Child Sexual Exploitation and British Muslims: A modern moral panic?

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Introduction

This chapter invites the reader to examine recent well-publicised incidents of Asian/Muslim men being convicted of sexual offences committed against children across various locations in the UK. For a prudent academic evaluation, the chapter directs the reader to consider these incidents against broader historic and politicised social constructions of deviant populations, Islamophobia and the role of the media in distorting public perceptions of the extent and motivations of the offending behaviour. The first part of the chapter will explore the pitfalls of categorisation of minority populations and crime leading to a discussion about the processes of racialisation which maintain historic racial hierarchies. The discussion will then address the constituent ingredients of a criminological moral panic before examining whether the same concept applies to the cases of Asian grooming and child sexual exploitation (CSE).

To categorise, sift and differentiate: the legacy of biological taxonomies

There exists a well-established theoretical critique of the origins of the modern concept of race which highlights the obsession of some Enlightenment scholars with categorising humans based on pseudo-scientific hierarchies (Immerwahr, 1992; Eze, 1997). Within such hierarchies, White Europeans judged themselves to be the adjudicators of reason, which was the preserve of White Europe, beyond which lay savagery, barbarism and immorality (Pocock, 1999; Quraishi & Philburn, 2015).

Biological taxonomies, originally applied to the world of plants, found purchase via the ideas of Charles Darwin, with early anthropologists and biologists to categorise the imagined varied races of mankind encountered by European explorers in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Early biologists claimed that humans could be identified to belong to distinct biological races, within a hierarchy of evolution. The White 'race', was deemed to be top within this racial hierarchy, superior in intellect and moral capacity to subordinate 'darker' races. Some scholars, particularly those belonging to the Philadelphia Anthropological School even advanced upon the theory of polygenesis, namely that subordinate races owed their origins to different animal species along the route of evolution (Sebastiani, 2003).

Emphasising physical differences between human beings also fed into the ways in which different cultures, religions and philosophies came to represent types of 'otherness' embedded in Orientalist literature and art and spread through European colonial conquests (Said, 1978; 1997).

Whilst science, and parts of society, have moved on from the biological fixedness of race, the legacy of these ideas about subordinate, deviant and less intelligent 'races' and people are clearly evident in contemporary society, in images portraying visible minorities as

irrational, violent or belonging to another less advanced civilisation (Sivanandan, 2006; Kundnani, 2007; Fekete; 2009). Therefore, although the hard scientific determinism of race, as brutally characterised by the eugenics movement for example, may have been dismantled, the attribution of certain negative traits and characteristics to identifiable ethnic or religious groups is a definite part of the new landscape of racism (Kundnani, 2007; Fekete, 2009). Furthermore, scholars have prudently asserted that a distinction could be drawn between the *visibility* of the 'race' of 'groomers' versus the *invisibility* of the same in relation to media and official reporting of high-profile white male celebrity sexual offenders culminating in *Operation Yewtree* (Miah, 2013;2015).

The ethnicity and crime debate: reflections on British Asian-Muslim populations

We have arrived, in the UK at a position whereby there is a statutory duty to record the ethnicity of the offender/suspect/defendant and victim in relation to various stages of the criminal justice system. Whilst, the recording of such data may perpetuate racial stereotypes and fuel divisions, the governmental obligation stems from a noble aim to locate and challenge discrimination within the institutions which constitute the criminal justice system.

Official Census and population data tends to record ethnicity rather than religion and the earliest studies on Muslim populations began by examining the 'Asian' category (Quraishi, 2005). The 'Asian' category in the UK refers to persons with origins in the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) and the earliest criminological studies pointed towards a crime rate amongst Asians which was lower than their white counterparts in proportion to their density in the population as a whole. When statistics began to disaggregate the 'Asian' population from the Black population and then further to break down the Asian population, we see that Indians were under-represented whilst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis moved to over-representation in official criminal statistics (Quraishi, 2005). Since prison is the only part of the criminal justice system which records religion, scholars have been able to trace the rather sudden burst in the recorded Muslim prisoner population over the last two decades although the ethnic composition of Muslims in prison does not match that of the wider British population with Black Muslims disproportionately represented (Spalek & El-Hassan, 2007; Quraishi, 2008). Elsewhere, in the system, analysts are prompted to interpret faith affiliation from ethnicity, on the educated assumption based on Census data that most Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and up to a third of Indians, claim Islam as their religion (ONS, 2012).

The annual release of information about the growing Muslim prisoner population, coupled with the state's counter-terrorism response following 9/11 has contributed to significant academic interest in the surveillance, policing and treatment of British Muslim populations (Beckford et al 2005; Marranci, 2009a; 2009b; Patel & Tyrer, 2011; Kundnani, 2007; Spalek & Lambert, 2007; Fekete, 2009; Allen, 2011). The general thrust of this scholarship is to assert that 'Muslims', rather than 'Asians', are the latest 'folk-devils' in Britain used as political scapegoats by the far right and vilified and projected as a deviant enemy within. The securitisation and crime debate around Muslim populations is simply one aspect of the broader phenomenon of Islamophobia in contemporary society. Since the Runnymede Commission's Report of 1997 on Islamophobia scholars have charted the impact of discrimination and hatred towards Muslims in Britain and Europe across the spheres of

education, politics, culture and media as well as within different parts of the criminal justice system (Poole, 2002; Poole & Richardson, 2006; Sayyid & Abdoolkarim, 2010; Petley & Richardson, 2011; Morey & Amina, 2011; Shaik, 2011; Helbling, 2012; Ansari & Farid, 2012; Klug, 2012; Kumar, 2012; Morgan & Poynting, 2012[1]).

Islamophobia is related to the traditional concept of racialisation, which is the mechanism through which minority populations become the subject of negative discourse (Miles, 1982). More specifically, racialisation describes the interaction of social processes through which people become defined as a group with reference to their biological or cultural characteristics which are then negatively reproduced and compounded by individuals and institutions. A key aspect of the process of racialisation is the significance of class and power relations through which subordinated classes become the subject of detrimental constructions which are then maintained (Quraishi and Philburn, 2015). It is the combining of the concept of racialisation with criminalisation which accounts for the racial loading of certain terms such as 'riot' or 'grooming' (Webster, 2007). Below we will discuss how such negative projections arise and are maintained within the lens of moral panics.

Tenets of a Moral Panic:

It was Stanley Cohen's research on mods and rockers in the 1960s which firmly established the sociological concept of a moral panic. Cohen's examined media reports which depicted youth belonging to distinct organised and affluent gangs engaged in significant violence in Clacton during the Easter bank holiday in 1964 (Cohen, 1973). Cohen's research found little evidence of organised gangs, that the youth were largely unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers rather than affluent, and the extent of serious violence and criminal damage was minimal. What is important to grasp here is, that although the initial behaviour may not have been worthy of comment, the media exaggeration of the deviant behaviour has the potential to initiate a process which may be termed 'deviancy amplification' (Wilkins, 1964:90). Disproportionate, exaggerated and emotive media coverage of an event, such as public disorder, raises anxiety amongst the general public to which the police become obliged to react via the deployment of more resources and increased or proactive surveillance. The increased police surveillance leads to more suspects being arrested, charged and prosecuted which in turn is used as evidence to justify the initial media concern (Hall *et al*, 1978).

Throughout the decades there have been clearly identified moral panics about a wide range of social and crime problems including skinheads and football hooligans; street crime, drugs, pornography and video nasties to mention a few (Muncie & McLaughlin, 2001). Furthermore, some scholars in the field of social work have also asserted that theories of moral panic provide a useful lens through which the scale of child protection issues can be put into perspective, particularly concerning issues of child trafficking and internet use by young people (Clapton *et al*, 2013; Cree, 2014).

The impact of media constructions, particularly news coverage of crime, and the misrepresentation of crime risks are particularly important for analysing 'political support for authoritarian solutions to the supposed 'crisis' of law and order' (Reiner, 2002:383). Further ingredients of a moral panic involve the simplification of the causes of the particular crime

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[1] I am very grateful to Robin Robertson, Co-Director of Insted Consultancy, for sharing his 'unofficial' yet comprehensive Islamophobia Bibliography with me.

issue and the creation of 'folk devils' who are labelled by the media and attributed with criminogenic or deviant traits (Barak, 1994). Another aspect of the media's role, according to some criminologists, is the correlation between depictions of certain crime, such as sexual assaults or racist attacks and levels of fear of those crimes amongst members of the public. The amplified media depiction   is often far removed and exaggerated when compared to the statistical probability of becoming a victim of such personal crimes (Reiner, 2002).

The specific impacts or media effects of crime news upon audience perceptions are disputed and remain unresolved despite comprehensive academic evaluation of this topic (Livingstone, 1996). However, there is evidence to confirm a plausible idea that 'exposure to media images' is associated with the 'fear of crime' (Reiner, 2002:401; Williamson & Dickenson, 1993). For Reiner, an important agenda on this topic should be less about whether media representation has consequences, since this is undisputed, but more about the 'complex interrelationship between content and other dimensions of social structure and experience in shaping offending behaviour, fear of crime and the politics of law and order' (Reiner, 2002:401).

Asian Grooming: A Modern Moral Panic?

The topic of sexual deviance and ethnicity should be examined alongside established discussions about the role of the media in perpetuating Islamophobic and racist depictions of Muslims as wife-beaters, fanatics, fundamentalists and book-burners which predate the events of 9/11 and the global war on terror (Runnymede Trust, 1997; Quraishi, 2005). Furthermore, following 9/11 not only have Muslims have been the subject of a media rhetoric about home-grown terrorism but attention has also been turned to Muslim prisoners as potential recruits for terrorist activity (Quraishi, 2010). The media coverage of Asian/Muslim grooming incidents also echoes anti-semitic constructions of Jewish populations in Europe and America and South America in the early 20th Century in relation to the white slavery moral panic (Bristow, 1982; Mirelman, 1984; Doezema, 1999; de Vries, 2005; Bunzi, 2007).

As indicated above, a moral panic distorts the extent and causes of a particular crime problem. Therefore, it is worth noting that when examining the percentages of defendants tried for sexual offences in 2010, Asians accounted for 8% of the total, whilst for Black people it was 9% and for white people it was 71% of the 7.4 thousand sexual offences processed up to December of that year (Ministry of Justice, 2010a). Whilst Asians do not represent the largest proportion of offenders here, their rate is double their population density in the broader UK population. However, Asians have the lowest average custodial sentence length in 2010 for sexual offences (Ministry of Justice, 2010b). Caution has to be exercised in interpreting these statistics since they rely upon a whole series of complex interactions as well as being based on the 'observed ethnicity' of the defendants rather than self-declaration. Such statistics are only useful if we examine the complete social interactions of which they are products. For example the dynamics which dictate why an incident is reported, acted upon, processed and successfully prosecuted mean that statistics can only ever provide us with a partial picture of the crime or crimes being examined. Furthermore, whilst official criminal statistics may give the impression that particular crimes are committed more frequently by particular ethnic groups, findings from self-report studies tend to illustrate the involvement in crime cuts across all ethnicities (Quraishi, 2012).

By way of illustrating the complexities mentioned above, when we turn to the specific offence of grooming a child for sexual exploitation, we also encounter definitional problems. Professionals do not agree upon the definition of sexual grooming of children. Some link the offence to paedophilia but this confuses grooming with a very specific clinical diagnosis which is not applicable to all offenders. Craven *et al*, argue that a definition which links grooming to paedophilia is unhelpful since it may prevent some offenders from acknowledging their own grooming behaviours. Furthermore, those who know the offender may not identify the grooming behaviour because they do not expect the perpetrator to fit their socially constructed image of a 'paedophile' (Craven *et al*, 2007). For Craven *et al*, the public perception of people who groom children for sexual exploitation is littered with stereotypes centred upon 'dirty old men' or 'strangers' although their analysis is silent upon depictions of ethnicity or the faith of perpetrators.

The legal definition is contained in s15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and it created a new offence although it does not criminalise an act of sexual grooming *per se.* The offender must meet a child following grooming for the crime to be committed, which in itself presents the police with the complex task of proving harmful intent to trigger an intervention before a meeting occurs following grooming (Ost, 2004).

One of the most appropriate published academic definitions of child grooming for sexual exploitation is:

'The process by which a child is befriended by a would-be abuser in an attempt to gain the child's confidence and trust, enabling them to get the child to acquiesce to abusive activity. It is frequently a pre-requisite for an abuser to gain access to a child.' (Gillespie, 2002: 411).

Craven *et al*, expanded Gillespie's words with their own more comprehensive definition:

'A process of by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of a child. Specific goals include gaining to the child, gaining the child's compliance and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender's abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions' (Craven *et al*, 2007:297). The media coverage of such offences rarely engages with the complexities outlined above, the nature and motivation of the offenders is often couched in simple terms, the perpetrators as predators or bestial motivated by malice or in the case of Muslim/Asian perpetrators by conflicting cultures and faith or even endorsed or validated by the same.

Daniel Filler has argued that there exists significant evidence in the USA of deliberate media and institutional rhetoric linking Islam, terrorism and paedophilia together which he examines via the lens of both moral panic and risk society panic. In his perceptive article 'Terrorism, Panic and Pedophilia' he charts these seemingly disparate issues to provide a convincing thesis about the deliberate demonising of Muslims with the potential for future mass detention of the same for sexual crimes brought about through increased and disproportionate targeting of this population (Filler, 2003). Filler's article outlines key incidents such as the publicity of comments made by Islamophobic Christian preachers, such as the Reverend Vines at the Southern Baptist Convention in 2002 which contained a rally call to Christians about the primacy of their faith, coupled with an assertion that the Prophet of Islam was an immoral paedophile and finally that the God of Islam created

terrorists who killed innocent people (Filler, 2003). Filler also charts numerous media reports and speeches, where the link between Islam, terrorism and child sexual exploitation are asserted which had the effect of normalising the association between them. Furthermore, the backlash and counter discourse in turn has the unfortunate potential to repeat and reify the original distortion and fabricated connections being asserted. The same can be stated about local community responses established to counter the perceived incidents of sexual offending in a particular location where convicted offenders resided. However well-intentioned the local action groups may be, such initiatives have the unintended consequence of reinforcing the associations between the offences and culture, ethnicity and faith of the offenders.

In 2008 scholars at the University of Cardiff undertook a comprehensive content analysis of 974 newspaper articles about British Muslims in the British Press between the years 2000 and 2008 (Moore *et al*, 2008). In addition to articles, Moore *et al* also examined visual images used in articles about British Muslims in the British Press and included a series of case studies about the same. Whilst 36% of the stories in the sample related to terrorism or terrorism related matters, Moore et al noted a rise in the stories which focused upon religious and cultural differences between Islam and British culture or the West in general. Simultaneously, the study observed that coverage of attacks on Muslims or on problems facing Muslims steadily declined as a proportion of the coverage over the course of the eight year study period (Moore *et al*, 2006). In sum, the Moore *et al* study concluded that the bulk (approximately two thirds) of coverage on British Muslims focused upon them as threats (in relation to terrorism); a problem (in terms of differences in values) or both (Muslim extremism in general) (Moore *et al*, 2006). The dominant rhetoric projected Islam as 'dangerous', 'backward' and 'irrational' and references to radical Muslims outnumbered moderate Muslims by 17 to one. Visuals which accompanied many stories tended to depict Muslim men in mugshots or via images taken outside of police stations or criminal courts. Muslim people also tended to be presented as a homogenous group and were less likely, for example, to be identified by their profession and more likely to be unnamed or unidentified especially when depicted in groups (Moore, *et al*, 2006:3-4).

A further study by scholars at the University of Leeds has examined the various ways in which Muslim populations have been represented by the British media and includes a focus on the issue of child sexual exploitation and grooming (Sian, Law, Sayyid, 2012). An important distinction to note is that not all members of the media are complicit in the construction or maintenance of negative or discriminatory images of Muslim populations. Sian *et al* highlight clear differences between the ways in which the national newspaper The Daily Mail and The Guardian report the same stories. Sian *et al* provide a critical content analysis of 68 news items on domestic issues involving Muslims over a three month monitoring period from October 2011 to December 2011. The researchers narrowed their enquiry across two national tabloid newspapers (The Sun and The Daily Times) and two broadsheet newspapers (The Guardian and The Independent).

With regard to stories about Muslim populations and sexual offending, Sian *et al* pick up on two main news items, Asian men accused of 'grooming' white girls for sex and allegations of sexual and violent abuse towards children in Islamic faith schools often run by mosques (Sian et al, 2012). Sian et al claim to have found marked differences between the ways in which the Daily Mail and The Guardian covered these stories. With regards to the crime of grooming, The Daily Mail reports were deemed to contain clearly racialised representations

which emphasised the link between the ethnicity of the offenders and their crimes. According to Sian et al, there was no room in the coverage by The Daily Mail for critical or counter opinion or representations of the Pakistani or Muslim voice (Sian *et al*, 2012). Reporting by The Guardian of the same issue was, in contrast, more balanced and contained a caveat for readers not to link the ethnicity or culture of the offenders to the crime. Furthermore, Sian *et al* clearly illustrate how newspapers with polarised political perspectives interpret official statements and deploy expert opinion in their framing of a social problem. In the reporting by *The Daily Mail*, a quote from the Children's minister, Tim Loughton, tends to implicate a 'closed Asian community' as essentially complicit in the offending by 'turning a blind eye to it'. However, in *The Guardian* report, provides critical counter-voices and quotes an expert who warns local authorities not to be misdirected by stereotypes around the extent and location of such offending behaviour within particular communities (Sian *et al*, 2012:18).

With regards to the issue of alleged abuse in Islamic schools, Sian, Law and Sayyid's analysis asserts that *The Daily Mail* reports of the issue following a Channel 4 documentary, were 'Islamophobic' and 'sensational', 'accusatory', 'unbalanced' and followed an 'anti-multicultural' narrative (Sian *et al*, 2012:21). By way of contrast, reporting of the same issue by *The Guardian* over the period of the research provide for a more critical and inclusive representation about the extent and nature of the issue (Sian *et al*, 2012). The authors concluded that their research exposed a tendency towards Islamophobia in *The Sun*, *The Mail* and *The Independent*, whilst attributing a more balanced and inclusive coverage to the Guardian. The researchers go on to point out that *The Guardian* has launched a campaign for a public inquiry into anti-Islam press (Sian *et al*, 2012). It is logical to assume, the support for this campaign and the finding of a more balanced reporting of Muslim new stories in *The Guardian* are inextricably linked.

A comprehensive academic evaluation of this area was undertaken as part of the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups by the Office of The Children's Commissioner (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012). This Report reveals some important trends and data which further contextualises the discussion in this chapter. The first important finding articulated by the Report is that the perpetrators of CSE come from all ethnic groups along with their victims (Berelowitz, et al, 2012:5). This is important since it contrasts with the media concentration upon Asian/Muslim perpetrators. Second, the Report emphasises that there are significant data gaps on both victims and perpetrators and so one of many caveats to the findings is that the information contained in the Report may be biased owing to the fact some agencies go looking for CSE whilst other do not. As with the definitional issues raised with the offence of 'grooming', Berelowitz *et al* note there are varying definitions of CSE in groups and gangs and also 'inconsistent recording and collection of data by external agencies' (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:11). Furthermore, each police force has its own way of coding sexual offences against children. With regard to the ethnicity of victims, the authors of the Report prompt readers to exercise caution since there are 'limitations with collecting accurate aggregate data on ethnicity on the indicators of CSE and indeed at a national level…there are differences between the ways in which organisations collect ethnicity data with police predominantly collecting data on ethnic appearance which is not directly comparable with that provided by other organisations' (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:66).

Importantly, some indicators for CSE are more likely to identify White British children, for example use of drug and alcohol services, whilst others such as being excluded from school are more likely to identify Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children. Hence, practitioners are

prompted to use multiple indicators which could avoid neglecting BME children at risk. Furthermore, by way of contrast from the populist media image, the victims of CSE are likely to be from a range of ages, both boys and young men, girls and young women and from a range of ethnicities. Within this picture, BME children have a higher than previously recorded likelihood of becoming victims of CSE and females are more at risk than males. However, 'individual characteristics' identified by the study cannot be used to target and identify specific victims (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:82). The Report states that 28 per cent of victims who informed the Inquiry belonged to BME backgrounds, which is significant in the light of general perceptions that sexual exploitation by gangs and groups is primarily a crime against white children (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:94).

BME children at risk tended to be identified by BME faith and statutory and voluntary sector youth agencies and were rarely identified by professionals from police forces or local authorities. The latter were more likely to identify children at risk who were White British (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:91).

Turning to perpetrators, the Report emphasises that far less is known about their individual characteristics but media attention has focused upon high-profile court cases involving adult males of British Pakistani origin and white British female victims. The authors of the Report assert that it is clear that the police, children's social care services and other agencies have been 'effective in readily identifying perpetrators and victims with similar individual characteristics to those involved in such cases' (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:98). Importantly, the Report continues to emphasise that during the site visits, as part of the methodology for the Inquiry, there was 'no doubt that data is gathered more assiduously on perpetrators identified by professionals as 'Asians', 'Pakistani' or 'Kurdish'. However, White British males were the only perpetrators identified in all site visits (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:98). This data must also be read against the fact that in '90 per cent' of the submissions to the Inquiry, 'all or at least some of the perpetrators were unknown to the victim' (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012: 98).

The Report continues to cite a significant range of problems with drawing conclusions about the ethnicity, or indeed other characteristics, of perpetrators claiming it was impossible to confirm whether figures on the 'ethnicity, age, faith, nationality or disability of identified perpetrators are representative of all perpetrators' (Berelowitz, *et al*, 2012:100). Furthermore, since the majority of the perpetrator data collected during the call for evidence for the Inquiry was presented by the police, it is possible this represents a bias against those most highly visible to the police (Berelowitz, et al, 2012). When examining victim accounts of perpetrator's the authors of the Report indicate that some victims would change the ethnicity of the perpetrator during the course of the discussion whilst others confused ethnicity with nationality. Furthermore, the Inquiry was informed in several site visits of groups of perpetrators who were described generically as 'Asian', but who, upon further investigation turned out to include 'Afghan, Kurdish and White British' perpetrators. (Berelowitz, 2012: 107). Significantly, the authors of the Report conclude that it 'is not possible to extrapolate from this information a definitive statement about the ethnic origin of perpetrators' (Berelowitz, 2012: 107).

Concluding remarks

The Asian or Muslim grooming affair needs to be placed against the various contexts discussed in this chapter. First, the process by which racial and religious minorities become framed as 'folk-devils' is necessarily linked to negative, crude, exaggerated and distorted depictions by some media outlets driven by institutionalised and politicised racism. Historical analysis reveals the discarded and often resurrected folk-devils of the past, for example Jewish populations faced a parallel moral panic about their alleged role in white slavery and prostitution in the early 20th century (Bristow, 1982; Doezema, 1999). Second, the counter-rhetoric must tread a very careful line to avoid reifying the determinism which connects certain ethnic and religious groups to particular forms of criminal behaviour. Third, the focus upon depictions of Muslims as sexual deviants must be viewed alongside other examples of essentialist and Islamophobic stereotyping which casts them as an enemy within, dangerous, fundamentalist, terrorist or misogynists (Moore, *et al*, 2006; Sian *et al*, 2011; Morey & Amina, 2011).

The emerging scholarship and official Inquiry is revealing that CSE is a far more complex matter than is projected by some parts of the media. Importantly, the research seems to suggest, as with many forms of crime, that the true extent or incidence of CSE is far greater than official reported and is likely to cross a wide range of ethnic groups, demographics and vulnerable populations. A move towards dissolving the media moral panic around 'Asian grooming' is to remove or lessen the connection being asserted between faith, ethnicity, culture and CSE. In a prescient moment, the former Chief Crown Prosecutor for the North West, Nasir Afzal, declared his reasoning for prosecuting the Rochdale case of Asian men involved in CSE. Afzal stated that by instigating and publically supporting the prosecution of the Rochdale case there was the possibility that he would experience a backlash from the predominantly Pakistani Muslim community in Rochdale. Whilst this did not come to pass, he became the victim of a hate campaign, led by the far right, which was incensed by the puncturing of its rhetoric along the lines that 'all Pakistani men view young, White vulnerable girls in this manner'. If Afzal, a British Pakistani, was the chief agent behind such prosecutions, the hollowness of the far-right mantra echoed by some elements of the media would be clear to all (Afzal, 2012). Nevertheless, since resources tend to follow risks, the agencies are now positioned to focus upon Asian and Muslim populations and they will indeed unearth some sexual crimes which will then justify the original deployment of resources.

The findings of the Children Commissioner's Report on CSE contains some important warnings and caveats about the potential for negative stereotypes and a misleading racial profiling of these offences by official agencies such as the police and local authorities. Such misdirection has the potential to exclude certain vulnerable children and young people which is where the focus of relevant official agencies and the media should be concentrated. The arguments presented here are not apologies for child sexual exploitation or distractions from worthy victim-centred approaches. By illustrating the broader complexities which underpin the debate the injustices of Islamophobia and racism and the falsehoods they create and mask may eventually be checked.

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