

Solidarity in and through Journalism:
An Exploration of Minoritized Group Coverage and Journalists'
Roles

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ABSTRACT

The social inclusion of minoritized groups can be reinforced or challenged by news media representations, yet our understanding of journalists' approaches towards coverage, and articulations of this potential inclusiveness is limited. Over three articles, this dissertation develops a critical, intersectional framework for analysing the understudied spectrum of 'positive' representations in broader coverage of minoritized groups, specifically of marginalized women. In addition, this dissertation explores how solidarity is enacted in and through journalism. This is achieved by studying news content alongside the perspectives of women journalists using qualitative and mixed-method approaches.

Working from the critical epistemological perspective, this dissertation includes Critical Discourse Analysis (Carvalho, 2008), Informed Grounded Theory (Thornberg, 2012), semi-structured interviews (Morgan-Brett & Wheeler, 2022) and reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020). These diverse methods are used to study a range of news texts, and journalists' perspectives from across the UK, Germany and the US. Critical theories, including intersectionality and counterpublic sphere theory are drawn upon across these analyses (Crenshaw, 1991; Warner, 2002).

Overall, this thesis makes two central contributions. Firstly, an **analytical framework for studying intersectional solidarity in news representations** is developed, which can be used in different contexts. This complicates the analysis of 'positive' news coverage, by unpacking how inclusivity is articulated, drawing attention to intersectional identity dimensions, and differentiating between representational lenses of empathy and pity. Secondly, this thesis contributes to refining **the concept of solidarity in and through journalism**. Building upon Varma's (2020) previous conceptualizations of solidarity – as a discursive logic of representation in articles one and two and as a part of journalistic practice in article three – facilitates a holistic exploration of the news media's potentiality in terms of promoting social inclusion. In exploring the enactment of solidarity through journalists' roles, focus is expanded from content-specific, explicit and performative dimensions of roles to hidden practices and opportunities. Specifically, the understudied perspectives of women journalists are explored, highlighting the tensions between their prescribed and described roles, drawing attention to the emotional dimensions of their work, and uncovering the influence of intersectional identities upon practice.

Ultimately, as journalistic roles are shifting and the industry is under increasing pressure, developing an understanding of journalism as a potential as a tool for improving social inclusion and enacting solidarity makes an important and hopeful contribution to the field.

KEYWORDS: Solidarity, Intersectionality, Minoritized Groups, Qualitative Methods, Journalism, Representation, Counterpublics, Women, Migrants

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Introduction

Since the pandemic began, I've grown more fearful of what could happen. I've felt stares on my way to the hospital. My mother and I were talking about how this process is cyclical and why it feels so familiar. We know South Asians are watching us endure this and thinking back to 9/11. It's just a reminder that white supremacy operates against whichever marginal minority group is most convenient to target based off of the present circumstance.
– (Shah, 2021)

In March 2021, *The Haitian Times* published an article on rising racism against Asian people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Voices of the Asian American community in Atlanta were featured in the article, including Ms Clara Wang, quoted above. In discussing racism's structural causes and highlighting connections between those experiencing oppression and discrimination, this excerpt displays the potential role of journalism in platforming and facilitating solidarity. Notably, Ms Wang, the medical student cited in the text, was quoted alongside a 'school principal', and a 'Harvard graduate'. Thus, whilst this article reveals opportunities to promote solidarity, it also raises many questions: during a crisis, whose perspectives are considered important, and who gets lost? Is coverage of solidarity present across the news landscape, beyond minority news outlets? Especially in the context of rising inequality, alongside other shifting economic, technological and audience-related pressures and changes within the field (see: Garcia-Aviles et al., 2024; Costera-Meijer, 2020; Kitchens et al., 2020; Reese, 2020; Garcia-Aviles et al., 2024), how should journalists cover minoritized groups? Whilst the role of the news media has always been 'negotiated and contested' (Mellado, 2020; Ferrucci & Canella, 2023: 525), our current context has made these questions more urgent.

The news media is a site where power structures are simultaneously challenged and reinforced, and within which lines of social exclusion or inclusion are constructed, sustained and dismantled. Within a crisis context, besides having an impact on political views and voting patterns, the representation of minoritized groups in the news media can define audiences' attitudes towards 'the other'. Specifically, journalists' representation of different groups have the potential to promote negative stereotypes, challenge them, or evoke pity, sympathy, empathy, or solidarity. A significant body of literature explores dimensions of negative and exclusionary representations, especially when it comes to representing Muslims, migrants, refugees and women as distinct social groups within the news (see: Ahmed & Mathes, 2017; Caviedes, 2018; Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020). However, far less attention has been paid to representations of minoritized groups at the 'positive' end of the spectrum. Such 'positive' representations might

include those which counter stereotypes, promote inclusion, celebrate groups, or shed light on communities addressing marginalization. This matters because in the age of the polycrisis (Lawrence et al., 2022), positive news coverage can help promote social inclusion and create a sense of intra-group solidarity.

Alongside a limited body of work on positive representations, few studies adopt an intersectional approach to studying coverage (but see: Amores et al., 2020; Ward, 2017). The lack of intersectional concern is especially apparent in German communication studies (Gouma & Dorer, 2019), ultimately limiting our ability to understand the complex ways in which representations are articulated within German news media. The focus of this thesis is therefore, in part, to establish a deeper understanding of the way in which ‘positive’ representations of minoritized groups are articulated in news texts, and specifically to address gaps in the literature in research studying these representations in Germany.

In conducting fine-grained analyses of representations at the positive end of the spectrum and focusing on their political potential, the concept of solidarity is vital. As such, the overarching research question addressed through this thesis is:

How is solidarity enacted in and through journalism?

Solidarity is a complex concept, with a multitude of definitions that have evolved since the 18th century, referring to a ‘collective relation that mediates between the individual and the community [...] and entailing positive duties or commitments to action’ (Scholz, 2015: 725; Wilde, 2007). In the fields of political communication and journalism studies, most research has focused on the analysis of solidarity through social movements and humanitarian campaigns (see: Wallaschek et al., 2020; Cinalli et al., 2021; Chouliaraki, 2021). There has been a focus on solidarity responses to disasters, rather than adopting and applying the broader definition of solidarity to news media content. Varma (2020; 2023a) has built upon this work to develop the concept of solidarity as a logic of representation in news coverage, and as a form of journalistic practice. However, this work has largely ignored intersectional influences, and studied solidarity as ‘present’ or ‘absent’ in coverage or practice. Instead, this thesis considers representations of minoritized groups as situated on a continuum. Further, as a form of journalistic practice, extant research has focused on ‘public-facing’ practices and dimensions of journalistic roles. Ultimately, this thesis builds upon the extant literature on solidarity in and through the news, by extending the concept so that it can be used to study a variety of contexts with an intersectional sensitivity. Secondly, a holistic

approach to studying solidarity in and through journalists' roles is refined, which includes a consideration of beliefs, identities and emotions.

To study solidarity enacted in and through journalism, focused has been placed on solidarity expressed towards, and articulated by one minoritized group in particular: women. Although women are not a minority group in numerical terms, regarding the societal imbalance in power, wealth and positions, they have been actively *minoritized* (Wingrove-Haugland & McLeod, 2021). More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and its enduring effects have disproportionately impacted women, especially women from ethnically and racially minoritized groups across the countries studied in this thesis and beyond (Connor et al., 2020). The increased precarity of women's lives, alongside the temporary disruption of the hegemonic politics of visibility in the news environment, created the conditions and opportunities for increased solidarity. Therefore, this thesis includes the overarching, subsidiary research questions:

How are women represented across minority and mainstream news?

How can an intersectional solidarity framework help us understand these different representations?

In what ways do these representations establish solidarity between groups?

Notably, the comprehensive list of research questions are included in each article. In Article 1 and 2, these studies reveal the ways in which minoritized women are often represented as victims or as vulnerable, in ways that might evoke pity and empathy. By adopting an intersectional lens, these studies shed light on the racialized and religious dimensions attributed to such coverage, and used to construct the 'migrant woman'. This thesis is also concerned with the roles of journalists; more specifically, with the underrepresented group of women journalists. Therefore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of news representations, it was crucial to examine news production. The key questions addressed in the third paper were:

How do women journalists' approach the representation of minoritized groups?

How do women journalists perceive solidarity within their role?

What factors constrain and enable the enactment of solidarity?

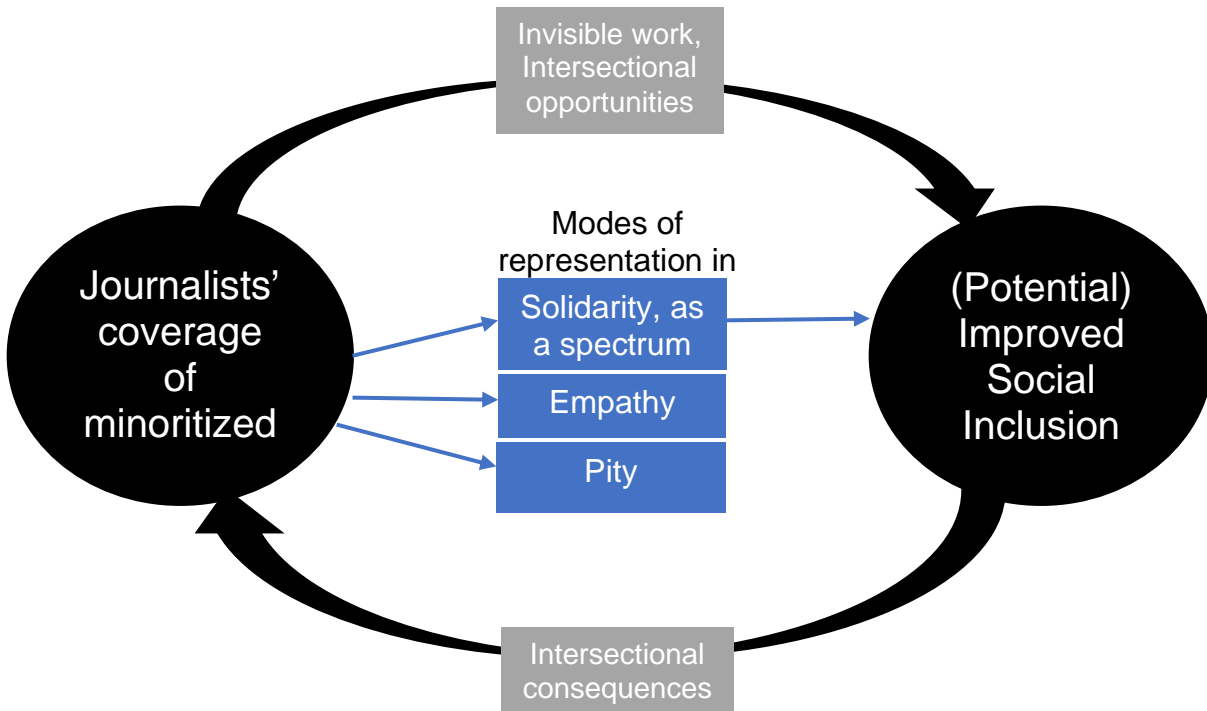
In addressing these research questions, this thesis has highlighted understudied dimensions of journalists' roles, whilst foregrounding the perspectives of an understudied group. Role theory was used to distinguish between descriptive, prescriptive and cathectic role expectations (Biddle, 1979). Studying women journalists' roles through this lens allowed for potential tensions to be highlighted between what journalists believed they should do, guided by their own personal values

and the expectations of others, alongside their described practice, and emotional reactions. Such an approach also sheds light on the power structures – within and outside the field of journalism – that constrain and enable some women journalists to enact solidarity through their work. In working towards a more equitable and inclusive future in journalism, the findings of this third study highlight both opportunities, and pinpoint some challenges.

Including qualitative methods and approaches, a critical methodology has been adopted across all articles comprising this thesis, in order to establish an understanding of how ‘minoritization’ is sustained and highlighting opportunities for solidarity and inclusion. This thesis drew upon a range of critical theories to comprehend how power operates in and through news media and its representations, from the angle of news context and production, including counterpublics, intersectionality and the concept of solidarity in the news. In addition, employing qualitative methods that can be suitably adapted to the specific questions and circumstances being studied – including Critical Discourse Analysis (Carvalho, 2008), Informed Grounded Theory (Thornberg, 2012), semi-structured interviews (Morgan-Brett & Wheeler, 2022) and reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) – facilitated a contextualized, reflexive analysis, and enabled a diverse and novel corpus of original data to be studied. These critical, innovative approaches are discussed at length in the methodology chapter. Studying women within and behind the news across the UK, Germany and the US facilitates a (tentative) understanding of cross-national differences and allows us to understand women’s representation and perspectives in diverse contexts.

Overall, this thesis addresses several research gaps, contributing to our understanding of how news content and journalists’ roles are connected to social inclusion, equality and emancipation, whilst highlighting intersectional opportunities and challenges. We complicate previous understandings of what inclusive representation is and how it is articulated through identifying a spectrum on which representations can be identified and positioned, between transformative and radically inclusive solidarity, empathy, sympathy and pity. A summary of this overarching contribution can be seen in Figure One. This thesis has also advanced the concept of solidarity in journalism studies by studying new contexts, and listening to critically understudied minoritized group perspectives. We have uncovered invisible acts of solidarity, refined our understanding of what solidarity is, and who can practice it, at what price, as well as shedding light on the limits of solidarity enacted through the news. This thesis highlights the tensions between the enactment of solidarity with professional values, and ‘the objectivity myth’, whilst encouraging us to rethink the (intersectionally mediated, political) potential of solidarity within an ever changing field.

Figure One: Summary and connection of Articles



The thesis is structured as follows. Firstly, the literature review chapter summarizes the state of the field regarding approaches to studying intersectional representations in news coverage, and solidarity in and through the news. Next, a chapter summarizing the methodology across the three papers of this thesis is included, before moving on to each of the three articles:

- 1) *On the Margins: Exploring Minority News Media Representations of Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Beazer et al., 2023; see also: Appendix A, Article 1)
- 2) *Intersectional Solidarity, Empathy, or Pity? Exploring Representations of Migrant Women in German and British Newspapers during the Pandemic* (Beazer et al., 2024; see also: Appendix B, Article 2)
- 3) *Space for solidarity? Studying women journalists' experiences of covering minoritized groups* (Beazer et al., under review; see also: Appendix C, Article 3).

Finally, the conclusion draws together the main findings, implications, challenges and pathways for future research.

Literature Review

The news media impact audiences' political attitudes (see Eberl et al., 2018), shape identity conceptions (Sullivan & Platenburg, 2017) and define the boundaries between who is 'included' and 'excluded' (Martikainen & Sakki, 2021; Şahin, 2021). As such, news media coverage of minoritized groups can play a definitive role in potentially reinforcing inequalities between groups. In Western countries, this can include the well-documented exclusion of migrants, religious minoritized groups and women in news media texts, established through negative coverage, or, indeed, the absence of coverage (Bleich et al., 2021; Bleich et al., 2018; Global Media Monitoring Project [GMMP], 2020). Though they are not a minoritized group in real numbers, women are a minoritized group in almost all national contexts, due to their lack of power, and underrepresentation in institutions. Given the focus upon gender that runs across Article 1, 2 and 3, this chapter begins with an outline of extant studies of women's representation in the news. Next, we move on to discuss extant intersectional studies of representation, minority news content, and the exploration of solidarity in news content and through journalists' approaches. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the main research gaps identified and addressed across this thesis.

Women's representation and Intersectionality

Women are underrepresented in the media broadly speaking (GMMP, 2020), and especially as experts (Ross et al., 2018). This was especially clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, where a US-based study showed that only 35.9% of cited experts were women (Fletcher et al., 2021). A significant body of research has found similar disparities in the portrayal of female politicians; Van der Pas and Aldering's (2020) cross-country meta-analysis showed women politicians tend to get more negative coverage, and more focus on their personal life and image – rather than their politics – than their male colleagues. Further, there are established bodies of literature studying disparities in representation within sports news (Bruce, 2016), social movements (De Benedictis et al., 2019), and other 'gendered' topics, such as domestic violence (Lloyd & Ramon, 2017). Fewer studies have focused on the representation of 'ordinary women' broadly speaking (see: Beckers, 2017), or adopted an intersectional lens to consider how additional categories of identity can influence such representations.

In this relatively small but growing body of intersectional research, most studies examine representations of women from migrant and ethnically minoritized backgrounds. These important studies tend to concentrate on isolated moments, such as women politicians during elections

(Ward, 2017), or other high-profile women. Other important areas of this research focus on the intersectional dimensions of crime coverage in the news, revealing how white women are most likely to receive sympathetic coverage (Slakoff & Brennan, 2019; Slakoff & Brennan, 2023). Regarding migrant women's representation specifically, most research so far has been concerned with salience (Lind & Melzer, 2021), Muslim migrant women (Özcan, 2013), and visual representations (Amores et al., 2020). Whilst there are growing bodies of research in these specific areas, overall, research on news media representation with an intersectional focus is lacking, and has been highlighted as a crucial area for future research (Kassova, 2020; Valdivia, 2021). An intersectional lens holds many advantages for understanding news media representations of ordinary women. Firstly, it sheds light on the patterns of exclusion embedded in such representations, and draws attention to how these might vary between different contexts. Secondly, such an approach shows that by focusing on identity-based groups along single axis, complex, implicit articulations of othering may be overlooked. The politics of visibility embedded within news media texts requires a sensitive, contextually-focused lens, which intersectional approaches provide. Thirdly, especially when focusing on unique, liminal moments such as the pandemic context (Van de Wiele & Papacharissi, 2021), such an approach ensures a sensitivity towards those who are most disproportionately impacted.

A further gap in the literature relates to minority news content. Previous studies have suggested minority news coverage of minoritized groups might be different and more inclusive, and thus preferred by minority groups (see: Vercellotti & Brewer, 2006; Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). However, evidence is mixed, with some studies suggesting that minority news content is often not drastically different from mainstream news (Caspi et al., 2011; Matsaganis et al., 2011; Budarick, 2017). Moreover, most of the studies on minority news coverage of different groups are based on limited national contexts (US). In sum, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the way in which marginalized women and other groups are represented in the news media, it is vital that minority news sources are included.

Alongside the need for research on more varied content, investigations of minoritized group representation must be expanded beyond the study of negative coverage and stereotypes. Previous studies have investigated the 'pity' and 'charity' related frames (Balaji, 2011; Vossen et al., 2018), as ultimately disempowering and exclusive representations. Other notable studies targeting more 'positive' newspaper coverage of minoritized groups include Ramasubramanian et al's (2020) work focusing on positive, 'model minority' stereotypes in the US context. In a similar vein, Estrada et al. (2020:125) have examined how 'seemingly positive', 'elite' media coverage of

LatinX migrants still constructs a boundary with the majority group, and add to racial stereotypes; specifically, migrants are presented as 'economically exploitable, vulnerable but blameworthy, mostly illegal [...]devoted to their families and traditional gender roles'. Underlying this work, is the notion that news media coverage that promotes any kind of stereotype or hierarchical relationship with audiences can be damaging, by reinforcing notions of otherness. Moving from sympathy-based representations towards more radically inclusive modes of representation, few scholars have examined the news media as a site of solidarity enactment, in the US context (Varma, 2020). There is a need to complicate our understanding of 'positive representations' and expand our understanding of the news media as a platform for potentially promoting social inclusion by turning our attention to the understudied matter of solidarity in the news.

Defining Solidarity

Whilst debate surrounds different forms and functions of solidarity, some key, universal tenets run across definitions. From the sociological perspective, solidarity is enacted when individuals control their 'actions by something other than the promptings of their own egoism' (Durkheim, 1965: 331). This classic definition highlights the fundamental concern of supporting others, with the absence of any transaction. Comparably, more recent definitions describe solidarity as a 'situation in which the well-being of one person or group is positively related to that of others' (de Beer & Koster, 2009: 12). In addition, Durkheim's definition foregrounds the importance of action. According to Scholz (2015), 'all forms of solidarity include an active element or positive duty'. This differentiates solidarity from charity, sympathy and empathy. Despite the vast literature on solidarity, dominant sociological and political definitions are relatively consistent in their focus on action, social justice, the wellbeing of people from different social groups and their orientation towards notions of redistribution, often connected to support for social welfare on the intra- or international level (Lahusen & Grasso, 2018).

Recent work on social movements and (post)humanitarianism has focused on contextual dimensions of solidarity, showing how solidarity can be nurtured by different institutional environments and practices. For example, according to Chouliaraki (2021: 1):

We often think of solidarity as a spontaneous feeling that springs from the heart, when we see people suffer or we feel an injustice has been done. Solidarity, however, [...] is a public disposition that is nurtured by our culture and institutions. It is shaped by its own time and place. And it requires active work in order to emerge and to continue to thrive.

Although Chouliaraki's (2021) work focuses on activist work, specifically through digital activist content, it is useful in calling attention to solidarity's social, political and cultural construction and

embeddedness. Adopting this critical, constructivist approach facilitates the investigation of solidarity in a variety of contexts, including within texts such as the news media.

Similar to the constructive, discursive approach, scholars have differentiated between different degrees of solidarity, varying in their emancipatory capacity. For example, Varma and Shaban's (2024:1) critical work on the 'Women, Life, Freedom' movement in Iran drew a vital distinction between the 'actions, logics, practices and implications' of superficial and substantive solidarity. Whilst superficial solidarity was defined as using a Western, individualist lens to draw attention to a group or issue without disturbing the status quo, substantive solidarity was defined as practice that calls for action and change, focusing on marginalized subjectivity and group recognition as a form of anti-colonial praxis, whilst abandoning any transactional notion. Ultimately, for Varma and Shaban (2024: 5), the emancipatory, inclusive power embedded in any textual representation boils down to 'whose demands are being centred'. Like most conceptual work on solidarity and its articulations, this important study focuses on discourses beyond the news media, including social media data. Whilst this is vital work, key questions remain unaddressed in the literature. Namely, our understanding of articulations of solidarity within the news environment is limited, both as a mode of representation, and a potential practice. In the subsequent section, the extant literature on empirical studies of solidarity in the news, and journalists' (potential) roles in practicing solidarity shall be outlined.

Solidarity in the News

Typically, in studying solidarity in news content, research has concentrated on coverage of social movements, international solidarity (Sijstermans & Brown 2022) or solidarity at the European level (Williams & Toula, 2017), especially regarding the refugee crisis (Brändle et al., 2019; Cinalli et al., 2021). Other researchers have focused on the discourses surrounding 'solidarity' more broadly. For example, Wallaschek et al (2020) studied discourses surrounding solidarity across four German newspapers, by searching for the term 'solidarity' and seeing in which topical contexts the concept emerged. Using quantitative approaches including a discourse network analysis, this study traced the evolution of and contextual usage of the term over time across different outlets, providing a broad overview of coverage *about* solidarity. However, through focusing on discourse and context surrounding the word 'solidarity', this study explored coverage of solidarity, as opposed to coverage promoting or enacting solidarity. Overall, the scholarship on solidarity in news content is fragmented and context specific, concentrating on specific social movements, or instances of intra- or international solidarity. A lack of understanding remains regarding the news media as a potential medium for solidarity to be practiced, thinking more

broadly about the articulation of solidarity towards different groups *through* coverage, and a consideration of journalists' roles in enacting this.

Focusing on journalists' potential solidarity enactment and approaches towards minoritized group coverage connects to a fundamental concern with professional role definitions. Journalists' roles and the normative foundations on which they are based are not, and have never been entirely stable. Studies have explored journalists' role dimensions from the perspectives of local communities (Eldridge & Steel, 2016), national audiences (Loosen et al., 2020), journalists themselves (see: Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Holton et al., 2019), and crucially, from the perspectives of journalists' from minoritized groups (Arafat, 2021; Harlow, 2022). These studies reveal a diverse range of role definitions that are constantly evolving across different contexts. The level of social advocacy and justice-related activity journalists engage in has always been in flux; elements of journalists' roles that were once considered radical, or outside the boundaries of the profession at different historical moments, are often later celebrated as vital work, and acceptable within more contemporary role definitions (Lumsden, 2015). Therefore, moving away from traditional Western definitions of journalists' roles, to ones that can potentially include enactments of solidarity – through radical inclusion, promoting social change and holding power to account (Varma, 2023a) – captures the potential range of practice and activity within journalists work. In a time of crisis, when journalistic roles are shifting and expanding in the direction of social justice (see: Schmidt, 2024), it is especially important that these understudied dimensions are explored further.

Whilst there are limited studies of solidarity specifically in and through journalists' roles, a great deal of extant work exists on genres and types of journalism connected with this definition. Specifically, scholars have investigated different types of journalism that challenge the status quo through, for example, the foregrounding of journalists' own critique and perspectives. In their study of Metajournalistic discourse, Ferrucci and Canella (2023: 513) outline 'resistance journalism' as a new type of journalism that is 'unobjective, targeted and truth bending [...] focuses on narrative and has the propensity to advocate'. One may argue that focusing on any journalistic advocacy, without differentiating between advocacy based on social justice and inclusion, vs those based on exclusion – concretely, through equating journalistic advocacy of the far right with that of the far left – is over-simplistic. Other alternative journalistic genres specifically orientated towards social justice include activist journalism (Møller Hartley & Askanius, 2021), advocacy journalism (Vine, 2017) and engaged journalism (Medeiros & Badr, 2022). Nested within the broader genre of 'activist journalism', engaged journalism is defined by 'its reconceptualization of the journalist–audience relationship' (Ferrucci et al., 2022: 1586), from a distinct, hierarchical relationship of

information provider and consumer, to one of increased collaboration and interaction, facilitated largely via digital means. Others such as Meideiros and Badr (2022: 1345) have extended upon previous conceptualisations by focusing on journalists working in alternative media outlets beyond the Western context, and through considering engaged journalism a ‘political act’ and positioning on the margins of the journalistic field.

Overall, across all literature exploring these emerging genres of journalism, there are varied degrees of engagement with context, and social justice. As such, each of these alternative approaches to journalism may be understood as ‘critical’ to varied extents. Nonetheless, some clear patterns emerge in this diverse body of literature; firstly, advocacy, activist and engaged journalism tend to be associated with particular ‘types’ or specific groups of journalists, working for ‘alternative’ outlets (see: Ginosar & Reich, 2020). In other words, these are presented as alternative professional role identities that certain journalists opt into, or perform (Mellado et al., 2016). By associating activist, advocacy and related types of journalism with specific actors or outlets, it is arguable that many instances of this form of practice may be missed. Viewing these journalistic approaches as forms of practice which any journalist has the possibility to engage with – including journalists working for mainstream outlets – could provide a more accurate and holistic vision of these different types of journalism in action.

Moreover, in investigating journalists’ roles in activist, advocacy and engaged journalism, most research has focused on the performative dimension of roles, such as the way journalists interact with audiences, and the way their journalistic output is articulated (see: Møller Hartley & Askanius, 2021). Focusing solely on the visible aspect of role performance, misses other aspects of roles such as intentions and emotions. Therefore, there is a need to study journalists’ roles and practice holistically, considering the visible and the invisible, normative expectations and actions, and the contexts that affect this. Moving away from considering ‘alternative’, social-justice orientated journalism as a distinct role, separate and lesser than traditional professional journalistic roles, towards a broader focus on diverse practice could also contribute towards the de-stigmatization of different social justice and critically orientated practices within the profession.

Solidarity in and through journalists’ roles

The work focusing explicitly on solidarity journalism is quite limited. Notably, Varma (2020; 2023a; 2023b) has refined the concept of solidarity journalism in two ways; firstly, as a ‘radically inclusive’ logic of representation, and secondly as a form of journalistic practice. Moving away from previous approaches that perceived solidarity journalism as less serious and inferior journalistic genre, Varma (2020) has advanced a more fluid definition of approaches adopted by many journalists to

varying degrees and rates of frequency. Varma's (2020) work allows us to reconsider the possibilities of journalistic roles in both tackling specific social issues, such as the San Francisco homeless project, which she cites within her work, besides promoting a more equitable society, broadly speaking. Notably, her pioneering work has (so far) focused on the US-context, usually at the city level. In addition, reflecting overarching trends in the field of journalism studies, Varma's work has so far not explicitly examined the perspectives of journalists from minoritized groups. Thus, the multitude of contextual, identity-related factors influencing journalists' ability to engage in solidarity-related practice has not yet been investigated.

Regarding the limited extant work on journalists exclusively from minoritized groups, recent work has focused on important topics such as the 'professional backstaging' of marginalized identities within roles in the US context (Carter and Ferrucci, 2024), and diaspora journalists' development of advocacy journalist practices through their roles (Arafat, 2021). To our knowledge, only one paper has engaged explicitly with solidarity journalism from the perspectives of journalists from minoritized groups. Jeppesen and Research Group's (2018) study explored practices by 'media activists', including some journalists, who are 'women, queer, trans*, Indigenous and/or people of colour' working in the media, by conducting semi-structured focus group workshops. The workshop discussions led to the definition of solidarity journalism as:

A practice of autonomous journalism that constructs relationships of mutual support across communities of difference who share a political vision [...] with a focus on collective autonomy. It provides media space for intersectional communities with systemic barriers to accessing storytelling spaces, or who are frequently stereotyped, misrepresented or invisibilised in public discourse. (Jeppesen & Research Group, 2018)

Besides the focus upon actively nurturing relations across groups, and creating space for marginalized communities, crucial in their definition is the emphasis placed upon solidarity journalism as a practice creating space outside of 'public discourse', which includes mainstream journalism. Solidarity journalism is therefore conceptualized as a form of practice only possible in independent, autonomous media spaces. Whilst Jeppesen and Research Group's (2018) participatory research study makes a vital contribution, it is important to recognize that these findings were developed from the perspectives of self-identified media activists, some of whom worked as journalists for autonomous news sources. If we are to understand solidarity in and through journalists' roles holistically, it is important that a diverse range of perspectives are addressed, including journalists working at mainstream outlets, or those who work as freelancers for multiple outlets.

Summary of Research Gaps

In sum, six main gaps in the literature are identified, relating to news content, and journalists' roles. Each research gap, and the specific way in which it is addressed within this thesis is discussed below.

RESEARCH GAP 1: *Minoritized Women's Representation*

Whilst a substantial body of research targets women's representation in news coverage – especially high-profile women – relatively few studies have focused on the representation of ordinary women, or adopt intersectional approaches. Understanding representations of marginalized women is particularly urgent within crisis contexts, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, during which these groups endured disproportionate, negative impacts. Across Articles 1 and 2, this thesis explores ethnically minoritized and migrant women's representation in British, American and German news, in order to gain a broad overview of the discursive constructions and language surrounding these identity labels.

RESEARCH GAP 2: *Studying the spectrum of positive representations.*

Most studies of minoritized group representation focus on analysing negative stereotypes and metaphors; studies exploring the 'positive' spectrum of representations are far more limited. More (critical) attention is needed to pick apart the political potential embedded in such representations. To address this, the intersectional solidarity framework is developed across Articles 1 and 2, which can be employed to study a range of contexts. Concretely, the framework distinguishes between pity, empathy, and varying degrees of solidarity, and therefore differentiates between levels of inclusiveness communicated through coverage

RESEARCH GAP 3: *Minority News Coverage*

Another gap in research relates to the lack of awareness of minority news content, especially regarding the coverage of different groups. Articles 1 and 2 address this gap, through analysing representations across minority and mainstream news sources in the US, UK and Germany respectively, complicating previous categorizations of content. Furthermore, in Article 3, journalists currently and formerly working for minority news outlets are included in the sample. Just as minority news content should not be overlooked, the perspectives of journalists working at minority news outlets are also vital.

RESEARCH GAP 4: *Holistic Approach to studying Journalists' Roles*

Rather than developing and labelling complex, often overlapping typologies of journalistic role performance, this thesis draws upon Biddle's (1979) role theory, to push towards studying journalists' roles holistically, with a consideration of ideal and performed roles, alongside emotive reflections. Specifically, in Article 3 of this thesis, journalists' roles are studied by considering their prescribed, described and cathectic role expectations, to highlight the range of practices journalists adopt in minoritized group coverage, and potential solidarity-related practices.

RESEARCH GAP 5: *Solidarity in and through Journalism*

In the limited studies of solidarity in journalism, scholars have focused on solidarity in news content, as a discourse or in relation to social movements, as well as solidarity journalism as a distinct genre limited to alternative outlets. In Articles 1 and 2, this limited literature is advanced, by elaborating upon Varma's (2020; 2023b) conceptualisation of solidarity as a mode of representation, present across a range of news outlets. Moving from content to production, in Article 3, we examine the innovative ways in which solidarity can become (temporarily) part of journalistic practice and journalists' roles more broadly, for those working across a range of news outlets, in different national contexts, and both invisible and visible ways. The intersectional influences on these varied solidarity practices are also discussed.

RESEARCH GAP 6: *Minoritized Journalists' Perspectives*

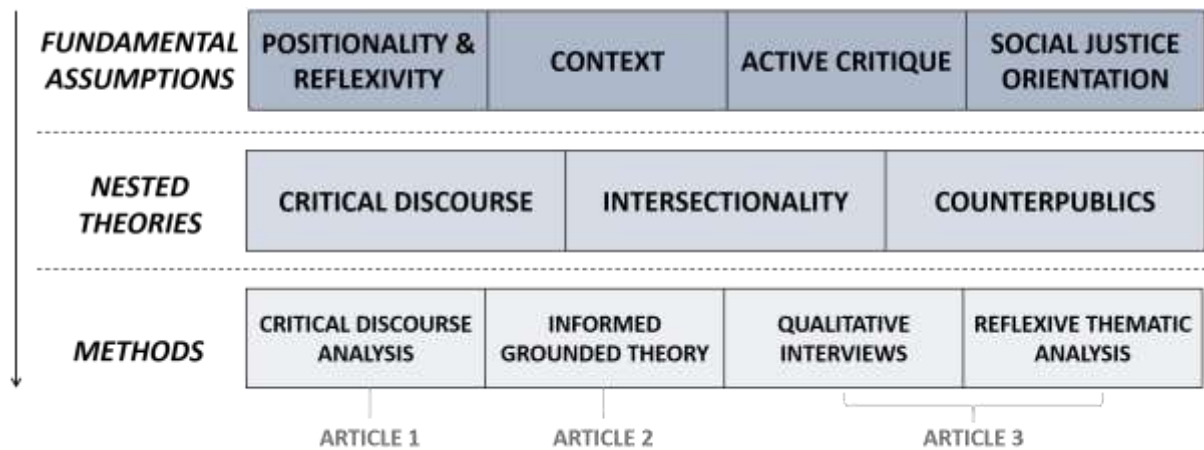
Finally, there is a lack of research exploring minoritized journalists' perspectives regarding journalistic roles and practice. The perspectives of journalists from minoritized groups must be understood beyond experiences of harassment, or during extreme events and crises. Therefore, Article 3 focuses on the perspectives of women journalists based in the UK and Germany, many of whom held additional marginalized identities, in order to expand our knowledge of journalists' roles from the margins.

Overall, there are a range of interconnected substantive and theoretical gaps in the literature regarding women's representation and solidarity, in news content, and in relation to journalists' roles. To address the six main research gaps, a critical methodological approach cuts across each article in this thesis. A comprehensive overview of the methodology follows.

Methodology

This section begins with an outline of the critical approach underpinning this thesis, before discussing the main theories drawn upon within each article. Next, each qualitative method employed across the three studies is described; namely, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Informed Grounded Theory (IGT), semi-structured interviews and reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA). Special attention is paid to the relevance, implementation and connectedness of each approach. Figure Two illustrates the way in which these epistemological, theoretical and analytical methods are related.

Figure Two: Critical Approach: Assumptions, Theories and Methods employed in this Thesis



A Critical Approach: Aims and Assumptions

Studying minoritized groups using methodologies that claim to be neutral and objective runs the risk of reinforcing patterns of social exclusion. Indeed, scholars have shown how some positivist methodological approaches emerge from the same broader paradigms that oppress and discriminate minoritized groups (Collins, 1986; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008; Buggs et al., 2020). In an attempt to research news media content and journalists' perspectives in a sensitive, nuanced manner, and to avoid deepening exclusion through this work, a critical epistemological perspective underlines this thesis (Merriam, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011).

Whilst all social science research involves some level of critique, critical research is defined by the very 'activeness' and 'integral' nature of critique in the process, and the explicitly transformative goals of such research (Harvey, 1990:2). Beyond expanding knowledge, critical research aims to create conditions that can empower, emancipate and tackle systematic

inequalities; such research often involves direct 'attempts to confront structures of oppression' (Kincheloe et al., 2011: 288). Studies emerging from the critical epistemological perspective tend to problematize definitions and paradigms, extend upon or develop new concepts and categories, and push beyond disciplinary boundaries (Zelizer, 2004). Unsurprisingly, critical research is often connected to (or even embedded within) social and political movements, with an explicit commitment to social justice (Hartnett, 2010; Johnson & Parry, 2022). Whilst there is diversity across the critical research paradigm, all critical studies share the aim of improving social inclusion. In studying nuances in representations of minoritized groups, moving beyond simplistic studies of 'positive' coverage, and establishing an understanding of the perspectives of journalists from a minoritized group, this thesis aligns with such aims of increased inclusivity.

To achieve these goals of emancipation and inclusion, all critical research shares a set of assumptions. Similarly to constructivist approaches, the critical perspective draws attention to context(s) of knowledge production; social, historical, political, and cultural contexts are all understood as influential factors and are thus encouraged to be foregrounded in the research process (Kincheloe et al., 2011). Whilst positivist epistemological and related theoretical perspectives interpret the existing social order and context as a given, stable backdrop, critical approaches reject this notion, instead perceiving complex constellations of contexts as having a definitive impact on institutions and structures of power (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Notably, critical approaches share this rejection of positivist assumptions with constructivist approaches. Specifically, there is overlap regarding the concern with identifying underlying contexts, reinforcing patterns of dominance and power imbalance (Kincheloe, 2005). Both constructivist and critical approaches perceive information and knowledge as intertwined with social values and ideologies. However, critical approaches vary from constructivist approaches in their commitment towards social justice and action. In other words, there is a commitment not only to deconstruct, but to highlight emancipatory alternatives. Across this dissertation, rather than perceiving the news media as a neutral source of information divorced from bias, it is understood as a socially constructed form of knowledge, bound to various influences and contexts in both its production and consumption, which can have a profound impact on the functioning of democracy (McDevitt, 2022).

The recognition of context is not limited to the subject of study, but also to the researcher(s), and the institutions in which they are based. Critical perspectives recognize academic institutions as being actively involved in the production of oppressive structures (Stanfield, 1985). Moreover, critical research recognizes the subjectivity of language, as a communicative medium of all

research. Therefore, focusing on context, also means being critically aware of the way in which information is interpreted and researched (Kincheloe et al., 2011). The notion of a distinct, objective researcher analysing a stable object, or subject, is rejected (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Instead, critical introspection regarding the positionality of the researcher is essential throughout the research process, as a form of 'self-conscious criticism' extending beyond surface-level reflections of identity and power imbalance (Kincheloe et al., 2011). Although discussions of positionality are present in each article comprising this thesis, a summary is presented below.

Positionality & Reflexivity

Researcher identities shape knowledge production. However, this subjective influence is not a disadvantage. As Collins (1986: 29) stated in her seminal text, *Learning from the outsider within*, subjective identities, experiences and 'dimensions of self' can enrich the research process, as 'intellectuals learn to trust their own personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge'.

Given the centrality of identity in research, at the start of the PhD process I used a 'social identity map' as a tool to sketch out various facets of my identity, both visible and invisible, which influence my research to varying degrees (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). As a white, lower-middle class British woman working at a German higher education institution in Southern Germany, throughout my research I have tried to reflect upon and bring an awareness to the various privileges entangled within my personal identity, and my institution. In researching the representation of groups with minoritized identities, including ethnically minoritized women and migrant women, my whiteness has played a definitive role in shaping my interpretations. In analysing certain patterns of racialized exclusion embedded in texts, I am not sensitized to observe all nuanced and implicit instances of exclusion and othering. Crucially, as I stated in Article 1, a person of colour's perspective and work should be prioritized before mine on such topics.

Whilst working on my third paper, which involved interviewing journalists, I observed that singling out individual categories of my identity as a point of possible connection in social interactions falsely assumes a certain level of consistency in their influence. Intersectional identities are not additive (McDevitt, 2022) and simply being a woman, and sharing this identity label with research subjects does not guarantee reduced power imbalances. In reality, the most influential aspects of my identity have been fluid, shifting from interaction to interaction as they are contextually bound. Adopting elements of Folkes' (2023) 'kitchen table reflexivity' and Glas and Soedirgo's (2018) 'active positionality' have aided this reflective work, allowing me to move away from the surface-

level engagement of positionality (merely describing shared or different identities) which are broadly adopted.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that across all the interviews, I perceived how social class played a substantial and relatively consistent role. This was particularly obvious in the interviews with British journalists; accents, and especially regional accents proved fundamental in creating grounds for some fruitful conversations. In practice, this does not mean that I shared the same regional accent as participants, but that we both held regional accents, indicating some potential shared experience and background. In both academia and journalism in the UK context, social class is a major formal and informal barrier to entering the respective professions, and has been shown to create a sense of alienation for those 'on the inside' (Ashley et al., 2015). Besides a lack of financial fall-back, many of my interviewees were also first generation, and had no connections within, or prior knowledge to the sector they entered; experiences I resonate with. In order to be taken seriously, some of my interviewees spoke about adopting a different dialect and accent in their work; something I am familiar with in previous and current professional environments. Therefore, it was not the matter of holding identical social backgrounds but the perceived experience of being (partial) outsiders in our respective professions that created the grounds for more relaxed, open interviews. However, this too was not consistent; in other interviews, having lived in the same city, studied the same subject, having the same sense of humour, or sharing age with some of the participants also seemed to have a positive impact on the richness and openness of responses.

Regarding reflexivity, I have considered both functional reflexivity (considering the influence of methodological tools on research, which shall be discussed in detail in later sections) and personal reflexivity throughout the research process (Morgan-Brett & Wheeler, 2022). One of the strongest impacts the research process has had has been on my emotional connection with the topics I am covering. This culminated in the third research paper of this project, which involved listening to women journalists' experiences. Whilst working on this paper, my feelings in response to some of the women's often traumatic accounts cannot be entirely disentangled from data interpretation and analysis. Even when the responses were not reported in the findings, they have shifted my perception of the work of women journalists, particularly regarding what many women have to deal with behind the scenes. Beyond these interactions, more broadly speaking, whilst this research addresses news content during the COVID-19 pandemic, it should be noted that the PhD research itself was conducted during an ongoing series of crises (including two conflicts), that continue to

shape and inform my critical stance. In the subsequent section, details of the specific critical theories employed across the dissertation are described.

(Counter)public sphere theory

Public sphere theory and counterpublic sphere theory help us understand how the news media influences democracy, and the ways in which the news media can reinforce inclusion or exclusion. Of specific interest in Article 1 is counterpublic sphere theory. The notion of a counterpublic developed out of a key criticism of Habermas' (1962/1989) public sphere theory. In Habermas' original conception, he described democracies as depending on a space for the deliberation of various topics and issues by members of the public. Habermas envisioned his public sphere as a framework for describing a rational, deliberative debate over matters of public concern, that then manifest in political actions and changes. In his conception, the print news media played a central role, providing a medium for such deliberation. In essence, a 'society engaged in critical public debate' is the key definition of the public sphere offered by Habermas (1962/1989: 52).

One of the main criticisms of Habermas' (1962/1989) theory is the assumed accessibility of this deliberative 'public' by citizens from different backgrounds. Notably, Fraser (1990) argued that Habermas' 'ideal', rational deliberative society overlooked identities entirely. For Fraser (1990) and Feslki (1990), rather than an upper middle-class, bourgeois circle of intellectuals driving democratic political change, it is precisely those that Habermas' theory *excluded* – socially marginalized groups based upon gender, for example – which were, and are, the true drivers of democratic change. Public Sphere Theory also came under great scrutiny from Black scholars, who criticized the racially exclusionary nature and historically inaccurate definition of Habermas' 'public' (Squires, 2002). Indeed, Jackson and Kreiss (2023) stated, 'while (the public) appeared to be a general public, it was a public of the white, landed, mercantilist class'. Warner (2002) also problematized the simplistic public/private dichotomy at the core of Habermas' (1962/1989) work, as well as the heteronormativity embedded in his notions of the citizen, and of a public absent of prejudice. Overall, Habermas' (1962/1989) work is perhaps best summarized by Johnston (2002), as an 'imperialist fiction'.

Emerging from the critique is the concept of counterpublics. Asen's (2000: 424) work focused on the discursive articulation of a counterpublic, defining it as:

A critical term to signify that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants.

In addressing power imbalances and exclusion, Asen (2000: 427) describes how groups develop 'alternative discourse practices and norms' as a result of explicitly *recognizing* their exclusion from dominant publics; from this perspective, the 'counterpublic' is considered as a socially constructed, communicative response to societal exclusion, which is best studied through discourse.

However, in adopting such a broad approach which collocates all socially excluded communicative groups as equal, without considering the nature of this exclusion and (political) resistance, some argue that the concept of counterpublics has been stretched too far. Specifically, Jackson and Kreiss (2023) warned of the pattern in recent scholarship, to label far-right media platforms as counterpublics, reasserting the necessity of democratic improvement within definitions. Such arguments are not entirely new. In critiquing Nancy Fraser's (1990: 57) broader definition of counterpublics as 'formulating oppositional interpretations of [subordinated social groups] identities, interests and needs', Warner (2002: 86) argues that such definitions can also apply to a multitude of other groups, including US Christian Fundamentalists. In other words, for Warner, Fraser's definition is too broad, and 'can be true of any public, not only counterpublics' (Warner, 2002: 85). The mere qualification of being 'oppositional' is too general. In line with Warner's (2002:86) arguments, essential to the definition of a counterpublic, is the underlying need to tackle social, economic and political exclusion from a historically excluded group, which 'maintains at some level [...] an awareness of its subordinate status'. Therefore, 'alternative' news media alone, such as far-right media do not qualify, given that they are produced by traditionally powerful groups, and because they are not working towards improving societal inclusion.

Counterpublic sphere theory can be useful for understanding both the diverse news media landscape and understanding news coverage itself. Historically, minority news sources have been understood to play an integral role in the formation of counterpublics. This is because they provide a positive in-group representation of the minoritized audiences they address, often standing in contrast to the negative and stereotypical portrayals found in mainstream media outlets (Zou, 2020). A number of studies have examined minority news as counterpublics, mainly in the US context (Jackson, 2017) and the UK (Mădroane et al., 2020), whilst also exploring other alternative news mediums as counterpublics, including podcasts (Vrikki & Malik, 2019) and twitter (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015).

In Article 2, I focused on minority news coverage as a site of counterpublic discourse, through analysing the modes of representation of ethnic minority women during the pandemic. Ultimately this study worked towards problematizing and complicating the frequently used labels of minority news as 'counterpublics', defined simply in contrast to mainstream news sources; the minority

news content studied in this paper actually existed on a spectrum between mainstream and counterpublic style content. This falls in line with much of the work on minority news as counterpublics, across various contexts (Caspi & Elias, 2011; Budarick, 2017). Following Jackson and Kreiss (2023), of central importance to the critical theory of counterpublics, is to acknowledge that both the theoretical extensions and empirical findings of any study of counterpublics, are inherently bound to their specific contexts. Scholarship on counterpublics is thus an endeavour to investigate (contextually bound) marginalized subjectivities, practices and resistance through media practice, as opposed to aiming to find broad-brush patterns about the news media. This approach sheds light on modes of audience address in content, and helps us understand how social exclusion is reinforced, challenged, or simply overlooked within content.

Intersectionality

Emerging from Critical Race Theory (CRT), a second central theory underpinning this thesis is intersectionality, defined here as offering, 'explanatory power of race and racism and ways structures re/produce subordinated locations of identities' (Anders et al., 2024: 67). Crenshaw (1989; 1991) outlined three main 'types' of intersectionality – structural, political and representational – which collectively offer explanatory and emancipatory power for those working from a feminist and antiracist perspective. Given that the central focus of this thesis relates to minoritized group representation, it is the latter representational form that has been used.

Intersectional research is an inherently critical approach, concerned with uncovering the 'complexity of identities and experiences' and their fundamental connections to 'laws, institutions and organizations, and policies, rhetoric and discourse' (Anders et al., 2024: 70). As such, representational intersectionality draws attention to the ways in which structures and powerful institutions such as the news media not only reflect societal patterns of identity-based exclusion, but play an integral and active role producing them (Cho et al., 2013). Abandoning notions of the news media as a neutral, objective platform which mirrors society, intersectional approaches instead perceive the representation of women of colour, for example, as cultural constructions. Given the socially constructed nature of such representations, this theory also highlights opportunities for positive change and increased equity, for example through coalition building between groups (Carbado et al., 2013).

Extant intersectional analyses are often criticized for treating identities 'additively', as distinct and singular categories, rather than heterogeneous, context bound constellations (Banjac, 2022). Indeed, identities are shifting, socially constructed and often referred to by categories and labels which might not mean anything to an individual. On top of this, identities are situated within

complicated layers of context; this complex reality is therefore difficult to translate into systematic analytical work. McCall (2005) has helped to disentangle the varied approaches to intersectionality, defined as 'intra-categorical', 'anti-categorical', and 'inter-categorical'. Anti-categorical intersectional approach (post-structuralist) rejects identity labels as analytical categories, for oversimplifying and imposing labels upon groups, and ignoring the reality that no individual fits neatly into any identity groups. Alternatively, intra-categorical perceives identity categories such as 'woman' as fixed, meaningful attributes which can aid our understanding of discrimination. Finally, inter-categorical encourages a critical reflection on the way in which identity labels are used, whilst recognizing that using such categories can be insightful: 'the main task of the inter-categorical approach is to explicate relationships (of inequality), and doing so requires the provisional use of categories' (McCall, 2005: 1785). It is this latter, inter-categorical approach which has been employed across this thesis, due to its versatility in being utilised with a variety of methodological approaches.

Overall, adopting a critical, intersectional lens across Articles 1 and 2 facilitated the identification and deconstruction of structural patterns of advantage and disadvantage associated with certain identities and contexts. To reflect critically on the representation of minoritized groups in the news media does not mean focusing solely upon negative and exclusive dimensions of representation; it can also mean critically examining representational lenses that facilitate inclusion, equity and justice. In other words, to identify and explore opportunities for coalition building, and enacting solidarity through the news media (Crenshaw, 1991; Varma, 2020). Bringing an intersectional awareness to studying solidarity expressed between different groups, can shed light on the real emancipatory power of such connections and coalitions (Ciccio & Roggeband, 2021). Next, connected with many of the underlying assumptions of intersectionality and counterpublic sphere theory, the critical discursive approach is outlined.

Critical Discourse Approaches

Importantly, CDA is not only a method, but a set of approaches developed from base principles of Critical Theory (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). CDA perceives language as a form of social practice, and brings special awareness to the function of power, structures of oppression and discrimination within discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 1993). Researchers using CDA perceive elite actors status to be protected and reinforced implicitly in texts (Van Dijk, 1993). Critical discourse approaches can thus shed light on the 'manipulation, legitimation and manufacture of consent' (Van Dijk, 1995:18) rooted in discourse. Ultimately, this approach is orientated towards critique and addressing societal issues, rather than being a purely descriptive text analysis approach (Fairclough et al., 2011).

Emerging first in the 1990s, there are three main schools of CDA; the systematic functional linguistic approach (Fairclough, 1993), the socio-cognitive approach (Van Dijk, 2011) and the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). These approaches share critical theoretical foundations, and a concern with highlighting context, including the subjective context of the researcher's positionality. As such, CDA contradicts positivist standards of neutrality, reliability and validity. However, in the fields of media, communication and journalism studies, there is a long tradition of CDA being used (Sengul, 2019: 14), particularly in the study of minoritized groups (see: Khosravini, 2010, Li & Zhang, 2022). Given that CDA is concerned with addressing societal problems, this makes it ideal methodological approach for drawing attention to social exclusion's potential reinforcement in the news media (Van Dijk, 1995).

Methods

Given the critical framework of this thesis, a range of qualitative approaches have been used; namely, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Informed Grounded Theory (IGT), Semi-structured Interviews and reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA). These methods were selected for practical, theoretical, epistemological, and ethical factors which are outlined below, before moving on to outline the specific process and advantages of each approach.

Qualitative Approaches

Qualitative approaches are well aligned with a critical epistemology. In qualitative work, a reflection on researcher's subjective identity and relationship to the researched forms a 'core aspect of inquiry' (Reich, 2021: 575). Also, given that one of the main, substantive aims of the thesis involves researching understudied, socially excluded minoritized group representations, across diverse contexts, this aim is most ethically and appropriately achieved through utilizing various qualitative approaches (Leavy, 2014; Nápoles-Springer & Stewart, 2006).

Regarding content analysis, qualitative research does not aim to make generalizable statements and identify patterns, for example regarding minoritized group coverage. As Jackson and Kreiss (2023: 103) have also noted, much of the work being done in computational and quantitative research in this field 'tends to avoid deep engagement with questions of power, social structures, inequality and access'. Here, instead, using qualitative approaches ensures that marginalized subjectivities are foregrounded and that the characteristics of representations are studied, instead of their prevalence (Myers, 2000; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Articles 1 and 2 ultimately aimed to understand the precise, nuanced and idiosyncratic *nature* of ethnically minoritized and migrant women's representations on the fine-grained level.

Due to its adaptability, and focus on detail in new contexts, qualitative research is well-suited to addressing exploratory question and aims (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Through the exploratory aims underpinning each paper of this thesis, we contribute to theory development and refinement, specifically in relation to solidarity. Qualitative methodological approaches are generally favoured in work in which theory is foregrounded throughout the research process (Collins & Stockton, 2018), and work which aims to develop theory and concepts (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010).

Beyond these general advantages of adopting qualitative approaches, in the following subsections, each of the qualitative methodological approaches employed across this thesis shall be discussed in greater depth in chronological order of their use. Finally, a summary will synthesize their main strengths, and how these methods have combined to provide a critical and comprehensive overview of minoritized representation in the news, both within news content, and its production.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In Article 1, *On the Margins: Exploring Minority News Media Representations of Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Beazer et al., 2023; see also: Appendix A), CDA was used to analyse representations of women in ethnic minority news outlets. Despite CDA's popular usage, it is often criticized for lacking fixed, repeatable steps. Proponents have illustrated how this fluidity is the main advantage of this method, allowing its use in diverse contexts (Janks, 1992).

Carvalho's (2008) approach to CDA was employed in this article. Carvalho (2008) divides CDA into two phases, firstly a text analysis, and secondly a contextual analysis. More specifically, Carvalho's (2008) toolkit highlights some of the dimensions of text researchers can focus upon, including layout, mention of objects, ideological standpoint, and description of social actors. In our first paper, the elements central to our analysis were 'actors' – as both 'subjects' and 'objects' within text – the use of speech, and 'discursive strategies', such as 'legitimation' and 'positioning'. Most importantly, 'positioning' refers to the way in which different social groups are discursively constructed in relation to one another, which is especially relevant in studying solidarity articulations.

Even within Carvalho's (2008) approach, the stages of analysis remain open to different, interdisciplinary text analysis approaches. In order to focus upon these elements of the text, we created a set of informal, provisional codes. For example, within the 'actors' label, we searched for identity descriptors relating to race, religion and nationality, as well as other identity labels, relating to professions, family roles and more, which were modified as the analysis progressed. Secondly, the contextual analytical phase as outlined by Carvalho (2008) includes a comparative-

synchronic and historical-diachronic analysis. Comparative-synchronic may be understood as examining representations of a topic, or group, across different texts and sources. Historical-diachronic analysis describes analysing ‘the temporal evolution of media(ted) discourses’ (Carvalho, 2008:172). In Article 1, given that our focus was placed upon the representation of ethnically minoritized women during the COVID-19 pandemic across different minority news sources, we predominantly drew upon comparative-synchronic contexts of the articles included in the corpus.

Like other step-guided qualitative analysis methods, Carvalho’s (2008) CDA approach incorporates an initial reading and recording of notes and memos, before a second phase of deeper reading and analysis, whilst drawing comparisons within and between texts in the corpus. Therefore, throughout the analysis we moved between our provisional codes relating to actors and discursive strategies, whilst focusing on connections and divergences across the sample, and connections with broader, mainstream discourses and representations. Overall, in dealing with a vast and complex range of topics, and news outlets with different reporting styles, this two-step approach offers some structure.

Informed Grounded Theory

In Article 2, *Intersectional Solidarity, Empathy, or Pity? Exploring Representations of Migrant Women in German and British Newspapers during the Pandemic* (Beazer et al., 2024; see also: Appendix B) the analysis involved a fine-grained analysis of articulations of social inclusion and exclusion through news articles. Informed Grounded Theory (IGT) was selected due to its semi-inductive and semi-deductive flexibility (Thornberg, 2012), and its suitable combination with computational approaches, in both an ontological and practical sense (Nelson, 2020). Specifically, topic modelling was used alongside IGT in order to combine macro-level and micro-level analyses, and understand our large and diverse corpus. IGT’s analytical phases include working with a set of pre-defined codes to approach the sample (see: Appendix B), and refining these codes in a reciprocal process, until a point of saturation is reached. Importantly, and differently from other qualitative text analysis approaches, every line of text the corpus is analysed, to ensure that inconvenient or contradictory patterns are not ignored.

IGT is a later development of Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) original Grounded Theory (GT). In essence, GT is a qualitative method used to generate theory from text; a diverse array of approaches have evolved; ranging from Glaser’s (1992) positivist approach, to Charmaz’s (2000) constructivist GT. The varied epistemological foundations of these types of GT are reflected through differing text analysis approaches. For example, Glaser’s (1992) purely deductive

approach requires that researchers ignore prior knowledge and theories, instead working solely from the data upwards. Pragmatically, Thornberg's (2012) IGT approach uses extant theories as initial, guiding frameworks, whilst allowing for modification throughout the analytical process. In approaching the study of representations of migrant women informed by previous theories relating to solidarity, empathy and intersectionality in Article 2, IGT allowed for the 'intersectional solidarity framework' to be developed.

Interviews

Moving on to Article 3, *Space for solidarity? Studying women journalists' experiences of covering minoritized groups* (Beazer et al., under review; see also: Appendix C), analytical attention turned towards the perspectives of journalists. Whilst surveys are useful for establishing a surface-level understanding of participants' perceptions, in-depth interviews allow us to 'understand experiences and reconstruct events' holistically and with sensitivity (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 3). Rather than being a neutral observer, from the critical perspective, the interviewer can be understood as a 'well-informed traveller' (Witzel & Reiter, 2012), moving through interactions with participants as an adaptable, sensitive, reflective, non-judgemental listener, in order to co-construct knowledge (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structure interviews are for 'describing social processes' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 3), and crucially in the case of this study, delving into the personal perspectives of journalists to understand their role perceptions.

A number of interview approaches were drawn upon in Article 3, including the 'guiding interview' and 'semi-structured interview' approaches described by Aurini et al (2021:82). Based upon Morgan Brett and Wheeler (2022: 37), an interview guide was developed by beginning with the central research questions and aims, generating topics from this, and expanding upon these topics using the literature. A mix of experience-based, knowledge and descriptive questions preceded normative perception, feeling and value-laden questions. The questions varied slightly between each participant, within the framework of a set of consistent guiding questions answered in all interviews.

Assumptions of the critical paradigm perceive data collected in the interviews as socially generated and produced, relational and contextually bound (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). Indeed, Morgan Brett and Wheeler (2022:7) define interview data as 'inextricably linked with the identity and disposition of the interviewer'. Notably, interviewees for Article 3 included a diverse group of women journalists based in the UK and Germany, of mixed age, social background, and professional experience. The sample of participants was achieved via snowball sampling, and via

social media. Inclusion criteria was minimal; the journalists had to identify as women, and have professional journalistic experience.

Notably, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or call. Some have rightfully argued that online interviews involve 'a layer of meaning being removed by the technological medium', which can negatively impact interviewees' ability to 'listen deeply' (Hart, 2024: 1). However, conducting interviews online also held many advantages. Indeed, the very possibility of these interviews taking place was facilitated by technology; the cost of travelling all over the UK and Germany to meet individuals would not have been possible in the same time frame or budget. Furthermore, many of the participants' felt more comfortable being able to do the interview in their own space (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2012). Overall, the online format of the interviews was well matched to the research aims, the project scope, and the participants' preferences.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) was employed in Article 3, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019). Reflexive TA is often used in counselling and psychological studies, because the method successfully facilitates researchers' understanding of complex perspectives, opinions and experiences (Hayes, 2000). Given the critical aims of Article 3 in exploring the volumes of interview transcripts capturing journalists' perspectives on representation and solidarity in relation to their professional roles, reflexive TA is well placed to achieve such goals. Ultimately, reflexive TA aims 'to identify patterns in data, describe and interpret those patterns, and/or to provide a theoretically informed interpretation of them' (Braun & Clarke, 2020: 38). There are three main schools of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2019), coding reliability, codebook and reflexive. Unlike coding reliability and codebook approaches, in which themes are developed relatively early in the analysis, in reflexive TA themes are 'understood to represent researcher's interpretations of patterns of meaning across the dataset' (Byrne, 2022: 1393).

Despite important differences, TA is often confused with Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). Notably, QCA emerges from a post-positivist perspective and quantitative logic, incorporating a more strict approach to coding, for example through measuring inter-coder reliability (Burla et al., 2008). TA's coding approaches are far more flexible, do not require inter-coder reliability scores, and are more consistently orientated towards theoretical development. Crucially, the reflexive version of TA involves the subjective, reflective interpretation of the coding process to *construct* themes (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Specifically, themes are classified as 'data domains' (Braun & Clark, 2019: 12), which are interpreted and constructed in light of the researcher's subjectivity. As such, like other qualitative approaches utilized throughout this thesis, the reliability and validity of

reflexive TA lies not in inter-coder reliability but in the evaluation of researcher's positionality, and engagement with the data throughout the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

MAXQDA was used to implement reflexive TA's coding process; 'structural codes' were first created by reading transcripts and highlighting relevant sections for further analysis. This departs from the previously adopted Grounded Theory approaches, whereby all lines of text are coded. Implementing the structural coding phase facilitated a quick overview and relevance check of the data. Adopting partially inductive, and partially deductive approaches, the initial coding scheme was modified to include more themes and sub-themes as the analysis progressed (Miles, et al., 2014). Specifically, initial codes related to each of the three research questions, on representation approaches, connections with personal identities, and thirdly, perspectives on solidarity. These codes were amalgamated to construct summative themes, using notes taken during interviews, and memos created during the coding process. For example, within the initial code relating to solidarity, sub-codes were created after drawing together transcript data and notes, including 'invisible acts' and 'professional consequences'. MAXQDA eased the ability to explore connections between sub-codes, for example relating to intersectional identities and social exclusion.

In sum, the flexible and critical approach of reflexive TA is useful in distilling the essential elements of a highly diverse set of interview transcripts (Fassinger, 2005), and enabling participants perspectives to be positioned within broader contexts.

Methodology Summary

Overall, each article of this thesis is committed to understanding how patterns of societal inclusion and exclusion are articulated in and through the news. A range of qualitative methods have been combined to achieve this; key differences and similarities of these methods, and overall strengths and limitations of the methodology are discussed below.

There is notable variation regarding the centrality of critique in each method. Naturally, CDA 'makes an explicit commitment to adhere to the emancipatory agenda of critical scholarship' (Sengul, 2019: 4). Alternatively, in using IGT and reflexive TA, through the selection of additional theories such as intersectionality, the extent of explicit critique at the core of these studies has been determined. Besides varying degrees of critique across each method, there are differences in output; IGT is orientated to conceptual development and clarity, and category development, whilst reflexive TA is rather orientated towards mapping a large and heterogeneous corpus. Despite this variation, all approaches used share the assumption that news media texts, as well as journalistic roles, are socially constructed. As such, CDA, IGT and reflexive TA all involve

contextualizing findings (to varying degrees), besides foregrounding researcher positionality, and ultimately rejecting the notion of value-free work.

Despite the benefits and utility, the critical research paradigm within which the thesis is positioned includes a number of challenges and limitations. In order to address them partly, Baez's (2007: 21) argued that 'research that purports to be critical must actually be critical and self-critical'. Therefore, in the final section of the methodology, a summary of this critical reflection is included.

Limitations and Reflections

Firstly, as qualitative methods, CDA, IGT and reflexive TA share limited capacity in terms of sample size, and thus the applicability of results beyond their specific contexts. However, it should be noted that critical, qualitative research is deliberately focused and contextually specific. Whilst the substantive findings of this thesis are (importantly) limited to the contexts in which they were studied, the theoretical and analytical framework development is not. The explorative studies comprising this thesis extend upon broader concepts, such as solidarity, and includes the development of a theoretical framework, that can be used by other researchers in different contexts.

Notably, Article 2, which combined topic modelling with IGT, started with a much larger sample of articles. However, this larger sample was not selected to make representative claims about the data, but rather to map tentative themes in a large data set, and aid the identification of a highly relevant sample for further, in-depth qualitative coding using IGT. Indeed, the methods employed in Article 2, go some way to demonstrate possibilities for combining computational and qualitative methods, whilst shedding light on how many subjective, qualitative decisions are taken in many semi-supervised computational approaches. Ultimately, this methodological combination emphasises the need for critical, reflexive, qualitative work to complement computational analyses (see: Nelson, 2020), especially when studying minoritized group representation.

Beyond the specific, method-related limitations, the critical approach more broadly holds various limitations. For example, in writing on critical feminist research, Sprague (2016: 18) emphasised concerns that 'research questions that have earned the most respect [...] are more likely to come out of scholars in the West than out of the everyday struggles of groups working for social change'. In other words, even when attempting to reduce inequality between social groups, critical research often still involves top-down, Western-centric perspectives, imposing research topics and agendas on populations with less power. Within Articles 1 and 2, representations of marginalized women were examined. Although it was the contextually bound *construction* of migrant women in representations being studied, as opposed to the women themselves, on reflection, our analysis

could have been complemented by listening to the perspectives of individuals identifying as members of these groups. This may have been challenging in terms of scope, however, discussing the findings of Articles 1 and 2 with marginalized women beyond the academic environment could highlight potential findings that had been overlooked, bring new perspectives and interpretations, and perhaps show which topics and issues should be prioritized in analyses.

Article 3 involved speaking to women journalists with mainly pre-determined, guiding questions, leading to (typically) relatively open-ended conversations. To be more useful to women journalists in the future, it could be beneficial to ask for feedback on the research design and topic from the community throughout the process. Other additional steps could be to combine individual interviews with participatory, workshop-based methods, to complement and enrich the findings.

Beyond the processes of research design, data collection and analysis, a fundamental principle of critical research is its orientation towards creating positive change, and actively addressing societal problems. Despite the intention, Kurki (2011: 131) argued that 'critical theoretical research does not seem to be particularly effective in imparting critical knowledge or change on society'. Whilst highlighting issues of inequality and exclusion reinforced by the news media, this research has not actively tackled them enough. Future research should dig deeper into many of the complex, invisible challenges impacting women journalists' roles, foregrounding women journalists' own solutions to the challenges they face and emphasising their critical and analytical perspectives.

In the subsequent section, there are brief, one-page summaries of each article comprising this thesis, with emphasis placed upon personal contributions to each study. The full articles can be read in Appendix A, B and C.

ARTICLE ONE SUMMARY: On the Margins: Exploring Minority News Media Representations of Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic

This article analyses representations of women during COVID-19 in minority news sources, whilst paying special attention to the way in which solidarity is articulated through news coverage, and reconsidering the counterpublic/public sphere dichotomy.

Research Gap: There is a lack of knowledge regarding ordinary women's coverage in the news broadly speaking, and especially during the pandemic, despite being a disproportionately impacted group (Crenshaw, 2020). Some studies have examined women's coverage in mainstream news during COVID-19 (Kassova, 2020), but typically focus upon women's representation in scientifically-orientated articles (Fletcher et al., 2021), whilst neglecting minority news content and ignoring intersectional dimensions of coverage. Also, given the relatively limited body of literature on 'positive' coverage of minoritized groups – especially of migrant women – this research aimed to explore different degrees of emancipatory potential embedded in 'positive' representations, and understand how such coverage might promote inclusion or solidarity.

Research Questions: *RQ1: In what ways are women represented within minority news during the pandemic? RQ2: How do these representations contribute to counterpublic formation and reflect counterpublic discourse? RQ3: In what ways do these representations establish solidarity between groups?*

Sample and Methods: This study focused on the coverage across four diverse, digital, ethnic minority news outlets from the US, including a podcast to reflect the heterogeneous news landscape, and mixed news consumption patterns among audiences. After using a minimal keyword search of gender-related keywords to establish a corpus, Carvalho's (2008) approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used. This approach included two central phases; firstly a textual analysis and secondly a contextual analysis. Drawing upon intersectional theory enabled power asymmetries present within the representations under study to be deconstructed.

Findings: The study shows that across the diverse range of US-based minority news sources, women are generally covered in a positive manner, promoting inclusion and the empowerment of individual actors, giving voice to women and their perspectives, and ultimately promoting solidarity. Rather than contrasting against mainstream news sources, minority news content oscillates between hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses. Indeed, the coverage of women often adopted critical frames, and radical expressions of solidarity whilst reflecting the mainstream, neoliberal feminist paradigm (foregrounding individual achievements) on other occasions. Besides advancing the intersectional solidarity framework as a flexible, analytical tool, our findings complicate previous understandings of the way in which counterpublics are both formed and sustained by illustrating how content often reflects mainstream frames and values.

Summary of Personal contributions: As the lead author, I was responsible for the research design, including the scoping of the literature, writing the literature review and the development of the theoretical framework, based upon Ciccio and Roggeband's (2021) work. After I selected keywords, one of my co-authors retrieved the sample of articles, which I later verified. Following this, I conducted the analysis, summarized findings, and wrote the article. I received support from my other two co-authors, who offered comments, made some amendments to the article text, by assisting my selection of examples to include in the findings section, and narrowing the focus of the conclusion. Finally, I managed the process of editing the manuscript following reviewer comments, through the review process at *Digital Journalism*.

ARTICLE TWO SUMMARY: Intersectional Solidarity, Empathy, or Pity? Exploring Representations of Migrant Women in German and British Newspapers during the Pandemic

This mixed-method, cross-national study explores migrant women's representation in the news during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing attention to articulations of solidarity, empathy and pity.

Research Gap: During the pandemic, migrant women were among the worst impacted groups; despite this, little is known about news coverage of this marginalized group. Given the fact that the pandemic provided an opportunity for temporary shifts in the politics of visibility, positive representations of an underrepresented and marginalized group were expected to emerge; these positive representations might include the understudied lens of solidarity. So far, solidarity in the news has been studied mainly as a discourse (Wallaschek, 2020) or regarding specific cases (Cinalli et al., 2021). Besides the work of Varma (2020; 2022), little attention has been paid to solidarity as a mode of representation in relation to coverage of minoritized groups and issues.

Research Questions: *RQ1. In what ways were news media expressions of solidarity articulated towards migrant women during the COVID-19 pandemic? RQ2. How can computational and qualitative methods help us understand expressions of intersectional solidarity with migrant women?*

Sample and Methods: The diverse corpus included minority and mainstream news articles published in German and British news outlets between 2020 and 2021. Topic modelling and Informed Grounded Theory (IGT) (Thornberg, 2012) were combined to form a novel intersectional analytical approach. Firstly, topic modelling provided a thematic overview of how migrants were covered and identified a highly relevant sample of articles. Building upon and complementing the macro-level overview of the data, IGT allowed for a fine-grained intersectional analysis of coverage on the micro-level, paying attention to articulations of solidarity, empathy and pity.

Findings: Findings complicate previous understandings of how social inclusion and exclusion are articulated, whilst refining conceptualizations of solidarity as a logic of representation. Across the corpus, solidarity was articulated in representations of migrant women by providing a platform for these women's analytical perspectives to be heard, instead of including only emotional perspectives. Empathetic and pitying representations were, however, far more dominant. Fine-grained analysis of empathetic and pitying representations demonstrate how 'positive representation' can actually contribute to further social exclusion, through placing conditions upon minoritized groups' humanity or through reinforcing damaging frames.

Summary of Personal Contributions: Initially, I identified the research gap, developed the research questions, and research design. Regarding the computational phase, whilst I did not run the topic models nor the translations of German texts, I was the 'human in the loop' throughout this process, conducting many multi-step verifications, selecting K , choosing labels and defining topics, creating and labelling sensible clusters. Once the sample of highly relevant articles was formed, I conducted the second, qualitative phase of the analysis (IGT), which involved coding all lines of text in 200 news articles. I also developed the analytical framework, to analyse migrant women's representation across diverse texts. This framework refines and expands our understanding of inclusive representation and news coverage, through fine-grained, qualitative, and intersectionally-focused analysis. It can be employed by others to study minoritized groups in multiple contexts. Beyond this, I wrote the article, prepared the supplementary material, figures and tables, and made the edits after the article received reviewer comments.

ARTICLE THREE SUMMARY: Space for solidarity? Studying women journalists' experiences of covering minoritized groups

This qualitative study drew upon interviews with 23 women journalists across the UK and Germany, to examine their perspectives on minoritized group coverage and solidarity.

Research Gap: Three main research gaps are addressed. Firstly, despite the impact of journalists' coverage of different minoritized groups on audiences, journalists' perspectives on practicing this dimension of their role remain understudied. Secondly, whilst the news media hold potential as a site of enacting solidarity, few studies have explored how journalists approach solidarity practice. Thirdly, I interviewed journalists from a minoritized group based in the UK and Germany – women journalists – whose perspectives are largely overlooked in the extant literature. Drawing upon Biddle's (1979) role theory ensures that it is not only the role performances which are analysed, but also the prescriptive expectations and emotional reflections on these roles.

Research Questions: *RQ1: How do women journalists approach the coverage of minoritized groups? RQ2: How do women journalists navigate personal identities and professional norms in their coverage of minoritized groups? RQ3: What factors constrain and enable the enactment of solidarity in women journalists work?*

Sample and Methods: This study focused on the perspectives of women journalists based in the UK and Germany, sampled via searching news sites, professional networks and social media, and snowball sampling. The sample is diverse, including journalists of varying age, levels of experience, working across mainstream and minority news outlets, on different topics, and with different levels of seniority. In addition, some of the women self-identified as holding additional minoritized identities, for example belonging to a religious or ethnic minoritized group, or coming from a working class, or migrant background. Interviews took place via Zoom, or call (participant's choice). The interviews were semi-structured, covering some main guiding questions, relating to the central research aims. Transcripts of the audio-recordings, along with memos and notes, were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) approach.

Findings: Across the sample, whilst normative definitions of journalistic roles remained broadly consistent in relation to representing minoritized groups, whether journalists perceived solidarity enactment as a (potential) dimension of journalists' roles proved to be far less consistent. Few women journalists described solidarity practice explicitly in their work, however, implicit and invisible practices were more common. Structures of intersectional opportunity and disadvantage constrained who is able to enact solidarity through their work, and at what cost. The perceived distance between women journalists prescribed, ideal roles, vs their described, actual roles has emotional consequences. Ultimately, these findings combine to expand the conceptualisation of solidarity in and through journalism; rather than being a distinct role for journalists working in a particular alternative genre, or outlet type, the interviews uncover solidarity in journalism as a regular, often invisible journalistic practice, existing on a continuum between active and passive.

Summary of Personal contributions: I was responsible for the scoping of the literature, research design, contacting journalists, conducting the interviews, automatically transcribing the interviews and manually fixing and tidying the transcripts, analysing the transcripts using reflexive TA and finally writing up the findings, and manuscript. In this research article, I received some support from my co-authors in refining the research questions, shaping the theoretical framework, and some minor comments in the finalisation of the manuscript.

Conclusion

This thesis explores expressions of solidarity in news coverage, and journalistic perspectives on enacting solidarity. It does so by engaging with a diverse corpus of news articles using qualitative and computer-assisted methods to analyse marginalised women's representation, before conducting interviews with women journalists to understand their roles conceptions. Overarching findings of this thesis are outlined below, structured by addressing the six main research gaps identified in the literature review. Key limitations of the thesis are then discussed, alongside pathways for future research. This chapter ends with final reflections on this thesis' central substantive, methodological and theoretical contributions.

Addressing the Research Gaps

RESEARCH GAP 1: *Minoritized Women's Representation*

Our understanding of women's representation in media content has been limited to investigations of the coverage of women politicians and public figures (Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020; Aldering & Van Der Pas, 2020), whilst overlooking 'ordinary women'. During the COVID-19 pandemic period when women – especially women from minoritized groups – endured disproportionate negative impacts, establishing an understanding of representations became all the more urgent. In Article 1 (Beazer et al., 2023; see also: Appendix A) and 2 (Beazer et al., 2024; see also: Appendix B), this research gap was addressed by analysing representations of ethnically minoritized and migrant women across a diverse corpus of British, German and American news sources. Using an intersectional lens allowed for nuances in representations to be identified, and articulations of inclusion and exclusion to be foregrounded.

The analysis of articles from ethnic minority news sources published during the COVID-19 pandemic period revealed diverse representations of women. Coverage was often empowering, for example by platforming individual achievements, and occasionally more radically inclusive, through highlighting marginalized subjectivities and fostering cross-group solidarity. Each of these representative approaches were embedded to varied extents in broader discourses. Considering the representations of women in light of these discourses, such as neoliberal feminist discourse, illuminated power structures embedded in such representations. Next, in line with previous work on discursive constructions of migrant women in the European press as vulnerable or '(un)deserving' (see: Holzberg et al., 2018; Gray and Franck, 2019), findings from Article 2 showed how identity labels relating to race, ethnicity and migrant status were similarly used to discursively construct migrant women as victims. Across the sample, migrant women were commonly

presented as figures worthy of pity, sympathy and charity, but fundamentally subordinate or separate to audiences. Whilst some coverage celebrated or platformed women from different minoritized groups, the analytical and evaluative perspectives were mainly excluded, instead featuring emotive quotes and coverage. These findings highlight the need for further intersectional work exploring women's representation from a nuanced, critical perspective.

RESEARCH GAP 2: *Studying the spectrum of positive representations.*

Findings from Article 1 and 2 complicate previous understandings of 'positive' news representations by differentiating between empathetic, pitying and transformative, solidarity-based modes of coverage. Concretely, building upon Varma (2022) and Ciccio and Roggeband's (2021) work, this research refines and develops the intersectional solidarity framework for studying news coverage of different groups. This framework unpacks how inclusivity and exclusivity are articulated by focusing analysis on different discursive elements, relating to actor labels, uses of direct speech and more. In Article 1 we show how representations of ethnically minoritized women as 'role models' are not as empowering as they may seem; the women's celebration and inclusion is often dependent either upon their shared traits with audiences or conditional based upon their success, in line with neoliberal feminist ideologies. Building upon this, Article 2 illustrates how during the COVID-19 pandemic, pitying and empathetic representations of migrant women dominated, as opposed to enactments of solidarity. These findings illustrate how 'positive' representations may not be inclusive and highlight how this can potentially serve to disempower and reinforce stereotypes of groups. Studies of minoritized group sentiment which identify coverage merely as 'positive', or 'negative' misses these important nuances in representations that may evoke empathy, or encourage political action, for example.

RESEARCH GAP 3: *Minority News Coverage*

This thesis consistently focuses on minority news; in Articles 1 and 2, minority news outlets from the US, UK and Germany were used to form the sample, whilst in Article 3 (Beazer et al., under review; see also: Appendix C), many of the journalists' interviewed had extensive (past or present) experience working at minority news outlets. Specifically, Article 1 findings showed how minority news coverage of women alternates between dominant and counterpublic discourses and modes of address, sometimes including expressions of solidarity, and other times reflecting more mainstream patterns in discourse. In Article 2, migrant women's representation was studied across mainstream and minority news outlets. From a methodological perspective, these studies highlighted challenges in studying minority news content alongside mainstream content when

using computational research methods, such as topic modelling. Regarding substantive contributions, the study tentatively showed (in a non-representative sample) how radically inclusive representations were more present in, but certainly not limited to minority news outlets. Comparably, journalists' perspectives studied in Article 3, showed how specific elements of minority news journalist's roles such as a focus on advocacy and concern with social justice (Ostertag, 2007; Peterson-Salahuddin, 2021) were also present in journalists' practice working at mainstream outlets. Collectively, findings from Articles 1, 2 and 3 suggest that oppositional, dichotomous categorizations of minority vs mainstream news content and journalistic role conceptions should be reconsidered.

RESEARCH GAP 4: *Holistic Approach to Studying Journalistic Roles*

In Article 3, this thesis analysed women journalists' roles by considering prescriptive, descriptive and cathectic dimensions (Biddle, 1979), alongside broader contexts and intersectional dimensions. Studies exploring journalists' roles have typically focused on role conceptions (Hanitzsch et al., 2020; Lobo et al., 2017; Weaver et al., 2019), the public-facing, performative dimensions of roles (Mellado, 2015), or sought to explain the gap between conception and performance, highlighting various influences such as market orientation (Mellado and van Dalen, 2014) and media ownership (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). This illusive gap between ideal and practiced roles has been shown to be greatest for journalists' who perceived their roles as holding an important, public-serving, democratic function (Mellado et al., 2020; Roses and Humanes-Humanes, 2019). Our findings build upon these previous studies in two main ways. Firstly, findings from Article 3 suggest that minoritized identities seem to add to the tension between prescribed roles, and described roles. The women journalists highlighted how their identities were perceived to place limits on which topics and groups they were allowed to cover, and how and when they might cover them. This adds a further contextual complication to understanding journalists' roles, by considering how power dynamics relating to race, religion, gender, class and sexuality influence practice.

Secondly, this thesis considered emotional dimensions of journalists' roles. Findings highlight complex emotional dynamics for women journalists, especially those holding additional minoritized identities. For some women, strong emotional reactions pushed them towards covering certain topics and groups they felt passionate about, whilst avoiding others. For other women journalists, they found additional part-time jobs to support working on content they personally desired, which was typically less lucrative. A few women journalists in the sample were motivated by strong

emotions of anger and frustration to create their own outlets. Evidently, in line with literature highlighting the emotional toll of journalists' work and their coping strategies (Barão da Silva et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2021), this thesis cautiously identifies how the gap between intended and practiced roles has significant emotional implications, which in turn impact professional approaches and career trajectories.

RESEARCH GAP 5: *Solidarity in and through Journalism*

Most of the (limited) work on solidarity in the news focuses on coverage of specific social movements (Cabas-Mijares, 2024), the discursive construction of solidarity (Wallaschek, 2020), and so far, the U.S. context (see: Varma, 2019; 2020). Building upon this, regarding the articulation of solidarity within news content, Article 1 and 2 collectively contribute towards a broader, political understanding of solidarity as a mode of representation, and the news media as a place of (potential) sense making and resistance of injustice. As a practical, methodological contribution, the analytical framework of 'intersectional solidarity' developed across Article 1 and 2 enables us to differentiate between different degrees of emancipatory potential communicated through coverage by distinguishing between empathy, instrumental solidarity and transformative solidarity. Extending upon Varma's (2022) work, the framework draws attention to the constructed relationship with audiences, scale of representation, context, tone, and the inclusion of emotive or analytical perspectives, alongside other intersectional dimensions. Whilst representations of instrumental solidarity refer to instances of solidarity constructed with single groups in isolated moments, transformative representations are more inclusive, orientated towards collective calls for action. Using Carvalho's (2008) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thornberg's (2012) Informed Grounded Theory (IGT) approaches to analyse women's representation during the pandemic showed how these lenses of solidarity and empathy are not mutually exclusive; often, multiple lenses were combined within the same text. Whilst CDA allowed for attention to be drawn to the ways in which representations connected to broader contexts and neoliberal, or counterpublic discourses, in Article 2, IGT enabled the intersectional solidarity framework to be developed from the corpus. As the findings of both articles reflected, representational lenses of solidarity were far less dominant than empathetic and pitying modes of representation.

Traditionally, solidarity has been relegated as an alternative practice, performed by journalists who work outside of traditional, 'professional' roles. Ultimately, these findings push beyond such conceptualisations of 'solidarity journalism' as being associated with a particular journalistic role or news genre towards viewing solidarity as a practice that journalists have the (contextually

bound) potential to engage with. This aligns with arguments made in previous scholarship, such as those presented in Deuze and Witschge's (2018) work on entrepreneurial journalists, who were found to adopt activist-like practice in combination with more traditional roles. Reflecting this perspective, Article 3 showed how journalists' roles were not entirely 'alternative', traditional, or bound to any particular form of practice; instead, their roles were fluid. Few women journalists in the sample engaged specifically and exclusively in solidarity practice, however, many had occasionally enacted solidarity in different aspects of their roles such as minoritized group coverage, in both implicit and explicit ways. Conceptualizing solidarity as a potential element of journalistic practice that can be enacted in a number of contexts moves beyond Western-centric definitions and conceptualizations, which bind solidarity to a particular outlet type, a certain actor or genre of journalism.

Regarding journalistic practice, Article 3 shed light on the visible and the invisible ways in which solidarity is enacted through journalists' roles. In exploring solidarity practice through women journalists' work, the scope of focus is expanded from public-facing aspects of roles, to hidden spaces and moments of enacting solidarity (invisible work, such as saying 'no', quitting, arguing over headlines with editors, etc.). Article 3's findings also revealed how there are contextual limits to how and if solidarity can be enacted in journalists' work, relating to a range of factors, from timeframes, budget and sourcing practices, to broader, political contexts, experiences and threats of discrimination, and specific newsroom cultures. Many of these external factors were incompatible with enacting solidarity. Finally, this study demonstrates how an intersectional lens can highlight journalists' identities influences on facilitating or inhibiting opportunities to enact solidarity. This pushes beyond previous work in these domains, which has primarily focused on articulations and practices of solidarity, without considering the personal, professional and identity-based influences and contexts of this type of practice. This influence of personal identities on journalistic work is elaborated upon in the subsequent section.

RESEARCH GAP 6: *Minoritized Journalists' Perspectives*

In the field of journalism studies, the perspectives of journalists holding marginalized identities are often overlooked. Minoritized women journalists' perspectives have so far been investigated in studies relating to harassment, discrimination and violence, experienced both on and offline (Chadha et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2020). In addition to this essential work regarding basic safety and rights, considering other dimensions of minoritized women's roles as journalists, and more nuanced instances of exclusion is important. Indeed, this thesis shows that journalists from

minoritized groups are perhaps among the best placed to highlight the challenges, contradictions, and boundaries of roles present in the field. Specifically, the understudied perspectives of minoritized women journalists were investigated in Article 3. Findings show how minoritized identities held by journalists are tactically mobilized and ignored in newsrooms; during crises, minoritized women are a resource for newsrooms, and other times their perspectives are deemed 'too subjective', or ignored. In other words, the study points towards intersectional affordances, and raises questions such as: who is able to enact solidarity, and at what price? Future research on journalists' roles should focus on the perspectives of minoritized journalists in different contexts, and draw attention to the importance of broader contexts – at the level of the newsroom, the outlet, and politics – in order to deepen our understanding of challenges and influences on the field.

Limitations

Alongside its contributions, this thesis has a number of limitations. Notably, the three studies focus on news content and journalistic perspectives in three Western countries. To avoid reinforcing a Western-centric focus and power structures further, a post-PhD project is being developed, that will extend on Article 3 by including journalists from different countries beyond the Western context. Moreover, across Articles 1, 2 and 3, whilst each country-case was contextualised briefly, in some cases more words were spent explaining my positionality than providing detail on particular news outlets or national journalistic cultures. Rather than focusing on my personal identity and reflexivity, in order to decentre the Western context, more attention should have been given to describing the details of countries and outlets (Gani & Khan, 2024). This outlook is something I will carry forwards and apply in future research.

An additional limiting factor that has inhibited the interview phase of Article 3 in particular, is my language capabilities. To enhance inclusivity through my research, working closely with future co-authors who can interview journalists' in their native tongue would ensure that participants are able to express themselves well, and that power dynamics are more balanced during interactions. On top of this, citing more diverse literature published in different languages would both enrich the articles, and improve inclusiveness. Taking inspiration from Jeppesen and Research Group (2018), future research could also include journalists from minoritized groups in the research design and interview guide preparation. Such an approach would also reduce power imbalances in the research process, and ensure that the findings fully reflect the most important dimensions of journalists' roles.

Article 1 and 2 studied news articles from 2020-2021, because positive representations were expected to be found in this period during which the politics of visibility was disrupted. Also, this period was chosen because the aim was to gain a broad overview of women's representation without focusing too narrowly on a single event, group, or moment. As a result, the scope of Article 1 and 2 created limitations at different stages of the process; concretely, both in terms of the studies' narrow focus, and, at the same time, their breadth. On one hand, selecting coverage from the COVID-19 pandemic period meant that significantly diverse topics could emerge from the complex and widely felt dynamics of the pandemic. These emerged in a variety of texts, ranging from articles on health, to community organizing, domestic abuse, hospital workers, families, and much, more. As such, this experience suggested that focusing more narrowly on one specific group (such as female health workers specifically) or a concrete time period (the early months of the pandemic, for example) would have facilitated a more focused, coherent analysis. Nonetheless, it was our aim to offer a broader view of discursive constructions, which required a larger scope. On the other hand, in focusing only on the COVID-19 pandemic, whether or how far our results extend beyond this crisis context remains unknown. Future research could compare representations of marginalized women across news coverage of different crises periods, to see if similar representational modes are employed.

Key Contributions and Pathways for Future Research

Current work on solidarity in and through journalism has positioned this mode of representation and form of practice in contrast to 'traditional' roles and norms, which are underpinned by notions of objectivity, distance, and the reliance upon 'expert' sources (Varma, 2023a). Findings from this thesis indicate that such an oppositional, extreme conceptualisation of solidarity is perhaps inaccurate; analysis of news content and journalists' perspectives presents a more nuanced reality. In broader work on emerging, antagonistic journalistic practices and alternative journalistic actors in the field, Eldridge's (2019: 17) study of 'interlopers' concluded that 'boundaries [of the field] are not lines but something of a graduated spectrum'. Rather than viewing the field of journalism as having a stable core, and a volatile, antagonistic periphery, the notion of a spectrum abandons hierarchical distinctions, instead shifting towards a more inclusive definition of what journalism is, and what journalists can or should do. Comparably, other work on pioneer journalism collectively points towards abandoning dichotomous notions of serious and unserious, superior and inferior practice (Zelizer, 2017; Deuze & Witschge, 2018, Anderson, 2023). Indeed, whilst Witschge and Deuze (2020: 360) call for 'adopting a lens of wonder' in our study of journalism that 'can enhance our ability to consider the rich diversity that can be found in the field', Anderson

(2023:233) comparably argues that emerging journalistic practices and roles should be considered in light of their 'reconstructive', as opposed to 'disruptive' potential. As such, adopting these progressive conceptualisations of journalism's potentiality, and acknowledging the inherent diversity within the field not only creates space for possible solidarity-related practice and content, but recognizes such practice as a valid dimension of professional roles, alongside traditional dimensions and practices.

As the analysis of news content and journalists' perspectives across this thesis indicate, neither representations of solidarity nor broader forms of solidarity practice are employed consistently. Rather, there is significant diversity even at the level of the individual, with solidarity practice being facilitated in certain contexts and constrained in others. As foregrounded across each article, focusing upon the multiple layers of political, cultural, institutional and personal context is key. As Deuze and Witschge (2018: 562) have argued, journalism is 'not only ideologically driven but also influenced by strategic considerations.' Therefore, whilst solidarity practice may not be part of traditional, Anglo-American definitions of journalistic roles, with rising hyper-inequality and climate change among many other social, health-related and political crises, there is perhaps not only a viable place but a strategic need for social-justice orientated journalism. Rather than questioning the professionalism of solidarity as a journalistic role dimension, we might ask ourselves whether traditional, Western, 'objective' conceptualisations of journalism – in both theory and practice – are appropriate in our current context. Journalistic practices which uplift minoritized communities, platform marginalized voices, and challenge the status quo through radically inclusive and collaborative content could be vital for audiences in current and future contexts.

Besides exploring the diverse forms of social justice-orientated practice that might emerge in journalists' roles, studying solidarity in and through journalism raises questions regarding who might be able to practice solidarity, and at what professional and emotional cost. What has been missing in the extant literature on journalists' role conceptions is an intersectional consideration of journalists' identities. Just as the journalistic field does not exist in a neutral context, individuals working within the field do not hold equal power. Identities have been shown to have a huge impact on individual journalists' daily practices, for example through making individuals more likely to encounter certain types of harassment (Chen et al., 2020), leading to the avoidance certain topics in coverage and the development of coping strategies such as 'professional backstaging' (Carter & Ferrucci, 2024). As the interviews of Article 3 demonstrated, the tensions between prescribed and described roles and the emotions surrounding this are better understood if we turn our focus

towards journalists' identity conceptions. Moreover, as a news value with inherently racial underpinnings, objectivity has been problematized, especially in the US context (Robinson & Culver, 2019; Schmidt, 2024). Building on this at the level of the journalist, we should problematize how this Western-centric, normative underpinning is weaponized against journalists from minoritized backgrounds to devalue their work. Ultimately, our findings point to the conclusion that in conceptualising journalists' roles and possibilities of solidarity practice within such roles, a consideration of intersectional identities is vital.

In discussing the potential of critical social research, Clarke et al (2017) describe, 'a place of sense-making of injustice' and even a 'site of resistance'. Whilst they refer to the academic context, the collective findings of this thesis illustrate how the news media also holds similar potential as a site of resistance, social justice orientated work, and solidarity. Whilst solidarity is not a new feature of journalism, it is an underexplored dimension requiring further investigation, as this thesis has begun to address. Across the three articles, this thesis has examined diverse articulations of solidarity in coverage and shown how it is practiced in roles; this is not an exhaustive conceptualization but an explorative beginning, highlighting some possibilities in specific contexts. Findings show that solidarity in and through journalism is not limited to a particular actor, mode, genre or type of outlet. To expand our knowledge this emancipatory approach to coverage, solidarity's diverse articulations, manifestations and modes of practice need to be studied in more varied contexts, outside of the west, across different outlet-types, and with diverse groups of journalists. Traditional journalism's normative underpinnings do not necessarily need to be abandoned, but perhaps hierarchical distinctions between hegemonic and emerging forms of practice should be. Further, in conceptualising solidarity practices in journalistic roles, besides foregrounding minoritized perspectives, academic attention should be extended beyond the explicit and hyper-visible, to examine more hidden manifestations of practice, and to consider journalists' emotions.

Finally, this thesis calls for the connections between crises and solidarity to be better understood, in the context of the journalistic field. As described in Article 2, during the age of 'polycrisis', the concept of 'liminality' serves as an important (theoretical) anchor, to help us, as researchers, make sense of such rapid change and upheaval (Turner, 1969). Liminal moments can be understood as 'occasions of collectively experienced change or crisis', during which 'the prevailing structure and order of society are suspended' (Van de Wiele & Papacharissi, 2021: 1144). During liminal moments, such as our current context, crises do not simply 'happen' to passive populations.

Instead, they catalyse the formation of diverse solidarity networks, which not only oppose the forces and actors that perpetuate man-made crises, but actively work towards a more equitable reality (see: Zajak et al., 2021; Libal & Kashwan, 2023). The field of journalism is not immune to the extreme changes that characterise liminal moments. During a period of profound societal shifts, as a collection of crises amalgamate and partly (re)define the field, a radically inclusive journalism that is orientated towards social justice could play an integral role in rebuilding audiences trust. Indeed, we might ask ourselves, who or what is journalism for, if it does not encompass these principles and practices of solidarity? Ultimately, researchers should recognize solidarity practice as a both a legitimate and important dimension of journalists' roles and expand upon our current conceptions, in order to contribute towards a more inclusive and equitable field.

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APPENDIX A

On the Margins: Exploring Minority News Media Representations of Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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On the Margins: Exploring Minority News Media Representations of Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately negative affect on women, especially women from minoritized groups. Minority news media are an important information source for these groups, when it comes to providing alternative views, and health related information. Whilst the poor representation of women in COVID-19 related mainstream news coverage is acknowledged, little is known regarding the representation of women in digital minority news content, during the pandemic and beyond. Considering this gap, we examine how women have been represented within a diverse corpus of minority news, and explore how these representations serve to bridge between different social groups. Critically analyzing the representation of these marginalized groups offers a lens through which we can better understand the function of minority news media in a democracy. Using critical discourse analysis, this study examines three online minority newspapers and one podcast from the US. Findings show that women are covered in an inclusive and empowering way, containing perspectives and concerns unique to the minority group, strengthening identities, platforming community-specific issues, communicating a call to action, and promoting intersectional solidarity. These representations also reveal the complex tensions between counterhegemonic and dominant publics which minority news media sources constantly negotiate through their content.


KEYWORDS

Women; ethnicity; minority media; counterpublics; COVID-19; discourse analysis

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, but for some more than others. Women, especially from minoritized backgrounds, are among the most negatively impacted due to multiple factors, including healthcare access, discrimination in healthcare

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settings, occupational status, increased vulnerability to domestic violence and disadvantaged status within households (Connor et al. 2020; Laster Pirtle and Wright 2021; Crenshaw 2020). Women make up 70% of global health care workers and face higher infection risk (Miyamoto 2020; Steinert et al. 2021). Mothers have been taking over more care work and struggling with their professional responsibilities more than fathers (Barroso and Horowitz 2021). Infection and mortality rates have also been higher among individuals with lower socio-economic status and from ethnic and racial minoritized groups, whilst disparities in vaccination rates are also found along those lines (Williams 2020; Ayers et al. 2021). In short, COVID-19 has propelled pre-pandemic hyper-inequality to new levels (Kim and Bostwick 2020).

News media have played a crucial role in bringing these issues to peoples' attention. Given that audiences are more dependent upon and consume more news – particularly online news – during a crisis, and that the news media provide a key role in the uptake of health information, the influence of representations on audiences during the pandemic is especially strong (van Aelst et al. 2021; Motta et al. 2021). In this context, low levels of visibility of minoritized groups including women are particularly concerning, because sharing similarities with sources in the news, can affect source credibility and the impact of negative stereotypes on marginalized groups is amplified (Kreuter and McClure 2004; Quintero Johnson et al. 2021). Mainstream coverage of women during the pandemic – as experts, stories with women protagonists, and in terms of coverage of gender equality issues – has been consistently low (Kassova 2020; Fletcher et al. 2021).

Minority news media can provide alternative, heterogenous and more positive portrayals (Bozdag, Hepp, and Suna 2012) while being at the same time an important information source for minority groups, also when it comes to health-related issues (Rasmussen 2014). Despite this, we know little about minority news content, and more specifically, women's representation within this. Understanding minority news coverage of this underrepresented group is particularly pressing during the pandemic as this was a "critical moment for journalism," with the potential and possibly contradictory opportunities to transform, reverse or amplify longstanding hierarchies, patterns in content, and indeed the role of the news media (Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen 2021: 1201). In this period audiences turned towards the news media more than "normal" times; our understanding of how minority media address and construct the publics they speak to therefore becomes all the more relevant, when those communities-as-counterpublics are marginalized, for example as women, ethnic minorities, or otherwise "subaltern" in the larger societal hierarchy.

Therefore, this study asks: *How are women represented within minority news sources during the pandemic, and what do these representations tell us about the broader role of minority news in a democracy?* Analyzing the coverage of four online minority news outlets from the US using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper finds that minority news media serve an important function of advocacy and empowerment for women. Through highlighting and contextualizing issues of inequality, whilst platforming key role models and celebrating marginalized identities, the minority news media's representations of women simultaneously "counter" and negotiate mainstream news media representations, whilst alternating between modes of mainstream and counterpublic address. Besides contributing

to the limited literature on representations of women in minority news content, this study calls the process of counterpublic formation to attention, and demonstrates the tension between minority news outlets shifting between counter and dominant publics.

Minority Media as Counterpublics

The concept of counterpublics helps us understand the formation, nature and significance of minority news. This concept was born out of a critique of traditional notion of the public sphere as a discursive space in which members of the public – more specifically, the bourgeois – could deliberate societal issues (Habermas 1989). The free press served as a central pillar of this public sphere, and deliberation process. Yet, Habermas' original concept was, and is heavily criticized for failing to recognize the multiplicity of any public, and ignoring the vital role played by subordinated groups in promoting change; hence, the notion of subaltern counterpublics was born (Fraser 1990; Asen 2000). Through offering a discursive space in which groups and issues ignored in the mainstream are discussed, counterpublics address matters of social exclusion and have the potential to reshape power relations (Asen 2000: 425). Warner (2002) proposes that it is more accurate and useful to define counterpublics by the way in which they engage with the public sphere, and how they negotiate connections to and embeddedness within dominant publics. Such an approach acknowledges that counterpublics function within the same social systems as dominant publics, and recognizes inherent overlap and connectedness. The crucial difference between counterpublics and publics from this point of view is that within counterpublics “a hierarchy or stigma is the assumed background of practice” and that counterpublics only come to fruition when “participants are addressed in a counterpublic way” (Warner 2002: 87); one which implicitly or explicitly calls for transformation.

Extant research has turned to various facets of the communications landscape to study counterpublic content; recent research has focused on blogs (Steele 2018; Eckert and Chadha 2013), radio (Leonardo 2012), podcasting (Vrikki and Malik 2019), social media content (Foucault Welles and Jackson 2019) and the comments sections of legacy news websites (Toepfl and Piwoni 2015). In this study, we are interested in minority news media. Minority news is a highly heterogeneous category, predominantly based online, produced by and for different marginalised groups (e.g., based on gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, race, and migrant status), with varying aspects and degrees of difference from the mainstream news (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011; Ferrer and Retis 2019). Rather than being inherently “counter,” it is most productive to consider minority news as a possible, but not guaranteed site of counterpublic discourse (Budarick 2017; Couldry and Dreher 2007). Previous studies adopting an institutional approach attempted to implement structural criteria to differentiate between minority news both for and by a minority group; findings show that minority news cannot be easily categorized, with many outlets varying greatly in terms of initiative, design, function, representation and access (Caspi and Elias 2011).

As a sub-category of minority news, ethnic minority news plays an important role in fulfilling entertainment and information needs of diverse audiences and maintaining certain aspects of cultural identity (Deuze 2006; Johnson et al. 2010;

Lin, Song, and Ball-Rokeach 2010; Ramasubramanian, Doshi, and Saleem 2017). There is reason to believe that the role of ethnic minority news media has been heightened during the pandemic especially regarding health-related communication, as sources adapt information communication (cf. Kreuter and McClure 2004). Additionally, what makes minority news attractive and important for their audience is an alternate, positive portrayal of the respective minoritized group, challenging mainstream representations (Ramasubramanian, Doshi, and Saleem 2017). This is particularly the case for women, whose compound marginalized identities often render them invisible, or negatively stereotyped in the mainstream news media (Slakoff and Brennan 2019; Ward 2017).

Women are considered a minoritized group in society due to their lack of power, access to power, and public prominence, despite making up approximately half of the population. Within the field of political communication, there is a deficit of studies examining minority news media content, meaning that our knowledge of women's representation is largely derived from studies of mainstream outlets (Bleich, Bloemraad, and De Graauw 2015). Most studies exploring news coverage of women have targeted high-profile figures and politicians (Sisco and Lucas 2015; Williams 2020). Overall, whilst the representation of women in political news stories has been steadily increasing in quantity and quality (Humprecht and Esser 2017), extant findings uncover great inequality between the frequency of men and women cited as experts, and in the age of men and women being included (Ross et al. 2018; Ross and Carter 2011). Also, studies in multiple national contexts have found that news coverage of prominent women in society typically foregrounds women's role in the family and the domestic sphere, most typically through emphasizing an individual's role a mother (Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Vandenberghe 2019). Overall, inequalities in coverage have remained consistent, despite some improvements in global patterns of women's representation in the news (Macharia et al. 2020).

Some gaps have persisted in research on female representation in the news; namely studies examining the representation of "ordinary women," here defined as women not holding prominent positions in society (Beckers 2017; Mitchelstein et al. 2019). Further, few studies have considered the intersectional impacts of class, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and disability on the visibility of women in media texts. Evidence from the coverage of politics and crime in the UK and US contexts have shown that whilst the visibility of women of color is sometimes higher than that of their white counterparts, the coverage is overwhelmingly and disproportionately negative (Ward 2017; Slakoff and Brennan 2019). To our knowledge only one study engages specifically with women's representation in minority news content, with findings indicating that the representations are influenced by both mainstream and local media cultures (Yu 2017).

An intersectional perspective can shed light on power imbalances in the representation of different groups of women (Crenshaw 1991). Crucially, intersectionality is comprised of three central dimensions; structural, political, and representational (Crenshaw 1991). It is the third tenet, representational intersectionality, that is most important to this study, as it targets the marginalization of women within media texts and emphasizes the importance of fair representation. Drawing upon McCall's (2005) conceptualization of intersectionality, this paper utilizes the "intra-categorical" approach,

meaning that social categories such as “women” and “ethnic minority” are understood as socially constructed, but relevant to life. Investigating the process by which such categories are created and articulated, and exploring their use in representations is crucial in order to comprehend the power dynamics communicated through discourse. In exploring the representation of women in minority news sources, this study focuses on how different aspects of intersectional identities are emphasized or mitigated to communicate particular messages. Targeting minority news representations during the pandemic can shed light on the way in which minority news sources navigate the discursive space between counter- and dominant publics, whilst showing how representations can have a bridging or polarizing effect between different groups. This study asks:

RQ1: In what ways are women represented within minority news during the pandemic?

RQ2: How do these representations contribute to counterpublic formation and reflect counterpublic discourse?

Besides drawing attention to the complex, interconnected set of power structures underpinning patterns of inequality, intersectionality helps us to explore how coalitions are formed and groups are mobilized around shared issues or identity aspects (Fisher, Dow, and Ray 2017). In other words, an intersectional approach can present an opportunity for minoritized individuals to unite in actions of solidarity. We use Ciccina and Roggeband’s (2021) framework for intersectional solidarity to approach the texts. Although their framework was developed in relation to organizations, we argue that its definitions and application can be useful for studying (mediated) expressions of solidarity between social groups in minority news. Ciccina and Roggeband (2021) differentiate between intersectional solidarity based on shared issues and experiences (the “Common Denominator” frame) and solidarity expressed through drawing attention to the unique challenges faced by certain groups (“Recognition of Difference frame”) (see Table 1). Crucially, the latter frame incorporates, rather than minimizes differences between groups, by highlighting marginalized subjectivities. On another dimension, Ciccina and Roggeband (2021) also distinguish between expressions of solidarity based on short-term, isolated incidents, and those which present opportunities for long-term change, or take a broader, contextualized view of the situation; these are labelled as having a “transformative praxis.”

Such a framework allows for distinction between articulations of solidarity based upon the extent to which they engage with marginalized subjectivities, and the transformative potential of such representations. Thus, the final research question asked in this study is:

RQ3: In what ways do these representations establish solidarity between groups?

Table 1. Types of intersectional feminist solidarity, Ciccina and Roggeband (2021).

| Transformative praxis | Issue framing | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| | Recognition of differences (RD) | Common denominator (CD) |
| Absent | 1. Instrumental intersectionality (Short-term, Single issue) | 3. Incorporation (Short-term, Single issue) |
| Present | 2. Transformative solidarity (Long-term, Multi-issue) | 4. Pragmatic solidarity (Short-term, Multi-issue) |

Methodology

Case Study and Sample

The US has faced the largest number of COVID-19 infections and deaths worldwide, both being higher among individuals from ethnic and racial minorities (Mackey et al. 2021). The country has a rich minority news landscape, the largest and most established being the (contestably labelled) LatinX media landscape and the black American press (Pew Research Centre 2021). Originally, the LatinX press was formed as a way for white elites to reach the predominantly immigrant-origin Hispanic population (Retis 2019). Today, the geographical scope, editorial perspective and opinion and ownership of LatinX news sources is mixed (Retis and Chacón 2021). Regarding the Black press; this long-established news sector “fosters black group consciousness” through disseminating important in-group information, promoting counter-narratives, and advocating for Black counterpublics (LaPoe and LaPoe 2018). Despite recent concerns that the advocacy function of the Black press is softening due to increasing volumes of entertainment content, Williams Fayne (2023) has argued that the Black American press has maintained its vital role as a form of positive representation.

Both the Black and LatinX press can be considered counterpublics to the extent that they advocate for and platform the voices of a marginalised group (LaPoe and LaPoe 2018; Retis 2019). Contrary to mainstream media’s portrayal, these outlets often promote fairer, contextualized, positive representations of Black and LatinX Americans (Brown and Gershon 2017; Retis 2019). Despite recent decline due to reduced advertising revenue, social media, and broader shifts in the traditional media environment, the minority news media landscape has not only endured, but expanded in some sectors, facilitated in part by a transition to online and digital news media (Castañeda 2018; Jackson 2017), highlighting their importance to audiences.

Articles were selected from digital minority news sources in the US.¹ We focus on a selection of the most prominent and read minority news sources produced by and for the two largest minoritized groups. Namely, *AL DÍA* for the LatinX community, the *Haitian Times* for the Black American and Haitian diaspora of New York, and *African American News and Issues (AANI)* for the Black American communities (Firmstone et al. 2019). These outlets were selected based on their readership, strong digital presence, and their recent growth. Specifically, *AANI* has a circulation of 175,000 (Ford, McFall, and Dabney 2019), the *Haitian Times* has 150,000 unique views per month (CCM, 2023) and *AL DÍA* is expanding digital reach on a national scale (Holmes 2023). Also, in order to reflect the diversity of the news landscape, and the news consumption patterns of audiences through including non-traditional news sources, transcripts from the podcast, *Code Switch* by the public radio network NPR are included. *Code Switch* focuses predominantly on race-related issues (Ellis 2013) and is classified here as a hybrid digital news outlet, situated between mainstream and minority news. *Code Switch* was ranked the top show of 2020, indicating not only the large audience, but the cultural influence and significance of this platform (McBridge 2020).

The pandemic has been described as a “critical moment” impacting all areas of society and journalism, including content (Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen 2021). Given that media representation has a particularly strong effect in defining public attitudes

towards certain topics and groups during a crisis (Johnson et al. 2010), this study investigates the representation of women during 2020 and 2021. Accessing the news outlets through open archives (AANI), through requested archival access (AL DÍA) and through Factiva (*Haitian Times* and *Code Switch*) articles were selected by conducting a keyword search including terms related to women and COVID-19 (see the online [Appendix 1](#) for search terms, [Appendix 2](#) for details and brief summaries of articles cited in the Findings section, and [Appendix 3](#) for details on the remaining sampled articles, [supplementary materials](#)). Relevant articles were identified by checking that both women (or a woman) and COVID-19 appeared in at least two sentences. In total, 158 texts were identified that form the basis for the empirical analysis. The sample is purposeful in order to explore diverse representations of women in depth.

Method

To address the explorative aims of this study in understanding the nature of women's representation, we used CDA. Emerging first in the early nineties, CDA is best understood as an adaptable tool for analyzing a range of semiotic data (Fairclough 1995). As a research paradigm, CDA has developed within three central schools, including Fairclough's (Fairclough 1989) systemic functional linguistic perspective, van Dijk (1993) sociocognitive approach predominantly concerned with ideology, and Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (Wodak 2001) which focuses on sociocultural and historical contexts in the analysis of texts. Whilst each "school" has a different focus, they share principles of being interdisciplinary, problem-orientated, and defining discourse as "socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258; Wodak and Meyer 2009). Building from this foundation, discourse is seen as both forming and reflecting social reality, simultaneously reinforcing and challenging the status quo and patterns of exclusion. CDA approaches build upon Critical Theory, understood as a form of social theory that uncovers and critiques the often-invisible ways in which power operates in society, as well as aiming to alter society for the better in some way. Over time CDA has attracted a great deal of criticism, predominantly from scholars working in positivist traditions, who claim that CDA researchers bring preconceived ideas into their analysis of texts, that their analysis contains political biases, or even an "ideological commitment" (Tyrwhitt-Drake 1999). While CDA comes from a critical, problem-orientated standpoint, scholars push back against such critiques, arguing the explicit foregrounding of a critical theoretical underpinning serves to contextualize the findings.

Given that we are examining the coverage of underrepresented and discriminated groups from an intersectional perspective, and that we are concerned with power dynamics and manipulation concealed within such coverage, this critical perspective becomes an asset, and offers an ideal approach to develop meaningful understanding of mediated discourses (Carvalho 2008), following traditions of researchers who have brought CDA to the study of news (Fowler 1991). A further defining aspect of CDA making it ideal for this study is the importance of researcher's positionality being acknowledged alongside the analysis; as four white researchers from Western countries, numerous privileges and aspects of our identities must be considered alongside findings. Indeed, though we hope that our study may be insightful, the findings

should not be listened to before the work of someone's whose positionality more fully reflects the intersections explored in this study.

CDA is often critiqued for lacking a vigorous set of reproducible analytical steps, however, given that CDA researchers are targeting a diverse range of social problems, the approach must understandably be adapted to investigate different contexts and issues. That said, within the CDA paradigm, a number of adaptable, analytical frameworks do exist to guide researchers. This study adapts Carvalho's (2008) two-part analytical framework for studying media discourse, which is divided into textual and contextual analyses; a summary of the approach is included in the Appendix (Appendix 4).

Given the focus on women's representations within this study, we adapt the framework drawing mainly upon the analysis of actor representations (Who is mentioned? How are they mentioned?) and consideration of discursive strategies employed in order to construct such representations (framing, positioning, legitimation and argumentation strategies). Specifically, following an open-ended, initial reading of all relevant articles we examined the use of individual and collective labels, pronouns, the employment of direct and indirect speech, the use of stereotypes and the linguistic devices employed in descriptions. The next analytical phases included comparing representations within the corpus to each other, followed by considering whether the representations departed from broader hegemonic discursive patterns or not (Carvalho 2008).

Findings

Using CDA to study minority news outlets from the US, we find that representations of women during the COVID-19 pandemic communicated different types of solidarity with other marginalized groups and individuals; these representations emphasized different aspects of identity, whilst the precise nature of this solidarity varied across outlets and topical contexts. Such variation is emblematic of the diverse nature of representations within minority news outlets, vacillating between dominant and counterpublic discourses. The following sections present the themes across which women's representations emerged within the digital outlets, in establishing solidarity between groups.

Inter-Group Solidarity in the US

Racist attacks against Asian Americans have increased exponentially through the pandemic across the US (BBC 2021); this crisis, and its gendered dimensions were covered by some of the sampled outlets. In "To be Asian and Atlantan right Now," the *Haitian Times* reported on how coronavirus has strengthened solidarity with other ethnic groups. A Chinese American medical student, Clara Wang states, "since the pandemic began, I've grown more fearful [...] I've felt stares on my way to the hospital." In detailing the everyday experiences of Wang through using direct quotes and emotive language, this article emphasizes the *uniqueness* of her experience of marginalization. Based upon Ciccio and Roggeband's (2021) intersectional feminist solidarity framework, this exemplifies "instrumental intersectionality"; whereby the

idiosyncrasies of an individual's experience are foregrounded, emphasizing marginalized subjectivities.

Solidarity operates on different scales, and through different frames in this *Haitian Times* article; after describing her own experience with racism, Wang references the "unique solidarity in being lumped together, othered together" as Asian-Americans. Notably, the term "Asian-American," is highly contested, drawing together a highly culturally and ethnically heterogeneous range of groups and identities. Nonetheless, Wang describes how "East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian" and "people from any other part of Asia" came together to have "rallied and supported each other." This reveals transformative action, whereby an initially problematic, homogenizing label is recontextualized and mobilized to form a community. This article also touches upon discursive parallels between heightened instances of racist attacks during the pandemic against Asian Americans, and against other minoritized groups during previous crises:

My mother and I were talking about how this process is cyclical and why it feels so familiar. We know South Asians are watching us endure this and thinking back to 9/11. And it's just a reminder that white supremacy operates against whichever marginal minority group is most convenient to target. (emphasis added) - Haitian Times, March 24 2021

In describing a conversation with her mother, Wang highlights the persistence of racism in the US, with the pandemic merely being the latest event to trigger such a "familiar" reaction; the uniqueness of the context of COVID-19 is overlooked. Wang stresses the lack of novelty in her experience; Asian Americans are described as the latest "convenient target." This exemplifies "pragmatic solidarity," whereby multiple instances are drawn together focusing on the "common denominator" of experience that many minoritized groups have faced. It is not the white majority group, but the enduring *system and institutions* of white supremacy, standing in opposition to the minoritized group. This contrasts against the well-established pattern we see in mainstream news, creating a binary division based on group membership.

Within *Code Switch*, actions of solidarity were also highlighted. In one episode featuring listeners questions on COVID-19, one question confronted the actions allies should take in response to increased instances of racism. A white American woman, Jacqueline, describes the challenge of knowing how best to support her Asian-American friend, "my constant, I'm sorry white people are so dumb, is overused and unhelpful. What are the things that I as a white person should or should not say and do?" Here, the concerns of one member of the majority ethnic group are articulated. Her questions are both general in expressing the experiences and concerns of many members of the majority ethnic group, and specific, regarding details of her friend's experience. The public being addressed encompasses the majority group, who are advised to "be a monitor, an observer" and "document it." Additionally, effective allyship is defined as "not in the abstract, but, what she [the friend] specifically says would be most helpful to her." This topic of effective allyship is not something addressed in the other minority news sources analyzed, possibly indicating the difference in focus regarding the intended public and stressing *Code Switch's* role as a hybrid minority news outlet.

Shared Histories

We also find message of solidarity communicated through vaccination coverage, advancing the mainstream narrative beyond targeting Black and Hispanic communities' lower vaccination rates (Ndugga et al. 2021), or conspiracy theories circulating on social media influencing these vaccination rates (Khubchandani and Macias 2021). Rather than dismissing the vaccine hesitancy among minoritized groups as a matter of "ignorance," *AL DÍA* addresses lesser-known historical events contributing to this hesitancy as Latin American women were sterilized without consent in the sixties, leading to long-term mistrust in the medical system (March 31 2021). It does this temporally, constructing a generational link between these historical tragedies and the present through "the daughters and granddaughters of these women," but also in terms of sentiment, scale, and urgency. The article alludes to the scope of historical suffering as a "pandora's box of unresolved – or even inadequately compensated – trauma."

Platforming the voice of the granddaughter of one victim, it notes this is symbolic of "an unknown quantity of Latin American women," reinforcing the collective nature of this injustice and explaining why many women in the LatinX community are hesitant, yet stopping short of adopting an anti-vaccine stance. In this "us/them" construction, *AL DÍA* reinforces its own community orientation towards a Latin American public, simultaneously constructing an audience who are aware of and understand this trauma, whilst building an emotional bond with those who may have endured similar experiences. By directly addressing those who assign simplistic explanations for this hesitancy, they admonish these voices: "when people talk about the lack of confidence of black, Latino or native people in the vaccine [...] they tend to forget the terrible racist shadow that hangs over these people whose history cannot be separated from recent eugenics." The text encourages intergroup understanding, as *AL DÍA's* journalists navigate a complex discursive space between promoting the official government message, whilst ensuring that these women are heard.

This is amplified further by connecting instances of state-sanctioned eugenics impacting other marginalised groups, to contemporary debates on vaccination. Comparable cases are described as having happened "all over the country," with "Southern black women and native American women as victims," showing how *AL DÍA* advocates for other marginalized groups. This is an example of "incorporation," whereby commonalities are briefly mentioned on a single issue in a sometimes superficial way (Ciccia and Roggeband 2021). Comparable representations can be seen regarding "concern for the rising number of cases among all *women of colour* nurses" (*AL DÍA*, June 3 2020, emphasis added), through highlighting how "*Latino and Black* communities have been disproportionately affected by the disease," and claims such as "if *our brothers and sisters who are black* are not free, then I am not free" (*AL DÍA*, June 17 2020, emphasis added). Here, emphasis is consistently placed on shared identity aspects. Similarly, in *Code Switch's* episode "A Shot in the Dark," one woman is quoted, "I'm a 37-year-old Black woman, so I'm hesitant to take the COVID-19 vaccine because of the way the medical industry has treated Black people since the start of this country." Rather than dismissing this scepticism, an expert on this history, Harriet Washington is quoted. She states, "I wish people were more willing to get the vaccine. But no one can say it's illogical given the history." Whilst the correct course

of action here is implied as vaccination, the doubts and challenges that people have are acknowledged and contextualised. For example, in the *Haitian Times* specific challenges to getting the vaccine are addressed towards those in power (“if you make it easy for people, they will get vaccinated”) and the minoritized group, noting that challenges were mitigated when shown “how easy the process [...] was”, by a “trusted”, member of their community. Describing the women’s identity means that the public may relate; it is about evoking a sense of trust with an in-group member. Besides the call to action, this article shows the active, embedded nature of the minority news journalists in working with members of the community.

Precarious Employment

In the US (but also in many other countries), women of color and immigrant women are more likely to work in “front line” positions than their white counterparts. Most coverage of women working through the pandemic focused on healthcare, charting the challenges faced by women in this sector, whilst celebrating their work ethic. At the beginning of the pandemic, one *Haitian Times* article (March 19 2020) emphasizes the “dire lack of basic practical personal protection equipment” available to nurses, and their financial struggles (“these women and nurses [...] hold one, two or three jobs to make ends meet”). Simultaneously, the women are celebrated as “loving taking care of crises,” and being “infamous for taking care of everyone else.” Members of the in-group are presented as more caring and hardworking than other nurses (“particularly our Haitian nurses”).

Code Switch focused on the experiences of female Filipino nurses. In the March 31 episode, they state that, “Filipino nurses make up 4% of all the nurses in the United States, they make up 31% of the deaths of nurses from COVID.” It focuses on Rosary Castro-Olega’s life (“she came out of retirement at the start of the pandemic because she really wanted to help out”) described in detail, using emotive language. Voices of her friends and daughters are included, shifting constantly between the broad and the specific, the experiences of many women immigrating to do nursing in the sixties, and the details of Rosary’s life. Crucially, in describing Rosary’s “really intimidate, hard work,” the presenters emphasize the significance of “bedside-care work”: “there’s front line workers and then there’s front line of the front-line workers. And that’s these nurses.” The metaphor of being the “front line of the front line” reiterates the risks of working in such proximity to the virus. Rather than highlighting the immediate dangers of the job, *Code Switch* also emphasizes the broader contextual factors leading to higher death rates among Filipino nurses, including, “historical reasons and the economic reasons that brought them to this country in the first place” as well as “cultural factors” whilst connecting to broader immigrant identities. In connecting Rosary, and other female Filipino nurses’ experiences to the broader “immigrant” identity and experience, this potentially provokes a sense of identification and understanding with a much broader public.

Solidarity Across Borders

Moving beyond expressions of solidarity with marginalised women across the US, the sampled digital news outlets frequently reference women beyond US borders. *AL DÍA*’s

coverage represents women from a range of different, predominantly Spanish speaking countries, reflective of the highly heterogeneous diaspora. Crucially, identities of women of Latin American heritage, and migrant women were not clearly demarcated; instead, open, inclusive labels were used. Additionally, shared issues, history and heritage with other women of colour in the US were consistently highlighted, emphasising common denominators of identity. This is defined by Ciccía and Roggeband’s (2021) as “pragmatic solidarity,” a short-term, multi-issue form of intersectional solidarity. The following extract from *AL DÍA*’s front-page article, focuses on Symone Sahib’s mural for world refugee day (see Figure 1), highlighting some immigrant women’s responses to the pandemic:

Beyond those main storylines were those heroes holding their communities and families together through sheer willpower and love [...] their heroic efforts went unseen in the moment, but had lasting impacts. They shaped how their communities responded to the pandemic and are now playing a role in how they recover. - *AL DÍA*, July 21 2021

After highlighting the work of medical professionals throughout the pandemic, the article focuses on the invisible labour of immigrant women. Positive labels reference “those women”; “those” is simultaneously massifying and specific, capturing the seven women within the mural, and many more. Further, using strong verbs highlights the women’s agency and influence – through descriptions such as “shaped” and “played a role” – despite the unseen nature of their work. This is clear example of “pragmatic solidarity” (short-term, multi-issue) (Ciccía and Roggeband 2021), which is limited in its emancipatory potential due to the emphasis on common denominators of identity as opposed to unique aspects of women’s experiences. Later in the article, the women featured in the mural are metaphorically constructed as representing “countless others” and “lifting the entire country up,” communicating the importance of this group to the audience being addressed. In showing these women’s plight, the article potentially reinforces and promotes pro-immigrant attitudes of *AL DÍA*’s imagined audience (speaking for these women) whilst also letting these women know that their work is acknowledged (speaking to).

Similar representations appear in a second *AL DÍA* article published May 19 2021 on protests in response to the Colombian government’s handling of the COVID-19 crisis. The article highlights the women’s place “among the front lines of these



Figure 1. “The Real Heroes of 2020” (July 21 2021).

protests,” with “women” being inclusive of “trans women, and non-binary individuals that run a higher risk of facing violence.” The “powerful shows of bravery” by these groups of women are platformed, whilst the consequences of marginalized women’s mobilization is foregrounded, including the disproportionately negative impact on trans women. Similar to the story of the “seven women” above, the mobilization of women is portrayed as an act of community agency. Crucially, the way newspapers address their readers offers the first indication of the nature of that public; here we can say that they are community-oriented, collectively standing against certain injustices. Hence, the advocacy potential of this newspaper is not limited to the US population, but also to a (connected but distant) diaspora. This is an example of instrumental intersectionality, whereby the difference in experiences and issues faced by the Colombian women are detailed, but the focus is placed on this single issue (Ciccia and Roggeband 2021).

Role Models and Individual Responsibility

Across the sample, women’s actions of solidarity during the pandemic were celebrated through platforming female role models. The dominant message is that women are responsible for, and have the power to endure a range of issues resulting from the pandemic; COVID-19 is constructed as a unique challenge to be overcome by resilience and hard work. This message of individual responsibility communicated through female role models’ representations can be seen in *AANI* when, as one example, an article on the career and work of Judge Elaine Marshall (April 5 2021) foregrounds a dynamic of responsibility:

The COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic has each of us on edge. But ultimately, it begins with each individual and their mind-set and, more so, how they stand in the face of adversity; something Marshall will not let slow her down. (emphasis added) - *AANI*, April 5 2021

It is implied that the extent to which COVID-19 can impact a person is due to “mind-set,” and Judge Elaine Marshall demonstrates this by presenting women’s responses to the pandemic as a simple choice. There is a construction of “us” and “them” (or “they” here), creating a binary between the community who shares the experience of living in fear (“each of us on edge”) and those who respond by doing nothing, or take action. The line of inclusion and exclusion is not built around aspects of identity, but women’s attitude. Further, a specific type of action is valorized here, to “stand in the face of adversity.” In another profile piece on Georgia Provost, an important figure in Houston’s education sector, she says “common sense and critical thinking” may help to address some pandemic-related issues (*ANNI*, July 19 2021). Whilst the sense of a shared experience of the pandemic in the community is constructed (“simple solutions right in front of us”), she implies that there are those who recognize such “simple solutions” (positive), and those who do not. Thus, the public being addressed has to adhere to this notion of being proactive, led by examples of individual role models.

Whilst platforming female role models is positive, potentially as a form of aspiration to the community being addressed, these messages may be discouraging for those who do not see themselves in the same position and are struggling to cope with

the negative impacts of the pandemic. As such, there is an implicit hierarchy within the community of women created between those who fit and are able to achieve the desired behaviour, and those who cannot.

Role Models – A Call to Action

The focus on individual responsibility is not consistent; whilst some articles mitigate the impact of socioeconomic factors on women's ability to adapt, other articles highlight broader issues compounding the situation. In this sense, whilst some of the high-profile women represented in the newspapers – including in the examples above – are used as exemplars of ideal behaviour, others appear as champions for their communities, encouraging others to take action. Even in pieces profiling women's careers, what is often being celebrated is their work in and for the broader community rather than personal success. For example, in an article on Antonia Villarruel, it is "the fact that she has spent most of her nursing career supporting Latinx communities across the world," that is emphasized (*AL DÍA* 2021, April 21).

We see minority news coverage of women during the pandemic does not merely highlight inequalities, but serves as a call to action among adults who have "an obligation at this time to step up and take charge." Describing the volunteer Beatriz Mignens, her resilience is presented positively, her response as motivated by a desire to serve the older community reflected in an "us" vs "them" generational framing ("We have the training, the experience..."), and between the government and the community, as it is suggested that government inaction necessitates community action, to "step up and take charge," or "take over actively" (*AL DÍA*, April 15 2020). The use of a martial reference through the "cannon fodder" metaphor signals an urgent sense of "us," with the younger generations being called to save the rest.

Through representing individuals as role-model figures, minority news outlets platform challenges faced by certain groups of marginalized women, serving as a call to action whilst shedding light on longstanding issues. In one *Haitian Times* article from 11 December 2020, they say "the mandate is clear and urgent: we must improve the health care inequity that Black women face. It is no longer satisfactory to be 'not racist.'" The public being addressed here is simultaneously the Haitian diaspora, and Black women in New York City, as well as the majority group. The author discusses the damaging impact of "pretending we are color blind," with the "we" referring to white people, whilst being a member of the Haitian community. This article, like many others across the sample, embeds the experiences of Black and Haitian women during the pandemic within much broader issues.

Besides contextualizing many COVID-related challenges to women in the marginalized communities, many of the calls to action are legitimized through emphasizing key identity markers, including women's role within the group and society, as "mothers," "carers," "immigrants," "advocates," or "activists." As such, there are certain conditions defining women's capacity to call for action in the news sources. Using these identity markers, particularly those relating to women's roles as mothers or carers can reinforce traditional stereotypes (Macharia et al. 2020).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to examine how women have been represented in minority news during the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyzing four different digital ethnic news sources from the US using CDA, we find that their coverage is inclusive, empowering, and contains perspectives and concerns unique to the minority group. Through the strengthening of collective and individual identities and the platforming of community-specific issues, minority media communicate a call to action, and promote intersectional solidarity. Do these representations contribute to counterpublic formation, and what are the implications for minority news media's role in a democracy? The representations analyzed in this study reveal a dual function of minority news sources, both oscillating and manoeuvring between the counter and dominant public spheres.

Minority news coverage plays an important political function in three key ways. Firstly, our analysis shows these media platformed the voices, stories and experiences of marginalized women during the pandemic. This emerged in the consistent use of direct quotes from women within the communities being addressed, typically using emotive language, and including narrative features. Secondly, and critically, the coverage *contextualized* the impact of the pandemic. Women's stories were situated within broader historical, political, economic and cultural patterns of inequality and exclusion. By making the broader power structures and influences visible, representations develop an emancipatory potential; when power structures are made visible, they can be addressed. Thirdly, all sampled digital news outlets platformed the voices and experiences of marginalized women from different groups, both within the US and beyond. Intersectional solidarity was communicated through the nature of the stories chosen to be covered, the identities of the women featured, and labels used to refer to such identities. Besides the matter of *who* was represented, solidarity emerged in the mode in which the public was addressed; ambiguous group labels ("we"/"us" (could be used for women across the world) thus promoting solidarity between groups. This challenges the idea that counterpublics are speaking to specific, closed, identity-based groups (cf. Ref). Across the outlets, different types of intersectional solidarity were mobilized over various topical contexts, often within the same article.

At the same time, some coverage of women during the pandemic, and specifically the representation of "female role models," reflected aspects of a neoliberal feminist paradigm, inhibiting the emancipatory potential of the coverage. This emerged in coverage of successful women in business, family, and healthcare, reinforcing the idea that the individual is responsible for their wellbeing; women's success is regarded as a matter of preparedness, and attitude, particularly hard work and resilience (whilst ignoring other structural factors). Such representations ultimately detract from the messages of solidarity by shifting the blame to individual women and ignoring external factors.

Overall, minority news is constantly shifting between "counter" and "mainstream" spaces. These findings expose the tension between the emancipatory, political aims of a coherent counterpublic that communicates intersectional solidarity, serves as a platform for calls for action, ensures a diverse range of voices are heard, highlights the broader contexts which have led to marginalized women's precarious position during the pandemic, whilst simultaneously reflecting mainstream values. Where this complicates an understanding of minority news media as counterpublics, it also

reflects the constant negotiations of identities and belonging within the societies where these media operate. As the topic of COVID-19 might have been more likely to reveal these patterns, future research should examine the representation of intersectional identities in other contexts.

Whilst this research has begun to delve into an understudied area of the digital news landscape – minority news media – crucially, we do not claim to represent this highly heterogeneous news sector. Evidently, in exploring four diverse online news outlets, and targeting the pandemic period, the scope of the paper is limited. Therefore, future studies should explore more varied news sources that cater to minoritized groups beyond ethnicity to understand the way in which different groups are represented, both during the pandemic and beyond. A more systematic comparison of representations across minority and mainstream news outlets, and exploring the way in which minority and alternative digital news landscapes function across different countries could also prove to be fruitful avenues for future research and further enhance our understanding of the democratic role of minority news.

Note

1. It should be noted here that while we focus on the digital versions, these outlets are hybrid newspapers who publish online and offline news.

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APPENDIX B

Intersectional solidarity, empathy, or pity? Exploring representations of migrant women in German and British newspapers during the pandemic

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Intersectional solidarity, empathy, or pity? Exploring representations of migrant women in German and British newspapers during the pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This research examines migrant women's representation in British and German news during the COVID-19 pandemic, paying particular attention to expressions of solidarity. While previous research has focused on the representation of women and migrants, studies have largely treated these groups as distinct entities. Combining topic modelling with informed grounded theory, this research compares the representation of migrant women, including women from ethnic minorities, across a diverse corpus covering 2020–21. This two-step methodology facilitates intersectional analysis at the macro and micro level, revealing the salience, topical concentration and context of migrant women's coverage. Findings show that solidarity emerged through the platforming of migrant women's voices, and connected to discourses of class, poverty and precarity. Representations containing empathy and pity – less likely drivers of social change – were more prevalent. This research contributes to our understanding of migrant women's coverage during the pandemic and provides a granular and intersectional lens for analysing minoritized group representation.

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KEYWORDS Intersectionality; topic modelling; informed grounded theory; solidarity; empathy; representation

Introduction

The pandemic was, and continues to be a period of great social, economic, political and cultural upheaval. COVID-19's devastating and multifaceted effects on migrant women across the world include negative impacts on health, job security, legal status and living conditions (Kantamneni 2020;

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Paton et al. 2020). Hegemonic and institutionalized systems of sexism, racism and classism mean that the heterogeneous group of migrant women were more strongly affected by the pandemic; this statement holds across many nations (Crenshaw 2020). Despite the extent and varied dimensions of discrimination during COVID-19, little attention has been paid to whether or how migrant women were represented during this period in the news media: were their voices, narratives and experiences platformed? This matters because we know that representation, regarding both the extent and nature of coverage, can define audiences' perception of and attitudes towards social groups via parasocial contacts (e.g. Appel and Weber 2021; Tukachinsky, Walter, and Saucier 2020).

Historically, pandemics have "forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew", serving as a "gateway between one world and the next" (Roy 2020, 3). Following Van De Wiele and Papacharissi (2021), drawing upon Turner's (1969, 1144) notion of "liminality", a pandemic serves as a "long moment of in between", where hegemonic social structures can be "disrupted and reimaged", and where "new possibilities for agency and resistance are generated" (Van De Wiele and Papacharissi 2021, 1143). In such moments, traditionally less-visible actors such as migrants also have opportunities to be heard in public discourses, particularly through the news media.

We know that during the COVID-19 pandemic there was a shift in news representations. Front-line workers garnered more positive news coverage, and moments such as "clap for carers" were (temporary) disruptions in these hegemonic patterns of visibility. For these reasons, despite the traditional lack of voice assigned to migrant women in the news, we anticipate that during the pandemic, a shift towards more positive representations, including expressions of solidarity, might occur. It is important to understand the nature of migrant women's coverage because minoritized group visibility is deeply connected to matters of social cohesion and the potential promotion of empathy and solidarity among groups (Walter and Glas 2024). Therefore, this study asks:

RQ1: In what ways were news media expressions of solidarity articulated towards migrant women during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: How can computational and qualitative methods help us understand expressions of intersectional solidarity with migrant women?

Speaking to the broader theme of this special issue on minoritized group representation during the pandemic, this paper combines computational and qualitative methods to conduct an intersectional analysis at the micro and macro level, in a multilingual corpus of British and German news. Doing so, this study contributes to the limited literature studying representations of migrant women from an intersectional perspective, expands knowledge regarding articulations of solidarity, empathy and pity in "positive" media

coverage, and ultimately complicates our previous understandings of inclusive representation.

Migrant women in the news

Broadly speaking, studies of news media representation typically target “women” or “migrants” as distinct groups (Eberl et al. 2018; Van der Pas and Aaldering 2020). Across many countries, studies have shown that migrants tend to be underrepresented in the news, while being overrepresented in negative news, often framed as a threat, or in relation to criminality (see Eberl et al. 2018). There is variation across groups, with migrants from Muslim backgrounds receiving the worst coverage (Bleich and van der Veen 2021). Comparably, despite improvements in the proportion and nature of women being covered in political stories (Humprecht and Esser 2017), recent findings reveal sustained, gendered imbalances in terms of age and quoting women experts (Ross et al. 2018). Moreover, high-profile women are typically framed in relation to their status as a mother, or other caregiving role (Vandenberg 2019; Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012).

Our understanding of representation for those who are represented as both “migrant” and “women” is limited, as several overlapping and interlocking systems of exclusion amalgamate around these identities. Focusing on “individual” labels leaves blind spots regarding identities and experiences; there is a need to pay attention to nuances which further compound exclusion. Regarding the German context, research has identified variation between outlets with left-leaning media being the most likely to cover migrant women (Lünenborg, Fritsche, and Bach 2014). Furthermore, while men are mentioned in nearly every article on migration, women appeared in only 12–26 per cent of these news stories (Lind and Meltzer 2021). Extant research in the United Kingdom (UK), on the other hand, found that TV and legacy news, rather than underrepresenting migrant women, covered them extensively in homogenizing, dehumanizing and stereotypical ways (Silva and Mendes 2009).

Our understanding of the nature of migrant women’s news coverage is generally limited. Given the disproportionate negative impacts of the pandemic on this diverse group, this is concerning (Kassova 2020; Laster Pirtle and Wright 2021). Nevertheless, as an unprecedented event, there is reason to believe that the COVID-19 pandemic could have profound implications, and a growing number of studies address women’s representation in this context. We have, for example, seen a low level of female experts in pandemic news (Jones 2020), whilst other intersectional identity markers such as age have been foregrounded (Adlung and Backes 2023). In representing issues impacted by gender, class and race, news media “cover these issues as much as they conceal them” (Lünenborg, Reißmann, and Siemon 2023, 86).

Furthermore, the frequent use of masculine metaphors around war and conflict in pandemic coverage seems to limit women's visibility (Williams and Greer 2023).

Intersectional solidarity: a lens for studying representations

Studying the coverage of migrant women in a meaningful way requires a nuanced, critical and contextually informed approach, accounting for overlapping lines of exclusion and inclusion. Following Crenshaw (1991), an intersectional perspective sheds light on how certain groups and identities come to have their exclusion compounded within a given social structure. Crenshaw identifies three types of intersectionality, political, structural and representational. The latter is most useful here.

The processes through which interlocking oppression is sustained can be messy, and many of our current methodological approaches fail to capture this complexity. Instead, two strands of intersectional studies have emerged; those tracing macro-patterns (quantitative), and those focused on micro-contexts (qualitative). Through adopting McCall's (2005) inter- and intra-categorical approaches to intersectionality, we combine both levels of analysis. Intercategorical intersectionality sees existing social categories and labels like "gender" and "migrant" as (at least partially) useful; this approach lends itself well to quantitative studies. The more critical and qualitatively inclined approach of intra-categorical intersectionality encourages analysis of precisely *how* such categories are distinguished within and beyond language, acknowledging the ever-changing nature of social categories and their relationship to one another.

Within social movement literature, solidarity is defined as promoting and working towards collective aims in the political sphere, established by emphasizing "shared fate", or "shared values" with different social groups and identities (Einwohner et al. 2021). Recent work has pushed beyond defining solidarity as "action", instead moving towards a discourse perspective (Alharbi and Rucker 2023). Within journalism studies, solidarity is understood as an enduring but scarcely recognized news feature, or value (Varma 2022). This "logic of representation" aims to expose structural factors that contribute to the marginalization of certain groups, highlighting potential solutions and encouraging audience action (Varma 2022). There are different degrees of solidarity expressed within the news, ranging from short-term, single issue-focused "instrumental" solidarity, in contrast to the broader, longer-term matter of transformative solidarity. "Empathy" is a connected but distinct concept. Varma (2022) separates solidarity's promotion of radical inclusion, from empathetic representation, which offers a narrative of individual exceptionalism and shared traits. Representations adopting this

approach might make a marginalized individual “relatable” to their audience, or foreground outstanding achievements.

To study expressions of solidarity and empathy towards migrant women, Ciccia and Roggeband’s (2021) framework for intersectional solidarity offers a starting point (c.f. Beazer et al. 2023). This draws a distinction between solidarity based on “Common Denominators” (e.g. identities, experiences, etc.) and the “Recognition of Difference” (foregrounding the subjectivities and unique experiences, identities and issues). This study draws upon an analytical toolset to examine the composition of marginalized group representations in the media (Table 1). Dimensions of representation – e.g. *scale of representation*, *constructed relationships*, and *level of context* – have been adopted from Ciccia and Roggeband’s (2021) and Varma’s (2022) conceptualizations.

Methodology

This study examines representations of migrant women in the UK and Germany, including news outlets from two European countries with different migratory histories, but similar experiences of gender equality,

Table 1. Intersectional solidarity in the news framework.

| | → POTENTIAL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE → | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Logic of representation | Empathy | Instrumental solidarity | Transformative solidarity |
| Scale of representation | Individual | Individual or collective | Collective |
| Constructed relationship to audience | Common denominators in identity OR role models/outstanding achievements | Marginalized subjectivities | |
| Conditions of minoritized groups inclusion | Shared identity OR outstanding achievement | No conditions | |
| Context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal life • Mainly short-term • Single issue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly focus on individual/single group • Short term • Single issue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad context • Connects to other issues/groups • Mainly long-term, multi-issue |
| Tone | Emotive | Explanatory and analytical | |
| Aim of representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be relatable to the audience or provoke an emotive response in the audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote action • To promote social change • To elucidate structural factors • To promote radical inclusion | |
| Types of article | Stories of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal resilience • Overcoming challenges • Relatable stories | Calls for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Action • Recognition of a single group/individual regarding a single issue | Calls for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Action • Recognition of minoritized group(s) regarding a shared, often enduring issue |

Table 2. Classification of news outlets included within the sample.

| | DE | UK |
|------------------|--|--|
| Mainstream Right | Die Welt and Welt Online Bild, Bild Online ^a | The Daily Telegraph and Telegraph Online The Sun and The Sun Online |
| Mainstream Left | Süddeutsche Zeitung | The Guardian and Guardian Online |
| Minority News | Islamische Zeitung Neuland Zeitung ^b | Asian Image Muslim News |

^aIncluding Bild Plus, i.e. online content behind paywall.

^bUnlike the other minority news outlets which cater to different religious and ethnic groups respectively, the Neuland Zeitung is written by and is for migrants within Germany from all national backgrounds.

current migratory groups, and COVID-19 impact. Indeed, in both countries, migrant women were among the most negatively impacted groups (Germain and Yong 2020; Willers and Barglowski 2023). By analysing a diverse corpus of minority and mainstream news outlets, including quality and popular newspapers from across the political spectrum, we address existing questions of variation between mainstream and minority news sources (Freudenthaler and Wessler 2022). Drawing upon classifications established in previous research, our full sample is displayed in Table 2 (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2016). This further enables exploring the nature of positive representations comparatively, identifying the contexts under which different articulations of solidarity and empathy emerge.

For the sampling of relevant news stories, native and bilingual English-German speakers created a migrant-related keyword search string, semantically similar in English and German (Appendix 1) to retrieve 18,978 migrant-related news articles published 2020–21. Articles were accessed using LexisNexis and web scraping. 18,527 news articles included in the corpus were from mainstream news outlets, while 451 were from minority news sources. In terms of national balance, 9,716 articles were sampled from the UK and 9,262 articles came from German outlets.

Mixed-methods approach

Given this study's ultimate aim to explore articulations of solidarity in coverage of migrant women across a diverse corpus, the analysis is composed of two main phases at the macro (quantitative) and micro (qualitative) levels. Firstly, informed by Nelson's (2020) computational grounded theory approach, we adopt a broad, thematic analysis using the computational approach of topic modelling. Then, we conduct a more fine-grained analysis using the qualitative approach, Informed Grounded Theory (IGT) (Nelson 2021; Thornberg 2012). An overview of the approaches can be found in Figure 1. Importantly, due to the differences in sample size, topic modelling is only used for the mainstream news sample. We chose a manual classification approach for the minority news sample, explained in greater depth below.

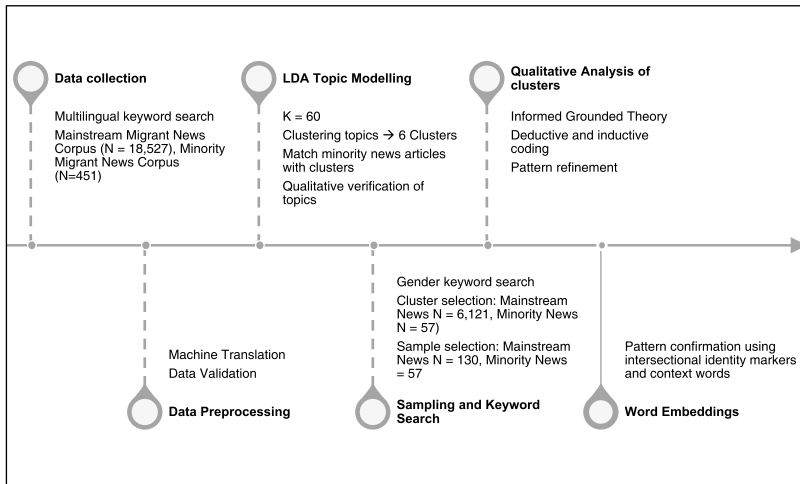


Figure 1. Summary of methods and sampling.

Topic modelling and topic classification

Topic models are widely applied across social science to automatically identify latent themes (or topics) in large text collections (Chen et al. 2023). To improve the classification of topic models, scholars have called for joining computational and qualitative methods (Nelson 2020), as we do here. Specifically, we use topic models to highlight the broader themes present in the coverage of migrant women during the pandemic across the entire corpus, and therefore guide us towards a theoretically relevant sample.

As an accurate and cost-effective approach for bag-of-words text analysis, we used machine translation using the DeepL API to translate German news to English (see Lind et al. 2022). Analysis used the *quanteda* (Benoit et al. 2018), *DeepL* and *tidyverse* R packages (Wickham et al. 2019). Having identified sixty as the optimal number of topics (see Appendix 2), we reviewed the results and identified forty-three interpretable topics. After labelling the topics, the sampled texts were grouped into six larger themes using hierarchical cluster analysis (Puschmann and Scheffler 2016). Finally, regarding the minority news texts included in the sample, using the topic clusters from the mainstream news media analysis as a starting point, two researchers manually coded and categorized the articles', whilst remaining open to the emergence of unique, new themes.

Qualitative analysis

Of the six clusters identified through the topic model analysis, the cluster labelled "Management and Unequal Impacts of Covid-19" (N mainstream media = 6121; N minority media = 57) was most relevant to the research question. Besides containing the most relevant articles of migrant women during the pandemic, the cluster featured cases of solidarity and empathy, which we

examined by through closer analysis. We narrowed these articles down by employing a second multilingual keyword search using gender-related keywords and terms uniquely relevant to female migrants (see Appendix 1). The two-step sampling process enabled us to reach a more relevant sample and gain a comprehensive overview of migrant women's salience in articles on migration, broadly speaking.

Within the cluster, "Management and Unequal Impacts of Covid-19", after the keyword search, articles were randomly sampled when they scored above a set threshold for relevance.¹ Out of the resulting 173 mainstream articles, 30 articles were excluded because migrant women were mentioned as fictional characters. Hence, the final qualitative sample consists of 143 articles from mainstream and 57 articles from minority media outlets.

The qualitative sample was analysed using IGT. Grounded Theory can generate new theories grounded in data by moving between analysis (both open and focused coding) and data collection, code creating and memo writing (Glaser and Strauss 1967). IGT builds on this by utilizing a previously defined theoretical framework – in our case, intersectional solidarity (c.f., Table 1) – to inform analysis, while allowing for modifications to the coding scheme in subsequent iterations of analysis (Charmaz 2006; see Appendix 3). Open codes were formed from the intersectional solidarity framework, with a focus on actor descriptions, the use – and tone – of direct (or indirect speech) and the context. Articles were analysed iteratively until saturation was reached.

Word embedding

Following this, we use word embeddings to demonstrate pattern confirmation from the qualitative findings, by analysing news articles from the topic cluster "the Management and Unequal Impacts of COVID-19" ($N = 6,121$). Simply put, word embeddings are numerical representations created using co-occurrences of words in a corpus, which can be useful for illustrating relationships between different words (Mikolov, Yih, and Zweig 2013). In this paper, word embeddings allowed us to identify differences in the language used to represent female vs. male migrants, thus adding an additional layer of intersectional analysis.

To discover words that were related to female migrants in our corpus, we created Word2Vec embeddings using the GloVe algorithm with 100 dimensions and a window of 5 for words that occurred more than 10 times. We created a list of words for females (e.g. woman, mother, girl), males (e.g. man, father, boy), and migrants (e.g. immigrant, migrant, foreign). The category vectors were the mean average of the list of vectorized words for each category (see Appendix 1). Pairwise combinations of the vectors for each category were then averaged to create the intersectional identities (females + migrants), and compared across different identities.

Results

Quantitative analysis

To analyse expressions of solidarity and empathy in migrant women's representations, we focused on a corpus comprised of migrant-related articles from mainstream and minority news. The reason we focused on migrant, as opposed to migrant-women-related articles from the offset is because we wanted to explore intersectional identity dimensions within a broader context. Using topic modelling followed by a cluster analysis, our findings revealed six general themes of mainstream news coverage of migrants in the corpus. Table 3 shows a brief description of each of these themes.

Figure 2 is a scatter plot that includes a point for each topic cluster in the mainstream news analysis. The x-axis shows the total number of distinct articles that were classified into each of the clusters. The most occurring topic cluster is "Border Crossing" ($N = 11,176$ articles), followed by "Management and Unequal Impacts of Covid-19" ($N = 6,121$ articles) and "Politics" ($N = 5,873$ articles). The y-axis shows the percent of distinct articles in the topic cluster that included female migrant keywords. The "Border Crossing" and "Management and Unequal Impacts of Covid-19" had a similarly high proportion of articles that included both female and migrant keywords (38.4 and 36.5 per cent, respectively).

Due to the much smaller minority news sample, rather than running topic models, articles were manually coded across the clusters identified in the mainstream analysis. Table 4 shows the number of articles across each cluster, where we see a very different distribution of articles in comparison to the mainstream sample. Strikingly, "Politics" is the dominant cluster, containing 266 articles, whereas articles relating to border crossing are very low. This reflects, potentially, the different audience addressed, different ownership and agendas.

Table 3. Results from topic modelling and cluster analysis of mainstream news ($N = 18,527$).

| Label topic cluster | <i>N</i> Topics | Description |
|--|--------------------|---|
| Border crossing | 17 | Describing perilous journeys and refugee camp conditions |
| Management and unequal impacts of Covid-19 | 11 | Describing impacts on e.g. work, health, treatment, vaccination |
| Politics | 8 | Covering politics e.g. regarding social/economic issues, EU policy, international court decisions |
| Refugee and migrant integration | 4 | Covering e.g. migrant/refugee experiences of integration/inclusion |
| Risks and danger in crossing borders | 2 | Covering mistreatment/detainment/asylum |
| Arts and culture | 1 | Covering art/cultural content and events |

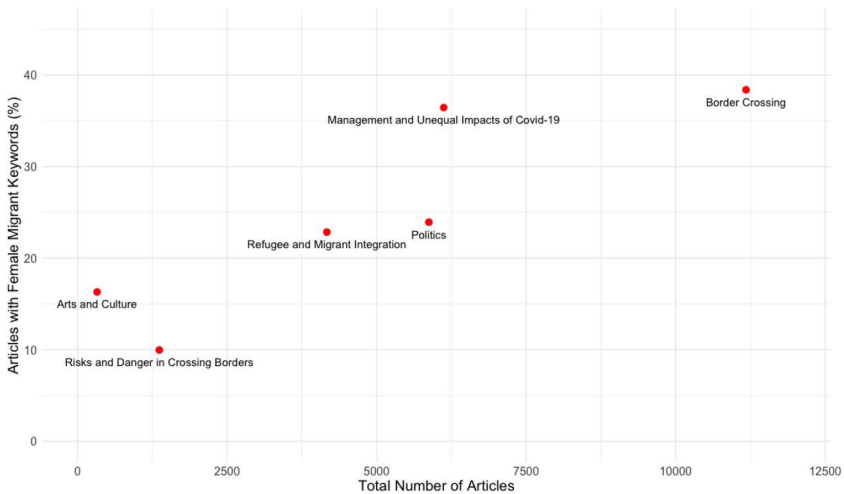


Figure 2. Topic clusters and share of articles with female migrant keywords.

Qualitative findings and discussion

Focusing on articles from the “Management and Unequal Impacts of Covid-19” cluster enabled us to conduct more in-depth, micro-level analyses. Guided by our central research questions, we begin by discussing examples of the most inclusive forms of representation (“transformative and instrumental solidarity”) and move towards discussing empathetic representations, before outlining the emergent representations of pity. This intersectional analysis pays special attention to context and power dimensions in each representation.

Transformative and instrumental solidarity

Transformative solidarity was found in a range of articles across topics. This mode of representation focuses on political and structural context, and is based upon the logic of radical inclusion, with its ultimate aim of inciting social action (Varma 2022). Across the corpus, radical inclusion was extended to a range of groups, including one frequently overlooked group

Table 4. Results from topic classification of minority news and share of female migrants ($N = 448$).

| Cluster name | Percent of articles (N) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Border crossing | 3.1% (14) |
| Management and unequal impacts of Covid-19 | 12.7% (57) |
| Politics | 59.4% (266) |
| Refugee and migrant integration | 15.2% (68) |
| Risks and danger in crossing borders | 4.9% (22) |
| Arts and culture | 4.7% (21) |

disproportionately impacted by the pandemic: students. This is apparent in one *Guardian* article (14th December 2020), where the author, a female migrant, connects her experiences as an international student with other overlooked groups including “temporary visa holders”, “backpackers, refugees and asylum seekers”. She refers to these groups using collective pronouns: “they are now unemployed, in danger of homelessness and lining up at charities for food vouchers just to survive” (emphasis added). The discursive construction of solidarity is made not only *with whom*, but *in relation to whom*: “They wanted us to come here, but in a crisis, we feel abandoned. It is deeply hypocritical” (emphasis added). Though the author recognizes marginalized subjectivities and differences in experience between groups, the issues common to multiple marginalized groups is emphasized through collective pronouns that establish a cleavage between those who are exploited and lack access to services, and those who hold power; in this case the government.

Similar patterns can be seen in one *Muslim News* article (13th May 2020), discussing the complex causes of higher levels of COVID-19 related deaths among migrant women in the UK. Here, the case of one migrant woman, Belly Mujinga; “the ticket officer who died after being spat on by an infected passenger” is highlighted as just one example of the increased risks facing minoritized groups. The article reports, “[t]here is a concern that they will find reasons to blame BAME communities for their own deaths, with these deaths being pinned on cultural and genetic factors” (emphasis added). Solidarity appears in the construction of connections across different ethnically minoritized groups, who all suffer from structural inequality and the racism which perpetuates this.

We also see solidarity emerge within representations of migrant women when journalists include migrant women’s voices and analytical perspectives. Migrant women’s voices are included, for example, in articles relating to the so-called “refugee crisis” in articles discussing how the pandemic worsened conditions for refugee women and their communities. In *Die Bild* article (4th February 2021), Ms. Jihan Khodr, a Lebanese-born German resident and volunteer in refugee aid, is quoted in her address of the former Chancellor Angela Merkel. She is quoted as follows: “I have a lot of contact with refugee women and mothers. There were always problems, but it was never as visible as in the Corona times. We want to help our children more!”. Although the journalist does represent her in emotional terms (“she burst into tears”) Khodr’s own voice dominates her representation within the article.

In the Munich-based minority news outlet *Neuland Zeitung*, solidarity towards migrant women emerges not through quotations, but by providing a platform for women to write about their personal perspectives on the integration process. As such, solidarity emerges not only through representations

within articles, but through the outlet's design, giving voice to women to describe their experiences without paraphrasing, or journalistic interpretation. These are found in articles discussing linguistic and cultural-related challenges (Article One, Issue 1, 2021) and reflections on the experience of Lockdown (Article Two, Issue 1, 2021). Whilst many focus on structural challenges, there are also hopeful pieces (Article Two, Issue 1, 2021). The deeply personal reflections in *Neuland Zeitung* shine a spotlight on personal narratives, assigning space for critique, analysis and deliberation to the migrant women writing the articles, rather than treating them as news subjects to be covered in a more distant voice.

Combined modes of representation: solidarity and empathy

Previous work on representations of marginalized groups has distinguished between empathetic representations at the level of the individual, versus politicized, collective representations which “enact solidarity through a technique of radical inclusion” (Varma 2020). This study finds the binary distinction between individual (empathetic) and collective (politicized) representations is not clear cut. Many articles use the stories of individual women as a means to communicate a message of radical inclusion and solidarity. One *Guardian* article (1st September 2021) focuses on an organization for hotel cleaners in Spain, founded as a union-style organization, developing an app to support these women. One migrant woman involved in this organization is quoted, describing the extreme circumstances many women face:

The women were forced to survive on food banks and charity from community groups and the church. [...] “I couldn’t claim furlough because my husband was receiving it, €900 a month, and I only say that because I’m one of the lucky ones”, Atana said.

Drawing on her own experiences, anecdotes of others, and historical context, Atana describes a complex experience of simultaneous intersectional advantage and disadvantage, with the key underlying point: that hotel profit underpins this exploitation. Atana also describes the nature of the group: “the majority are immigrants from Latin America, eastern Europe and Africa” She later adds, “they [business owners] prefer single mothers because they’re easier to exploit” (emphasis added). As intersectional markers, these offer indications as to who the most vulnerable women are, tied to place of birth, and gendered family roles. At the end of the article, Atana calls for collective solidarity in a direct mode of audience address: “if you’re looking for a hotel, look for one where there are humane working conditions”. This provides an example of a migrant woman’s voice being included both actively, as she calls for change, and critically, when represented in mainstream news.

Coverage of the exploitation of female migrant workers in a variety of precarious sectors extends across the sample. For example, an article from the *Guardian* (12th May 2020) highlights the case brought against one migrant woman, Rosa, who was held liable for spreading COVID-19. The article begins by describing her as “a legal permanent resident from the Dominican Republic whose children and husband live in New Jersey”. These intersecting identity markers make her relatable to the audience (her role as a mother, her background) and legitimize her inclusion (being “legal”); as such, the representation could evoke empathy in the audience. Rosa’s voice is included within the article, and she is quoted in predominantly emotive terms (“all my children were suffering watching me cry at night [...] I saw everything gray”). Here there are elements of the empathetic mode of representation in the usage of personal, emotive quotes. However, the representation also includes context regarding the history of disease criminalization in the US. For example, it notes, “you can go all the way to ‘Typhoid Mary’, an Irish immigrant woman who was detained for many years after being accused of spreading the disease”. This socio-historical context, displaying the discriminatory roots of the accusations made against Rosa, allows us to see this representation as employing elements of *transformative solidarity*.

Empathy

Throughout the corpus, migrant women appear frequently within individual profiles. A *Guardian* article (1st July 2020) focusing on Ernesta Nat Cote and her experiences working as a cleaner in Lewisham Hospital during the pandemic describes her first in reference to her profession (“a cleaner at Lewisham Hospital”), then via her experience and family background (“At 57, she is older than many of her colleagues, a grandmother”), her hardworking nature (“an old timer in a workforce where people tend to come and go”, “she applies an obsessive rigor”), her popularity (“everyone knows Ernesta”), her personality (“buoyant with confidence”), and finally her migrant background (“born in Equatorial New Guinea”). This reflects the representational logic of empathy in two ways: firstly, by outlining the many points of a possible connection with readers, and, secondly, by constantly foregrounding Ernesta’s exceptional and outstanding work.

The contexts in which representations emerge must also be considered. The intersectional positioning and use of identity markers in covering Ernesta implicitly reference class-based distinctions that shape perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the UK. Ernesta is quoted: “I’m a cleaner, but I don’t put myself like a cleaner. The way you put yourself is the way they’re going to take it”. There are, nevertheless, points of contrast within the article that suggest dynamics of exclusion. Ernesta is referred to by her first name, while a second migrant woman represented in the article – a white, Irish migrant woman – is referred to by her surname. While no conclusions

can be drawn on this based on one example, the contrast raises questions regarding the representation of migrant women of different backgrounds in the same piece. It brings to mind racialized hierarchies in the representation of migrant women which have been found in previous studies (Slakoff and Brennan 2023). Regarding the inclusion of Ernesta's voice throughout the article, she is quoted describing the broader situation, with most direct quotes reflecting her feelings, attitude, and experiences in emotive and descriptive terms ("I'm very blessed. God is good for me"). Key, analytical perspectives, however, are articulated by the journalist. One of the defining factors of representations containing empathy is the inclusion of groups or individuals based upon certain conditions, such as outstanding achievements or shared identity markers. Here, Ernesta's inclusion is largely based upon the notion of individual exceptionalism, rather than radical inclusion.

Within the corpus, conditions of inclusion in the representation of migrant women emerge along temporal and spatial axes. Simply put, the "acceptability" of certain groups of migrant women was conditioned in some outlets by historical trajectories (women who migrated further back in history, in contrast to contemporary migrants; those who are "legal", versus undocumented) and spatial patterns (migrant women being mistreated in other countries being framed differently than domestic cases). For example, the historical conditions of inclusivity can be seen in the obituaries of migrant women. In the UK, this is apparent in coverage of migrant women from the "Windrush Generation" (see: "Paulette Wilson", *The Daily Telegraph*, 31st July 2020). In German outlets, this can be seen in the coverage of Nükhet Kivran, a former chairwoman of the Munich Advisory Council for Foreigners (8th September 2020, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*). Whilst Kivran's migrant background is highlighted ("she came to Germany from Turkey at the age of 15"), her outstanding qualities and work on behalf of others are emphasized: "she campaigned tirelessly and successfully for the integration of people" (emphasis added). Elaborate descriptions of the work of important figures in obituaries are what defines this genre; however, there remains a striking, and consistent, difference in tone and the nature of representation between coverage of migrant women who migrated in *earlier* decades, versus those going through the same experiences now, enduring comparable hardships in the present day.

Geographical cleavages in migrant women's inclusion are notable in coverage of domestic violence. Domestic violence towards migrant women worsened during the pandemic globally; this is reflected across the corpus in coverage in both minority (see: In Namen der Frau, *Neuland Zeitung*, 10th October 2021) and mainstream outlets (see: Refugees Refuse: One in four Abused, *The Sun*, 16th June 2020). Many articles include representations of solidarity towards these women, often through the inclusion of rich

contextual detail. In *The Sun* (19th September 2021), context is established between violence and the disproportionate impact that government cuts had on migrant women during the pandemic: “migrant women are locked out of services and unable to access support altogether because they have no recourse to public funds” (emphasis added). However, in furtherance of the dynamic noted above, UK news coverage of domestic violence within the corpus primarily addressed *international* cases, rather than the rise in domestic violence against migrant women in the UK. In *The Daily Telegraph* article (22nd December 2020), journalists focus on one migrant woman in the US, described as “an undocumented migrant who only speaks Spanish”. This establishes a hierarchical distinction drawn between the domestic and international framing of these stories, and the legitimacy of their status (“undocumented”) with the stories of migrant women abroad being consistently foregrounded above domestic cases.

Speaking for migrant women

One key element determining the inclusiveness of representations is the use of direct quotes from migrant women in articles. As has been emphasized throughout the findings, many articles include emotive and descriptive quotes from women, whilst the provision of analysis comes through the voice of the journalist, or often, non-migrant spokespeople. This means that migrant women’s issues are often presented through an emotional frame, rather than allowing migrant women to have a say on the broader structural context or causes of their situation, or to speak on behalf of a collective; e.g. other migrant women, other workers, or citizens. This results in a hierarchy of voices between the personal (migrant) and professional (expert). In a *Daily Telegraph* article, the experiences of migrant women in the US at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centre (15th September 2020) quotes a whistleblower, Dawn Wooten, and migrant women at the detention centre. However, the overarching analytical perspective is limited to the whistleblower and the journalist, whilst migrant women (described as “detainees”) are quoted in emotive terms, or paraphrased.

Another *Daily Telegraph* article (20th October 2020) addresses the increased precarity of migrant women working as domestic maids in oil-producing states around the Persian Gulf during the pandemic but confines migrant women’s voices to emotional accounts. One migrant woman’s voice is included, as she states, “I cry so much because my employers are always angry”. Contrastingly, the analytical perspective comes from the journalist and spokespeople cited in the piece. The exclusion of migrant women’s analytical perspective can also be seen in articles within minority news sources, for example, covering domestic violence (“In Namen der Frau”, *Neuland Zeitung*, 10th October 2021), and the challenges of the integration of female refugees during COVID-19 (“Scotland welcomes Afghan family

after immigration battle defies the odds”, *Asian Image*, 22nd September 2021). In one *Asian Image* article, the husband of one migrant woman – Tabasum – is quoted extensively, whilst her representation remains in the third person. This compounds prevailing concerns around silencing marginalized voices and detracts from the potential of news coverage to provide a platform for promoting solidarity.

Lazy and pitying references

Whilst representations of solidarity typically focused on underlying points of connection to other groups and empathetic connections highlighted points of commonality, “pitying” representations identified in this analysis focused not only on stressing vulnerability but (intersectional) distance between the reader and the subject, through disempowering labels such as “women and children” or “especially women”.

This disempowering mode of representation emerged in offhand mentions in longer articles, for example, in one *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article, (29th June 2020): “Women, who are more likely to take on the now urgent childcare and are more often exposed to violence by partners and people with a migration background” are often affected (emphasis added). When patterns of intersectional exclusion are highlighted, such representations do little to meaningfully elevate the experiences and perspectives of this group of women. Similar representations are found in *The Sun*, where migrant women were represented solely through the description “forgotten migrant women”. Other examples can be seen in minority news outlets; in one *Muslim News* article (13th May 2020), the causes of gross disparities in health outcomes of COVID-19 between white and ethnic minority and especially migrant and refugee communities are speculated on. The journalist states “with men at higher risk, women and children may be left more isolated”. This also emerges in other coverage areas; reporting on the Calais-Dover crossing of the English Channel, *The Sun* uses the labels “vulnerable women and children” (19th December 2020). Such representations not only persistently collocate women and children (melding their concerns, and equating their levels of vulnerability), and overlook the compound challenges these groups are facing, but also disempower migrant women by suggesting that they are passive actors.

At the same time, representations that highlight differences and infantilize women to *exclude* them are also used as a justification to “help” or “save” them. Put simply, it is through victimizing migrant women, their inclusion is somehow deemed more legitimate in some outlets. The discursive construction of migrant women as a lesser group, often in parallel with children, permits their being helped. This logic of representation is predominantly found in the right-wing newspapers within the sample, where certain identity markers belonging to the majority group (being male, economically active,

middle class, educated) are repurposed as grounds for exclusion and a lack of empathy or sympathy. For example, in an article from *The Sun* (25th March 2021) examining the UK's rising immigration during the pandemic, migrant women's vulnerable status is used to justify their humanity, as Priti Patel stated, "87 per cent of arrivals last year were men [...] where are the vulnerable women and children that this system should exist to protect?". Rather than channelling empathy, here, explicitly gendered identity markers associated with vulnerability are used, reinforcing gendered and socially embedded power imbalances.

Word embeddings: pattern confirmation

Given this study's concern with the presence of solidarity and empathy in migrant women's representations during the pandemic period, all articles from the mainstream news cluster, "The Management and Unequal Impacts of Covid-19" were analysed using word embeddings. In essence, word embeddings can highlight patterns, allowing us to tentatively confirm whether qualitative results are reflected more broadly.

Firstly, we compared how adjectives² most commonly associated with the group "migrants" compared with adjectives most closely associated with migrant women, or migrant men (see Table 5). As Table 5 shows, the adjectives more closely associated with "migrant women" are discursively differentiated from the adjectives associated with migrants, and migrant men. Namely, there are more emotive adjectives with disempowering connotations, with "vulnerable" being not only the top adjective associated with migrant women in the corpus but the top word overall. This connects to our qualitative analysis of pity in migrant women's representations, whereby the word was used frequently to group women and children. Interestingly, whilst the adjectives closest to the gender-neutral "migrant" term do not mention age, "migrant women" are associated with the word "elderly", an adjective with connotations of frailty, as opposed to the more neutral terms "old" and "young" discursively associated with the representations of migrant men.

Table 5. Top 10 adjectives most associated with migrants, migrant women and migrant men using word embeddings.

| Migrant | Migrant women | Migrant men |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| Undocumented | Vulnerable | Old |
| Small | Undocumented | Young |
| Young | Unable | First |
| Alone | Elderly | Good |
| Vulnerable | Female | British |
| Poor | First | Black |
| Numb | Numb | Italian |
| British | Black | Foreign |
| Unable | Indian | Alone |
| Foreign | Foreign | Unable |

Table 6. Top nouns (person labels) most associated with migrants and migrant women, using word embedding.

| Migrant | Migrant women |
|-----------|---------------|
| Migrant | Girl |
| Refugee | Worker |
| Immigrant | Community |
| Worker | Migrant |
| Child | Woman |
| People | Child |
| Woman | Student |
| Family | Refugee |
| Man | Staff |
| Parent | Nurse |
| Group | Partner |
| Community | Group |
| Citizen | Immigrant |
| Us | Victim |
| Girl | Employee |

Next, we analysed the nouns (referring to individual people or groups) most commonly associated with migrant women and migrants.

Table 6 shows the nouns most closely associated with migrants as a general group, in comparison to words which were more closely associated with “migrant women”. Whilst we see some overlap, there are clear differences. As the qualitative analysis touched upon, migrant women’s coverage during the pandemic did focus prominently on migrant women as workers, in articles related to job loss and increased precarity, environmental exposure and exploitation. We see “worker”, “staff”, “nurse” and “employee” within the list of top nouns associated with migrant women, whilst employment-related labels are less associated with “migrants”. Also, as a potential indication of solidarity within the articles on migrant women, the word “community” is much more associated with migrant women than it is with migrants as a neutral term. Furthermore, as evidence of the pitying frame of representation here we see that “victim” features within the top nouns associated with migrant women uniquely, in line with our qualitative findings. Overall, whilst it is impossible to conduct informed grounded theory on all articles in the selected cluster, word embeddings allow us to tentatively explore some of the qualitative findings, by illustrating the most discursively associated words across a large corpus.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic served as an opportunity to shift the politics of visibility in the news media and to promote solidarity and inclusion towards intersectionally minoritized groups. Yet, extant research has not engaged with the dynamics of news media coverage during this period, and explored how minoritized groups such as migrant women were represented (Walter

and Glas 2024). This mixed-method study finds evidence of transformative and instrumental solidarity in representations of migrant women. Addressing our first research question regarding the articulations of these representational lenses, we find that they differ in scale (collective vs individual representation), their inclusion of context (broad political and socio-historical vs close, individual context), their issue focus (long-term, multi-issue vs short-term, single issue) and their platforming of voice (emotive or analytical). Somewhat unsurprisingly, such representations were generally more concentrated in left leaning and minority news, perhaps due to these outlets' concerns with advocating for minoritized groups. Representations demonstrating solidarity towards different groups of migrant women generally were found in longer features; this suggests that such representations, which aim to promote inclusion and social action lend themselves to a particular style of journalism.

Differently to Varma (2020), who finds empathy and solidarity to be largely mutually exclusive logics of representation, this study finds representations to appear on a spectrum, often mixed within the same article. From analysing articulations of these different representational modes, we propose understanding empathy and solidarity as lenses temporarily employed by journalists to evoke specific reactions in the audience. The temporary and interchangeable employment of these different lenses of representation relates to conceptualizations of solidarity as "thin" and "thick", resonating with Wright et al.'s (2022) notion of "drive by solidarity". In addressing our first research question on articulations of solidarity and empathy, studying news representations of migrant women revealed a further representative logic: pity. Here, migrant women's inclusion – predominantly found in right-leaning outlets – becomes palatable with increased (intersectional) distance to the subject. Temporal and geographical distinctions are employed to emphasize how different, desperate and exceptional these women's cases are, thus how these migrant women are "victims", worthy of help. These findings connect to de Carvalho, Santia, and Ramasubramanian (2024), who identified the framing of Indigenous people as victims within pandemic news coverage. Beyond news coverage, Liu and Wan (2024) also showed how policymakers in Taiwan employed a similar, gendered, victim frame in reference to migrant spouses, thus compounding patterns of exclusion.

In answering our second, methodological research question, combining qualitative and computational approaches enabled us to understand how intersectional identity markers function in different ways and on different scales across representational modes. Whilst the initial analysis revealed topical patterns in the coverage of migrants and migrant women, the qualitative analysis allowed us to explore precisely how representations were articulated. Stories of migrant women from EU and Western countries were largely absent across the corpus. Instead, news coverage of "migrant

women” constructs a frequently racialized figure, associated with certain contexts (poverty, precariousness, the family, foreignness). Intersectional identity markers collocated with migrant women are often connected to discourses of class and socioeconomic status, poverty, and precarity. Ethnic backgrounds and nationalities of women emphasized in representations revealed who the media define as “migrant women”. Specifically, the backgrounds of migrant women foregrounded were those from Syria, from South-east Asia, Latin America and Central America.

In line with the intersectional focus of this special issue, the qualitative analysis revealed that the news media’s construction of the migrant woman is a constellation of minoritized identities, underpinned by notions of pity assigned to those who “deserve” help; in other words, through a form of intersectional stereotyping. Similar to visual analysis of representations of the “refugee crisis” (Maneri 2021), this study finds that the figure of the “migrant woman” emerges as an intersectional assemblage of identity markers and contexts – being a low-wage worker, from a poorer country, often being a person of colour, and a mother. This reproduces hegemonic power structures and racialized hierarchies. However, different constellations of identity markers lend themselves to different types of representation. Whilst gendered identity markers related to family roles typically emerge in empathetic representations, markers of socioeconomic status appear in representations expressing solidarity.

Overall, and despite limits in the extent of comparability, we locate patterns emerging regarding patterns in migrant women’s representation across different outlets in Germany and the UK. Topic modelling guided us towards contexts in which migrant women are visible, word embeddings highlighted key discursive dimensions of representation, and qualitative analysis allowed us to deepen our understanding of the representational modes of solidarity, empathy and pity. As such, from a methodological perspective, this study shows how computational and qualitative methods can be combined in order to study complex, nuanced topics, such as representation. Focusing on news media coverage from the pandemic period has shown that during crisis periods, whilst the news media can promote solidarity towards groups, the presence of a crisis does not guarantee that inclusive representations would be used. Indeed, despite the crisis context of the pandemic and the fact that migrant women are among the worst impacted groups, findings show that even in “positive” news coverage, a range of representational lenses are employed that can reinforce patterns of exclusion in subtle ways. In considering the possible role the news media can play more broadly in supporting inclusion or enacting solidarity, this study complicates and enriches our understanding of different representational lenses, and how they are employed in relation to minoritized groups, working towards an identification of problematic patterns in exclusionary representation.

Our research has not been without challenges; whilst we included a broad corpus including outlets from the UK and Germany, the topic modelling results led us to a set of particularly relevant articles, which were potentially skewed towards the English language. This article was not intended to include a systematic, cross-national, cross-outlet comparison; however, the authors did not anticipate the extent to which the quantitative results would focus on the UK section of the sample. We used machine translation to cross the language barrier, however automated translations are imperfect and mistranslations can impact further analysis results (Lind et al. 2022). On one hand, topic modelling as an approach to reach smaller, more concentrated qualitative samples for further analysis works very effectively, facilitating both a comprehensive overview at the macro level and the ability to identify a small, highly relevant sample. On the other hand, state-of-the-art multilingual text analysis methods still imply a tradeoff between scalability and human-level accuracy (Baden et al. 2022).

Ultimately, in studying the potential for social change embedded in the news representations, this study enriches discussions of journalism's possible role in promoting inclusion and solidarity in society. Representations based upon both solidarity and empathy challenge traditional objective, monitorial journalistic norms (Broersma 2017). Unpacking the intersectional dimensions of migrant women's representations helps us identify who is visible (and who is not), who is defined as worthy of empathy, and in which contexts (in which moments and places/situations is solidarity expressed with certain migrants). Combining computational and qualitative methods allowed us to use the intersectional solidarity framework on a larger but more focused set of articles, which dominant computational approaches alone (e.g. keyword searches) simply could not reach. Looking to the future, scholars could examine the way in which different intersectional identity markers are employed in different national contexts; how the legitimacy criteria for inclusion vary by outlet, and by country, and how we might explain these different "conditions" for inclusion. Future studies could explore the potentially varied impacts of these different modes of representation on audiences, and begin to include more diverse news formats.

Notes

1. This was calculated using the mean Gamma (γ) score. Gamma, in LDA topic modeling, represents the measure of how relevant a document is to a topic. The mean gamma score for "management and unequal impacts of COVID-19" was used as a threshold when sampling articles.
2. We excluded adjectives making reference to time, speed, order and volume.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Keyword searches

A multilingual keyword search was created and matched across German and English. Differences in grammar between German and English created an increased challenge for gendered search terms because, unlike English, German uses gendered nouns. This resulted in search strings that were structurally different, but semantically equivalent.

Migrant

EN = Migrant.*, Foreign.*, Immigrant.*, Student.

DE = Migrantin.*, Einwanderin.*, Zuwanderin.*, Ausländerin.*, Gastarbeiterin.*, Immigrantin.* OR Migrations.*, eingewandert.*, einwandert.*, zuwandern.*, zugewandert.*, zuwandert.*, ausländisch.*, "aus dem Ausland", "immigriert.*"

Women

EN = Women.*, woman.*, girl.*, female.*, Mother.*, Sister.*, Daughter.*

DE = Frau.*, Mädchen, Mutter, Mütter, Schwester.*, Tochter, Töchter, Bürgerin.*, Staatsbürgerin.*, Studentin.*, Schülerin.*

Appendix 2. Pre-processing topic models

Before translation, minimal pre-processing steps included cleaning up duplicates, splitting documents into individual words (tokenization), and removing punctuation. To reduce noise for topic modelling, we followed Maier et al. (2018) suggestions of lowercasing, lemmatization, stop-word removal, and pruning of outlier occurrences (<5 and >99 per cent), using the default quanteda dictionary and lexicon R packages (Rinker 2018).

LDA topic models use statistical co-occurrence of words to group words and documents into a pre-selected number of topics. We followed the methodology laid out by Maier et al. (2018). We trained and optimized the topic model on our mainstream news sample using the LDA model in topicmodels (Grün and Hornik 2011) and ldatuning (Murzintcev and Chaney 2020) R packages. We found the best number of topics (k) by comparing LDA scoring algorithms from ldatuning across models that varied in their number of topics (10 to 100, by 5). The researchers then compared the interpretability of each model; sixty topics was the best performing model.

Appendix 3. Provisional coding scheme

Scale:

– is this story about one woman/multiple women (personal/collective)?

3rd person labels

“women and children”

“especially women”

By occupation

Through their relationship to men: as wives and girlfriends

Family labels: Daughter/Mother/Sister/Wife

Type of citizen/spokespeople

- “ordinary” citizens
- Activists
- Elite source
- Politicians
- NGO
- Businesswomen

Use of direct voice/reported speech

- Emotive
- Descriptive
- Analytical perspective

Context

- *Personal* (one person profile, personal context)
- *local* (discusses local context, similar women)
- *Structural/broad* (discusses story in context of broader events/issues/structure)
- *Historical* (connects to similar events in other periods)
- *Horizontal/connection to other minoritized groups*

Appendix 4**Table A1.** Articles cited in text.

| Outlet | Date | Title | Summary |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 14th December 2020 | Australia wants international students to study here but abandoned them during the Covid crisis | Reflections and call for action from Colombian female migrant and international student – in reaction to lack of support during the COVID-19 pandemic |
| <i>Muslim News</i> | 13th May 2020 | How Govt failed Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities during Covid-19 pandemic | Description and analysis of the unequal impacts of COVID-19 on the population of the UK |
| <i>Die Bild</i> | 4th February 2021 | Verzweifelte Eltern reden über den Lockdown; Tränen bei Merkels Bürger-Talk | Reflects on the points raised during Angela Merkel's annual discussion with citizens – one migrant women's question is highlighted in the article |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 1st September 2021 | Spanish hotel booking app to show working conditions of staff | Reports on Union-like organization and app to monitor and report potential mistreatment of hotel workers in Spain – in a sector dominated by migrant women |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 12th May 2020 | He lived in the US for forty years. Then he became the first to die from Covid-19 in immigration jail | A man who had lived and worked in the US for over four decades died of COVID in immigration custody. <i>The Guardian</i> report focuses on his sister's account of the event |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 1st July 2020 | You have to take Action: One hospital cleaner's journey through the pandemic | The profile of Ernesta, a hospital cleaner who played an integral role in the union and protecting the rights of workers |
| <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | 31st July 2020 | Paulette Wilson | Obituary for a female migrant (from Windrush generation) who campaigned a lot for the rights of the Windrush generation |
| <i>Sueddeutsche Zeitung</i> | 8th September 2020 | Eine Frau für das Miteinander; Nükhet Kivran, ehemalige Vorsitzende des Ausländerbeirats, ist im Alter von 56 Jahren gestorben | One woman with a migration background, who was on the migration council in Munich, passed away |
| <i>Neuland Zeitung</i> | 10th October 2021 | In Nahmen der Frau | A piece on domestic violence worsening during the pandemic. |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 16th June 2020 | Refugees Refuse: One in four Abused | Report on the fact that one in four domestic abuse survivors are rejected from refuges because they have no housing benefit access |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 19th September 2021 | Credit Crunch: Universal Credit £20 cut could push domestic abuse victims into poverty, warns charity | Describes rising domestic abuse in pandemic – and the potential increased vulnerability, especially of migrant women – due to government cuts to welfare |

(Continued)

Table A1. Continued.

| Outlet | Date | Title | Summary |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | 22nd December 2020 | Inside New York's domestic violence shadow pandemic | Reports on rising domestic violence during the pandemic and its potential causes, highlighting the increased vulnerability of migrant women and drawing on several individual's experiences and accounts |
| <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | 20th October 2020 | "I want to leave but I'm scared": Pandemic increases risk of violence for Gulf's Domestic workers | Highlights how the precariousness of many domestic maids situations (working in Gulf state) has become much worse during the pandemic. Reports on working conditions, physical abuse, and human rights abuse |
| <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | 15th September 2020 | Whistleblower nurse alleges "hysterectomies performed on immigrant women" in US | Detained immigrant women under ICE custody undergoing different medical procedures without consent. Reports on whistleblowers account |
| <i>Neuland Zeitung</i> | Winter/Spring 2021 | Article One: Machmal fühle ich mich immer noch hilflos | Discusses a range of challenges on the experience of lockdown in Germany as a migrant |
| <i>Neuland Zeitung</i> | Winter/Spring 2021 | Article Two: Lockdown: eine Zeit mit zwei Zeiten | Discusses the experience of lockdown as an immigrant with the focus on some positive aspects |
| <i>Asian Image</i> | 22nd September 2021 | Scotland welcomes Afghan family after immigration battle defies the odds | An Afghan-Scottish man is reunited with wife, children and family after Taliban takeover |
| <i>Sueddeutsche Zeitung</i> | 29th June 2020 | CORONA; Vor allem ein großes Unglück | The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on families. Includes focus on several families, the issues they are working through, and the work of Caritas Erding |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 19th December 2020 | CUT-PRICE CROSSINGS Small boat smugglers "slash price for migrants" to cross the Channel ahead of festive surge | Highlights the work of people smugglers, who are charging increasing amounts to bring families from Calais to Dover |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 25th March 2021 | Be Tough to be Kind on Asylum | Argues that healthy, economically active working men should not be coming to the UK and claiming asylum, but rather the system should be only aiding women and children |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 4th June 2021 | "Outrageous": why was a US health worker charged with spreading Covid? | Description of the case/attempt to hold a female migrant care worker criminally liable for the spread of Covid – in causing the death of her client. Josefina Brito-Fernandez lost her license to work and faced the possibility of deportation |

APPENDIX C

Space for solidarity? Studying women journalists' experiences of covering minoritized groups

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Space for solidarity? Studying women journalists' experiences of covering minoritized groups

News coverage of minoritized groups has a significant and diverse set of impacts on audiences, yet little is known regarding journalists' perspectives on this aspect of their role. Moreover, the news media hold potential as a site of enacting solidarity, but few studies have explored how journalists approach solidarity practice. This lack of knowledge regarding journalists' perspectives on their roles is especially prevalent for women journalists. We conducted 23 semi-structured interviews with women journalists across the UK and Germany to learn about their role perceptions regarding minoritized group coverage and solidarity. Findings reveal that whilst the normative, ideal approaches to minoritized group coverage are quite consistent, the enactment of solidarity in and through journalistic work is contested. The perceived distance between women journalists prescribed, ideal roles, vs their described, actual roles has emotional consequences. Regarding the topic of solidarity, structures of intersectional opportunity and disadvantage constrain who is able to enact solidarity through their work, and at what professional price. Also, this study contributes to our theorization of solidarity as a journalistic practice; rather than a distinct sub-genre, the interviews uncover solidarity in journalism as a regular and often invisible journalistic practice, existing on a continuum between active and passive.

KEYWORDS: Solidarity, Women Journalists, Role Theory, Representation

Introduction

Historically, the perspectives of journalists from minoritized groups have been overlooked. The limited body of extant research has focused on experiences of discrimination, and identity suppression in newsrooms (Douglas, 2022; Somani & Hopkinson, 2018). Women journalists' experiences in particular are understudied, with almost all of the current literature focusing on harassment and misogyny, due to its widespread presence across national contexts (see: Chadha et al., 2017; Kundu et al., 2023). This important research highlights the significant range of challenges many women journalists face, whilst working in this often hostile and dangerous sector. However, adding to this vital work, it is also essential that women journalists' perspectives on their daily roles and practice are also brought to attention. Women journalists' approaches to minoritized group representation and the potential promotion of social justice through their roles can enable the identification of tensions and opportunities within journalistic roles more broadly.

Traditionally, journalism focusing on social justice has been defined as a peripheral sub-sect of the profession, lying firmly outside the traditional journalistic norms in the West. More recently, however, there has been pushback against such categorizations (Ferrucci & Canella, 2023). As a broad, journalistic 'logic of representation' and as a

news value (Varma, 2020; Varma, 2023a), solidarity enacted in and through journalism has been defined in contrast to monitorial modes of journalism. In essence, solidarity in and through journalism refers to the radical inclusion and destabilizing of hierarchies through journalistic texts, which can be articulated in different ways; through sourcing techniques, language usage and potential calls for action.

The limited research on solidarity in journalism studies has focused on news content, rather than journalists' perspectives. We know that journalists' personal conceptions, thoughts and normative definitions of their role can impact practice (Greber, 2002). These sit alongside numerous other influences, ranging from news outlet culture, to political context, complicating the relationship between prescribed and practiced roles. To understand journalistic approaches to minoritized group coverage and potential solidarity enactment, and to see how journalists' navigate potentially conflicting influences on their roles, this paper studies the perspectives and experiences of journalists from minoritized groups – namely, women journalists – by addressing through the following questions:

RQ1: How do women journalists approach the coverage of minoritized groups?

RQ2: How do women journalists navigate personal identities and professional norms in their coverage of minoritized groups?

RQ3: What factors constrain and enable the enactment of solidarity in women journalists work?

Using semi-structured interviews and reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), we examine women journalists' understudied perspectives and experiences of their roles, whilst using a critical, intersectional lens that allows for the extension of the theorizing of solidarity in journalistic work.

Solidarity in and through journalism

Within journalism studies, the hegemonic value of 'objectivity' has been challenged, if not abandoned in recent years (Canella, 2019; Wallace, 2019). Alamo-Pastrano et al (2018), has shown how 'objective', 'professional' journalism is embedded in racial dynamics, and bound to notions of whiteness. Challenges to traditional, monitorial conceptualizations of journalistic roles as 'neutral' and detached observers of society has been defined separately from mainstream journalism, as genres such as

'alternative journalism' (Atton, 2003), 'advocacy journalism' (Janowitz, 1975; Vine, 2017), and 'activist journalism' (Russell, 2017). Others have identified alternative 'models of journalistic practice', such as 'intersectional journalism' (Peterson-Salhuddinn, 2021). Cutting across these varied definitions of different journalistic sub-genres, is the enduring notion that journalism that advocates for certain minoritized groups sits outside the boundaries of 'normal', professional journalism (Ferrucci & Canella, 2023). However, such perspectives deny the reality that news media have served as a site for promoting social inclusion throughout history (Varma, 2023b). Indeed, recently, in the US and following the murder of George Floyd, scholars such as Schmidt (2023) have identified shifts in journalists' roles, towards a social justice and solidarity-based orientation (Schmidt, 2023).

Despite these shifts, few studies examine solidarity in news texts. Where they are found, representations of solidarity are more common in minority news sources (Alamo-Pastrana & William Hoynes, 2020). However, this 'logic of representation' is present across the news landscape, including in mainstream outlets (Beazer et al., 2024). Recent studies investigating articulations of solidarity have focused on solidarity in the coverage of the 'refugee crisis' within the European press (e.g., Cinalli et al., 2021). This work shows solidarity's enactment in response to crises, whilst highlighting that the presence of a crisis is not a necessary precondition. Other studies within this small but growing field have focused on solidarity more broadly, from a discursive perspective. For example, in the German context, Wallaschek et al (2020) studied discourses on 'solidarity' by examining articles mentioning the word 'solidarity'. Though important, such work does not recognize the ways in which solidarity is enacted when the word is not explicitly used.

Turning from news content to journalists' roles, little is known regarding journalists' perspectives on enacting solidarity through their work. Indeed, broadly speaking, few studies have examined how journalists perceive and approach minoritized group coverage. Notably, Arafat (2021) shows how the identities and experiences of Syrian diaspora journalists – and their activist roles – serve to challenge the traditional foundations of journalism in the West. Pantti and Ojala (2019: 1031) have also shown how journalists used personal stories of asylum seekers in order to counter stereotypes, demonstrating that such approaches are ultimately constrained by 'discursive structures that foster a culture of suspicion'. In the US, Varma (2018) has

highlighted how journalists adopted different roles (personalizing, or politicizing), in their coverage of the San Francisco Homeless project, as such, developing the concept of solidarity reporting. Importantly, this work turned the focus from journalists' personal identities, values and convictions, towards a broader, more versatile conception of a reporting mode.

To our knowledge, no studies have assessed the perspectives of women journalists in approaching minoritized group coverage, or enacting solidarity in their work. Addressing this gap is important, as understanding the perspectives of women journalists can allow us to better highlight the boundaries and dimensions of journalistic roles which may not be identified or experienced by relatively privileged, majority group members. Despite the lack of studies focusing on women journalists' perspectives on enacting solidarity, some researchers have explored their roles more broadly. Most of the research on women journalists has focused upon experiences of harassment, including in India (Chadha et al., 2017), Bangladesh (Kundu et al., 2023), Namibia (Zviyita & Mare, 2023) and the Philippines (Tandoc et al., 2023). These experiences of harassment have been shown to have a profound impact on women journalists' feelings about and perceptions of their roles. Investigating the abuse of women migrants online, Chen et al's (2018) cross-cultural study revealed that the extent and nature of online harassment women journalists' experiences is so strong that it alters daily practices and forces different types of coping strategies to emerge, including limiting the volume of online posting. Women journalists' responses to misogynistic abuse have been explored by researchers, for example through highlighting resistance strategies including establishing social media support groups (Mesmer and Jhang, 2023) and sharing tips on assignment or source avoidance in Brazil (Barão da Silva et al., 2023).

Women's presence in newsrooms does not guarantee that minoritized groups – including women – are more fairly represented (Sui et al., 2018). This raises many questions regarding the experiences and perspectives of journalists from minoritized groups. Regarding current knowledge on minoritized journalists' perspectives on social justice-orientated work, Peterson-Salahuddin (2021: 1) spoke with 13 'intersectional news creators' to conceptualise 'intersectional' journalism, as decentring hegemonic identities, including considerations of interlocking systems of oppression. Other studies have explored the activist-journalist tension; Møller Hartley and Askanius (2021: 875),

showed how some women journalists adopted an activist role during the height of the #MeToo movement in Denmark and Sweden, ‘albeit with some consequences and a price to pay’ within their careers. Also, Fletcher’s (2021) ethnographic study of marginalized journalists in the US has shown the obstacles journalists face in enacting ‘ethical practice’. This is vital work, but distinct from solidarity.

Solidarity and Journalists’ Roles

Moving on from considering solidarity as a distinct journalistic genre, Varma (2023a) defines solidarity as an alternative news value and a logic of representation, involving varying degrees of political and emancipatory potential. For Varma (2020), solidarity moves beyond simply ‘giving voice’ to marginalized perspectives, to explicitly platforming explanatory and analytical perspectives of marginalized group members, foregrounding the broader structural conditions and context reinforcing their exclusion.

Rather than being ‘present’ or ‘absent’, solidarity is understood as emerging to varying degrees. Building upon Varma’s (2020) framework, Beazer et al (2024) distinguish address ‘positive’ news coverage of migrant women, differentiating between representations evoking transformative solidarity, empathy, and pity. This distinguishes between descriptions of empathy and transformative solidarity enacted by journalists, offering meaningful insights into the role of journalists in either compounding exclusion or facilitating the inclusion of minoritized groups.

Gaining an understanding of the potential enactment of solidarity through minoritized group representations connects to journalists’ normative role conceptions. Therefore, this paper draws upon role theory to understand women journalists’ experiences and perceptions of their work. Biddle’s (1979) role theory helps us understand behaviour in relation to specific roles by looking beyond observable role aspects, towards an individual’s *reaction* to expected qualities and behaviours. Within journalism studies, Banjac (2022: 79) has used role theory to explore and illustrate how audiences ‘construct and perform their expectations [of journalists’ roles] through various feedback mechanisms’. Here, we turn from studying audience expectations, to journalists’ role expectations. Notably, Biddle (1979: 152) conceptualizes role expectations as describing ‘characteristics, anticipate their occurrence, insist upon them, or devalue them’. Role expectations emerge across three main modes; prescriptive, descriptive and cathectic. A summary of these modalities of role expectations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Biddle’s (1979) Modalities of Role Expectations

| Mode | Definition | Example |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Prescriptive</i> | Norms or demands expected of a role – as applied to the self and to others. | Minoritized group coverage should be approached by... |
| <i>Descriptive</i> | Refer to people’s personal accounts of what has happened in their role (and others roles) in the past, present and future. | Recently, when working on an article, I experienced ... |
| <i>Cathectic</i> | Describes personal, emotional reflections and evaluations of roles (in relation to self or others). | <i>Self-reference:</i> This aspect of my role has provoked personal stress / anger / joy, etc. <i>Other reference:</i> I see other journalists do X, and it makes me feel... |

Ultimately, through picking apart women journalists’ prescriptive, descriptive and cathectic reflections on their roles, Biddle (1979) provides a useful lens for understanding the understudied perspectives women journalists regarding minoritized group representation and solidarity.

Research Design

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 23 journalists based in the UK and Germany. Whilst these countries share relatively low proportions of women journalists (EJO, 2018), previous research found differences in professional attitudes across these countries, with journalists from Britain perceiving their roles as ‘more confrontational to those in power than their German colleagues’ (Henkel et al., 2019: 1996). As such, this study builds upon previous studies exploring this cross-national role difference, this time focusing specifically on journalists’ from a minoritized group.

Inclusion criteria was minimal; participants had to identify as a woman, and work as a journalist for a mainstream or minority news outlet¹ in Germany or the UK. Besides diversity of journalistic experience, participants’ backgrounds were mixed regarding

¹ Mainstream news outlets include widely consumed news outlets (print and other media), such as *The Guardian* and *The BBC* in the UK, and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Deutsche Welle* in Germany. Minority news includes a diverse range of outlets produced and consumed by minoritized groups (based upon gender, race or religion).

nationality, age (22 to 74), self-reported socioeconomic background, racial, and sexual identities. Participants were sourced using social media, professional platforms, and snowball sampling. Whilst this means that the sample is not representative of women journalists in both countries, crucially, this is not something we aimed to achieve. A summary of participants (pseudonymized) profiles is supplied in Appendix 1.

All interviews were conducted by the lead author in English, either over Zoom or via phone, an approach which has been shown to hold some advantages over face-to-face interviews, ranging from environmental, economic as well as social factors (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021). Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 90 minutes.

Using the main research questions as a starting point, an interview guide was produced (Morgan Brett & Wheeler, 2022). Not all participants answered identical questions, but each interview covered the same guiding questions, ensuring that research aims were addressed. A mixture of descriptive, feeling and knowledge-based questions were included, allowing us to gain a holistic overview of women journalists' experiences (see Appendix 2). We combined the semi-structured interview approach with some aspects of the Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2004). Transcripts of the interviews were automatically generated and edited in Microsoft Word, then combined with interviewer memos and reflection notes.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to analyse the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2019). TA refers to a collection of qualitative text analysis approaches, with differing philosophical assumptions, but a shared focus on 'generating themes' from data. Importantly, within reflexive TA, themes are classified as 'analytic outputs developed through and from the creative labour of our coding' (Braun and Clark, 2019:14). Unlike traditional TA, reflexive TA foregrounds critical concerns regarding researcher identity throughout the process (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Reflexive TA begins with a codebook; in this study, initial codes were created from the research questions in combination with Biddle's (1979) theory of role expectations. After reading each transcript and recording initial thoughts, interview transcripts were coded using the initial codebook (see Appendix 3), plus additional codes added throughout the analysis. Themes were developed and refined through repeated engagement with the dataset (presented in the findings section).

Statement of Positionality

Interviewees shared the same identity as the interviewer in terms of gender, and occasionally other identities such as national background. This often eased communication, however, some of the most fruitful conversations with British journalists were perceived to be facilitated by a common class identity (indicated through accent) and age. Notably, all interviews took place in English. Although all German participants spoke excellent English, the richness of their answers may not be equal to those offered in their mother tongue.

Regarding transcript analysis, as a white woman, interpretations of responses may miss instances of racial othering that a person of colour would be better placed to observe. Moreover, the way in which ethnic, racial, class-based and gender-based exclusion are encoded in German and British society varies; the primary researcher is perhaps more sensitive to the British context.

Findings

A summary of the main findings is included (Table 2), before elaborating with examples, explanation and context below.

Table 2: Summary of Findings

| Research Aim | Role Dimensions | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Prescribed Roles | Described Roles | Cathetic Role Reflections |
| RQ1 – <i>To understand approaches to minoritized group coverage.</i> | <p>Relatively consistent responses across the sample regarding how journalists' <i>should</i> approach minoritized group coverage.</p> <p>Key principles of 'respect', 'empathy', and platforming communities.</p> | <p>Divergent responses regarding described approaches to minoritized coverage, ranging from rendering groups similar to the majority group, to radically inclusive approaches.</p> | <p>Expressions of concern with reducing individuals and groups to single identities, frustration over who is able to be represented 'fairly', and anger at superficial engagement with minoritized groups.</p> |
| RQ2 – <i>To understand how women journalists' navigate personal identities and professional norms in minoritized group coverage.</i> | <p>Differing perceptions: Some journalists perceived themselves as 'extractor fans', requiring distance from communities, whilst others perceived their identities as an asset, or resource in minoritized group coverage.</p> | <p>Varied experiences: Some journalists described the 'exploitation' of their identities in crisis moments.</p> <p>Others described 'performing' their identities in a palatable way, having their professionalism questioned, or being pigeonholed on certain topics related to their (minoritized) identities.</p> | <p>Frustration regarding Editors exploitation of journalists' (marginalized) identities in moments of crises.</p> <p>Constellations of minoritized identities and particular values created additional challenges and emotional strain for some women journalists.</p> |
| RQ3 – <i>To understand perceptions on solidarity in journalism, and the factors that constrain and enable the enactment of solidarity.</i> | <p>Highly contrasting views on the role of solidarity in journalism: For some journalists, enacting solidarity was an essential part of journalism related to humanistic values and social justice.</p> <p>For others, solidarity was deemed to be incompatible with journalism, because it compromised professional distance with communities.</p> | <p>Solidarity emerged in invisible practices, such as refusing work, and arguing over headlines. It also emerged in visible practices, through radically inclusive representations, and offering financial compensation.</p> <p>Minoritized identities were perceived to constrain women journalists' ability to enact solidarity, as well as homogenous newsrooms.</p> | <p>Anger at the professional punishment of journalists working from a social justice standpoint.</p> <p>Frustration and upset regarding how journalists' identities must be exploited and suppressed strategically in crisis moments.</p> <p>Emotional wellbeing of women journalists suffered in homogenous newsroom environments.</p> |

Minoritized group coverage: the gap between prescribed and described roles

In addressing RQ1, 'How do women journalists approach minoritized group coverage?' women journalists based in the UK and Germany offered similar responses concerning how minoritized groups *should* be represented. For example, many interviewees articulated the need to 'give (minoritized groups) a voice', and 'be more sensitive' than when covering powerful groups (Diana*, DE). Across both countries, however, there was a consistent, perceived gap between the ideal approach, and practice. For example, Esma* (DE) stated, 'we say we need to represent society and we don't [...] we're very far away from that'.

For many of the younger journalists, the need for improved minoritized group representation attracted them to journalism. Tara* (UK) said, 'I want to feel like I'm advocating for people who you don't hear a lot from in society, or who are underrepresented or misrepresented'. An active engagement in 'changing mainstream perceptions' was identified as a key motivation of her work. Similarly, Jasmine* (UK) said 'I thought: wow, the media is racist! We need to work to do something about it'. For these journalists, bettering minoritized group representation was a key, normative dimension of journalists' roles.

Regarding concrete practices and approaches to minoritized group coverage, interviewees offered various responses. Freya* (UK) expressed a concern with 'trying to empower (minoritized groups)'. Nora* (DE) described 'going to the ground, being curious, asking the people about what they think [...] and hearing what they need'. This connects to notions of transformative solidarity (Varma, 2023a), which emphasizes the need to foreground participants' evaluative perspectives, rather than journalists own judgements. In line with this, Leena* (DE) also prescribed journalists' roles as 'not trying to analyse everything themselves', but to 'give as many perspectives as possible'.

Interviewees from both countries highlighted the importance of upholding values such as 'respect.' However, 'respect' was interpreted differently. For Jenny* (UK), an experienced and successful freelance journalist, 'respect' encapsulated a concern with 'using the right terminology', to avoid 'causing any offense'. In a similar vein, TV journalist Esma* (DE) emphasized how crucial it is 'for people to pronounce names correctly', by taking the time to clarify this with sources.

Uniquely, for Anna* (UK), a former journalist and current editor of a regional newspaper, improving minoritized group representation was a way of ‘starting to build bridges’. Notably, this regional newspaper historically published racist stories and cartoons; Anna* perceived her work as partially addressing this past, whilst expanding the audience. Differently, some other journalists in Germany attempted to render minoritized groups familiar to the majority group audience through coverage, reflecting the empathetic logic of representation (see Beazer et al., 2024). For example, Nora* (DE) said, in covering minoritized groups, ‘you always need to make some kind of relativeness to the reader’. These similarities point towards implicit conditions of inclusion.

For some interviewees, ‘educating yourself with context’ was a key dimension of journalists’ prescribed roles (Jasmine*, UK); this contextual awareness included the platforming of diverse perspectives on all topics. In an article on sexual assault, Jasmine* ‘made sure that I also included disabled women [...] with different types of disability’. Similarly, for Grace* (UK), exposing diversity of views and perspectives within and across minoritized groups allowed her to move beyond superficial coverage and ‘appreciate the nuances in people’.

Others described sourcing ‘diverse’ experts was fundamental to fair representation. Esma* (DE) described a ‘first step’ in minoritized group coverage as including analytical perspectives; ‘let’s not ask the same male elder experts, but just look for a female expert’. She later added, ‘I try to say we should ask (someone) with an Arab name or [...] a foreign name’, not because they ‘stand for migrant experts or refugee experts, but just as an economic expert’. In a similar vein, Nicole* (DE) described the common practice of homogenizing, pigeonholing approaches to coverage: ‘minorities are just portrayed as being a minority’ [...] ‘(the media) often have a black woman talking about her experience as a black woman, but not as a woman’. Across these responses is the concern with reducing individuals to single, superficial identities.

Notably, some journalists reported influences regarding *who* are able to be fairly. For example, Esther* (UK) stated, ‘often times larger groups with, maybe more watered down or acceptable politics are the ones that are highlighted’. Esther’s* response suggests unspoken rules regulating minoritized groups coverage, relating to politics. Differently to Varma’s (2020, 2023a) notion of transformative solidarity in texts, Esther*

describes how journalists minoritized group coverage is politically conditional; groups challenging the status quo may not get represented fairly or inclusively.

Navigating the self and the subject(s)

In response to RQ2, 'How do women journalists navigate personal identities and professional norms in their coverage of minoritized groups?' interviewees highlighted the frequently contested dynamics between themselves and the communities they cover. A few women journalists' perceived sharing identities with groups as irrelevant to coverage. Jade* (UK) described herself as being 'like an extractor fan, extracting all this information from people' and working 'in a relatively robotic way'. Similarly, Naomi* (DE) stated, 'you need to be a vessel', stressing the need to maintain distance with subjects, whilst communicating their voices neutrally. Jenny* (UK) described 'switching off the emotional part of your brain' and 'compartmentalizing [...] because it's not about you and it's not about your feelings'. Here, the removal of the journalists' individual identity is perceived as both essential to fair coverage, and a potential coping strategy. However, in the same interview, Jenny* described drawing upon personal experiences within her role ('I try to use [my identity] in a positive way, like when I'm writing about schools and my daughter'); this was perceived to enrich her coverage. As such, Jenny's responses expose a tension, between the need to remove journalists' personal identity and emotions, or use them as a resource.

For most interviewees, sharing minoritized identities with groups was perceived to improve coverage, but was not essential. Tara* said, 'there can be allies. I don't think you need to be from the exact same background to be a good journalist and bring in that kind of empathetic practice'. She defined this 'empathetic practice' as 'making a conscious effort' and 'actively making space for' fair representation.

For Nora* (DE) her minoritized identity is an important tool:

My upbringing as a daughter to a refugee family, also as a woman [...] here in Germany being a person of colour, being a migrant, being Palestinian in [home country] as well... This upbringing makes you aware of how people could be directly affected by not saying the whole version of the truth.

Comparably, Freya* (UK) who suffered from a severe health condition, perceived her role as a journalist to bring light to this issue and do good:

(Journalism) is something very satisfying because [...] I can take something that's a nebulous emotion and then construct a solid and coherent [...] argument with all the facts and real life case studies to show this is happening.

She perceived coverage of this minoritized group issue as ‘something constructive’ with the potential to have a positive impact. However, drawing upon personal experiences was also described as ‘tiring’ and ‘draining’. These tensions emerged in other interviews, for example Jasmine* (UK), who highlighted a central conflict: ‘there’s a question of whether you should have to [...] exploit your own heritage, sexuality, or mental health issues in order to get paid’. Her frustrations were related to journalists’ perceived superficial engagement with minoritized group issues.

Tokenism

Journalists in Germany and the UK highlighted the issue of tokenism. For example, Jasmine* described the experiences of her friend, a black woman and journalist in the UK:

Back when 2020 happened, [...] suddenly everyone was like, right, we wanna talk to you! We want your expertise. That felt exploitative in some, or most cases [...] because it’s like, now *you’re* the topic. So now we want to hear from *you* [...] cause we don’t wanna look racist.

Similarly, Mariam* (UK) stated, ‘I feel like media and journalism only really care about black people in times of crisis’. Esma* (DE) described a similar experience in Germany:

It was the time where there was this refugee crisis in Germany, and some editors came to me and asked me: I know you’re half Egyptian. Do you know Syrian people who like to make Christmas biscuits for Christmas?

Although this experience was recounted with humour, the absurd assumption that Esma’s* national background would mean being connected to communities from an entire global region, reveals racist assumptions. Most interviewees felt that journalists’ minoritized identities should not be side-lined, nor exploited during particular ‘relevant’ moments, but to be taken seriously.

Besides tokenism, interviewees also raised the connected issue of pigeonholing women with minoritized identities to write solely about communities and individuals sharing these minoritized identities. Esther* (UK) described how, ‘especially white male journalists [...] have a lot more freedom to write about any topic they want’. This draws attention to dimensions of intersectional privilege embedded within journalistic roles.

Contesting Objectivity

In response to RQ1 and RQ2, journalists’ highlighted tensions surrounding the notion of ‘objectivity’, in relation to minoritized group coverage. Some journalists, emphasized the importance of objectivity, such as Jenny* (UK) (‘you have to be extremely

objective'). However, most journalists' perspectives were more nuanced, or rejected the notion of objectivity entirely. In discussing white journalists covering stories on race, Esther* (UK) said:

(Editors are) like, if I choose a person of colour, there might be a lot of emotion and a lot of subjectivity to what they write because they are a racialized person. However, on the other hand [...] why are you as a white person covering this thing? What does it do for you that you're covering racism, when oftentimes you are either the beneficiary of racism or a perpetrator of racism?

For Esther*, journalists sharing identities with minoritized groups should not lead to a questioning of their professional integrity, given that subjective bias impacts everyone. From this perspective, not allowing journalists with minoritized identities to cover minoritized group issues can reinforce structures of oppression. Journalists in Germany also discussed the questioning of some journalists 'neutrality', particularly regarding the coverage of Gaza. For example, Esma* stated:

My father lost his cousin in the in the six days war [...] I don't really feel I can speak up as a person who is Muslim and who is half-Egyptian because they might think I'm one-sided. This is the biggest challenge, to be perceived as someone who is not neutral and not objective. But, I think that the German side cannot be objective and neutral at the same time.

Having a familial, historical connection to the situation in Gaza, is a factor which is presented as making Esma* less qualified to cover the topic. She perceives that her role as being impacted by how others view her identity.

Interviewees discussed tensions regarding their political values, which were also interpreted as creating conflict. For example, Jasmine* (UK) described her experience:

Sometimes I get told off for being too political [...].but my ideas aren't political, they were just the right thing to do because I believe that we should treat everyone with dignity and respect!

Thus, from the interviews, the image of an ideal palatable identity for journalists seemed to emerge. Or at least, a palatable *performance* of identities, including an acceptable political identity that does not challenge the status quo by being too critical.

Indeed, the minoritized groups' issues covered by journalists had to align with dominant discourses, otherwise, as Jade* (UK) described 'people will be called an activist [...] that's just the political landscape that we live in'. Many interviewees suggested that foregrounding their political values was only acceptable when external forces

legitimized this. Interestingly, for Leena* (DE), journalists should 'have that difference between personal and political [...] besides climate change, that is obvious'.

Many UK and Germany-based journalists' criticized the objective 'norm' underpinning their professional role expectations broadly speaking. Andrea* (DE) stated:

Western media or German media are often [...] arrogant enough to think that they are objective and that their point of view is neutrality. If you see it from a more global point of view, it is of course not.

Here, traditional, Western news values underpinning journalists' professional role expectations are problematized by placing them in a global context. Comparably, Aylin* (UK) said: 'I've never believed in objectivity [...] I think the best writers are those who bring the personal, political and social together'. She stressed the importance of being 'emotionally engaged with the subject'; notably, Aylin* is a successful, experienced journalist, without any formal journalistic qualifications. Rather than objectivity, for some others, a fundamental concern in advocating for and expressing solidarity with minoritized groups was integral to the role; Nora* (DE), who prescribed a journalist's ideal role as follows:

I see advocacy, activism and solidarity as part of a value-driven or ethics-driven journalist. [...] you will write stories about nonsense [...] when you don't have this purpose, when you don't have the inner compass, when you don't feel for the people you are giving voice to.

For Nora*, this 'inner compass' connected to humanistic values. Other expressed similar sentiment, such as Andrea* (DE):

When you become a journalist there should be some sense of justice [...] and making people be heard that are normally not listened to that much [...] The ones with money and the ones with influence, they already have their power.

Notably, Andrea* perceives her personal role, and journalists' roles more broadly, partly as challenging societal power imbalance. Practicing journalism with this 'sense of justice' meant addressing the mechanisms that compound exclusion by giving voice.

Many journalists covered minoritized groups in closer alignment with their personal values, than their professional role expectations. Specifically, Grace* said:

I cannot be delivering news that I do not believe in, in the name of objectivity. Because I am a human and this is my personal journey [...] when I pass away, my name is gonna be with something that I don't want my name to be with.

For some, this alignment of personal values with professional roles was a perspective that evolved through the experience of working as a journalist. For Jasmine* (UK), journalism ‘made (her) more compassionate’.

Across the interviews, the distinction between activism and journalism emerged as vital, yet contentious. Indeed, for Andrea* (DE), solidarity was ‘not the definition of journalism. In my eyes, it's activism’. Yet, for Andrea* the two ‘can blend into each other’, similarly to Leena* (DE) who described how journalists’ roles are ‘sometimes very near to activism’. Heike* (DE) also stressed ‘you have to keep a distance [...] even if you can understand the suffering of the people’. Whilst most journalists emphasized the need for this distance, implementing this in practice was more complex. As an alternative to drawing clear lines between journalists and communities, some journalists such as Jasmine* (UK) argued that ‘it's always good to consider your own biases because bias isn't always a negative thing’. Comparably to critical approaches to reflexivity and positionality adopted by researchers, Jasmine believed journalists’ should be aware and upfront about such biases.

Invisible Role Dimensions

Interviewees described pushing for fair minoritized group coverage often leading to behind-the-scenes conflict. Jenny* (UK) reported fighting over headlines with her editor, stating, ‘a headline that I just do not think fairly reflects what that person meant – whether it's left or right wing or whatever – I will fight for them to put an accurate headline’. Rather than accepting editorial decisions that might attract clicks, or satisfy certain interests, Jenny pushed for fair representation of minoritized groups.

Some behind-the-scenes conflict might be understood as (invisible) enactments of solidarity. For example Tara*, spoke about her experience of refusing to write a piece:

(Editors) asked me to write a puff piece about this landlord agency [...] about this exciting new measure that they've introduced to make it easier to evict people. I was like, I'm not typing that. Literally, they just want you to frame it in a way that's very positive. [...] I was just like, yeah, I'm not saying that.

Though invisible to readers, refusing to work might be considered a form of enacting solidarity; through withholding her labour, Tara* refused to participate in legitimizing a procedure which would negatively impact socioeconomically marginalized tenants.

When asked if there is space for solidarity in journalism, Charlotte* (DE) answered ‘there needs to be [...] I'm not sure if there really is, since editorial teams are pretty

homogenic'. This encapsulates one of the most important 'behind-the-scenes' factors perceived to influence journalists' roles, and solidarity practice; newsroom diversity. Jade* (UK) stated, 'if you haven't employed people then you are going to struggle to tell their stories [...] or ignore them'. This lack of diversity impacted journalists' emotional wellbeing, and their ability to practice their desired role. In describing her experience of working in male-dominant environment, one young British journalist, Silvia* (UK) described her experience as follows: 'I would love to be taken more seriously. Other women generally have taken me very seriously [...] I always feel so much better working with women than I do with men'.

Homogenous newsrooms also had professional and emotional consequences, for example for Tara* (UK), who described this as, 'a big reason that I'm not working in a full time journalist role right now [...] It feels like I'm going insane sometimes', due to 'always being the only person of colour'. In the context of homogenous newsrooms, some journalists' expressed frustration that editorial teams only recognized issues during crises. For example, Mariam* spoke about the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020:

So many publications were looking around at the newsrooms [...] and were like, we don't have any black writers, it's really bad'. In that moment, they became desperate to find that people to work for them. But since then it's kind of died down.

Here, a lack of concern in employing black journalists related to poor coverage of minoritized communities; these two topics, of minoritized coverage in news content, and minoritized groups working as journalists, were deemed inseparable.

Dominant concerns relating to the lack of newsroom diversity varied across countries. British journalists' frustrations with newsroom homogeneity focused predominantly on race and class. Meanwhile, German journalists spoke about educational exclusion, elitism, and pointed to the lack of journalists with migrant backgrounds. The lack of discussion of race and ethnicity may well be due to Germany's post-WWII silencing of language relating race and ethnicity (Salem and Thompson, 2016). Clara* (DE) said, 'it shouldn't be the case that only very highly educated people are able to write something in a newspaper'. Beyond the lack of socioeconomic diversity, others, such as Andrea* highlighted gender-based exclusion in the newsroom, which was particularly difficult to overcome.

Some participants described their professional role as, in part, challenging the historical homogeneity of newsrooms. For example, Jasmine* said:

I make a difference because I'm in the role and I know that I care about representation so I will be pushing for it.[...] people say oh well, people just aren't applying for the jobs [...] It's because everyone you feature is white! It looks racist.

For Jasmine*, not accepting 'different people, different perspectives, different ways of doing things and different stories' behind-the-scenes was interconnected with socially exclusive content. Both Grace* and Jasmine* were driven to create their own platforms outside of the mainstream news channels because of the inhibiting environment of homogenous newsrooms.

Enacting Solidarity: Definitions, challenges and opportunities

Many interviewees felt that enacting solidarity should be part of their roles as journalists, with a plethora of solidarity definitions emerging in the interviews. For Mariam* (UK), enacting solidarity meant, 'when you can see an issue and you highlight that issue even though you're not related to it'. For Tara* (UK), journalists' roles connected to 'holding power to account [...] and challenging injustices'. Other journalists, such as Freya* (UK) explicitly acknowledged the subjective, flexible nature of such definitions ('my advocacy and solidarity looks like one thing, but then, you know, there might be people at the Daily Mail who describe what they do (the same way)'). Regarding the enactment of solidarity, Jade* (UK) described her work as a 'wishy washy version of solidarity that is less [...] concrete in terms of women's rights or civil rights', but rather concerned with being 'more connected and interested by each other'.

In discussing journalistic limits of enacting solidarity, Clara* (DE) said, 'you cannot solve the problem with your article, but you can contribute to the discourse and to putting light on certain issues'. Moreover, Clara* stressed the importance of actions over words ('the way you pick your topics already shows solidarity [...] it doesn't mean putting certain words in an article, but it can just mean giving people a voice').

One of the key dimensions of transformative solidarity as outlined by Varma (2022), is that minoritized groups are represented as active resisters of their oppression, as opposed to passive victims. This form of solidarity was not common in interviews, however, was discussed by Esther* (UK). For example, when speaking about approaches to minoritized representation, she answered:

If I'm writing about a specific group, I would usually try to research the groups work already [...] I see if they're up for giving a comment or up for writing something. And that will usually involve me splitting some of my commission with them because [...] I try not to ask minoritized groups to work for free.

Notably, this financial compensation typically meant sharing fees with a minoritized community organization, either organized or chosen by the group being covered. Esther* highlighted her attempt to place minoritized groups' own voice and perspective in her writing – 'to place (minoritized groups) as agitators or people with agency' – perceiving her role as a way of collaborating with communities. She emphasized her efforts to frame minoritized communities as 'active participants who are taking control of their own liberation or their own movements' and 'uplift the work that's already being done by others', contradicting the commonly employed victimizing, pitying and charity-based frames often employed to represent minoritized groups (see: Goethals et al., 2022). Notably, Esther's* responses must be considered also in light of her also being an activist ('its part of my politics [...] about liberation'); she recognized that journalists adopting a similar approach 'share very similar politics to me'.

Whilst no other journalists described sharing financial compensation, the fundamental aim of creating a more balanced, collaborative relationship with communities did emerge. For example, Heike* (DE) prescribed journalists' roles in covering minoritized groups as follows:

It's not fair to get there like a vampire and ask people questions and get every detail of their life and [...] their emotional life and not give anything back. So, it's always a kind of exchange. I also share some of my experiences or my feelings.

Heike* stresses that journalists work is not simply extractive or one-sided, but a humanistic exchange. Clara discussed a similar approach* (DE), as she described covering the homeless community in her city: 'it is important to work with them and not on them'.

For some journalists, enacting solidarity meant shifting the focus away from the self. For example, Esther* said, 'Especially in the UK or in the West, journalists and writers are encouraged to write things like they're the first person that's ever covered this thing [...] which is wrong'. Journalists centring themselves in their work was perceived to add to the notion of minoritized groups being 'helpless' having 'no agency' whilst presenting the journalists as 'the good ones'.

Finally, a further way in which solidarity was enacted through journalists work, was to encourage audiences to act. Again, this was not commonly mentioned by journalists, however, Esther* (UK) prioritized a call to action as the ultimate aim, 'more journalists should seek to spur something in someone [...] rather than just presenting it on a platter'. She also critiqued the passivity of journalism ('we're told, this is actually just the way it is'). A central thread running through her journalistic work is therefore to challenge taken-for-granted ideas ('I always try to structure my writing in a way that is like: we actually don't have to be this way').

Enacting solidarity was perceived to negatively impacts on some journalists' roles; interviewees' responses tentatively suggest that this was more prevalent for women journalists with self-defined minoritized identities. For example, Aylin* (UK) said:

If I wasn't who I am, a migrant, a woman, a woman of colour, outspoken, disobedient, I would have had far more many more chances [...] I'm not being arrogant, but lesser journalists... you know, more obliging ones... I see them rushing past me [...] if I got on to onto one of the channels and denounced asylum seekers. Or said I was going to be supporting closing our borders. [...] I'd be on all the political channels.

Having a certain personal identity and holding values of social justice, was perceived to have had a strong, negative impact on Aylin's* career. Other journalists in both countries recognized the professional consequences of working from a radically inclusive perspective, and based their expectations and behaviour upon this. Nora* (DE) described encountering 'very real threats if you don't toe the line', and Esther* (UK) said, 'it costs to uphold your politics and your integrity'. Observing and personally experiencing this hostility, created a set of prescriptive role boundaries. Interviews suggested that there were intersectional dimensions of consequences for those enacting solidarity through their work, thus raising the question: *who* can enact solidarity?

Working from a critical, social justice-based perspective on certain topics proved to be particularly contentious for women journalists identifying as members of minoritized groups. Jasmine* described her experience of being 'called aggressive' alongside 'the three other brown women who have been called aggressive'. Beyond accusations, some perspectives were quashed. Nora* (DE) highlighted the 'silencing of the Palestinian narration' in the German news media, in particular. This situation is not limited to Germany. Aylin* (UK) who is from a Muslim and migrant background wrote

several columns on the situation in Gaza for a major mainstream newspaper and described how 'ever since this happened and I've been speaking up, the BBC isn't inviting me on anymore. There's always a price to pay'.

For journalists' who perceived solidarity practice as an important or potential element of professional journalistic roles, there was a recognition that a range of political, institutional and ideological contexts overshadowed and defined this role conception. Some journalists offered reflections on contextual factors creating obstacles to enacting solidarity. Aylin* (UK) said, 'too much of what is happening everywhere [...] is client journalism'. Comparably, Freya* (UK) described how, 'it's difficult in the journalism industry to be a source of change' due to being 'so reliant on advertisers who [...] don't want words like death or bombing near their branding'. In response, some young British journalists created their own outlets or newsletters, whilst others worked for explicitly solidarity-orientated, minority news media outlets. For example, Freya* highlighted a former outlet produced by women and non-binary people of colour:

[The outlet] started from a sense of solidarity between groups that would struggle to access traditional roles within traditional journalism. [...] The reason it couldn't continue was because it wasn't able to secure enough funding to move forward. And that's partly because of [...] the people it was prepared to take on and speak out against, and the values that the members of staff wanted to kind of stay true to.

The broader, neoliberal context in which journalists' roles are positioned seems to inhibit certain types of radically inclusive, solidarity-orientated outlets from functioning. Besides this experience, Freya* left a large, mainstream newspaper in order to work for a smaller 'feminist' outlet. However, she again perceived that they 'didn't really stand for any of this [feminism]'. Instead, similarly to the experiences of black women journalists in newsrooms during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, her colleagues and editors adopted feminist values 'because it's a bit more fashionable now'. Again, this highlights the importance of including broader contexts whilst defining journalist role conceptions.

Discussion & Conclusion

This study sought to explore how women journalists' perspectives on role conceptions and practice might contribute towards an understanding of minoritized group coverage, and help us explain the potential enactment of solidarity in and through journalism. Overall, whilst women journalists' prescribed roles in covering minoritized groups were fairly consistent, differences emerged in terms of described, practiced roles, determined by a number of factors, ranging from newsroom diversity to political context. The gap between how women journalists' prescribed and practiced their roles created emotional strain in many cases. The interviews suggest that this emotional strain is compounded by journalists' holding additional minoritized identities – such as being a member of an ethnically minoritized group, or a migrant woman – in many contexts. Regarding the potential enactment of solidarity, there was far greater variety in women journalists' perspectives, and few described this explicitly in their practice. However, many implicit practices were described, which incorporated solidarity practice in often (publically) invisible ways. For those who did enact solidarity through their roles, there were personal and professional consequences, especially for women journalists holding minoritized identities. We will first address each of the research questions before moving on to discuss broader findings and contributions.

How do women journalists approach minoritized group coverage? In response to RQ1, almost all journalists' interviewed cited the importance of practicing 'respect' and 'empathy' through their representation of minoritized groups. A few journalists emphasized the need to treat all groups equally in representations; such approaches may be problematic in the sense that ignoring inequalities between identity-based groups might actually preserve these inequalities, by overlooking the way in which exclusion operates in society. Many journalists' described how their entering the journalistic profession was prompted by the desire to better represent and platform minoritized groups. However, there was a gap between desired and actual practice. For most journalists, political, institutional and discriminatory experiences were perceived to enforce the gap between intended and actual practiced roles regarding minoritized group coverage. Despite challenges, a range of practices were described, such as sourcing diversifying experts and sources on all topics.

How do women journalists navigate personal identities and professional norms in their coverage of minoritized groups? Contradictory responses emerged in the interviews, as some women journalists described the importance of keeping their emotions, personal values and experiences out of their roles, whilst simultaneously recognizing the advantages and necessity of using their personal backgrounds. Constellations of particular values orientated towards social justice, or holding minoritized identities – for example, being a migrant woman – created tensions for many journalists working on minoritized coverage, regarding how much this identity could and should be ‘involved’ in coverage. Journalists’ descriptive accounts revealed a set of topics, issues and groups which were acceptable to be discussed in light of the women’s subjectivities. However, the coverage of other topics such as the situation in Gaza, excluded some women journalists. For example, some women journalists originally from or with family backgrounds in different Arabic countries were excluded from covering Gaza, as they were deemed *too* subjective.

Some interviewees described the tension between personal identities and values as often being exploited. At the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, many of the women journalists reported that they (as black women), or their black colleagues were suddenly asked to write about racism. For some, this led to being pigeonholed into only writing stories about race, whilst other journalists felt they became less relevant again afterwards. These journalists’ experiences in their roles reveal a point of tension, with editors’ superficial engagement in topics of social justice creates immense frustration, strong negative emotions and even disillusionment. In other words, many women journalists holding intersectionally minoritized identities perceived themselves as only being useful or important during particular moments or externally defined crises, which negatively impacted their attitudes and feeling towards their roles.

What factors constrain and enable the enactment of solidarity in women journalists work? Addressing RQ3, the analysis revealed a broad spectrum of activity undertaken within women journalists’ roles, expanding upon extant conceptualizations of solidarity in journalistic practice (Varma, 2023b). In exploring solidarity in news content, previous studies highlighted ‘radically inclusive’ and ‘transformative’ representations (Varma, 2023a); some women journalists’ described adopting similar approaches in their work. However, the interviews revealed a wide range of behind-the-scenes activity, which we define as solidarity practice on a continuum between

passive and active. Passive examples of solidarity practice include refusing to write certain articles or to accept misleading headlines that negatively and falsely represented a group. Crucially 'passive' here does not imply weak, or unimportant; rather, it describes the refusal of an action, or withholding labour. These invisible acts of solidarity remain unnoticed when studying solidarity purely in journalistic output. Moving towards more 'active' solidarity practice, journalists' described the importance of foregrounding minoritized groups analytical and evaluative perspectives. This included focusing on extant work by minoritized groups to tackle issues, as opposed to being passive victims. This connects to Varma's (2023b) conception of actively *recognizing* minority groups through journalistic practice, rather than merely improving visibility.

At the more radical active end of the spectrum, some journalists discussed their ideal and practiced role of journalism as deliberately challenging the status quo. As such, journalists' perceived their roles as problematizing the neoliberal social order, as opposed to the micro-context of a particular individual or group's experience. Some journalists described making a call to action for audiences within their work. Finally, few journalists spoke of their roles as collaborators and described sharing resources, information, and personal experience with communities, as opposed to being neutral observers, extracting stories. This collaborative role conception extended to one journalist offering financial compensation, through donating to organizations run or selected by the group being covered.

There were marked differences in women journalists' capacity to enact solidarity, and the emotional toll this might take, in connection with intersectional identities. Whilst the additional emotional work of women journalists has been studied previously, less research has approached women's emotions in journalism with a consideration of identities. This research highlights the importance of studying women journalists' emotions holistically, including considering their roles in different political, professional and personal contexts. Besides dealing with challenges of discrimination, our findings tentatively show how women journalists from minoritized groups perceive their identities as something to be occasionally exploited and suppressed strategically, ultimately constraining their roles, and creating additional emotional tension. Therefore, it is not only a question of *who* can enact solidarity through their roles as journalists, but at what (emotional) cost?

Furthermore, interviewees described their perceptions of newsroom diversity in defining minoritized group coverage. Possibilities of practicing solidarity were perceived to be inhibited when newsrooms are homogenous. Whilst some extant research has shown that newsroom diversity can have limited, and audience-dependent impacts on news coverage (Sui et al., 2018), other work which complicates this relationship (Fletcher, 2021; Møller-Hartley and Askanius, 2021). Besides the connection with content, most work on newsroom diversity has studied the impact of individual identity dimensions on roles (Assmann and Eckert, 2024; Nishikawa et al., 2009). Building upon this, we examined the unexplored impacts of perceived newsroom diversity on journalists' role perceptions by considering journalists' roles holistically, in terms of their prescriptive, descriptive and cathectic dimensions, whilst adopting an intersectional lens. As such, this study shows that whilst newsroom diversity may have limited substantive impacts on content, crucially, it does have a significant impact on journalists' attitudes, emotions and experiences. These tentative findings suggest that through intersectional dynamics of opportunity and punishment, newsroom diversity can be considered a relevant dimension in defining possibilities of solidarity practice. Examining women journalists' perspectives without a consideration of additional minoritized identities would limit our ability to understand the impacts of complex newsroom dynamics and the ways in which inclusion and exclusion operate in the news media.

Notably, this research did not aim for a systematic comparison of journalists' perspectives across the UK and Germany. Nonetheless, it is worth stating that whilst approaches to minoritized group coverage were largely comparable across these countries, approaches and attitudes towards solidarity proved to be more divisive. Larger-scale empirical testing is needed to explore these differences further.

Overall, this research provides an insight into the contested range of roles undertaken by journalists in relation to minoritized group coverage. Beyond practice, the study reveals diverse and sometimes contradictory imaginaries of journalists' roles. Moreover, findings indicate that the way in which we discuss solidarity as part of journalists' roles needs to be complicated and expanded, to consider the passive and the active, the visible and the invisible, and the intersectionally determined factors facilitating or inhibiting this. Possibilities of enacting solidarity in and through journalism

have the potential to be constrained or enabled by macro and micro contexts; further research is needed to shed light on this complex dynamic.

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APPENDIX 1

Table: Summary of sample

| | Pseudonym | Age Bracket | Country | Role description | News outlet |
|----|------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|--|
| 1 | Leena | 40-49 | DE | Senior editorial role | Major national news outlet |
| 2 | Tara | 20-29 | UK | Freelance journalist | Range of mainstream and minority news outlets |
| 3 | Naomi | 30-39 | DE | Freelance journalist | Range of mainstream and regional news outlets |
| 4 | Nora | 30-39 | DE | Freelance journalist | Range of outlets |
| 5 | Grace | 20-29 | UK | Freelance journalist, Editor and Founder | Minority news outlet and regional news |
| 6 | Jenny | 40-49 | UK | Senior Freelance Journalist | Works mainly for one major mainstream newspaper |
| 7 | Anna | 50-59 | UK | Editor | Regional newspaper |
| 8 | Jasmine | 20-29 | UK | Freelance Journalist & newsletter | Experience with major national newspapers and minority/alternative news |
| 9 | Aylin | 60-69 | UK | Senior journalist | A range of major national newspapers, and TV |
| 10 | Clara | 30-39 | DE | Investigative journalist | Range of experience at national outlets |
| 11 | Jade | 20-29 | UK | Freelance journalist | Range of experience, but mainly working for one major national news outlet |
| 12 | Mariam | 20-29 | UK | Freelance Journalist | Range of outlets, mainly lifestyle journalism |
| 13 | Nicole | 30-39 | DE | Editor | Audio-journalism in major regional news |
| 14 | Carolin | 40-49 | DE | Freelance journalist and columnist | National mainstream newspaper & smaller local outlets |
| 15 | Leonie | 30-39 | DE | Freelance journalist | Video journalism, and writing for major national outlets |
| 16 | Silvia | 20-29 | UK | Freelance journalist | Mainstream national outlets |
| 17 | Heike | 30-39 | DE | Freelance journalist | Mainstream, regional and local news outlets |
| 18 | Freya | 20-29 | UK | Freelance journalist | Experience with range of mainstream national and minority news outlets |
| 19 | Esther | 20-29 | UK | Part-time Freelance Journalist | Mainly minority news contribution |
| 20 | Andrea | 30-39 | DE | Chief editor & journalist | Edits minority news outlet |

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|-------|----|--------------------------|--|
| 21 | Diana | 30-39 | DE | Editor / lead journalist | Major regional news outlet |
| 22 | Esma | 30-39 | DE | Head of services | Major national outlet, TV |
| 23 | Charlotte | 20-29 | DE | Freelance journalist | Range of major outlets, national outlets |

APPENDIX 2

Interview Guide

This guide serves as the basis for semi-structured interviews with journalists. This structure was not followed rigidly with each participant, meaning that not all participants answered all or the same questions; rather, the lead author and researcher adapted to each individual. That said, key questions from each of the sub-sections were asked. Also, sub-questions included in this guide were used when appropriate.

Background & Experience

1. Please can you describe yourself to me briefly, in your own words?
Prompt: This can include your gender, your place of birth, your class, your age, experience, profession, or include any other aspects of your identity you consider important and relevant in your life.
2. Can you tell me a little bit about your role, and how you came to work in this position, in your own words?
 - a. What is your official title?
 - b. How long have you been working in this role? Did you have a similar role previously?
 - c. How do you feel about your experience of working as a journalist so far?
 - d. Did you have any formal training?
3. Tell me about a typical day in your role. Is there a typical routine to your daily work?
4. What do you like about your role?
5. What do you dislike about your role?
6. Can you briefly describe the outlet that you work for?
7. What makes the outlet unique? What are the defining aspects of this outlet?
8. How do you feel certain aspects of your identity (for example, being a woman) impact your work? How do you deal with this? How does this compare to colleagues, or others in the field?

Covering minoritized groups / identity and values

1. What do you consider important when writing articles on / covering certain minoritized or discriminated groups?
2. Do you remember a moment when you covered a minoritized/ vulnerable group and your personal values conflicted with those of the newspaper/outlet you were writing for?

- a. How did you navigate this situation?
 - b. Is there anything you would do differently if faced with the same challenge?
3. Think of a time you felt connected with a source / with an individual or group you were covering in your journalistic work. Can you describe what that interaction was like?
 - a. How did this sense of a shared identity make you feel?
4. When you feel a personal connection with a story you are covering because of your identity, or your values, how do you navigate this situation?
 - a. Which aspects of your personal or professional identity do you draw upon in these situations?
5. You wrote article X. Can you describe your approach to working on coverage of movement Y?
 - a. How did you select sources?
 - b. What informed your approach? (professional values, personal values)
6. Can you tell me a little bit about your approach to writing articles about vulnerable / minoritized groups – as sources, or simply writing articles using secondary data?
7. How do you feel about news coverage of minoritized groups in the British / German news media?

The Role of Journalism

1. Thinking very broadly about your sector: What is your personal perception of the role of journalism in society? What should it do?
2. What do you understand by the term 'objectivity' in journalism?
 - a. Is this something you strive for? Do you think it is important?
3. Sometimes, it is said that it is the journalist's role to be objective. What do you think about this?
4. Sometimes, it's said that journalists have an advocacy role, for the citizens and communities they serve in their respective news outlet. What do you think about this?
5. What do you understand by the term 'advocacy' / 'solidarity'?
6. How do you feel about the notion of representing different groups through your work?

Personal and collective challenges in the profession

1. Can you tell me about some of the main challenges you have encountered in your role so far?
 - a. Has it changed during your time working in the role?
2. What are some of the main changes you have witnessed?
3. How do you think your experience compares to some of your peers and colleagues?
4. Have you had support in facing some of the challenges that you have encountered from your outlet?
5. Has your identity or personal values ever created conflict at work / created challenging situations?

6. Sometimes it's said that every profession has to adapt to changing conditions – journalists should simply adapt their skills. What do you think about that?
7. What changes would you like to see in the profession? / If you had a magic wand, what would you change about the situation/ the scenario / the news sector as it stands?
8. Can you tell me a bit about your opinion on the accessibility of the journalistic profession, including your own experiences?
9. Do you have anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX 3

Initial Codes

| Research question | Initial codes | Question |
|---|---------------|---|
| RQ1 – Approaching the representation of Minoritized Groups | Prescriptive | How <i>should</i> journalists cover minoritized groups? |
| | descriptive | How <i>are</i> minoritized groups (believed to be) represented by journalists? |
| | cathectic | How do journalists <i>feel</i> about minoritized group coverage, in their role? |
| RQ2 – Connecting the self and the subject | Prescriptive | <i>How should journalists navigate personal and professional norms when representing minoritized subjects?</i> |
| | descriptive | <i>How do journalists navigate personal and professional norms when representing minoritized subjects?</i> |
| | cathectic | <i>How do journalists feel about navigating personal and professional norms whilst representing minoritized groups?</i> |
| RQ3 – Enacting solidarity through journalism | Prescriptive | <i>(How) should solidarity be enacted through journalists' roles?</i> |
| | descriptive | <i>(How) is solidarity enacted through journalists' roles?</i> |
| | cathectic | <i>How do journalists feel about the (potential) enactment of solidarity through their roles?</i> |