

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Media Representation of Anti-Asian/Chinese Hate Crimes during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UK Press

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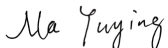
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the media representation of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes in the UK press during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2024). Drawing on theories of media representation, othering, and news racism, it answers two research questions: firstly, how are minority victims, offenders and the COVID-19 pandemic portrayed in UK newspaper headlines, and secondly, who is given a voice in the articles and how does this shape representations of the parties involved. A corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA) was conducted on 84 articles from 39 distinct UK news sources. The analysis reveals that victims are consistently foregrounded but stripped of agency and individuality, while offenders and their racist intent are largely obscured, with responsibility for the crimes displaced onto the pandemic context. Across the corpus, official and institutional voices consistently dominate the reported speech, while the voices of minority victims are relatively underrepresented. A comparative analysis is employed to explore differences in representation between broadsheets and tabloids, which reveals notable divergences in length, narrative and register. Overall, the dissertation shows that UK press coverage tends to present anti-Asian/Chinese hate incidents as isolated events rather than situating them within structures of systemic racism.

Ce mémoire examine la représentation médiatique des crimes de haine anti-asiatiques/chinois dans la presse britannique durant et après la pandémie de COVID-19 (2020–2024). S'appuyant sur les théories de la représentation médiatique, de l'altérisation et du racisme dans les médias, il répond à deux questions de recherche : premièrement, comment les victimes minoritaires, les auteurs des faits et la pandémie de COVID-19 sont-ils représentés dans les titres de la presse britannique, et deuxièmement, à qui la parole est-elle donnée dans les articles et comment cela contribue-t-il à la représentation des parties impliquées. Une analyse du discours critique assistée par corpus (CACDA) a été menée sur 84 articles issus de 39 sources de presse britanniques distinctes. L'analyse révèle que les victimes sont systématiquement mises en avant mais dépouillées de leur agentivité et de leur individualité, tandis que les auteurs des faits et leur intention raciste sont largement occultés, la responsabilité des crimes de haine étant déplacée sur le contexte pandémique. Dans l'ensemble du corpus, les voix officielles et institutionnelles dominent le discours rapporté, tandis que

les voix des victimes minoritaires sont relativement sous-représentées. Une analyse comparative est employée pour explorer les différences de représentation entre la presse de qualité et les tabloïds, ce qui révèle des divergences notables en termes de longueur, de narration et de registre. Dans l'ensemble, ce mémoire montre que la presse britannique tend à présenter les crimes de haine anti-asiatiques/chinois comme des événements isolés, plutôt qu'à les inscrire dans des structures de racisme systémique.

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic became a center topic of the media all around the world with its large number of casualties and significant impact on the economics around the globe. Amid this worldwide gruesome epidemic, blame has been made and fingers have been pointed to China for being the origin of the coronavirus and for its ways of dealing with the situation. Prejudice, discrimination and hatred against the Chinese communities arose in many countries. In the US, terms like “the Chinese virus” have been used by the president Donald Trump and by national press media since March 2020 (Gray & Hansen, 2021¹). In the UK, it is revealed that hate crimes surged against Chinese communities and Asians perceived to be Chinese in general in the first 3 month of 2020, and the disproportionate victimization continued well into the post-lockdown period (Carr et al., 2022²; Gray & Hansen, 2021). The increase in racial hate crimes against Asian/Chinese communities have been attributed to protectionism and retaliation (Carr et al., 2022) and have fitted into previously observed patterns of increased xenophobia following epidemics (Muzzatti, 2005³). However, the way in which these racial hate crimes were taken up by the British press has received little scholarly attention. This dissertation aims to address this gap and to shed light on the media representation of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes in the UK press media during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2024).

To achieve this objective, two main research questions are raised:

1. How were hate crimes targeting the Asian/Chinese community during the COVID-19 pandemic represented in UK newspapers?
More specifically: how are the offenders and the minority victims portrayed in the headlines and, is the specific COVID-19 context foregrounded? To what extent are these portrayals different in broadsheet headlines versus tabloid headlines?
2. Who is given a voice in the news articles? How does this contribute to the representation of the various parties and crimes mentioned in the articles?

¹ Gray, C., & Hansen, K. (2021). Did COVID-19 lead to an increase in hate crimes toward Chinese people in London?. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 37(4), 569-588.

² Carr, J., James, J., Clifton-Sprigg, J., & Vujic, S. (2022). *Hate in the time of COVID-19: Racial crimes against East Asians* (Vol. 15718). IZA-Institute of Labor Economics.

³ Muzzatti, S. L. (2005). Bits of falling sky and global pandemics: Moral panic and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, 13(2), 117-128.

To answer these questions, a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis is conducted to examine 89 headlines and articles from 39 distinctive British news sources and to interpret the patterns that emerge. A comparative approach is adopted to observe any notable differences between broadsheet and tabloid portrayal on the matter.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters and is structured as follows. The second chapter provides a literature review of theories and concepts central to this study, which are around the topics of media representation, race, hate crimes and the British press. The third chapter details the methodology, including the data collection strategy, descriptions of the corpus, and the analytical procedures employed. The fourth chapter presents the headline analysis, tracing how victims, offenders, crimes, and the pandemic context are linguistically constructed in broadsheet and tabloid headlines, which answers my first research question. The fifth chapter explores the voice of different parties presented in the news reports by examining quotation practices across the corpus and its broadsheet and tabloid sub-corpora. The concluding chapter synthesizes the findings, reflects on the methodological limitations, and provides suggestions for future work.

2. Literature Review

This literature review introduces the theoretical and contextual foundation for examining media representations of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes in UK press during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first section introduces the core concept of media representation and its relation to race as well as the concept of Othering as they provide important conceptual tools for tracing discursive framing in my analysis. Secondly, I discuss the definition, history and legalization of hate crimes in the UK, aiming to elucidate the relatively new concept and to allow a better understanding of the incidents reported in the data of this study. The third section deals with media framing patterns during crises and pandemics, to contextualize my study of COVID-19 coverage in the longer-term complicated crisis reporting traditions. Fourthly, I draw knowledge from the overall portrayals of minorities, especially Asians/Chinese, in the British press, to uncover longstanding stereotypes and scarcity.-; The final section provides a characterization of broadsheets and tabloids in the UK and their perceived differences as the data analyzed in this dissertation essentially comes from these types of newspaper.

2.1 Media representation, race, and the social construction of “the Other”

This section examines how media representation is bound up with the construction of racial meaning and the production of differences. Drawing on Hall (2003⁴)’s account of representation, Spivak (1985⁵)’s concept of othering, and van Dijk (2000⁶)’s work on news racism, it is argued that news does not merely describe racialized groups or violent events but actively organizes them through recurring discursive patterns, binary oppositions, and unequal access to voice and agency. These perspectives provide an important conceptual foundation for the analysis in this study, because they make it possible to trace how anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes are framed and constructed in press discourse.

2.1.1 Representation and media discourse

Hall (2003) argues that representation is not a passive reflection of reality but an active social practice through which meaning is produced and circulated. For Hall,

⁴ Hall, S. (Ed.). (2003). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.

⁵ Spivak, G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: An essay in reading the archives. *History and theory*, 24(3), 247-272.

⁶ Van Dijk, T. A. (2000). New (s) Racism: A discourse. *Ethnic minorities and the media*, 37, 33-49.

representation is the process through which meaning is produced via signifying systems, including written language, images, and narrative structures. Within this framework, representation is embedded in a “circuit of culture” in which shared meanings are produced, exchanged and contested, and in which power is exercised, making particular meanings stabilized as natural or self-evident (Hall, 2003). This constructionist understanding is crucial for this study, because it directs attention away from the question of whether news “accurately” reports events and towards how the news discursively constructs people, causes and responsibilities.

Hall (2003) distinguishes two main strands within constructionism: a semiotic approach, influenced by de Saussure and Barthes, and a discursive approach associated with Foucault. The semiotic strand focuses on how sign systems operate through denotation and connotation to organize meaning; for example, how the denotative level of a news image (e.g. a crowd, a mask, a police officer) is overlaid with connotative associations (e.g. danger, disorder, protection, threat) that are culturally learned and often racialized (Hall, 2003). The discursive strand, by contrast, focuses on how particular ensembles of statements, vocabulary and practices, namely discourses, define what can be said, thought and done about specific topics (Hall, 2003). Crucially, Foucault (cited in Hall 2003) insists that such discourses are historically contingent and embedded in relations of power: different discursive formations rise and fall, reshaping what is sayable and thinkable. This suggests that media discourses can define who may speak, whose experience counts as knowledge, and how violence is classified and explained, depending on the power dynamics behind the stories.

2.1.2 The concept of “Othering”

Building on this constructionist and discursive starting point, Hall (2003) has dedicated a chapter-- “spectacle of the ‘Other’” to examining how difference, and especially racial difference, is represented in popular culture and the mass media. Hall shows that minorities are frequently represented through binary oppositions such as civilized/primitive, rational/irrational, normal/deviant or modern/backward. These polarized binaries define the dominant group as normative and central, while positioning the racialized “Other” as inferior, exotic, dangerous or deficient (Hall, 2003). Hall also highlights the role of intertextuality in the process of “othering” -- the accumulation of meanings across images, captions, genres and platforms -- through which racialized meanings are sedimented and reinforced (Hall, 2003). This

intertextuality is pertinent when analyzing media representation of minority issues: news articles about these issues do not appear in isolation, they are read against a broader discursive backdrop of stories about, for example, migration, politics or security.

The concept of othering can be understood as the process of defining and stigmatizing certain people (the Other) as fundamentally different from and inferior to one's own group (the Self). Othering has been established as a crucial concept of postcolonial theory. It was coined by Spivak in her 1985 essay *The Rani of Sirmur*, where she illustrated the British colonial power's othering process of Indian natives through three examples, each demonstrating a dimension of othering (Jensen, 2011⁷; Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011⁸). The following theories have been regarded as roots for the concept of Othering: Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical concepts, which sees the reflection the "Other" as a necessary constitute in the construction of "Self"; Edward Said's postcolonial theory in the work *Orientalism* which discusses the discursive practices that "orientalize" the orient, constructing "the Orient" as an antithesis of "the occident"; philosophical thoughts such as Hegel's master-slave dialectic; and De Beauvoir's introduction of the notion of "the other", which can be used to describe women while men are regarded as the norm (Brons, 2015⁹; Jensen, 2011; Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011). The concept of Othering has been used across numerous academic and practical contexts such as education (Dervin, 2016¹⁰), healthcare (Johnson et al, 2004¹¹) or media studies (Liang et al., 2025¹²). Specifically, the concept of Othering has also been used to understand the motives behind hate crimes (Allen, 2021¹³; Chakraborti, 2009¹⁴), a notion that is central to this study and which will be discussed in the next section.

⁷ Jensen, S.Q. (2011). Othering, identity formation and agency. *Qualitative Studies*, 2(2): 63-78

⁸ Thomas-Olalde, O., & Velho, A. (2011). Othering and its effects—Exploring the concept. *Writing postcolonial histories of intercultural education*, 2(1), 27-51.

⁹ Brons, L. L. (2015). Othering, an analysis. *Transcience, a Journal of Global Studies* 6 (1):69-90.

¹⁰ Dervin, F. (2016). Discourses of othering. In F. Dervin, *Interculturality in education* (pp. 43–55). Palgrave Pivot. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54544-2_4

¹¹ Johnson, J. L., Bottorff, J. L., Browne, A. J., Grewal, S., Hilton, B. A., & Clarke, H. (2004). Othering and Being Othered in the Context of Health Care Services. *Health Communication*, 16(2), 255–271. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327027HC1602_7

¹² Liang, L., Wang, H., & Li, F. (2025). Representing the other: A critical discourse analysis of British media coverage of China's role in climate change. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12, 1168. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05456-w>

¹³ Allen, C. (2021). A Hate Crime Crisis? Investigating the function of Brexit, Terrorism, COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter on Levels of Hate Crimes in Today's United Kingdom. *Przegląd Policyjny*, 142, 61-72.

¹⁴ Chakraborti, N. (2009). Crimes against the "other": Conceptual, operational, and empirical challenges for hate studies. *J. Hate Stud.*, 8, 9.

The theory of Othering is central to how this dissertation approaches racialized media representation. In fact, the use of the Othering process has frequently been observed in discourses around minority issues and in time of major health crisis (de Rosa & Mannarini, 2020¹⁵; Ittefaq et al., 2020¹⁶; Salvatori, 2020¹⁷; van Dijk, 2000). For example, de Rosa and Mannarini (2020) illustrate how coronavirus was systematically racialized as the “Chinese virus” in Italy and identify this racialization as a clear instance of Othering. They argue that the “othering” behavior of blaming the outgroup is not unique to COVID-19 but echoes historical responses to previous epidemics.

When analyzing the newspaper coverage of racial hate crimes against Asian/Chinese people, it is not sufficient to examine what is said; it is equally important to explore how the subjects of reporting are treated. This entails asking whether they are discussed as individuals or only as an undifferentiated group, whether they are presented as proactive agents who express their opinions and narrate their own experiences, or as passive objects whose stories must be told by someone else – and, if so, by whom. It also involves examining whether their perceived differences are repeatedly highlighted, and whether these differences are presented as contingent and social or as inherent and natural. These questions are directly inspired by the theory of “othering” and guide the reading of news texts in this dissertation.

2.1.3 Racialized regimes of representation and news racism

Van Dijk’s (2000) work on “new(s) racism” offers a more explicitly discourse-analytic account of how racial hierarchies are maintained in the news. Van Dijk (2000) argues that contemporary racism frequently operates in subtle and indirect ways, especially through the structures and strategies of media discourse, rather than through overtly racist language. Media discourse, he notes, is a key source of people’s knowledge, attitudes and ideologies (van Dijk, 2000). Racism is thus reproduced when news routines, story schemas, lexical choices and rhetorical devices consistently generate positive representations of “us” and negative, problematizing representations of “them,” even when explicit racist slurs are absent (van Dijk, 2000).

¹⁵ De Rosa, A. S., & Mannarini, T. (2020). The “invisible other”: Social representations of COVID-19 pandemic in media and institutional discourse. *Papers on Social Representations*, 29(2), 5-1.

¹⁶ Ittefaq, M., Abwao, M., Baines, A., Belmas, G., Kamboh, S. A., & Figueroa, E. J. (2022). A pandemic of hate: Social representations of COVID-19 in the media. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 22(1), 225-252.

¹⁷ Salvatori, P. (2020). *Frame analysis in a pandemic: Representations of COVID-19 in British broadsheets and tabloids* [Bachelor's thesis, Leiden University]. Leiden University Student Repository. <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3240371>

Van Dijk also put forward a framework that operationalizes the more general insights of Hall and Foucault into a concrete toolkit for analyzing media discourse. To explore how news discourse contributes to everyday elite racism, he proposes examining news at three levels: 1) topics, signaled primarily by headlines; 2) quotes, which reveal whose voices journalists draw on and thus who holds discursive power; and 3) local meanings, which refer to meanings that are conveyed “between the lines” through lexical choices that are not explicitly racist but influenced by attitudes and opinions about specific groups and events (van Dijk, 2000). Van Dijk (2000) argues that in news discourses, ethnic minorities often appear in negative topics such as crimes and social problems, and even in seemingly neutral topics, minorities tend to be represented in an unfavorable light through negative lexicalization. For example, in his analysis of an article that deals with immigration, van Dijk (2000) pointed out that the headline *BRITAIN INVADED BY AN ARMY OF ILLEGALS* associates immigrants with violence, crimes and represents them as a threat by using military metaphors “invasion” and “army”, and by referring to them as “illegals”. These insights directly inform the analytic strategy of this dissertation: a close analysis of word choice and syntactic patterns in headlines and an examination of quotation practices are employed to reveal how various parties are constructed in the news, whose voices are given more weight and whether strategies such as nominalization or passive constructions are used to mitigate the responsibility of ingroups.

2.2 Racial hate crimes and their reporting in the media

Now that we understand how media discourse and the process of “othering” shape the perception of minority groups, it is important to start looking at the specific studies that have focused on hate crimes in their media discourse analysis. This section begins by tracing the definition and legal history of hate crimes in the UK, before turning to the existing scholarship on how racial hate crimes and more generally, minority victimization, are represented in the press.

2.2.1 Definition and history of hate crimes in the UK

Hate crime can be understood as a “conventional” criminal offence (e.g., assault, criminal damage, harassment) that is committed with a *bias* or *prejudice* motive, where the victim is targeted because of their real or perceived membership in a group such as race, religion, ethnicity), sexual orientation, disability, or gender/identity (Chakraborti, 2009;

Laverick & Joyce¹⁸, 2019; Mason, 1993¹⁹). As mentioned by Laverick & Joyce (2019), it is argued that hate crimes are usually targeted at socially marginalized groups and represent a mechanism that sustains the somewhat precarious hierarchies and power relations with them. Though it is a relatively new concept in the UK (Allen, 2021; Chakraborti, 2009), hate crime has its root deep in British history. In the case of racial hate crime, Laverick & Joyce (2019) explain that racist ideas (e.g. that black people are naturally inferior) were used to justify the slave trade in the 18-19th century and continued to be nurtured (e.g. that the colonized countries are backward and dependent) during the colonial project in the 19-20th century. Negative sentiments towards Africans and Asians persisted, finding expression in restrictive immigration and access controls, as well as in the competition for and exploitation of labor in the country. According to Laverick & Joyce (2019), riots and racist attacks against multiple non-European minority ethnicities surged after the end of World War I when these groups, accused of taking jobs and houses from white communities, were used as scapegoats for post-war economic problems. After World War II, while British officials were welcoming immigrants from its colonies and former colonies to fill the labor needs, people from minority groups were again met with racially motivated violence along with police brutality and malpractice (Laverick & Joyce, 2019).

2.2.2 Legalization of racial hate crimes in the UK

Allen (2021) and Chakraborti (2009) attribute the recognition of “hate crime” in the British criminal justice system to several racially motivated incidents around the end of the 20th century, especially the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. Despite previous attempts to curb racial discrimination and violence, it was not until the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act that higher sentences for racially aggravated crimes were implemented (Chakraborti, 2009). An offence is defined as racially aggravated when, at or around the time of the incident, the offender demonstrates hostility based on the victim’s actual or presumed racial group, or when the offence is wholly or partly motivated by hostility towards that group (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, s.28; Laverick & Joyce, 2019). In line with US penalty-enhancement models, these provisions do not criminalize new conduct but symbolically and materially mark racist offences as more serious, reflecting the

¹⁸ Laverick, W., & Joyce, P. (2019). *Racial and religious hate crime*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.

¹⁹ Mason, G. (1993). *Violence against lesbians and gay men* (Vol. 2). Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

state's willingness to take racially motivated offending seriously (Laverick & Joyce, 2019). Subsequent statutes extended and consolidated this framework: the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 added religiously aggravated offences to the CDA scheme, while the Criminal Justice Act 2003 extended the penalty enhancement principle for offenses motivated by hostility against someone's sexual orientation or disability (Chakraborti, 2009; Laverick & Joyce, 2019).

2.2.3 Media reporting of racial hate crimes

Foreman et al. (2016²⁰) conducted an experiment to examine the effect of different media frames on viewers' perceptions of suspects of crimes and their racial groups. The findings of this study showed that "people who read a scrutinizing news frame have more blame for the suspect and more negative feelings towards the suspect's race as a whole" and that viewers "are more likely to be sympathetic towards a suspect when they share the same racial identity" (Foreman et al., 2016, p. 8). This finding is in line with van Dijk's theories that perceptions of a certain racial group would be influenced by the way the group or a certain individual from the group is represented in media. Studies that specifically focus on hate crime representation in the media are scarce. Hatcher (2002²¹)'s analysis of hate crime coverage in two major national American newspapers between 1997 and 1999 revealed that hate crime reporting in newspapers is comparable to official statistics in terms of ethnicity of offender (predominantly white in both news reports and FBI statistics) and bias type (both present sexual orientation, race and religion as the most frequent motives). This study also found that the primary informants and sources of the news are governments and other official institutions (Hatcher, 2002). However, the first finding has later been somewhat contradicted by later studies that identify a misrepresentation of the actual statistics in media crime reporting involving minorities, with an overrepresentation of some and an underrepresentation of others (Bjornstrom et al., 2010²²; Ghazi-Tehrani & Kearns, 2020²³). For example, while comparing the media treatment of hate crimes that are also

²⁰ Foreman, K., Arteaga, C., & Collins, A. (2016). The role of media framing in crime reports: How different types of news frames and racial identity affect viewers' perceptions of race. *Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research*, 4(1), 12.

²¹ Hatcher, J. M. (2002). *Hate crime in the media: A content analysis of "The Washington Post" and "The New York Times"* [Master's thesis, West Virginia University]. The Research Repository @ WVU. <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd/10628>

²² Bjornstrom, E. E., Kaufman, R. L., Peterson, R. D., & Slater, M. D. (2010). Race and ethnic representations of lawbreakers and victims in crime news: A national study of television coverage. *Social problems*, 57(2), 269-293.

²³ Ghazi-Tehrani, A., & Kearns, E. M. (2020). Biased coverage of bias crime: Examining differences in media

considered “terrorism” and those that are not, Ghazi-Tehrani & Kearns (2020) found that non-white perpetrators of hate crime receive more media coverage and that hate crimes with minority victims receive less media attention.

Studies surrounding the media representation of minorities have also been conducted for other media forms such as television. Bjornstrom, et al. (2010) carried out a study to analyze the portrayals of lawbreakers and victims in television crime news and found that “racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to be portrayed as victims than whites”(p. 288), which can be explained by several factors such as the privilege of and the more significant amount of attention given to the victimization of whites compared to nonwhites, the fact that the media owners, who are white themselves, are more inclined to present news featuring white victims, and the fact that white victimization is simply rarer (Bjornstrom et al., 2010). This study has also revealed that victimization in minority communities is routinely minimized.

Similarly, more recent research, covering the period of 2018-2020, suggests that hate crimes targeted at Jewish people, Asian Americans, Americans with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ community are disproportionately underreported in the press media (HonestReporting, 2022²⁴). This under-representation of minority victimization has complicated consequences. On the one hand, it misleads the public in their perception of the real ratio of victimized ethnicities in crimes. Especially when combined with an “over-representation” of minority perpetrators in crime, people might think that their racial group is under bigger threat than they actually are, and at the same time think that another ethnic group is more dangerous and inclined to commit crime than they really are. On the other hand, this disproportionate representation can obscure the problems that certain ethnic groups are facing, conceal the seriousness of their vulnerabilities to crime and thus impede policies and efforts to address these problems and vulnerabilities.

Zaykowski’s (2010²⁵, p. 389) study found that “minority victimizations of racial and non-racial hate crimes were less likely to be reported compared to victimizations of Whites”

coverage of hate crimes and terrorism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1830573>

²⁴ HonestReporting. (2022). *HonestReporting research study: Comparing US media coverage of hate crimes against minorities, including Jews*.

<https://honestreporting.com/honestreporting-research-study-comparing-us-media-coverage-of-hate-crimes-against-minorities-including-jews/>

²⁵ Zaykowski, H. (2010). Racial disparities in hate crime reporting. *Violence and victims*, 25(3), 378.

and that “the likelihood of reporting minority victimizations of racial hate crimes to the police was substantially less than reporting non-racial hate crimes”. The study confirmed that hate crimes against minorities, particularly racial hate crimes, may be underrepresented in the official numbers of crimes published by authorities. This means that, when it comes to the media representation of crime involving minority ethnicities, it is not sufficient to only look at the published reports, because a big part of the crimes that happen are not reported to the police and authorities.

The studies above reveal that crimes, especially hate crimes against ethnic minorities, tend to be undercalculated and underrepresented in the media. News reports are abundant to cover crimes committed by racial minorities but rather scarcely on the crimes committed against them. However, these crimes are also understudied, especially in the context of media representation. Despite a long history of interracial violence in the UK, few studies have focused on the media representation of racial hate crimes. Even though studies have shown that in general, minorities tend to be represented in a negative spotlight (van Dijk 2000), few studies have specifically looked at the media reports on crimes where ethnic minorities are the victims in the story. This dissertation aims to address the lack of attention devoted to media reporting involving ethnic minorities who are the victims of crime.

2.3 Media framing during crises and pandemics

While this dissertation focuses on reports about racial hate crimes against Asian/Chinese people in the UK since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to acknowledge that these are news reports published during a period of crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic is without any doubt a major global health crisis with its rapid spread all over the planet, infecting an estimated 43.9% of the global population at least once by late 2021 (≈ 3.8 billion cumulative infections) (COVID-19 Cumulative Infection Collaborators, 2022²⁶), causing more than 7 million reported deaths (WHO situation reports, 2024²⁷). What is more, the health and social effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continued into the mid-2020s.

2.3.1 Media coverage during crisis

²⁶ COVID-19 Cumulative Infection Collaborators (2022). Estimating global, regional, and national daily and cumulative infections with SARS-CoV-2 through Nov 14, 2021: a statistical analysis. *Lancet (London, England)*, 399(10344), 2351–2380. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(22\)00484-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(22)00484-6)

²⁷ <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update---24-december-2024>

It is not the first time that humanity has experienced worldwide health crises since the 20th century: the 1918 “Spanish flu”, the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the 1980s, the 2002 SARS (on a less severe scale). It is clear that the media has held an important role in informing, alerting and educating the public during these times of crisis. It has led to the fact that crisis reporting is now studied as a specific subject. Existing literature has tried to study, from various perspectives, how the media reacts to a large-scale public health crisis. Some have focused on one specific device commonly used in the media, such as metaphors (Chiang & Duann, 2007²⁸; Wallis, 2005²⁹). Wallis (2005), for example, found that war metaphors to describe the illness tend to be “more prominent where the threat was immediate” (p. 2633). Others analyzed the reappearing frames used in the reporting of these illnesses in times of crisis (An, 2009³⁰; Ogbodo et al., 2020³¹). Semetko & Valkenburg (2000³²)’s list of news frames are frequently used for content analysis of the media framing during crisis. The frames include attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences and morality (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

2.3.2 Media framing during Covid-19

Ogbodo et al. (2020) reveal that the most dominant frames used in the global media coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic were human interest and fear/scaremongering frames. The human interest frame personalizes news stories by emphasizing emotional angles, individual experiences, or “human faces” on issues to evoke empathy, sympathy, or outrage and boost audience engagement. In COVID-19 coverage, this frame dominated global media by focusing on personal impacts like family separations or frontline workers' struggles, making the impact of the crisis relatable to readers. Fear/scaremongering frames exaggerate threats through alarming language, hyperbolic warnings, or worst-case scenarios to heighten anxiety and urgency. They can amplify

²⁸ Chiang, W. Y., & Duann, R. F. (2007). Conceptual metaphors for SARS: 'war' between whom? *Discourse & society*, 18(5), 579-602.

²⁹ Wallis, P., & Nerlich, B. (2005). Disease metaphors in new epidemics: the UK media framing of the 2003 SARS epidemic. *Social science & medicine*, 60(11), 2629-2639.

³⁰ An, S. K., & Gower, K. K. (2009). How do the news media frame crises? A content analysis of crisis news coverage. *Public relations review*, 35(2), 107-112.

³¹ Ogbodo, J. N., Onwe, E. C., Chukwu, J., Nwasum, C. J., Nwakpu, E. S., Nwankwo, S. U., ... & Ogbaeja, N. I. (2020). Communicating health crisis: a content analysis of global media framing of COVID-19. *Health promotion perspectives*, 10(3), 257.

³² Semetko, H. A., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2000). Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news. *Journal of Communication*, 50(2), 93-109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02843.x>

perceived risk, trigger strong negative emotions like panic, and drive behavioral responses such as compliance with precautions, but risk causing undue stress or health issues for vulnerable groups. Ogbodo et al. (2020) argued that the dominance of the human interest and fear/scaremongering frames shaped public perceptions, potentially escalating anxiety during the pandemic. According to De Rosa & Mannarini (2020), the excessive use of these frames may also be responsible for stirring up nationalist emotions and racial hatred, which then lead to blaming, “othering” and discriminating against Asian/Chinese communities.

2.4 Minorities in the British press

The representation of minorities and specifically of Asian/Chinese communities in the British press provides essential context for understanding the background against which the British media portrayed anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section first examines general trends in British media coverage of minorities, including their disproportionate linkage to sensitive issues like crime and immigration, before focusing specifically on portrayals of Chinese and Asian communities, which reveal similar scarcities and stereotypes.

2.4.1 British media representation of minorities

Another aspect, namely the media representation of minorities in the UK, serves as an important context when analyzing the media representation of racial hate crimes against Asian/Chinese during and after Covid-19 pandemics. In the UK, xenophobia has historically been exploited by politicians to achieve their own ends. The British press, being overtly partisan, has been an important stage on which threats caused by immigrants and asylum seekers are amplified and made sensational (Firmstone et al., 2009³³). These politicalized anti-minority news reports are found to possess high news values and go hand in hand with the development of draconian border policies. However, this high news value is contrasted by very low press coverage of minority issues. In fact, Firmstone et al. (2009, p. 4) found that:

Ethnic minorities receive proportionately very little coverage in the British press: but they have high salience in relation to specific news agendas, notably immigration, terrorism, and crime.

³³ Firmstone, J., Georgiou, M., Husband, C., Marinkova, M., & Steibel, F. (2009). *Representation of minorities in the media: UK. Final analysis report*. University of Leeds. <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/143385/>

This finding is in line with Van Dijk's observation, showing that even when little or no overtly racist language is used, news still holds a power in shaping readers' mind about minority groups in other ways. A continuous disproportionate association of minority groups with certain news subjects would limit the knowledge about these groups and fixate their image in these mostly sensitive and highly political matters.

2.4.2 British media representation of the Chinese

When it comes to the media representation of the Chinese, the scarcity of press coverage and relatively high salience also applies. A 2020 PhD dissertation was dedicated to this representation (He, 2010³⁴). He concluded that a shift in the image of China from a "fascinating country" to a "falling apart empire" (p. 58) happened as the Opium wars broke out. With the success of British intrusion, China was forced to legalize opium and accept opium trade with the British. This led to the stereotypes of the Chinese being weak and drug addicts in the UK and the western world (He, 2010). To examine the modern British press representation of China and its people, He analyzed a large number of news articles on Chinese issues (Tibet issue, the Hongkong handover, Chinese immigration and the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake) over recent decades using two master frames, namely ethno-nationalist and liberal individualist masterframes. According to He (2010), the liberal individualist point of view was widely adopted when reporting on China and its people in British newspapers. This means that for the four issues reviewed, there is an overarching tone criticizing China's political regime--a "communist" country (the quotation marks are used here for the reason that China is arguably a socialist country, not communist), which signifies the lack of freedom and human rights when held to the western yardstick of democracy (He, 2010). The other ethno-nationalist masterframe was found to make few appearances in the British media in the form of Orientalism, depicting China and its people as barbarian and underdeveloped. Similar to the result of the 2009 report by Firmstone et al., He concluded that "the media exposure of the Chinese community in Britain is very low" and that "when it is covered in the news, it is mostly linked with drugs, street crime, syndicates etc. in the British media" (p. 71).

³⁴ He, M. (2010). *An analysis of framing in British news media representations of China and the Chinese* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation]. Loughborough University.

2.5 Broadsheets vs. tabloids

Broadsheets and tabloids are two newspaper traditions that differ not only in page size, but also in editorial style, audience orientation, and news values. In British journalism scholarship, tabloids (popular press) are generally associated with accessibility, visual emphasis, and human-interest storytelling, while broadsheets (quality press) are associated with a more institutionally oriented style of coverage (Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992³⁵).

2.5.1 Historical development

Originally, the term “tabloid” referred to a compressed pharmaceutical tablet, but it was later applied to newspapers that adopted a smaller format and a more concise presentation style, as opposed to broadsheets, the “conventional” and the more “serious” end of the press, which typically give greater space to politics, economics, and institutional affairs (Bingham & Conboy, 2015³⁶). The growth of the tabloid press was closely linked to industrialization, rising literacy, advertising markets, and the expansion of mass circulation newspapers. In this context, tabloids became commercially successful by addressing wider and often less elite audiences through readable language, prominent headlines, and strong visual appeal.

The distinction between broadsheets and tabloids emerged historically through the development of mass-market journalism in Britain from the late nineteenth century onward. As pointed out by Bingham and Conboy (2015), the tabloid model was shaped by several waves of innovation: Alfred Harmsworth’s *Daily Mail* in the 1890s, redesigns and editorial shifts in the 1930s, and the full popularization of tabloid style with *The Sun* in the late 1960s and 1970s. Tabloidization had such a long-lasting impact that by 2004, even the *Times*, one of the most traditional papers, adopted the tabloid size (Bingham & Conboy, 2015). Over time, “tabloid” came to describe not only a smaller physical format, but also a broader journalistic style defined by populism, visual intensity, and a focus on sensation and immediacy.

2.5.2 Main differences

The differences between broadsheets and tabloids lie in both format and content. On the formal level, tabloids usually use smaller page formats, larger photographs, bolder

³⁵ Dahlgren, P., & Sparks, C. (Eds.). (1992). *Journalism and popular culture*. Sage.

³⁶ Bingham, A., & Conboy, M. (2015). *Tabloid century: The popular press in Britain, 1896 to the present*. Peter Lang.

headlines, shorter articles, and more striking page design, while broadsheets traditionally use larger formats and denser text with less visual interruption (Bingham & Conboy, 2015). On the content level, tabloids tend to emphasize sport, scandal, celebrity, crime, and human-interest stories, whereas broadsheets more often privilege politics, economics, and public affairs (Dahlgren & Sparks 1992). In terms of readership, Bingham and Conboy (2015) report that tabloids actively seek audiences that are not well served by the broadsheets, especially working-class and lower-middle-class readers, as well as women.

Unlike broadsheets, tabloids are closely linked to sensationalism. As Bingham and Conboy (2015, p2) note, the tabloid model is driven by the “insistent pursuit of sensation and scandal,” while it is argued that sensational tabloid practices may compromise accuracy, credibility, political significance and other journalistic values. (Taft, 1938, as cited in Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992, p. 133). Dahlgren & Sparks (1992) also notes that popular journalism often frames events through the experiences of individuals, offering immediate explanatory frameworks built around personal causes and responses, while quality journalism more often presents a fragmented picture that requires readers to assemble broader meaning themselves. In this sense, tabloids tend to personalize social issues, while broadsheets are more likely to contextualize them within institutions and longer-term structures.

2.5.3 Crime reporting in broadsheets and tabloids

Crime reporting, as pointed out by Colbran (2022³⁷), is significant to news media content since violence embodies news values. According to Ditton & Duffy (1983³⁸), the newspaper coverage of crimes does not necessarily reflect the reality of crimes in terms of frequency and type of incidence. This means that some types of crimes are given more attention while others could be underreported. Media discourse in crime reporting can attribute negative narratives surrounding a certain community when disproportionate association between crime and the community is made. Cushion et al.’s (2011³⁹) Cardiff-based study of media representations of black young men and boys, for example, concludes that across news and current affairs, black youth are disproportionately

³⁷ Colbran, M. (2022). The changing face of crime news. In *Crime and Investigative Reporting in the UK* (pp. 144–166). Chapter, Bristol University Press.

³⁸ Ditton, J., & Duffy, J. (1983). Bias in the newspaper reporting of crime news. *Brit. J. Criminology*, 23, 159.

³⁹ Cushion, S., Moore, K., & Jewell, J. (2011). Media representations of Black young men and boys. *REACH media monitoring project*, 1-103.

represented as perpetrators or suspects of violent crime, with tabloids especially reliant on gang and knife-crime narratives. Tabbert (2015⁴⁰), in her analysis of linguistic construction of offenders, victims and crimes in the British and German press, revealed that crime news does not provide a neutral representation of offenders and victims and that portrayals of these figures are shaped by underlying editorial ideologies. However, studies that specifically compare crime news representation across broadsheet and tabloid outlets remain scarce, and this dissertation therefore adopts a comparative approach to explore potential differences between the two.

⁴⁰ Tabbert, U. (2015). *Crime and corpus: The linguistic representation of crime in the press*. John Benjamins.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework guiding this dissertation. It first details the data collection process, including the database searches, iterative refinement of search strings, and screening procedures used to compile the corpus. It then gives a descriptive overview of the corpus and sub-corpora, followed by an account of the research approach employed for the analysis.

3.1 Data collection

This section describes the data collection process for this dissertation and gives an overview of the data. It details the methods used to select UK press articles on racial hate crimes against Chinese and Asian communities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2024). The approach draws on database searches, refining search terms, and careful screening to create a focused yet comprehensive dataset. The resulting data have been carefully classified by multiple criteria, such as newspaper type (tabloid vs. broadsheet, regional vs. national), article type, publication date, and article size.

This study uses a multi-stage data collection strategy to identify and compile UK news coverage of racial hate crimes targeting Chinese and broader Asian communities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The process combines systematic database searches, iterative refinement of search strings, AI-assisted pre-selection and manual screening, to balance breadth of coverage with conceptual precision around the category of “racial hate crime.”

Data sources, temporal scope and key concepts

News articles were retrieved via Factiva⁴¹, a comprehensive news and business information database owned by Dow Jones, and a number of decisions had to be made and revised in order to refine the search to include enough data for a corpus analysis while staying precisely on the topic of racial hate crimes. The “pandemic and post-pandemic” period was defined as January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2024, aligning the news corpus with the epidemiological timeline of COVID-19 since the first reported cluster in Wuhan fell on December 31, 2019. “Hate crime” was operationalized according to the shared definition used by the police, Crown Prosecution Service, and

⁴¹ <https://snapshot.factiva.com>

other criminal justice agencies in England and Wales⁴², that is, as any criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a protected characteristic (here: race or ethnicity). On this basis, “hate crimes” in this project refer specifically to racially or ethnically motivated offences. In other words, non-criminal forms of hostility (for example, microaggressions or generalized xenophobic discourse) were not, by themselves, sufficient for inclusion.

Initial search strategy

The initial focus was on eight national UK newspapers commonly grouped into “quality press” (broadsheets): The Guardian, The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Independent and “popular press” (tabloids): The Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror and Daily Express. A pilot search was conducted targeting articles that explicitly linked “Chinese” or “Asian” and “hate crime” in the headline to identify the most clearly labelled instances of the phenomenon. In Factiva syntax, this first query took the form:

hd=((Chinese OR Asian) AND "hate crime"),

with the date range set to 01/01/2020–31/12/2024, region restricted to the United Kingdom, language set to English, and source restricted to the Guardian to test the feasibility.

This pilot returned only one Guardian article explicitly headlined with both an Asian identifier and the term “hate crime,” indicating that many relevant reports would likely be headlined under other lexical choices. Based on this insight and on a manual scan of headlines across the sample newspapers, an expanded list of candidate keywords was drawn up inductively from actual news usage.

A second, broader search string was then constructed by combining ethnic markers (“Chinese,” “Asian”) with a set of descriptors for racially motivated violence, abuse and hostility observed in relevant headlines (e.g. ‘racist incident’ , ‘racial crime’). The resulting Factiva query took the form:

hd=((Chinese OR Asian) AND ("hate crime" OR "racist incident" OR "racist incidents" OR "anti-Asian racism" OR xenophobia OR "racial discrimination" OR sinophobic OR "racial crime" OR "racial crimes" OR "anti-Chinese racism" OR "anti-Chinese attacks" OR abuse OR abused OR "Covid-related racism" OR "racism during the pandemic" OR experiences OR "COVID 19 incidents" OR

⁴² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2024/hate-crime-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2024>

violence OR attack OR attacks OR aggression)).

This string was applied first to each of the four broadsheets, then to the four tabloids, under identical temporal, regional and language constraints. The use of Factiva's "subject" filters (for example, "Hate Crime," "Racism/Xenophobia," "Crime/Legal Action") was explored but not adopted as a primary selection mechanism, as pilot searches showed that many clearly relevant items were indexed under various tags while some "hate crime"-labelled pieces discussed policy or legislative debates rather than specific criminal incidents.

Parallel search strings were developed to capture reports of hate crimes against Black/African communities, with the intention of enabling comparative analysis of media attention across racialized groups. Here, the ethnicity terms were modified while the violence/abuse lexicon was retained, for example:

hd=((Black OR African OR Afro) AND ("hate crime" OR "racist incident" OR "racist incidents" OR "anti-Black racism" OR "Afrophobic" OR "racial discrimination" OR "racial crime" OR "racial crimes" OR "anti-Black attacks" OR abuse OR abused OR "Covid-related racism" OR "racism during the pandemic" OR experiences OR "COVID 19 incidents" OR violence OR attack OR attacks OR aggression)).

An analogous approach was tested for "White" or "Caucasian" victims, but this yielded predominantly irrelevant material (for example, references to surnames, "White House," or metaphorical uses of "black") and confirmed that white victims are rarely explicitly marked as such in headlines. Given these linguistic and indexing constraints and the insufficient time to closely read and analyze too big a dataset, the comparative method among ethnicities was eventually abandoned, giving way to a more close-up analyze focused only on the anti-Asian/Chinese incidents among the COVID-19 period.

Selection criteria and screening procedure

Across all periods and search iterations, article inclusion was governed by a consistent set of criteria derived from the UK legal definition of hate crime and the substantive focus of the dissertation. To be included, the article had to:

1. Describe a criminal offence or clearly illegal act (for example, physical assault, criminal damage, threats, online abuse investigated or prosecuted as an offence) occurring in the UK within the relevant time window;
2. Indicate, either through police classification, judicial treatment, explicit

use of “hate crime,” “racially aggravated,” “racially motivated,” or through unambiguous reporting of racial slurs and targeting, that the offence was motivated by hostility or prejudice against Chinese or broader Asian individuals or communities; and

3. Devote the main focus of the article to these incidents rather than to related but distinct themes such as policy debates, general racism, or institutional discrimination without specific criminal events.

On this basis, reports of racist harassment, cyber-abuse or over-policing that were not recognized as criminal offences or not framed as hate crimes under UK law were excluded, despite their obvious importance to broader discussions of racism. This conservative approach aimed to keep the dataset conceptually coherent around racially aggravated offending as a legally and discursively bounded category.

The screening proceeded in several steps. First, all headlines returned by a given search string were inspected within Factiva. Articles whose headlines were clearly irrelevant (for example, cyber-attacks involving Chinese state actors, diplomatic disputes, or crime stories involving Asian perpetrators but not Asian victims) were excluded at this stage. Second, the full text of all remaining items was read to determine whether the incident met the inclusion criteria, with particular attention to whether the police, courts or journalists described the event as “racially aggravated,” a “hate crime,” or explicitly linked it to anti-Chinese or anti-Asian hostility. Third, duplicate versions of the same story (for example, agency copy and newspaper reproduction, or near-identical online and print editions) were identified and removed, privileging the most detailed version for corpus construction.

For the initial, newspaper-restricted phase (2020–2024), this procedure yielded seven articles on anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes across the eight selected titles: five in The Guardian, one in The Independent and one in the Daily Mirror, with none identified in The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Sun, Daily Mail or Daily Express. Equivalent searches for Black/African victims produced 11 articles meeting the criteria over the same period (nine in broadsheets, two in tabloids), highlighting the overall scarcity of coverage.

Extension beyond the initial newspaper sample

To enlarge the dataset, two pre-COVID comparison windows were then added: 2010–2014 and 2015–2019. For these earlier periods, the same database and overall

procedure were retained, with COVID-specific terms removed from the search strings while maintaining a focus on racialized victimization of Asian/Chinese communities in the UK.

After careful selection according to the inclusion criteria, an extremely small number of qualifying articles on anti-Asian hate crimes in the sample over 15 years (14 items between 2010 and 2024) was observed, suggesting that restricting the dataset to eight national titles would severely limit both quantitative and qualitative analysis. To address this, the data collection strategy was broadened to include all UK-based news sources available in Factiva that met the same regional constraints (i.e. UK), and the time scope was settled again on the 5-year period of 2020-2024.

For the 2020–2024 period, the expanded search initially returned 9650 hits, which were reduced to 643 by restricting the “region” field to the United Kingdom. Given this volume, a hybrid method combining AI-assisted pre-selection and human verification was adopted. Within the Comet browser interface, the built-in AI assistant was prompted to scan all retrieved articles page by page and identify those that, according to the UK hate crime definition and the project’s inclusion criteria, appeared to report hate crimes against Asian/Chinese individuals or communities in the UK (cf. prompt used in Appendix 1).

The AI-generated list of candidate headlines was then used as an initial filter. Each suggested article was located again in Factiva, its full text read in detail, and its fit with the inclusion criteria reassessed by the researcher. Articles that the AI had flagged but that did not in fact center on racial hate crime (for example, pieces about US attacks, conceptual discussions of anti-Asian racism, or assaults at Chinese takeaways without any racial or xenophobic motivation mentioned) were excluded at this stage. From the 74 headlines the AI assistant preselected as potentially relevant, 49 articles were included in the dataset after manual selection.

In a final stage, I manually scanned the remaining, non-pre-selected headlines from the 643-article pool to identify any additional items that the AI had overlooked. Candidate headlines suggesting racial abuse, racially aggravated assault, or explicit anti-Asian/Chinese hostility (e.g. *Shocking moment Asian man is punched as he walks down the street by white thug in 'racially motivated attack' amid violent riots in Hartlepool*) were opened, read in full, and evaluated against the same criteria. This manual examination added 36 further articles, bringing the total number of included

items on anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes in the UK during 2020–2024 to 84 across a wide range of national and regional outlets.

All selected articles were then downloaded from Factiva in RTF format under “article format” and stored as the core textual corpus for subsequent quantitative and discourse analyses.

Methodological complexities and limitations

Several methodological complexities emerged during data collection. First, there is a structural mismatch between the legal/criminological category of “racial hate crime” and the heterogeneous ways in which news organizations index and label relevant stories. Factiva’s “Hate Crime” subject tag proved too narrow and inconsistent to use as a standalone filter, while broader tags such as “Racism/Xenophobia” or “Crime/Legal Action” captured many conceptually adjacent but non-criminal or non-racial incidents. This required intensive manual reading and judgement and likely means that some borderline cases were excluded.

Second, the distinction between police-recorded hate crimes and wider patterns of racist victimization is often blurred in practice. The dataset systematically excludes, for example, important cases of online racial harassment, sexual violence with racialized elements, and racially discriminatory policing that are not explicitly treated by the police or journalists as “hate crimes.” While this narrowness aids conceptual clarity, it also under-represents other forms of racial harm experienced by Asian/Chinese communities.

Finally, even after broadening the source base beyond the initial eight newspapers, the absolute number of news reports meeting the strict inclusion criteria remains modest: 84 articles on anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes UK-wide during 2020–2024. This scarcity is itself an empirical finding concerning media visibility, but it also constrains certain statistical operations and calls for a qualitative, discourse-analytical orientation that can work productively with relatively small, carefully delineated corpora.

3.2 Description of the corpora

Tables 1-4 provide an overview of the corpus collected within the framework of this dissertation.

Table 1. Corpus summary

Corpus feature	Value
Articles/files	84
Tokens	44,043
Newspapers/sources	39
Date range	2020-02-06 to 2024-08-01

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics by Newspaper Distribution Scope

Scope ⁴³	Number of Articles	Average Words	Median Words
National	17	601	542
Regional	67	430	447

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics by Newspaper Typology

Classification	Number of Articles	Average Words	Median Words
Tabloid	59	392	443
Broadsheet	20	503	468
Newswire	4	305	209
Monitoring service	1	471	471

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics by Article Type

Article Type	Number of Articles	Average Words	Median Words
News	80	415	437

⁴³ For the classification of geographical scope see Section 3.2.1.

Article Type	Number of Articles	Average Words	Median Words
Opinion	2	586	586
Features	1	1802	1802
Letters	1	535	535

Table 5 provides a summary of the sub-corpora created for the analysis of this dissertation.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Sub-corpora

Feature	Headline Sub-corpus	Broadsheet Sub-corpus	Tabloid Sub-corpus
File count	1 ⁴⁴	20	59
Token count	1,177	10,501	29,376
Type count	478	1,996	3,869

3.2.1 News sources

Overview of the News Sources

The dataset for this dissertation comprises 84 articles from 39 distinct news sources published in the UK press during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2024). This collection represents a diverse cross-section of the British media landscape, encompassing national newspapers (“national” here means UK-wide, newspapers that are considered national in one of the countries in the UK, such as *The Herald*, are treated as “regional”), regional publications (e.g. *The Star* (Sheffield)), news agencies (e.g. *Press Association National Newswire*), and ethnic minority press (i.e. *Eastern Eye*), according to the description provided on Factiva in the “Source Details”. The single most represented outlet is *Mail Online* with 9 articles (10.7% of the corpus), followed by *The Star* (Sheffield) with 7 (8.3%) and *The Scottish Sun* with 6 (7.1%). *The Independent Online* and the *Daily Record* each contribute 5 articles (6.0% each), while *The*

⁴⁴ All 84 headlines were compiled into a single document prior to upload.

Guardian accounts for 4 (4.8%). Together, these six outlets account for 36 articles, making up 42.9% of the entire corpus. Table 6 shows the 10 most present news sources of the dataset.

Table 6. Top Newspapers by Article Count

Rank	Newspaper/Agency	Number of Articles	Percentage
1	Mail Online	9	10.7
2	The Star (Sheffield)	7	8.3
3	The Scottish Sun	6	7.1
4	Daily Record	5	6.0
5	Independent Online	5	6.0
6	The Guardian	4	4.8
7	Birmingham Mail	3	3.6
8	The Huddersfield Daily Examiner	3	3.6
9	Evening Standard Online	3	3.6
10	The Courier	2	2.4

Distribution of News Sources

Regional outlets account for a clear majority of the corpus, with 57 articles (67.9%) originating from regionally anchored sources, compared to 27 articles (32.1%) from nationally scoped outlets and wire services. The regional coverage is dominated by England, accounting for 36 articles across various regions such as Yorkshire with 9, London with 4, Huddersfield, Birmingham, and Lancashire each with 3, followed by Scotland with 17 articles, including Scotland-wide titles and newspapers covering smaller regions like Falkirk and Glasgow. Wales and Northern Ireland each account for 2 and 1 articles. The strong presence of regional news outlets suggests that anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during the pandemic were experienced and reported as local phenomena across the UK, rather than being framed exclusively as national-level issues.

Typology: Tabloid vs. Broadsheet

Given that most of the data collected are from regional newspapers, whose genres (tabloid/broadsheet) have not been sufficiently discussed to be self-evident, three classification processes have been conducted to classify them:

Firstly, Factiva descriptions of news sources are examined and those that have “broadsheet” or “tabloid” paper in the description are treated as such when classifying the newspapers collected in our data. However, this is very rare and only six papers are labeled either broadsheets or tabloids in the Factiva descriptions: *Daily Record*, *The Mail*, *The Mirror*, *The Scottish Sun* (tabloid), *The Herald*, and *The Western Mail* (broadsheet). Secondly, widely known national papers including *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Independent* (broadsheet) and *The Metro* (tabloid) are exempted from subjective classification. Newswire agencies including Press Association National Newswire, both national and regional (London), and M2 Presswire are excluded from the classification since they are primary news sources and not newspapers. BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific is also excluded from the tabloid/broadsheet classification and comparison since it is, according to the Factiva description, a specialist unit within BBC News that collects, translates and analyses media from around the world, providing open-source intelligence and contextual analysis rather than functioning as a conventional news outlet.

Thirdly, the titles that remain unclassified after the first two stages go through a manual examination to be determined their genre. According to Semino (2009⁴⁵), what distinguishes between broadsheets or “quality” press or “elite papers”, and tabloids or “popular” newspapers are the interests, social classes, levels of education and incomes of their target readers. For this study, since social status and income of the targeted audience is not always stated for the newspapers, I first examine the main topics of the front-page news pieces, which reflect the news worker’s perceptions of the interests of the target readers (Semino, 2009). Specifically, newspapers that prioritize international politics, economics, and public affairs are classified as “broadsheets” and those with more focus on celebrities, personal stories and scandals are treated as “tabloids” (Dahlgren & Sparks 1992). Along with the topics of the content, I also examine the design and the language style of the newspapers, treating more abundant and larger

⁴⁵ Semino, E. (2009). Language in newspapers. In J. Culpeper, F. Katamba, P. Kerswill, R. Wodak, & T. McEnery (Eds.), *English language: Description, variation and context* (pp. 439–453). Palgrave.

photographs, sensational headlines and more striking page design as signs of tabloids and the opposite as attributes of broadsheets (cf. section 2.5.2). When examining the headlines on the front pages, the perceived sensationalism is examined by frequencies of strong emotional words. According to Bednarek (2006⁴⁶), evaluations of emotivity (the writer's evaluation of news events as positive or negative, examples given by Bednarek: They *showed'em* [positive]: Iain Duncan Smith with wife Betsy after his conference *tour de force* [positive]; But some visibly flinched as he *stooped to* [negative] *gutter* [negative] politics with *vicious* [negative] *personal attacks* [negative] on political opponents) are more frequent in tabloids compared to broadsheets. Appendix 2 shows my broadsheet/tabloid classification of the collected data and words in the front-page headlines (that of April 17th, 2026, on their official websites) that indicate sensationalism are listed. Appendix 3 shows screenshots of the front-pages of the newspapers' online platform on April 17th, 2026, providing a more visual presentation of the second classification standards.

After three stages of classification, the dataset shows a clearly pronounced tabloid dominance. Of the 84 articles, 59 (70.2%) originate from tabloid outlets, 20 (23.8%) from broadsheets, and 5 (6%) from newswires and news monitoring services whose format classification is not applicable. The broadsheet group includes ten outlets: *Belfast News Letter*, *Birmingham Post*, *Eastern Eye*, *Evening Standard Online*, *Independent Online*, *The Guardian*, *The Herald*, *The Observer*, *The Western Mail* and *Yorkshire Post*. Tabloid outlets span both national titles and most of the regional press.

3.2.2 Articles

Distribution of publication dates

As established in the previous section, the data comprises 84 articles from numerous news outlets. The articles span the period from February 2020 to August 2024, with coverage heavily concentrated in the early pandemic years. A total of 40 articles (47.6%) were published in 2020: the year in which COVID-19 first emerged as a public health emergency in the United Kingdom, and a further 25 articles (29.8%) appeared in 2021, meaning that over three quarters of the corpus (77.4%) belongs to the two-year pandemic peak. Coverage declined sharply thereafter, with 9 articles (10.7%) published in 2022, 2 (2.4%) in 2023, and 8 (9.5%) in 2024.

⁴⁶ Bednarek, M. (2006). Evaluation in media discourse: Analysis of a newspaper corpus. Continuum.

Article types

According to Krüger et al. (2017⁴⁷), newspaper articles broadly fall into two categories: 'opinion' articles, which include editorials, commentary, letters to the editor, and 'neutral' reports, which refer to the news reports that appear to be the most factual (Semino, 2009). Of the 84 articles collected in this study, about half (n=43, 51.2%) are labeled "News" in the Factiva metadata, two are labeled Opinion (2.4%), one labeled Feature article (1.2%), and one Reader's Letter (1.2%). The rest of the articles (37,44%) do not carry an explicit type designation on Factiva. While studies have been done on classification of news versus opinion text, it is not the focus of this study. For our analysis, articles that are not otherwise specified are treated as "news" since newspapers are traditionally obliged to separate and signal the 'opinion' from the more factual reporting which is aimed at informing the audience with minimum bias (Krüger et al., 2017).

Article sizes

The corpus is predominantly made up of short-to-medium-length pieces. The mean length is 506 words and the median 456 words, with a range from 94 words (the shortest, published in the *Warrington Guardian*) to 1,802 words (the *Scottish Sun* feature). Articles that are under 400 words and that are between 400-800 words each take up 34.5% and 53.6% of the corpus, while long articles over 800 words only account for 11.9%.

3.3 Research approach

This dissertation employs a corpus assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) approach to examine how the hate crimes against Asian/Chinese communities during the COVID-19 pandemic are represented in the British press media. Specifically, this dissertation tries to uncover potential patterns of language features used to portray the crimes, the suspects/perpetrators and the victims in these hate crime incidents, as well as to reveal the power dynamics behind these news articles by analyzing them as discourses that are not only constructed but can also actively construct ideologies and social realities (Fairclough, 2013⁴⁸).

⁴⁷ Krüger, K. R., Lukowiak, A., Sonntag, J., Warzecha, S., & Stede, M. (2017). Classifying news versus opinions in newspapers: Linguistic features for domain independence. *Natural Language Engineering*, 23(5), 687-707.

⁴⁸ Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge.

The Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis method has been previously applied in examining media portrayal of races (Al Fajri, 2020⁴⁹; Samaie & Malmir, 2017⁵⁰), migration (Calzada Pérez, 2023⁵¹; Griebel & Vollmann, 2019⁵²; Saleh Aluthman, 2018⁵³) or crime (Ghaffar & Siddique⁵⁴, 2026; Ras, 2017⁵⁵). In their analysis of the gendered representations of violence, agency and responsibility in crime reporting in Pakistani English newspapers, Ghaffar & Siddique (2026) examined keywords, collocations and concordances in news articles obtained using the corpus analysis toolkit AntConc⁵⁶ and found patterns of women's victimization being individualized, the violence of men being mitigated and the depoliticization of gender-related crimes in Pakistani English newspapers' crime reporting. In Ras (2017)'s dissertation on British newspaper reporting of corporate fraud, she employed multiple corpus tools including AntConc, SketchEngine and Wmatrix to analyze lexical, grammatical and semantic patterns (including labels, metaphors, agency and modality) in a large newspaper corpus (comprising about 85,000 articles), and concluded that UK press coverage tends to neutralize corporate fraud and shift responsibility away from corporations and onto regulators. These studies show that, by employing more quantitative corpus-linguistic tools such as frequency lists, keyword analysis, collocation and concordance analysis, recurring patterns can be identified at the lexical, grammatical, and semantic levels, which make it possible for researchers to make observations and interpretations. In this way, the alleged selectivity and subjectivity of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach is mitigated (Baker et al., 2008⁵⁷).

⁴⁹ Al Fajri, M. S. (2020). The construction of Indonesian Muslims and Islam in Australian newspapers: A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Interaction*, 13(1), 5-24.

⁵⁰ Samaie, M., & Malmir, B. (2017). US news media portrayal of Islam and Muslims: a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49(14), 1351-1366.

⁵¹ Calzada Pérez, M. (2023). The representation of migration in parliamentary settings: critical cross-linguistics corpus-assisted discourse analyses. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1-12.

⁵² Griebel, T., & Vollmann, E. (2019). We can ('t) do this: A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of migration in Germany. *Journal of language and politics*, 18(5), 671-697.

⁵³ Saleh Aluthman, E. (2018). A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of the discursive representation of immigration in the EU referendum debate. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume*, 9.

⁵⁴ Ghaffar, A., & Siddique, M. (2026). A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of Gendered Representations of Violence, Agency, and Responsibility in Pakistani English Newspaper Crime Reporting. *Social Science Review Archives*, 4(1), 1645-1659.

⁵⁵ Ras, I. A. (2017). *A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the Reporting on Corporate Fraud by UK Newspapers 2004-2014* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds).

⁵⁶ <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html>

⁵⁷ Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., Khosravini, M., Krzyżanowski, M., McEnery, T., & Wodak, R. (2008). A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press. *Discourse & society*, 19(3), 273-306.

Tabbert (2015) combined corpus linguistics and critical stylistics to reveal how offenders, victims, and crimes are linguistically constructed in the British and German press. According to Tabbert, CDA does not provide “an agreed set of analytical tools” for the analysis, which makes it risk being condemned as biased since the tools are “cherry picked” to prove the results that were already prefabricated. However, as argued by Tranchese (2023⁵⁸), CDA-informed studies are explanatory by nature, and researchers do not pretend to be objective in their analysis. Taking a particular point of view, predicting results, and selecting the appropriate analytical tools to verify the hypothesis made is in fact natural in discourse analysis.

The initial motivation for the research of this dissertation was the real-life experiences of Asian people close to me during the COVID pandemic and in general and I have no intention of hiding my minority standpoint (hence the victim standpoint) while conducting this study. In the qualitative discussion of my data, **specific attention will be paid to the victims’ agency and voices** in the British press representation, in addition to the general examination of how crime perpetrators, victims and crimes are portrayed in these discourses through various devices.

The notion of “**agency**” has been focused on in the analysis of news reports on violence against women and homosexual individuals (Ehrlich, 2003⁵⁹; Henley, Miller, Beazley, Nguyen, Kaminsky, & Sanders, 2002⁶⁰; Henley, Miller, & Beazley, 1995⁶¹). For example, Henley et al. (1995) conducted two studies which examined 1) the use of the passive voice in reporting violence against women and 2) the effects of the passive (e.g. In the U.S. a woman is raped every 6 minutes) vs. active voice (e.g. In the U.S. a man rapes a woman every 6 minutes) on readers respectively. Their studies found a predominant use of the passive voice in sexual violence reporting and a lower perceived harm and low perpetrator responsibility attribution when the passive voice is used in reporting violence against women (Henley et al., 1995). This means that, when the passive voice, as opposed to the active voice, is used predominantly in news reporting of sexual

⁵⁸ Tranchese, A. (2023). *From Fritzl to #metoo: Twelve years of rape coverage in the British press*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵⁹ Ehrlich, S. (2003). *Representing rape: Language and sexual consent*. Routledge.

⁶⁰ Henley, N. M., Miller, M. D., Beazley, J. A., Nguyen, D. N., Kaminsky, D., & Sanders, R. (2002). Frequency and specificity of referents to violence in news reports of anti-gay attacks. *Discourse & Society*, 13(1), 75-104.

⁶¹ Henley, N. M., Miller, M., & Beazley, J. A. (1995). Syntax, semantics, and sexual violence: Agency and the passive voice. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 14(1-2), 60-84.

violence, perpetrator agency is largely obscured, the seriousness of the crimes is mitigated, and the responsibility of perpetrators is lowered in the readers' mind. Van Dijk (2000) integrated the concept of agency in his study of the news representation of minority ethnicities, and he concluded that minorities are often depicted in a passive way except when they are the agents of negative actions. For example, Van Dijk (2000) analyzed a headline on immigration from the British tabloid *the Sun*: *BRITAIN INVADED BY AN ARMY OF ILLEGALS*. Here, the passive structure foregrounds "Britain" as the victim, and immigrants, referred to by "illegals", are constructed as the actor of the action "invade", their responsible agency is thus emphasized. Van Dijk (2000) also mentioned the use of nominalization to obscure agency in the coverage of ethnic issues, for example when using the noun "discrimination" instead of saying exactly who discriminated whom to mitigate negative actions of "ingroups". In line with van Dijk (2000)'s analytical framework, "agency" is examined through the active and passive voices of verbs, as well as nominalization in this study.

Another important concept in our analysis of British media representation of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the Covid pandemic is "**voice**". In this study, voice refers to utterance, speech and expression of opinion. Whose voices are heard and are amplified in a news article determines whose side of the story we get to hear and whose perspective or opinion we can potentially adopt and understand. Bednarek (2016⁶²) linked news values to attribution and concluded that whose voice is quoted, how it is introduced, and how it is integrated structurally can help "package" events as newsworthy. For example, she argued that when the voices of 'ordinary people' are included as eyewitnesses, they could contribute to various news values such as "Personalization", "Negativity/Impact" (describing damage, fear), "Superlativeness" (intensifiers like "very, very shocking"), and "Unexpectedness" ("I just can't believe this area is so damaged").

Studies on the representation of crime and of minorities have examined the voices of different news actors mainly through the analysis of quotations (Tabbert, 2015; Teo⁶³, 2000; van Dijk, 2000). Tabbert (2015), in her investigation of the linguistic construction of offenders, victims and crimes in the German and UK press, concluded that a high rate

⁶² Bednarek, M. (2016). Voices and values in the news: News media talk, news values and attribution. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 11, 27-37.

⁶³ Teo, P. (2000). Racism in the news: A critical discourse analysis of news reporting in two Australian newspapers. *Discourse & society*, 11(1), 7-49.

of presumed truthfulness can be assigned through quoting authorities. She analyzed the presentation of opinions of offenders, victims as well as the authorities in crime news discourses and found that in both offender-related and victim-related sentences in British crime news, it is the official sources, including the police, the prosecutor or prosecution office, and the judge or the court that are quoted the most. When examined in news representations of minorities, voices in news reveal a power relation between representatives of the majority population and minority groups. According to Teo (2000), a quotation can be used as a “gate-keeping device” that only accepts the opinions of those in possession of power and influence and shuts out those of the powerless. In his study on racism in the news, Teo (2000) examined news articles about the 5T (a group of young Vietnamese drug dealers) in two newspapers (*The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*) and found a significant under presentation of voices from members of the gang or from the Vietnamese community in general, while stories of the criminals are mostly told from the perspective of the “elite majority” including the police and some experts. This quotation pattern, as Teo (2000) concluded, helps to manipulate readers’ perception of minority groups and to sustain stereotypes about them.

Following the approach taken in the studies mentioned above, this dissertation sets out to identify quotations and examines who is quoted. A distinction is made between direct speech reporting,

e.g. a professor’s cited response to a student from the university being racially attacked: "There is no place for racism or racial harassment in our university" (*Chronicle Live*, 26 March 2021)

and indirect speech reporting,

e.g. a man is quoted expressing worry for his mum after attacks targeted at Asians: The 24-year-old said he wished he could be there for his mother 24/7 and pick her up from work but he is not able to (*Evening Standard Online*, 23 March 2021).

A corpus analysis is conducted to answer the first research question, namely:

How were hate crimes targeting the Chinese community during the COVID-19 pandemic represented in UK newspapers? More specifically, how are the offenders and the minority victims portrayed in the headlines and is the

specific COVID-19 context foregrounded? To what extent is this different in broadsheet headlines versus tabloid headlines?

The 84 headlines of the collected articles (cf. section 3.2 above) are examined with the help of LancsBox X, a corpus analysis tool developed at Lancaster University (Brezina & Platt, 2022⁶⁴). It is argued that the use of corpus linguistics software such as LancsBox X can help researchers obtain quantitative results and improve objectivity (Zih, El Biadi, & Chatri, 2021⁶⁵). I first generated a frequency list of all the words that appeared in the headline sub-corpus using the Words function provided by LancsBox X. I then manually went through the list to identify any words that possibly refer to victims, offenders and actions of crime.

As shown by Tabbert (2015), victim, offender and crime referring words can reveal how different parties are constructed in news reports. For example, Tabbert pointed out that, by referring to offenders by their role in crime, e.g. “attacker”, “rapist”, they are represented one-dimensionally and reduced to their offence (Tabbert, 2015). Crime-related words, e.g. “abuse”, “assault”, “attacked”, depending on if the active or passive voice is used, can indicate if the crimes are presented as intentional actions carried out actively by offenders or as misfortune suffered passively by victims. When identifying crime-describing words, on top of words related to physical violence, I also included those that refer to an action related to other forms of hate crime such as harassment and threatening. For example, I included the verb “told” where it is used to refer to racial verbal insults, e.g. *Coronavirus: British-Chinese woman **told** to 'f***k off back to China' in shock bus attack*. I chose “word (lowercase)” as the unit, as opposed to hw (headword) when generating the wordlist, so that an easier distinction can be made between different verb voices of crime-referring words in my subsequent analysis.

After identifying the candidate offender, victim and crime referring words, I observed them in context thanks to the concordances retrieved using the KWIC (Key Word in Context) tool in LancsBox X. According to Baker (2010⁶⁶, p.21), a concordance is “a table of all of the occurrences of a linguistic item in a corpus, presented within their linguistic contexts”. Here, examining the words in context helps to identify to whom or what they

⁶⁴ Brezina, V., Platt, W. (2022). #LancsBox X 1.1.0 [software package]

⁶⁵ Zih, H., El Biadi, M., & Chatri, Z. (2021, June). Evaluating the effectiveness of corpus linguistic software in analyzing the grammatical structure: LancsBox and AntConc as case studies. In *2020 6th IEEE Congress on Information Science and Technology (CiSt)* (pp. 515-519). IEEE.

⁶⁶ Baker, P. (2010). *Sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics*. Edinburgh University Press.

refer and exclude those instances that are not relevant. After the manual screening, any words that appeared more than once and are present in at least two headlines as offender, victim or crime references are retained. In order to examine whether the Covid context is foregrounded in these headlines and how the anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes are portrayed in relation to the pandemic, I went through all the headlines and manually identified any mention to the pandemic, including pathogen-related terms like “coronavirus”, “virus” and their collocates such as “coronavirus-related” and “coronavirus rage”. These extracted words and collocates make up the material for my subsequent analysis on the offender and victim portrayal in anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime reporting against the Covid-19 context. Subsets are created respectively for the 59 broadsheet headlines and 20 broadsheet headlines, and a comparison is made between their offender, victim, crime reference and context mention.

I manually went through the articles and identified both direct and indirect quotations to answer the second research question, namely:

Who is given a voice in the articles? How does this contribute to the representation of the various parties mentioned in the articles?

In doing so, I treated what Vaucher et al. (2021⁶⁷) called “partially indirect quotations”, i.e. combinations of reported speech and verbatim reproductions, as indirect quotations. For example, the following sentence is treated as indirect quotation in my analysis:

He added that the university had "taken pride in putting social justice at the heart of its mission, vision and strategy", adding that the "rich diversity of our community" is what he felt made the city so special. --(*Chronicle Live*, 26 March 2021)

When quotations were identified, I examined their context closely and recorded the quoted speakers. After retrieving all the quotations, I grouped the speakers into categories and counted the times they are quoted directly and indirectly to determine who is given a voice in the anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime covering news during and after Covid in the British media. A quantitative and qualitative comparison was then made between quotations in broadsheets and tabloids.

⁶⁷ Vaucher, T., Spitz, A., Catasta, M., & West, R. (2021, March). Quotebank: A corpus of quotations from a decade of news. In *Proceedings of the 14th ACM International Conference on Web Search and Data Mining* (pp. 328-336).

4. Headlines

The first analysis carried out in this study is the headline analysis on the news reports on anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. Being the 'entry point' to the news texts for readers (Molek-Kozakowska, 2017⁶⁸), headlines are an important element of journalism and are paid much attention when being composed (Bedřichová & Urbanová, 2006⁶⁹). As pointed out by Bonyadi and Samuel (2013⁷⁰), headlines of news articles have been reported to take on multiple functions: e.g. summarizing function, where headlines indicate the topic and the main content of the text (van Dijk, 1988 as cited in Bonyadi & Samuel, 2013), communicative function, where they make the stories more relevant to the readers and help readers grasp the meaning of the texts (Dor, 2003 as cited in Bonyadi & Samuel, 2013), or promotive function, where they serve to attract attention (Ifantidou, 2009 as cited in Bonyadi & Samuel, 2013). In my analysis, the focus is on the second function in that I set out to examine how headlines are used to help readers understand anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime incidents by describing the crime, the offender, the victim and the context of the crime. Specifically, the headlines of all the 84 articles in my corpus are scrutinized to establish if there is any mention of the four factors mentioned above, namely victim, offender, crime and context (COVID-19 in the case of this study). For example, the following headline includes references to the victim and the crime:

***Asian student** (victim description) **allegedly assaulted** (crime description) in Newcastle as police probe 'appalling **hate crime**' (crime description) -- Chronicle Live, 26 March 2021*

Defender description and context description can be found in this example:

***Coronavirus** (context description): **Teenage girls** (offender description) **arrested after 'abusing** (crime description) **Chinese people** (victim description) **wearing face masks in racially-motivated attack'** (crime description) -- Independent Online, 22 March 2020*

Mentions are then counted and compared across the sub-corpora. Appendix 4 shows the headlines and the descriptive words used to refer to these four factors.

⁶⁸ Molek-Kozakowska, K. (2017). Stylistic analysis of headlines in science journalism: A case study of New Scientist. *Public understanding of science*, 26(8), 894-907.

⁶⁹ Bedřichová, L., & Urbanová, L. (2006). *Headlines and sub-headlines in newspaper reporting* [Unpublished MA thesis]. Masaryk University.

⁷⁰ Bonyadi, A., & Samuel, M. (2013). Headlines in Newspaper Editorials: A Contrastive Study: A Contrastive Study. *Sage Open*, 3(2).

4.1 Headlines in the corpus

Table 7 includes a summary of victim, crime and perpetrator descriptions and COVID mentions in the headlines in my corpus. As can be seen, references to victims and crime are invariably included in the headlines. On the other hand, the context and the perpetrator are far less frequently mentioned: in under 50% and 40% of the cases respectively.

Table 7. Victim, Crime, Perpetrator Description and COVID Mention in Headlines

Feature	Headlines with mention	Percentage
Victim description	84	100.0
Crime description	84	100.0
Perpetrator description	30	35.7
COVID mention	40	47.6

4.1.1 Victim description in headlines

Table 8 includes the 17 most frequent words (case insensitive) used to refer to the victim(s) in the headlines. These are all the words that appeared more than once in the headline wordlist generated using LancsBox X. Appendix 5 shows the whole list. As can be seen, “Chinese” “Asian” and “student” are the most frequently used words to describe the victims in the headlines. With no overlap of “Chinese” and “Asian” in any headlines, the two words appear in almost the entire data (83 out of 84). A grouping of these victim-referring words reveals patterns of constructing victims on the basis of their professional and social backgrounds such as their occupations and relationships, as well as portraying them as a generalized identical “outgroup” that is far away from “Us”.

Table 8. Most Frequent Victim-Referring Words in Headlines

Word	Word count	Word percentage	Articles present	Article percentage
Chinese	47	23.7	47	56
Asian	37	18.7	36	42.9

Word	Word count	Word percentage	Articles present	Article percentage
student(s)	26	13.1	26	31
people	10	5.1	10	11.9
man(men)	7	3.5	7	8.3
woman(women)	7	3.5	7	8.3
east	6	3	5	6
British	4	2	4	4.8
victim(s)	4	2	4	4.8
community	3	1.5	3	3.6
doctor	3	1.5	3	3.6
family	3	1.5	3	3.6
friend	3	1.5	3	3.6
couple	2	1	2	2.4
south	2	1	2	2.4
staff	2	1	2	2.4
takeaway	2	1	2	2.4

These words can generally be grouped into 6 categories: ethnicity, occupation, gender, role in crime, family relations and others. Table 9 shows the grouping of victim-referring words.

Table 9. Grouping of Victim-Referring Words in Headlines

Category	Words	Frequency
Ethnicity	Chinese, Asian, East, British, South	96: 47, 37, 6, 4, 2
Occupation	Student(s), Doctor, Staff, Takeaway	33: 26, 3, 2, 2

Category	Words	Frequency
Gender	Man/Men, Woman/Women	14: 7, 7
Role in Crime	Victim(s)	4
Relations	Family, Friend, Couple	8: 3, 3, 2
Others	People, Community	13: 10, 3

It can be observed that words referring to **ethnicity** collectively make up the majority (57.1%) of the 17 most frequent victim-referring words. The single most frequently used word referring to the victim(s) is “Chinese”, with 47 occurrences across the headlines, while a more general reference “Asian” has a slightly lower frequency of 37 occurrences. The high frequency of these two words corresponds with the search strategy I used when collecting the data, where I specifically looked for articles mentioning Asian or Chinese victims to match with the research objectives. The figures show that there is a slightly higher percentage (13.1%) of articles specifying the Chinese background of the victims than those describing them as Asian. The words “east”, “British” and “south” are premodifiers that further specify the ethnicities of the victims as in “East Asian”, “British Chinese”, “South Asian” as in the headlines

*Hate crime against **east Asian** people in the UK rocketed during Covid – and it hasn’t gone away -- The Guardian, 26 April 2024*

*Coronavirus: **British-Chinese** woman told to ‘f***k off back to China’ in shock bus attack -- The Mirror (online), 28 February 2020*

*Sheffield’s **east and south east Asian** community reacts to city centre hate crime incident. -- The Star (Sheffield), 7 May 2021*

The second most highlighted characteristic of victims is their **occupations** (19.6%). Four words fall into this group: “student(s)”, “doctor”, “staff” and “takeaway”, with “student(s)” mentioned the most. This means that among the Chinese and broadly Asian victims of the hate crimes during and after the pandemic, students are the most targeted group according to British news reports. The occupational words put victims in a studying or working scenario of life, and by giving the victims a specific identity in those scenarios, help readers relate to them to a certain extent. For example, in the headline *Lancashire man convicted of “appalling” online abuse against Chinese **doctor** (Lancashire Evening Post, 11 February 2021)*, revealing the victim’s identity as a doctor may intensify readers’ outrage toward the crime and increase their sympathy for the victim.

The **gender** of the victim is mentioned 14 times throughout the headlines, with equal amounts indicating male victims and female victims. Examples can be seen in the following headlines:

*Property firm boss, 36, who sprayed an Asian **man** with a fire extinguisher and told him 'this is the first time you've been white', is spared jail for Indian restaurant attack -- Mail Online, 14 April 2022*

*Trio are hunted after racially-aggravated attack on Asian **woman** and her friend taking Tube home after night out that left victims with broken leg and head injury -- Mail Online, 13 January 2022*

In eight headlines, **social** and **family relations**, i.e. “family” “friend” and “couple”, are used to refer to the victims. According to Tabbert (2015), referring to victims by their relations to other people constructs them as part of a social system, which enhances the impact of the crime and evokes empathy and concern. For example, in the headline *Woman is savagely beaten in Birmingham 'coronavirus rage' attack after stepping in to defend her Chinese **friend** from racist abuse (Mail Online, 23 February 2020)*, the victim reference “Chinese friend” emphasizes the social relationship of this person, constructing her as a friend that is so loved and cared for that she is defended bravely. This human-interest perspective makes it easier for readers to relate to and empathize with both the Chinese victim and her brave defender (who is an Indian woman as the article points out), as it is not difficult to imagine ones’ friends getting hurt and defending them.

Interestingly, among the headlines collected, **other victim descriptions** can be argued to have the opposite effect. Victims are simply referred to as “people” in ten headlines, e.g.

*Chinese **people** in UK targeted with abuse over coronavirus, -- The Guardian, 18 February 2020,*

and as “community” in three, e.g.

*Police investigate coronavirus racist incidents against Chinese **community** -- The Mirror (online), 7 February 2020.*

In these headlines, victims are referred to as a collective homogenous group, while the only revelation about their profiles is their ethnicity. According to Anastasio & Costa (2004⁷¹), more personal descriptions of crime victims, such as their personality traits,

⁷¹ Anastasio, P. A., & Costa, D. M. (2004). Twice hurt: How newspaper coverage may reduce empathy and

ethnicity, family and friends, professional status or occupation, hobbies or interests, or where the victim lived produce greater empathy towards victims and diminish the likelihood of them being blamed. Here, the ethnicity of the victims is included in the headlines as the only personal information about them. However, while the ethnicity mentioned does not match with the background of the majority readership, and is presented as the only personal information about the victim, does it still create greater empathy towards them? Heath (1984⁷²) found that not all crime reports are equally fear provoking, and that fear is increased when random crimes are proximal to the reader, in both social and geographic terms, but reassuring when they are distal. In other words, when crimes are reported to happen only to a specific ethnic profile that is distant from our own, crime news is less fearsome and more reassuring. In racial hate crime reporting, the lack of any other personal information than the ethnicity of the victim, while probably invoking empathy and fear in the community that shares the same ethnicity, can produce the opposite effect in the broad readership that does not, namely reducing empathy towards the victims and enhancing the tendency to blame them. More specifically, the lack of personal information has both a distancing and a generalizing effect on readers' perception of the Asian/Chinese victims in question. On the one hand, it gives the impression that the entire Chinese community in the UK is affected by racial abuse, which might amplify the impact of the crimes being reported. On the other hand, by withholding any identifying features beyond their ethnicity, these headlines detach the minority victims from the majority readership, creating a victimhood of "Them" who are nothing like "Us".

4.1.2 Crime description in headlines

Table 10 lists the 15 most frequent words (case insensitive) used for describing the action of crime in the headlines (all the words that appeared more than twice in the headline wordlist). Appendix 6 shows the whole list.

As shown in the table, the most frequent words used to describe crimes are "attack(s)", "abuse", "racist", "hate" and "racially", together making up over half of the crime-referring words in all the headlines (55.8%) and 67.3% of the 15 most frequent words.

Two nouns, namely "attack(s)" and "abuse", stand out in the description of the anti-

engender blame for female victims of crime. *Sex Roles*, 51(9-10), 535-542.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-004-5463-7>

⁷² Heath, L. (1984). Impact of newspaper crime reports on fear of crime: Multimethodological investigation. *Journal of Personality and social Psychology*, 47(2), 263.

Asian/Chinese hate crime in the headlines. According to the Cambridge Dictionary⁷³, “attack” as a noun means “a violent act intended to hurt or damage someone or something” among others, and “abuse” as a noun in this context can mean 1) cruel, violent, or unfair treatment of someone or 2) rude and offensive words said to another person. Both words indicate violent and offensive behavior, which in British legal terms can best be described as assault⁷⁴. This means that offences of assault are the most reported form of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after Covid-19 in British newspapers.

Table 10. Most Frequent Crime-Referring Words in Headlines

Word	Word count	Word percentage	Articles present	Article percentage
attack(s)	35	17.6	35	41.7
abuse	22	11.1	22	26.2
racist	21	10.6	21	25
hate	17	8.5	17	20.2
racially	16	8	16	19
crime(s)	14	7	14	16.7
abused	13	6.5	13	15.5
told	5	2.5	5	6
aggravated	4	2	4	4.8
assaulted	3	1.5	3	3.6
attacked	3	1.5	3	3.6
punched	3	1.5	3	3.6
race	3	1.5	3	3.6
racism	3	1.5	3	3.6
shouting	3	1.5	3	3.6

Grouping the crime-referring words by word class (see table 11 below), it is obvious that nouns predominate crime description. This includes “attack(s)”, “abuse”, “hate”, “crime(s)”, “race” and “racism”. In fact, 69 of the 84 headlines (82.1%) contain these crime referring nouns and out of the 15 that do not, 2 contain another two nouns

⁷³ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

⁷⁴ <https://sentencingcouncil.org.uk/resources/common-offences/assault/>

(“discrimination” and “incidents”) which are not deemed frequent, referring to the crimes. The nouns “hate” and “race” are mainly used as noun premodifiers to other crime-referring nouns such as “attack”, “abuse” and “crime”, e.g.

***Hate crime** against east Asian people in the UK rocketed during Covid – and it hasn’t gone away -- The Guardian, 26 April 2024;*

*Asian woman accused of 'bringing in coronavirus' in sickening **hate attack** in Iceland queue -- Teesside Gazette, 4 May 2020;*

*Police probe 'Chinese' **race abuse** outrages -- Daily Record, 8 February 2020.*

Along with the noun “racism” used in some headlines to describe the incidents, e.g. *ANTI-CHINESE **RACISM** 'EVEN REPORTED AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS' AMID VIRUS OUTBREAK* (Press Association Regional Newswire – London, 6 February 2020, the all-caps formatting in the headline was preserved), this lexical pattern indicates that the headlines predominantly frame anti-Asian/Chinese incidents as both criminal acts and racialized events, which is confirmed by the frequent use of adjective “racist” and adverb “racially” to modify the crime-referring nouns and verbs.

Table 11. Distribution of Crime-Referring Words by Word Class in Headlines

Category	Word form	Frequency
Nouns	attack(s)	35
	abuse	22
	hate	17
	crime(s)	14
	race	3
	racism	3
Adjectives/adverbs	racist	21
	racially	16
Verbs	abused	13
	told	5

Category	Word form	Frequency
	aggravated	4
	assaulted	3
	attacked	3
	punched	3
	shouting	3

In 14 headlines, crimes are only described by verbs, among which merely four contain verbs in their active voices, the rest only contain verbs in the passive voice. In the headlines, syntactic transformations (cf. Bedřichová, 2006) including nominalization (transformation where verbs and adjectives are realized syntactically as nouns) and passive transformation (transformation where positions of left-hand and right-hand noun phrases are switched so that the patient occupies the syntactic subject, e.g. writing “**Chinese people** in UK targeted with abuse over coronavirus” (*The Guardian*, 18 February 2020) instead of “**some people** in UK target **Chinese people** with abuse over coronavirus”) can be frequently observed. While nominalization has been identified as a typical linguistic feature of headlines in English newspapers according to Develotte & Rechniewski (2001⁷⁵), predominant nominalization as well as passive voice can be used to obscure the actor and diminish agency as discussed in section 3.2. For example, in the headline **Chinese people** in UK targeted with abuse over coronavirus (*The Guardian*, 18 February 2020), the nominalization of “abuse” backgrounds the offender’s agency and downplays the actor responsible for the crime. With “Chinese people”, namely the victims, put in the subject position, the offender is completely omitted, and their negative agency is entirely overlooked. The passive voice of the verb “targeted” presents the victim as a passive recipient of the crimes, diminishing the agency of the victim. Through these syntactic structures, the headline foregrounds the victimization and lack

⁷⁵ Develotte, C., & Rechniewski, E. (2001). Discourse analysis of newspaper headlines: a methodological framework for research into national representations. *The Web Journal of French Media Studies*, 4(1), 1-12.

of agency of the victims and veils the negative agency of the offender. Similar examples can be seen in the following headlines:

45% OF EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN PEOPLE IN THE UK HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO A HATE CRIME IN THE LAST YEAR (passive transformation and passive voice) -- *M2 Presswire*, 23 April 2024

CHINESE PEOPLE 'TOO SCARED TO VENTURE OUT ALONE' AMID RISING CORONAVIRUS ABUSE (passive transformation and nominalization) -- *Press Association National Newswire*, 6 May 2020

Asian youngsters subjected to racist abuse in Falkirk park (passive transformation, passive voice, and nominalization) -- *Falkirk Herald*, 13 June 2022

Chinese student left 'traumatised' after racially aggravated attack in Dundee (passive transformation, passive voice, and nominalization) -- *The Courier Online*, 29 April 2024

Chinese students left bleeding and scared to walk the streets after attacks in Sheffield (passive transformation, passive voice, and nominalization) -- *The Star (Sheffield)*, 28 September 2021

To further illustrate the effects of these structures in the headlines, here is an example of the mentioned headlines where only active voice is used for crime-describing verbs for comparison:

Herefordshire carer racially abused pub staff and Asian family -- *Hereford Times*, 7 September 2021

In this headline, the identity (carer) and location (Herefordshire) of the offender is revealed and placed in the subject place, no nominalization can be observed, and the active voice of the crime-referring verb (abused) is used. Here, the negative agency of the offender committing the crime is foregrounded, as opposed to the previous examples discussed.

4.1.3 Offender description in headlines

As established before, perpetrator references appear in only 35.7% of the headlines. This indicates a tendency to omit the offenders in headlines and to shift attention to the victim and their victimization. Table 12 features the 8 most frequent words (case insensitive) used for perpetrator description in the headlines (all the words that

appeared more than once in the headline wordlist and appeared at least in two headlines). Appendix 7 includes the whole list.

Table 12. Most Frequent Perpetrator-Referring Words in Headlines

Word	Word count	Word percentage	Articles present	Article percentage
man	5	8.6	5	6
thug(thugs)	5	8.6	5	6
teenage(r),				
teens	4	6.9	4	4.8
woman	3	5.2	3	3.6
boss	2	3.4	2	2.4
racist	2	3.4	2	2.4
girls	2	3.4	2	2.4
lancashire	2	3.4	2	2.4

The offender-referring words can roughly be grouped into 5 categories: gender, age, occupation, moral label and location, as shown in table 13 below. The most common offender references are those referring to their gender (17.2% of all offender-describing words and 40% of the 8 most frequent words), with five occurrences of “man”, three occurrences of “women” and two occurrences of “girls”, which also indicate the age of the offenders. Six age markers have been used to refer to the offenders, all of which (“teenagers”, “teens”, “girls”, “teenage girls”) indicate a young age. Compared with victim descriptions, more emphasis is put on the gender and age of offenders. This could be due to a presumably higher newsworthiness of women (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002⁷⁶; Chermak, 1998⁷⁷) and juveniles (Grosholz & Kubrin, 2007⁷⁸) as offenders in crime news. Another observation is that offenders are, in some cases, referred to according to the characteristic label assigned to them by writers, which I call moral label here, according to the crimes they committed. For example, in the headline

⁷⁶ Berrington, E., & Honkatukia, P. (2002). An evil monster and a poor thing: Female violence in the media. *Journal of Scandinavian studies in criminology and crime prevention*, 3(1), 50-72.

⁷⁷ Chermak, S. (1998). Predicting crime story salience: The effects of crime, victim, and defendant characteristics. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 26(1), 61-70.

⁷⁸ Grosholz, J., & Kubrin, C. E. (2007). Crime in the news: How crimes, offenders and victims are portrayed in the media. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 14, 59-83.

*Humza Yousaf condemns **thugs** after Chinese photographer 'attacked and racially abused' in Glasgow (Daily Record, 16 June 2020),*

the word “thug” (which according to Cambridge Dictionary, means a man who acts violently, especially to commit a crime), is employed to refer to the offenders based on the violent nature of the crime they committed. Another example is the headline

***Racist** woman confronted by Glasgow man after shouting vile abuse at Chinese students in park (Daily Record, 28 May 2021).*

Here, gender is used to describe the offender which is pre-modified by “racist”, which is, again, a label assigned to the offender based on the racially motivated nature of her offence. Occupation, relationships and ethnicity of the offenders are rare or non-existent in the offender-referring words in the headlines. This observation aligns with Tabbert (2015)’s conclusion that offenders are often constructed one-dimensionally, equated with their crime and labeled as deviant.

Table 13. Grouping of Offender- Referring Words in Headlines

Categories	Words	Total count	% of all offender words
Gender	man, woman, girls	10	17.2
Age	teenage(r)/teens, girls	6	10.3
Occupation	boss	2	3.4
Moral label	thug(s), racist	7	12.0
Location	Lancashire	2	3.4

4.1.4 Context description in headlines

As mentioned before, the context of the anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes, namely the Covid-19 pandemic, is mentioned in under half of the headlines (47.6%). This means that about half of the articles present the crimes against the backdrop of the major health crisis, deeming it of enough relevance and contribution to the perpetration of the

crimes to be involved in the headlines. Table 14 lists all COVID-19-related terms appearing in the headlines.

Table 14. COVID-Mentioning Words in Headlines

Word	Word count	Word percentage	Articles present	Article percentage
coronavirus	26	46.4	26	31
virus	10	17.9	10	11.9
covid	5	8.9	5	6
rage	4	7.1	3	3.6
outbreak	3	5.4	3	3.6
hate	2	3.6	2	2.4
related	2	3.6	2	2.4
abuse	1	1.8	1	1.2
crisis	1	1.8	1	1.2
lockdown	1	1.8	1	1.2
maskaphobia	1	1.8	1	1.2

Pathogen-related terms, including “coronavirus” (46.4%), “virus” (17.9%) and “covid” (8.9%), together account for well over two thirds of all pandemic-referring words in the headlines and are present in all the headlines that refer to the crisis. In some headlines, “outbreak”, “crisis” and “lockdown” follow the pathogen-related words, e.g. *Chinese people in Birmingham 'told to go home' and abused in wake of **coronavirus outbreak*** (*Birmingham Mail*, 12 February 2020), which emphasizes disruption and anxieties created by the pandemic. The analysis reveals that 17.9% of words referring to the pandemic, including “rage” (7.1%), “hate” (3.6%), “abuse” (1.8%), “maskaphobia” (1.8%) as well as “related” (3.6%), link the pandemic to anger, hatred and violence, presenting them as byproducts of the health crisis. For example, in the headline *UK-CHINESE PEOPLE 'MAY BE SCARRED FOR MORE THAN A GENERATION' AFTER **VIRUS ABUSE*** (*Press Association National Newswire*, 16 July 2021), the pandemic mention “virus abuse” is also the crime reference. By directly using the pandemic referring word “virus” to modify the crime “abuse”, a causal relation is established: UK-Chinese people are abused because of the virus. The virus, instead of the racist intent of offenders, who are entirely absent from the representation, is constructed as the primary reason of the crime. Even in headlines where crime words are not directly modified by the pandemic-

referring words, establishing causal relationships between the two are common in the headlines. For example, in the headlines *Chinese takeaway staff suffer racist abuse **due to** coronavirus* (*Wales Online*, 15 March 2020) and *Chinese student 'target of racist abuse **over** virus'* (*The Western Mail*, 11 February 2020), linking devices like "due to" and "over" create the causal link between the crime and the pandemic. This directs readers to attribute the victimization of Asian/Chinese people to the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby obscuring the role and agency of the offenders in these hate crimes.

4.1.5 Conclusion

My analysis of headlines in the corpus reveals a consistent pattern of foregrounding Asian/Chinese victims through ethnic markers while diminishing their agency via passive voices, and obscuring perpetrators' identity and agency through omitting offender description and the use of nominalizations in crime references. Some headlines provide personal information of victims, which might have the effect of enhancing empathy in readers, while others generalize victims into one homogeneous group marked only by their ethnicity, constructing a distant "other" and an "us versus them" dichotomy. The pandemic appears in 47.6% of the headlines, mentioned primarily as a biomedical crisis, into which anti-Asian/Chinese hate is folded as a derivative, thereby attributing the incidents to the health emergency while downplaying offender responsibility. This may have the effect of shaping public perceptions of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes as pandemic byproducts rather than entrenched racial animus.

4.2 Comparative analysis of headlines between broadsheets and tabloids

To examine the patterns that might differ across broadsheets and tabloids, I compared the length of headlines, the victim, offender and crime description and pandemic mention between the broadsheet and the tabloid headlines. The length of the 20 headlines from broadsheet ranges from 4 to 22 words, with an average length of 11.2 words and a median length of 10.5 words. In comparison, tabloid headlines are longer, ranging from 5 to 33 words, averaging 14.9 words with a median of 14 words. This pattern, and the ones that emerge from my examination of the victim/offender/crime descriptions below, are consistent with Alba-Juez (2017⁷⁹)'s finding in her comparative study of broadsheets and tabloids: tabloid headlines are generally longer and

⁷⁹ Alba-Juez, L. (2017). Evaluation in the headlines of tabloids and broadsheets: A comparative study. *Evaluation in media discourse. European perspectives. Linguistic Insights series*, 207.

syntactically more complex than broadsheet headlines, which is demonstrated in the following examples:

Chef who posed for pictures with Marcus Wareing, Michel Roux Jr and Tom Kerridge 'pulled Asian man's turban off as he and his brother assaulted Asian couple and referred to Manchester and 9/11 attacks' -- Mail Online (tabloid), 3 October 2022

Chinese students flee UK after 'maskaphobia' triggered racist attacks -- The Guardian (broadsheet), 17 March 2020

Table 15 shows the frequency and percentage of victim, perpetrator, and crime descriptions, as well as COVID-19 mentions by newspaper typology. Among the 20 broadsheet headlines, 6 (30%) include perpetrator description and 13 (65%) include COVID-19 mention. In comparison, 24 (40.7%) out of the 59 tabloid headlines describe perpetrators and 23 (39%) mention Covid-19. It appears that newspaper typology can be connected with the presentation of perpetrators and contexts of crimes in the headlines. Tabloids have a relatively higher tendency to refer to offenders in the headlines, for example, in the tabloid headline *Former University of Sheffield student due in court again over attacks on Chinese students (The Star (Sheffield), 29 September 2021)*, the offender is clearly identified as a “former University of Sheffield student”.

Broadsheets tend to mention the context amongst which anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes occur more frequently in their headlines, for instance, in the broadsheet headline *Chinese student suffers virus hate attack (The Herald, 19 March 2020)*, the context of crime is mentioned by using “virus” to modify “hate attack”.

Table 15. Victim, Crime, Perpetrator Description and COVID Mention in Headlines by Newspaper Typology

Description / mention	Broadsheets: frequency	Broadsheets: %	Tabloids: frequency	Tabloids: %
Victim description	20	100.0%	59	100.0%
Crime description	20	100.0%	59	100.0%
Perpetrator description	6	30.0%	24	40.7%
COVID mention	13	65.0%	23	39.0%

4.2.1 Victim descriptions by typology

Table 16 lists all the victim description words in the broadsheet and tabloid headlines appearing at least twice across all the headlines, sorted by frequency.

Table 16. Most Frequent Victim-Referring words in Broadsheet and Tabloid Headlines

Broadsheets	Word count	Headlines in broadsheets (%)	Tabloids	Word count	Headlines in tabloids (%)
Chinese	11	55	Chinese	32	54.2
Asian	8	40	Asian	28	45.8
Student	5	25	Student	21	35.6
People	5	25	Woman	6	10.2
East	3	15	Man	5	8.5
Victim	2	10	British	3	5
British	1	5	Community	3	5
Couple	1	5	Doctor	3	5
Man	1	5	Family	3	5
Takeaway	1	5	Friend	3	5
			People	2	3.4
			South	2	3.4
			Staff	2	3.4
			Victim	2	3.4
			East	2	1.7
			Couple	1	1.7
			Takeaway	1	1.7

The table shows that both broadsheets and tabloids rely most heavily on “Chinese”, “Asian”, and “student” to refer to victims, which suggests a strong focus on ethnic identity and student victimhood across the whole corpus. Broadsheets are more limited in lexical range when it comes to victim references, concentrating mainly on the ethnicity and occupation of victims, with very rare mentions of their gender and social relationships, which could also be connected to the smaller amount of broadsheet headlines in the corpus. In contrast, tabloids use a wide variety of victim descriptors, including gender references (“woman” and “man” together appearing in 18.7% of the headlines vs. 5% in broadsheets), and relational descriptors (“family”, “friend”) as well as occupational terms (“doctor”, “staff”). In broadsheet headlines, the word “people” is used exclusively to label the victim as a collective group, while in tabloids both “community” and “people” are used to the same end but relatively less frequently, appearing together in only 8.4% of headlines compared to 25% in broadsheets. The role-in-crime descriptor “victim” appears only occasionally in both typologies (2 occurrences each, or 10% of broadsheets vs. 3.4% of tabloids).

4.2.2 Crime descriptions by typology

Table 17 shows all the crime-referring words in the broadsheet and tabloid headlines which appeared more than twice across the headlines, sorted by frequency.

Table 17. Most Frequent Crime-Referring Words in Broadsheet and Tabloid Headlines

Broadsheets	Word count	Headlines in broadsheets (%)	Tabloids	Word count	Headlines in tabloids (%)
Attack	12	60.0	Attack	23	39.0
Hate	5	25.0	Abuse	16	27.1
Racist	5	25.0	Racist	16	27.1
Abuse	4	20.0	Racially	14	23.7
Crime	4	20.0	Abused	12	20.3
Racially	2	10.0	Hate	11	18.6
Punched	1	5	Crime	9	15.3

Broadsheets	Word count	Headlines in broadsheets (%)	Tabloids	Word count	Headlines in tabloids (%)
			Told	5	8.5
			Aggravated	4	6.8
			Assaulted	3	5.1
			Attacked	3	5.1
			Race	3	5.1
			Shouting	3	5.1
			Punched	2	3.4

It can be observed that both newspaper types heavily employ violence and racism related terms such as “attack” “abuse” “racist” and “racially” with “attack” appearing most frequently in both broadsheet and tabloid headlines. Nouns are used predominantly to refer to crimes in both broadsheets and tabloids, but a significantly higher percentage of target crime-referring verbs is seen in the latter (37.3% compared to 5% in broadsheet headlines), including “abused”, “told”, “assaulted” “attacked” and “shouting”, which exclusively appear in tabloid headlines. This suggests that tabloid headlines tend to give more narrative details to the portrayal of the incidents. For example, in the tabloid headline *Police launch probe into five racists attacks linked to the coronavirus in Portsmouth and Southampton after Asian students and school pupils were verbally abused and told to 'go back to your f***** country'* (Mail Online, 18 February 2020), a relatively large amount of information is disclosed: action taken by the authority (“Police launch probe”), number and nature of crimes (“five racist attacks”), the relevant context of the crimes (“linked to coronavirus”), location of crimes (Portsmouth and Southampton), victim description (“Asian students and school pupils”) and the specific form and details of the crimes (“verbally abused”, “told to.....”). By loading the headline with information, the headline tells a mini story, so the reader needs less effort to infer who did what to whom, where, and how serious it is. Abundant information also helps readers to quickly determine if an article is relevant to them and

might evoke more intense emotions when the relevance is high. In contrast, broadsheet headlines tend to foreground a smaller number of words. For example, in the headline *Chinese people in UK targeted with abuse over coronavirus* (*The Guardian*, 18 February 2020), only victim description (“Chinese people in UK”), nature (abuse) and context of the crime (over coronavirus) is present. By involving no evaluative or emotionally loaded words and very little detail, this headline seems mainly informative, only summarizing the main gist of the article, which may be associated with more objectivity and credibility by readers.

4.2.3 Offender descriptions by typology

Table 18 includes all the offender-referring words in the broadsheet and tabloid headlines which at least appeared twice across the headlines, sorted by frequency.

Table 18. Most Frequent Offender-Referring Words in Broadsheet and Tabloid Headlines

Broadsheets	Word count	Headlines in broadsheets (%)	Tabloids	Word count	Headlines in tabloids (%)
Teenage(r), teens	3	15.0	Man	5	8.5
Woman	2	10.0	Thug(s)	5	8.5
Girls	1	5.0	Boss	2	3.4
			Lancashire	2	3.4
			Racist	2	3.4
			Teenage(r), teens	1	1.7

In the 20 broadsheet headlines collected, the only descriptors that appeared more than once are age and gender labels, namely “teenage(r), teens”, “woman” and “girls”, which interestingly, are all groups that can be associated with high newsworthiness when presented as offenders in crimes (see section 4.1.3). This could mean that, there is a tendency for the broadsheets’ anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime reports to only include offenders in the headline when they are groups of high newsworthiness as offenders, namely juveniles and women, and to omit offender descriptions in other cases. Tabloids

on the other hands, do not seem to share the same pattern: the most frequent offender descriptors are “man” and “thug(s)”, both the more typical categories of offenders. Evaluative words including “thug(s)” and “racist” and occupational descriptor “boss” only appear in tabloid headlines. Evaluative descriptors (e.g. “thug”, “racist”) differ from neutral ones (e.g., “man,” “teenager”) because they express moral judgement and social condemnation rather than merely identifying demographic characteristics, e.g.

*Shocking moment Asian man is punched as he walks down the street by white **thug** in 'racially motivated attack' amid violent riots in Hartlepool (Mail Online, 31 July 2024),*

By referring to the offender as a “thug,” the headline represents him as morally reprehensible, which may prompt readers’ outrage toward the perpetrator and invoke empathy for the victim. At the same time, highlighting the deviant characteristic of the offender may encourage readers to interpret the incident as the result of individual moral failure rather than structural racism.

4.2.4 Context descriptions by typology

Table 19 shows all the crime-referring words in the broadsheet and tabloid headlines, sorted by frequency. It can be observed that though both use “coronavirus” as the main way of naming the pandemic, broadsheets almost only employ the more neutral medical terms “covid” and “virus” as context, while tabloids use a wider and more varied set of descriptors including “rage”, “hate”, “related”, “crisis”, “lockdown”, and “outbreak”, which lends more emotions to their presentation of the pandemic. This suggests that broadsheets keep the pandemic reference relatively neutral, concise and direct, whereas tabloids expand it with more evaluative wording, e.g. “rage”, “hate”, to build a more dramatic and sensational COVID context in the headlines. For example, in the headline *Woman is savagely beaten in Birmingham '**coronavirus rage**' attack after stepping in to defend her Chinese friend from racist abuse (Mail Online, 23 February 2020)*, the word “rage” signals the seriousness of the crime and presents it as highly sensational. This may intensify readers’ emotional response and make the headline more striking and memorable. By associating coronavirus directly with “rage”, as discussed in Section 4.1.4, the headline may lead readers to perceive these hate crimes as a by-product of the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby obscuring their racist nature.

Table 19. COVID-Mentioning Words in Broadsheet and Tabloid Headlines

Broadsheets	Word count	Headlines in broadsheets (%)	Tabloids	Word count	Headlines in tabloids (%)
Coronavirus	6	30.0	Coronavirus	19	32.2
Covid	3	15.0	Virus	4	6.8
Virus	3	15.0	Rage	4	5.1
Maskaphobia	1	5.0	Covid	2	3.4
			Hate	2	3.4
			Related	2	3.4
			Crisis	1	1.7
			Lockdown	1	1.7
			Outbreak	1	1.7

4.2.5 Conclusion

Overall, the comparative analysis reveals that tabloid headlines are longer and more lexically diverse than broadsheet ones across victim, crime, perpetrator descriptions and COVID-19 mentions, aligning with established patterns of syntactical complexity in tabloid headlines (Alba-Juez, 2017). While both types of paper prioritize ethnic identifiers for victims like "Chinese" and "Asian" and crime nouns such as "attack" and "abuse" in the headlines, tabloids incorporate broader victim relational terms (e.g., "family," "friend"), more crime-describing verbs (e.g., "abused," "shouting"), typical perpetrator labels (e.g., "man," "thug"), and evaluative pandemic words (e.g., "rage," "hate"). Broadsheets, by contrast, are more restrained on lexical choices and details, focusing on ethnic labels of victims, high-newsworthiness perpetrators (e.g., "teenager," "woman") and neutral pathogen-related COVID terms, with higher overall mentions of pandemic context but lower perpetrator references. These features indicate that in the British newspaper representation of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after COVID 19 pandemic, tabloid headlines might invoke more intense sentiments in readers,

reveal offender agency to a relatively greater extent, and embed Asian hate into the Covid pandemic further, while broadsheets appear more factual and informative, conceal offender agency to a greater extent and construct victims more as indistinctive members of an “outgroup”.

4.3 Summary of the findings and implications

This chapter's headline analysis directly addresses the first set of research questions connected with the UK newspaper representations of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of victim portrayal, I found that victims are foregrounded in headlines with their agency diminished through passive constructions. Tabloids tend to personalize victims via relational terms, likely evoking empathy, while broadsheets generalize them more often as a homogeneous "outgroup," reinforcing "us vs. them" dichotomies. When it comes to offender portrayal, my investigation showed that perpetrators are systematically obscured and their negative agency is erased via nominalizations. Tabloid headlines refer to offenders relatively more often than broadsheets, which tend to only reveal offenders when they are associated with high newsworthiness. As for COVID mention, the pandemic context appears in slightly under half of the headlines, foregrounded more often by broadsheets than by tabloid headlines. When mentioned, the pandemic is presented as a causal driver, folding hate crimes as derivatives of crisis and downplaying offender responsibility. When comparing structural features, tabloids feature longer, lexically diverse headlines with more verbs and evaluative terms, potentially intensifying reader sentiments, whereas broadsheets headlines are shorter, rely on a smaller range of descriptors and appear more informative and factual, which is in line with findings of previous studies about broadsheets vs. tabloids (Alba-Juez, 2017; Bingham & Conboy, 2015). Taken together, these findings suggest that, while tabloids emphasize victims' suffering and offenders' deviance for the sake of sensationalism and broadsheets depoliticize the crimes through concealing offenders and shifting responsibility onto the pandemic, neither directs readers to understand anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after COVID-19 in the UK as a systemic phenomenon rooted in racial hate and racialized discourse. The implications of this risk perpetuating the situation: readers who are seldom shown who the perpetrators are, or who understand hate crimes primarily as pandemic side-effects, are ill-equipped to recognize systemic racism and to support meaningful policy intervention.

5. Who is given voice?

As discussed in Section 3.2, an analysis of quotations in the articles collected is carried out to examine who is given voice in the news reports on anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. Considering that quotations, as explained by Vaucher et al (2021), can come in various forms and some of them can be difficult to extract automatically, such as those that do not use an obvious syntactic pattern or have no speaker, in this dissertation, quotations are extracted manually. From these extractions, an identification of the speakers that are quoted, and a distinction between direct quotations and indirect quotations are then made. When quotation marks are used, what is between each enclosed pair of quotation marks is labelled as one direct quotation. For indirect speech, the sentence marked by a full stop that contains the reporting verb(s) is treated as one indirect quotation (e.g. the sentence *He added that the university had "taken pride in putting social justice at the heart of its mission, vision and strategy", adding that the "rich diversity of our community" is what he felt made the city so special. (Chronicle Live, 26 March 2021)* is treated as one indirect quotation despite two reporting words: “added”, “adding”). It is important to mention that, when a quotation is embedded in another quotation, both speakers are documented. For example, the sentence *He says Mr Walker was heard saying: 'If I wasn't racist before, I am now!' (The Huddersfield Daily Examiner, 17 January 2021)* is both labelled as an indirect quotation of “He” (the primary speaker) and a direct quotation of “Mr Walker” (the embedded speaker).

5.1 Overview

Table 20 below shows the use of quotations across articles. It can be observed that the majority (72, 85.7%) of the 84 articles collected contain at least one quotation. More specifically, direct quotations appear in 71 articles (84.52%) out of the 84 articles that contain quotations, while indirect reported speech appears in 64 articles (76.19%). This indicates that sourced speech is widely employed in British newspapers’ anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime reporting during and after the Covid 19 pandemic and that the use of verbatim quotations is more prevalent than the use of indirect speech.

Table 20. Overview of Quotation Use Across Articles

Measure	Value
Articles with any type of quotation	72 (85.7%)
Articles with direct quotation	71 (84.5%)
Articles with indirect quotation	64 (76.2%)

Table 21 presents the numbers of each type of quotation found in the entire dataset. Across the 84 articles, I identified 871 quotation instances in total, including 654 direct quotations and 217 indirect quotations. The average article contains 10.4 quotations, which suggests that quotation use is not only frequent across articles but also substantial in quantity, especially considering the often short-to-medium length of the articles, with an average length of 506 words.

Table 71. Distribution of Quotation Types and Frequency of Quotations per Article

Measure	Value
Total quotations	871
Direct quotations	654
Indirect quotations	217
Average quotations per article	10.4
Median quotations per article	9

5.2 Who do we hear

Table 22 lists the categories used to code speakers during the extraction of the quotations and the distribution of quotations among speakers. As can be seen, a large variety of different parties are directly or indirectly quoted in the articles. The most quoted sources in decreasing order of frequency are victims (27.2% of the quotations), the police and enforcement (15.4%), offenders (12.2%), experts and academics (8.2%)

and government officials (6.1%), together making up 69% of the quotations. Unlike what Teo (2000) found in his analysis of Australia-based newspapers' reporting of a Vietnamese drug gang, where he concluded that ethnic minority, is quoted less than the "white majority" such as white detectives, here I found the Asian/Chinese victims were quoted more than any other groups both directly and indirectly in the reporting of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic in British newspapers. One reason for this difference might be the different roles that minorities play in crimes, here as victims and in Teo's study, offenders. As both Teo (2000) and Tabbert (2015) pointed out, people in authority and in power tend to be quoted as the main source of news in crime reporting. Here, while the police and enforcement are the second most quoted source only after victims, if we combine it with other groups of people in authority, such as governmental officials, prosecutors and judges, together they are indeed more often quoted than victims and become the most quoted party in the articles.

Table 22. Number of Quotations by Speaker

Speaker	Total Quotations	Direct Quotations	Indirect Reporting
Victim	237	170	67
Police / Enforcement	134	112	22
Offender	106	89	17
Expert / Academic	71	52	19
Government Officials	53	40	13
Legal Officials	50	40	10
Asian Community	37	29	8
Public / Anonymous	36	16	20
Organization	32	27	5
Asian Representative	31	20	11

Speaker	Total Quotations	Direct Quotations	Indirect Reporting
An Asian (individual)	29	21	8
Offender's Lawyer	18	11	7
Witness / Bystander	14	10	4
Legislation Officials	9	7	2
Victim Supporter	4	3	1
Protestors / Activists	4	4	0
Victim-Related Witness	1	0	1
Offender's Employer/Character Witness	3	1	2
Medical Services	2	2	0
Total	871	654	217

Given the wide range of sources, a further grouping of the speakers is needed. According to the roles they play in the incidents, speakers are grouped into victim-related speakers, including victims, their relatives, their supporters, their communities, as well as the leaders and members from “their communities”⁸⁰; offender-related speakers, including offenders, their employers, their character witnesses and their lawyers; witnesses and bystanders, namely those that were at the crime scene; authority, including the police and enforcement, governmental authorities, legal officials, politicians and so on; organizations and their representatives, including charities and their founders, universities and professors, sports clubs and their spokespersons, etc.;

⁸⁰ Quotation marks are used here because these are communities that writers put the victims into and not necessarily communities where the victims feel like they belong. For example, when reporting a hate crime towards a Chinese person, a Taiwanese person can be quoted to represent the opinions of the victim’s community. This is illustrated in Example 13 in section 5.3.

and others, including public, anonymous speakers, protesters, etc. Table 23 shows the distribution of quotations per category.

Table 23. Grouping of Speakers and Number of Quotations by Category of Speakers

Category of Speakers	Total Quotations	Direct Quotations	Indirect Reporting
1)victims	237	170	67
2)victim's relatives and supporters	5	3	2
3)Asian communities and representatives	68	49	19
4)An Asian	29	21	8
Victim-related	339	243	96
5)offenders	106	89	17
6)offenders' employer and character witnesses	3	1	2
7)Offenders' lawyers	18	11	7
Offender-related	127	101	26
8) witnesses and bystanders	14	10	4
9) authority	246	199	47
10) organizations	105	81	24
11) others	40	20	20
Total	871	654	217

As can be seen, the most quoted speakers are victim-related individuals and groups. Authorities are quoted less than victim-related parties but more than offender-related people. For both victim and offender related groups, it can be observed that relatives and other people personally known to the victims and offenders (such as people who offered to help the victims and the offenders' employers) are the least quoted, making up only 1.5% and 2.4% of each group. This does not align with Tabbert (2015)'s finding that victim's voice tends to be substituted by their relatives and friends. In fact, remarks from the Asian/Chinese victims' perspectives are presented: beside quoting the victims themselves (69.9% of the victim-related quotations), the articles often cite leaders and representatives of local Asian communities (20.1% of the victim-related quotations) and sometimes simply quote another Asian person (8.6% of the victim-related quotations).

This means that, in the case of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime reporting against the Covid background, victims' voices are more commonly substituted by a larger circle of people perceived to be from the same ethnic community than by their personal close social circle. In other words, the victims of these incidents are not simply represented as victimized individuals, but as ethnic symbols that represent their ethnicity, and their ethnic communities, in turn, represent them. Offender's perspectives, on the other hand, while also the most presented through quotations of offenders themselves (83.5%), are also presented by quotations of their defending lawyers (14.2%). While victim-related speakers account for more quotations overall, victims themselves represent a smaller share of the victim-related quotations (69.9%) than offenders in offender-related ones (83.5%). This suggests that victims are more likely than offenders to be represented through the voices of others rather than their own.

A pattern worth noting is that, in the articles collected, a person's remarks are often presented in a series of quotations. This is illustrated in the following example:

Example 1

Detective Constable Mark Nelson, of Lancaster CID, has welcomed the conviction, saying "everyone in our county should be allowed to live their lives free from harassment and the fear of hate crime".

He said: "The abuse directed at the victim in this case was absolutely disgusting and understandably left her extremely distressed and frightened for her safety.

"As if being physically attacked and then racially abused wasn't enough, this was directed towards an NHS employee in the middle of a pandemic.

"Everyone in our county should be allowed to live their lives free from harassment and the fear of hate crime and Lancashire Constabulary will continue to take a zero-tolerance approach to offences like this.

"Hate crime causes great distress to its victims and we are committed to investigating all crimes and incidents motivated by hate, supporting victims and bringing offenders to justice."

-- *Lancashire Evening Post*, 11 February 2021

In this example, the detective constable gave a speech about the police's standpoint on the racial hate crime against a Chinese doctor. His speech is presented in five separate direct quotations instead of one, which suggests that these might be excerpts of what he

said selected by the writer rather than the whole speech. The prevalence of this treatment means that the quantity of quotation instances across articles can be inflated by the number of quotations a speaker's speech is split into. I thus include the number of articles where each category of speaker is quoted as another measure of the distribution of voices in my dataset. Table 24 shows the list of speaker categories by number of article coverage.

Table 24. Articles Containing Each Speaker Category

Speaker Category	Articles (n)	Articles (%)
Authority	53	63.1%
Offenders	36	42.9%
Victims	32	38.1%
Organizations and representatives	26	31.0%
Others	15	17.9%
Asian communities and representatives	14	16.7%
An Asian	8	9.5%
Offenders' lawyers	6	7.1%
Witnesses and bystanders	5	6.0%
Victim's relatives and supporters	2	2.4%
Offenders' employer, character witnesses	2	2.4%

As is shown in the table, by counting articles where each speaker category is quoted, authority is the most widely represented speaker category, appearing in nearly two thirds of all articles (63.1%), followed by offenders (42.9%) and victims (38.1%). This result aligns with the tendency of authoritative people to be the main definers in crime news illustrated by previous studies (Tabbert, 2015; Teo, 2000). Despite victims being the most frequently quoted individuals by quotation count (237 quotations), they appear in fewer articles than offenders, suggesting that victims' voices are less often

included in British newspapers' anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime reporting during and after the pandemic but when they are, they tend to be quoted more times within a single article. Another observation is that remarks from organizations and representatives are present in almost one third of the articles. These organizations can be those that victims and offenders are members of, (e.g. universities, sports clubs, trade unions), or entities that can provide insight, help or advice regarding hate crime incidents such as charities and student associations. The content of quotations from these organizations demonstrates five recurrent themes, which are listed below along with examples:

1) Account of the crime

Example 2

She (Kate Gordon from the Chinese Community Centre) said: "It's happening on the streets, bus stops and in one case in the city centre, a young girl was shouted at by a group of teenage boys who said, 'the Chinese are killing us.' "One of our volunteers, who is actually Vietnamese, went to a walk in (the) centre and they told her to stay right back from the counter and that they couldn't see her because they were fully booked. She thought it was because she is of her Chinese appearance. -- *Birmingham Post*, 13 February 2020

2) Support for victims and potential victims

Example 3

Lisa Yeung-Donaldson, of the Chinese Welfare Trust, wrote in the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) Hate Crime Newsletter in February: "With the support of an independent Review Group, longer-term sustainable strategies will be explored, including the formation of a national hub-like network of local hate crime reporting or support centres." -- *Independent Online*, 3 March 2021

3) Sympathy for the victim

Example 4

A club statement read: 'Swansea City is appalled and saddened by racist abuse received by Yan Dhanda via social media following tonight's Emirates FA Cup game against Manchester City. -- *Mail Online*, 10 February 2021

4) Condemnation of the crimes

Example 5

Swansea City condemns racism and abuse of all kinds, and we urge social media companies to go above and beyond to stamp out this abhorrent level of behaviour that continues to tarnish football and society. -- *Mail Online*, 10 February 2021

5) Call to action

Example 6

Andy Fearn, Co-Executive Director, Protection Approaches said:

"The findings of this research are a call to action for both the Government and funding bodies. The rise in hate crime faced by ESEA communities during COVID-19 was not just a passing trend but a significant societal issue that demands immediate and comprehensive intervention. It is imperative that the Government expedites the publication of a new national Hate Crime Strategy. This strategy should be developed in close collaboration with community organisations, as well as those dedicated to supporting hate crime victims and implementing prevention programs." -- *M2 Presswire*, 23 April 2024

In these quotations, various parties, including charity representatives (e.g. Lisa Yeung-Donaldson from the Chinese Welfare Trust) and sport clubs (e.g. Swansea City), are quoted for their comments on the crimes. This indicates that anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes in the UK are not seen just as individual incidents but also as matters of institutional and broader social concern requiring organized responses. The emerging themes of their quotations, as shown above, are heavily anchored in the victims' perspectives, revealing victims' experiences, showing support and empathy for them, condemning the crimes against them and calling for action on their behalf. These quotations can thus also be seen as an institutional voice that speaks for the victims, contributing to additional substitution of victims' voices on top of authorities and ethnic community leaders and members. This multiple substitution of voices is consistent with van Dijk (2000)'s finding that minorities are seldom permitted to speak alone and their opinions often confirmed or conveyed by elites.

5.3 How are voices presented

Table 25 shows the distribution of direct quotations and indirect reporting by speaker category ranked by frequency of direct quotation. Offenders are most frequently quoted

directly, with their exact words being cited 83.8% of the time. Authorities too, are quoted verbatim for over 80% of the time. It is interesting that the minority victims, along with all the victim-related speakers, are quoted less directly than both offenders and authorities, with about 70% of verbatim utterances. This echoes the finding that minorities are quoted less prominently in previous studies (Teo, 2000; van Dijk, 2000). According to Tabbert (2015), direct speech is associated with the highest faithfulness. It is the form of quotation that is the least subjected to alterations of meanings by the writer, which allows the writer to “hide behind” the speakers’ utterances (Tabbert, 2015). The lower rate of direct quotation for victim-related speakers may suggest that journalists exercise greater editorial control over how victims' words are conveyed, shaping or filtering their messages more than they do for offenders and authorities, whose voices are reproduced more faithfully through verbatim citation.

Table 25. Distribution of Direct and Indirect Speech by Speaker Category

Category	Total	Direct	Direct %	Indirect	Indirect %
Offenders	106	89	84.0%	17	16.0%
Authority	246	199	80.9%	47	19.1%
Organizations	105	81	77.1%	24	22.9%
An Asian	29	21	72.4%	8	27.6%
Asian communities and representatives	68	49	72.1%	19	27.9%
Victims	237	170	71.7%	67	28.2%
Witnesses and bystanders	14	10	71.4%	4	28.6%
Offenders' lawyers	18	11	61.1%	7	38.9%
Victim's relatives and supporters	5	3	60.0%	2	40.0%
Others	40	20	50.0%	20	50.0%
Offenders' employer, character witnesses	3	1	33.3%	2	66.7%

Category	Total	Direct	Direct %	Indirect	Indirect %
Victim-related (subtotal)	334	239	71.6%	95	28.4%
Offender-related (subtotal)	132	105	79.5%	27	20.5%
Total	871	654	75.1%	217	24.9%

While offenders are the group whose words are quoted verbatim the most, their quoted remarks tend to be their verbal abuse towards the victims. As a result, their quotations tend to be short and sporadic, as opposed to the long sequence of quotations illustrated in Example 1, which are common to other speaker categories such as authority and victims. The style of quoting of offenders can be observed in examples 7 to 10:

Example 7

He said that four young men approached him shouting "Hey! #coronavirus!" followed by a gesture of covering their mouths with their clothes. -- *The Western Mail*, 11 February 2020

Example 8

A Chinese takeaway owner has allegedly been spat at in Hertfordshire, while a stranger reportedly told a woman to "take your f***** coronavirus back home" in a Birmingham nightclub in recent weeks. -- *Independent Online*, 22 March 2020

Example 9

One shocking message sent to Digbeth-based Chinese Community Centre read: "The disgusting, barbaric animal cruelty you people do -you all deserve to get the virus." -- *Birmingham Mail*, 12 February 2020

Example 10

A property boss who sprayed an Asian man with a fire extinguisher and told him: 'This is the first time you've been white' has been spared jail - despite having a previous conviction for racist behaviour. -- *Mail Online*, 14 April 20

In these examples, the offensive remarks of offenders are kept verbatim, which signals the truthfulness and credibility of the account of crimes. However, quoting offenders almost only with the insults they hurled in the moment of crime contributes to the construction of flat characters whose only recognizable features are their violence and

brutality. This is in line with Tabbert (2015)'s conclusion that offenders tend to be reduced to their offence in crime news. Revelations of information about offenders beyond their criminality, such as their profession, are rare in the data set and only occur when they are quoted as denying the crimes they are accused of committing. It is also only when offenders are defending themselves and denying the crime accusations that lengthy chains of quotations are used when citing them.

Example 11

Mr Walker said he had spent 50 years in the engineering and manufacturing industry including a spell at David Browns in Meltham and is now employed as a trainer at Kirklees College.

He denied he had a racist bone in his body and said he had "got coloured people in my family".

He said he had been at a huge disadvantage during the tribunal hearing because he could not afford to be legally represented.

He said: "When Yaseen started I was asked if I would supervise him and I said yes. I always had his best interests at heart but as time went on he totally let me down.

"I found him asleep several times. He wouldn't do anything I wanted him to do but I let him get away with it.

"He was petulant and spoilt and had an air of 'the world has done me wrong'.

"I gave him the benefit of the doubt, it was my choice whether to supervise him or not, I was a friend to him and it has backfired in my face. I was kicked in the teeth with it.

"It's nonsense to say he was intimidated by me -he's 20-stone-plus and 6ft tall and he would have made mincemeat out of me.

"I work with a lot of Asian apprentices and I don't have a problem with them at all. I get praised for how I have brought them on.

"Yaseen couldn't take the company to an employment tribunal because it had gone into Administration so it came to me.

"The judge believed him and I couldn't get him to believe otherwise. Words and issues were twisted.

"If I was a racist person why would I agree to have him working for me I had a choice. I had his best interests at heart.

"I had a couple of goes, really shouting at him -I did go too far -but he exaggerated all the time.

"He was putting it all on. He would get an Oscar for it. I have been hung out to dry.

"The business about Tonto and the Lone Ranger I didn't say that it was someone else.

"I did not talk about a pig's head The electrician told me that he had seen this years ago on a banner in Dewsbury.

"The company found me not guilty when we were going through the grievance procedure but at the tribunal hearing the judge found otherwise.

"Again, I say I am not a racist in any shape or form and from a panel of two people I have been condemned behind belief."

-- *The Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 17 January 2021

This is Ian Walker, a boss defending himself and denying the racist accusation after losing a tribunal case where he was found guilty of harassment related to race and/or religion and of victimization of his Asian apprentice Yaseen Patel. Here, 18 quotations, among which 3 indirect and 15 direct, are used to present the offender's version of the story. According to Jullian (2011⁸¹), the choice of informants, as well as the inclusion and exclusion of certain information are ideological decisions. In example 5, even though the writer does not explicitly acknowledge the explanations of the offender, the abundant space dedicated to the offender's denial suggests that the writer finds the counter-narrative worthy of consideration and possessive of credibility. Through choosing to include the offender as informant and to recite his arguments in detail, the writer guides readers to keep a skeptical attitude about the racist claim and thus mitigating the crime in terms of racist intention. Though offenders' narratives of crimes are rare in the articles, they were present in all the articles where the reported offender and victim are more than strangers. For example, offenders' justifications for the crimes can also be seen in Example 12.

Example 12

⁸¹ Jullian, P. M. (2011). Appraising through someone else's words: The evaluative power of quotations in news reports. *Discourse & Society*, 22(6), 766-780.

Both claimed they had endured previous trouble with Miss Parveen with Holden claiming she had suffered 'nine years of hell'. -- *Mail Online*, 24 November 2020

Here, the two offenders (referred to as "Both" in the quotation) told the police that they had suffered for nine years at the hand of the victim -- their neighbor Miss Parveen, after found guilty of racially aggravated harassment. This statement implies that there might be a "valid" reason for the offenders' abuse other than racial hate, and the writer's inclusion of the information hints, again, that the racist motive behind the crime can be doubted. The reporting verb "claimed", however, according to Cope (2020⁸²), is used to distance the writer from the quotation, suggesting uncertainty about the statement. The writer has thus limited the skepticism that can be raised towards the racial aggravated nature of the crime.

As mentioned before, victims' perspectives are shown through, not only in their own words, but often also in the words of leaders and representatives (20.4%) as well as members (what I call An Asian in the speaker category, 8.7%) of Asian communities. The following examples show how the quoting of victims' communities help construct crimes in the news reports.

Example 13

Jeff Tsao, a former Sheffield University student who is originally from Taiwan, said: "During the past three years I lived in Sheffield, I can say this is a friendly city. I did not have any issue with racism or discrimination. I believe I am not the only international student who thinks this way. After I started to work, it is still the same." -- *The Star (Sheffield)*, 7 May 2021

In this article of 358 words, there are no direct or indirect quotations from the victims: one was "in hospital after an attack, said to have been fueled by racial discrimination", the other was "attacked on West Street, an incident also believed to be caused by racism". However, as seen above, there is a quotation from a former student that is not directly relevant to the crime itself, who claims he has not met with racism and discrimination. The choice of person to quote and the remarks selected here are interesting because it may lead readers to believe that the incident that happened is individual and rare instead of systematic and common. Quotations can be seen as

⁸² Cope, J. (2020). Quoting to persuade: A critical linguistic analysis of quoting in US, UK, and Australian newspaper opinion texts. *AILA Review*, 33(1), 136-156.

writers expressing their own opinions through someone else's mouth (Jullian, 2011). By quoting "I believe I am not the only international student who thinks this way. After I started to work, it is still the same" from another person, the writer expresses the idea that many Asian people are having a good time in the city of Sheffield and have no problem with racism. By specifying that the speaker is from Taiwan, thus part of the Asian community, the writer lends more credibility to the utterance. This quotation hence veils and isolates the victims (Other) and the crimes they suffered from and shifts the attention from the hate crimes that happened to how, between the lines, pleasing and inclusive the city (Us) is.

Interestingly, the former Taiwanese student is not the only person quoted in the article to affect readers' understanding of the crime. The only other person quoted is Zongyou Zuo, "president of Chinese Students and Scholars Association in Sheffield", and here are the statements directly and indirectly quoted from this person:

Example 14

- 1) Zongyou Zuo, president of Chinese Students and Scholars Association in Sheffield, said after last week's incident they had accompanied the victim to the medical walk-in centre.
- 2) "After that, we contacted the International Office of the University of Sheffield and then sent an email to the university asking the university to provide necessary support and assistance to victims.
- 3) "We can't stand by and watch this matter. In addition to writing to the university, we are also actively keeping in touch with the victim recently so that we can keep track of her mental and physical health.
- 4) "This is a typical hate crime, and it is hard to imagine this happening in Sheffield city centre.
- 5) "We hope that the suspect can get a fair trial and that the victim can get out of the shadow of this incident as soon as possible, and we also hope that similar events will not be repeated in the future."

-- *The Star (Sheffield)*, 7 May 2021

The president from the Chinese Students and Scholars Association is quoted as a representative of the Chinese community. A sequence of his/her remarks have been quoted, which I numbered to facilitate the analysis. In quotation 1), indirect speech is used, claiming that the victim was accompanied to the medical center, which indicates

that the association has done their duty in helping the victim. Quotation 2), similarly, is a statement about a step taken by the association to make sure the victim gets the help she needs, but this time in the form of direct speech. In quotation 3), an attitude-showing statement – “We can’t stand by and watch this matter” is made, which emphasizes the willingness and the desire of the association to intervene and to help. This is followed by another action that the association has presumably taken – “keep in touch with the victim”. Quotation 4) elucidates the nature of the crime, pointing out that what happened is a hate crime, before adding that it is “hard to imagine” that something like this would happen in Sheffield. Here, the second part of the sentence adds on to what is expressed in the Taiwanese student’s statement, that is, Sheffield has a positive image, which makes hate crime happening in the city unimaginable. Again, the statement being made by a representative of the Asian community – the president of an association representing Chinese students and scholars, lends credibility to the statement, and to the idea being expressed covertly – the positive image of the city. Quotation 5) is another statement that shows the attitude of the association – that justice would be delivered. Through quoting these utterances of the president, the writer expresses essentially three ideas: 1. relevant organizations are providing due support and assistance to the victim; 2. the incident is a hate crime and 3. this is not something that you can imagine happening in Sheffield. These quotations altogether, give voice to neither the victim nor the offender, mentioning them through the voice of victims’ ethnic communities and only stating that they are getting or should get what they deserve – support and lawful punishment, as any victim and any offender in any crime. Voice is given to a representative of the victim’s community and another member supposedly from the same community to mitigate the impact of the crime and to preserve the positive image of the city in the hearts of the readers. It is also worth noting that, when quoting a Taiwanese person’s argument to represent the feelings and opinions of the Chinese victim’s community, the writer assumes the homogeneity across Asian communities and treats all Asian descendants as comparable when it comes to their experiences with discrimination and racial hate in the UK. This kind of generalization is typical of stereotyping (Teo, 2000), a significant practice of “othering” according to Hall (2003), where individual differences are ignored and a homogeneous “outgroup” is constructed.

In summary, quotations play a central role in British newspaper reporting of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, with most articles relying heavily on direct speech. Although victims are the most quoted individuals by quotation count, authority figures such as police, legal officials, and government representatives dominate when considering the number of articles in which they appear. The analysis reveals a multiple substitution of victims' voice, where their perspectives are often mediated through Asian community leaders, other Asian individuals and organizations. This suggests that victims are represented often as minority ethnic symbols rather than solely victims and that their voices tend to be conveyed through both elite groups and the ethnic communities where the writer believes they belong. The choice to give these individuals a voice on behalf of victims arguably also enables writers to tell the story in ways that serve their interests, such as maintaining a positive image of a city. Offenders, though cited directly the most, are usually quoted only through their racist insults, which reduces them to their criminal actions. However, in some cases lengthy quotations are used to present their denials and justifications, subtly encouraging readers to question their racist intent. Overall, the findings suggest that quotation practices are not neutral but play a part in shaping how victims, offenders, and crimes are understood.

5.4 Quotations by typology: broadsheets vs. tabloids

Among the articles collected, at least three quarters of both broadsheet and tabloid articles contain quotations, with 15 out of 20 broadsheet articles (75%) and 52 out of 59 tabloid articles (88.1%) featuring at least one instance of direct or indirect speech. This confirms that reported speech is a fundamental feature of UK press coverage of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes across both newspaper types. Table 26 shows the distribution of direct and indirect speech by newspaper type. It can be seen that, among the articles with any type of quotation, while all the broadsheet articles employ both direct and indirect speech, direct speech is more prevalent across tabloid articles than indirect reporting. This indicates a stronger preference for direct quotation over indirect reporting in tabloids, which can be associated with their emphasis on emotional impact, and a consistent use of indirect reporting in broadsheets, which allows a greater degree of editorial mediation around quoted content.

Table 26. Distribution of Quotation Types by Newspaper Typology

Feature	Broadsheet (n=15)	Tabloid (n=52)
Articles with any quotation	15 (100%)	52 (100%)
Articles with direct quotations	15 (100%)	51 (98.1%)
Articles with indirect reporting	15 (100%)	44 (84.6%)

Table 27 presents the distribution of quotations by speaker category across broadsheets and tabloids. In both newspaper types, victims and authority figures together account for the largest share of quotations. Victims represent the most quoted category in terms of number of quotations in broadsheets (28.5%) and a similar percentage of quotations are allocated to victims in tabloids (28.1%). However, while authority accounts for the second quoted group (24.4%) in broadsheets, it is the most quoted (30.2%) speaker category in tabloids. This suggests a stronger reliance on institutional voices such as the police, legal officials and politicians in tabloid coverage. Tabloids also quote offenders proportionally more than broadsheets (12.9% vs. 9.9%), which reflects a tabloid tendency to include more information around the perpetrator, which aligns with my finding in the previous chapter where I concluded that offender descriptions are relatively more present in tabloids than in broadsheets. In fact, as I have shown in section 5.3, both examples 6 and 7, where offenders' speech to defend themselves against crime accusations and to justify their behaviors are included and thus more perpetrator quotations are used, are from tabloid papers (*The Huddersfield Daily Examiner* and *Mail Online*). This offender's counter narrative is absent from broadsheet articles, where offenders are exclusively quoted with the verbal insults that they have thrown at victims (See examples 2 and 3). Another divergence between the two press types is observed in the "Others" category, comprising members of the public, anonymous speakers and so on, which account for 11.6% of broadsheet quotations compared to only 1.7% in tabloids, suggesting that broadsheet coverage gives more volume to non-institutional public voices.

Table 27. Quotations by Speaker Category: Broadsheets vs. Tabloids

Category	Broadsheet (n)	Broadsheet (%)	Tabloid (n)	Tabloid (%)
Victims	49	28.5%	177	28.1%
Victim's relatives and supporters	0	0.0%	4	0.6%
Asian communities and representatives	11	6.4%	54	8.6%
An Asian	13	7.6%	11	1.7%
Offenders	17	9.9%	81	12.9%
Offenders' employer, character witnesses	0	0.0%	3	0.5%
Offenders' lawyers	3	1.7%	15	2.4%
Witnesses and bystanders	2	1.2%	13	2.1%
Authority	42	24.4%	190	30.2%
Organizations	15	8.7%	69	11.0%
Others	20	11.6%	11	1.7%
Total	172	100%	629	100%

As mentioned before, the total number of quotations does not reflect the distribution of voices across articles. Table 28 shows the number of articles containing each speaker category in broadsheets and tabloids. It can be observed that authority figures are quoted in nearly three quarters of both broadsheet (73.3%) and tabloid (73.1%) articles, making them the most consistently present speaker category across both newspaper types. This shows that authority is the primary source in crime news regardless of newspaper typology. Offenders, being the second widely quoted speakers in both broadsheets and tabloids, are proportionally included more often in broadsheet

articles (60.0%) than in tabloid articles (48.1%). Combined by the fact that they account for relatively fewer quotations in broadsheets than in tabloids, this means that broadsheets quote offenders more consistently in their articles but dedicate less volume to their speech and only include their crime-related remarks, while tabloids quote offenders less consistently but assign more quotations to them, including more details and offenders' perspectives when they do. Victim quotations are present in only one third of broadsheet articles (33.3%), which is slightly under half of offender presence (60%) and less than half of authority presence (73.3%), suggesting that in the British broadsheet news reporting of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the Coronavirus pandemic, voice is commonly given to authoritative figures and offenders while victims' voice is underrepresented. In comparison, tabloids, which also most consistently include people of authority as informants, show a more balanced distribution of voice between offenders (48.1%) and victims (46.2%) across their articles. Another notable divergence between the two types of newspapers concerns organizations, which appear in 46.7% of broadsheet articles compared to 30.8% of tabloid articles, indicating that broadsheets more consistently draw on a broader range of institutional voices, which as discussed in section 5.3, can lead to further substitution of victims' voices.

Table 28. Articles Containing Each Speaker Category: Broadsheets vs. Tabloids

Speaker Category	Broadsheet (n)	Broadsheet (%)	Tabloid (n)	Tabloid (%)
Victims	5	33.3%	24	46.2%
Victim's relatives and supporters	0	0.0%	2	3.8%
Asian communities and representatives	2	13.3%	10	19.2%
An Asian	1	6.7%	5	9.6%
Offenders	9	60.0%	25	48.1%

Speaker Category	Broadsheet (n)	Broadsheet (%)	Tabloid (n)	Tabloid (%)
Offenders' employer, character witnesses	0	0.0%	2	3.8%
Offenders' lawyers	1	6.7%	5	9.6%
Witnesses and bystanders	1	6.7%	4	7.7%
Authority	11	73.3%	38	73.1%
Organizations	7	46.7%	16	30.8%
Others	3	20.0%	10	19.2%

Overall, the comparison shows that quotations are a central feature of both broadsheet and tabloid coverage of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes in the UK, despite differences in the use of reported speech. Broadsheet articles are found to employ indirect speech more consistently, allowing for more writer's mediation of the message, while tabloids rely more heavily on direct quotations, reflecting their stronger focus on emotional impact. Across both types of newspapers, victims and authority figures are the most quoted speakers by quotation count, but authoritative speakers are significantly more widely present among the articles. In terms of article-level presence, I also found that victims' voices are comparatively underrepresented in broadsheets, where authority figures and offenders are much more consistently present, whereas tabloids provide a somewhat more balanced distribution between victim and offender voices. Offenders are less present as speakers in tabloids, but they are given proportionally more space, sometimes including their perspectives and self-defending narratives, which is absent in broadsheet articles, where offenders' speech is more consistently present across articles but limited to crime-related remarks.

5.5 Summary of the findings and implications

This chapter's quotation analysis directly addresses the research question on who is given a voice in UK newspaper reports of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. I found that quotations are an essential element across the dataset, with most articles relying heavily on sourced speech, particularly on direct quotations. In terms of whose voices are heard, it can be concluded that authority figures are the primary sources of the news, with the most consistent presence across articles, large quantity of quotations and obvious tendency to be quoted with their exact words. Asian/Chinese victims' voices are also rather prominent, accounting for the most quotations in the dataset but this is compromised by appearing in fewer articles and a relatively lower chance of being quoted verbatim. The analysis also reveals a multiple substitution for the minority victims' voices by Asian or Chinese community leaders, other Asian individuals and organizations such as charities, universities and trade unions, through which victims are constructed less as individuals and more as ethnic symbols of a presumed homogeneous "Asian community." Offenders' voices are, despite being slightly more common than victims in the articles and often conveyed through direct quotations, largely limited to their racist comments, which lends credibility to the reported incidents but reduces them to their criminal acts. In terms of the broadsheet vs. tabloid comparison, both types of newspapers center on authorities' voices. However, broadsheets employ indirect speech more consistently and draw more heavily on organizational and institutional voices, allowing greater editorial mediation and substitution of victims' voices. Tabloids, by contrast, rely more on direct quotation, allocate proportionally more space to offenders' narratives, and achieve a somewhat more balanced article-level presence of victim and offender voices. Overall, the analysis discussed in this chapter indicates that quotation practices in the British newspapers' coverage of anti-Asian/Chinese racial hate crimes amid and following COVID-19 pandemic tend to represent the crimes by privileging authoritative and institutional voices, substituting victims' speech, limiting offenders' perspectives, through which minority victims are othered, offenders criminalized and crimes mitigated. Such patterns of representation carry broader implications, as they risk leading readers to perceive anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes as isolated criminal incidents rather than manifestations of structural racism. The racial prejudice and racist sentiments that give rise to racial hate crimes in the first place likely remain

unaddressed, undermining the possibilities for collective actions and policy changes needed to prevent future incidents.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation set out to investigate how anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes were represented in the British press during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2024). Through a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of 84 articles drawn from 39 British news sources, two research questions were addressed: how victims, offenders, and the pandemic context are linguistically constructed in headlines; and who is given a voice in the articles and how this shapes the representation of the crimes. A comparative approach was adopted to explore similarities and differences between the representation in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers.

The analysis of headlines reveals that the British press consistently foregrounds Asian/Chinese victims while limiting their agency. Victims are present in every headline but are predominantly referred to by their ethnicity, which reduces them to a homogeneous outgroup and reinforces an “us versus them” dichotomy. Offenders, on the other hand, are absent from nearly two-thirds of all headlines. When they do appear, they tend to be equated with their offence, which echoes Tabbert (2015)’s finding of “one-dimensional” representation of offenders in crime news. The use of passive constructions and nominalization is prevalent in both broadsheet and tabloid headlines to obscure perpetrators’ negative agency. COVID-19 is mentioned in roughly half of all headlines, and it is predominantly presented as a causal factor for hate crimes, effectively displacing responsibility from offenders’ racial animus onto the pandemic. The comparative analysis shows that while these tendencies are present across both newspaper types, tabloids produce more emotionally loaded narratives in their headlines, whereas broadsheets adopt a more restrained register and appear more factual and informative.

The quotation analysis reveals that authority figures’ voices dominate the anti-Asian/Chinese hate crime reporting, being present across nearly two-thirds of all articles and predominantly quoted verbatim. While victims are the most quoted group by volume, their voices are frequently substituted by those of Asian community leaders, representatives, other Asian individuals and organizations. This shows that, rather than being represented as unique individuals, victims are treated as ethnic symbols whose perspectives can be conveyed by any member of a presumed homogeneous Asian community. As for offenders, they are largely quoted only through the racist verbal abuse they used against victims, which constructs them as flat, deviant characters. In

some tabloid articles, however, offenders are allocated extended space to deny accusations and present counter-narratives, thereby raising doubt about the racist motivation behind hate crimes. The comparison between broadsheets and tabloids reveals a more consistent use of indirect reported speech in broadsheets, allowing greater editorial mediation and a preference for direct quoting in tabloids, which might evoke greater emotional responses from readers.

Overall, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the British press tends to construct Asian/Chinese victims as a distant, homogeneous Other stripped of individual agency, reduce offenders to deviant outcasts of the society, attribute hate crimes to the pandemic rather than to racist intent, and prioritize authoritative and institutional voices in their reporting of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes during and after COVID-19 pandemic. Taken together, these representational patterns risk obscuring the deeply embedded structural racism that underlies anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes, thereby impeding the public awareness needed to challenge racial prejudice and drive meaningful change.

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. The corpus of 84 articles is modest in size and imbalanced, with the broadsheet sub-corpus (20 articles) much smaller than the tabloid one (59 articles). This constrains the generalizability of the comparative findings. Moreover, the classification of newspapers not conventionally known as broadsheet or tabloid required manual assessment against established criteria, which introduces a degree of circularity: patterns identified in these sources may partly reflect the classification standards applied rather than their independent editorial tendencies. Furthermore, the application of the UK legal definition of hate crime as an inclusion criterion inevitably excluded incidents of racial hostility not formally recognized as criminal, such as online harassment or microaggressions, which potentially leaves a large portion of racialized discourse unaccounted for. Finally, the analysis is restricted to textual features of the news reports, with multimodal dimensions such as photographs and layout unexamined, which limits the scope of the conclusions that can be drawn about the press representation.

Future research could address these limitations and extend the present study to gain a more comprehensive picture of racial hate crime reporting in the press media. A study comparing pre-pandemic periods with pandemic-era coverage would allow for an assessment of whether the media representation of anti-Asian/Chinese hate crimes has

evolved due to the crisis. A cross-ethnic comparative study examining coverage of hate crimes targeting different ethnic communities would help determine whether the discursive practices identified here are specific to anti-Asian/Chinese coverage or characteristic of British hate crime reporting generally. An analysis incorporating visual elements would provide insight into how multimodal representations contribute to the construction of racial hate crimes. Finally, a study exploring how British readers interpret and respond to the press representations examined here would complement the producer-focused perspective of this dissertation and illuminate the real-world impact of these discursive choices on the audience.

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Appendices

Cf. attached documents.

