

**An evaluation of the media
coverage of Aisling Brady McCarthy,
through 'The Boston Nanny' Case:
Distinguishing the differences
between localised, tabloid and
broadsheet Irish print media and
American print media reports.**

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

Signed:

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Abstract

Aisling Brady McCarthy featured in global headlines in January 2013, when she was first charged with the death of a baby which had been in her care for several months, whilst she worked as a nanny in America. Comparable to all murder stories Aisling's case received a high level of attention, as the case had strong evidence weaknesses from the start.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the manner in which Aisling was reported on throughout the 'Boston Nanny Trial', with particular examination of Irish and American print media organisations. My research was centred on a content analysis approach using media framing, coding and tonality assessments.

The data sample involved three Irish print media organisations and one American print media organisation, *The Boston Globe*, *The Irish Daily Mail*, *The Anglo Celt* and *The Irish Independent*. The basis for this data sample selection was to include, a broadsheet, tabloid, American and local example of a print media establishment.

This dissertation analysed data from 2013 until the trial ended in 2015 when Aisling was exempt of the murder charges. The dissertation aims are to determine whether there are any similarities between the Irish and American print media organisations as well as any diversity in the reporting of the 'Boston Nanny Case' by the chosen Irish newspapers.

The content analysis highlighted a wide range of similarities in the Irish and American case coverage with the *Irish Daily Mail* and *The Boston Globe* having increased news coverage in 2015, while *The Irish Independent* and *The Anglo Celt* seen its highest rate of news coverage in 2013.

Overall, the attribution of responsibility frame was the most dominant throughout the data, with the human interest frame utilised most often by *The Anglo Celt*. The tonality of nearly all of the newspapers proved to be generally neutral with *The Anglo Celt* producing the most positive articles concerning Aisling and her case.

The Boston Globe's coverage of the 'Boston Nanny Case' presents a very different interpretation of the mainstream US media, by reporting on the case in a generally neutral way, with some opinion based reports suggesting the evidence surrounding Aisling's case to be faulty. Moreover, *The Anglo Celt*, which was selected as a local print media example displayed some signs of favouritism and a non-objective tone towards Aisling with an early judgement of her innocents.

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I won't forget any of you when I'm famous, promise!

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Like many Irish before her, Aisling Brady McCarthy moved to America in 2002, with the hope of an exciting new adventure and new employment encounters. (Farrell O, 2015) In September 2012, Aisling married Don McCarthy and they began to live a happy life together in America. (Armstrong, K, 2015) Aisling became one of the many undocumented Irish living illegally in America, and it was this status that led Aisling to a job, which many illegal Irish females partake whilst living in America, as a nanny for an American family.

Aisling had worked as a nanny/au pair for the Sabir family in Cambridge, Massachusetts, America, for almost six months before their baby girl, Rehma, became ill. On the day of the baby's birthday, Aisling put her to bed as she noticed she was tired, when sometime later Aisling found the baby was unconscious and an ambulance was rang. Baby Rehma was then rushed to the nearest hospital and within less than a day at the hospital Rehma was diagnosed with Shaken Baby Syndrome by a doctor in the hospital, as severe head trauma was discovered on the baby's skull and the baby girl was declared dead two days later. (Perry C, 2015).

On January 21st 2013, Aisling was arrested and charged with assault and battery of the child, Rehma Sabir. (Wen P, 2015) "As the last person with the infant, Ms Brady McCarthy was ultimately arrested and charged with murdering her." (Perry C, 2015) Aisling's bail was set at a staggering \$500,000, which was set out by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, claiming Aisling was a flight risk due to her illegal immigrant status in America.

By April 2013, Aisling's charges had been updated to the murder of the child and at that stage Aisling had already spent four months in a female federal prison, in the United States. On the evening of the 12th of April the nanny was charged with the murder of baby Rehma, the Attorney General Office statement read, "It is alleged that on 14 January, the child was in the care of the defendant, her nanny. Through their investigation, including interviews with witnesses, police concluded that the defendant had sole custody of and contact with the child during the time

that the child sustained the abusive head trauma injuries that caused her death.” (O'Carroll S, 2013)

Aisling spent a total of 28 months in prison, for a crime she did not commit. “The narrative was clear — a crazy illegal Irish nanny had beaten a child to death.” (Breslin J, 2015) According to Aisling’s lawyers the police rushed to establish the cause of the baby’s death and the medical evidence was never backed up by fact; as it turns out the baby’s injuries were sustained when abroad in India with her parent or due to on-going medical conditions the baby girl already had, rather than in the care of Aisling. Further medical evidence, which was also ignored at the start, exposed the baby as malnourished, as well as having other minor medical conditions. The main doctor at the head of the children’s hospital decided on Shaken Baby Syndrome, with no other examinations carried out, once arrested Aisling was continuously denied bail until May, 2015. (Breslin J, 2015)

Aisling’s defence lawyers were asking for a constant review of the medical records which led to the office of the Medical Examiner taking the unusual step and re-reviewed the medical evidence. Before the review the baby’s death was a cause of ‘blunt force head trauma’ and after the review the cause of death was ‘undetermined’. The judge over the case claimed, “she had additional information not available to her prior to reaching the original conclusion – such as additional transcripts of police interviews, grand jury testimony, additional medical records and additional lab tests.” Aisling was deported back to Ireland and cleared of the murder in September, 2015. (Perry C, 2015).

In January of 2016 reports began to surface that Aisling would take legal action over what had happened to her through the American legal system. “She now wants to see the doctor who first implicated her regarding Rehman’s death, Dr Alice Newton, and Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan held accountable for her imprisonment. ‘They weren’t just wrong in my case, they were reckless”, McCarthy told *the Boston Globe* in an interview reported on by *the Irish Times*. (The Irish Times, 2016)

In February, 2016, a new lawsuit was filed against the Cavan nanny. "Aisling Brady McCarthy is being sued for wrongful death by the parents of the deceased one-year-old girl she cared for, five months after US prosecutors dropped murder charges against her," this issue is yet to be resolved. (Carswell S, 2016)

The media can have an impact on public opinions and beliefs of high impacting news stories, as the media tend to be a key source of information for the public. The general public tend to know very little about legal cases such as Aisling's case. Therefore, the information they receive on the case or on Aisling shapes the readers views and opinions of the subject. "The media – television, the press and online – play a central role in communicating to the public what happens in the world. In those cases in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become particularly reliant upon the media to inform them." (Happer C and Philo G, 2013, p231) In this instance most information came from the main stream print and televised media establishments in Ireland and America.

Granted the media can be influential on the general public, some may interpret media differently than others. Print media readers from Ireland may read the media surrounding Aisling case from a different perspective than the American newspapers audience. "These messages are not received uniformly by all audiences, and the level of influence that they have varies greatly." (Happer C and Philo G, 2013, p236).

Although female offenders have been analysed in other studies, as well as wrongful convictions, there is a clear gap in a specialised case such as Aisling's case. As Aisling case was extremely high profile in the media, in both Ireland and America, the media coverage concerning a female offender turned wrongful conviction warrants a media examination. The case has never been analysed through the media coverage she received, as it is still a very recent case. Research has been carried out on a number of similar cases and on areas which concern Aisling's case.

Studies by Black (2009) look exclusively at the representation of female offenders in Irish print media, comparable to this dissertation Black looks at four newspapers and uses a content analysis approach for her study. Black highlights categories in which female offenders appear in, such as, "mother, sexual, mad". (Black L, 2009, p28). Black offers an uncommon study of the Irish media.

American studies, which are the equivalent to Black's analysis on Irish female offenders have also been created by Pauline K. Brennan and Abby L. Vandenberg (2009), who have examined female offenders, concentrating on race and ethnicity, within front page American media, using a content analysis concentrating on two major American newspapers. The study highlighted that, "Few have considered how a female offender's race/ethnicity may impact media coverage. Such a consideration is important given the prevalence of negative racial/ethnic stereotypes in American society." (Brennan & Vandenberg, 2009, p164).

An extensive breakdown of the literature surrounding this study is completed in Chapter 2. Many areas are analysed in the literature review, including female offenders, female offenders influenced by female stereotypes and female gender roles within the media, Shaken Baby Syndrome, media framing literature, racial bias within the media and literature surrounding media influence within wrongful convictions will also be examined for this dissertation.

This dissertation will evaluate the print media coverage Aisling received through her trial with the selected print media analysed on numerous levels, American, Irish broadsheet, Irish tabloid and localised Irish print media, while three key years will be examined through this study; 2013, 2014 and 2015. The aim of this dissertation is to illustrate the similarities and differences between the different print media outlets and discover the media frames and tones which were used by the print media when Aisling was first arrested, during Aisling's trial and when the charges were dropped against Aisling in 2015.

Like many studies relating to media conduct and representation, questions will be answered using a content analysis approach. Firstly a data sample will be

collected from 2013 till 2015 with the newspapers which were selected, *The Irish Independent*, *The Anglo Celt*, *The Irish Daily Mail* and *The Boston Globe*. The chosen articles were sourced from *Lexus Nexus* and *Irish Newspaper Databases*, while *The Boston Globe* articles were sourced from the *Boston Globe Archives*. The search term which will be used through the database is "Aisling McCarthy Brady" or "Boston Nanny", as all articles will include Aisling's name within the articles.

The framing theory will be the foundation of this research, by using the framing theory, the overall tone and character of each article can be understood. "Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue." (Chong D & Druckman J, 2007, p104) Four news frames will be selected from Seon-Kyoung Ana & Karla K. Gowerb (2009) content analysis study on news crisis and news frames. These frames are; human interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame and the attribution of responsibility frame. A detailed methodology account can be found in chapter three of this study, which further outlines the methodology process.

The media coverage surrounding Aisling throughout her trial illustrates a diverse range of views from different media organisations. In both Irish and American law, everyone is entitled to a fair trial. "One of the most sacred principles in the American criminal justice system, holding that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty. In other words, the prosecution must prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, each essential element of the crime charged." (Legal Information Institute, 2015)

Nevertheless, what happens when the accused becomes a part of a trial by the media? The trial by media can have influential effects on the general public, resulting in a negative or positive result for the accused in regards to their legal case. "The knowledge that the transformation of the sober and impartial investigation of guilt into a grotesque media "carnival" could probably happen nowhere in the Western world other than the United States reminds us again of the distinctiveness of First Amendment jurisprudence" (Phillipson G, 2007, p16).

Therefore, in my opinion, a case like Aisling merits a great deal of investigation. How the media coverage changed throughout Aisling's trial will illustrate what information the general public received about Aisling's trial from the print media. Moreover, how the media coverage differed in Irish broadsheet, tabloid and localised print media and American print media will highlight the differences and similarities each had.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Female Offender Representation

Brennan and Vandenberg, conducted a study on female offenders, concentrating on race and ethnicity, within front page American media. The main objective of this study is whether the race or ethnicity of a female offender affects her image within the media. The literature from which this study derives from suggests that white female offenders sometimes get excused for their crimes easier than if the offender is of a minority. The data analysis examined *the New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, due to their wide readership. "We found that stories about white female offenders were more likely to contain excuses for their alleged or actual offenses and were, therefore, more likely to take on an overall favourable tone than stories about minority female offenders." (Brennan & Vandenberg, 2009, p141) The study sets minorities in opposition to white female offenders and tends to see Black Americans as the other. Unsurprisingly, the results illustrated the fact that black female offenders and ethnic minorities are shown in a more negative light within front page American print media, rather than white female offenders. (Brennan & Vandenberg, 2009, p164) Brennan and Vandenberg highlight some warranted research in their study, although their methodology and chosen characteristics worked, perhaps the range of articles which were chosen could have benefited from more newspaper scope, since only two newspapers were selected for the research. This dissertation will highlight a different race, the Irish race living in America. Aisling Brady McCarthy was an illegal immigrant in America, since moving there in 2002. Therefore, this dissertation will highlight how illegal Irish female offenders are portrayed by the media in America, anticipating that illegal immigrants will be portrayed negatively by America's print media.

Lynsey Black (2009), examined female offenders within Irish media, and the repetition of these females. Following on from Brennan and Vandenberg research into offenders in American media, research on offenders within the Irish media is

also fundamental in this dissertation research. Black's study was a content analysis of four high volume newspapers in Ireland, using a sample of each newspaper over a month and applying coding to reach her conclusions. Black's methodology is thorough, and in turn this makes the data analysis results detailed and comprehensive. "As highlighted in the literature review, women are often presented in simplistic terms pre-ordained by society; it can be seen that the representation of female offenders in Irish newspapers shares many of these limitations." (Black, L, 2009, p55). The study suggests that female offenders are much less likely to appear in the media than male offenders and when they do appear they were placed under certain categories, such as "mother, sexual, mad". (Black, L, 2009, p28). It will be interesting to see if Aisling appears under any of the roles which were found from Black's study. "As expected, the Irish Times carried few of these headlines. The Irish Daily Star featured the largest number, also expected, due to the emotive nature of much tabloid reporting and their penchant for gripping headlines (Conboy, 2006)." (Black, 2009, p33) Interestingly, Irish tabloids illustrated the most interest in female offenders. My own study will also compare tabloids to broadsheets in the Irish print media, therefore, our results could be somewhat similar. Black validates the influence the media can have on its audience saying, "The press is an influential institution; it must therefore engage in accurate representation," so it is vital that media representations are correct and balanced for its audience. (Black L, 2009, p56). Resembling this study, Aisling's media coverage over the Boston Nanny trial should be represented accurately and inaccuracy or favouritism will be noted.

Rachael E Collins (2014), produced a content analysis on Canadian newspapers concerning female offenders. "Media sensationalism around female violence and aggression is not a novel phenomenon; women and girls who break the law have long captured the attention of mass audiences (Chesney-Lind and Irwin, 2008)." (Collins, 2014, p1) In Collins' study the stereotypically depictions of women were analysed just like Kathleen Evans (2012) study on female and male offenders. Collins points out that females are assumed as the victim, therefore, when they fall into the offending category they are treated much more harshly than their

male counterparts. "Female offenders who have fallen from grace and are seen as violators of gender norms can be punished more harshly than their male counterparts." (Collins, 2014, p3)

A mixed method approach was utilised by Collins in this study and four cities in Canada were chosen while local papers were also selected and covered. The dates and samples were selected randomly by Collins, "In total, 1190 articles were collected from 480 newspapers." (Collins, 2014, p4) Interestingly, in the coding system and coding words were chosen with a detailed summary of the words meaning given in relation to its context in the media articles which were analysed. "The main goal of a CDA is to describe the nature of these messages and to shed light on the nature of the portrayal put forward for offenders and victims who are both men and women." (Collins, 2014, p7) There was a contrast in the language used when describing female offenders in comparison to male offenders. As noted previously by Collins in the study, the media seem to be more critical of female offenders. Moreover, the research results tend to improve this argument, "Articles describing female offenders were significantly more likely to contain language describing crime as being everywhere (main effect of offender gender: $F(1, 1178) = 13.75$; $p < 0.001$). The same articles also mentioned the offender's history of crime (main effect of offender gender: $F(1, 1178) = 11.43$; $p < 0.001$) and occupation (main effect of offender gender: $F(1, 1178) = 9.00$; $p < 0.003$) less than articles describing male offenders." (Collins, 2014, p8) Another noteworthy point, is that in comparison to the male offenders, female's appearance was generally commented on by the media, as well as the sexualisation of females within media reports. Sexualisation examples such as, "terms like 'bombshell bandits' and 'beauty and bullets' to portray a fantasy depiction of the sexy bad girl with long white gloves and fuchsia lips. This sexualisation was strictly reserved for women." (Collins, 2014, p10) This study will expectantly show some similarities to Aisling's depictions within the Irish and American media as a female offender or perhaps some contrasting points as Aisling was found innocent of the crime in 2015.

Male representation within the media will also be examined in order to improve the research of this dissertation. Kathleen Evans (2012) study examines "Media

Representations of Male and Female 'Co-Offending': How female offenders are portrayed in comparison to their male counterparts", this study highlights a female offender case, "nursery worker Vanessa George was taken into custody on the suspicion of possessing indecent images of children". (Evans K, 2012, p12) The study demonstrates the role of women within society, and the stereotypical roles they play. Women are maternal, mothers, caring and nurturing, thus, the author states that the female offender in question had broken two laws, a legal law of their crimes and the laws which surround women, how women should act within society, and how they are viewed stereotypically by society. The paper found that not all media could be accused of gender bias in terms of male and female offenders, but it was definitely a concern. "It highlights the potential within this method to actively seek out those suggestions of female inequality at the risk of disregarding other issues which may be of relevance". (Evans, 2012, p17) Aisling's media portrayal may or may not be stereotypically depicted within Irish and American print media, nonetheless, this is an issue worth examining.

Female Offenders influenced by Female Stereotypes and Female Gender Roles

Brenda Russell (2013), illustrates the stereotypes and gender roles which surround female offenders. As Russell points out society still sees female crimes as unusual and uncommon, although there has been a significant rise in female offenders over the past decade. Social constructions within society leave a question mark over female offenders, "Our social norms dictate that women are not dangerous - that they do not commit crimes - and the thought of a female offender conflicts with prescribed gender roles: aren't women supposed to be nurturing and passive?" (Russell B, 2013, p1). In the past women have been positioned as the victim and men as the offenders, this is slowly changing within the modern society, with the literature on the subject of female offenders on the rise and vaster than ever before. This literature suggests a number of variations between male and female offenders, "In our long history of gender based norms, we cannot ignore the influence of history, politics, culture, legislation, and other contextual forces" (Russell B, 2013, p4) Moreover, Russell states that women who commit crimes are judged by the justice system through the societal female

stereotypes which exist. Perhaps they are prosecuted more harshly, as women are not normally criminals. Therefore the media may also treat them differently to male offenders, "This book provides an evidence based approach of how female offenders are perceived in society and how this translates to differential treatment within the criminal justice system and explores the ramifications of such differences." (Russell B, 2013, p4)

Georgie Ann Weatherby, Jamie Blanche and Rebecca Jones (2008), produced a paper on The Value of Life: Female Killers & the Feminine Mystique. The paper suggests that female murders are infrequent within society, and when a case emerges, society and the justice system seem much more critical of their punishment, in comparison to male offenders. The study states, "Research suggests that this discrepancy could be based on the cultural norms surrounding the view of women as inherently nurturing and feminine". (Weatherby, Blanche, Jones, 2008, p1) Women are judged more harshly if their crime is said to be unfeminine, such as crimes concerning children. Another noteworthy difference between male and female offenders is the use of imagery which is used by the media for female offenders. "When the crimes are especially heinous and against perceived female norms, the court system, media, and public come down exceedingly hard on these unnatural and doubly deviant criminals." (Weatherby, Blanche, Jones, 2008, p1) The media tend to quickly identify the accused women as either mad or bad, and try to convince its audience to think similarly. The authors believe that even within today's society women are put into old fashioned categories and stereotypes, "They are supposed to act, dress, and present themselves in every way possible as a lady. Such gender stereotypes that can be found, even in today's time, is that a woman should be a nurturing mother, faithful to her family, and ultimately subservient to her husband" (Weatherby, Blanche, Jones, 2008, p2) Since females are seen as the least likely to commit serious crimes, when these crimes do occur, the media and public reaction is immense according to this study, as it is seen as un-characteristic within society norms.

This 2008 study selected newspaper articles from two national papers and two local papers, where the case study crimes were committed. The articles were on the subject of the case of Aileen Wuornos a female offender in America. The study analysed a number of theories, including the labelling theory, anomie theory and the chivalry theory. (Weatherby, Blanche, Jones, 2008, p5-6) The labelling theory produced the media stereotypes which would be anticipated. Aileen Wuornos was a lesbian, and her sexuality was highly concentrated on by the media. Her image was also commented on by some American media, "Tall and masculine-looking...the women wore white T-shirts with the sleeves cut out and no brassieres." (GA. Weatherby, J. Blanche, R. Jones, 2008, p8) Overall the articles, which were analysed on Aileen Wuornos the offending female, highlighted media influence on public opinion. In addition, the context in which the woman was reported on can be viewed as discriminating. "However, it can be concluded that it was very questionable that a majority of the newspapers continuously reported irrelevant facts and opinions about each case. Instead of reporting about the facts and evidence that are pertinent to the rulings of each case, the media decided to mention divorce, sexuality, occupations, educational levels, physical descriptions, and perceived femininity levels of the woman which ultimately should not have any bearing on the actual sentence" (Weatherby, Blanche, Jones, 2008, p10)

Shaken Baby Syndrome

When Aisling was charged with the murder of Rehman Sabir, the doctors initially said the baby's death was due to Shaken Baby Syndrome. Throughout the literature of Aisling's case, which is mainly media articles, the case is compared with that of Louise Woodward. Louise was a young British woman, who was also charged with the murder of the baby which she took care of for an American family. The diagnosis of this baby's death was also Shaken Baby Syndrome to begin with. (BBC NEWS, 1997) Jojo Moyes wrote an article on Louise Woodward's case, which was not a typical timeline or review of her case. The journalist suggests that the imagery of her within the media, was key to her case. Interestingly, Woodward was portrayed in a very positive light by the British

media, she was a young girl, who wore very little make-up, and couldn't eat prison food because she was a vegetarian. In contrast to this view the American media seen her as the polar opposite, "She was, according to the prosecution, a "little actress", a cool, composed, nightmare nanny determined to do whatever she had to do to get off her charge." (Moyes J, 2011) This difference of image of Louise Woodward is noteworthy in terms of my own research. This article exemplifies the support Louise got from the British media and the slating she received from the American media. Whether or not my research will have the same outcome is yet to be determined; in terms of the Irish and American media coverage differences.

Medical evidence and medical reports were the focus point of many of the articles which surrounded Aisling's Case. The medical condition, Shaken Baby Syndrome, was attributed on both Aisling and Louise Woodward in the cause of both baby's deaths. Shaken baby was once accepted by a world of medical professionals but doubt over this medical condition is now on the rise. *The New York Times* explain the growing doubts, "While many doctors, maybe most, still swear by the diagnosis, a growing number have lost faith. Not that they doubt that some babies have been abused. But these sceptics assert that factors other than shaking, and having nothing to do with criminal behaviour, may sometimes explain the triad." (Haberman C, 2015) Some medical experts are now concerned that this diagnoses is leading a number of miscarriages of justice for parents and child carer cases. At the time of Louise Woodward's case, Dr. Patrick Barnes, a neuroradiology on the case in 1997, told a *New York Times* report "I was adamant that it had to be child abuse, shaken baby syndrome". (Haberman C, 2015) However, since the Woodward case in 1997, Dr. Barnes has revised his views on the case and the evidence of Shaken Baby Syndrome. The doctor now believes that other reasons may form this type of head trauma, "Other doctors who share his outlook question whether just shaking an infant, without resorting to other forms of violence, could in fact produce the triad's tell-tale signs." (Haberman C, 2015) Nevertheless, it is a medical question which can only remain unanswered as the theory of shaken a baby understandably will never be accurately tested. Shaken

Baby Syndrome was a term used repeatedly by the print media through Aisling's case. It will be noteworthy to examine how the medical evidence was used by the media through her case, and whether any newspaper questioned the shaken baby syndrome before Aisling was found not guilty of the baby's death.

"For nearly 40 years, prosecutors have been winning convictions on charges ranging from child endangerment to murder based on the hypothesis of Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) (Committee on Child Abuse & Neglect, 1993), recently renamed Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) (Christian 2009)." (Luttner, 2014, p1). Susan E. Luttner, provides an argument surrounding shaken baby syndrome. The paper looks at the medical evidence which surrounds some of the court cases which also involve Shaken Baby Syndrome. The main motive surrounding the shaken baby argument is the evidence it provides, and as Luttner points out, there have been many cases diagnosed by medical staff "even if the child has no bruises, abrasions, grip marks, or other external signs of battering." (Luttner, 2014, p1) Shaken Baby Syndrome divides the medical world and evidence shows it has led to many miscarriages of justice. Furthermore, some doctors disputed that such injuries could even come from falls, even dramatic falls down stairs. Therefore, the injuries that come as a result of Shaken Baby Syndrome are believed, by some doctors, to be connected with human force and abuse. (Luttner, 2014, p3)

In this paper, Luttner discusses the Louise Woodward case and the impact Shaken Baby Syndrome had on her case. Louise Woodward's case was labelled "The Boston Nanny Case", as Louise was a British Nanny living in Boston, looking after 8-month-old Matthew Eappen. "Like many children in shaking cases, Matthew had a skull fracture that could not be dated. He also had a healing wrist fracture that no one could explain and a fatal brain injury." (Luttner, 2014, p6) Many doctors within the trial testified that Woodward could not have shaken the baby so forcefully to cause such traumatic head injuries. John Plunkett, was one of the doctors who protested the claims against Woodward. He stated that the injuries which the 8-month-old baby received were so severe they could have come from a car crash or a fall from a two-story building, therefore Woodward had not

shaken the baby to death. (Luttner, 2014, p6) Since Woodward's case in 1997, many medical associations have made new statements regarding the diagnosis, with the American Academy of Paediatrics updating their stance on the issue in 2001, stating, "These clinical signs of shaken baby syndrome are immediately identifiable as problematic, even to parents who are not medically knowledgeable (19). However, depending on the severity of clinical signs, this may or may not result in caretakers seeking medical attention. These nonspecific signs are often minimized by physicians or attributed to viral illness" (Luttner, 2014, p7)

To conclude, Luttner states that the theory surrounding Shaken Baby Syndrome is resulting in many miscarriages of justice. In addition, those who believe in the syndrome have very little records to back up their theory, they tend to rely on their own opinions as well as likeminded opinions. "Historically, courts have endorsed the theory. Fortunately more recently, courts have been more questioning, bringing judicial decision- making more closely in line with science." (Luttner, 2014, p13) Luttner's paper is undoubtedly on the side of caution when it comes to the diagnoses of Shaken Baby Syndrome. As an argument and critique of the medical terms, only cases siding with her view were chosen. However, this type of literature is central to understanding Aisling's case and the media attention she received throughout her court case, as the syndrome was central to Aisling's murder charges.

Media Framing

Tankard's study (2001) discusses perspectives of media and our understanding of the media as well as the impact media framing can have within society. "News framing can eliminate voices and weaken arguments, that the media can frame issues in ways that favour a particular side without showing an explicit bias, and that defining the terms of a debate takes one a long way toward winning it." (Tankard, 2001, p95) Tankard notes the difference between media framing and bias, which in the past were seen as similar effects. Framing unlike bias can be connected to cognitive beliefs, whereas, media bias is very recognisable, while media framing holds a deeper concept. "Framing recognises the ability of a text-or a media presentation-to define a situation, to define the issues, and to set the

terms of a debate.” (Tankard, 2001, p96). It is possible that through Aisling’s case the media framed some articles surrounding Aisling and the case. It will be interesting to see how Aisling and her case were portrayed during the trial and what media frame was most utilised throughout the data sample.

As this study assesses the evaluation of media coverage of Aisling throughout her trial, the influence of the media must also be assessed. The previous reading illustrates mass media effects and the significance of media framing. DA Scheufele (1999), states media framing relates to the “operationalized on the basis of the social constructivism. Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers and viewers use to interpret and discuss public events.” (Scheufele, 1999, p105) Framing comes in two terms; media framing and personal framing. Different media outlets are bound to frame media events differently to suit their media audience and readers. “Media frames also serve as working routines for journalists that allow journalists to quickly identify and classify information and “to package it for efficient relay to their audiences.” (Scheufele, 1999, p106) Through the range of print media outlets which will be analysed for this research project, the type of media framing is expected to illustrate diverse article approaches of Aisling’s trial.

In attribute agenda setting, priming and the media’s influence on how to think about a controversial issue, framing is defined quite broadly by theorists, such as Entman, who describes it as “framing as a process of selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more salient), while others appear to be quite different (e.g. Iyengar’s [1991] episodic and thematic frames; Gamson and Modigliani’s [1989] framing as an interpretive package or a story line).” The means in which the story is framed will be how the audience are expected to portray it. (Kim, Han, Choi, Kim, 2012)

Framing tends to associate itself with one other model of media communication; agenda setting, this model is “the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).” (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p11) Agenda setting as set out in this paper suggests that the media tend to give

some events more attention than others, which in turn makes the audience regard some events more news worthy, and important than others. The data analysis on Aisling's media coverage throughout her trial will examine agenda setting by the newspapers. "Both frame building and agenda building refer to macroscopic mechanisms that deal with message construction rather than media effects. The activities of interest groups, policymakers, journalists, and other groups interested in shaping media agendas and frames can have an impact on both the volume and character of news messages about a particular issue." (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p12). The character of a news story is evident from most articles, whether that is positive or negative. Like this study the representation of Aisling's character will be examined through this dissertation.

Racial Media Bias

Rachael E Collins (2014) examines whether or not racial bias is used within Canadian print media. In this case the study looks at the racial bias which is used towards victims and offenders of crime stories in Canada's print media. It is a content analysis, with similar qualities which I hope to bring to my content analysis. As the author of this study points out, crime is popular and it sells. From the outset the study suggests that the Canadian media frame their crime news stories in order to secure power within their own class, and higher powers. Interestingly, Collins states that the media tell us who to blame for the crimes. It was not surprising that studies illustrated representation of minorities in a negative light. "Studies have repeatedly found that visible minorities are underrepresented in portrayals highlighting positive roles (e.g. positions of government, education or corporations), but are overrepresented in portrayals of depicting threats to social order, including criminal behaviour (Larson, 2006)." (Collins, 2014, p79) Aisling was part of a minority group whilst living in America as she was an undocumented illegal immigrant in America, which may lead to a negative portrayal of her in the American print media. Canadian print media tended to put immigrants and crime within the same category. (Collins, 2014) It would be noteworthy to see if Aisling was treated as a minority by the American print media throughout her trial.

Media Influence within Wrongful Convictions

Julie M. Krupa, conducted a study on the representation of wrongfully convicted women as she believes that women who are wrongfully convicted of their crime are highly underrepresented in many ways, in comparison to males. The Innocence Project is part of this study with Krupa stating that although female crime has risen significantly over the years, men are still given more prominence with their wrongful conviction cases. "The number of female prisoners in state and federal prisons increased an alarming 832% between 1977 and 2007 (West and Sabol, 2008). Although the Innocence Project has exonerated over 250 people, only four of them have been women." (Krupa, J, 2012, P94) The issue of female representation in media broadcasting and print media is noted by the author. Krupa's study selected four exonerated females and analysed the amount and the type of media coverage they received after the Innocence Project. The selected media coverage included "examining newspaper articles in the local area of the wrongfully convicted, the film *The Exonerated* and reports conducted by the media network CBS." (Krupa J, 2012, P121) Just like previous literature has pointed out, media articles concerning convicted women, or in this case exonerated females, tend to stereotype women who featured in crime. The four women were seen as having low intelligence and were of low to middle class, which resulted in very little media coverage of their cases. "This is evidence of a class bias among exonerated women and in level of publicity in the media." Although the four female cases are analysed accurately, the data is small and perhaps a bigger scale study would result in further findings concerning exonerated females, as the author points out, the literature is limited in this field. (Krupa J, 2012, P124)

Lorenzo Johnson, served 16 and a half years for a crime he did not commit. He wrote a blog for *The Huffington Post* highlighting the role the media play on wrongful convictions. Johnson, claims that mainstream media can sometimes be the help a wrongly convicted person needs, as they bring the injustice to a wider community. "In many cases, brave investigative reporters have generated interest in prisoners' innocence, helping them to obtain investigations, new trials, and

exonerations.” (Johnson L, 2015). However, unfortunately Johnson feels the media are very selective in the cases they give attention too as he suggests that the media are fearful of cases like his own, “media will not touch a claim of innocence by prisoners who can show evidence of our innocence unless we are first granted a new trial, DNA excludes us, or we were just exonerated.” (Johnson L, 2015) Johnson makes a comparison between his own case and the Amanda Knox case. However, the startling difference between these two cases is the media coverage they both received, although both cases had the same depth and inequality to them, Johnson case received very little media coverage. Both Johnson and Knox’s’ cases were overturned, but after months of freedom for them both, their cases were reversed. He went back to prison quietly and received no media attention, whilst Amanda Knox’s case made front-page national American news. Johnson states “My legal team has now unearthed evidence, hidden by the prosecution, that prosecutors knew of my innocence for over 18 years. Still no media attention.” Although Johnson makes some interesting points about mainstream media representation of wrongful convictions, his view could be somewhat tainted from his overlooked treatment by the main stream American media. (Johnson L, 2015)

The above literature corresponds with Julie M. Krupa study on the representation of wrongfully convicted women. Both readings illustrate that the media can be very selective when it comes to the case they choose to represent in the media. More research would further expand these types of studies, as a larger scale of wrongful convictions could be analysed, in order to produce in depth results.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Overview

Engaging with the above literature review, it will be beneficial to compare many different print media organisations, in order to achieve an objective result.

Aisling's case received a lot of media attention in both Ireland and America.

Therefore, American and Irish newspapers will be examined within this study. The literature review also highlights comparative studies which involve the representation of female offenders through the print media. Aisling's case has not yet been analysed in any type of research study to date.

Firstly, a content analysis will be clarified in relation to this study. Furthermore, the time frame will be specified along with the print media organisations, four newspapers which have been chosen for this study. Objective one involves the application of four selected news frames, which will illustrate the most dominant frame throughout the data sample. Objective two will examine a number of positive and negative phrases using a coding system to determine the use of each phrase. Objective three will analyse the tonality of the data sample, based on three tones, positive, negative and neutral. These steps will ultimately lead to the formation of the content analysis which will be discussed through a comparable study.

Catherine Happer and Greg Philo (2013) state, "The media – television, the press and online – play a central role in communicating to the public what happens in the world. In those cases in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become particularly reliant upon the media to inform them. That is not to say that the media simply tell us what to think—people do not absorb media messages uncritically". (Happer and Philo, 2013, p321) It is imperative to critically examine the mainstream media as they are the informers of public news issues. They create a view on topical issues and set the terms of these issues within the public sphere. "But they are key to the setting of agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects, which operates to

limit the range of arguments and perspectives that inform public debate.” (Happer and Philo, 2013, p321)

Content Analysis

The research method which has been applied to this study is a content analysis.

According to Stemler (2001) “Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Berelson, 1952; GAO, 1996; Krippendorff, 1980; and Weber, 1990).” Content analysis is branded as a reliable form of research which facilitates large amounts of data, and allows researchers to focus on a certain niche, organisation or a person, if needs be. Content analysis allows researchers to find trends and comparable details within a data sample, which corresponds to this studies outline and methodology. (Stemler, Steve, 2001)

Historically content analysis can be dated back to Berelson’s Content Analysis in Communication Research, in 1952 when according to Berelson a “Content Analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest of communication”. (Berelson, 1952)

Data Sample

The overall design of the proposed research will take a content analysis approach, meaning I will use methods of sampling, coding, framing and an over-all comparable analysis.

The data sample will be conducted from four newspapers in total, these newspapers were chosen due to their high and similar circulation in both countries. One newspaper was chosen from America and three were chosen from the Irish print-media establishments. *The Boston Globe* was selected to represent the American print-media, *The Irish Independent* was selected to represent the broadsheet Irish print-media, *The Irish Daily Mail* was researched to represent the tabloid print media in Ireland and *The Anglo Celt* was also examined through the content analysis, and it will represent the local print media in county Cavan,

Aisling's birthplace and family residence. The expectation from this wide range of print media organisation is that it will provide balanced and accurate results, illustrating a wide range of print media organisations.

The Boston Globe was selected as an example of the American media representation of Aisling's trial. The daily circulation of *The Boston Globe*, shows its popularity in America and the Boston area. "Weekday circulation, which includes print readership and digital subscriptions, was 245,572 during the six-month period ended in March — the highest since 2009 and 8.9 percent higher than figures for the same period a year earlier." (Borchers C, 2013) *The Irish Independent* is at present the most successful and widely read broadsheet in Ireland. "According to the ABC figures, the Irish Independent now sells an average of 112,502 copies every day, increasing its share of the quality daily market to 50.3pc." (Flanagan P, 2015) Therefore, *The Irish Independent* was chosen. *The Irish Daily Mail* was selected to represent the tabloid media within the Irish press, according to the recent ABC figures, its readership amounts to 46,028, which is one of the top three read tabloids in the Irish press, in 2015. (News Brands Ireland, 2015) Moreover, *The Irish Daily Mail*, reported on Aisling's case frequently in comparison to other Irish tabloids. *The Anglo Celt* circulation is on a smaller scale as it is the only local newspaper within the data sample. It has been selected for the local representation example and as Aisling's case was reported on continually throughout *The Anglo Celt*.

Data Sample Time Frame

The data sample will begin from January 21st 2013, which will be named 2013, this date has been selected as this was the beginning of Aisling's arrest and charges over the baby's death. "Then-Middlesex district attorney Gerard T. Leone Jr. announces the arrest of McCarthy. McCarthy, who had been living in Quincy, is arrested and held on \$500,000 bail. She is assigned to the women's state prison in Framingham." (Wen P, 2015)

2014 will be the second year to be analysed as 2014 dealt with Aisling's time within the American prison system, court hearings and seen the courts continual

objection to Aisling's lower bail pleas and this section will be named 2014.

"Defence lawyers for McCarthy lose their bid to have her bail lowered. Prosecutors argue that the nanny, who is in the country illegally from Ireland, is a flight risk." (Wen P, 2015)

The final year which will be examined is 2015 as on the 31st of August 2015 Aisling's murder charges were sensationally dropped. During 2015, speculation arose around Aisling's case and the faulty evidence against her and eventually all charges were dropped against the Cavan native. "After deeper examination, the medical examiner determines Rehman's death was "undetermined." The office found she died of "subdural hemorrhage with an unknown etiology." Later the same day, Middlesex District Attorney Marian T. Ryan drops charges against the nanny, saying her office can no longer meet its burden of proof." (Wen P, 2015)

As this case is a niche subject, entire years of the case can be analysed as the media coverage is at a minimum from month to month. Moreover, by analysing the three years of Aisling's trial through the media, a better understanding can be given to the overall tone and frames used by the print media in this study.

The chosen articles will be collected through *LexisNexis*, *Irish Newspaper Achieves* and the *Boston Globe Achieves*. In order to conduct the article search, a single or double search engine term will be used to find appropriate articles. The chosen search terms, through the search engines, is: Aisling Brady McCarthy and/or Boston Nanny.

Newspapers	2013	2014	2015	Total
<i>The Irish Independent</i>	20	5	5	30
<i>The Irish Daily Mail</i>	4	7	16	27
<i>The Anglo Celt</i>	12	3	6	21
<i>The Boston Globe</i>	3	3	19	25

Table 1: Newspaper coverage per year

Research Questions

The studies research question and objectives, which will be answered throughout the content analyse are:

1. How was Aisling portrayed in both American and Irish print media, at the beginning and during her trial? Furthermore, how was she portrayed when she was cleared of the murder charges in August 2015?
2. Did the American and Irish print media frame Aisling's story comparably or differently?
3. Did any newspaper illustrate favouritism towards Aisling? Will *The Anglo Celt*, the local print media organisation, illustrate more favouritism towards Aisling than the other Irish print media organizations?
4. What differences and similarities will be produced by this analysis on American and the Irish print media, in connection with Aisling's case coverage?
5. Does the media coverage increase or decrease over the years of Aisling's trial up until her release in 2015?

Coding

Coding is a popular and historic form of research within content analysis research, codes can be phrases, numbers or words. Many authors can be associated with

the use of coding methods such as, Miles and Huberman (1994), Coffey and Atkinson (1996), Patton (2002), and Boeije (2010). According to Gläser & Laudel (2013), "Coding and qualitative content analysis have roughly the same function in qualitative data analysis in that they let the researcher construct a data base that can be used for the identification of patterns in the data." (Gläser & Laudel, 2013)

Similar to Rachael E Collins (2014), my method of coding will look at distinguished words, and the meaning behind these words. (Collins, 2014). These are the words which portray Aisling in a positive light and words which portray Aisling in a negative light and it is anticipated that the wording and overall tone of the articles will suggest what way the stories were framed.

Coding Phrases:

Positive words: Innocent, Falsely Accused, Irish/Cavan Native.

Negative Words: Guilty, Responsibility, Illegal Immigrant.

The expectation is that the above coding will provide unbiased and accurate results. "All positive messages identified for analysis should be equally matched with their corresponding negative form, and vice versa, to ensure balance. For instance, if 'boys in schools are aggressive and violent' is analysed, the oppositional positive message 'boys in schools are not aggressive or violent or are passive and non-violent' should equally be analysed in the research." (Macnamara, J, 2005, p9) Each positive phrase has been giving a negative parallel, to create fairness within the study and to produce objective results.

These phrases/words will be referred too and the meaning associated with these words will also be taking into account; in order to examine the overall tone and frame of each article. "Different results will emerge if single words, as opposed to phrases are used in coding. Using single words is very useful if the researcher wants to contrast the results in a specific text or type of text with general usage." (Carley K, 1993, p85) Some of the selected coding for this study are singular words. However, for the strength of this study some phrases were also applied.

"Phrases are useful when the researcher is interested in capturing broad-based concepts or terms". (Carley K, 1993, p85)

Media Framing

The framing of an article is the means in which the reader interprets the text as well as how the text is portrayed to its readers. In D.A Scheufele paper on media framing he addresses many theorist framing definitions, according to Entman (1993) "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretations, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Scheufele, 1999, p107). The articles surrounding Aisling and her case will illustrate clear narratives surrounding the subject of her trial.

"Framing is, on the most fundamental level, the combination of words that form a sentence, phrase or story that consequently provides a message to its recipient. This message, whether it be provided by mass or alternative media, is being framed in some way." (Cissel M, 2012, p75) Framing is an accurate method of understanding a piece of text or article. Whether an article appears to be factual or sensationalised, both have been framed to be presented in that way. The frames exposed in this study will relate to the phrasing and the tone of the article, leading to a wider understanding of the text.

In order to understand how the data sample of this study was framed, four news frames were selected from Seon-Kyoung Ana & Karla K. Gowerb (2009) content analysis on news crisis and news frames. The four news frames are:

1. Human interest frame

This frame brings the emotional side to a story or article, by adding a human face to create a more personal humanised effect with the readers. In some previous examples which utilise this frame, "the human interest frame influenced participants' emotional response, and that it was a significant predictor of blame and responsibility in a transgression crisis." (Ana & Gowerb, 2009, p107)

2. Conflict frame

The conflict frame brings a disagreement between groups, individuals or organisations. "Neuman et al. (1992) found that conflict was commonly used by U.S." (Ana & Gowerb, 2009, p107).

3. Morality frame

This frame puts the news story or issue to the public as a moral issue. Referring the issues and problems to religion or comparing it with the social norms within society. "The morality frame was commonly used by journalists indirectly through quotations or inference," (Ana & Gowerb, 2009, p107). Journalists want to be viewed as factual and unbiased in articles, therefore they do not obviously present the use of this frame.

4. Attribution of responsibility frame

This frame is the subject of parting blame, and a "way of attributing responsibility for [a] cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group". (Ana & Gowerb, 2009, p107) Previous studies have shown that serious newspapers tended to use this frame more often than other media organisations.

Tonality

"Tonality is an analysis that uses a subjective assessment to determine if the content of article is either favourable or unfavourable to the person, company, organization or product discussed in the text." (Michaelson and Griffin, 2005, p2) Each article will be assessed within three categories: positive, negative and neutral. These categories will rate one to 10 in any of the three with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest. "An example is would be a scale with a rating of "-50" to "+50". In this instance, "-50" is completely negative and "+50" is completely positive. A neutral analysis would be recorded as "zero" on this scale." (Michaelson and Griffin, 2005, p2) By organising each article under its allocated frame of positive, negative and neutral; it will be easier to determine the overall tone of each article. The tone of each article will help summarise the

overall frame and will then become comparable with the different print media organisations.

Comparable Study

Once the overall tone is discovered from the chosen articles the results of the four chosen newspapers will become comparable with one another. This study will look at the similarities or differences which occur between the separate entities of the Irish print media. The study will also highlight the differences in Irish and American print media and their attitudes towards Aisling and her case. "Any comparison is a construction in the sense that it discerns which elements or segments of social reality are to be related to one another and along what dimensions." (Azarian R, 2011, p123) Comparable studies are widely used throughout social science and political studies, "It selects particular units and/or aspects rather than others, and abstracts them from the context in which they are indiscernibly embedded. It, in other words, brings into fore what is otherwise hidden in the totality of social reality –a reality that in its totality appears as infinite, formless and chaotic." (Azarian R, 2011, p123) Like all types of research, comparable studies can take a considerable amount of effort and relies on attention to detail in the research. "Indeed, there are a number of severe limitations and constraints associated with comparison that, calling for serious attention, should warn against and prevent any easy-minded uncritical adoption of this mode of analysis." (Azarian R, 2011, p120) By comparing all four newspapers it will present the research results on a level of difference and similarity.

Chapter 4 – Analysis and Discussion

Results

A total of 103 articles were selected for the purpose of this study: 30 from *The Irish Independent*, 25 from *The Daily Mail*, 21 from *The Anglo Celt* and 27 from *The Boston Globe*. All articles were assessed through the data sample methodology of media framing, coding, and tonality adding to the study further through the function of a comparable study, which will give an understanding to the research question objectives.

Objective 1: Media framing

Four media frames were selected for the purpose of this study; the human interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame and the attribution of responsibility frame. Each frame will be assessed through the chosen print media organisations, with the quantity and meaning of frames analysed.

Objective 2: Phrase coding

The coding phrases selected were: 'innocent, falsely accused, Irish/Cavan native' as the positive phrases and 'guilty, responsibility, illegal immigrant' as the negative phrases. These phrase will be counted and analysed within the data samples below, with each phrase counted once per article, regardless of its volume throughout.

Objective 3: Tonality

The overall tonality was assessed through both the frames and the coding process of each article. The tonality was assessed under three tones, positive, negative and neutral. If a tone was positive it signifies a favouritism towards Aisling, by

supposing her innocence before she was exempt from the murder charges, while negative tones highlight a harmful reflection of Aisling assuming her guilt before any verdict had been agreed on and neutral tones were ascribed when an article was seen to be fully objective and non-opinionated of Aisling and the case.

The Boston Globe

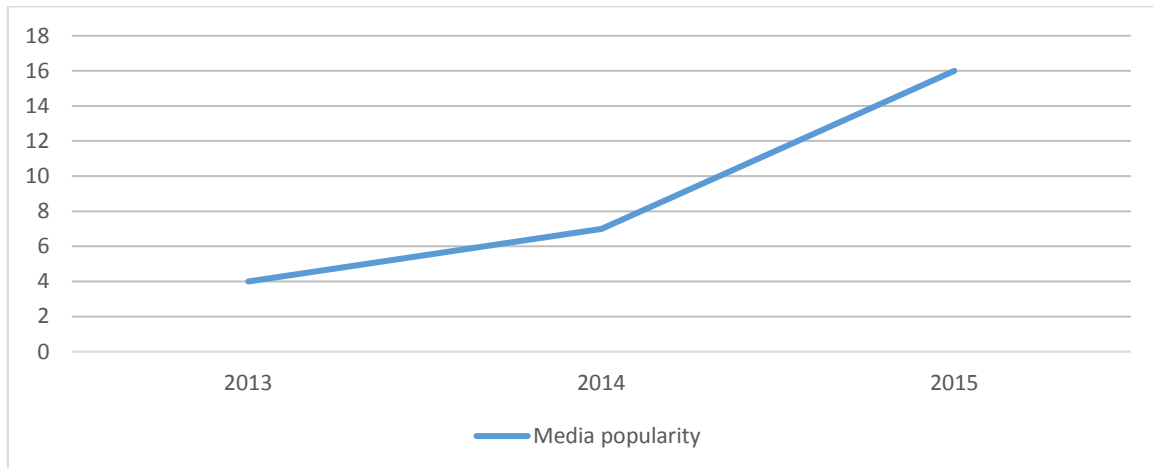


Fig 1: Highlights the growth in news coverage over the three year period

The above figure, Fig 1 highlights the growing popularity Aisling's case received over the three year period. The newspaper allocated significantly more coverage to her case in 2015. The *Boston Globe* produced a total of 32 articles from the search term "Aisling Brady McCarthy" and "Nanny", the two search terms were applied through the archive search to downgrade the oversized data sample of 700 original articles. Five of these articles were removed from the analysis, as they only featured Aisling's case in relation to similar cases which were ongoing. Subsequently, a total of 27 articles were examined.

Through the content analysis of the *Boston Globe* articles, all four frames were noted, with some more than others as the attribution of responsibility was the most frequently used throughout, which was followed by the human interest frame, then the morality frame and the conflict frame. The figure below shows which frames were attributed to each year.

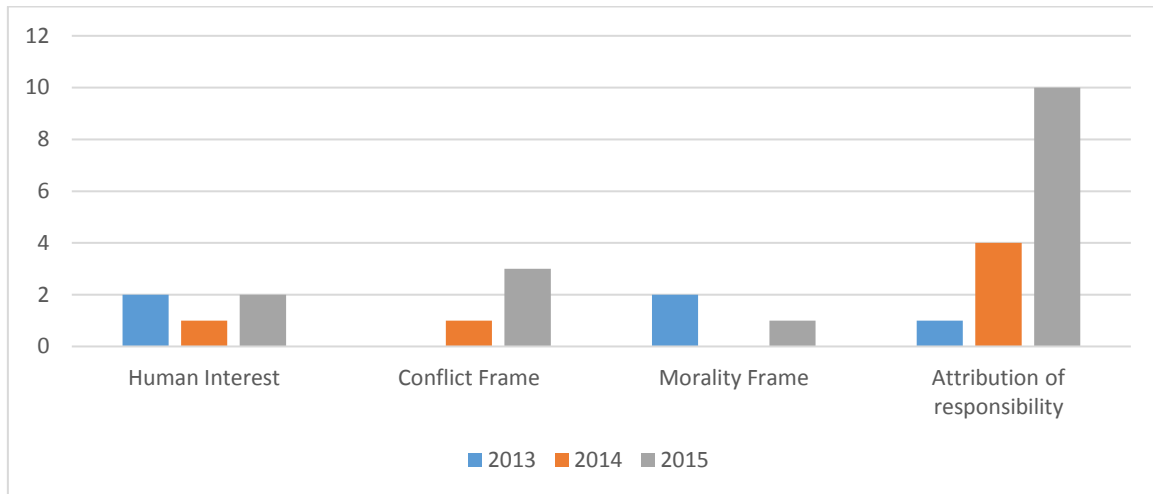


Fig 2: Illustrates the most dominate and least used frames from 2013-2015

Objective 1: Media Framing through the Boston Globe

Attribution of Responsibility Frame

Attribution of responsibility frame was the most observed frame throughout the *Boston Globe* articles. This frame accounted for 48.1 percent of the 27 articles. In 2013, this frame was associated with very few of the articles. However, in 2014, this frame was ascribed to the most news articles and in 2015, the frame grew even further as it was associated with nine articles.

In 2014, articles began to centre on the court proceedings and whether or not Aisling was guilty of the murder of Rehma Sabir. Each court hearing was covered by the *Boston Globe* staff, who highlighted the key areas of the case, with a lot of the articles stating the injuries which the baby received and both defences expressing when they believed the baby's injuries were initially received. One such article from August 8th 2014 states, "Sabir, who authorities say was in McCarthy's exclusive care when she was injured, was diagnosed at the hospital by Alice Newton" (Schworm P, 2014). Overall the article, which is similar to most articles in 2014, gives evidence which imparts responsibility on Aisling or upon the medical evidence.

In 2015, this frame continued to grow, this was due to the increased court hearings which were taking place through Aisling's trial. Once again, in 2015, early articles which fell under this frame seemed to attribute responsibility on the medical examiners and the medical evidence which had been provided, highlighting a previous case which was struck out due to similar insufficient evidence the article read, "The opinions expressed by Dr. Newton in the Wilson case are strikingly similar to those expressed by her in this case," McCarthy's lawyers wrote.....McCarthy's lawyers have also asserted that the child was seen by specialists for gastrointestinal problems, failure to gain weight, and a bleeding disorder." (Schworm P, 2015)

Human Interest Frame

The human interest frame appeared five times throughout the analysis. In 2013, this frame accounted for half of the stories published by the *Boston Globe* concerning the trial of Aisling. "McCarthy, a native of Ireland living in the country illegally, sat in the front of the courtroom beside her lawyer during Tuesday's hearing. When prosecutors discussed the child's loud cries, she shook her head slowly side to side." (Schworm P, 2013) This image of Aisling reinforces the human interest frame using Aisling's emotions to create a more humanised effect.

When Aisling's murder charges were dropped the human interest frame appeared again, "The life of an innocent women was ruined", once again adding the emotional human interest to the article. (Schworm P, 2013)

Conflict Frame

The conflict frame made no impact on articles printed in 2013, this frame was utilised most often in 2015, with one such article providing the information that, "Middlesex County prosecutors had information that could have helped Aisling Brady McCarthy, the nanny accused of killing the 1-year-old she was caring for. But instead of sharing it, as they should have, they kept it to themselves for more than a year while she remained in jail." (Abraham Y, 2015) This type of information creates conflict between the case defence and prosecutors.

Morality Frame

Throughout the data sample the moral question which is posed is whether or not Aisling is guilty of the crime she has been charged with. The morality frame was exhausted least throughout the *Boston Globe* articles. Although the courts were generally considering Aisling's guilt or innocents the *Boston Globe* mentioned this very little throughout. "McCarthy's attorneys have aggressively asserted her innocence, with one saying at a recent hearing that "an innocent person sits in jail" while they await more evidence for the trial." (Valencia MJ, 2013)

Objective 2: Phrase Coding through the Boston Globe.

Throughout the data sample some of the chosen phrases were more evident than others. The negative phrases appeared 29 times throughout the sample, whereas the positive words appeared 26 times throughout the articles.

The phrase 'innocent', was the dominant positive phrase throughout, appearing 13 times within the articles. The phrase was usually said within quotes from lawyers or when Aisling's murder charges were dropped in 2015. One such quote saying, "The ruling marked the second time in less than a year the medical examiner's office had changed its stance on a shaken-baby case. It made McCarthy, a 37-year-old native of Ireland who has steadfastly maintained her innocence, a free woman." (Schworm P, 2015)

The most utilised negative phrase throughout the articles was 'illegal' and 'illegal immigrant', accounting for 15 of the 29 phrases. This phrase can be found in the early articles surrounding Aisling's trial, when her stance in the country was being questioned and her bail was denied as she was assumed to be a flight risk. "But Superior Court Judge Maureen Hogan said that the immigration detainer lodged against McCarthy, who has been living in the country illegally, made it impossible to guarantee her appearance." (Schworm P, 2014)

Objective 3 Tonality: The Boston Globe

Overall, the articles were overwhelmingly neutral. Figure 3 illustrates the overall tone from the *Boston Globe* articles, presenting 2015 with the most neutral reporting of the case. Although some negativity and positivity appeared throughout, the majority of articles fell under the neutral category. Aisling's case was reported on very objectively providing mostly court proceedings and factual evidence from the court hearings.

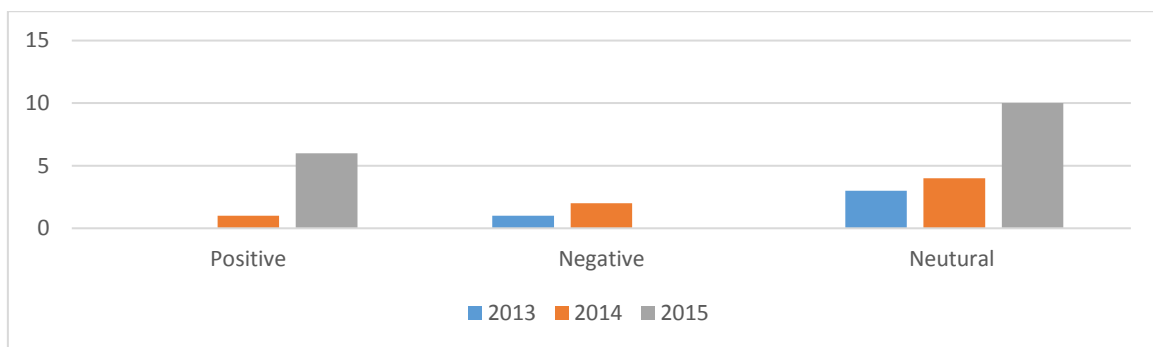


Fig 3: Highlights the tonality through the *Boston Globe* article from 2013-2015

The Irish Daily Mail

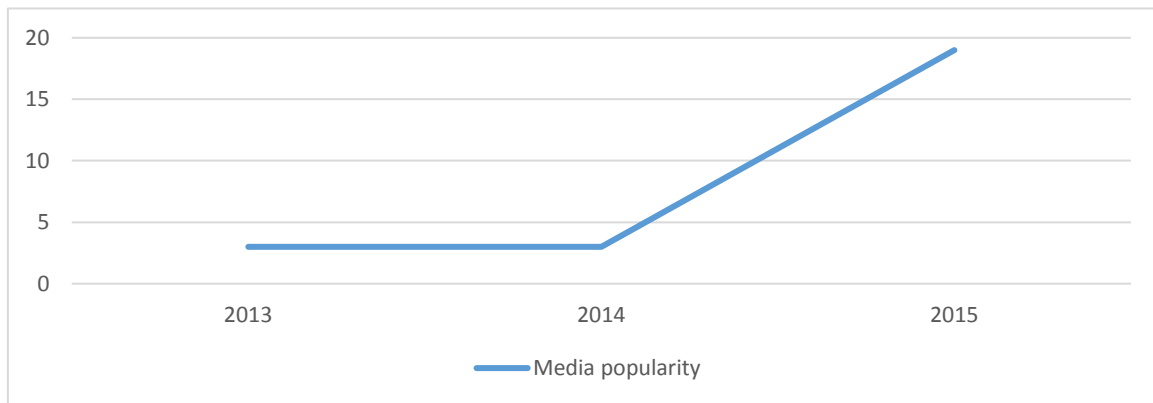


Fig 4: Highlights the growth in news coverage over the three year period.

The above figure, Fig 4 illustrates when Aisling's case gained the most coverage from the *Irish Daily Mail*. Aisling's case was mentioned a mere 6 times throughout 2013 and 2014, however, the case coverage increased dramatically in 2015, with the newspaper printing 19 articles on Aisling and her case. Overall, 36 articles were presented from the search term 'Aisling Brady McCarthy' and 'Nanny'. When the data was analysed, 25 articles were used, as the unused articles were readers' letters to the newspapers, or stories that did not apply to Aisling's case.

Through the content analysis of the *Irish Daily Mail*, four media frames were identified. The attribution of responsibility was the most dominant frame, accounting for 36 percent of the data sample. The human interest frame followed closely, accounting for 32 percent of the 25 articles, followed by the conflict frame and lastly the morality frame which accounted for 16 percent of all articles.

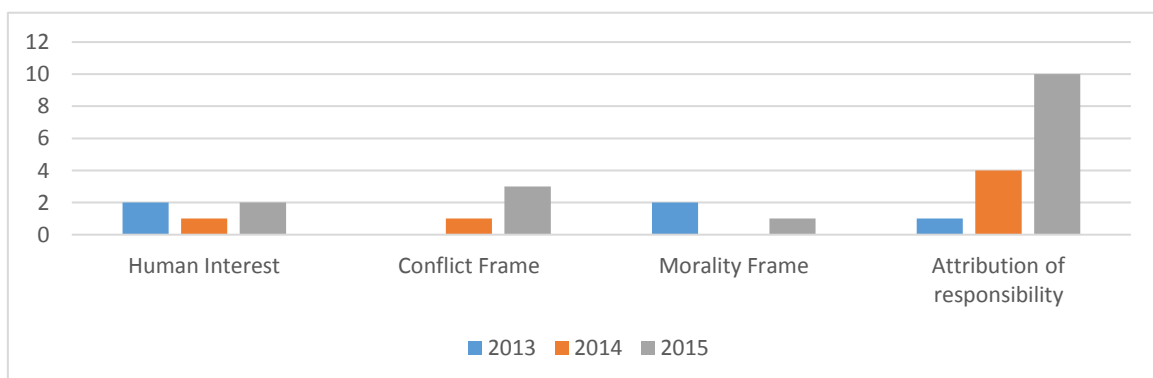


Fig 5: Illustrates the most dominant and least used frames from 2013-2015

Objective 1: Media Framing through the Irish Daily Mail

Attribution of Responsibility Frame

The attribution of responsibility was the most noted frame throughout the *Irish Daily Mail*, as the frame was found throughout all the years and peaked in 2015. One such article example states "It was 'scandalous', she said. And she singled out Dr Alice Newton for criticism." (Keane K, 2015) Statements like this were published by the *Daily Mail* allocating responsibility on doctors and flawed medical evidence.

In earlier articles from 2014 the blame is being contributed to the medical condition Shaken Baby Syndrome, by the *Irish Daily Mail*, with one headline reading, "Shaken baby link disputed in nanny case". (Irish Daily Mail, 2014)

Blame is not ever openly put on Aisling although she is always associated with the crime, but never claimed as guilty by the Irish tabloid, more so that she is innocent of the crime.

Human Interest Frame

This frame is evident throughout each year of Aisling's case. In one of the earliest articles written about Aisling and her case, a lengthy article can be seen producing numerous statements confirming Aisling's good natured character. "AISLING McCarthy Brady's ex-boyfriend has spoken up to declare her innocence - even though he lodged a restraining order against her a few years ago." (Bracken A, 2013) Similarly other character statements are given but positive ones concerning Aisling override the negative statements.

After Aisling's murder charges were dropped, there was a surge in the use of the human interest frame, with the *Daily Mail* reporting on Aisling's release, speaking to friends and family, quoting Aisling sister saying "She added: 'It's heart breaking to think she had to stay in there a day, a night, let alone two-and-a-half-years.'" (Hassett, D, 2015) Adding once again to the emotional side of Aisling's story, getting personal accounts from her sister.

Conflict Frame

The conflict frame was used throughout Aisling's case, usually framing issues surrounding the medical evidence of the case, and in some articles conflict was suggested surrounding opinions of shaken baby syndrome. "Aisling Brady McCarthy's legal team argued that the condition is 'junk science', caused by 'over zealousness within the child protection community'." (Young N, 2014)

After Aisling returned to Ireland in 2015, the conflict frame began to appear in other articles. "Aisling Brady McCarthy could receive millions in compensation if she successfully sues over her prosecution, it is been claimed." (Haugh B, 2015) Articles like this created conflict between Aisling and the murder charges, which eventually fell apart.

Morality Frame

In earlier articles from the *Irish Daily Mirror*, the morality frame was observed on the subject of Aisling's innocence or guilt of the accused crime. Aisling's defence and prosecution were in conflict over the information surrounding the case, with ongoing support for Aisling from her lawyer Thompson. Thompson, "who had worked for seven years at the Middlesex DA's office where the indictment was prepared, has become a ferocious believer in McCarthy's innocence". (Young N, 2014)

In 2015, when Aisling's charges were dropped the moral question had been answered by the newspaper, Aisling was innocent, "The charge that she murdered one-year-old baby Rehman Sabir was suddenly dropped yesterday, after medical experts dramatically changed their evidence." (McDonald, L and Fegan C, 2015)

Objective 2: Phrase coding through the Irish Daily Mail.

Overall the two most utilised phrases by the *Irish Daily Mail* was 'innocent' which was noted 11 times throughout the articles and 'illegal' which was noted 13 times throughout the articles.

'Innocent' was the positive term used most often, in 2015, when Aisling's name was cleared and just before, this phrase was found in numerous articles. Nevertheless, it was still printed to a high degree before Aisling's murder charges were dropped with one such article stating, "The nanny has said, through her lawyers, that she is completely innocent and has never harmed a child" (Bracken A, 2013)

The negative phrase 'illegal' was also applied frequently throughout the articles, it was usually used as a descriptive word before her name, or when explaining her citizenship status in America, "Ms Brady McCarthy was living in the US illegally when she was arrested" (Irish Daily Mail, 2015) Interestingly, the opposition phrase 'Cavan/Irish native' was used very little in comparison, with the *Daily Mail* utilising this phrase on six occasions.

The phrase 'guilty' was also noted six times throughout the data sample but was not always used in a negative or positive form. "She added: 'I don't think the medical examiner made a pass on innocent or guilty.'" (Fegan C, 2015)

Throughout the articles some phrases were used within quotes from doctors and lawyers involved with the case so could not be termed positive or guilty.

Objective 3 Tonality: The Irish Daily Mail

Through the three tones, positive tonality was the most dominate throughout the articles, followed by neutrality. None of the articles examined displayed negative tones, in terms of their reporting of Aisling and covering of the trial. Doubt was often cast over the evidence within the trial, highlighting positivity towards Aisling's case and her innocence, showing an un-objective view of the case, before Aisling's faith had been determined by the courts. Figure 6 highlights the tonality

of each year of the case, highlighting 2015 as the most positive and neutral year in regards to Aisling coverage and her case.

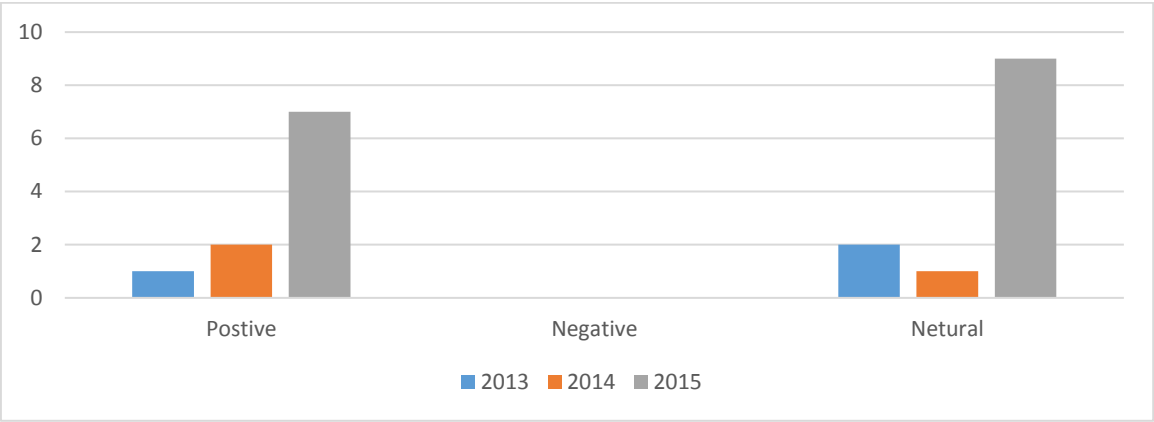


Fig 6: Highlights the tonality through the Boston Globe article from 2013-2015

The Anglo Celt

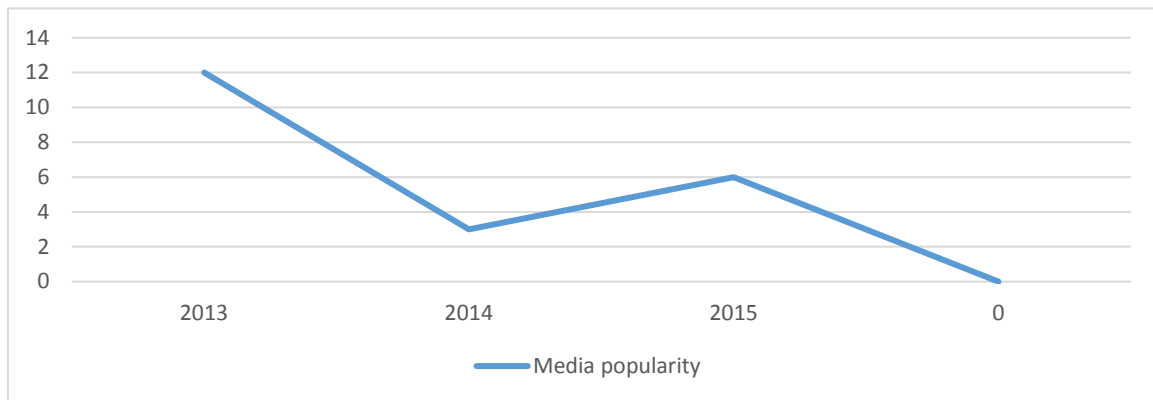


Fig 7: Highlights the decrease in news coverage over the three year period.

Fig 7 illustrates when Aisling's case received the most coverage by the *Anglo Celt*. For this local Cavan newspaper, the height of Aisling's reports came from 2013, with 12 articles featuring Aisling and her case, three were published in 2014 and there was a slight rise again in 2015, with six articles published on the subject by the newspaper.

Altogether from the search term 'Aisling Brady McCarthy' 24 articles were found, three of these article were not used as they were irrelevant to the study and only produced a front page outline, with 21 out of the 24 articles then used for the data sample.

Through the content analysis the four selected media frames were identified. The human interest frame and the attribution of responsibility frame were the most noted throughout the sample and were used an equal amount of times throughout. Both frames accounted for 38.1 percent each, of the data sample. The morality frame accounted for 14.2 percent of the overall articles and the conflict frame accounted for 9.5 percent of the overall sample.

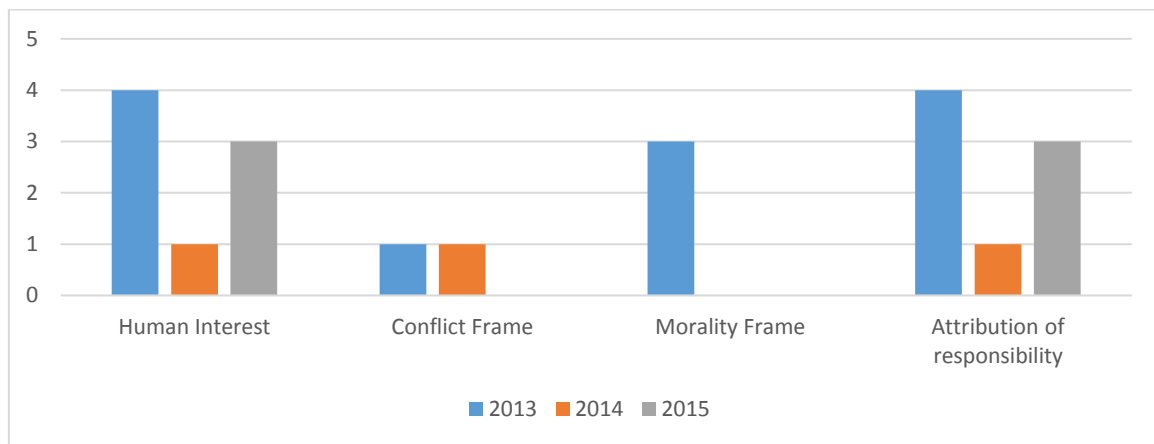


Fig 8: Illustrates the most dominate and least used frames from 2013-2015

Objective 1: Media Framing through the Anglo Celt

Human Interest Frame

In 2013 the human interest features highest, although Aisling was only charged in 2013 it is clear from the amount of human interest frames used within this year, by the *Anglo Celt* articles, that the emotional side of Aisling's story is key, adding her and her family's interests to most stories creating a humanised effect.

In one story published in 2013, just months after Aisling's arrest, it states, "They are a very decent family and she is an Irish girl stuck on American soil," said Fr. Fay their local priest in Cavan. (Anglo Celt, 2013)

Other articles mentioning another human face, Louise Woodward, who endured a similar trial to Aisling in 1997 is mentioned by the newspaper. *The Anglo Celt* suggests that the legal expert who defended Woodward's case, which was dismissed said, "The prosecutors have a weak case against Aisling McCarthy Brady." (Enright S, 2013)

Attribution of Responsibility Frame

This frame was noted most in 2013, and also found in 2015. The attribution of responsibility was generally set on medical examiner results and unsatisfactory evidence. "The autopsy report showed the child had fractures that were between two weeks and two months old at the time of her death." (Enright S, 2013)

Relating that Aisling was not the sole caretaker of the baby at that time the baby received her injuries, as previously stated.

"But Mrs McCarthy Brady's defence team say the child was malnourished having travelled extensively with her family." (Anglo Celt, 2013) The attribution of responsibility is also associated with the child's pre-existing medical conditions which were noted in court.

Morality Frame

"Aisling was falsely accused of harming a child in her care and wrongfully imprisoned", this was noted in an *Anglo Celt* article in 2013, printing part of a press release from Aisling, in which they are stating the case is morally wrong as Aisling is innocent. (Enright S, 2013)

Continually throughout 2013 questions were posed by the *Anglo Celt* on whether or not the murder charge added up. "The defence attorney complained that a grand jury, which indicted Ms McCarthy Brady for first degree murder in April, had heard details of "potential shaking and a head injury" to baby Rehman Sabir," yet again suggesting the Aisling is in fact innocent of the murder charges. (Anglo Celt, 2013)

Conflict Frame

Throughout the *Anglo Celt's* coverage of Aisling and the case, conflict was suggested surrounding the medical evidence of the case and the medical reports which first convicted Aisling of the murder.

In 2014 conflict was suggested in the form of the parents of the Sabir baby, "it has been revealed the parents of baby Sabir, who have not been charged with any crime, have retained the services of Eliot Weinstein, a well-known defence lawyer." (Enright S, 2014) Using the conflict frame to signal conflict between Aisling and the deceased baby's parents as perhaps un-innocent.

Objective 2: Phrase coding through the Anglo Celt.

Throughout the selected data sample from the *Anglo Celt*, the two most utilised frames were 'Irish/Cavan native' as the positive phrase and 'illegal' as the most noted negative phrase. 'Cavan native' was highlighted eight times and 'illegal' was also noted eight times.

In most cases Aisling was described as a Cavan or Lavey native, which is the locality Aisling was born and where her family reside, "evidence has come to light in the case of Irish nanny, Aisling McCarthy Brady." (Enright S, 2014)

The phrase 'illegal' is used when explaining her situation, stating that she "has lived and worked in the US for a decade, though illegally since 2002 when she overstayed her 90-day visa." (Enright, S, 2013)

The phrase innocent was used, but not with any denotation implied. It was namely used throughout the piece from her lawyer's quotes claiming Aisling is innocent or from family members of Aisling, "her defence lawyer Melinda Thompson reiterated her client's innocence to the charges" (Enright, S, 2013)

Objective 3 Tonality: The Anglo Celt

Overall the tonality of the Anglo Celts' reporting on Aisling and her case was noted as a very positive portrayal of Aisling from the start and continued until 2015. 11 positive stories were noted and 10 were noted as neutral, no articles could be seen as negative towards the portrayal of Aisling or her case with neutral reports tending to be very factual highlighting information heard in court and indicating court days. Positive reports tended to support the fact that Aisling was innocent before the courts had said so with one such article stating, "A baby is dead, and that is horrific. But a women is in jail and the pieces of the puzzle just don't seem

to fit.” (Fitzpatrick P, 2014) Such articles assuming Aisling’s innocents, while the issue is in fact something the legal system must decide on, not the press.

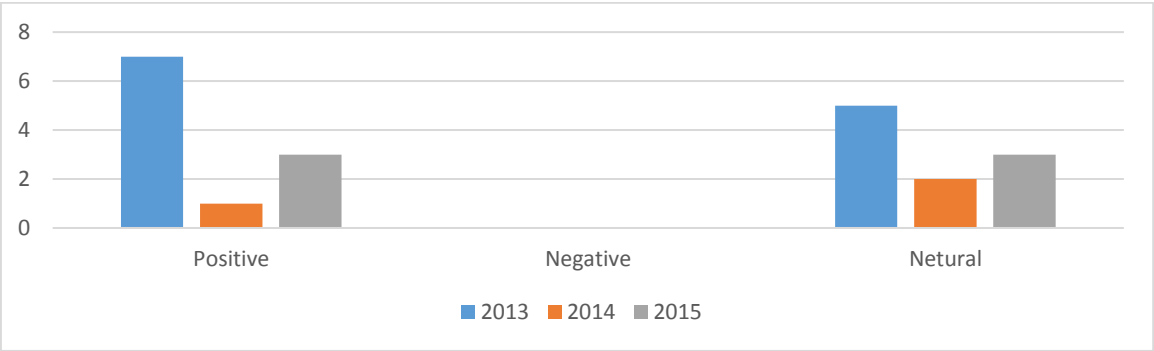


Fig 9: Highlights the tonality through the Anglo Celt articles from 2013-2015

The Irish Independent

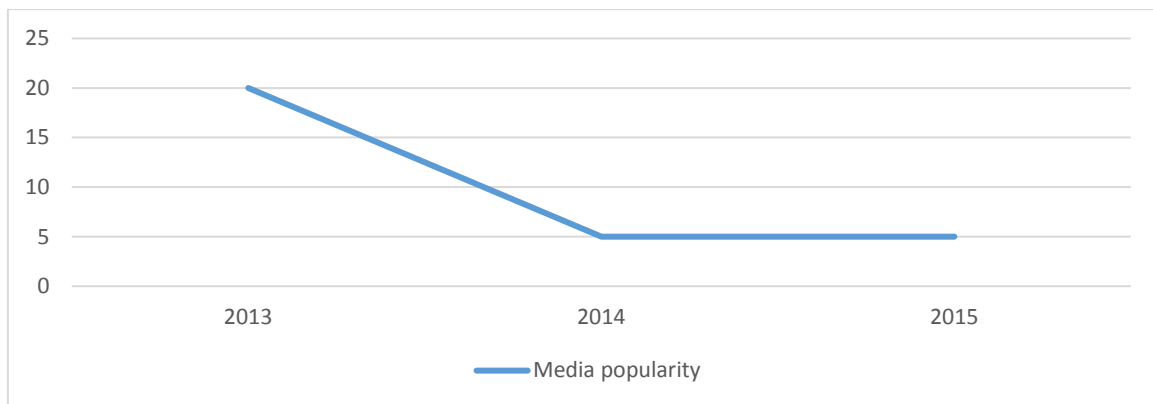


Fig 10: Highlights the decrease in news coverage over the three year period.

Figure 10 highlights the dominant year of coverage from the *Irish Independent*, which was 2013, producing a total of 20 articles throughout that year, while five articles were printed by the newspaper in both 2014 and 2015.

From the search term 'Aisling Brady McCarthy' a total of 34 articles were found, with 30 of these articles being used within the data sample. The unused article featured 'news in brief' segments only mentioning Aisling's case as general news.

Through the content analysis the attribution of responsibility frame was utilised most frequently, accounting for 30 percent of the *Irish Independent* articles. The human interest frame and the morality frame were noted equal times throughout the data sample, accounting for 26.6 percent each of the total data sample and the conflict frame appeared a total of five times throughout the *Independent's* articles, accounting for 16.6 percent of the overall sample.

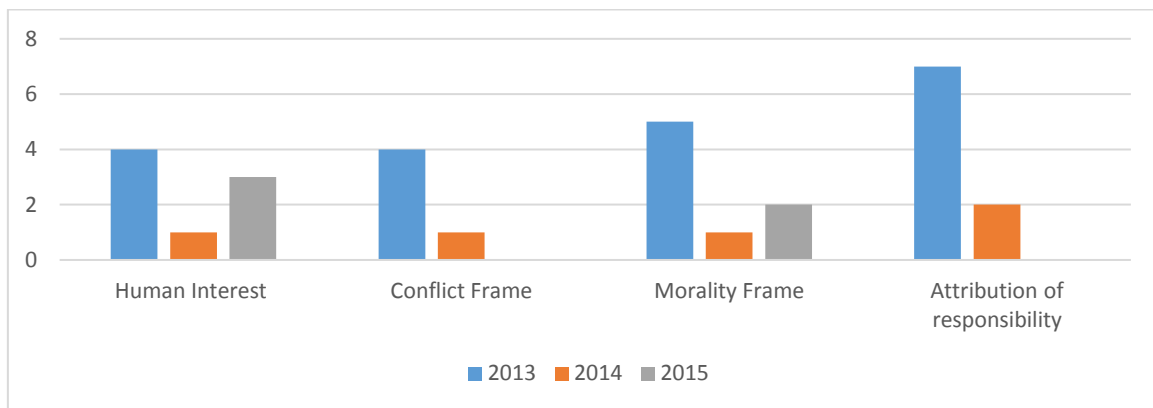


Fig 11: Illustrates the most dominant and least used frames from 2013-2015

Objective 1: Media Framing through the Irish Independent

Attribution of Responsibility Frame

This frame was used most frequently within the *Irish Independent* articles. The responsibility was being placed on the case evidence, mainly the medical evidence which was produced against Aisling. Many articles reiterating the defence teams want for a case dismissal, "saying prosecutors in Massachusetts acted unethically in the way they presented evidence." (Farrell O, 2013)

The majority of this frame was highlighted in 2013, with some articles stating that the baby's injuries did not occur while she was in the nanny's care, putting the responsibility of the child's death into another time frame, when Aisling was not the sole carer. One such article said, "Miss Thompson said the nanny hadn't been with the child from early December until early January during which time those injuries could have been sustained." (Farrell O, 2013)

Human Interest Frame

This frame was used throughout some of the articles and interestingly featured most in 2013, with the frame conveying a humanised effect surrounding Aisling's case. Although Aisling's case was not resolved until 2015, an article from 2013 compares Aisling's case to that of Louise Woodward's case in 1997, "Miss

McCarthy Brady's trial is set to be just as controversial – and the facts are just as murky." (Palmer C, 2013)

Another human face which was put forward by the *Irish Independent* was an article discussing the 'unimaginable' pain and grief the parents of the deceased baby were going through. Stating they "have gone through "unimaginable pain" since their child has died, says the local district attorney." (Byrne and Harkin, 2013)

Morality Frame

The morality frame featured a similar amount as the human interest frame with many of the articles posing the moral question, is Aisling guilty or not guilty of the crime, by printing all the facts surrounding the case and given a general consensus as to whether Aisling is guilty or not. Many of the articles which featured the morality frame state quotes such as this one, "Ms McCarthy Brady's lawyer, has previously insisted her client is innocent and that the state's case against her is weak." (Cunningham and O'Regan, 2013)

In 2015, the moral question surrounding Aisling's case had been answered, but now the morality of what had happened Aisling was being questioned. "After an extensive review, the medical examiner said that it can "no longer rule the manner of the death as homicide." (O'Connor W, 2015) Aisling was being deported back to Ireland, with the death of the baby no longer her responsibility.

Conflict Frame

The conflict frame was unused in 2015 and most applied in 2013 by *The Irish Independent*. The articles which featured the frame, concentrate heavily on the case evidence, or lack of evidence, such as, "The defence also contends the case is so weak it does not meet the low legal threshold of probable cause." (Ellis F, 2013)

A further conflict printed in the *Irish Independents'* coverage of Aisling's case, publishing an article questioning whether there is a solution for selecting a good childminder both at home and in the states, with the author of the piece claiming

the accusations against Aisling have “struck fear into the hearts of every mother I know.” (Moriarty S, 2013) Further stating “it is a jungle out there and none of us want to sit in work worrying,” the article is creating conflict between working parents and the unknown nannies they employ.

Objective 2: Phrase Coding through the Irish Independent.

Throughout the content analysis of *The Irish Independent*, ‘innocent’ was used frequently throughout the articles. The phrase was used throughout all years of the case being noted most in 2013, in particular by her lawyer and friends of the defendant. Such articles from 2013 stating “She maintains her innocence, it’s a sad case.” (*Irish Independent*, 2013)

The ‘Irish/Cavan native’ is also used many times throughout the articles, this phrase is often expressed as a descriptive word. “An Irish nanny accused of murdering a toddler in Boston has been refused bail” (Farrell O, 2014)

Few negative phrases were used throughout the data sample. ‘Illegal’ was used most often throughout the text as a negative phrase, occurring 7 times. Similar to the positive phrases this phrase was used in a descriptive manner. “Illegal immigrant Ms McCarthy Brady was arrested after one-year-old Rehman Sabir died of extensive brain injuries last January 14.” (Bray A, 2013)

Very few phrases were used within a negative or positive light, more so to describe Aisling or noted throughout article quotations.

Objective 3 Tonality: The Irish Independent

The overall tonality from the *Irish Independent* is neutral with more than half of the articles covering Aisling and her case in a fair and unbiased manner. The articles mainly reported factual court information and when opinions were published they were that of lawyers or people involved within the case. Some positive articles were present with positivity increasing in 2015, after Aisling’s

charges were dismissed. Moreover, there was one negative article throughout the data, this article focused on the deceased baby’s parents and how hard this ordeal had been for them. (Byrne, L & Harkin G, 2013.)

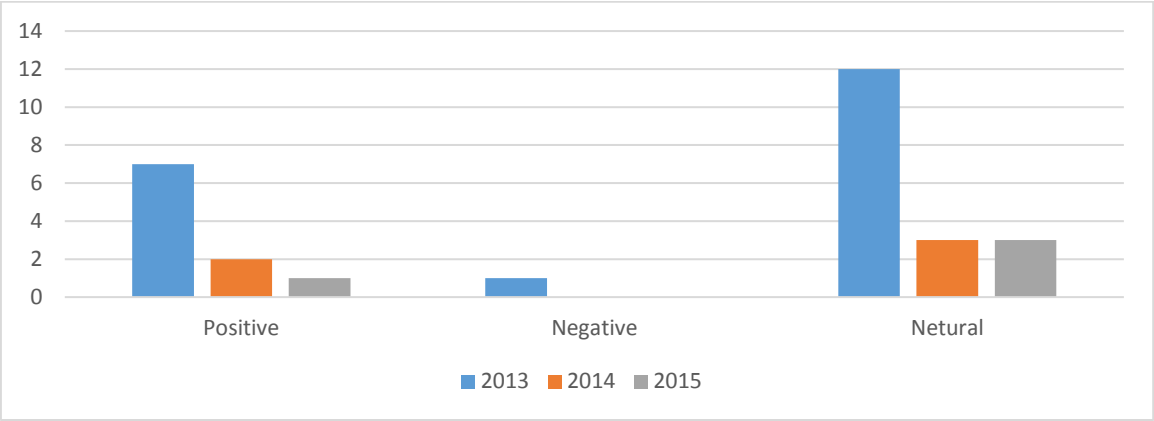


Fig 12: Highlights the tonality through the Irish Independent articles from 2013-2015

Discussion

Objective 4: Comparable Study

There was some notable similarities between the four print media organisations and their coverage of Aisling's case.

Increased News Coverage

The Boston Globe and the *Irish Daily Mail* media coverage rose in 2015, with both newspapers offering significant more coverage in that year rather than 2014 or in 2013. While the *Anglo Celt* and the *Irish Independent* published the most articles featuring Aisling and her trial in 2013.

In 2015, both the *Irish Daily Mail* and the *Boston Globe* repeatedly reported on similar issues concerning Aisling's court appearances, and information on medical evidence which surfaced over 2015.

Both newspapers produced articles in July 2015, reporting that the case had been delayed over medical reports with *The Irish Daily Mail* reporting, "Irish nanny's US child death case stalls over medic's report", and the *Boston Globe's* article stating "Report on baby's death delayed".

The Anglo Celt and *The Irish Independent* had increased coverage in 2013, which is contradictory to the other two print media newspaper coverage. In 2013, less was factually known about Aisling's case and the evidence surrounding it.

Interestingly, as well as covering some equal subjects surrounding the case, both *The Anglo Celt* and *The Irish Independent* covered the fundraiser that was being organised for Aisling to help with her financial costs, with *The Anglo Celt* stating, "Friends and relations of Mrs McCarthy Brady are now planning to hold a fundraising event in Boston in two weeks' time." (Enright S, 2013) *The Independent* said, "Supporters of Aisling McCarthy Brady (34), from Lavey, Co Cavan, are asking donors to help raise money for her defence." (Bray A, 2013)

Frames Applied

Each of the four selected print media organisations utilised the attribution of responsibility frame most dominantly. *The Anglo Celt* was the only newspaper from the data sample which the human interest frame accounted for the same amount as the attribution of responsibility frame, both noted in eight articles each. The attribution of responsibility frame is the subject of parting blame, and a “way of attributing responsibility for [a] cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group”. (Ana & Gowerb, 2009, p107) The frame is an obvious highly used frame throughout, as Aisling’s case was not resolved until September 2015. Moreover, throughout the case Aisling’s innocents is debated as well as the medical evidence which was provided throughout the trial.

In 2015, after Aisling was cleared of all murder charges and deported back to Ireland, the attribution frame continued throughout the data sample. *The Boston Globe* went on to place individual blame on some prosecutors involved in Aisling’s case. “But now questions have been raised about whether Middlesex county prosecutors withheld evidence from her lawyers that could have cast doubt on the murder charge”, (*Boston Globe*, 2015).

Code Phrasing Similarities

Out of the two phrasing categories, which included positive phrases, ‘innocent, falsely accused, Irish/Cavan native’ and ‘guilty, responsible, illegal immigrant’ as the negative phrases, the positive phrases appeared most often throughout the data sample.

The Boston Globe and the *Irish Daily Mail* similarly used ‘illegal’ most widely throughout their articles and secondly used ‘innocent’ most throughout the articles.

The study also found the *Independent* printed ‘innocent’ most dominantly throughout the data sample, while ‘Irish/Cavan native’ was used second most by the *Irish Independent*.

It was further noted through coding that the *Anglo Celt* used the phrase 'Irish/Cavan native' most often throughout its articles, also highlighting 'illegal' as its second highest used phrase.

Tonality Similarities

The neutral tone was comparable within three of the print media data samples, *The Irish Independent*, *The Irish Daily Mirror* and *The Boston Globe*, with each of the newspapers recording more neutral articles than any other tone.

The Anglo Celt's leading tone was the positive tone, meaning it was the only newspaper to have a dominant tonality of positivity towards Aisling and her case. *The Anglo Celt* produced a number of articles as early as 2013, condoning Aisling's innocents with personal accounts from friends and the local priest from her hometown of Lavey, Co. Cavan, although Aisling's innocent verdict was not given by the courts until 2015.

An evident one-sided piece was published in February 2014, when although there was clear doubts emerging over Aisling's case, she had not yet been cleared of the murder charge. Stating "Mercifully, this case, we all hope, has turned a corner and if Aisling Brady-McCarthy has been wronged, and the reports would suggest she has a strong case, the truth will emerge." (Fitzpatrick P, 2014)

The Boston Globe had an overall neutral tone followed by a positive tone surrounding Aisling and her case. The data sample also noted three of the *Boston Globe* articles in a negative tone, with the negative articles stating Aisling's illegal status in America and suggesting that she may be a flight risk if bail is given. "The immigration detainer logged against McCarthy, who has been living in the country illegally, made it impossible to guarantee her appearance." (Schworm P, 2014)

Irish and American Coverage Comparisons:

Louise Woodward Case

Throughout the data sample all four newspapers shared some similarities, one of which was reference to the Louise Woodward case. Louise Woodward was a British native, working as a nanny in America, in 1997, when the 19-year-old

Woodward was charged with first degree murder of a baby. "The judge shocked residents by commuting the sentence down to manslaughter and releasing Woodward for time served" (ABC News, 2007).

Interestingly, the American print media highlighted the miscarriage of justice that was the Louise Woodward case in an article in 2014, before Aisling's charges were dropped. In an editorial/opinion piece Scheier of the *Boston Globe* says, "The truth is that Martha Coakley's deft misuse of science actually came very close to sending an innocent caretaker to prison for life." (Scheier, 2014) The piece throws doubt over Shaken Baby Syndrome and the prosecutor Martha Coakley, highlighting Aisling's up and coming case.

The Anglo Celt mentioned the Louise Woodward case twice throughout the data sample, stating that the case was similar to Aisling's. They say the legal expert who represented Louise Woodward in 1997, "has said that prosecutors have a weak case against Aisling McCarthy Brady." (Enright S, 2013) The article mentions the Woodward case, but does not go into great detail in comparing both cases.

The Irish Daily Mail included the Woodward case in one of their articles, making a slight comparison in an article questioning Aisling's case, stating that Aisling had already spent over 800 days in jail, the article said, "Louise Woodward, who was convicted of the second degree murder of Matthew Eappen but later had her conviction reduced to involuntary manslaughter, served just 279 days in jail." (Irish Daily Mirror, 2015) This was the only mention of the Woodward case throughout the data sample of the *Irish Daily Mail*.

Caitriona Palmer from *The Irish Independent*, wrote an article in 2013, which states the Woodward case "echoes" Aisling's case and she highlights the controversy the Woodward case caused among the American media and public, which led to a backlash against the innocent British nanny. Akin to Aisling's case Palmer says "Ms McCarthy Brady's trial is set to be just as controversial – and the facts just as murky." As the case was set to continue Palmer believes Aisling's case was set to receive as much interest as the Woodward case, "sure to ignite a firestorm of interest." (Palme, C, 2013)

Aisling's Previous Convictions

Aisling's previous convictions were noted by three out of the four selected newspapers. *The Anglo Celt*, which was selected to represent a local newspaper, did not mention any of Aisling's previous convictions in relation to her case, highlighting their bias towards Aisling.

The Boston Globe merely mentioned Aisling's previous convictions, stating in one article that she has no criminal convictions, "but in 2007 was charged with attacking her female roommate during a quarrel. The case was dismissed. She has had two restraining orders taken out against her." (Schworm P, 2013) The history of Aisling's legal past is left there and no explanation or motive is given to the fight or restraining orders.

The Irish Daily Mail makes reference to Aisling's previous legal issues twice, highlighting details of complaints made against Aisling by giving quotes from her ex-boyfriend who took out a restraining order against Aisling and further highlighting a fight between Aisling and an ex-housemate. However, although they have pointed out Aisling's past, they then go on to insure these issues were in the past, with her ex-boyfriend saying, "I do believe that she is innocent but will have a tough time proving it because of her bit of history." (Bracken A, 2013) The article then goes on to give more positive statements of Aisling's character.

The Irish Independent also mentioned Aisling's two restraining orders and fight with her ex-housemate twice throughout the data sample. All of the previous legal issues are explained in the article, and it is noted that none of the incidents resulted in any convictions. *The Independent* said, "But the reporting of them has quickly tarnished Ms McCarthy Brady in the court of public opinion. A women who lost her temper so regularly with adults, the implications goes, could do so with a baby." The article questions whether or not Aisling can receive a fair trial, when she is being portrayed as a violent women and continues on to give positive statements of Aisling from her friends and information of her previous volunteer work, "She volunteered at a local food pantry for the poor." (Cullen K, 2013)

Sabir Family Retaining a Solicitor

Another noteworthy aspect in the data sample, is the claim that the Sabir Family retained a defence lawyer throughout the case. From the four selected newspapers only one newspaper stated this point, the *Anglo Celt*. In an article from 2013, Fitzpatrick, writing for the *Anglo Celt*, states that Aisling's case just did not add up, giving multiple examples as to why.

He wonders why, "In a horrible twist, the family (the father is a well-heeled, English, Harvard educated scientist) have retained the services of a high profile defence lawyer." Fitzpatrick claiming that they do not need the any legal assistance, "Why should they do so, when they have not been accused of a crime?" (Fitzpatrick, 2014) Perhaps, this was an un-verified detail that a local paper decided to dwell on, in order to further insure Aisling's innocence and extend their favouritism towards Aisling.

Conclusion

Reporting on crime continues to fascinate the western world, and holds a firm position within the news and media. The mass media are a source of information for the general public, in shaping and framing crimes, accused and victims. The media play an important role in shaping public attitude towards crime as the general public have limited ways of gaining other information on crime, only through the mainstream media reports. Hans and Dee (1991) say that crime reporting can sometimes be misleading but its popularity is apparent, "A significant portion of local and national news consistent of stories about crime and law." (Hans and Dee, 1991, P136)

Aisling's case was frequently published in both American and Irish print media as well as on a global scale. The case was widely reported on for numerous reasons, such as, the crime, the murder of a baby girl which corresponded with the ideal victim, "vulnerable, defenceless, innocent and worthy of sympathy and compassion." (Greer, 2007, P22) The baby girl was indeed all of this, the death of a poor defenceless baby girl had to be investigated, and whoever did this had to be punished for a horrendous crime.

The story was evidently news worthy, falling under the chronicle system of crime reporting, which is the attribution of blame. The blame was obvious, Aisling was the last person in sole care of the child and had a history with the law, and thus, the blame was attributed to Aisling. According to Greer (2007) "When crime victims come symbolically to represent a problem that resonates with and potentially affects many in society", the killing of a baby or any child is of the upmost crime one can commit, so the responsibility of this crime and the crime itself enacted public interest.

This dissertation analysed the print media coverage of Aisling's case from 2013 till 2015, comparing print media through, an Irish tabloid, an Irish broadsheet, an Irish localised newspaper and a mainstream American print newspaper. The aims were to see if American and Irish media differed on their representation of Aisling,

and what frames were used? What year was the media coverage most popular and why? What stories were comparable between the different print organisations and who showed the most favouritism towards Aisling?

The study illustrated some similarities within the coverage of Aisling's case, when comparing *the Boston Globe's* coverage to the Irish print media coverage. In contradiction to the literature review, *The Boston Globe* provided mostly fair and balanced reporting throughout Aisling's trial, even portraying a positive aspect of Aisling throughout some parts of the case. As discussed in the literature review Rachael E Collins (2014) study showed minorities were overrepresented in portrayals of depicting criminal behaviour and underrepresented in their better form, this detail does not address Aisling's representation by *the Boston Globe*. Throughout the data the court hearings were fairly depicted and factually describe, just like the Irish media some feature/opinion pieces were published testifying the lack of evidence surrounding the case and the widespread reservation around Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Aisling had two previous restraining order charges taken out against her, one from her ex-boyfriend as well as having a fight with her ex-housemate, but received no convictions for any of them. This was highlighted by *The Boston Globe*, as part of court evidence. However, *The Boston Globe*, which had the authority to delve deeper into Aisling's past did not do so, choosing to portray a very fair and objective view of Aisling throughout her case, or perhaps even illustrating some bias towards Aisling.

Interestingly, Scheier (2014), published an article in the *Boston Globe* condemning the medical facts surrounding Shaken Baby Syndrome, stating the mistakes that were made in previous cases such as the Woodward case, while eagerly suggesting that history should not repeat itself in Aisling's case.

The Irish Independent also focused heavily in one article, which was published months before Aisling was cleared of the murder charges, on the Louise Woodward case, giving it as an example of how the American law system can go

so wrong. The article did not directly say Aisling was innocent, but it was implied throughout.

The Independent published more information about Aisling previous brushes with the law in comparison to the American print media example, the *Boston Globe*. Generally, just mentioning the details but not implying that Aisling was a violent women.

Overall, the Irish print media were the least objective when reporting on Aisling's case, by printing many character references of Aisling from friends, family and local priests. However, *The Boston Globe*, *The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Daily Mail* articles were mainly neutral on the reporting of Aisling and her case, with some positive and negative tones throughout.

The Anglo Celt published mostly positive articles in relation to Aisling and her trial. As expected the local Co. Cavan newspaper showed favouritism towards Aisling from the beginning of her trial in 2013. The newspaper published a number of articles in 2013 and until Aisling's release in 2015, suggesting that Aisling was innocent. Although correct in their prediction they did not objectively report on Aisling's trial at time. *The Anglo Celt's* utilisation of the human interest frame throughout a number of its articles was to create a humanised emotional effect to their stories concerning Aisling. Moreover, the newspaper alleged that the Sabir parents of the deceased baby retained the services of an elite solicitor in America, which made readers question why innocent parents needed a solicitor, while none of the other print media outlets mentioned this point.

The Irish Daily Mail proved to be the most compassionate towards Aisling in 2015, when her charges were dropped, by once again using the human interest frame and involving Aisling's tragic circumstances within their articles.

The Irish Independent printed the highest amount of article concerning Aisling. However, the *Anglo Celt* produced a considerable high amount as unlike the other newspaper from the content analyses, the *Anglo Celt* is not produced daily, only on a once a week basis.

The attribution of responsibility, was the dominant frame throughout all newspapers except the *Anglo Celt*. The attribution of responsibility proved to be one of the more objective frames and highlighted a question throughout, which was, who killed baby Rehman Sabir.

The popularity of Aisling's case within the media varied throughout. *The Anglo Celt* and the *Irish Independent* gave the case the most coverage in 2013. Which highlights the supportive view of Aisling from the start, with many articles stating the case was not convincing, and publishing articles on the subject of Aisling's family and personal statements, presenting bias in Aisling's favour.

The Boston Globe and the *Irish Daily Mail* produced the most coverage of the case in 2015, with many of the *Irish Daily Mail* articles published after Aisling was cleared of the murder charges in 2015. *The Boston Globe* were most likely to publish articles when there was a court hearing or appearance, or when any additional evidence was given, which occurred predominantly in 2015.

Throughout the literature review Shaken Baby Syndrome was questioned and the syndrome continued to be questioned throughout Aisling's trial reports. The doubts raised echoed throughout the content analyses, as well as the comparison with the Louise Woodward case.

The Shaken Baby Syndrome history was vital to Aisling's case and the media which surrounded it. Perhaps, the media had made such a mistake throughout the Woodward case through their trial by the media, these mistakes would not be made again by an American print media organisation like *The Boston Globe*. Each newspaper published articles on the cases medical evidence or lack off, mildly suggesting that the case did not add up and Aisling's charges were far from determined.

There are many areas in which Aisling and her case could be further researched, particularly within the American media. This dissertation gives a detailed account of Irish print media organisations on a national and local level and from a national American newspaper. The results proved to be unexpected from the American print media, which perhaps could be advanced by analysing more American print

media organisations. *The Boston Herald's* coverage of Aisling throughout her trial may or may not differ with that of the *Boston Globes'* coverage.

Moreover, the *Boston Herald* reported extensively on Aisling and her case and could warrant a comparison with the *Boston Globe*, perhaps showing a different side of the American media and could illustrate the idea of the American trial by media, as some of the *Heralds* headlines highlight this, "Accused has crossed paths with law before", "McCarthy's charges a mother's worst fear". (*Boston Herald*, 2016)

A further area of research could focus on the use of imagery published throughout Aisling's case. Imagery is a very powerful tool within the media, as, "Images have a powerful impact on a viewer's attitude, and this impact cannot be created by text alone. In a news context, the presence of a photograph will significantly alter the consumer's attitude toward the framed issue." (Cope, J. 2016)

Many images circulated of Aisling throughout the media reports, images of her on her wedding day, images captured of her crying in the court room and images of a different woman entering Dublin airport after she was freed from the murder charges, each image used to create an assumption by the readers.

After Louise Woodward's charges were dropped in 1997, her case was examined by many journalists, as to how the 19-year-old was convicted of a crime she did not commit. (Moyes J, 1997)

In 1997, Moyes suggested that Louise Woodward lost the image battle with the media, "Two distinct images of Louise have emerged over the past three weeks; images that exposed huge differences in two nations that more usually stress their cultural similarities." (Moyes J, 1997)

The British media painted a picture of a young innocent, British nanny, who came across as a very naïve, polite and a respectable young woman. Her low-key fashion sense and Alice in Wonderland hair band further highlighted her youthful innocence.

The American media highlighted the same visuals as the British press but seen these points in a dramatically different way. Instead she was "according to the prosecution, a "little actress", a cool, composed, nightmare nanny determined to do whatever she had to do to get off her charge." (Moyes J, 1997)

Research of the images which were used throughout Aisling's murder trial both in Ireland and in American print media could highlight some vast differences just like the Louise Woodward imagery coverage in Britain and America.

The dissertation analysis highlighted many comparisons throughout the four print media organisations and most interestingly showed the media to be hostile of Aisling's case and the evidence that surrounded it from the start. Rather than question the accused motives and actions, Irish and American print media seemed to support the accused side. *The Boston Globe* highlighted a changed perception of the American print media in terms of crime reporting, the *Globe* never assumed Aisling's guilt, if anything it can be suggested that in Aisling's case the media were slightly un-objective towards the crime due to the flawed evidence which was produced throughout the three year period.

Although, a trial by the media is often associated with the negative implications it can have on the accused, Aisling's trial by the media perhaps helped her case in a positive way, by siding with Aisling's innocents throughout. The evidence and case had obvious inaccurate evidence which gave the print media a definite side to back throughout the case, and this was Aisling's side.

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