SIMPLIFICATION IN THE BRITISH PRESS:
BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN CRIME REPORTS

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Abstract
This paper explores crime reports on verdicts and sentences in child/teenager murder cases in the British press with a view to demonstrating that ‘simplification’ is one of the significant values of crime reporting, regardless of the type of newspaper (Jewkes 2004). The analysis illustrates how both quality and popular British newspapers employ ‘binary oppositions’ (i.e. a typical feature of simplification), such as good vs. evil, in order to communicate to their audiences the social status of victims and killers and at the same time traditional social values and norms. The employment of ‘binary oppositions’ in noun phrases that introduce and/or classify victims and killers thus enables newspapers to appeal to the public and act, or at least try to act, as moral guardians.

Key words
simplification, binary oppositions, crime reports, victim, killer, British press, good vs. evil, noun phrase

1 Introduction
In the modern world, where instant access to information is taken for granted, newspapers face completely new, previously unimagined challenges. In order to at least retain their current readerships in competition with other types of media newspapers are undergoing substantial changes reflected mainly in their content, newsgathering practices, and style of reporting and layout (Franklin 2008). Their commercial success, since they are businesses in the first place and as such need to be profitable for their owners, depends on their ability to appeal to a particular readership/audience. Otherwise, they would experience difficulties in fighting off competition from other papers in the newspaper market and also other modern sources of information that are accessible to the public due to the extremely fast development of modern technology. The constant, ever-present pressure on journalists and editors to produce news quickly, or at least as quickly as others, and mainly low budgets lead to considerable changes in the newspaper industry, whether it is the excessive use of news agency reports instead of investigative journalism or the shift from foreign and political news to human stories and celebrity news. Some media scholars view this process of ‘tabloidization’ of media as particularly alarming and a sign of crisis; others consider it a natural development which simply reflects the current societies and...