

CRIME NEWS IN BRITISH PRESS: EXPRESSING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STATUS OF CORE PARTICIPANTS

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Abstract

The paper presents a study of naming and referring strategies as they were manifest in crime news reports in four British national dailies (both broadsheets and tabloids). The focus is on the representation of victims and murderers, achieved mainly by attributing and projecting positive and negative status to core participants. It is shown in our study that in addition to providing information, newspapers also present and promote views and attitudes, which are communicated mainly via the language used. The same event or participants may be presented in different ways. The ways that people are referred to in newspaper discourse can, at least to a certain extent, influence the reader's perception of the participants as well as the events described, together with the reader's view of a particular issue. This contribution endeavours to demonstrate how messages and views can be incorporated in the text of newspaper reports by foregrounding of certain characteristics of the participants. The analysis suggests that the choice of naming and referring strategies helps enhance a particular intended effect determined by the type of audience at which the newspaper is targeted, although whether the effect is really achieved or not depends solely on the reader, since it is highly individual what inferences the reader will make.

Key words

naming and referring strategies, newspaper discourse, victim/criminal dichotomy, tabloids, broadsheets

1 Introduction

The primary function of the press is to provide readers with information on current events. From the reader's point of view, obtaining information is the main motive for reading newspapers. Modern media, however, have several other functions, among which opinion formation and entertainment rank as the crucial ones (Diller 2002). A newspaper article does not necessarily fulfil only one of the functions mentioned above, although one purpose should, at least theoretically, be the central one. For example, when reading a report the reader expects an

objective account of the event reported on, whereas when choosing to read an editorial or a review the reader assumes to be presented with someone's opinion and evaluation in the first place. In modern media, however, as Diller points out, the purposes may be and often are combined, which the reader does not always have to be fully aware of. It is mainly the so-called serious newspapers (i.e. broadsheets) that claim to be objective and impartial in comparison with popular press (i.e. tabloids). Although a journalist would claim that it is his or her mission to provide objective and unbiased information to readers (Fowler 1991), the question is whether it is possible to provide information without presenting an opinion or making an evaluation at the same time. As White (2006) claims, even broadsheets, which would like to be viewed as impartial, do propose and enhance particular views and ideological stance, and evaluation can be traced in them as well as in tabloids. According to White, even newspaper reports are not devoid of evaluation.

There are many factors which crucially influence the final product, i.e. the article the reader is presented with. In the first place, a newspaper article must be seen as a product of a number of people who participate in the process of its production, not as a product of a single journalist or reporter. During the process of editing, the original journalist's product may be changed in terms of content and length as well as expression; sentences may be shortened as well as expanded, and new sentences (or ideas) can be included. The changes may also be motivated by other factors than content and ideational reasons, for example, space limitations and placement of the article in the paper.

As it follows from the above mentioned, the originator or producer of newspaper discourse cannot be viewed as an individual; therefore, we can hardly speak of the 'sender' and his or her intentions, which we would normally consider in spoken interaction, for example. In our view, it is not possible to compare the 'communication' that takes place in newspaper discourse between the 'writer' and 'reader', as we would analyze it in face-to-face conversation because with newspaper discourse the negotiation of meaning is excluded (for negotiation of meaning in face-to-face conversation, cf. Povolná 2009). The traditional sender/receiver model is thus insufficient for news discourse analysis and, as Scollon (1998) suggests, should be abandoned. The terms 'writer' and 'reader' need to be understood as general concepts, which do not denote particular individuals.

On the other hand, with so many national and local newspapers in the market, it is a matter of survival for newspapers that they identify their readership in order to be successful businesses. Without a considerable number of readers a newspaper cannot compete with other newspapers and other types of modern media. Scollon (1998), for example, not only refutes the sender/receiver model

but also claims that it is virtually impossible to define the so-called ‘implied reader’. From our point of view, the theory of ‘implied reader’ is still at least partly valid because newspapers need to delimit their readership in order to get their share of the market, although they themselves realize that such a reader does not really exist (cf. Jančaříková 2009, Reah 2002). The ‘implied reader’ is an important aspect in determining a particular newspaper’s content, rhetoric and mainly its advertising potential. The fact that we find the same event reported on in different papers in slightly different ways and with a different final effect on the reader leads us to acknowledge that the reader is at least partly taken into account in the process of production of a newspaper article, although it should not be overestimated since there are other factors that influence the production of news, for example, time and space constraints, changing agenda of newspapers or the process of tabloidization. We do not propose the view that there is only one reading of a particular article. On the contrary, there are many meanings and messages that readers may infer and it is highly individual what views, beliefs or values on top of information a particular reader will associate with the people and events in the course of reading a newspaper article. The aim of this paper is therefore to demonstrate how various language means, namely referring and naming strategies may be used in newspapers to communicate certain views and values to the reader, which does not necessarily mean that every reader will interpret them in the same way. The linguistic phenomena under investigation in the present paper have been studied before within the domains of stylistics, lexicology or genre studies. In this paper we focus mainly on the possible interpretations of particular phenomena and argue for the inferential approach to interpretation. We believe that interpretation is largely influenced by the readers’ existing views and values, previous experience, other articles they have read about similar events, but also age, place of living, social background, social and cultural context, and many other factors. This approach supports the view that newspapers may endeavour to influence their readers by proposing certain views and values, and therefore work with the concept of implied readership, which on the other hand does not mean that the readers will form one particular opinion of the event or problem discussed because, as suggested above, a single article may have many readings.

2 News values and crime

Not everything that happens around is news, or we should say not everything is considered newsworthy by newspapers, and not every event has the potential to become a news item. The criteria for newsworthiness known as ‘news values’,

as formulated by Galtung and Ruge in 1965, have been further discussed and elaborated on by many news discourse analysts in order to demonstrate how newspapers treat events and turn them into news items (cf. Brighton & Foy 2007, Richardson 2007, Van Dijk 1988).

Among the topics that are most probable to attract the readers' attention and generate public interest crime appears to be relatively frequent (cf. Franklin 2008). At this point it should be stated that 'crime news' is a relatively broad field of newspaper discourse which does not include reports on particular crimes only, as it might seem, but "encompasses a wide range of topics including the reporting of specific crimes, investigations, when suspects are charged, trials, sentences and the eventual punishment" (Wardle 2008: 144). Crime news popularity among readers can be explained by considering which news values apply to this type of news. It is mainly 'negativity' and 'reference to people', both being 'culture bound news values' (cf. Fowler 1991) that turn crime into a newsworthy item. Bad news, i.e. death, conflict, scandal, and mainly violent crimes will attract the readers' attention, although "there is no natural reason why disasters should be more newsworthy than triumphs" (ibid.: 16). According to the findings of a study into serious national newspapers in Britain as carried out by Lewis et al. (2006), it is mainly individual crimes that receive considerably more attention than, for example, criminal policy. The tendency towards human stories, which can be traced both in broadsheets and tabloids at present, is in compliance with the above mentioned news value of 'reference to people'. Such news is about real people with whom the reader may identify (Wardle 2008), mainly when innocent ordinary people or children are involved.

Crime news has the potential of attracting the reader's interest but also enables newspapers to exercise their power by promoting and defending certain values as well as to initiate a public discussion on generally acknowledged beliefs and views of a particular community or nation (Caviglia 2006). In crime reports, therefore, we find not only information but also evaluation and opinion that may be presented implicitly or explicitly to the reader, often building on particular cultural and social stereotypes.

3 Core participants and their status

The main factual questions that a crime report should answer are *what* happened *to whom*. The event itself and the participants thus have the greatest likelihood of becoming central to crime news. With murder cases, which this analysis focuses on, the main participants that will naturally be contrasted in crime reports are the core participants, i.e. the victim and the criminal/offender.

A person can be identified by, for example, his or her name, age, profession, social status or nationality. Still, the effect that each of these types of reference provides about the same person may not carry the same message to the reader. In Richardson's words "we all simultaneously possess a range of identities, roles and characteristics that could be used to describe us equally accurately but not with the same meaning" (Richardson 2007: 49). Whereas in some contexts the age of the victim may be accentuated, in others it will be his or her family background. Similarly, the murderer may be presented as a notorious criminal but probably not as a father of three young children, even if he really is the father of three children, who will now grow up in an 'incomplete' family after their father's conviction. Therefore, naming of the core participants plays a crucial role in news discourse since "journalists have to provide names for the people in the events they report and this naming always involves choice" (Richardson 2007: 49). The concept of naming as we use it in the present analysis requires some clarification. The term is not used here to label the process of naming the result of which is a naming unit (i.e. a conventional sign) in Mathesius's (1975) sense, but rather to describe the process of 'creation' of a participant's characteristic. The purpose of 'naming' in this sense is to depict the 'relevant identities' of the participant (e.g. *a criminal*, *drug dealer* and *illegal immigrant*) and convey them to the reader, who shall create either a favourable or non-favourable view of the person. Our focus is therefore not on all referring expressions including personal pronouns, but rather on lexical items and their choices in a particular context.

With the cases analysed in this paper there is no need to question the reader's 'preferences', as it is more than evident with whom the reader will sympathize – it is the victim (i.e. a child) that is assigned a positive status, while the criminal/offender is assigned a negative status. The focus of this paper is to demonstrate how certain characteristics of the participants are foregrounded in order to achieve a particular status, often via activating shared knowledge and particular cultural stereotypes.

4 Material

This paper explores the expression of a positive or negative status of the core participants in crime news, namely its creation and enhancement throughout the article. For this purpose three events, all child murders, were chosen, each event being represented in the corpus by four articles taken from four British national dailies (i.e. twelve articles in total). As mentioned above (cf. Section 2), under the label 'crime news' various kinds of articles about crime can be listed, including trials and verdicts. All articles in the corpus report on the results of the

trials and the sentences the murderers received in the three cases concerned. This type of crime news was chosen on purpose since it represents a kind of context in which the victim and offender/criminal, i.e. the good and evil, can be contrasted, which is a typical feature of the present crime news reporting (cf. Wardle 2008). We do realize that the relatively small size of the corpus does not provide enough grounds for stating general norms of the participants' depiction in crime newspaper discourse. Despite its small size, however, it may be assumed that it reveals some tendencies adopted by both serious and popular papers, which will be further elaborated in our future research.

The choice of papers was governed by one of the main aims of the analysis, which was to compare naming and referring strategies employed by broadsheets and tabloids, each type being represented here by two papers, the *Guardian* (G) and the *Daily Telegraph* (DT), and the *Daily Mirror* (DM) and the *Sun* (S) respectively.

As for the choice of articles, the main criteria included the type of article (i.e. a report), the content (i.e. information about the verdict) and location in time. The type of article in this study is a newspaper report, which in the first place should provide the reader with information on a recent event. Here the event is not the murder itself but the verdict, so the purpose of the articles is not to give details of the murder as such (those were given after the murder was committed), but sum up the case, clarify the main participants (i.e. the victim vs. the murderer) and mainly, inform the reader of the verdict. The principal message to the reader is that the case was closed and the murderer punished. As for location in time, all the articles concerning individual events were published on the same day, i.e. the day following the trial. Since the murderer is known at this stage and has been convicted of the crime, it is possible to focus the analysis on the victim/murderer dichotomy and expression of positive and negative status of the main participants. It should also be stated that the analysis includes the headlines too. According to the 'top-down principle', also 'top-down strategy' (Ungerer 2002), the most important and essential information should be provided as soon as possible within an article, i.e. in the headline and the lead. Therefore, the mention of the participants is often made as early as possible, i.e. in the headline, which justifies the inclusion of headlines in the present analysis.

5 Analysis

5.1 Event One

Event One is the murder of a seven year-old-girl called Toni-Ann Byfield, who was killed in 2003 by Joel Smith, a drug dealer. Smith first killed the girl's father Bertram Byfield, also a drug dealer, in front of the girl. Then, in order to eliminate her as a potential witness, he shot her in the back while she was trying to escape from the room. Smith, who believed he had committed a perfect crime, was convicted of double murder in 2006 and sentenced to life, with a minimum of 40 years in prison (in Britain, if someone is sentenced to life, the court determines the minimal period of time that the criminal has to serve in prison). This especially appalling crime shocked the nation and also provoked a heated public discussion since the girl was supposed to be under the care of Birmingham social services and yet was allowed to stay with her father although his criminal background was known to the authorities.

Event One – the articles headlines and length of articles in words:

G – *Cold blooded killer of Toni-Ann jailed for at least 40 years*; 629 words

DT – *Forty years for Toni-Ann's cold blooded killer*; 748 words

DM – *A minimum of 40 years, Record sentence for Toni-Ann's brutal killer*; 380 words

S – *Toni-Ann killer caged 40 years, Yardie shot girl in back*; 385 words

For better illustration, the four articles are included in the Appendix.

5.1.1 The victims

As mentioned above, this was a double murder, so theoretically the focus should be on both the victims, the girl and her father. However, the opposite is true. If we consider the amount of information about the victims and space devoted to them in the articles as well as the referring expressions used, we will come to the conclusion that the victims do not have an equal status. Whereas the girl is moved to the foreground so that she can be contrasted with the murderer, the father (who was a drug dealer) is mentioned only briefly, as if for the sake of completeness but not with the aim of promoting feelings of sympathy in the reader. Reading on, the reader may easily get the impression that there was only one victim, since the murderer is presented as Toni-Ann's killer, not as a killer of two people. The participant with a positive status that the reader will side with is therefore the seven-year-old girl. The girl, unlike her father, fully represents a

type of victim with whom the reader is encouraged and expected to identify, as it could easily be the reader's daughter, granddaughter, a niece and happy girl from the reader's neighbourhood, etc.

As can be seen from Table 1 below, in all four articles analysed, i.e. both in broadsheets and tabloids, the reference by the girl's first name prevails over other naming and referring expressions. This particular use of the first name is, in our view, a means of promoting familiarity and sympathy and expressing the positive status of the victim. The girl's first name (i.e. *Toni-Ann*) also occurs in all articles as the first mention of the victim as early as possible, i.e. in the headlines (the main or the successive ones). As the case received considerable public attention and press coverage, the reader is expected to recall the event and mainly the victim upon hearing her name. The whole name (i.e. *Toni-Ann Byfield*) occurs only once in all the papers with the exception of the *Daily Mirror*, and thus clearly fulfils the function of identification.

	Guardian <i>629 words</i>	Daily Telegraph <i>748 words</i>	Daily Mirror <i>380 words</i>	Sun <i>385 words</i>
1. first name	6	5	4	3
2. whole name	1	1	–	1
3. surname	–	–	–	–
4. reference to age	3	3	4	3

Table 1: Event One: reference to the victim (the girl)

Not surprisingly, it is reference by the girl's age which is used several times in order to emphasize her youth and innocence. The age is either mentioned in phrases such as *a seven-year-old girl* (DT), or in combination with other types of factual information, typically the name, e.g. *seven-year-old Toni-Ann Byfield* (G), *little Toni-Ann* (DM), *a girl of seven* (S). Apart from these phrases that can be labelled as descriptive, i.e. presenting facts, we can also find other phrases which are included in order to emphasise the girl's innocence and lively nature (cf. Examples 1-4 below). Their emotive effect on the reader is supported by the fact that these evaluative descriptions were uttered by the judge, who represents authority here, when announcing the verdict (cf. Example 1) and the grief-stricken girl's mother (cf. Examples 2-4). They are obviously taken from a report provided by a news agency, as they are very similar. They are presented as quotes in the articles and can be found in both broadsheets and tabloids.

- (1) *a lively seven-year-old full of hope and excitement* (G)
- (2) *a bright, lovely, respectable and talkative girl* (DT)
- (3) *a bright, lovely little girl* (S)
- (4) *a bright, lovely, respectful and talkative little girl* (DM)

The articles also include reference by pro-forms, i.e. *she* and *her*. Their use is motivated by grammatical reasons, i.e. cohesion, and therefore they are not, at least in this case, relevant to creating positive status, and their occurrence is not recorded in the analysis.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the other victim, i.e. the girl's father, is moved to the background, and as a victim has a considerably lower status than the girl. We could also say that his status as a victim is rather blurred and he is assigned negative rather than positive status since in all the articles his criminal background is mentioned – he is referred to as *a crack cocaine dealer* (G and DT), *crack dealer Bertram Byfield* (DM) and *(her) drug dealing dad Tony Byfield* (S). In all the four articles we also find one instance of his whole name together with his age, for example *Bertram Byfield, 41* (DT), the occurrence of which can be explained as a realization of identification. Whereas the girl is referred to by her first name, reference to her father is realized by the surname only, i.e. *Byfield*, which can be found in all four articles, and, in our view, is a means of expressing negative status (this will be further specified in the following section on reference to the murderer). If he were not a criminal but an ordinary, law-abiding citizen, he would probably be referred to as *Mr. Byfield*. What also contributes to enhancing the negative status of the father is the information about how he got to live in Britain as he is not of British origin, i.e. he is to be seen as an 'outsider'. In the *Guardian* this is done rather implicitly by stating that he *bought a British passport* (cf. Example 5). It is common knowledge that it is not possible to *buy* a passport; therefore, the inference that the reader will draw from this form of expression is that he did not enter the country legally. Such information further enhances the negative view of the father, who was not a law-abiding citizen. In the same sentence his motive for moving to England is mentioned, i.e. *dealing drugs* (cf. Example 5), which further contributes to his negative status, and may evoke in the reader a view of him as a reprehensible person, who not only entered the country illegally, but also with the aim to violate the laws of the country. In the *Sun*, however, we find a much more explicit and more negative description which states and enhances the negative status of the father by labelling him as

an illegal immigrant, a drug dealer and a member of a gang (cf. Example 6). Lexical items of this kind clearly place the father into unfavourable social groups, members of which are generally considered as ‘outsiders’, ‘evil’, or ‘threat to the society’. In the other papers, i.e. the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Telegraph* we find no mention of this kind.

- (5) *Byfield, born Anthony Pinnock in Jamaica, had moved to England to deal drugs after buying a British passport in the name of Bertram Byfield.* (G)
- (6) *... Jamaican illegal immigrant Byfield, 41 – a member of a Yardie gang controlling a crack cocaine trade worth millions.* (S)

All of the papers with the exception of the *Daily Telegraph* also choose to include the information that Byfield was not Toni-Ann’s biological father, for example by using the words *dad* and *father* in inverted commas (this fact was revealed by post mortem DNA tests). These words can be interpreted as indirect reference to the girl, who was killed because of a man who was not even her father. The information that the man was not the girl’s natural father may be interpreted as a fact but can also result in generating even greater sympathy towards the girl.

5.1.2 The murderer

In Subsection 5.1.1 it was stated that the use of the first name in reference to the victim results in enhancing familiarity, sympathy and positive status. With the murderer the status to be communicated to the reader is obviously negative. The analysis proves that this is achieved by the use of the surname only, i.e. *Smith* without the title *Mr*, whereas the whole name (*Joel Smith*) is mostly used for identification, and the first name (*Joel*) is not used at all, as can be seen from the following table:

Table 2 also demonstrates the differences in the use of nouns and adjectives, for example, the use of *cold-blooded* in the broadsheets but no occurrences of this adjective in the tabloids. The tabloids prefer to mention the victim’s name in phrases such as *Toni-Ann killer* and *Toni-Ann brutal killer*, which further contributes to personification of the good and evil. Phrases of this kind which include reference to both the victim and murderer are probable to create a more emotive effect than if the murderer was simply referred to as *the killer*. The tabloids both choose to describe the killer as *Yardie*, which due to its denotative

and connotative meaning enhances his negative status (i.e. a member of a gang consisting primarily of Jamaicans selling drugs). Apart from conveying to the reader that this person is a criminal involved in drugs trade, it also states the killer's origin, i.e. non-British.

	Guardian <i>629 words</i>	Daily Telegraph <i>748 words</i>	Daily Mirror <i>380 words</i>	Sun <i>385 words</i>
1. whole name	1	3	2	1
2. surname	6	8	3	7
3. first name	–	–	–	–
4. Yardie	–	–	1	1
5. cold-blooded killer	1	2	–	–
6. Toni-Ann killer	–	–	–	1
7. Toni-Ann's brutal killer	–	–	1	–

Table 2: Event One: reference to the murderer

Explicit evaluation is made in the tabloids also by the use of the adjective *evil*, as in:

(7) *an evil Yardie gangster* (S)

(8) *an evil gunman who murdered a girl of seven* (DM)

In both examples the criminal is referred to as *evil*, in Example 7 within a cluster of three negative words, thus forming a loaded negative noun phrase, and in Example 8 as a pre-modification of the word *gunman*. The post-modifying relative clause moves the reader's attention to his callous and appalling act and thus further enhances the negative status of the criminal. The man is to be viewed as representing 'evil', which the tabloids choose to state explicitly by using the adjective *evil*.

In the *Daily Telegraph* we find a similar phrase (cf. Example 9), which also communicates the negative status of the criminal but the function of the postmodifying relative clause is different – to describe his criminal background. His image of a 'bad' man is supported by the use of the verb *prey* instead of the adjective *evil* used in the tabloids. The inference that the reader is invited to make

here is that he was a threat not only to ordinary people and law abiding citizens, but also to people of his own kind. The whole noun phrase can be understood as both descriptive and evaluative.

(9) *a gunman who preyed on drug dealers* (DT)

Whether a noun phrase is descriptive or evaluative or both may also largely depend on the context. If we consider the following phrase – *the muscular and tattooed 32-year-old* – used in the *Guardian* in reference to the criminal, we might at first sight regard it as a description of the killer’s appearance. If we, however, consider the context in which it is mentioned (cf. Example 10), we will see that the communicative purpose of this phrase is not to provide a physical description of the man:

(10) *Joel Smith listened to the guilty verdicts at the Old Bailey, and the sentence an hour later, with no sign of emotion. But as he was led from the dock, the muscular and tattooed 32-year-old gave a middle finger gesture of abuse at the detective who first questioned him.* (G)

From the factual point of view, such a description of appearance in this context is irrelevant; it would be fully sufficient to refer to the criminal as *Smith* or *he* in order to achieve cohesion and clarity of the text. In our view, the choice of this particular phrase was motivated by different reasons. In some readers this may evoke a stereotypical image of a criminal; to others this will emphasize the contrast between the callous killer and the innocent victim. In any case, this phrase is an example of evaluation presented to the reader.

5.2 Event Two

Event Two is the murder of a two-year old girl called Sanam Navsarka, who was tortured and finally killed by her mother and her boyfriend, Subhan Anwar. They claimed the girl had drowned in the bath as she was playing alone. The case came to court in February 2009. Both the mother and her partner were convicted of the girl’s death. The man was found guilty of murder and was given a life sentence (with a minimum of 23 years). The mother, Zabheena Navsarka, was cleared of murder and sentenced to nine years for manslaughter. This was an especially shocking case as the girl “suffered over 100 injuries in the month before her death” (*The Daily Telegraph*, February 12, 2009), she was severely

beaten and closed in a cupboard as punishment by both the adults, and all her limbs were broken when she was brought to hospital.

Event Two – the articles headlines and length of articles in words:

G – *Toddler killed by mother and boyfriend*, 736 words

DT – *Cruel beyond belief, Mother and partner convicted of toddler’s death*, 232 words

DM – *‘Cruel’ mum and lover jailed for killing Sanam, 2*; 346 words

S – *Cruelty beyond reason, Mum and stepdad jailed for killing tot*; 317 words

5.2.1 The victim

Similarly to Event One, the girl is referred to throughout all the articles by her first name for the same reasons – enhancing familiarity and sympathy. The whole name occurs once in two of the papers (DT and S), twice in the *Guardian*, which is the longest article of all (736 words), whereas in the *Daily Mirror* we do not find any instance of the whole name, probably because the identity of the girl is considered clear from the reference to her mother (cf. Table 3):

	Guardian <i>736 words</i>	Daily Telegraph <i>232 words</i>	Daily Mirror <i>346 words</i>	Sun <i>317 words</i>
1. first name	12	5	7	5
2. whole name	2	1	–	1
3. surname	–	–	–	–
4. reference to age	5 i.e. – <i>toddler</i> (2) – <i>a two-year-old girl/child</i> (3)	3 i.e. – <i>toddler</i> (2) – <i>a two-year-old girl</i> (1)	3 i.e. – <i>the child</i> (2) – <i>youngster</i> (1)	4 i.e. – <i>tot</i> (1) – <i>the girl</i> (2) – <i>a two-year-old girl</i> (1)

Table 3: Event Two: reference to the victim

Since the victim is a very young child, her age is central to reference to the victim. In the broadsheets we find the same noun – *toddler* – used twice, which clearly communicates the fact that this was a very young child, while in the *Daily Mirror* we find different expressions – *youngster* – and in the *Sun* the noun *tot* (both informal according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*).

In Event One we also identified the focus on Toni-Ann's lively nature, apart from her age. In this case, since the girl was only two years old, such explicit reference is not central; we only find one example of such reference in the *Daily Telegraph* – *normal, happy child* (cf. Example 12). Feelings of sympathy in the reader towards the victim are further promoted by giving details of her enormous suffering, which at the same time is to emphasize the brutality of the mother and her partner.

The broadsheets both choose to quote how the girl was described in the courtroom (the part in inverted commas was probably taken from a news agency report) and thus they emphasise the girl's innocence and defencelessness, as in Examples 11 and 12:

- (11) *The court heard how “vulnerable and defenceless” Sanam deteriorated over four weeks and died in severe pain, but to avoid being found out the defendants did not seek medical help.* (G)
- (12) *The court heard how “vulnerable and defenceless” Sanam deteriorated from a normal, happy child into one in severe pain and unable to walk.* (DT)

The tabloids both choose to quote the judge, representing the voice of justice, where the focus is on the girl's suffering and the responsibility of the two adults for it. As can be seen from Example 13, in the *Daily Mirror* the cruelty of the *mother* is emphasised – the pronoun 'you' is used to refer to the mother, as if she was the only person responsible. In the *Sun*, however, the reference is made to the *pair* (cf. Example 14). The phrase *you both* in Example 14 draws the reader's attention to both offenders and their deliberately cruel behaviour and cruel nature. The same quote as in Example 13 is included also in the article in the *Guardian*, which is the most detailed of all articles in this set.

- (13) *Judge Peter Thornton QC told the mum: “You did nothing, absolutely nothing. That is unbelievable. It is also incredibly cruel. You failed to protect your child from serious harm, knowing what was being done to her. This was a gross abuse of trust. It is almost unbelievable the pain and*

anguish she must have suffered repeatedly at your cruel and selfish hands.
(DM)

- (14) *Judge Peter Thornton QC told the pair: “It is almost unbelievable the pain and anguish she must have suffered persistently at your cruel and selfish hands. It is clear you both deliberately chose not to have her treated to avoid being found out.”* (S)

The pronoun ‘you’ is a referring expression but, in our view, the pronoun itself is not used to express a negative status of the offenders. What is negative here is mainly the description of their behaviour; the pronoun ‘you’ in both examples is used to express the agent or agents who is/are assigned responsibility for the tragic event. In the previous sections we did not include pronouns in the analysis either, since the aim of the analysis is not to provide chains of all referring expressions, but to discuss those that contribute to creating and enhancing a status of the core participants.

5.2.2 The murderers

Technically, the mother was cleared of murder and convicted of manslaughter instead, but she is still responsible for the girl’s death, and as such she is presented both in the headlines and in the articles. Therefore, in this section, she is referred to as a murderer. In terms of naming and referring strategies, she and her partner are assigned negative status by the repetitive use of their surnames only (cf. Tables 4 and 5 below), both when they are mentioned separately (cf. Example 16) or together (coordinated subjects as in Example 15) or in successive simple sentences (cf. Example 17):

- (15) *Navsarka and Anwar, from Huddersfield, West Yorks, were accused of repeatedly assaulting Sanam in the month before she died.* (DT)
- (16) *Today, Navsarka was jailed for nine years for manslaughter, while Anwar was given a life sentence for Sanam’s murder ...* (G)
- (17) *Yesterday Anwar was jailed for life for murder. Navsarka was locked up for manslaughter.* (DM)

MOTHER	Guardian <i>736 words</i>	Daily Telegraph <i>232 words</i>	Daily Mirror <i>346 words</i>	Sun <i>317 words</i>
1. whole name	1	1	1	–
2. surname	4	1	3	1
3. first name	–	–	–	–
4. <i>mother/ mum</i>	4/–	3/–	–/3	–/3
5. <i>brute</i>	–	–	1	–

Table 4: Event Two: reference to the mother

MOTHER'S PARTNER	Guardian <i>736 words</i>	Daily Telegraph <i>232 words</i>	Daily Mirror <i>346 words</i>	Sun <i>317 words</i>
1. whole name	1	2	1	1
2. surname	4	1	2	4
3. first name	–	–	–	–
4. <i>stepdad</i>	–	–	–	3
5. <i>boyfriend/partner/lover/ fiancé</i>	4/–/–/–	1/1/–/–	–/–/2/1	–/–/–/–

Table 5: Event Two: reference to the killer (the mother's partner)

As for the mother, the focus is on her being the parent of the girl. The reference to the relationship with the victim is found in both broadsheets and tabloids by the words *mother* and *mum* respectively. In the *Daily Mirror* she is also referred to as *a brute*, which enhances her negative status. To an ordinary person, such behaviour to one's own child is considered totally unexpected, extraordinarily cruel and absolutely unacceptable.

The man, who was convicted of murder, was not the girl's father, which is a piece of information that both broadsheets and tabloids choose to move to the foreground instead of mentioning his profession or family background or other information. As can be seen from Table 5, three of the papers focus on the relationship with the girl's mother – he is referred to as the mother's *boyfriend* (G, DT), *partner* (DT) and *lover* and *fiancé* (DM). All of these may be understood as conveying that he was not the girl's parent but also that the mother put her relationship with the man before her own child, which is also mentioned in the

articles. In the *Sun* we find reference to them as the *pair* and the *couple*. Also, the *Sun* focuses more on the relationship with the victim by referring to the man as *stepdad*, which may be understood as signalling a certain distance between him and the victim. The *Sun* is the only of the four papers that mentions details of the man's background by referring to him as *the former grammar school boy*. This kind of reference might in a way assign a bit positive status to him (i.e. he was not a man without education), but in this context (cf. Example 18) it rather contrasts his education and relatively young age (i.e. 21) with his unbelievably brutal behaviour:

- (18) *The former grammar school boy, of Huddersfield, West Yorks, also put her in a tumble drier and filmed her having a fit, Bradford Crown Court heard.* (S)

The negative status of the mother and her partner are further enhanced in the quotes of what was said about them in the courtroom, as mentioned in Subsection 5.2.1 above (cf. Examples 13 and 14).

5.3 Event Three

Event Three is the murder of a four-year-old boy, Ryan Hawkins, who was stabbed to death by his own father, Christopher Hawkins, in September 2007. Hawkins was convicted of murder in 2008 and sentenced to life (with a minimum of 21 years in prison). He killed the boy as revenge on his wife, from whom he was separated, after he found out she was having an affair and had already had it before their separation. He also stabbed his fourteen-year-old daughter, who unlike Ryan, survived the attack. Therefore, the following description focuses mostly on the boy as the victim and the father as the murderer.

Event Three – the articles headlines and length of articles in words:

G – *Life for father who killed son as revenge on unfaithful wife*; 450 words

DT – *Man who killed son, four, given life*; 494 words

DM – *Vengeful son killer Christopher Hawkins jailed for life*; 156 words

S – *Dad jailed over son's murder*; 669 words

5.3.1 The victim

As in the previous cases, the reference to the boy by his first name prevails and can be interpreted as a means of promoting sympathy and familiarity towards

him – a child and victim of a particularly appalling crime, as the killer was his own father. The whole name, i.e. *Ryan Hawkins*, is mentioned in the *Daily Telegraph* once, whereas in the other papers we find no instances of it. We may conclude that the identity of the boy is clear and does not need to be stated, since the *father – son* relationship is mentioned in all four headlines as well as in the lead and body of the articles. Reference to the victim’s age is made too, although only once in each article. The main message seems to be that ‘a father killed his child’, whether young or older seems not so important. The central feature of the boy’s identity is therefore the relation to the murderer, i.e. his own *son*, which occurs in all four articles, as Table 6 shows. The number of occurrences of *son* varies, which is mainly a matter of the length of the articles than a signal of differences in naming strategies. In the *Daily Mirror* article, which is only 156 words long, it is mentioned only once while in the *Daily Telegraph* article (494 words) we find five instances of *son* and in the *Sun* (669 words) six instances. The differences in the number of referring expressions can also be attributed to the content of the articles. The *Daily Mirror* article focuses more on the trial and the circumstances which led to the killing. The *Sun* article (the longest of all) gives a more detailed account of the case depicted here as an appalling murder that happened within a family, which is reflected in the number of occurrences of the boy’s first name and the word *son* (8 and 6 occurrences respectively).

	Guardian <i>450 words</i>	Daily Telegraph <i>494 words</i>	Daily Mirror <i>156 words</i>	Sun <i>669 words</i>
1. first name	3	6	3	8
2. whole name	–	1	–	–
3. surname	–	–	–	–
4. <i>son</i>	2	5	2	6
5. reference to age	1	2	2	1

Table 6: Event Three – reference to the victim

5.3.2 The murderer

As can be seen from Table 7 below, the murderer is most frequently referred to by his surname only in order to express his negative status, which is in compliance with the results obtained in the cases discussed above. The murderer’s identity as the *boy’s father* is expressed by the words *father* (in the broadsheets) and *dad*

(in the tabloids) but as the number of occurrences in the table shows, it is not as frequent as the reference by the word *son* to the boy. The relationship is mainly established via reference to the victim as *son*, as explained in Subsection 5.3.1 above.

	Guardian <i>450 words</i>	Daily Telegraph <i>494 words</i>	Daily Mirror <i>156 words</i>	Sun <i>669 words</i>
1. whole name	1	1	2	1
2. surname	5	7	2	7
3. first name	–	–	–	–
4. <i>father/dad</i> who killed...	2/–	1/–	–/1	–/1
5. <i>vengeful son killer</i>	–	–	1	–

Table 7: Event Three: reference to the murderer

In the headline of the article in the *Daily Mirror* we also find an evaluative phrase – *vengeful son killer* – which immediately draws the reader’s attention to the event and both its core participants. From the very beginning it is thus clear to the reader what happened and how appalling this event is. Killing one’s own child as an act of revenge is clearly unacceptable and unforgivable. The negative status of the father is communicated and enhanced mainly in postmodifying relative clauses which communicate the relationship between the victim and the murderer and the murderer’s motive, as Examples 19-22 illustrate:

- (19) *A father who murdered his four-year-old son in revenge for his wife’s affair ... (G)*
- (20) *A father who murdered his four-year-old son and stabbed his teenage daughter to take revenge on his estranged wife for having an affair ... (DT)*
- (21) *A dad who murdered his little boy in revenge for his wife’s affair... (DM)*
- (22) *A father who murdered his four-year-old son in a ‘cold-hearted’ attack to get revenge on his wife for having an affair... (S)*

In the *Daily Telegraph* we can also find an appositional noun phrase following the surname, which is an example of factual information rather than a means of enhancing his status (cf. Example 23).

- (23) *Hawkins, a sheet metal worker, and the children's mother, Valerie Gee, 41, had separated four months before the attack.* (DT)

The mother's name was not mentioned in the article before, so the whole name can be considered a means of identification. In the following context she is referred to as *Miss Gee*, which assigns neutral status to her, whereas her husband is never referred to as *Mr Hawkins*.

6 Conclusion

Although the corpus is relatively small, the findings reveal some interesting similarities between broadsheets and tabloids as well as differences that were demonstrated by the examples and tables above. Due to the small size of the corpus we can hardly make any valid generalisations, but we can at least identify several tendencies in naming of the core participants in crime news which will be elaborated on in our further research.

The main aim of the analysis was to determine how the positive and negative status of the participants may be communicated and further enhanced throughout a newspaper article. For that purpose articles reporting on trials and verdicts in high profile cases of child murders were chosen since such articles allow a closer investigation of victim/criminal dichotomy. Where possible, this dichotomy is used in crime news for several reasons.

Firstly, a contrast helps to depict the event and the participants more vividly and contributes to a dramatic effect. A newspaper article is then not only factual but also interesting, more like a story than a report. Newspapers are no longer read only for information. They have to compete for their readers with other newspapers and other kinds of modern media. Therefore, they need to attract their readers' attention, which is best done by human stories (e.g. individual crimes) rather than general news about the crime rate or criminal policy (Wardle 2008).

Secondly, a context where 'good' and 'evil' can be personified enables discussion of moral norms as well as reinforcement of particular social values and attitudes. Moral boundaries of a community or society concerned can thus be formed and further enhanced, and newspapers can act as "moral guardians" (Wardle 2008).

One of the main aims of the present analysis was also to trace similarities and differences between broadsheets and tabloids. The findings reveal some similarities mainly in the use of names. The use of names, or rather their various forms to express positive or negative status in newspaper discourse, has been studied and described before (cf. e.g. Reah 2002). It was our aim in this analysis to find out if the principles described in literature apply to crime news and whether the choices of forms of names display some consistency. It can be concluded that in all three events the first name is used exclusively to refer to the victim, which in our view is a means of achieving familiarity and generating sympathy in the reader. The negative status of the murderer is communicated by the use of the surname only, i.e. without the title *Mr.* The murderer is never referred to by his first name either. Titles seem to be reserved for witnesses or parents (unless the parent is the murderer) and can therefore be interpreted as reflecting neutral or positive status. The whole name, i.e. first name plus surname, is used in reference to both the victim and murderer for reasons of identification and as such occurs usually once in most articles; more than one occurrence can be attributed to the length of the article or the need to put emphasis on the agent, i.e. the killer.

Whereas the tendencies in using various forms of proper names are very similar or almost identical in both types of newspaper, the use of noun phrases seems to be more varied. The differences are most evident in the lexicon. If we consider the use of noun phrases such as *mother* vs. *mum*, *father* vs. *dad*, *a member of a gang* vs. *gangster*, *cold-blooded* vs. *brutal*, etc., we can conclude that the choice reflects a different type of readership that the newspapers are targeted at. Such choices are carefully made in view of their effect, mainly feelings and attitudes that they may trigger. It is not surprising that tabloids tend to be more emotive and more 'radical' in presenting both events and people. This effect, as the examples found in the corpus indicate, is achieved, for example, by the use of evaluative adjectives, clusters of negative words (e.g. *an evil Yardie gangster*) and mainly by emphasizing the contrast between the victim and the criminal. Opinion and evaluation are thus expressed explicitly together with factual information, for example, details of the case, the participants' background. We do not suggest, however, that broadsheets are more objective and devoid of opinion and evaluation just because they use more formal and neutral language. In broadsheets we can also find noun phrases and other means of expression which direct the reader to accept a certain stance (e.g. *the muscular and tattooed 32-year-old*, cf. Subsection 5.1.2 above). The forms of expression and lexical choices display a different position of serious papers, which are more reticent and not as explicit as the tabloids, which on the other hand does not mean that they do not present views and make evaluations.

We shall also state that apart from the above-mentioned tendencies there are many other features that contribute to the overall effect of an article, such as the layout, the photos, quotes, the amount of information included and the order of its mention, and other factors which would all deserve an analyst's attention. Our aim was to demonstrate how the same event can be presented to the reader in more or less different ways and how reality is mediated to the reader together with opinion and evaluation, which are naturally incorporated in crime discourse.

Note

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National

Cold-blooded killer of Toni-Ann jailed for at least 40 years

Seven-year-old 'lively, full of hope and excitement'

Angster's gesture of defiance to detective

David Pallister

A former member of a notorious west London street gang who murdered seven-year-old Toni-Ann... sentenced to life imprisonment yesterday

Joel Smith listened to the guilty verdicts at the Old Bailey, and the sentence he and his 22-year-old partner received... finger gesture of abuse at the detective who first questioned him.

Mr Justice Goss told him he had shot Toni-Ann - "a lively seven-year-old full of hope and excitement" - in the back at the age of five... She had been in a drug-related crime - in order to robbery or an assassination - in order to help her as a witness to the slaying of Britannia

Byfield, 42. They were killed three years ago in Byfield's west London bedsit when Toni-Ann was formally under the care of Birmingham social services.

After the hearing, Detective Superintendent James O'Connell said that, in Scotland Yard's view, Byfield had dealings with gun crimes, thumbed members of the black community who were brave enough to help the police.

Smith robbed crack houses, sometimes at the point of a gun. He hung out with members of the M14 Luv Crew who had a reputation for violence... almost provocation: "Shortly after midnight in September 2003 he and police believe, an accomplice, begged their way into the ground floor bedsit on Harrow Road, Brent. Byfield, a Jamaican, was found on the floor tangled in a bicycle, murdered with a single shot.

Byfield, born Anthony Finnock in Jamaica, had moved to England to deal drugs after buying a British passport in the name of Britannia Byfield. He had had a 10-year relationship with Toni-Ann's mother, who had been in a relationship with him. She showed him to be her father, US A tests showed they were not related.

In January 2000, while Byfield was serving a nine-year sentence in London

for trafficking cocaine, Toni-Ann was brought to the UK for what was supposed to be a holiday. At first she stayed in Birmingham with Byfield's ex-partner and one of her half-sisters.

But soon her "great physical abuse" was being inflicted by her best friend, who placed with a foster family. Byfield had been out of prison for a year and for the summer holidays of 2003 it was agreed that she could stay with an "aunt" in Brent and occasionally see her father.

Byfield had a "very poor" record, but Birmingham social services "seriously inadequate" in the handling of her care. At first, the police targeted Byfield's drug associates for the murders. Although Smith had a string of offences going back to his teens, he was not considered a major threat.

The police pursued a trail of intimidating conversations with friends and associates. He headed north and ended up in Liverpool. The public revelation of Toni-Ann's murder meant intelligence began to filter through. It was clear that Smith could have been involved. One of the men he was known as "Came" or "Candy".

The breakthrough came a year later, last



Joel Smith shot Toni-Ann Byfield after she witnessed death of her 'father'

September, when police went on Crime-watch: "We aimed this directly at him," said a senior officer. The suspect, the programme was told, was a black British male, in his 30s, formerly living in Brent but now in Liverpool and still involved in drug dealing. He was on B Wing of Liverpool's Walton prison serving a three-year sentence for a wounding.

A day later, on September 16 last year, Smith phoned his girlfriend, Tom Blackett, about the programme. This was a minute before he called the trading man, Tom Blackett, from the phone. "What do you mean. What are you trying to say?"

Tom Blackett began crying and asked: "What do you mean. What are you trying to say?"

Smith: "The watch thing, did you watch it yesterday? No, I didn't."

Blackett: "Yes, I did it."

Smith: "They said... they've got everything. The clock is ticking."

Smith was arrested a few days later before he was due to be released. He claimed that he had visited Byfield's home to buy cannabis at a time when Byfield and Toni-Ann were stopping for her school uniform. She had been in a relationship with Mus Luv Crew - serving 30 years for another killing - had carried out the actual shooting.

Article 3: The Daily Mirror

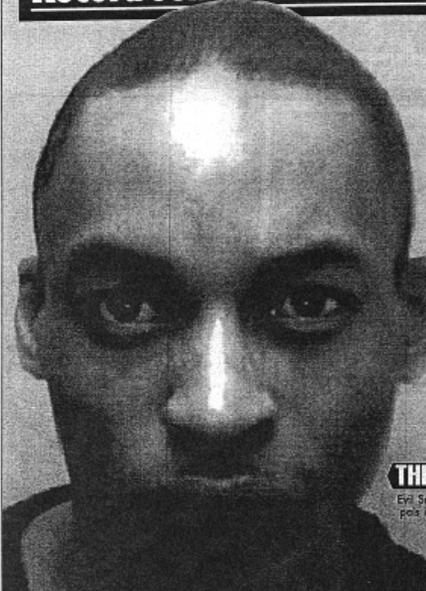
★★

DAILY MIRROR, Saturday, August 5, 2006

PAGE 7

A MINIMUM OF 40 YEARS

Record sentence for Toni-Ann's brutal killer



AN evil gunman who murdered a girl of seven because she saw him kill her "father" was given a record 40-year minimum jail term yesterday.

Tony Cross, 32, shot crack dealer Herman Byfield in his flat and blasted little Toni-Ann in the back as she fled.

Even gangland pals were so horrified they grazed on him. Yet Smith showed no remorse and made a one-fingered gesture at police as he was led away to start two life terms.

Smith shot Toni-Ann and Byfield in a 2003 drug robbery.

Old Bailey judge Mr Justice Gross told him: "She was in the way and you murdered her as a potential witness."

However grimly accustomed one becomes to violent crime, there is a particular horror in the shooting in the back at close range of a seven-year-old girl.

"This evil has no place in our society. It seems to me it must be met by the most severe sentence."

HM Prison Secretary Hazel Blears paid Toni-Ann a tearful tribute. She said: "She was a bright, lovely, respectful and talkative little girl. She had such a bright future."

"Her love for life could not be dampened, until she crossed paths with evil Smith."

Det Supt Neil Bass added: "We are proud that Toni-Ann will still never be eight. No parent can begin to imagine her mother's agonies."

He hailed Smith's sentence and said: "I hope at some point he has the decency to

By ADRIAN SHAW

tell us why he committed this most evil of acts."

Toni-Ann's life was as short-

as her death was brutal.

She was taken from her Jamaican home to live with

Byfield, who postmortem tests showed he was not her real dad.

When he was jailed for selling crack, she was fostered by a Birmingham family. But

social workers blenders saw her return to live with him at his ex-offenders' hostel in Kenal Green, North West London.

She spent her last day alive shopping with him for a uniform as she eagerly waited to start school the next day.

Smith was caught after bragging to lovers and gangland associates. Police are

convinced he did not act alone and are hunting accomplices. The judge ordered the building site foreman, of no fixed address, to serve at least 15 years for killing Byfield.

Voice of the Mirror: Page 8
a.shaw@mirror.co.uk

THE KILLER

Evil Smith boasted to pals about his crime

THE VICTIMS



DEALER: Tony

TONI-ANN was born in Jamaica to Roselyn Richards who already had two sons by Tony Byfield.

She falsely told him that Toni-Ann was also his child.

By the age of six months, Toni-Ann was being passed around and was looked after by Byfield's girlfriend.

The woman brought Toni-Ann to England when she was four to see her Kent-born dad in jail.

Byfield was freed from prison in 2001. He was shot in a row but recovered. In 2003 Birmingham social services took Toni-Ann into care. Then she went to a foster family. But Roselyn begged social workers

to let her daughter be with her "loving" father.

They were living in a house while Byfield sold crack when Smith shot and killed them.



LOST: Toni-Ann

Article 4: The Sun

26

THE SUN, Saturday, August 5, 2006 19

TONI-ANN KILLER CAGED 40 YEARS

Yardie shot girl in back

By ANDREW PARKER

AN EVIL Yardie gangster who executed a girl of seven to stop her identifying him as a killer was jailed for 40 years yesterday.

Joel Smith, 32, shot Toni-Ann Byfield in the back after she saw him blast her drug-dealing 'dad' Tony Byfield.

He wiped her out as a potential witness after killing Tony — who was not Toni-Ann's natural father — in his 'perfect crime'. But underworld gangsters were so shocked they broke a code of silence to 'turn him in' to cops.

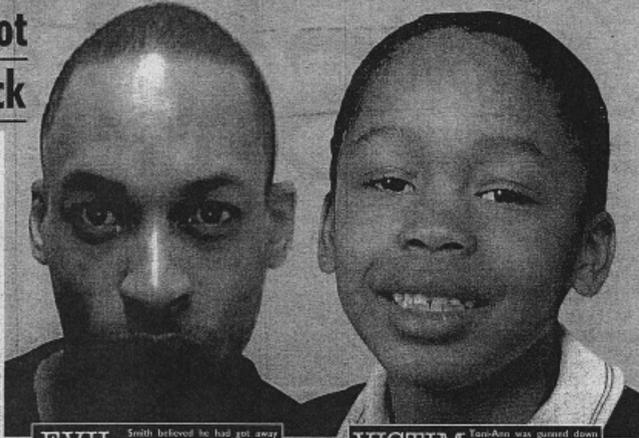
Sentencing Smith, Judge Mr Justice Gross told him: 'I regard the killing of Toni-Ann as an exceptionally significant one.'

However, grimly accustomed you may become to serious violent crime, there is a particular horror encountering the shooting in the back of a seven-year-old girl.

That is the tragic hallmark of this case.

This was not a stray bullet or a random shot. It was fired into her close by with a view to killing her.

Those who use firearms in such a fashion can expect no quarter from the law. The judge added: Smith



EVIL

Smith believed he had got away with the 'perfect crime', but was turned in by the underworld

VICTIM

Toni-Ann was pushed down in cold blood after seeing her drug dealer dad murdered

would be a 'very old man if and when' he was ever released.

Smith, who was found guilty of the double murder, made obscene gestures to cops as he was sentenced at the Old Bailey.

The trial heard Smith targeted Jamaican illegal immigrant Byfield, 41 — a member of a Yardie gang controlling a crack cocaine trade worth

millions. When he got to Byfield's bedset in a hostel for ex-offenders in Kenton Green, North West London, on September 12, 2003, he found Toni-Ann was there too and killed them both. He shot her in the back as she fled to the door.

The court heard Toni-Ann, who was under the care of Birmingham Social Services, should not have been

allowed to stay in London overnight with Byfield. After the double shooting, Smith, who lived in nearby Harlesden, fled to Liverpool. But information from the underworld led to a BBC Crimewatch appeal.

The 'red-ribboned gunman and robber of drug dealers' was identified and arrested in prison, where he was serving three years for GBH

Smith's ex-girlfriends said he had confessed to them about the killing. As Smith was sentenced, Toni-Ann's mother, Jan, died in Liverpool. Roselyn Richards wept and muffled 'bad man'.

Later she described her daughter as a 'bright, lovely little girl'. She added: 'Her love for life could not be dampened — until she crossed paths with Smith.'

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