in reality cases were influenced by the media. Public intellectuals further support the statement that media influences the court proceedings of cases as they noted that *"And the judges will say, 'No, we don't read newspapers', but they all do. And I really think that the public opinion can influence trials... do you think if a case gets a lot of media coverage, it's often seen as more important than perhaps others"*. The above arguments therefore state that the chivalry hypothesis does not exist as it is evident that leniency is not provided to women who commit murder (Chase, 2008:45).

6.5. Recommendations

The following recommendations pertain to future research, future responsibilities of criminologists and recommendations for public intellectuals, the media and the public on what their responsibilities are and what measures they can take to prevent the development of labels and to decrease the tension between these three entities.

- Future research should include a public intellectual participant group that is more inclusive of South Africa's demographics to improve the trustworthiness of the study as the study at hand's participant group was not as inclusive as the researcher would have hoped due to lack of interest in participating in the study.
- Future research should include a more inclusive geographic profile of offenders to ensure that the study is not geographically limited.
- When criminologists conduct interviews in correctional centres, extra effort and sensitivity should be given to the treatment of participants and their personal information to build better relationships and trust between offenders and researchers as offenders tend to label all researchers the same once their trust has been broken and they feel like they are being used for the personal gain of the researcher. Offenders should also be provided with the data findings to ensure that they are happy with the way their confidentiality or anonymity was treated.
- Criminologists should make continuous effort to ensure more studies are conducted on female criminality, which will help develop a better understanding of the phenomenon as well as more theories to properly explain female criminality. In

future, this can eliminate the development of labels as female offending is no longer looked at through the same lens as male criminality. By further developing a better understanding of female criminality, less harmful labels and language will be used to describe women who commit murder.

- Measures should be taken by the public intellectual such as speaking openly about the harmful nature that labelling might have on the mental health as well as the lives of women who commit murder, in a manner which educates the public. They should also address incorrect labels and phrases by means of offering training to the media on using correct terminology to describe women who commit murder.
- The public intellectual should receive training on when it is appropriate to comment on a case in order to avoid making comments about topics which they are not completely informed about as it will be effective in avoiding the development of false information and negative labels within both the media and the public sphere.
- Media outlets, journalists and reporters should receive training regarding the usage of specific language in the reporting of cases which involve women who commit murder as certain words and phrases lead to the development of false labels in the public sphere.
- Media outlets should offer ethical training and update their policies regarding ethical reporting to ensure that their journalists and reporters only report on the facts of a crime and that no speculative remarks or conclusion are used as the public is directly influenced by the manner in which the media reports.
- The public sphere should be educated by public intellectuals about the reality of female criminality and the influence the media has in the production of false information and news. This can be done by offering workshops to the public.
- The public needs to learn to move away from the gendered expectations of women as the public tend to be biased when women contradict these expectations, which leads to the development of negative labels, perceptions and harsh language.

6.6. Summary

The study at hand addresses multiple concerns regarding conflict between the public opinion, the media and public intellectuals regarding the development of labels and perceptions of women who commit murder. Over the past few years, there has been an increase in tension between the public intellectual and the court of public opinion. Central to this tension are labels, phrases and the language often associated with female offenders. The media tend to directly influence the opinions of the public and in some cases have the ability to lead to the development of false information in the public sphere as the main aim of the media is to make a profit. Therefore, they tend to be focused mainly on sensationalism to

ensure their media outlets sell. However, when the public intellectual attempts to correct these labels, their opinions are observed as not relevant by the public. Furthermore, the labelling of female offenders tends to be directly influenced, first, by what is said in the media as it is easier for the public to believe what the media state rather than thinking for themselves. Secondly, exaggerating portrayals of female offenders as being sexy and evil individuals tends to blur the line between fact and fiction, which further influences female offenders to be treated more harshly in the media and public comments. Thirdly, labels used to describe women who commit murder are strongly influenced by gender expectations and personal biases observed in society. When women tend to transgress societal expectations, they are also labelled and treated very harshly by both the media and public opinion. However, the development of these labels often also causes conflict between public opinion and the public intellectual as their opinions tend to differ. The main reason for the development of different opinions is because the media directly influences the court of public opinion and they tend to develop a collective mindset which contradicts the opinions of the public intellectual. Furthermore, due to the rarity of female offenders, the media and the public often tend to paint them as being celebrities, which can further account for the differences in opinions.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical clearance – University of Pretoria

Appendix B: Ethical clearance – The Department of Correctional Services

Appendix C: Letter from Social Worker for Debriefing

Appendix D: Invitation letter

Appendix E: Letter of Informed consent – Public intellectual

Appendix F: Letter of Informed consent – Female offenders

Appendix G: Interview Schedule A – The public intellectual

Appendix H: Interview Schedule B – Female Offenders

Appendix I: Editing certificate

Appendix A



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



16 September 2022

Dear Miss A Espag

Project Title: Women who kill: the public intellectual versus the court of public opinion
Researcher: Miss A Espag
Supervisor(s): Prof F Steyn
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference number: 17010642 (HUM019/0222)
Degree: Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 16 September 2022. Please note that before research can commence all other approvals must have been received.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,



Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof K. Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms D Mokolape

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa
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Appendix B



correctional services

Department:
Correctional Services
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X136, PRETORIA, 0001 Poyntons Building, C/O WF Nkomo and Sophie De Bruyn Street, PRETORIA
Tel (012) 307 2770, Fax 086 539 2693

Dear Ms Espag

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES ON: WOMEN WHO KILL: THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL
VERSUS THE COURT OF PUBLIC**

I wish to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services has been approved

- This ethical approval is valid from **9 September 2022 to 9 December 2023**
- The Area Commissioners where the research will be conducted will be informed of your proposed research project.
- You are requested to contact them before the commencement of your research
- It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your interviewing times
- Your internal guide is Ms Zodwa Hadebe, Psychologist at Kgosi Mampuru Management Area, kindly contact her at 0729175981
- You are not allowed to use photographic or video equipment during your visits however the audio recorder is allowed
- Your identity document/passport and this letter should be in your possession when visiting the Correctional Centres
- You are required to use the terminology used in the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (February 2005) and Correctional Services Act (No.111 of 1998) e.g. "Offenders" not "Prisoners" and "Correctional Centres" not "Prisons".
- You are required to submit your final report to the Department for approval by the Commissioner of Correctional Services before publication (including presentation at workshops, conferences, seminars, etc) of the report.
- Should you have any enquiries regarding this process, please contact the REC Administration for assistance at telephone number (012) 3072894/95/0723271937

Thank you for your application and interest to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services.

Yours faithfully

ND MBULI
Chair: DCS REC
DATE: 09 /09/2022

Appendix C



Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



Department of Social Work & Criminology

Our Ref: Priscilla Gutura
Tel: (012) 420-3162
E-mail: priscilla.gutura@up.ac.za

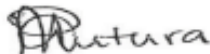
15/02/2022

RE: DEBREFING/ COUNSELLING SESSIONS

To whom it may concern

I, Priscilla Gutura, a social worker with registration number 10-31119, have agree to assist Anika (Student number: 17010642) with debriefing and counselling sessions of participants in her study towards a master's degree in Criminology. I will avail myself in person and virtually to the participants when the need arises.

Kind Regards,



Dr Priscilla Gutura

Appendix D



Researcher: Miss Anika Espag
Contact details: 0725547777
anikaespag98@gmail.com
Supervisor: Prof Francois Steyn
Contact details: 012-420 3734/2030

INVITATION LETTER

My name is Anika Espag and I will be conducting personal interviews as part of my master's research about women who have killed their partners and how people think about them. The study seeks to explore the views between public intellectuals and the court of public opinion regarding women who have committed murder. As a public intellectual you are in an ideal position to provide with valuable first-hand information that will contribute to the positive outcome of the research study.

The interview will span about 30 minutes at your own comfort (venue of choice) or by means of a recorded phone call or online platform. The interview is meant to capture your thoughts and perspective about how women who have killed their partners are treated by the general public and reasons behind the public's perceptions and attitudes. Your response to the interview questions will be kept confidential. Each interviewee will be assigned a code to help ensure that personal identities are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

Please suggest a day and that time that suits you and I will do my best to be available. If you have any enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Best wishes,
Anika Espag

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Appendix E



Researcher: Miss Anika Espag
Contact details: 0725547777
anikaespag98@gmail.com
Supervisor: Prof Francois Steyn
Contact details: 012-420 3734/2030, francois.steyn@up.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT

The University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee requires that a researcher should ensure informed consent from a participant before commencing with the research inquiry. Informed consent entails providing potential participants with information about the following aspects of the research study:

1. Purpose of the study

The study aims to explore the views between public intellectuals and the court of public opinion regarding women who committed murder.

2. Procedures

I, the participant, understand that I am requested to take part in the study about women who committed murder. I understand that I will take part in personal interviews at my venue of preference. I understand that I will be interviewed by a Criminology postgraduate student from the University of Pretoria. I will answer questions relating to the phenomenon women who kill and also share my professional viewpoint about how the media and the public treat women who committed murder. I am willing to spend sufficient time with the researcher in order for her to gather information from me. I allow the researcher to voice record the interviews.

3. Possible risks

I will not be physically harmed, and it is not the intention of the researcher to hurt my feelings or cause any harm whatsoever. The researcher seeks to understand my opinion about cases involving women who committed murder. No form of deception as to the purpose of the research will feature.

Room __, __ Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 __

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Lefapha la Bomotheo

4. Benefits of participation

I understand that there is no compensation, whether financial or material, for participating in the research inquiry.

5. Rights as a participant

I understand that my participation in the research inquiry is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the inquiry at any time without explanation or negative consequences. In the event of me withdrawing from the inquiry, all data collected from me will be destroyed. I understand that there will be no penalty or loss of benefit should I decide not to participate. I understand that I have the right to access the data I have contributed towards the inquiry.

6. Anonymity and confidentiality

I understand that the voice recordings will be used for research purposes only and all information will be kept confidential. Collected data will be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor only. My name and surname, or any other information that could identify me, will not be made known.

7. Contact details

I can contact the researcher, Anika Espag, if I have any questions or concerns relating to the study. The researcher's email address is anikaespag98@gmail.com and her phone number is 0725547777.

8. Data storage

I understand that the research data collected will be stored for a period of 15 years at the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria, as stipulated in their policy, for archiving and possible future research purposes. I understand that the collected data could be used for research outputs in the form of scientific articles and conference papers.

9. Covid-19 protocol

I understand that the researcher will have Covid-19 protocols in place for my protection. I understand that I will need to wear a mask and adhered to social distancing when engaging with the researcher during the research process. I understand that the researcher will adhere to all necessary forms of sanitisation of any items that I might come in contact with. I also understand that I have the right to request that the research take place in a manner where I do not have to have physical contact with the researcher but rather make use of alternative methods of interviewing such as recorded calls.

10. Permission for participation in the research study

I understand what the study is about, and I am participating on a voluntary basis.

Research participant

Date

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Lefapha la Bomo

Appendix F



Researcher: Miss Anika Espag
Contact details: 0725547777
anikaespag98@gmail.com
Supervisor: Prof Francois Steyn
Contact details: 012-420 3734/2030, francois.steyn@up.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent entails providing potential participants with information about the following aspects of the research study:

1. Purpose of the study

The study aims to explore the views between public intellectuals and the court of public opinion regarding women who committed murder. However, the researcher will ask participants questions based on their experiences with the media and treatment from the general public.

2. Procedures

I, the participant, understand that I am requested to take part in the study about women who committed murder and their experiences with the media and public comment. I understand that I will take part in personal interviews at a correctional facility in a time slot that suits me. I understand that I will be interviewed by a Criminology postgraduate student from the University of Pretoria. I will answer questions relating to my experience with how the media and the public treated me. I am willing to spend sufficient time with the researcher in order for her to gather information from me. I allow the researcher to voice record the interviews. I know that the study is voluntary, I will not be forced to participate.

3. Possible risks

I will not be physically harmed, and it is not the intention of the researcher to hurt my feelings or cause any harm whatsoever. I understand that there is a possibility of experiencing emotional distress as a result of the delicate nature of the topic under discussion. While the researcher is equipped with skills to debrief me after the interview, I understand that I can request to be referred to a social worker for further counselling.

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Lefapha la Bomotho

4. Benefits of participation

I understand that there is no compensation, whether financial or material, for participating in the research inquiry. I understand that by participating, or choosing not to participate, my circumstances within the correctional facility will remain unaltered.

5. Rights as a participant

I understand that my participation in the research inquiry is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the inquiry at any time without explanation or negative consequences. In the event of me withdrawing from the inquiry, all data collected from me will be destroyed. I understand that there will be no penalty or loss of benefit should I decide not to participate. I understand that I have the right to access the data I have contributed towards the inquiry.

6. Anonymity and confidentiality

I understand that the voice recordings will be used for research purposes only and all information will be kept confidential. In the event of a translator or social worker, they will also keep all information confidential. Collected data will be accessed by the sole researcher only. My name and surname will not be made known.

7. Contact details

I can contact the researcher, Anika Espag, if I have any questions or concerns relating to the study. The researcher's email address is anikaespag98@gmail.com and her phone number is 0725547777 or I can contact the supervisor through email francios.steyn@up.ac.za

8. Data storage

I understand that the research data collected will be stored for a period of 15 years at the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria, as stipulated in their policy, for archiving purposes. I understand that the collected data could be used for research outputs and future research. The data collected will be stored as a soft copy in PDF format.

9. Covid-19 protocol

I understand that the researcher will have Covid-19 protocols in place for my protection. I understand that I will need to wear a mask and adhered to social distancing when engaging with the researcher during the research process. I understand that the researcher will adhere to all necessary forms of sanitisation of any items that I might come in contact with.

10. Permission for participation in the research study

I understand what the study is about, and I am participating on a voluntary basis.

Research participant

Date

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomo

Appendix G

Interview Schedule A – The public intellectual

Opening

- A. My name is Anika Espag and I am a master's degree student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting a study on how the opinions of the public intellectual interact and contrast the opinions of the public sphere regarding women who commit murder. The main aim of the interview is to highlight some of the stigmas and labels surrounding women who murder, how and why these opinions are formed and how the opinions of the two groups might differ from one another.
- B. I would like to ask you some questions regarding your background, how you became a public intellectual and your experience as a public intellectual regarding opinions you've put forth or come across in your career about women who commit murder.
- C. The interview will take up around thirty minutes of your time. Is this a suitable time frame for you?

Interview transition: First let me start with a few general demographic questions.

A. General demographics information

General demographics

1. May I ask how old you are?
2. What is your preferred gender?

Education level

3. What is your highest education level?
4. What was your study major? (Only if the participant studied at university)

Let us move on to your involvement in the public sphere as a public intellectual

B. Experiences

5. How did you start your journey as a public intellectual?
6. In your opinion why do women commit murder?
7. What labels have you heard or seen used in social media or by members of the public to describe women who commit murder?
8. In your opinion, how do these labels used in social media influence the court of public opinion?

9. Why does the media associate such labels with women who commit murder?
10. Why does the public associate such labels with women who commit murder?
11. Have such labels ever influenced your opinions? How do you react to such labels?
12. How do you think public perception influences women who commit murder?
13. What do you think can be done to prevent public perceptions about these women from forming?

That was my last question. Thank you so much for time to share your opinions with me.

Appendix H

Interview Schedule B – Female offenders

Opening:

- A. My name is Anika Espag and I am a master's degree student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting a study on the opinions of the public and public intellectuals about women in prison. The main aim of the interview is to highlight some of the stigmas and labels surrounding women who commit crimes, how and why these opinions are formed and how the opinions of the two groups might differ from one another.
- B. I would like to ask you some questions regarding your background, how people and the media treat you and how this has influenced your life.
- C. The interview will take up around thirty minutes of your time. Is this a suitable time frame for you?

Interview transition: First let me start with a few general demographic questions.

A. General demographics information

1. May I ask how old you are?
2. What is your population group? (Only ask if the population group is not obvious)
3. What is your nationality?
4. What is your marital status?
5. How many children do you have if you have any?
6. What was your financial situation before you were incarcerated?
7. Were you employed?
8. What is your highest level of education?

Crime committed

9. How long is your sentence and how long do you have left?

(Let us talk more about your experiences with the media and public comment)

B. Experiences

10. Have you ever experienced any labels or opinions from other people as a woman who has committed a crime? If so, could you please provide me with a few phrases or words that you have been faced with as well as how these words made you feel?
11. Was your case reported in the media? If so, what was said about you in the media?
12. How did the opinions of you as reflected in the media make you feel?

13. In your opinion, did these labels and opinions influence the proceedings of your case? If so, could you please explain to me how you feel it influenced you?
14. Do these labels and opinions influence your life? Please elaborate.
15. Do these labels and opinions influence your feelings or your perception of yourself? Could you please elaborate?
16. Do you feel like these labels and opinions will influence your life in the future? Could you please elaborate on your answer?
17. Why do you think some people and (social) media might have these opinions about you and other women who are in the same situation as you?
18. Is there anything that you want to tell me about your experience with the media or what people said about you?

That was my last question. Thank you so much for doing this interview with me.

Appendix I

LET'S EDIT

EDITING CERTIFICATE

03 November 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

DECLARATION: Editing of Dissertation

I hereby declare that the Master of Arts (in Criminology) dissertation of **Anika Espag** entitled "**WOMEN WHO COMMIT MURDER: THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL VERSUS THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION**" has been edited. It is the responsibility of the student to address any comments from the editor or supervisor. The editor shall not be responsible for any subsequent additions or deletions made by the student in their document. Additionally, it is the final responsibility of the student to make sure of the correctness of the dissertation.



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