

The Media and Muslims in the UK

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Summary

This report provides an analysis of the various constructions and representations of Muslims circulating in the press in the context of the UK. Drawing upon data based on 68 news items on domestic issues concerning Muslims, generated from a three month monitoring period of the British press (October 2011-December 2011), specifically; *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, this report analyses the role of the media in the construction of public issues and the visibilisation of racism as a key social problem, this is explored in relation to the Muslim question. We examine the issue-framing effects of the press to understand how Muslims have been both represented and configured in relation to the national majority community. We engage with a critical discourse analysis approach, thus our concern is primarily to examine the current hegemonic articulations of Muslims in issues surrounding firstly, the war on terror, PREVENT¹⁹¹ and fundamentalism, this theme examines media constructs of Muslims as representing a domestic terrorist 'threat'. Secondly immigration and 'forced' marriage, this issue examines how Muslims have been constructed as 'foreigners' and 'outsiders' by the press, this is illustrated in debates surrounding 'soft' immigration policy, 'foreign' criminals and 'peculiar' practices and customs relating to family and marriage. Thirdly, grooming and madrassas (Muslim schools), this issue looks at the way in which the press associates 'predatory' behaviour including sexual exploitation and abuse with Muslims, and secondly the way in which the press represents madrassas and Muslim schools as 'problematic' and incompatible with British society. Fourthly we look at broader Muslim related issues, here we take the case of a Muslim 'attack' on a white lady during the 2011 riots, alongside this we also examine a case of institutional racism, these items are both compared to examine how the press frames debates surrounding Muslims and racism. These themes were the most dominant from the data set we collated and received the most media coverage and commentary. The report as such will analyse how these particular issues have been mobilised to denunciate the figure of the Muslim in the UK, moreover we will explore how such constructs also reflect and reinforce wider discourses and narratives on debates surrounding racism, tolerance and Muslims.

Introduction

¹⁹¹ *Prevent* is a policy led across Government by the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) in the Home Office and delivered by a number of departments and agencies which all have specific policy interests in the *Prevent* strategy. Its aim is to stop radicalisation, reduce support for terrorism and violent extremism and discourage people from becoming terrorists: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/6504.htm>

Muslims and Islam have occupied a central role in the British media following the Salman Rushdie Affair, the 2001 riots, conflicts in the Middle East and the global war on terror. Featuring also in issues surrounding multiculturalism, crime, education and faith schools, immigration, and oppressed women linked to the Burqa debate, Muslims have been the focus of numerous public issues and denunciations. The portrayal of Muslims has been largely negative and stereotypical informed often by a virulent, racialised Islamophobic discourse. This concern has been vocalised by many Muslim advocacy groups, organisations, academics and activists who argue that representations of Muslims in the British media are persistently negative, unfair and discriminatory and have subsequently contributed to establishing a climate of fear or a 'moral panic' with the Muslim 'folk devil' at its heart.¹⁹²

The media spotlight on Muslims and Islam is evident across the globe, in the UK context the media's centrality on Muslims has according to Elizabeth Poole (2009) been occupied by a relationship based on inclusion and exclusion. For Poole the increased Muslim visibility or Muslim presence has established what she refers to as a 'crisis of national identity' resulting with the development a national narrative which excludes Muslims from identifications with Britishness (Poole 2004: 22), in other words:

"The increasing visibility of Muslims to non-Muslims in the UK in a global mediated world, in which Muslims are homogenised, has resulted in their construction as a threat to non-Muslims. This ideological threat (in the UK) allows Muslims to be suppressed" (Poole 2004: 22).

Poole's extensive research in the field identifies the links between the construction of Muslims with the general construction of ethnic minority groups in the media which are largely represented within a 'negative conflictual framework' overshadowed by racialised tropes relating to crime, violence and immigration (Poole 2004: 22-23). Since the pioneering work of Stuart Hall's (1978) *Policing the Crisis* there has been a recognition in some quarters that racism, policing and sensational media coverage helped to produce an association between ethnically marked minority youth and specific forms of criminal behaviour (Sian 2009). Following the 1970s one can see that this pattern of engaging with the relationship between ethnic minority youth and crime has been modified to the extent in

¹⁹² See for example, Poole, Richardson and Van Dijk for such critique.

which increasingly the emphasis has moved from the black ‘mugger’ to the BrAsian, or more specifically, Muslim troublemaker (Sian 2009).¹⁹³

In a BBC Radio 4 interview, *Face the Facts: Islamophobia* (BBC Radio 4, 12:30PM, 27 Jan, 2011), John Waite investigates whether the British press are contributing to growing tensions between communities through negative representations of Muslims. The radio broadcast explores how the press produces distorted stories about Muslims and how this ties in with the growth of English Defence League activity. This is illustrated by the English Defence League being inspired particularly by a news story surrounding the ‘winterval myth’ the ‘unfounded claim’ that councils are rebranding Christmas or even banning it in some cities and towns in order to please Muslims. The broadcast interrogates why the national press are reporting Islamophobic stories that provoke the far right and questions if the Press Complaints Commission should impose tougher sanctions. It also asks whether editors need to take more responsibility over what they print.¹⁹⁴

The programme picks up on a number of stories featured in the press about Muslims which turned out to be simply false, for example it notes how on December 9th, 2010 *The Sun* headline read, ‘Al Qaeda Corrie Threat’. The item went on to state that, “Cops are throwing a ring of steel around tonight’s live episode of Coronation Street over fears that it is being targeted by Al Qaeda.”¹⁹⁵ John Waite goes on to point out however that:

“Nineteen days later *The Sun* covered another article, this time with smaller headlines and tucked away on page 2 stating; ‘we would like to make clear that whilst cast and crew were subject to full body searches, there was no specific threat from Al Qaeda as we reported. We apologise for this misunderstanding.’”¹⁹⁶

The programme goes on to explore similar distorted stories on issues surrounding Muslims including, “Muslims as extremists plotting to bring carnage to the country” or “as a threat to the Christian faith and the British way of life”.¹⁹⁷ It is argued that, “many of these stories turn out to be totally untrue, or at best, based on a grain of truth”.¹⁹⁸ In addition to this it is

¹⁹³ For example various mainstream media accounts following the riots of 2001 targeted Muslim youth (males) as the ‘folk devil’ in which such activity was seen represented through a cultural/ethnic register.

¹⁹⁴ See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00xw21x/Face_the_Facts_Islamophobia/

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

stated that, “some newspapers focus disproportionately on the negative, often distorting the truth in the process”.¹⁹⁹ Drawing upon research by Professor Justin Lewis from the University of Cardiff, School of Journalism, this is demonstrated further, whose analysis of the press found that:

“The five adjectives that we found most commonly used in relation to Muslims were in order; radical, fanatical, fundamentalist, extremist and militant. Muslim extremism is itself now a big story. Muslim moderation is not.”²⁰⁰

Justin Lewis analysed the coverage of Muslims in the print media from the period 2000-2008 and he continues to monitor how Muslims are represented in the press, he argues that:

“The ways in which Muslims are discussed or talked about in the press tend to be in a context that clearly are rather negative. So it is terrorism, it is about the clash between Christianity and Islam; it is about Islam as an extreme religion.”²⁰¹

In addition to this his research found that:

[In] 34% of stories we have found Muslims were specifically linked to the threat of terrorism, 26% of stories suggested that Islam was either dangerous, backwards or irrational. Now there were stories, I mean 17% of stories, talked about Islam as part of a multicultural society, but it is clearly a much smaller number. And you know the next biggest idea that we found in stories was the idea of the clash of civilization, between Islam and the west; 14% of stories. 9% talked about Islam as a threat to the British way of life. So the negative stories very clearly outweigh the positive stories by some degree.”²⁰²

The BBC broadcast clearly illustrates the level of distortion and negativity in the press surrounding Muslims. This supports our findings, which similarly demonstrate the negative framing of Muslims in the British press. With the majority of stories analysed being hostile, discriminatory and derogatory, we examine the way in which the press can be seen as both contributing to, and reinforcing an Islamophobic discourse. Based on empirical data generated from detailed media analysis over three months (Oct 2011-Dec 2011), our report will provide a critical account of the key issues we found to be hegemonic in the press,

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *ibid.*

²⁰² *ibid.*

these include: The war on terror, fundamentalism and Prevent; Grooming, abuse and madrassas; Forced marriages and immigration; and Muslim related domestic issues. Through these various and often overlapping issues we will examine the role of the media in the construction and framing of Muslims in the UK exploring how such representations impact upon current debates surrounding racism and tolerance.

1. (Mis)Representing Muslims: Overview of Case Study and Methods

This report will provide a detailed account of the representation of Muslims in the British press in 2011. The methodology consists of discourse analysis and the data collected which we draw upon throughout the report was generated by a three month monitoring period (from October 2011- December 2011) of four national newspapers. The papers examined were two tabloid national papers- *The Sun* and *Daily Mail*, and two broadsheet national papers- *The Independent* and *The Guardian*. The choice of newspapers enabled us to get a representative and comparative sample of both broadsheet/quality and popular/tabloid national newspapers (Van Dijk 1991: 8).

The 4 papers we analysed were gathered on a daily basis and any stories relating to Muslims or Islam were recorded onto a database. The items were clipped, dated and archived. When analysing the items the following information was logged:

- Type of item: news/ editorial/ comment
- General overview of the story,
- The level of minority bias: extent to which the item shaped hostility or inclusion,
- Minority news actors voice: Strong/Weak/Medium/Nil
- Key words and phrases
- Pictorial representation.

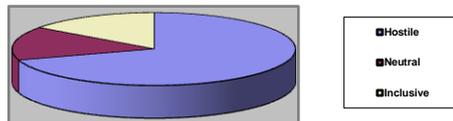
We gathered a total of 68 items with the exclusion of world news which generated hundreds of stories largely relating to the Middle East including violence in Egypt, Syria and Pakistan; the death of Gaddafi and Israel-Palestine relations. This report however will not elaborate on world news as our primary focus is an analysis of domestic issues, but it is important to note we are aware how world news becomes embroiled and inflected in domestic news thus do not dismiss its importance. We logged our data over a three month period and the items were organised around common dominant themes which included the following:

- War on Terror, Fundamentalism and Prevent
- Grooming , abuse and madrassas

- Forced marriages and immigration
- Muslim related domestic issues
- World news.

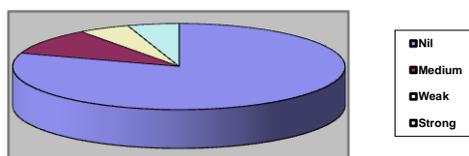
From our data collection the results indicated that 70 percent of all the news items gathered were hostile; 15 percent were inclusive; and 15 percent neutral (see table 1). Additionally when examining the strength of minority news actors voices we found that 80 percent of the items represented no voice, 10 percent represented a medium voice, 5 percent a weak voice and 5 percent represented a strong voice (see table 2).

Table 1: Level of minority bias



Source: Number of media items: 68

Table 2: Level of presence of minority news actor's voice



Source: Number of media items: 68

These figures signal that the press coverage representing Muslims is largely hostile and that Muslim voices remains marginal. The account to follow will be examined using a discourse analysis approach to understand how particular meanings have been attempted to be fixed and the way in which the figure of the Muslim has been hegemonically constructed by the press, as Van Dijk points out:

“Discourse analysis specifically aims to show how the cognitive, social, historical, cultural or political contexts of language use and communication impinge on the contents, meanings, structures, or strategies of text or dialogue, and vice versa, how discourse itself is an integral part of and contributes to the structures of these contexts” (Van Dijk 1991: 45)

Also following this approach, Poole notes how discourse analysis enables a critical examination of the material to inform understandings of the dominant set of attitudes in a particular context, additionally it allows us to investigate the politics of representation at work, that is how certain practices and processes attempt to ‘secure meaning’ by sustaining particular constructions whilst excluding others (Poole 2009: 103). By adopting this approach our report will examine the hegemonic representations of Muslims and the various ways such constructions inform the wider social and political context, moreover we will explore the various ways the media shapes particular meanings. It is important to note however, we do not argue that the media is independent of society and the sole cause of Islamophobia (Allen 2001: 2), rather the media is an institution which reflects and shapes the discourse of society and not vice versa, it certainly reinforces Islamophobic logics, but the media itself does not create it as it is interrelated with other social institutions and practices. We will examine in detail the key themes/issues that arose from the data to observe the role of the media in representing and framing Muslims in the British context.

2. Analysis of Muslims in the UK: Media Framing and Agenda Setting

“Sensationalism, crude xenophobia, and insensitive belligerence are the order of the day, with results on both sides of the imaginary line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ that are extremely unedifying” (Said 1997: xvii).

The critique of the press as contributing to racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Muslimness is well documented. Research by Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Elizabeth Poole, John Richardson and Teun Van Dijk among others, demonstrate the negative representations of Muslims circulating across the media. The figure of the Muslim is often constructed by the press through an Orientalist lens, whereby Muslims and Islam are continually marked out and contrasted with the values of the west, these Orientalist logics according to Richardson (2004) represent a split between ‘Islam and the west’ and ‘Muslim and westerner’ (Richardson 2004: 113). This division as such establishes an, ‘us and them’ framework which constructs Muslims as largely ‘problematic’, ‘dangerous’, ‘incompatible’

and 'oppressive' (Richardson 2004: 113; Said 1997: xlvii), Muslims within this framing are 'othered' and subsequently subordinated, marginalised and excluded.

The sensational and Islamophobic reporting by the press surrounding Islam and Muslims has increased following 9/11 and subsequent attacks, however prior to that negative representations were far from absent informed instead by events in the middle east and on a more national level the Rushdie affair and the 2001 disturbances. The Muslim 'problem' has also been tied into debates surrounding issues of multiculturalism and the question of the veil, forced marriages, crime, education and immigration (Ahmad 2006a: 963). Muslims are more than often marked out and racialised by the press, they occupy a clearly disadvantaged position and remain subject to unfair scrutinisation, unbalanced speculation and a series of stereotypical (mis)representations. The following sections will present an in-depth analysis of our findings and examine the way in which Muslims and Islam in Britain have been constructed by the press.

3. War on Terror, Fundamentalism and Prevent

Under the theme of the war on terror, fundamentalism and PREVENT in the context of the UK we logged a total of 35 stories relating to these issues, this theme in comparison to the other issues we examined was by far represented the most by the press (aside from world news) and generated the largest number of news items during our monitoring period. This is perhaps not all too surprising as it has been remarked upon on a number of occasions that following 9/11 and subsequent attacks Muslims became the central focus of the press agenda and the attendant moral panic to follow. The war on terror was the key moment that solidified the discourse of 'Islam as the enemy of the west' (Allen 2001: 3), within this framework constructs of the Muslim 'terrorist', 'fanatic', 'radical' and 'extremist' became embedded in the press's narration of the Muslim subject.

Eleven years on since September 11th and the bombardment of images of the plane crashing into the twin towers to be found on every front page of every newspaper across the globe, the hysteria surrounding the Muslim 'enemy' still remains largely in tact. The demonization of Islam is to be found at play within the orientalist binary that divides Islam from the west, that is Muslims and Islam are constructed as backwards, primitive, excessively religious and oppressive, in short they occupy the 'enemy' role, this is contrasted to the west who are represented as enlightened, modern, free, secular and liberal, in other words the 'friends', this framework epitomises the ongoing performance in the drama that is the battle between the 'us and the them/other'. This logic continues to

structure the discourse of the war on terror and can be seen circulating regularly throughout the press, more so in the tabloid press.

From our data set it was clear to see the 'threat' of terrorism was a central issue. This can be demonstrated with two news items claiming that Britain was in danger from Islamic terror attacks targeting the London Olympics and Christmas celebrations. In the case of the Olympics story (*The Sun*, 10/10/11, page 2), the headline stated, '200 suicide bombers on loose in UK: Ministers warned of Olympic threat',²⁰³ the story to follow reported that it had been claimed that more than 200 suicide bombers are living in Britain and planning attacks. It alleges that Ministers have been warned that terrorists could attack at the Olympics, the information regarding this came from a 'secret government report' which according to the item says, 'the would-be bombers are among 2,000 extremists believed to be based in the UK', it goes on to state that intelligence officials fear that public areas rather than Games venues could be targeted.

The article includes a quote from an intelligence official who says, "We may have had only one successful suicide attack in Britain but the tactic is an enduring threat. The terrorists are learning all the time and adapting." This is further cemented with other 'official papers' which state, "The internal threat is growing more dangerous because some extremists are conducting non-lethal training without leaving the country." The item goes on to argue that austerity cuts have led to a reduction in the terror monitoring of those who have been jailed for acts of terrorism and goes onto name two terrorists and their crimes. A large photograph under the headline presented in a mug-shot style of those named also features in the item:



Source: *The Sun*, 10/10/11

Caption reads, 'Jailed ... Saajit Badat, and right, Moinul Abedin'

²⁰³ See: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3862322/200-suicide-bombers-are-on-the-loose-in-UK.html>

Sensational and stereotypical use of language is embedded throughout this item, it is unbalanced, Islamophobic and feeds a scaremongering discourse particularly with its focus on the notion of a specific 'internal threat' suggesting Britain is in danger from those within who are training 'without leaving the country', this evokes the notion that the nation is under threat from 'outsiders' within. Words such as 'fanatic', 'threat', 'terrorists' and 'suicide bombers' feature prominently to develop a sense of hysteria, and the alleged secret intelligence information implies that there is fact and truth to the story. The item is uncritical and unsympathetic and the excessive use of language and the marking out of the 'terrorists' cements the construct of the Muslim 'enemy'. Similarly in another item featured in *The Sun* (25/10/11, page 8), it was reported that terror attacks were imminent over the Christmas period, the headline states, 'Talibans Xmas UK terror bid', although a smaller item than the previous one, the overall message, construct and framing is generally the same. The item reports that the Taliban are planning a campaign of Christmas 'carnage' across cities in Britain, it claims that the terrorists are ready to attack and warns that the perpetrators will be 'liberal looking', 'not bearded or veiled'. Such sensationalism implies that any Muslim in the UK is potentially a threat, the use of language is exaggerated and over-the-top including words and phrases such as 'suicide bombers', 'prepared squads of holy warriors', 'bearded' and 'veiled'. The item goes on to state that the Taliban are also seeking revenge on Obama following Osama Bin Laden's death, this works to cement the narrative of the global threat of Muslims in their concerted effort to attack the west. This story contributes once again to the establishment of fear and hysteria as well as reinforcing a strong sense of Islamophobia with the underlying message that all Muslims are potential terrorists.

The Sun (14/10/11, page 8), also enacted a campaign urging Theresa May to not soften/weaken the law against 'Islamic mobs insulting British troops'. Arguing that the abuse of British soldiers conducted by Muslim 'mobs' is unwarranted, the items call for tighter anti-terror laws and are highly critical of moves which mean the so called abuse of soldiers may no longer be illegal under new plans due to free speech breaches. The *Daily Mail* (14/10/2011, page 25), also picked up this story and followed almost exactly the same line of framing with sensational and Islamophobic language whereby Muslim protestors against British troops and occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq are constructed as 'yobs', abusive 'fanatics' 'thugs' and 'insulting', with a headline that reads 'Law that put poppy blaze fanatics in dock faces axe' (*Daily Mail*, 14/10/2011, page 25).

The article goes on to link this with other acts of public disorder including the 2011 riots and as we can see from the pictorial representation below the image typically comes in the form of a masked ethnically marked youth.²⁰⁴ The pictorial representation speaks volumes in the racial marking of Muslims (and black and minority ethnic groups) as ‘troublesome’ ‘dangerous’ and ‘threatening’, we can see strongly the linking of criminal activity with ethnically marked communities, this reinforces Hall’s (1978), black mugger construct and practices of racialisation. Note the security minister in picture 4 is wearing a suit, looking smart and respectable, compare this with the previous images of the ethnically marked figures who are photographed wearing face masks, Islamic dress and protesting- the ethnically marked are quite clearly represented as the ‘undesirables’.



Source: *Daily Mail*, 14/10/2011

Muslims are thus constructed as belonging outside the national narrative threatening British patriotism and British freedom, as the *Daily Mail* argues, ‘we must also make sure any new powers do not trample upon traditional British freedoms’. All the items surrounding this issue reinforce the orientalist logics whereby the figure of the Muslim occupies the outsider/non-belonging role and is contrasted with the national majority. These constructs thus feed the immigrant imaginary discourse (Sayyid and Hesse 2006),²⁰⁵ by sustaining a representation of Muslims that depicts them as a threat causing chaos to British values and freedoms.²⁰⁶ The immigrant imaginary refers to a series of discursive representations based

²⁰⁴ Pictures left to right: 1. Prosecuted: Emdadur Choudhury burned two huge poppies last November, 2. Protesters burning a poppy at a Muslims against Remembrance Day protest on November 11 last year, 3. Proposal: The Home Office wants police given new powers to impose blanket curfews and to force rioters to remove face masks, 4. Home Office crime and security minister James Brokenshire said police need to have appropriate powers to maintain public order, See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2048895/Law-poppay-burning-fanatics-dock-faces-axe.html>

²⁰⁵ See: Sayyid, S. and Hesse, B. (2006) ‘The Postcolonial Political and the Immigrant Imaginary’ in Ali, N., Kalra, V., and Sayyid, S. eds. (2006) *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, Hurst and Company: London.

²⁰⁶ See: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/politics/3871306/No-arrest-for-poppay-attacks-in-shake-up.html>

Also: http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/sun_says/3874351/The-Sun-Says.html

around the ontological and temporal distinction between host and immigrant (Sayyid and Hesse 2006; Sian 2009), it is beholden to orientalist and indological ways of thinking about non-western social phenomena and attempts to replace political motivations and agency with cultural, biological and other mechanistic accounts. (Sayyid and Hesse 2006; Sian 2009)

The *Daily Mail* (18/10/11, page 8), reported on several occasions that it was unjust that Islamic terrorists were able to 'walk free' and are treated better than Briton Gary McKinnon who faces imprisonment in a U.S jail for computer hacking. The articles claim that whilst Gary has numerous failed appeals against his extradition, terrorists including Siraj Yassin Abdullah are able to freely walk the streets of the UK.²⁰⁷ The reporting is highly critical of the Human Rights Act claiming that it has been misapplied and favours convicted foreign criminals over the justice of Britons.

The articles argue that the British taxpayer is paying millions by stalling the extradition of the world's most wanted Islamic terror suspects, while Gary was not subject to the same 'special' treatment. The constant use of words such as 'fanatics', 'hate preachers' and 'foreign criminals' fixes the 'us and them' distinction. The items follow an aggressive majoritarianism line of argumentation claiming that 'terrorists' in the UK have more rights than Britons themselves, furthermore it implies that 'terrorists' are rewarded for bad behaviour and are favoured by the law and the state. The unbalanced and Islamophobic pictorial representation depicts Abu Hamza as a 'fanatic' who looks deformed and gruesome, this image is contrasted with Gary McKinnon who is photographed with his mother. The distinction marks out and 'others' the Muslim as almost subhuman.²⁰⁸

And: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2048895/Law-poppy-burning-fanatics-dock-faces-axe.html>

²⁰⁷ See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2047218/Fanatics-treated-better-Gary-McKinnon-says-terror-chief-attack-human-rights-laws.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2050298/ECHR-judges-2-5m-delay-extraditing-6-UK-terror-suspects.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

²⁰⁸ Picture- left to right, 1. Case drags on: Race hate cleric Abu Hamza is fighting an extradition bid to the U.S, 2. Still fighting: Gary McKinnon, left, is facing extradition to the U.S on computer hacking charges. His mother Janis Sharp, right, is leading the attack against the Extradition Act, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2050298/ECHR-judges-2-5m-delay-extraditing-6-UK-terror-suspects.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>



Source: *Daily Mail*, 18/10/11.

This story also feeds into another item published by the *Daily Mail* (19/10/11, page 28), that secret courts are to shut down what they refer to as a 1 million cashpoint for terror suspects, here torture victim Binyam Mohamed is pictured and criticised for receiving a 'payout' from the state. Again the use of the word 'fanatic' is prominent to refer to the figure of the Muslim and the 'real' victim is portrayed as the hard working British public.

The discourse of 'who belongs' in the nation and who does not, can be seen featuring in another item published by the *Daily Mail* with the headline, 'At last, hate cleric to be kicked out of Britain', this story hails victory that the so called 'hate cleric' Rael Salah could be 'kicked out' of Britain after the courts ruled he had no right to be in the country and was found guilty of fostering hatred, alongside this it is reported that his presence could fuel inter-community violence and he is also accused of anti-Semitism and involvement in 9/11.²⁰⁹ He is constructed as a 'radical preacher' and represented as a dangerous figure, who, according to the item, has no right to be in the country. His extradition is seen as a triumph and in the public interest, the article goes on to critique the British immigration system for allowing the 'self-styled Palestinian sheikh' to 'waltz through immigration controls' after he had been banned. This item is once again structured along the 'us and them' framework and who belongs inside and outside the nation. The figure of the Muslim is clearly constructed as the 'outsider' threatening the streets of Britain. The sensational and Islamophobic reporting reinforces the Muslim as 'other'.

Items around the area of terrorism and the war on terror in the UK, also focused on the so called 'underpants' bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, pleading guilty to terrorism charges, this story was picked up by both tabloid newspapers, (*Daily Mail*, 13/10/11, page 31; *The Sun*, 13/10/22, page 8). The British University student, was marked out as

²⁰⁹ See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2053995/At-hate-cleric-Raed-Salah-kicked-Britain.html>

Nigerian, and was constructed as an 'Al Qaeda-inspired fanatic', (*Daily Mail*, 13/10/11, page 31). Recurring words included Al Qaeda, extremism, terrorism, radical and Muslim. In addition to this, it was noted that Farouk was privileged and well-mannered, thus evoking the notion that potentially any Muslim could be a terrorist, even the 'well-mannered' and 'privileged' (*Daily Mail*, 13/10/11, page 31). The student visa rules in the UK were also critiqued for being relaxed and allowing terrorist threats in. Following the notion that potential terrorists are more likely to be privileged and educated, the *Daily Mail* featured an item with the headline, 'The middle-class terrorists' (*Daily Mail*, 16/10/11, page 24).²¹⁰ The item claimed to have access to a 'secret' MI5 document on 'radical' Muslims revealing that terrorists are not stereotypically 'lonesome or mad' rather, they are more likely to be 'normal', sociable and middle class.

The item attempts to debunk the myth of terror suspects as poor, uneducated or 'lone wolves', however, in doing so it actually reinforces a sense of fear and scaremongering by implying that terrorists are 'normal' 'sociable' people, thus Muslims of all walks of life could potentially be a 'threat' (*Daily Mail*, 16/10/11, page 24). The item is sensational and Islamophobic and contributes to developing a sense of hysteria surrounding Muslims and terrorism. It is interesting to contrast this article (and those related from the tabloid newspapers), with an item published by *The Guardian* (14/10/11, page 11), which reported that the terror threat had in fact reduced dramatically. The item states that the number of terrorist suspects in Britain has seen a steep fall to just 121 over 2010/2011, this number is well below the average of 206 every year since 9/11.²¹¹ Additionally the article reports that Home Office statistics confirm that police in Britain have abandoned special anti-terror stop and search powers.

The article provides a breakdown of the statistics and reports that many arrested have been released without charge under terrorist related offences. The reporting is fair, balanced and inclusive and demonstrates a sharp contrast to the items we have seen generated by *Daily Mail* and *The Sun*. The article by *The Guardian* as such challenges the 'fear' of Muslims perpetuated by the right wing press and it is interesting to note that no other paper analysed here, picked up on these statistics. The marginality of this story demonstrates the hegemony of the representation of Muslims and terrorism as a 'real threat/danger' and thus

²¹⁰ See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2049646/The-middle-class-terrorists-More-60pc-suspects-educated-comfortable-backgrounds-says-secret-M15-file.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

²¹¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/13/terrorism-arrests-uk-steep-fall>

indicates that such negative, sensational and scaremongering constructs and narratives constitute the dominant news agenda, in other words Muslims as a 'threat' appears to be more newsworthy than Muslims as a non-threat.

In a similar vein *The Guardian* (29/8/11) was a marginal voice in reporting a story critiquing new plans urging university staff to inform on 'vulnerable' students. The item reports that government measures to extend the PREVENT policy across British universities means university staff including lecturers, porters and chaplains are being asked to essentially spy on Muslim students under new guidance for countering Islamic extremism.²¹² The article includes comments and opinions from lecturers, student union activists and Islamic organisation's spokespeople, thus providing a range of voices.

The reporting and framing of the issue is balanced overall, and unlike the tabloid press items, *The Guardian* tends to lean more to the left, giving more space to critical and sympathetic voices, as such we are not presented with a one-sided argument. The language is also neutral and avoids racial marking and stereotypical/Islamophobic commentary. It is interesting to see then that the majority of stories circulating around the 'threat' of Muslims/extremism comes from the tabloid press, *The Guardian* featured a smaller number of stories (7 percent) on related issues which were often contrary to the number of those presented in *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*.

The contrast of reporting between *The Sun* and *the Daily Mail* compared to *The Guardian* is quite remarkable and can be exemplified further by an observation of headlines, take for example a story in which two British teenagers were arrested by Kenyan anti-terror police for suspected involvement in Islamist activity. In this case *The Sun* (20/10/11, page 4), featured the headline 'Terrorist Brits held', whereas *The Guardian's* headline stated 'UK teenagers arrested near Somali border' (19/10/11, page 10). Moreover, whilst *The Guardian* reports 'suspected involvement' with 'al-Shabaab Islamisit rebel group' (19/10/11, page 10), *The Sun* reports involvement in 'an al Qaeda linked terror group', members of this alleged 'al Qaeda linked terror' group are subsequently referred to in the news item as 'al-Shabaab fanatics' (20/10/11, page 4). The difference of the framing of this story is quite clear, *The Sun's* reporting appears based on speculation, sensationalism, Islamophobia and accusatory commentary where as *The Guardian* represents a more balanced and impartial account.

²¹² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/aug/29/university-inform-vulnerable-muslim-students>

The Independent appeared more toned down in the use of language compared to the tabloid press surrounding terrorism issues, however at the same time, it tended to reinforce their political orientation/logic leaning more to the right. This can be seen with an item which featured the headline 'Bookshop owner on terror charge' (14/10/11, page 22). Although a very brief piece about a court hearing in which it was reported a book shop owner had distributed extremist books and DVDs, it was interesting to see an element of amplification creeping through this account making it more allied to the tabloid press. For example the opening line reads, 'a bookshop owner distributed extremist books and DVDs with the aim of "priming people for terrorism", a court heard yesterday' it goes on to state 'Ahmed Faraz is accused of possessing and disseminating material that ended up in the hands of terrorists including Mohammed Sidique Khan, leader of the July 7 attacks'.²¹³ Although less blatant than the tabloid press, this item tends to be similar in its selectivity and emphasis on the 'threat'. As such, *The Independent* appears more in line with the tabloid press, the sensational language is however less obvious and more covert.

From the four papers analysed it is clear that negative, Islamophobic and defamatory constructs of Muslims/terrorism are hegemonic. The *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* published the most number of stories related to the issue (90 percent), and were the most discriminatory, and more than often jingoistic, in their framing, imagery and language. *The Independent*, although featured a smaller number of stories (3 percent) on the issue, was more aligned to the tabloid press in contributing to a negative construct of Muslims and war on terror related issues. Thus three out of four papers represented Muslims in a negative light. *The Guardian* was the only paper that offered a more critical and balanced account in representations of Muslims and the war on terror, thus can be seen to represent a counter-hegemonic discourse. Avoiding stereotypes, racial markers and distortion *The Guardian* was the most impartial and inclusive of all the papers analysed, as such, the 'moral panic' in the tabloid press surrounding the 'threat' of Muslims and terrorism did not appear to carry the same purchase for *The Guardian*, the issue as such did not appear to be regarded as a prominent news item and did not seem to consume or preoccupy the news agenda the same way it did for the tabloid press.

²¹³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/bookshop-owner-on-terror-charge-2370216.html>

4. Grooming,²¹⁴ abuse and madrassas

“The shift from what I am describing as black ‘to brown’ myths is centred around the implied dangers of non-western cultures. There is a reworking of long-running racist myths – so the black rapist becomes the brown man from a backward and misogynistic culture, anti-feminist, sexually frustrated by traditional culture, addicted to honour killing and viewing women as tradable objects” (Bhattacharyya 2008: 20).

In relation to representations of Muslims surrounding the issues of grooming, abuse and madrassas, there appeared to be a clear hegemonic focus on the ‘dangerous Muslim male’ construct. Muslims in the news items around these topics were largely vilified, hyper-sexualised and racialised. Two key stories emerged under this topic including first, Muslim men being accused of ‘grooming’ white girls, that is plying them with drugs and alcohol and then raping and sexually abusing them, and second, the ‘scandal’ of Muslim faith schools, a topic pursued by the tabloid press which aims to expose ‘what really happens’ in Muslim schools including claims that hundreds of children have been subject to abuse and violence.

Taking the ‘grooming’ case this story was picked up by both the *Daily Mail*, and *The Guardian*. The difference between the newspapers in the reporting and the framing of the issue was quite significant. The *Daily Mail* featured the headline ‘10,000 children are sexually exploited by gangs’ (14/10/11, page 20), and went on to state in the article that an inquiry being launched into the sexual exploitation of young girls, claims that approximately 10,000 children could be victims.²¹⁵ It goes onto report that one in four men accused of grooming is of Asian origin, and keeping the focus on the Asian men the item states that such men lure in white girls and subsequently abuse, drug and sexually exploit them, the inquiry, to quote, ‘will study the appalling phenomenon of Asian men grooming white girls for sex and how teenage girl gang members can be forced into prostitution’ (14/10/11, page 20).

²¹⁴ Grooming refers to the action of befriending and establishing an emotional relationship with a ‘vulnerable’ individual, once trust is established the individual is forced into engaging in sexual relations. The use of drugs, alcohol and buying of gifts are common tactics used to ‘lure’ the individual.

²¹⁵ See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2048807/Up-10-000-children-exploited-sex-gangs-says-childrens-commissioner.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

The singling out and profiling of Asian men is quite clear where there is a racialised association being explicitly evoked between Asian men and grooming. The item shifts from Asian men as a broader category to then focus attention on Pakistani men, and without stating Muslim men directly they are clearly targeted. The news item exemplifies this point when it goes on to give an example of a case in which a lady named Stephanie had been jailed for luring 2 white girls to be raped by 3 Asian men. Providing the names of the three men; brothers Amjad Hussain, 34, and Shahid Hussain, 37, and their cousin, father-of-four Tanveer Butt, 39, the article states that, 'the case was the latest to feature Pakistani sex attackers who preyed on vulnerable young white girls'. Solidifying this further as a predominantly Asian/Pakistani/Muslim crime, the article includes a statement (which had been previously attacked by many activists and Muslim representatives as inflammatory and discriminatory), by Jack Straw, former Home Secretary who, 'accused some Pakistani men in Britain of seeing white girls as 'easy meat' for sexual abuse'. This statement was not challenged by the *Daily Mail*, in fact the contrary, as it appears to be used as a supportive statement for the argument being presented. The article finishes with a comment by Children's Minister Tim Loughton, who claimed, 'closed Asian communities have turned a blind eye to child sex grooming by gangs of men'. The item allowed no room for critical opinion and failed to represent the Pakistani/Muslim voice.

The vilification of Asians/Pakistanis/Muslims is obvious, the consequence being a clear racialisation of the crime that chimes with the logic of the 'black mugger' of the 1970s onwards (Hall 1978), in this case the black mugger is replaced by the 'Pakistani groomer'. Clearly Islamophobic in its language, this item reinforces the notion of the 'dangerous other' threatening white British girls, and perpetuates the framework of 'insider' and 'outsider'. Such constructs reaffirm, overstate and amplify notions of Pakistani/Muslim 'predatory' behaviour (Sian 2009), and as David Tyrer argues, "by referring to these as characteristically 'Muslim' crimes it fixes the representation of Muslims as criminalised, and thus valorises the logics of racist pathology" (Tyrer 2003: 184). What is interesting about the descriptions of this issue is the way in which the criminality of Pakistani men is read through a specific cultural/racialised prism,²¹⁶ so that it establishes an association between culture and crime which is absent in many other accounts of other criminal cases (Sian 2009). For example, in cases of serial killers who are disproportionately white males- it is rarely

²¹⁶ For a detailed critique of crime and 'race' in the media, see Law, I. (2001) *Race in the News*, Palgrave: London

suggested that being Anglo-British is responsible for their broken lives and violence that they use against their victims (Sian 2009).

These constructs of Pakistani/Muslim can also be seen as being parallel to the figure of the Jew during the white slavery moral panic of the early 20th century (Doemeza 2000).²¹⁷ The Jewish 'folk-devil' in the 'white slavery' panic was largely constructed by the media with vast newspaper coverage reporting on the issue, this perpetuated a deep hysteria and reinforced a virulent form of anti-Semitism. In the white slavery panic, Jews were seen as luring white girls into a life of prostitution and as Bristow points out, the anti-Semitic stereotypes of 'evil', 'villain', 'predator' illustrates how this "association of Jews with abduction (of white girls) was predetermined by the logic of white slavery. It did not depend upon the existence of Jewish procurers" (Bristow 1982: 46). Thus, the construction of the Jewish 'other' worked to reinforce notions:

"...That Jews were by nature criminal, that they organised widespread conspiracies to corrupt and pollute the Christian world, and that they ritually murdered Christian children in order to obtain their blood for baking the unleavened Passover bread" (Bristow 1982: 46).

This appears to mirror the Islamophobic logics stitching together the 'grooming' narrative featured in the *Daily Mail*, whereby constructs of the 'depraved and lecherous' Muslim/Pakistani, feeds an anti-Islamic rhetoric of the Muslim 'enemy' threatening vulnerable white British girls.

In contrast, *The Guardian* (14/10/11, page 8) ran the same story, in which the framing of the issue was notably different. The item examines the same inquiry to be launched into child sexual exploitation and opens by stating that, 'fears about the rise in child sexual exploitation have been growing after high-profile cases of groups of mainly Asian men grooming teenagers for sex in Derby and Rochdale', this is followed with, 'the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) warned that the problem is more widespread and

²¹⁷ For extensive research on the 'predatory' nature of Muslim men in relation to Sikh narratives on 'forced' conversions, grooming and the white slavery panic see: Sian, K. P. (2011) 'Forced' Conversions in the British Sikh Diaspora' *South Asian Popular Culture*, Vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 115-130, July 2011, and Sian, K. P. (2009) PhD thesis, *The persistence of Sikh and Muslim conflict in diasporic context: BrAsian Sikhs*, University of Leeds: Leeds. For an analysis of the White Slavery moral panic also see: Doezema, J. (2000) Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-emergence of the myth of 'white slavery' in contemporary discourses of 'trafficking in women', *Gender Issues*, Vol. 18, No. 1 pp. 23- 50

<http://www.walnet.org/csis/papers/doezema-loose.html>

stereotyping of perpetrators could mean victims are being missed'.²¹⁸ Rather than reinforcing the association between Asian men and grooming this article is much more balanced and sympathetic, and actually warns of the dangers of stereotyping such activity.

Giving space to many more critical voices the article goes on to quote Sue Berelowitz, deputy children's commissioner, leading the inquiry, who said, "we believe this is happening in every part of the country and these children need to be protected", additionally, "sexual, and often violent, exploitation of children and young people was happening throughout the country, often perpetrated by young people in street gangs, and not only by certain groups of men, she said". The spokeswoman then goes on to further challenge the notion of this being a specifically 'Asian' crime by stating, "in Derby it was Asian men but in [a recent case in] Torbay white men were involved. It happens in cities but also in rural areas. If it is happening in those areas it is happening everywhere" (14/10/11, page 8).

The article goes on to state, "the issue has come under the spotlight after a series of cases. In January the ringleaders of a gang in Derby who groomed girls for sex were given indefinite jail sentences, while in Rochdale nine men were found guilty of a series of sexual exploitation related offences", note, racial marking in both cases is absent thus offering a more neutral and impartial account compared to that featured in the *Daily Mail*. The article also explores data from the report to again challenge the assumptions and speculations surrounding the issue and includes a statement by one of the report authors Sue Jago, who argues, "the danger is that local authorities think this only happens to a certain type of child by a certain group of men, and then they are blinkered to different models of abuse" (14/10/11, page 8).

Interestingly while the *Daily Mail* included the quote, 'closed Asian communities have turned a blind eye to child sex grooming by gangs of men' (14/10/11, page 20), from minister Tim Loughton, *The Guardian* quoted professor Jenny Pearce who is heavily involved in the research/report stating, 'some local authorities were turning a blind eye to abuse' (14/10/11, page 8), this difference here is interesting and once again demonstrates the racial marking prominent in the tabloid press, and the neutrality and inclusivity represented by *The Guardian*. *The Guardian* also quoted Tim Loughton but rather than using a defamatory statement like the *Daily Mail*, this article quoted the minister saying, "child sexual

²¹⁸

See:<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/oct/13/child-sexual-exploitation-inquiry?newsfeed=true>

exploitation is an appalling form of child abuse and we are determined to do everything possible to stamp it out" (14/10/11, page 8). Thus unlike the *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian* once again presented a fair account attempting to interrupt the negative and hegemonic assumptions and stereotypes surrounding this issue.

Following on from this, the *Daily Mail* ran two stories both related to the 'dangers' of Muslims faith schools claiming abuse and violence was rife (19/10/11, page 16; 25/10/11, page 26-27). The first headline reads, 'hundreds of children abused in UK madrassas' (19/10/11, page 16) and the item reports that according to a special investigation based on an 'undercover' TV documentary numbers of Muslims youngsters have been victim to physical abuse in these schools.²¹⁹ The article is strongly against Muslim faith schools claiming hundreds of them are unregulated and remain dangerous as children are hit with sticks and other implements and also are forced to study hours of Islamic law and learn recite the Koran in Arabic.

It claims that many of the schools are often held in mosques and also garages, private homes and abandoned pubs. It goes onto report that the figures of abuse in madrassas are high and includes the voice of a Muslim think tank representative, Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, who supports the stance of the article arguing that 'We are basically destroying the lives of young people. Some kind of system must be put in place to ensure that only teaching takes place there, not sexual or physical abuse.' The article goes on to report cases of abuse including an imam from Stoke, who was imprisoned for raping a 12-year-old boy and sexually assaulting a 15-year-old. Other Muslim voices are included in the article supporting the arguments against Muslim schools.

The item is Islamophobic and sensational developing a strong sense of hysteria by suggesting that the figures are likely to be higher. The reporting is distorted, accusatory and unbalanced with allegations generated primarily from a Channel 4 TV documentary, and focuses only on the negative aspects of Muslim schools, the abuse element being central. Moreover, it develops a strong anti-multicultural narrative by evoking that these schools have no place in Britain, they are incompatible and pose a significant threat to society. The

²¹⁹See:<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2050399/Hundreds-Muslim-children-abused-UK-madrassas.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

pictorial representation coincides with the reporting of the story including a series of photos of Muslim teachers beating up children.²²⁰



Source: *Daily Mail*, 19/10/11.

A few days later, the *Daily Mail* took this story further by producing a two page 'special investigation' with the headline, 'what IS going on in Britain's mosque schools? Beatings, humiliation and lessons in hating Britain' (25/10/11, page 26-27).²²¹ Similar to the previous item the article further critiques Muslim faith schools claiming the type of punishment is 'medieval in it's cruelty' and lists examples of the type of abuse and 'torture tactics' used to discipline young Muslims. Muslim voices are present again within this article, yet the voices featured are only supportive of the critique. It similarly focuses on the abuse aspect claiming that Muslim pupils are brutalised and tortured, it reports that pupils are taught to refer to non-Muslims as infidels and that the British way of life is influenced by Satan. It alleges that beatings are administered and the community is in denial, it is claimed it is a 'taboo' subject for Muslims. Moreover the item reports that Al-Qaeda followers use these schools to radicalise youngsters and groom future terrorists. It explicitly attacks multiculturalism and anti-racism discourses arguing that, 'it's a shameful indictment of the modern British justice system and one has to wonder if political correctness means the authorities are reluctant to vigorously investigate such crimes for fear of being labelled racist' (25/10/11, page 26-27).

²²⁰ Left to Right: 1. Widespread abuse: The Channel 4 programme showed a child being slapped, which figures now reveal is common practice, 2. Unregulated: The lessons that featured in February's documentary took place at Markazi Jamia mosque in Keighley, West Yorkshire, 3. Hitting out: A teacher raising his arm to strike a child - an act that is still legal in part-time education in the UK, 4. Violence: A Muslim teacher pulls a pupil towards him and strikes him on the back at the Markazi Jamia mosque in February's Dispatches documentary, 5. Lesson in hate: A teenage pupil left in charge during a teacher's absence threatens a younger child with a bench.

²²¹ See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2053034/What-going-Britains-mosque-schools-Beatings-humiliation-lessons-hating-Britain.html>

The reporting is one sided, racially charged and sensational establishing an atmosphere of fear surrounding Muslim faith schools, in addition to this the term madrassas was used as a category to signify and represent all Muslim faith schools, thus the distinction between both was often blurred if not confused. The attack on Muslim faith schools is prominent claiming that 'religious apartheid and social segregation is being taught to a growing number of Muslim youngsters', however it defends Sunday schools claiming that, 'these institutions have been compared to Sunday school for Christians. The comparison is misplaced. By definition, Sunday school takes place only once a week. The majority of madrassas hold classes every evening, six days a week. Lessons last for about two hours. They represent, in effect, a parallel, but largely unregulated education system. Madrassas, unlike state or private schools, are not subject to Ofsted inspections'. This works to sustain the 'us' and 'them' framework keeping Muslims firmly on the outside.

Orientalist logics feed this story whereby to quote, 'in a typical daily scene, students hunch over wooden benches, rocking backwards and forwards as they learn the Koran by rote in Arabic, as a man with a long, dark beard dressed in traditional shalwar kameez — tunic and trousers — sits at the head of the class or paces up and down' (25/10/11, page 26-27), such language explicitly represents Muslims as 'backwards, primitive and excessively religious'. Narrated through the immigrant imaginary discourse (Sayyid and Hesse 2006), this report is speculative, essentialist, excessively Islamophobic and sensational. It is one sided and extremely hostile. The inclusion of Muslim voices only works to support the narrative being presented and the focus on cases of violence and abuse contributes to the reinforcement of Islamophobia and the perception of the 'threat' of Muslims in the UK.

The issues surrounding abuse, grooming and madrassas gained more attention from the tabloid press, specifically the *Daily Mail*. *The Guardian* again offered a more balanced view which attempted to dispel the myths of grooming subscribed to by the *Daily Mail*. The inclusion of a greater range of critical voices by *The Guardian* allowed room for a wider range of arguments. The *Daily Mail* on the other hand remained Islamophobic, unbalanced and sensational, it was hostile surrounding all the items featured and did not allow for critical voices or evidence. The emphasis on abuse was prominent and the framing overall was highly negative, these stories run by the *Daily Mail* on this issue furnished the construct of the 'dangerous' Muslim male, and the representations remain locked within an orientalist lens.

5. Muslim related domestic issues

Other notable stories related to Muslims in the UK include items following the 2011 nationwide riots. A case was picked up by both the *Daily Mail* (7/12/11, page 5) and *The Sun*, (7/12/11, page 29) whereby a 'gang' of drunk Muslim girls went 'free' after beating up a white woman, it is claimed by both papers the girls went free because they were Muslim and not used to the effects of alcohol. Both papers were highly critical of this and fed the discourse of Muslims as receiving 'special treatment' by the courts and furthermore reinforced the notion of white victims of racism. The *Daily Mail* featured the headline, 'Somali girl thugs go free after judge is told 'they were not used to being drunk' (7/12/11, page 5).²²² The item reports that a 'gang' of Somali Muslim women attacked a white lady and screamed 'kill the white slag' leaving the victim with a bald patch and other injuries. The 'gang' walked free from court after the judge heard that they were not used to being drunk because of their religion.

The article is unsympathetic and one sided, it frames the Muslim women as criminals and evokes that the ruling was unfair because they were Muslim. The white woman who was attacked is framed as the victim and the item is critical that the Muslims were not charged for racial aggravation and includes statements from the victim who claims she was attacked for being white. On the other hand the Muslim women were seen as callous, unsympathetic 'yobs' with statements included from some of the girls saying 'they didn't care' and were 'happy' with the ruling. The item is provocative and hostile as well as Islamophobic marking out continuously that the attackers were Muslim. The pictorial representation is equally negative featuring CCTV photographs of the attack with photos of the Muslim women and the caption referring to them as 'mobs' and photographs of the victim and her injuries.²²³

²²² See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2070562/Muslim-girl-gang-kicked-Rhea-Page-head-yelling-kill-white-slag-FREED.html>

²²³ Left to right: 1. Attack: Three of the young women can be seen setting upon Rhea Page, 22, in the centre of Leicester. Despite leaving her traumatised, they were handed suspended sentences, 2. Yobs: Sisters Hibo and Ambaro Maxamed, both 24, who attacked Rhea. They were both given six month suspended jail sentences, 3. Girl gang: Ayan Maxamad, 28, left, and her cousin Ifrah Nur, 28, who were also involved in the attack in Leicester, 4. Victims: Rhea, 22, was with her partner Lewis Moore, 23, when she was attacked. He tried to defend her, the court was told, 5. Bruised: Police picture of Rhea page's arm after the attack by the gang of Somalian girls



Source: *Daily Mail*, 7/12/11.

The item is sensational and unbalanced and frames the 'politics' of racism in this issue as fundamentally unfair as is explicitly critical that the attack was not read or accepted as a hate/racist crime. Following a similar framing of the story, *The Sun* featured the headline 'Freed: Muslim gang not used to booze' (7/12/11, page 29).²²⁴ Using the same defamatory and vilifying language the item opens with 'a FERAL gang of Somalian girls who repeatedly kicked a young woman in the head walked free from court after a judge heard they were "not used to being drunk" because they were Muslim', from the outset the tone of the piece is laid out to construct the Muslim women as the 'baddies'. Using the same quotes from the victim as the *Daily Mail*, and the attack on Muslims as getting favoured treatment, as well as the critique of the case not being deemed by the courts as an act of racism, the item is equally as hostile, negative and Islamophobic, whereby the Muslims are seen as the 'dangerous thugs' and the white lady as the victim. The pictorial representation is of a similar vein with the same CCTV photography and photo of the victim. Overall both items seem to be instrumental in rousing tension and hostility towards Muslims, using sensational and Islamophobic language throughout.

Related to the issue of racism is another case briefly picked up by *The Sun* (10/10/11, page 21), regarding DC Kevin Blackwell who was suing London's Met police force for race and sex discrimination. According to the article, Maxwell said in front of a tribunal that a racist colleague refused to eat curry at a mosque because someone would have spat in it, whilst another on an Islamic awareness day refused to take her shoes off because she was not Muslim. The article reports he is suing for bullying which has made him depressed and has subsequently been off work for two years. What is interesting about this piece is the fact that racism is trivialised and the police officer suing is almost mocked, the article is unsympathetic to the case and seems more supportive of the Met rather than Blackwell. He is constructed as almost incompetent for taking time off work and the article seems to

²²⁴See: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3981429/Muslim-girl-gang-who-kicked-woman-in-head-freed-after-court-hears-they-were-not-used-to-drinking.html>

suggest he is at fault, moreover it is stressed that he 'claims' these events have happened. The use of the word 'claim' by the journalist is interesting and as Van Dijk argues alongside 'claim' reporters in racism cases, as in this example, often 'speak of alleged discrimination' (Van Dijk 1991: 189), as such Van Dijk points out that, 'the journalistic routine of doubting accusations of racism is stronger than the facts' (Van Dijk 1991: 189).

The reporting is sensational and Blackwell is marked out as 'Black anti-terror cop' and 'Gay Mr Blackwell' thus he is marked out on both racial and sexual orientation lines. There is a strong degree of trivialisation and ridicule in this item which can be seen explicitly with the headline which states, 'No curry for 'racist' Met cop', the issue doesn't seem to be taken seriously nor is it balanced or critical, additionally the scare quotes around the word racist implies the journalist doubts or does not fully accept the usage of the term in this context.

The items in this section demonstrate the tabloid press's approach to racism, which is either seen as something which unfairly doesn't apply to white 'victims' or it is trivialised and denied especially in cases when the victim is of colour, this denial is significant as Van Dijk argues:

'The denial of racism has the strategic function of being able to say something negative about others without running the risk of being categorized as racist... [it] is the most strategic move we find in the right-wing Press...It may take the form of the usual distance or doubt about acts of discrimination, for instance by putting quotes or words like 'alleged' in well-known accusation contexts' (Van Dijk 1991: 188).

The denial of racism and the use of 'claim' and 'alleged' in the case of the policeman was evident, however interestingly not once was it 'claimed' or 'alleged' the Muslim women had attacked the white lady in the previous articles examined. Furthermore, what is interesting about these cases is the space given to each issue, in the case of the Muslim 'attack' both *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* gave greater space to the story, featuring a series of pictures, however in the 'alleged' police racism case this only received a very small amount of column inch space, no more than six lines, which reinforces Van Dijk's argument about the denial of racism in the tabloid press. The larger coverage of the Muslim 'attack' case seems to imply that this had more significance, what makes this interesting is that the victim was white, however in the case of the black victim very little space was given. This supports Van Dijk's research who argues that 'crime is a major subject of ethnic reporting' (Van Dijk 1991: 98), he goes on to point out that:

'As soon as black people are somehow associated with a breach of the law, such events come newsworthy, although the same crime committed by whites would be ignored or played down. This is especially the case when such crimes, real or alleged, can be construed as a 'threat' to white people. Such crime is no longer just a crime but black crime' (Van Dijk 1991: 99)

The story of the Muslim 'attackers' ties closely into research by Van Dijk who also found that in a case where a white girl was raped by 'black' men during the 1985 disturbances, meant that because the rape occurred during the disturbances the urban revolt as well as blacks were criminalised further (Van Dijk 1991: 99), he also notes the deliberate identification of 'blacks' in this crime by the right-wing press, and goes on to state that, "it is not surprising that these newspapers are far from happy with the 'light sentences' given to perpetrators, and generally resent that courts are too soft" (Van Dijk 1991: 99). This goes hand in hand with the Muslim 'attack' case, where the women involved were marked out as Muslim, the victim was white and the courts critiqued for letting them 'walk free', and moreover, the fact this crime happened during the 2011 riots the Muslim girls came to be narrated through the framework of associating the riots with ethnically marked communities. As such it would be fair to conclude that, "the focus is on those crimes that may be interpreted as confirming prejudices about black people, and that may be seen as a threat to white individuals" (Van Dijk 1991: 100)

6. Forced marriages and immigration

"The common slogan 'we are not safe in our own cities anymore', therefore expresses not only a characteristic right-wing concern, but is also a particularly prominent proposition in a racist ideology" (Van Dijk 1991: 100)

The issue of 'forced' marriages and immigration generated a lot of media attention, largely from the tabloid press. The general framing of the issue surrounding both areas was constructed as largely 'problematic' and a strain and hindrance to Britain and as Van Dijk points out:

"Although less than in previous decades, immigration is still among the most prominent Press...Its topic clusters deal with immigration policies, decisions of non-admission and expulsion, repatriation, family reunion, illegal entry and residence, and the treatment of immigrants" (Van Dijk 1991: 95).

This was true from our dataset and it was interesting to see how Muslims were tied up closely to these debates as 'incompatible', 'freeloading' and 'fraudulent'. *The Independent* (10/10/11, page 16-17), reported a story related to a speech to be made by PM Cameron on government plans surrounding the 'crackdown' on immigration and 'sham' marriages. The headline reads, 'If you want your foreign spouse to live here, earn more, says PM'.²²⁵ The item gives an overview of the forthcoming speech reporting that Cameron hopes to reduce the number of visas granted to family members of British citizens every year, it reports that Cameron will cite a Pakistani example of a 'sham' marriage, the item gives details of this case and constructs the Pakistani man involved as fraudulent and dishonest, for example, 'He will cite the case of Pakistani national who applied for a spouse visa on the basis of his marriage to someone settled in the UK. The man obtained indefinite leave to remain but then divorced his UK-based spouse and returned to Pakistan, re-married and then applied for entry clearance for his new spouse'. David Cameron's views are clearly being echoed throughout this item.

It is also reported that Cameron will address a 'crackdown' on forced marriages including the possibility of making it a specific offence, the item quotes the prime minister as referring to the practice as 'little more than slavery'. The topic of 'forced' marriage is an issue which is almost always sensationalised and read through a cultural register, as Van Dijk argues, "the case of whether or not second wives of (Muslim) immigrants from South Asia will be allowed to enter the UK not only draws attention to 'numbers', but also associates such immigrants with dubious cultural practices (second wives, arranged marriages), if not with fraud" (Van Dijk 1991: 97). Although not overtly hostile the overall stance of the item featured by *The Independent* appears pro Cameron and anti-immigration with the focus on themes of 'foreign spouses', 'benefits', 'sham marriages' and 'crackdown on forced marriage'. In addition to this it states that, 'the move is likely to prove controversial with immigrant groups and could be open to challenge in the courts for discriminating against couples on low incomes', on the surface this seems to give a view from both sides, however the use of language appears provocative in claiming the move is likely to 'prove controversial', but at the same time fails to include any 'immigrant group' voices. It also chooses to state 'in an attempt to appease the left', Cameron will announce new measures surrounding forced marriages, this evokes the idea of 'the left' as somewhat troublesome or

²²⁵See: <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron-if-you-want-your-foreign-spouse-to-live-in-uk-earn-more-16061623.html>

problematic. Such a rightist orientation can be exemplified by another item published soon after this story, by *The Independent* focusing specifically on the critique of 'forced' marriage (11/10/11, page 14).

This is a comment item with the headline reading, 'An outrageous practice that the law must address'.²²⁶ This is a clearly hostile piece which explicitly supports Cameron's narrative on 'forced' marriage as 'unlawful and abusive', and a practice that will not be tolerated. The item is only brief but the message is clear, that is, plans to make 'forced' marriages a criminal offence should be supported by the British public. Equating the practice to 'slavery', and stressing the abusive nature of 'forced' marriages the item states that, 'forced marriage is an iniquitous practice and proposals that it be made a criminal offence deserve unqualified support. As things stand, the practice can only be prosecuted under laws on kidnap, assault or rape. But the failure to recognise it as a crime in its own right leaves the law blind to the cultural and family dynamics which can render victims powerless to defend themselves'. Although careful not to mark the practice out as particularly South Asian or Muslim, it is clear this is evoked with the use of the phrase 'cultural and family dynamics'. The item thus remains locked within a culturalist and orientalist framework, it is unbalanced and one-sided.

Cameron's planned speech on immigration and 'forced' marriage made all the newspaper headlines we examined, and following a virulent critique of immigration, the tabloid press featured a number of related items. For example focusing on the forced marriage element, the *Daily Mail* used the headline, 'crackdown' on forced marriages' (10/10/11, page 4),²²⁷ the item focused on the strain or 'burden' on the taxpayer. The article 'condemns forced marriage', following the argument that it represents a form of slavery as well as an 'abuse' of the family system, the language was hostile and unbalanced and overtly anti-immigration. This corresponds to Van Dijk's research who found that in relation to immigration issues, 'The Mail specifically focuses on the alleged abuses of British 'hospitality', and calls for stricter immigration rules' (Van Dijk 1991: 96). This was continually reinforced with the items published by the *Daily Mail*, and in a similar vein, *The Sun* remained equally as hostile featuring the headline, 'Immigrants to pay cash bond: PM

²²⁶ See: <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/leading-articles/leading-article-an-outrageous-practice-that-the-law-must-address-2368625.html>

²²⁷ See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2047251/Migrant-families-pay-cash-relatives-settle-Britain-says-Prime-Minister-David-Cameron.html>

crackdown will ease burden on taxpayer' (10/10/11, page 2).²²⁸ Feeding the 'burden' on Britain discourse, *The Sun* used language such as 'soaring immigration' and 'failed immigration', additionally the item focused on criminal offences committed by 'immigrants' and the practice of forced marriage to frame the issue in negative terms. *The Sun* (11/10/11, page 26) followed this further by proceeding to publish a specific story on forced marriage, using their very own British Pakistani Muslim feature writer, *Anila Baig*, to run this story. We are presented with an ethnographical account of the writers 'own' experiences to attack forced marriage and support Cameron's 'crackdown'. The headline reads, "Sun Writer backs ban on forced marriages: There's never a happy ever after",²²⁹ and includes the following photo to equate the practice with prison and slavery:



Source: *The Sun*, 11/10/11

Caption reads: 'Prison sentence' ... marriage without consent.

The item is one-sided, deeply orientalist and sensational. What is remarkable is that as you read on you are to learn the writer actually had an arranged marriage, rather than a forced marriage, and although the writer acknowledges the difference later on in the item, the headline remains misleading, and the writer on numerous occasions falls into the problematic approach of simply conflating arranged and forced marriages. The piece as such is patchy, inconsistent and contradictory. The language is deliberately descriptive and emotive and explicitly reinforces orientalist logics by constructing Muslims, Pakistanis and South Asians in general as backwards and oppressive, this of course is contrasted with the modern, free west. For example the item reads:

"I WAS nine years old when my father took me to one side and told me that when the time came he would find me a suitable husband. I briefly wondered if this man would look like Starsky from TV show Starsky And Hutch, then went out to play again. When I was older I

²²⁸ See: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/politics/3862700/Immigrants-to-pay-cash-bond.html>

²²⁹ See: <http://thesun.mobi/sol/homepage/woman/3864529/Theres-never-a-happy-ending.html?mob=1>

wished, like all my friends, that I'd meet my prince, fall in love and live happily ever after. That didn't happen so when my Muslim parents arranged my marriage to a doctor in Pakistan, I didn't argue" (The Sun, 11/10/11, page 26).

The narrative presented is extremely stereotypical and the writer has clearly internalised the popular western construct of the 'backwards' Pakistani family, reinforcing typical cultural tropes surrounding restrictive customs, beliefs and practices as well as the supporting 'culture clash' discourse where she longs for the 'freedoms' of the west, (and the all American streetwise cop), but remains tied to her 'traditional' and 'insular' family values. Referring to themes of family 'pressure', family 'honour' and her absent Pakistani husband who 'literally' left her 'holding the baby' the article is reductive and sensational. She goes onto state that,

"I never used to believe forced marriage should be outlawed. I thought parents knew best and that governments should not meddle in cultural matters" (The Sun, 11/10/11, page 26).

The writer claims after interviewing victims her outlook has changed as women she spoke to commented that,

"Forced marriage is nothing less than a prison sentence. It can be mental and physical torture. The denial of human rights must stop. This new law offers hope and rescue" (The Sun, 11/10/11, page 26).

The inclusion of the victims voice further backs the campaign to support the 'ban on forced marriage' and the writer finishes the article by stating, 'Outlawing forced marriage would, at least, send out a powerful message that such an abhorrent practice is a crime. But forced marriage never has a happy ever after for anyone. And the sooner we see the back of it the better.'

Here it would be useful to use the work of Fauzia Ahmad (2006),²³⁰ to critique this account of the arranged marriage. The issue, or rather 'scandal', of the arranged marriage continues to be under the spotlight with stories of coercion, oppression and tyranny, (as illustrated in this item by *The Sun*). These accounts have come to dominate constructions of the BrAsian family which is typically perceived as 'backwards' or 'tribal' (Sian 2007). BrAsian women in the majority of the cases are depicted as victims or subjects of injustice and exploitation

²³⁰ See: Ahmad, F. (2006) 'The Scandal of "Arranged Marriages" and the Pathologisation of BrAsian Families', in *A Postcolonial People*, London: Hurst.

(Sian 2007; Ahmad 2006). Ahmad argues that, “the trope of ‘arranged marriages’ circulates as a sign of BrAsian ‘otherness’ and as a site for intervention and domestication of that otherness” (Ahmad 2006: 273).

Early ethnographic accounts from the 1950s onwards studying BrAsian families have increasingly focused their attention upon the ‘insularity’ of the family unit whereby notions of ‘kinship systems’ and ‘household structures’ are emphasised (Sian 2007; Ahmad 2006). Despite the fact that these themes only provide a partial presentation they have progressively become firmly entrenched within the literature on South Asians (Sian 2007; Ahmad 2006), as Ahmad articulates they, “have remained remarkably persistent, constituting the grammar by which BrAsian experiences are mediated and disseminated throughout society” (Ahmad 2006: 274). Ahmad notes that there is an evident confusion or blurring between forced and arranged marriages which is often perpetuated through an ‘idealised European’ framework in which the arranged marriage is almost always affiliated with simplistic notions that portray the practice as ancient, oppressive and patriarchal (Sian 2007; Ahmad 2006).

The press, the government and academic discourse collectively focus their attention upon the, “negative outcomes and attitudes, or stressing inter-generational and inter-cultural conflicts.”(Ahmad 2006: 274). As Claire Alexander notes (2006), the ‘clash of cultures’ account remains embedded within the literature around this topic constructing the subject, “as torn between the repressive traditional regimes of their parents and the more permissive freedoms of wider British society” (Alexander 2006: 256). The account presented by *The Sun* certainly reinforces these pathologising frameworks, as such it strips Muslims/Pakistanis/South Asians of any sense of agency through, “a racist discourse of patriarchy”(Ahmad 2006: 278).

Within this article the family is constructed as ‘repressive’ with little attempt to counter the confusion that arises in the distinction between forced and arranged marriages (Sian 2007), as such the item is shadowed with, “the over-bearing and izzat obsessed nature of BrAsian families abound”. Notions of *izzat* (honour) and *sharam* (shame) are essentialised and definitions of the terms remain weak throughout this account (Sian 2007). The interpretive structure used by the writer maintains the distinction between the traditional Asian woman and the modern westernised woman, this remains problematic for a number of reasons, as well as being reductive and essentialist, it instils ‘extreme binaries’, homogenises culture,

and privileges, “a hegemonic, colonialist-inspired discourse of western cultural superiority” (Ahmad 2006: 282).

The Guardian approached the topic by giving a much more balanced report of the issue (11/10/11, page 16).²³¹ Drawing upon Cameron’s speech and proposed immigration changes the item included the voice of Keith Vaz, the chairman of the Commons Home Affairs Committee, quoting him stating that these plans will, “antagonise settled communities in Britain and enrage our allies such as India” (11/10/11, page 16). *The Guardian* presents a more critical account by using voices to challenge Cameron, and also avoided racially or culturally marking out communities, furthermore the item is more sympathetic and inclusive avoiding the negative framing as illustrated by the tabloid press surrounding immigration and forced marriage. That is, it did not mention Muslims or Pakistanis unlike *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* who focused on this particular association with forced marriages. Added to the critique *The Guardian* item examines the changes to be made to the citizenship test and states,

“But whether those who are already British citizens would be able to pass such a test remains open to doubt. A series of polls taken over the past decade show that a large proportion of those under 30 have difficulty in identifying major figures in British history. One BBC poll showed that fewer than half could identify Sir Francis Drake as the key figure in the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and one-third did not know that William the Conqueror won the Battle of Hastings” (11/10/11, page 16).

This somewhat light hearted example challenges and calls into question the knowledge of the British public themselves which illustrates a direct contrast to the items in the tabloid press who appear more concerned with defending the British public. *The Guardian* as such appears to represent a counter-hegemonic discourse on immigration issues by being inclusive rather than hostile.

The same can be said for another related item *The Guardian* published surrounding forced marriage (13/10/11, page 18).²³² Rather than focusing on the practice as ‘abusive’, ‘oppressive’, ‘slavery’ like we saw in the tabloid press, the item by *The Guardian* reports that the Supreme Court rejected Tory plans surrounding the marriage visa ban. Critical of the Conservative Party, the item notes how,

²³¹See:<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/10/david-cameron-immigrationcrackdown?INTCMP=SRCH>

²³²See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/12/visa-ban-spouses-human-rights?INTCMP=SRCH>

“The judges said the ban, which was introduced to deter forced marriages, breached the right to family life of the couples involved – a right conferred by the controversial article eight of the European convention on human rights, which was at the centre of last week's cabinet row over the Human Rights Act” (13/10/11, page 18).

Additionally the item features a picture of Home Secretary, Theresa May with the caption, Theresa May, who has fallen foul of human rights legislation once again. The item as such offers a much more leftist approach and strong critique of the government. This is further demonstrated by the inclusion of voices from The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), which was party to the challenge, and said approximately,

“5,000 couples a year who wanted to get married were suffering under the ban, which applies to spouses and partners coming from outside the EU to join those with the right to live in Britain” (13/10/11, page 18).

The inclusion of this voice provides more space for critique. The article goes on to give examples two case studies of couples who had been affected by the legislation; the first couple concerned a British woman, Amber Jeffrey, and her Chilean husband, Diego Aguilar-Quila who met at school while Aguilar-Quila's mother was studying at a British university. The second couple concerned Shakira Bibi, from Pakistan, and Suhayl Mohammed, a British citizen, married on 30 October 2008 in which the Home Office accepted it was a traditional arranged marriage to which both had freely consented. The items include the voices of these couples to show how the plans had unfairly affected their cases. This again poses a direct contrast to the reporting of the tabloid press, whereby rather than focusing on ‘abusive’ marriages the item looks at genuine couples and offers a sympathetic account which rather than critiquing the couples themselves, critiques government plans and state practices. Both items featured in *The Guardian* surrounding immigration and marriage are inclusive, fair and balanced and challenge the assumptions and sensationalism embedded with the tabloid press.

Opposed to the Right to Family Life Act (1998), both *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* ran a series of articles with examples to illustrate how this was damaging and unfair to Britain, allowing, as *The Sun* headline reports, ‘Foreign crims to stay in Britain (17/10/11, page 9)’, and in a similar vein, the *Daily Mail* claims, “Right to family life lets rapist who abandoned

wife remain in Britain...and death crash driver can stay too' (17/10/11, page 20).²³³ This issue generated a number of follow up stories in both newspapers making a direct association between crime and immigrants using repetitive case studies of 'foreign' criminals in the UK, as well as focusing on the financial 'burden' of immigration on the British public. The case studies featuring Muslim 'criminals' referred to on numerous occasions included an alleged hit and run incident who the *Daily Mail* referred to as an, 'Iraqi asylum seeker' (19/12/11, page 10), and who *The Sun* referred to as, 'drugged up Pakistan-born death drive' (21/10/11, page 47). Both *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* were referring to the same 'hit and run' incident however the *Daily Mail* claims the 'criminal' is Iraqi and *The Sun* claims he is Pakistani, this demonstrates the distortion and puts into question the validity of the case. Additionally a man from Barbados is claimed to have carried out rape. Immigration policy is accused of being too lenient and relaxed for allowing 'foreign' criminals to walk the streets of Britain and put a strain the country's resources as well as threaten the safety of the public.

The topic of immigration and forced marriage occupied a prominent position particularly evident in the tabloid press. The majority of the papers including *The Independent*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* all represented the issue within a negative framework which worked to reinforce racial hostility. *The Guardian* appeared to be alone in offering a more inclusive, critical and balanced approach and featured the least number of items related to the issue. Our findings coincide with research by Van Dijk who argues:

"The topicalization of immigration is largely set in a framework associations, such as political rows, numbers, luxury immigrants, costs to the 'ratepayer', fraud, illegal residence and 'strange' customs. As in earlier decades, the topics of immigration focus on problems, if not on threats against white Britons. It is not surprising that although forced repatriation is not advocated, it remains a legitimate option. It is not surprising either that the racist nature of the immigration restrictions and laws, as well as the treatment of new immigrants by the authorities, are seldom topicalized" (Van Dijk 1991: 97).

Our research demonstrated that immigration was perhaps the largest site for racist expression to be vocalised by the right wing press. Subjects were racially marked out, criminal acts and strange practices and customs emphasised as well as the burden on Britain's resources, thus the national majority was constructed as the injured party, where

²³³ See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2049811/Rapist-killer-foreign-criminals-using-Human-Rights-Act-fight-deportation.html>

as immigrants were largely represented as freeloading criminals. Muslims in these cases were over represented in the forced marriage 'scandal' whereby they were read through an orientalist lens. They were also tied up in stories relating to 'foreign' criminal activity, thus were constructed as representing a fundamental 'threat' to the well being of the country.

Conclusion

Following 9/11 and associated attacks, many representatives including academics, public and political actors and community and ethnic minority activists, raised concerns about the negative constructs of Muslims circulating in the media. Years on we could have at some level perhaps expected a decline in the negativity surrounding Muslims, however, our findings alongside other research has illustrated that unfortunately the negativity still clearly persists and remains hegemonic in the media, as Poole notes, since September 11 and the time that has passed, "the association of Muslims with terrorism has concretised" (Poole and Richardson 2010: 95).

From the four themes we examined we can sum up with the following arguments. In relation to the war on terror, fundamentalism and PREVENT, *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, and *The Independent*, all used the logics of the 'us' and 'them' discourse to frame the issue, as such Muslims were almost always constructed as belonging 'outside' the nation. The representations were hostile and strongly Islamophobic which facilitated the development of a hysteria and overwhelming sense of fear by insisting that terrorists are 'lurking' on the streets of Britain, as well as beyond national borders, and furthermore there was a tendency particularly by the tabloid press to exaggerate the terror level in the UK. The recurring use of words such as 'fanatic', 'terrorist', 'fundamentalist', 'radical' and 'extremist' by the tabloid and conservative press works to stamp and imprint a particular image of the Muslim 'other' or more specifically the Muslim 'enemy', this image circulates globally as well as nationally with the continuation of the war on terror which has been typically constructed as a war between the west and Islam (Poole 2009; Richardson 2004). Similarly critical of these representations, Poole argues that:

"The representations of Muslims in the UK are now closer to the undifferentiated global aggressor that theory postulates. The more persistent the framework, the more indicative it is of an essential Muslimness and is in danger of becoming fixed. These events then define for

the public what it means to be Muslim, and then Muslims worldwide can be managed through social and aggressive policies” (Poole and Richardson 2010: 102).

The maintenance of such negative and vilifying expressions manifested through the tabloid and conservative press excludes and marginalises Muslim voices which are limited if not invisibilised, additionally there is a propensity to homogenise Muslims, the consequence of this being that Islamophobia remains unchallenged. To be fair to *The Guardian*, this issue was approached much more critically and sympathetically and rather than reinforce negative stereotypes, the reports examined tended to challenge the dominant constructs. The items were overall much more inclusive and as Poole similarly found with *The Guardian*, there was more than often an attempt to criticise Government policy (Poole and Richardson 2010: 97).

In relation to grooming, abuse and madrassas, commentary from *The Independent* was limited, however the issue was over represented by mainly, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*. Sharing a similar Islamophobic line of argumentation, the issue was framed to depict Muslims, specifically Muslim men as ‘dangerous’ and ‘predatory’, particularly towards white women. Muslim faith schools were also heavily attacked by the tabloid press to establish an anti-multiculturalism position, focusing on the negative aspects of madrassas and overstating violence and abuse. Muslims as such were largely constructed as representing yet again a ‘danger’ deemed incompatible with the national majority. *The Guardian*, once more offered a more balanced and inclusive approach to counter act the stereotypes and assumptions presented in the tabloid press, avoiding racial marking and cultural frameworks to explain crime. *The Guardian* as such constructed Muslims in a much more positive light. On the issue of forced marriages and immigration a similar patten emerged, *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* developed a negative representation whilst *The Guardian* stuck to a more fair approach. The tabloid press were particularly strong in their attack on immigration and ‘forced’ marriage, these issues perhaps mobilised the most virulent expression of Islamophobia and racism. Forced marriage was denounced on several occasions by all three newspapers (*The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*) in which stereotypical and reductive cultural frameworks of representation were deployed.

Orientalist logics were prominent to separate Muslims from the national majority, that is Muslims were constructed as backwards, oppressive and primitive where as the national majority was represented as free, liberal and modern. In relation to immigration generally, the focus of the tabloid press centred around criminal activity and the strain of immigration

on the British taxpayer. Crime was explicitly linked with immigrants and as we saw Muslims featured in a number of the cases presented, this as such reinforced Muslims as 'foreigners' and outside the contours of the nation, additionally they were also represented as a 'threat' yet it was assumed throughout the items they were able to 'walk free', this argument was used to fundamentally critique immigration policy for being too 'soft'. *The Guardian* represented counter hegemonic discourses by challenging the British public's knowledge on citizenship tests as well as critiquing Government breaches of The Human Rights Act, as such it remained once again the only paper to include a range of critical voices and approach the subject sympathetically.

When exploring Muslim related domestic issues the case of the Muslim women allegedly attacking a white woman was examined and compared with the case of a policeman 'claiming' racial discrimination, both stories were run by the tabloid press. It was interesting to see the level of coverage both issues generated, the Muslim 'gang' attack received a greater level of attention with lots of pictorial representation, whereas the 'alleged' racism case received no more than six lines, we argued that this illustrated the news agenda of the tabloid press which deemed the 'attack' as being more newsworthy, in short the scandalous nature of a white victim of a Muslim 'gang' who all 'walked free' was framed as more important than an instance of an ethnic minority experiencing institutional racism, this as we pointed out earlier illustrates the way in which the tabloid press deny racism.

Our findings thus expose the hegemony of Islamophobia in the majority of the newspapers examined. *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* all constructed Muslims in a largely negative light, this was illustrated more so by the tabloid press. This can be seen to reflect the wider social, public and political discourses surrounding Muslims as fundamentally 'problematic' and as representing the 'enemy' of the west. Alongside this we also can identify post-racial logics at play whereby issues of racism are trivialised, denied or in some cases exceptionalised. The hostile representations of Muslims enacted by the tabloid and conservative press demonstrates the wider context where the governing and regulating of Muslims is prioritised, where as critiques of structures of racism marginalised. The negative media discourses surrounding Muslims have as such not weakened, they remain hegemonic and continue to misrepresent Muslims by reinforcing antagonistic narratives based on unfounded cultural and racial stereotypes and a range of distorted speculations.

To end on a slightly more optimistic note it is worth pointing out the positive moves made to condemn the negative constructs and anti-Muslim representations embedded in the press. Such steps have been taken by *The Guardian*, who not only as we have seen tend to provide a more fair, critical and balanced approach, but who also in January this year, published and supported a campaign calling for an inquiry into anti-Islam press.²³⁴ Challenging the disproportional level of discrimination against Muslims in the British press, the campaign calls for an investigation into media reporting, concluding that, ‘victims – whether prominent or not – of alleged discriminatory media coverage have a right to have their testimonies catalogued and examined thoroughly by credible, independent assessors. Recommendations can then be made to improve ethical standards in the reporting of not solely the Muslim community but of all sections of society’. The letter was endorsed by a number of Muslim actors and representatives. The fact that *The Guardian* published this is significant as not only does it recognize Islamophobia in the press, it also sees it as an important issue that needs to be actively challenged. In addition to this we have also seen the development of organizations such as *Islamophobia Watch*, to monitor and document anti-Muslim material in the public domain and *The Muslim Council of Britain* is also active in challenging discrimination against Muslims with a media division which works to both monitor and interact with the British media.

Only time will tell and as Malcolm X warns us, “If you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything...”

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