

# Media representations of black young men and boys

Report of the REACH media monitoring project

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## Executive summary

This report provides an extensive analysis of media coverage of black young men and boys in the British news and current affairs media. The central aim of the research is to understand how the news media represent black young men and boys, and specifically, to consider whether there is evidence of negative stereotyping of black young men and boys in the news media.

The report begins by discussing the results of a quantitative analysis of media news stories about young men and boys generally, followed by more detailed analysis of media news stories involving black young men and boys. This is followed by an in-depth qualitative analysis of media stories about black young men and boys related to crime; an analysis of black and minority ethnic media coverage; and finally the results of a series of qualitative interviews with those involved in making and reporting the news.

Overall, the dominant discourse surrounding black young men and boys in the news media links them with violent crime, and particularly murders involving knives and/or gangs. While this is clearly a negative media image, no clear or explicit stereotype of black young men or boys was constructed across news reports.

In the mainstream news, young men and boys were regularly reported in relation to negative news values, just over 4 in 10 stories being crime-related,<sup>1</sup> while stories about wider social issues, such as education and health, were not as frequently or prominently reported. However, close to 7 in 10 stories of black young men and boys related in some form to crime - a comparatively higher figure than in coverage of young men and boys more generally.

Violent crime, murders, and gun and knife crime accounted for the majority of crime coverage featuring black young men and boys in the mainstream news, with little context or explanation for the reasons why crime was committed.

In gun or knife crime news, the 'race' or ethnic background of the young men or boys, as either victims or perpetrators, was rarely explicitly mentioned, but in a small minority of tabloid articles the black identity of young male perpetrators was reported as if relevant to their criminal activities.

The magnitude of knife crime as a contemporary social problem involving black young men or boys was emphasised in many articles drawing an equivalence between a variety of stories involving knife crime fatalities, which were often very different in circumstance or context.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes monitoring periods 1 to 4 and the 10 per cent sample obtained in monitoring periods 5 to 8

When young people featured as victims of crime in the news, sympathy appeared conditional upon an image of social respectability and legitimacy, especially a lack of connection to gangs or gang culture.

In a very few tabloid newspaper articles, young black males (and their families) were constructed as if symbolically representing problems associated with knife crime. There was also some evidence of an assumption in certain sections of the tabloid press that a young male victim of knife crime may be involved in gangs.

- In current affairs documentaries black young men and boys also featured largely in association with crime issues – especially street violence, gun and knife crime and gangs – and as both victims and as perpetrators of crime. Systemic issues shaping the experiences of black young men or boys as vulnerable young people were explored, but the behaviours and attitudes of some of those represented also associated black young men and boys with a potentially violent or criminal threat to the wider society.

The black and minority ethnic news media did not shy away from commenting or reporting on crimes committed by black young men and boys, but they did attempt to provide a context and address some of the issues that may lead to crime. By contrast with the mainstream news, the discussion of education and issues of racism were prominent within the coverage of the black and minority ethnic news media.

- The black and minority ethnic news media afforded black sources and commentators a forum to present opinions that did not seem, ordinarily, to be available in the mainstream press. Black and minority ethnic news media also provided black young men and boys themselves with a voice and a platform to challenge perceived stereotypes.
- Journalists and editors acknowledged that coverage of black young men and boys tends to be predominantly negative. While open to covering other, potentially more positive stories about black young men and boys, journalists felt that proactive investigation would be necessary to find such stories – something constrained by the desk-based nature of contemporary journalistic practice, in which journalists tend to rely on electronically delivered information and established sources of news.
- There was a clear awareness amongst journalists and editors of press regulations regarding the identification of ethnicity in news reports. Respondents firmly asserted that, in reporting crime, they did not consider the black identity of perpetrators to be relevant to the news value of a story. Yet, at the same time, it was noted that an image associating black young men and boys with gun and knife crime did exist, and that such stories did appear to be high on the news agenda.

- Interview respondents also highlighted that there are still comparatively few people working in mainstream journalism from a black or minority ethnic background. Because of this it was felt, the daily lives of black young men and boys are far removed from the experience of the majority of those working in journalism, particularly from the decision makers in higher-level jobs.

Without knowing to what extent black young men and boys themselves either access or interpret these news sources, it is not possible to assess what impact the coverage has on their own self-perceptions and, linked to that, their aspirations. It is however reasonable to assume that the negative portrayal of black boys and young black men in news media may well impact on the wider readership and viewing public's perceptions of these groups. That perception, in turn, may impact on black boys and black young men to a significant extent.

# Introduction

The *REACH Media Analysis Report* provides an extensive analysis of the coverage of black young men and boys<sup>2</sup> in the British news and current affairs media. The central aim of the research project has been to explore how the news media in Britain represents young males and to identify and seek to understand the dominant discourses with which black young men and boys are associated in the UK news.

In this, we respond to a set of policy research aims of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) developed from the REACH programme – a policy which aims to raise the levels of achievement and the aspirations of black young men and boys in England. The REACH report, published in 2007, identified negative media stereotypes and a lack of positive role models as factors contributing to under-achievement amongst black young men and boys in education and the labour market. The report suggested that a negative public and self image, fuelled by the media, is likely to impact upon the aspirations and achievement levels of black young men and boys. The REACH Media Analysis study aims to critically scrutinise the negative media image supposed by the REACH Report and to demonstrate whether, how, and the extent to which, negative images or stereotypes do surround black young men and boys in the news media. It is intended that our research will then inform policy discussions considering how news media representations of black young men and boys might influence their social experiences, aspirations and opportunities.

As media scholars, these aims immediately raise difficult and complex questions about the power of the news media, its relation to social relations in general, and of issues of 'race', gender and the social experiences of young people in particular. As such, we have sought to avoid any ready assumptions about the nature of the news media image surrounding black young men and boys, and its social 'effects'. Rather, our research adopts the approach that all identities and social relations are constructed, and that the media (and journalism in particular) constitutes just one site of representation through which that happens (Hall 1997; van Dijk 1991; 2000; 2006). In other words, the news media should be seen as one among many social forces responsible for the construction and reproduction of ideas informing and sustaining those identities and social relations (Solomos 1988; Smith 1994).

Indeed, how the 'social reality' of young black people in Britain is constructed clearly extends beyond media images and narratives. For example, a recent

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<sup>2</sup> Following the lead of Yarrow (2005) (and for pragmatic purposes in this research) we have defined black young men and boys as 11-24 year olds. We acknowledge the definition of 'black' used by the REACH report as 'black Caribbean, black African and black Other as defined in the 2001 census' cited in the Reach (2007) Independent Report to Government on Raising the Aspirations and Attainment of black Boys and Young black Men. London, Department for Communities and Local Government.

report from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on 'stop and search' suggested that 'stereotypical assumptions' are likely to underlie policing practices, such that, 'black people are at least six times as likely to be stopped as white people; Asian people around twice as likely' (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2010, p.3). Meanwhile, campaigners emphasise how a lack of educational, employment and training opportunities continue to affect minority ethnic groups and black young men and boys in particular. For example, in 'LABOUR CAN STILL HELP BLACK JOBLESS YOUTH' (21st January 2010, Guardian), Diane Abbott MP points out how a lack of such opportunities and experiences of discrimination characterise the disadvantages facing young black males in Britain. As we shall demonstrate in this report, negative stories concerning law and order issues clearly feature within the contemporary news media coverage of young black males; but, they are also prominent within contemporary policy debates and the wider public discourse surrounding young black people in the UK. It is also important to note how such issues have been historically politicised and racialised within political and media discourses (Cohen 1982; Hall et al. 1978; Gilroy 1982; 1987). The social identity and public image of black young men and boys is conditioned by long standing and deep-rooted structural issues, not just contemporary events or their current reporting in the news media.

What does make it onto the news agenda in respect of young men and boys, and how the dominant image of this group is framed is nonetheless very important. We would accept the proposition that, 'journalism exists to enable citizens to better understand their lives and their positions(s) in the world' (Richardson 2001, p.7) and contend that journalistic discourse carries a certain 'cultural authority' in this respect – representing (and constructing) 'the truth' of social reality (Chalaby, 1998). In investigating the image of black young men and boys in the news media, therefore, we are also seeking to understand how 'truths' about this group may be constructed, focusing upon whether and the extent to which stereotypes are evident through examining the broad patterns and characteristics of the coverage, drawing upon extensive evidence gathered from our media monitoring across a range of news media during 2008-9.

However, we also know that that it is very difficult to establish any simple 'cause-and-effect' in terms of the public discourse surrounding an issue and its role in news media agendas (Davies, 2007). A negative public image or stereotype cannot necessarily be attributed in origin, or solely, to journalists-even that represented within a news discourse. We know from previous studies, for example, that the construction of news discourse around a particular topic can depend very much upon the ways in which a story is framed or defined by primary sources - often elites or official voices such as politicians, judges or police (Hall et al. 1978). Moreover, journalists do not exist and operate in a vacuum, but are subjects of, as well as key contributors to, the dominant ideological discourses within which we all negotiate our ideas, opinions and identities everyday.

Because of this, our critical study of the content of news and current affairs media is also considered alongside evidence gathered from a series of interviews with journalists and editors whose work involves reporting stories about black young men and boys. In our view it is critical in a study of this nature, that the research seeks to reach beyond the analysis of news texts (as crucial as that may be) to consider the journalistic practices, news values, institutional and cultural constraints and everyday experiences of reporting which directly or indirectly influence the way certain stories are reported. Generating evidence about the production as well as the content of news media coverage helps us to better understand how and why the coverage we are monitoring is as it is, from negative stereotyping to seemingly more 'positive' or progressive media representations. As such, the study attends to several areas of enquiry in seeking to address the main research questions: Does the news media present negative images or stereotypes of black young men and boys? If so, how are such images constructed and to what extent do they characterise the coverage?

- What is the extent and nature of mainstream news media coverage of black young men and boys, and are there any significant differences between this the coverage of young men and boys in general?
- What are the main narratives that characterise the mainstream news media coverage of black young men and boys and how are these constructed?
- Are there any differences between the coverage of black young men and boys and news coverage in the mainstream and black and Minority Ethnic news media?
- Why is the coverage produced in the way it is? How do journalists and news editors reflect upon the production of news about black young men and boys?

The study is designed to provide an evidence base about the media coverage of black young men and boys upon which policy makers can draw. Our data should be useful for any other policy makers concerned about the role and influence of news media images of young men and boys, and of black boys and young black men in particular. However, it also provides a baseline for further academic research into the topic, inviting possible longitudinal studies to measure news coverage in this area over a more extended time period or cross-national comparisons. In the next chapter, we reflect upon some of the pre-existing literature in this area, seeking to contextualise our research findings in light of previous work concerning news media representations of young people, 'race' and black young men and boys in society in general. A *Methodology Chapter* then explains our approach in greater detail, setting out our programme of research methods, which have generated the findings presented in *Chapters Two* through to *Chapter Six*.

## Literature review

This section introduces some of the academic literature over the previous twenty years concerning young people and race in the news, and draws on more recent studies about young black men in society. We begin by asking what is news and why does it matter?

It is beyond dispute that we live in a media saturated culture – and within this culture there is the ubiquity of news. This is the era of digital news services, of 24-hour news channels, of ‘infotainment’, of free newspapers in a congested market.<sup>3</sup> For most of us, the way in which we learn about the world outside our personal sphere is through the consumption of news, largely still through broadcast or print (OFCOM 2007). It therefore occupies an important place in society. And, as Hartley (1989: 142) points out, as we get used to its codes and formats we become ‘news literate’ – able to follow stories and interpret the world from the codes we recognise. van Dijk (2000: 36) states, *‘media discourse is the main source of people’s knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, both of other elites and of ordinary citizens’*. In this sense, as Allan (2005) has argued, news media has a crucial and prime role in providing a discursive space for public discussion concerning social issues. It is against this background that we can consider, historically, how young people have been represented in the media.

The portrayal of certain young people as delinquent troublemakers is nothing new, of course. Cohen (2002) wrote of the ‘moral panics’ engendered by the mods and rockers in the 1950s and of the representation in the post second world war years of a more generalised working class youth ‘yobbery’. However, as Wayne et al. (2008) have argued, since the Thatcher years we have seen ‘media representations of young people arguably become less and less restricted to sub-cultures of youth and increasingly prevalent across the category of youth itself’. Griffin et al. (2004) put it simply: young people are portrayed dually as ‘in trouble’ and as ‘trouble’. Spencer (2005) suggests that the media is broadly concerned with two seemingly contradictory cultural discourses - the evil, violent predator and the innocent child. His analysis suggested that even though youth is presented as violent and dangerous, they are also are profiled as innocent victims of gangs, drugs and abuse. Pollak and Kubrin’s (2007) study found that although youth are much less likely to commit crime and to be victimized compared to adults, their stories are frequently considered to be more newsworthy. This is a key point. As Muncie (1999: 13) points out, *‘in political discourse, young people tend to be a perennial source of anxiety’*.

Society, then, encounters young people every day in contemporary media culture. From skimpily clad teenage models to violent ‘binge’ drinking ‘yobs’, the *image* of youth is as pervasive as the media we consume. But whilst the

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Infotainment’ refers to types of populist media, which merge entertainment with information.

portrayal of youth is a regular feature of the media landscape – in adverts, soap operas and glossy magazines – within news culture studies repeatedly reveal young people regularly appearing in quite negative and passive ways. So, for example, one study that tracked coverage of young people over the course of a week in UK national newspapers found that over seven in ten stories referred to young people negatively, most notably in relation to crime or anti social behaviour (Barrett 2004; Ghose 2004). And even though young people appeared regularly, their voices were quoted in less than 10 per cent of news stories about them.

In broadcast news, a similar theme emerges. Wayne et al. (2008) examined news coverage of a range of UK national news programmes and identified a number of key themes relating to youth. Firstly, close to 50 per cent of news stories concerning young people dealt with young people committing crime. Of these, 90 per cent were based on incidents related to violent crime or risks of terrorism (Wayne et al. 2008: 78). When they compared this to all crime stories over this period, 42 per cent of reports featured young people. For violent crime, this accounted for 50 per cent of stories. In short, young people received a disproportionate level of coverage.

Following the approach taken in these studies, our study seeks to provide a broad canvas from which to extrapolate how black young men and boys are represented in a range of news media. It is important, in our view, to explore 'race' in the context of broader assumptions made about young people. News coverage, most of the time, paints a fairly negative view of young people but studies in the UK have dealt less with isolating the differences across gender, race and ethnic lines for young people more generally. Recent unemployment figures for 16-24 year olds, for example, indicate that while 1 in 10 of white people are unemployed, this increases to nearly 4 in 10 if you're Bangladeshi, 1 in 4 if you are Pakistani, black Caribbean or black African, and still nearly double if you are Indian. To be white in the UK, in other words, would appear to significantly improve economic lifestyles, opportunities or social conditions of 'being young'.

Of course, 'being young' is itself a life stage that scholars have long tried to define. It is, in our view, not only a category that is commonly associated with one's age but also by its relationship to the later stages of *childhood* and the early stages of *adulthood* (we might want to think about it as a relational concept existing between the former and the latter). In this sense, its very meaning and earliest origins imply a transitory, elusive and volatile phase of life, because '*neither child nor adult the adolescent is lost in between, belonging nowhere, being no one*' (James 1986: 155). For Wyn and White (1997:1) the age of youth, '*for institutional and policy purposes starts at 13 and continues until age 25*', even though, '*in the future this shifting category will extend further, at both ends*'. Within news reporting it is sometimes difficult to establish age, but our coding variables would seek to identify, where possible, this and other social factors including gender and ethnicity.

Since 1990 there has been some scholarly interest in the representation of black and minority ethnic people in the British media as a whole (see, for example: Hall 1997; Millwood Hargrave 2002; Sreberny 2002; Poole 2006; Gross et al. 2007; Moore et al. 2008; Richardson and Burrige 2008; Lewis et al. 2009) though work on the representation of young black men and their relationship with the media has received less attention. However, Malik (2002) explores the packaging of black identities, including youth, in news programmes. She finds that news is a 'negative' genre and that reports around black images often tend to touch on recurring aspects of racial difference: that there is lack of context and explanation in a news culture of soundbites and shorter and shorter bulletins. Cottle (2000; 2004) provides insights into issues of racism in news production, finding that the mainstream media often produces, *'shocking examples of xenophobia and racist portrayal' while at the same time 'committing to the ideals and practices of an inclusive, multi-ethnic, multicultural society.* (2000: 3).

As Davies et al. (2007: 36) have pointed out, though, for decades black youth have been demonised in media discourses as the criminal 'other'. In the 1970's Hall et al. (1978) wrote of how the traditionally working class urban crime of mugging was progressively defined as a 'black crime' and Solomos (1988) writes of the 1970's as a time when 'black youth' became associated with images of inner city unrest. As Alexander (1996: 5) states, *'black youth in particular have been typecast into a role of almost pathological dislocation'.*

The idea still persists in our news media that black people are a threat to law abiding white society. Law (2002: 75) conducted a content analysis of news output from press, radio and television sources between November 1996 and May 1997. He found that, *'the linkage of race, violence, dangerousness and crime remains a high – profile theme'.* More than this, since the beginning of the 1990's new discourses have emerged which are, in the words of Gabriel (1998: 142), *'concerned with drugs, gangs and Yardies [and] have served to strengthen black crime associations'.*

With these issues clearly in mind and beyond the academic literature, there have been various reports published in the last few years dealing with relevant issues for the REACH Project. In exploring how young black men are routinely reported compared to young people generally, our research will examine the current trends in news coverage and assess whether and how there may remain grounds for concern about the national media's representation of black young men and boys . The following reports have informed our research design.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *'black Youth on the Margins'*, explored a range of ways in which young black people have been disadvantaged, citing the media coverage of issues such as educational underachievement and tensions between youth and the police as a factor influencing identity formation amongst young black people (Barn 2001). Social inclusion, the

report suggested, could only be achieved through an improved relationship between research, policy makers and practice.

In 2005, The Criminal Justice System Race Unit and Victims and Confidence Unit published the '*Young black Men as Victims of Crime*' report (Yarrow 2005). The report found that young black men generally lacked confidence in the police's ability to deal effectively with crime. Moreover '*the views of some reflected a belief in police racism*' - that they did not treat crime against black people with the required seriousness. This in turn meant a general '*lack of confidence in the police*' and the Criminal Justice System - an important reason for not reporting crime to the authorities.

The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee reported in 2007 on Young black People and the Criminal Justice System (HMSO 2007). The report stated that 'young black people are over represented at all stages of the criminal justice system'. The evidence they received suggested that, as a group, young black people are more likely to be stopped and searched by police, less likely to be given bail and more likely to be remanded in custody than their young white counterparts. They are also over represented as suspects for crimes such as robbery and offences relating to drugs. It was the case that young black people are also more likely to be the victims of violent crime. These statistics are illuminating when one considers that the report states, 'in 84.7 per cent of offences in 2004-5 involving young offenders aged 10 – 17, the young people involved classified their ethnicity as white. In 2003-4 92 per cent of young black people aged 10 – 17 were not subject to disposals in the youth justice system'. Such research is relevant to our studies because it provides a background against which we can seek to understand the dominant discourses with which black young men and boys are associated in the UK news. Importantly for our study, witnesses interviewed by the Committee suggested that, 'the media distorted perceptions of young black people's involvement in crime'. The Committee also identified factors within black communities which 'help exacerbate disadvantage and fuel involvement in the criminal justice system.' They were: lack of father involvement and other parenting issues and the fact that some young people chose to imitate 'negative and violent lifestyles popularised in film and music'.

The report suggested that in order to combat such over representation in the criminal justice system further action was needed to '*address the causes of crime amongst young black people – entrenched poverty, educational underachievement, school exclusions, family conflicts and breakdown and the lack of positive role models*'. Amongst a multitude of solutions offered were: focused support for positive adult role models and the recognition that '*broadcasters and producers have a responsibility to tackle concerns about violent and criminal content.*'

In 2007 REACH presented an independent report to Government entitled: '*Raising the Aspirations and Attainment of black Boys and Young black Men*

(Reach 2007: 5). The report provided a series of recommendations to enable young black men to realise their potential with the intention that they become *'more engaged and connected with wider society and more able to make an even greater contribution economically, culturally and politically to Britain.'*

Of core interest to our research is chapter 3 of the report, which is concerned with the need for more black role models and positive images of black men. As it is, the report stated, the outlook is not positive. There is need for positive role models because without them, children will resort to the *'world of fantasy and the media'* for their inspiration. What the report overall points towards is that all too frequently the only successful images of black young men in the media were of rap artists and sportsmen – with little diversity of images and portrayal.

By 2010, the report wished to see *'strong, well resourced networks of positive black role models'* both locally and nationally. These men would be able to work closely and proactively with black boys and black young men. Crucial to the success of this would be the involvement of the wider community, particularly schools, who would be able to highlight as examples positive role models who exist both in the home and the work place. There should also be steps to counter the negative stereotypes, which currently exist in the media – *'positive images, portrayals and stories about black boys and black young men'* should be a goal in all of the media.

More recently, the Runnymede Trust report, 'Race and Violent Crime in the Press' examined coverage over a two month period during the summer of 2007 (Sveinsson 2008). In a period which frequently saw violent crime between young people in major cities featuring as headline stories, Runnymede reported that coverage was often *'informed by notions of race'* in quite problematic ways. The report begins by highlighting the continuing influence of the media on the development of discourse around ethnic diversity. With this in mind, it examined the reporting of violent crime in relation to the ethnicity of both victim and perpetrator. It ultimately argued that violent crime is portrayed as endemic within ethnic communities and that *'notions of race tint the lens through which criminality is both viewed and projected.'* (Sveinsson 2008: 3)

The report found that journalists *'employed a strategic lack of precision'* when discussing different ethnic groups. This suggests that distinctive communities are often lumped together and presented as a threat to English identity and its values. Moreover, anecdotal evidence is routinely treated as truth and conclusive proof of a connection between race and crime.

It was also found that the term 'gang' is not a *'race neutral term'*. Young black criminality would often be associated with gang membership and a murder covered in the news involving black youth was more often than not assumed to be *'gang related'*. This was not the case when all involved were white.

The report was clearly critical of the media's reporting of violent crime whilst at the same time placing it at the '*centre of a discursive system which includes a range of social actors*'. The point is made that the media's influence is immense over the institutions at the heart of our society – the police, judiciary, corporations and civil society – and the way in which violent crime is framed is vitally important. The report states: 'A misunderstanding of cause and effect will lead to misinformed policies and harm community cohesion'.

2009 also saw the publication of a Runnymede Trust report analysing the impact of the initiatives, policy and guidance documents on the criminal justice system since the publication of the Lawrence Report in 1999 (Rollock 2009)<sup>4</sup>. Despite indicating there were some areas of progress the report stated that it was '*difficult to conclude that the charge of institutional racism no longer applies.*' Added to this, in 1999 black men were six times more likely to be targeted for stop and search techniques, but in 2008 they were seven times more likely to undergo the same procedure than white counterparts.

In December 2007 the government responded positively to the aforementioned REACH report of that year (CLG 2007). Hazel Blears stated that, '*We have listened to the black community and the recommendations of the REACH report, and we are determined to do everything we can in helping to turn things around*' (Blears 2007). This included overseeing the creation of the first ever black Boys' National Role Model programme, a focus on education to engage black parents and a concentration on equal opportunities in schools.

It would be useful at this stage in our report to attempt to define what a 'role model' actually is. There has been little academic work around this area though the term is in widespread use throughout the mainstream media. For example, when the debates about Prince Harry's use of the racially offensive term 'Paki' were reported recently, it was the Prime Minister who stated on GMTV that '*I think the British people are good enough to give someone who has actually been a role model for young people and has done well fighting for our country, gone into very difficult situations with bravery, I think they will give him the benefit of the doubt.*' (GMTV 2009) When Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympic swimmer in history, was pictured allegedly smoking cannabis through a pipe, the world's press lamented the fall from grace of the archetypal 'role model'. *The Times* reported, that '*Michael Phelps was a hero and role model for millions but now his career will be stained forever by claims that he smoked drugs.*' (Eason 2009)

In terms of our study, a significant publication in 2008 was 'Powerlist: Britain's 100 most influential black people' (Eboda 2008). Kwame Kwei-Armah, actor, playwright and judge for the list stated in *The Observer*, '*the importance of this list is that it has social relevance at a time when our headlines are forever*

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<sup>4</sup> See also 'POLICE STILL "INSTITUTIONALLY RACIST"'. *Daily Telegraph*, 15th February 2009.

*crowded with black stabbings. While the government is talking about role models, we have a hundred there, of both sexes, of all hues of the black family'* (Kwei-Armah 2008).

The panel involved in the compilation of the Powerlist was following the recommendations of the reports previously highlighted – they also eschewed celebrity and the fantastical world of the media. These were positive role models not from the world of sport or entertainment.

But what is a role model? Gauntlett provides a neat definition of what the term means. He states that a 'role model seems to be popularly understood as "someone to look up to", and someone to base your character, values and aspirations upon....they are supposedly influential figures' (2002: 211).

He goes on to say that role models can be divided into six categories:

- The 'straightforward success' – people who have been successful in their chosen field
- The 'triumph over circumstance' – those who overcome adversity
- The 'challenging stereotypes' – those that challenge traditional assumptions
- The 'wholesome' – those held up by the older generation as iconic
- The 'outsider' – heroes to those that reject conventional social expectations
- The family role model – including looking up to members of your own family.

For Gauntlett, it is important to remember that a role model should not be taken to be someone that a person wants to copy. He argues, instead, that *'role models serve as navigation points as individuals steer their own personal routes through life'* (2002:250).

There is evidence to suggest that, in the broadsheet press at least, the media is beginning to realise the inequalities of its representation of black young men. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and Daniel James Henry of the *Independent* wrote in November 2008 that, *newspapers circulate negative stories about young black men. It sells the papers. And when a group feels put upon, it will behave worse. So the papers run more stories. The young, gifted and black have become young, bitter and black, partly because they cannot bear the degeneration of their own, partly because they are almost expected to follow this destiny* (2008).

Eric Allison wrote in the Guardian in August 2008 that 'while negative stories about black teenagers are almost guaranteed headlines, the positive

achievements of black youth go largely ignored' (Allison 2008). David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, wrote in March 2009, 'If we want to raise the aspirations of young men, we should be praising their achievements, not talking them down' (Lammy 2009).

That said our study is being undertaken against a background where the prevailing mood is negative. In September 2008, Kelvin Mackenzie wrote directly to his readers in *The Sun*: '*Do you feel unsafe in the streets? Do you query how crime statistics appear to be falling yet neither you nor your friends feel at ease as you walk down the road?*' (Mackenzie 2009). Under the headline, 'Streets of Fear', appeared a colour photograph and the reasons for this perceived fear, '*The answer lies in this picture. It was taken at 2.30 in the afternoon. A pitched battle between black and Asian youths. Their weapons of choice; a screwdriver, a bike lock, a steering wheel lock*'.

Shaun Bailey, the prospective Tory parliamentary candidate for Hammersmith, outlines the general outlook of the reports summarised in this literature review when he says of young, black British men:

*We are represented in the media horribly. Only terrorists are represented as badly. We are shown as sexy, dangerous and exotic. We are either guilty or victims, and if we are victims it is at another black man's hand. You've got entire TV channels set up to celebrate everything that is bad in our community. I despair. These portrayals make black men believe that's what they are (Bailey cited in, Alibhai-Brown and Henry 2008).*

## Summary

The central aim of the research project is to explore how the news media in Britain represents young males and to identify and seek to understand the dominant discourses with which black young men and boys are associated in the UK news. This literature review has sought to identify the principle academic works produced in the last twenty years concerning young people and race in the news. First we explored the importance of the news media in providing a discursive space for public discussion of social issues and current affairs, noting that the image of youth is as pervasive as the media we consume, and that research strongly suggests that news coverage generally produces a negative view of young people. However, the portrayal of the young as delinquent trouble makers is not simply a recent phenomena, classic studies have suggested that the mainstream media has been guilty of xenophobic and racist stereotyping and the demonising of young black men as the criminal 'other'. Such studies also suggested that, black people more generally have been represented in media discourses as a threat to law abiding white society, research suggesting that in the past there has been a lack of context and explanation in news reporting, leading potentially to distorted perceptions of young black people's involvement in crime.

In the more recent assessment of young black men in society, an overview of the findings and recommendations of the various reports published by Government agencies and charitable trusts in the last ten years would suggest our study is being undertaken in an environment where inequalities in the representation of young black men still exist. There is also concern, requiring further investigation, that negative stories about black teenagers continue to make the headlines, that a word such as 'gang', for example, is not a 'race neutral term', and that the positive achievements of black youth go largely ignored. Moreover, in considering how a possible negative image surrounding black young men and boys might be potentially alleviated by the promotion of 'role models', it may also be important to consider that the term 'role model' is itself used prevalently in the mainstream media, and the ambiguities which may surrounding its meaning and representation. In systematically examining the discourses surrounding black young men and boys in the news media, this study will address itself to these issues - the methodological approach for which is explained in detail in the following chapter.

# Methodology

In order to explore whether the news media present negative images or stereotypes of black young men and boys, and if so, how such images are constructed and to what extent they characterise the coverage, the study seeks to answer several related questions:

- What is the extent and nature of mainstream news media coverage of black young men and boys, and are there any significant differences between this and the coverage of young men and boys in general?
- What are the main narratives that characterise the mainstream news media coverage of black young men and boys and how are these constructed?
- Are there any differences between the coverage of black young men and boys and news coverage in the mainstream and black and minority ethnic news media?
- Why is the coverage produced in the way it is? How do journalists and news editors reflect upon the production of news about black young men and boys?

In order to do this, the project has employed several research methods. These include both quantitative and qualitative analyses of UK news and current affairs media content, as well as a production study exploring the views of journalists and editors reporting stories about black young men and boys.

The first section of this chapter explains the quantitative content analysis method used to provide a broad picture of the volume and patterns of coverage about black young men and boys. Next, the qualitative approach informing our more detailed and in-depth thematic case study analysis of the news coverage, documentary and current affairs media and black and minority ethnic news media are outlined. Finally we describe our interviews with journalists and editors, and reflect upon some of the ethical considerations informing our research.

## Quantitative content analysis of news coverage

The report presents two sets of related quantitative findings: a content analysis of the coverage of young men and boys in general, which is presented in *Chapter One*; and a content analysis of black young men and boys more specifically, which is presented in *Chapter Two*. The main aim of these chapters is to address the question: What is the extent and nature of mainstream news media coverage of black young men and boys, and are

there any significant differences between this and the coverage of young men and boys in general?

## The media sample

For both studies our sample for analysis includes all UK daily and weekend national newspapers, a selection of regional newspapers and a range of television and radio news bulletins:

- **National daily and Sunday newspapers:** The Sun, The Mirror, The Daily Star, The Daily Mail, The Express, The Independent, The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Sunday Times, The Sunday Telegraph, The Independent on Sunday, The Observer, The News of the World, The Sunday Mirror, The Sunday Star, The People.
- **Regional newspapers:** London Evening Standard, Bristol Evening Post, Birmingham Evening Mail, Nottingham Evening Post and Manchester Evening News, as well as the free newspaper, The Metro.<sup>5</sup>
- **Nightly television news:** BBC Newsround, BBC Six O'clock News, ITV News at 6.30pm, Channel Four News at 7pm, SKY News at 6pm
- **Radio news programmes:** BBC Radio 4's Today Programme, BBC Radio 4's News at Six, and Radio 1's Newsbeat.

We have monitored the media for sixteen weeks in total, evenly spaced over eighteen months in 2008-9 during the following monitoring periods:

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<sup>5</sup> Aside from the *Metro*, each of the regional newspapers included within our sample is a paid for publication distributed on weekdays in major cities of the UK. These four titles were selected as their main readership is in regions of the country with significant black populations. The *Metro*, by contrast, is distributed free of charge in major metropolitan towns and cities of the UK (Bath, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Derby, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle and Sheffield). The news content is identical in each of these cities, with regional variations confined to the entertainment and classified sections of the publication.

Monitoring period one	May 12 – May 25 2008
Monitoring period two	July 7- July 20 2008
Monitoring period three	September 1 – September 14 2008
Monitoring period four	October 27 – November 9 2008
Monitoring period five	January 26 – February 8 2009
Monitoring period six	April 27 – May 10 2009
Monitoring period seven	July 27 – August 9 2009
Monitoring period eight	October 26 <sup>th</sup> – November 8 <sup>th</sup> 2009

For these selected periods data was systematically collected from national and regional newspapers as well as (from Monitoring period four onwards) television and radio news coverage for quantitative analysis.<sup>6</sup>

The first four monitoring periods inform the findings presented in *Chapter One* – a content analysis of the coverage of young men and boys in the UK news media – and generated a substantial sample of 1,532 news items in total for analysis. The findings of the first study therefore provide a substantive context for reading the findings presented in *Chapter Two* – a content analysis of black young men and boys in the UK news media. *Chapter Two* examines all coverage of black young men and boys across the eight monitoring periods – an analysis based upon a sample of 499 news items in total. As part of our second study, in addition to the sample of 499 news items about black young men or boys, a representative 10 per cent sample of the coverage of men and boys in general was also constructed for monitoring periods four to eight.<sup>7</sup> This allowed the study to retain comparability between its analyses of young black men and of boys and young men and boys more generally. For certain categories of analysis in *Chapter Two* therefore, we draw upon and generalise from this representative sample of coverage for all young men and boys in constructing our argument.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> As the research project did not begin until the early months of 2009, the broadcast news prior to Monitoring Period Four - October 27 2008 was not recorded and therefore could not be included for this part of the study. By contrast, print news archives are more readily accessible, allowing for greater flexibility for retrospective news analysis.

<sup>7</sup> The 10 per cent representative sample of coverage for all young men and boys constructed for monitoring periods five to eight was a stratified random sample. The sample was stratified by media type (i.e. the overall proportions of national newspaper, regional newspaper, television news and radio news coverage were maintained). A 10 per cent sample of each media type was selected systematically using the online random sample generator, *Research Randomizer*.

<http://www.randomizer.org/>

<sup>8</sup> These include, for example, *Table 2.0, Graphs 2.1 and 2.2 and Table 3.1*. Here, our data for the coverage of all men and boys are based upon our comprehensive data for monitoring periods one to four, plus figures extrapolated from the random 10 per cent sample (i.e. multiplied by 10) for periods five to eight.

## Units of analysis

In our analysis of broadcast news media it is important to draw a distinction between a news item and news story. While the latter refers to a specific story – about a particular role model say, or a young person being involved in a knife crime – a news item relates to the type of news report. So, whilst in the print news, a news item may refer to an individual article, or comment piece, in the broadcast news, a news item might be an *anchor only item* (where the anchor describes the news without a package by a reporter); a *reporter studio package* (where a package is introduced by the anchor); an *interview* (where a stand alone interview is conducted by anchor with a studio guest); an *anchor package* (where the anchor introduces the package); a *reporter/anchor two way* (where there is an exchange between studio and a live reporter, often with a split screen); and finally, a *reporter package on location* (where a reporter introduces their own news report live on location). A news story may therefore contain several news items (such as a reporter/studio package about GCSE results followed by a studio interview with a head master reflecting upon exam trends, or several newspaper 'hard news' articles and a comment piece) in order to cover a particular issue or event.

## Coding scheme

Our content analyses have included a number of different categories, or *variables* for examining the patterns of coverage of young men and boys and black young men and boys more specifically. These include the volume of coverage within each media type within our sample overall (national and regional newspapers, television and radio news) and within each media type; the prominence of news (i.e. where an article or report is placed in the news agenda); when stories occurred (i.e. the distribution of news over time); sources (i.e. who was quoted or cited within a report) and story subject (e.g. launch of a government policy, or high profile report; release of statistics; commentary about key issues affecting young people e.g. educational achievement; crime/activities; discrimination). The coding schemes used in the content analyses have been included in Appendix A.

## Qualitative analysis of news and current affairs content

In the *Introduction* to this report, we explained how our approach is informed by a view of social relations as constructed, including the ideas, which contribute to our sense of 'reality'. We indicated that journalism both reflects and contributes to the wider public discourse surrounding black young men and boys. In our understanding of the term discourse, we draw upon the definition of Stuart Hall, who describes it as:

*A group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment...Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But, since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect. (Hall 1997, p. 44)*

Although the news media is not the only institution important to the production of discourse, we suggested it nonetheless carries a certain 'cultural authority' in presenting 'the truth' of an issue. As such, the news media is likely to have a privileged social role in production of the discourse, or meaningful knowledge surrounding black young men and boys. In our qualitative research we have explored the discursive constructions of black young men and boys across a range of media through a series of thematic and comparative analyses. Through a close reading of these media texts, we highlight some of the key associations drawn between ideas which contextualise the representation of black young men and boys in different ways, the presuppositions within news narratives and the connotations of different forms of language use. *Chapter Three* presents an in-depth case study on black young men and boys in gun and knife crime news. Informed in part by our quantitative findings on the patterns of coverage across our monitoring periods, our media sample here is premised upon the same range of mainstream print and broadcast news media. Using key-word searches within our media samples, all coverage was systematically filtered and assessed for relevance in the selection of materials analysed for the case study. The analysis presented is nonetheless qualitative, with the primary aim of assessing how and why certain ideas were constructed in the coverage and the social meaning and significance of these constructions. A similar aim applies to our analysis of the coverage of black young men and boys with flagship television documentary programmes in *Chapter Four*. Although three different current affairs documentary programmes were monitored for coverage: *Panorama* on BBC One, *Dispatches* on Channel Four, and *Tonight* on ITV, relevant coverage was found only on *Dispatches* and *Panorama*.

An analysis of the coverage of black young men and boys within a range of black and minority ethnic news media is presented in *Chapter Five*. This chapter discusses a media sample including the newspapers: *New Nation* and *The Voice* as well as radio stations, *Choice FM* and *BBC 1Xtra*. The orientation and news agendas of coverage within each media type are discussed with comparisons drawn where relevant with the mainstream news coverage of black young men and boys.

## Interviews with journalists and editors

Finally, as indicated in the *Introduction* to this report, our approach includes a study of production focused upon the issue of black young men and boys, in the form of a series of semi-structured interviews with journalists and editors working within or across a range of news media organisations in Britain.

Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, from a group identified as journalists or editors who were experienced in covering stories about young people and/or black young men or boys in particular, within different areas of the news media.

In *Chapter Six* we engage with the reflections of journalists and editors upon their practice, seeking to examine how and why – from their perspective - the news coverage of black young men and boys is constructed as it is. Our respondents were asked to explain their experiences of reporting stories featuring black young men and boys, and their views about how these stories fit within the wider news agenda. In this, we have also sought to explore the *contexts* within which the news discourse surrounding black young men and boys is produced, including the institutional settings within which our participants work, their sense of professionalism as journalists or editors and the wider social discourses which influence what it seems possible or meaningful to report about in relation to these issues. Our findings include the analysis of responses from four journalists or editors working in television news, two from national tabloid newspapers, one from a local newspaper, two columnists writing for national newspapers and one radio broadcaster. These face-to-face and telephone interviews were transcribed for analysis.

All interview respondents were presented with the option of confidentiality as a condition of their participation. As such their identities have not been disclosed to any but the immediate research team, and their views appear anonymously within this report<sup>9</sup>. This is particularly important in terms of the research ethics and validity of interview research in general, but particularly for a study of media production in order to encourage participants to answer questions as freely and honestly as they feel able. The written and informed consent of all interview participants was also obtained, with the understanding that participation was voluntary and agreement to participate could be withdrawn at any time.

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<sup>9</sup> We were particularly conscious, in our position as researchers funded by a Central Government department, that our interview participants should be confident of the integrity of this confidential relation. Participants were therefore, also anonymised during the research process and with the exception of one participant (who expressed an interest to take part in the research through contacts at CLG), no names or information through which names might have been identified were disclosed to CLG.

# CHAPTER ONE

## A content analysis of young men and boys in the news

In this chapter we present findings from our content analysis of news coverage of young men and boys. We examine national and regional newspapers as well as radio and television news broadcasts over four two-week monitoring periods between May and November 2008<sup>10</sup>. The monitoring periods include:

Monitoring period one	May 12 - May 25 2008
Monitoring period two	July 7 - July 20 2008
Monitoring period three	September 1 - September 14 2008
Monitoring period four	October 27 - November 9 2008

Overall, the study explores the volume and distribution of coverage of young men and boys between and within media types, the subject matter and prominence of news coverage, along with quantifying the sources used by journalists to inform news items.

In providing an analysis of the news coverage of young men and boys in general, this chapter provides a comprehensive sample of the representation of this social group within the media types analysed. In addition, it provides a comparative context for a more detailed discussion of the representation of black young men and boys specifically, which follows in Chapter Two.

### Volume of news coverage about young men and boys

Across all media types, we identified 1,532 news items featuring young men or boys. Since our sample and time frame of newspapers is far wider in scope than broadcast news, print news constitutes the vast majority of coverage, accounting for 1,463 items (95.5%), compared with 69 items (4.5%) within broadcast news.

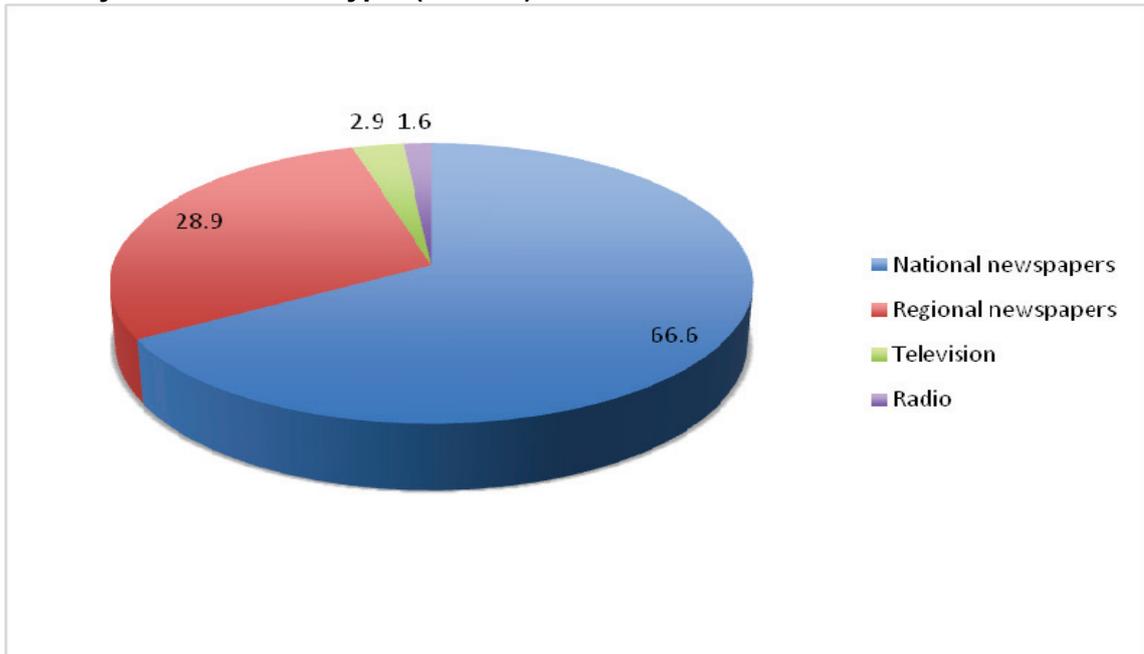
Graph 1.0 shows the distribution of coverage of young men and boys across media types. National newspapers accounted for 66.6 per cent of coverage in our sample, followed by regional newspapers (28.9%), television news (2.9%) and radio news (1.6%). Again, these figures should be interpreted in the

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<sup>10</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, broadcast news (television and radio) was only included in the analysis for Monitoring period four (October 27<sup>th</sup> – November 9<sup>th</sup> 2008) as retrospective broadcast news analysis was not possible.

context of the sample as a whole because we examined newspapers over a longer period of time than broadcast news. In addition, our sample of national newspapers was bigger than regional newspapers. This primarily explains the distribution of the coverage illustrated below. Of more interest is the distribution within media types, which we explore in a moment.<sup>11</sup>

**Graph 1.0: Percentage distribution of coverage of young men and boys across media types(n=1532)<sup>12</sup>**



### Volume of coverage within national newspapers

In our largest category of media genre, national newspapers, the volume of coverage was fairly evenly distributed across publications (see Table 1.0). Every newspaper monitored reported stories about young men and boys.

<sup>11</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages, please refer to Appendix B, Table 2.3

<sup>12</sup> The data here refers to national and regional newspaper coverage for Monitoring periods one to four (May 12 – May 25 2008; July 7- July 20 2008; September 1 – September 14 2008; October 27 – November 9 2008) and for television and radio broadcast news, Monitoring period four only (October 27-November 9 2008)

**Table 1.0: Volume of coverage within national newspapers:  
All young men and boys**

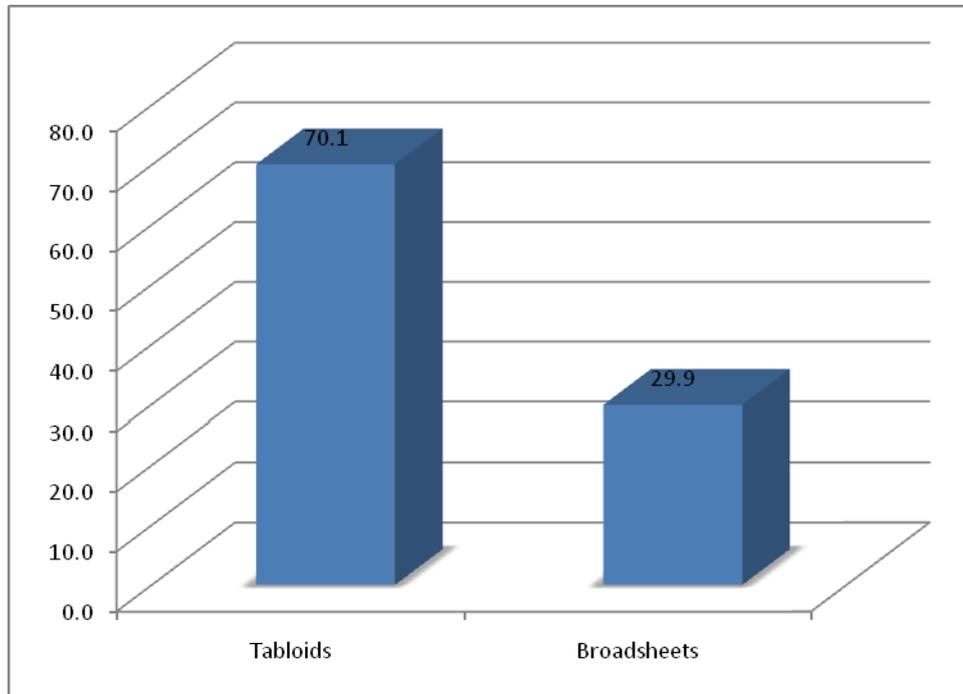
National newspaper	Number of articles	Percentage
The Mirror	170	16.7
The Sun	161	15.8
The Daily Mail	105	10.3
Daily Express	86	8.4
The Guardian	77	7.5
The Times	77	7.5
The Daily Star	65	6.4
The Independent	56	5.5
The Daily Telegraph	45	4.4
The News of the World	41	4.0
The Sunday Mirror	25	2.5
The People	22	2.2
The Independent on Sunday	19	1.9
The Observer	18	1.8
The Mail on Sunday	14	1.4
Sunday Express	14	1.4
The Sunday Star	12	1.2
The Sunday Telegraph	8	0.8
The Sunday Times	5	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>100</b>

The Mirror featured the largest number of news items about young men and boys overall (16.7%), followed by The Sun (15.8%). Of the Sunday newspapers, the News of the World featured the most articles about young men and boys with 4 per cent of the total national newspaper coverage, followed by the Sunday Mirror (2.5%).

Graph 1.1 shows that, overall tabloid newspapers had a far greater tendency to cover stories about young men and boys than broadsheet titles, with 70.1

per cent (n715) of news items appearing within tabloids, compared to 29.9 per cent (n305) within broadsheets.

**Graph 1.1: Percentage distribution of coverage between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers: All young men and boys (n=1020)**



### Volume of coverage within regional newspapers

As Table 1.1 shows, coverage of young men and boys in regional newspapers was once more evident across the sample. There was, however, a clear variation in the volume of coverage between different regional titles.

**Table 1.1: Volume of coverage within regional newspapers:  
All young men and boys**

Regional newspaper	Number of articles	Percentage
Birmingham Mail	104	23.5
Nottingham Evening Post	93	21
London Evening Standard	90	20.3
The Metro	89	20.1
Bristol Evening Post	54	12.2
Manchester Evening News	13	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100</b>

Of the five regional newspapers examined and The Metro, the Birmingham Mail contained the largest number of news items with 23.5 per cent of the coverage, whilst the Manchester Evening News carried only 2.9 per cent. The Bristol Evening Post also reported significantly fewer stories featuring young men and boys than the other regional newspapers from Birmingham, Nottingham and London (as well as the Metro), although with 12.2 per cent, the proportion of the coverage in the Bristol Evening Post was notably larger than that of the Manchester Evening News.

## Volume of coverage within television and radio news broadcasts

Within our sample of television news between 27 October and 9 November 2008, there was a fairly even spread of coverage across the programmes monitored, with BBC One News at 6pm and Channel Four News at 7pm each with 25 per cent of the coverage, and ITV News at 6.30pm with 22.7 per cent (Table 1.2).

**Table 1.2: Volume of coverage within television broadcasts:  
All young men and boys**

Television programme	Number of news items	Percentage
BBC One News at Six	11	25
Channel Four News at 7pm	11	25
ITV News at 6.30pm	10	22.7
SKY News at 6pm	6	13.6
Newsround	6	13.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

There were fewer news items broadcast about young men and boys on Sky News (13.6%). Perhaps surprisingly, given its target audience of young people, Newsround (13.6%) also contained fewer stories about young men and boys than the other terrestrial news programmes. However, this should be also read in the context of a shorter programme broadcast time (15 minutes) in the case of Newsround.

The number of news items within our broadcast news coverage was small overall. As fewer radio stations and programmes were included within our study, it is unsurprising that radio news comprised a smaller proportion of the total broadcast news coverage than television news. Within the radio sample, however, the programme that covered stories about young men or boys most frequently was *Newsbeat* on *Radio 1* (Table 1.3).

**Table 1.3: Volume of coverage within radio broadcasts:  
All young men and boys**

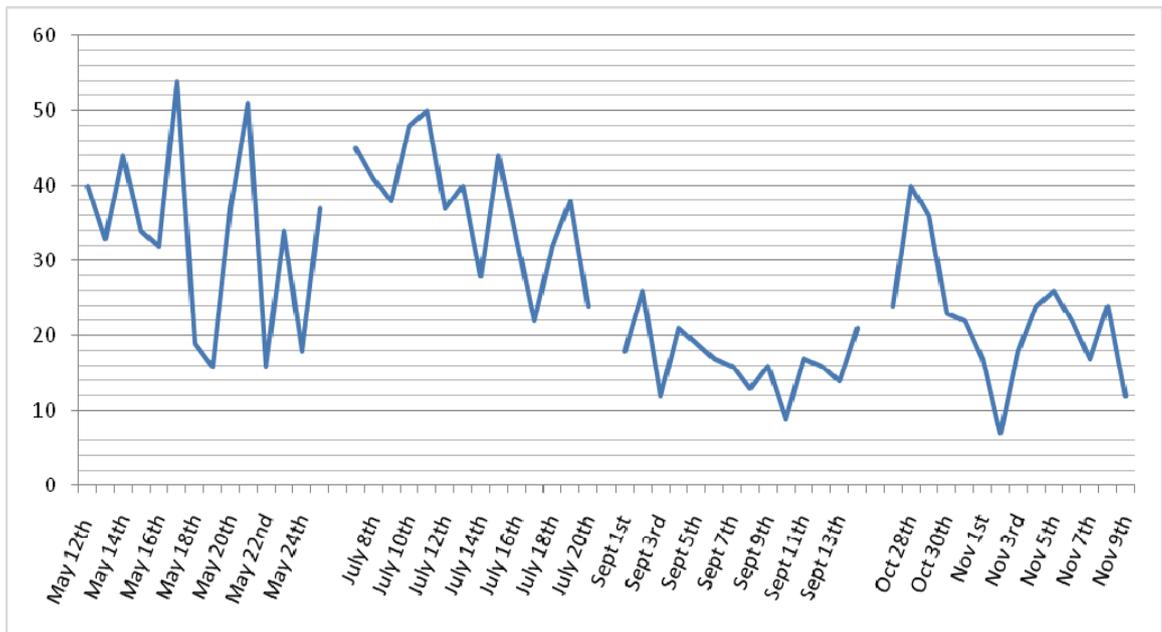
Radio programme	Number of news items	Percentage
Radio 1 Newsbeat	13	52
Radio 4 Six O'clock News	9	36
Radio 4 Today Programme	3	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Whilst only nine news items featuring young men or boys appeared on the News at Six O'clock on Radio 4, only three were found within the coverage on the Today Programme. Indeed, it would appear that for the two Radio 4 news programmes monitored during our study, stories about young men or boys were less newsworthy than for Newsbeat on Radio 1.

### Newsworthiness of young men and boys

Previous analyses of young people in the news indicate they are highly newsworthy subjects, prominently appearing on news agendas in both print and broadcast media (Wayne et al 2008; Women in Journalism 2009; Young People Now 2006). Young people, of course, offer negative news values that news editors concede they sometimes find too irresistible not to run with. In a journalistic culture, favouring negative over positive stories, it is perhaps unsurprising that young people are a highly newsworthy social group. Studies tend to show crime-related issues generate most coverage, especially around anti-social behaviour, fears of terrorism, and the policing of young people's behaviour (Wayne et al 2008; Young People Now 2006). The subject matter of stories about young men and boys identified in our study will be explored in further detail below. Similar to previous studies, we have found young people to be highly newsworthy. Over the course of the sixteen weeks of media monitoring, we found notable peaks and troughs in the coverage that suggest there is a shared journalistic sense of news values associated with young people. *Graph 1.2* below displays the spread of coverage over the sample periods.

**Graph 1.2: Distribution of Coverage during Monitoring, May – November 2008:**  
**All young men and boys (n=1532)<sup>13</sup>**



Stories about young men and boys made the news every day, and on the most newsworthy days were the topic of 50 news items or more. On average, per day, young men and boys generated 27 news items.<sup>14</sup> *In short, our data shows young men and boys form a stable part of the UK’s daily news agenda.*

### Prominence of coverage about young men and boys in the print news

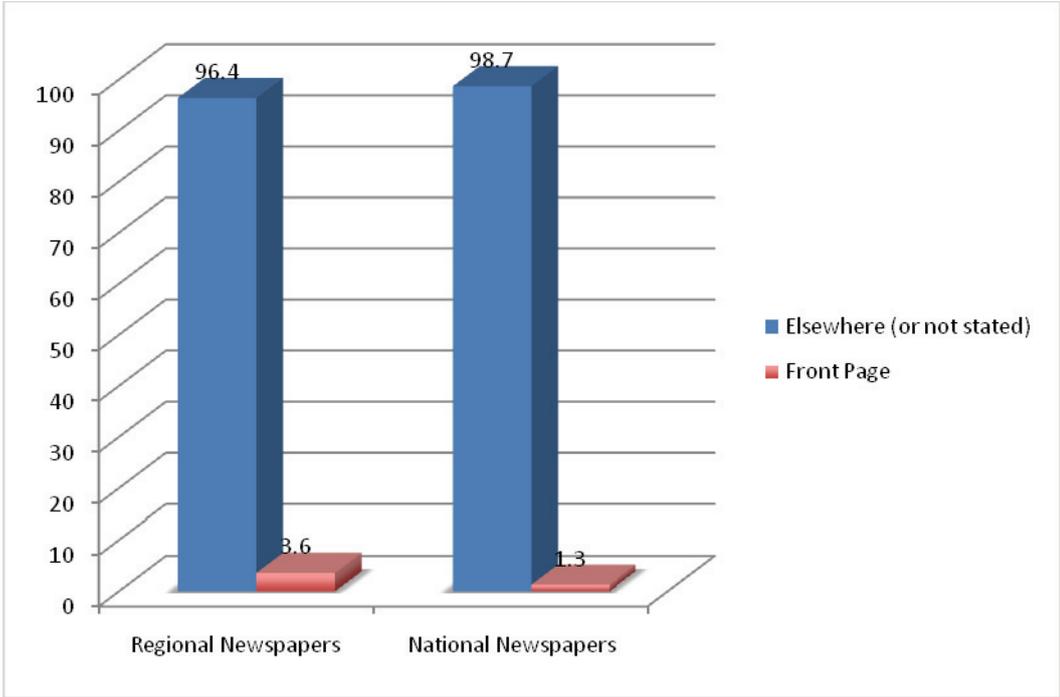
In order to explore further the extent to which stories about young men and boys were newsworthy, we also examined the prominence of coverage. As Graph 1.3 shows, in both national and regional newspapers, stories about young men and boys rarely made the front page, although front-page stories were slightly more common in regional newspapers (3.6%) compared to national newspapers (1.3%).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The data here refers to national and regional newspaper coverage for Monitoring periods one to four (May 12th – May 25th 2008; July 7th- July 20th 2008; September 1st – September 14th 2008; October 27th – November 9th 2008) and for television and radio broadcast news, Monitoring period four only (October 27<sup>th</sup>-November 9<sup>th</sup> 2008)

<sup>14</sup> This should be interpreted with caution: our broadcast coverage was over weekdays whereas our press analysis included the weekend papers also.

<sup>15</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages on prominence of coverage within the print news, please refer to Appendix B, Table 2.6

**Graph 1.3: Prominence of coverage within the print news %:  
All young men and boys (n=1463)**

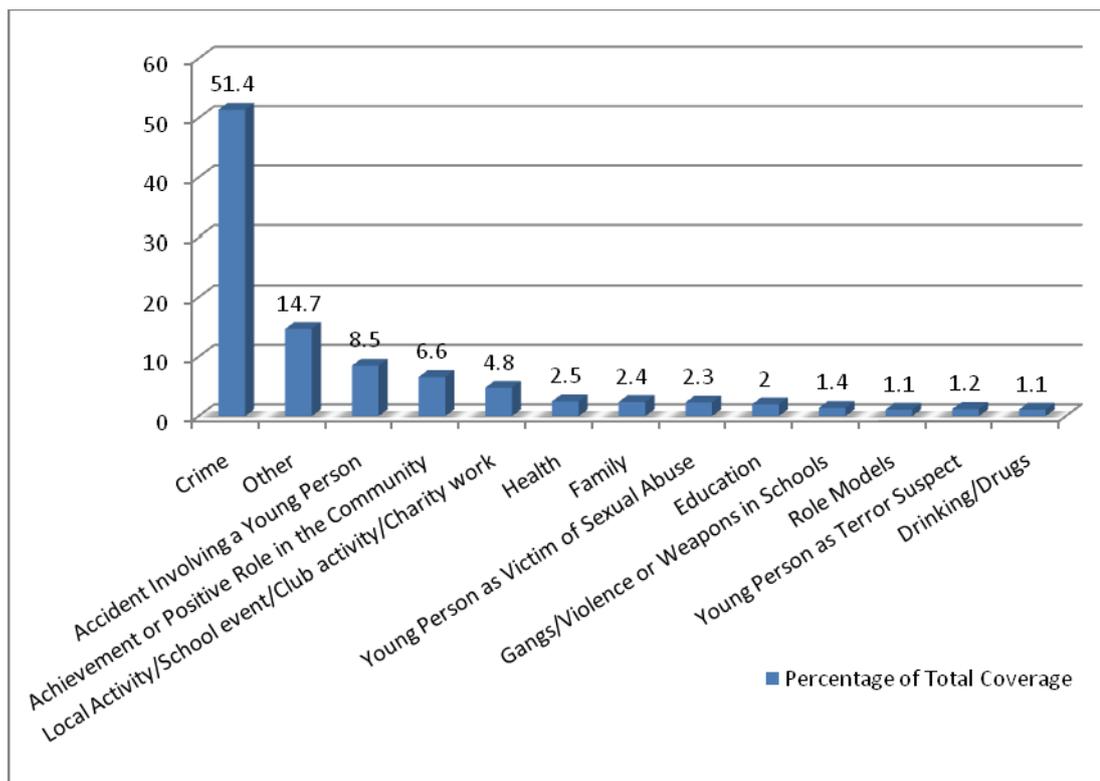


Of the 29 news items to make the front page, the majority – 79.3 per cent – were stories about crime. The other front page stories included three news items about a young person as a terror suspect, one news item reporting a plane crash accident involving young people, another a story relating to the aftermath of an earthquake in China, and a final story about the achievements of young England footballer, Theo Walcott.

## Subject matter of coverage<sup>16</sup>

Graph 1.4 shows that within our sample of 1,532 news items, while one type of story dominated, the coverage about young boys and men beyond this was fairly varied.<sup>17</sup>

**Graph 1.4: Subject matter of coverage of young men and boys in print and broadcast news (n=1532)**



<sup>16</sup> Here a range of news stories has been included within each category. For example 'Crime' stories classify: discussions and critiques about policy relating to gun and knife crime as well as policy proposals on the subject, murders, violent and non-violent crimes; 'Controlling gangs/violence/weapons in schools' includes gang or other violence including controlling gangs or youth gang violence and weapons in schools; 'Role Model' stories contain those referring to Barack Obama and Lewis Hamilton as role models as well as any other more general stories about individuals identified as role models; 'Education System' contains stories about policy discussions, critiques and problems as well as policy proposals; 'Family' includes stories about inter-generational conflict, absent fathers and family breakdown as well as 'other' stories relating to families; 'Health' includes stories about eating disorders as well as sexual health and other general health stories; 'Drinking/Drugs' includes either as a cause of health problems in young people or as a cause of crime/anti-social behaviour; 'Government policy discussion/critique/proposal' includes stories at both national and local level; 'Family' includes stories about parental irresponsibility or neglect; 'Other' includes a range of other stories which were not classified into any of the categories above, including for example, stories about a lack of youth clubs/activities and stories about girls or young women behaving violently/committing violent acts

<sup>17</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages on subject matter of coverage, please refer to Appendix B, Table 2.4

Consistent with previous studies of news coverage of youth (Wayne et al 2008), over half, or 51.4 per cent of the coverage, related to crime - far more than other, more positive stories about young men or boys, such as those relating to the achievement or positive role of young people in the community (6.6%), or other local activities, school events, club activities or charity work (4.8%).

## Sources cited within print and broadcast coverage

Finally, we examined the sources referred to within a news item about young men and boys. Of the 1532 news items within our sample, sources were cited in less than one in five stories (17.1%).<sup>18</sup> However, among the news items that did include sources, often more than one source was cited within each; in total, 914 sources were identified across the media sample.

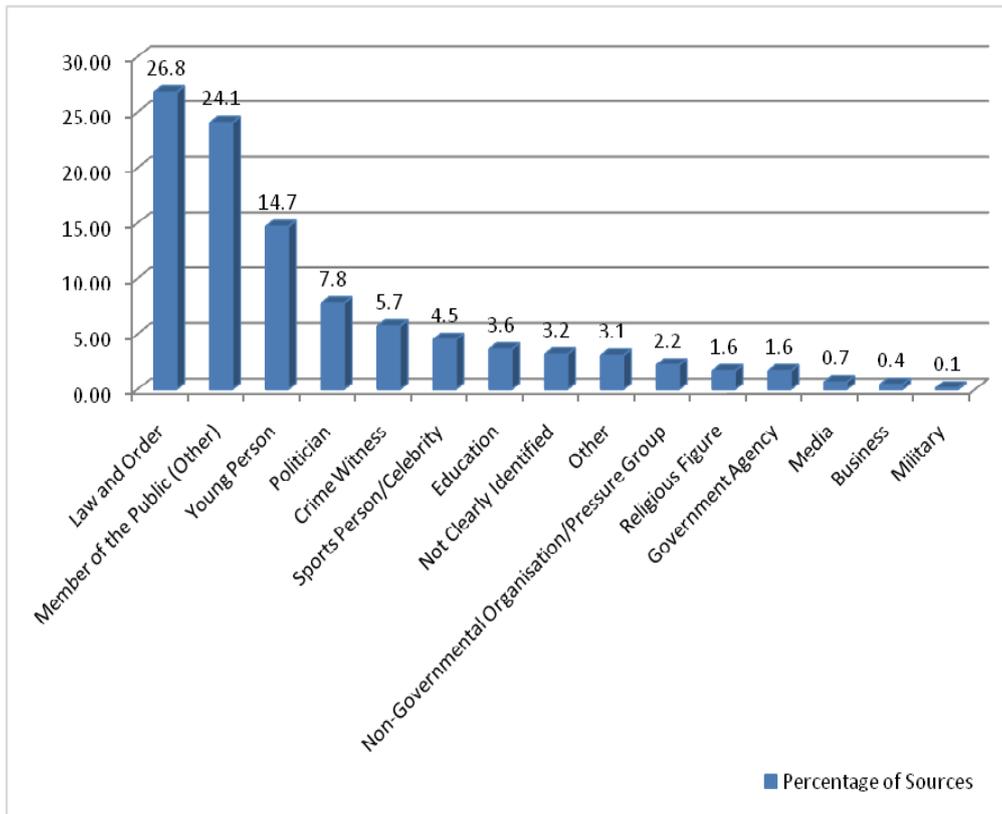
Graph 1.5 shows the type of sources cited within items. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the prevalence of crime coverage in our sample, law and order sources were most commonly identified (26.8%) overall.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages on sources cited, please refer to Appendix B, Table 2.5

<sup>19</sup> The category of 'law and order' included for example, the police, judges or members of the legal profession; 'Government agency' included for example, any spokespeople from any government agency or department of state; 'Education', included teachers. Lecturers or others working in the Education sector, for example School inspectors or University officials.

**Graph 1.5: Sources Cited Within Print and Broadcast Coverage: All young men and boys (n=914<sup>20</sup>)**



The next common type of source was an older member of the public, (24%), followed by young people [up to the age of 24], (14.7%). Not clearly identified sources (3.2 per cent of sources) refer to cases in which an idea or quotation was presented within a news item as sourced but unattributed to a particular group or individual (for example, as in the phrase, ‘figures showed that one person is the victim of knife crime every four minutes’ or, ‘sources close to Dizaei say...’). It is worth highlighting that whilst a large section of the coverage does use official or elite voices (for example, politicians, police or other public officials) as sources, the voices of young people themselves were also evident in coverage (14.7%).

<sup>20</sup> The total number of sources cited within the sample was 914. This number does not equal the total number of news items because in some news items no sources were cited, whilst in others more than one source was cited.

## Summary

What the evidence suggests, overall, is that while news about young men and boys regularly featured across all media types, most especially within tabloid newspapers, they tended to be reported in relation to negative news values. Our study found coverage of young men and boys was dominated by crime-related stories and framed by law and order sources – with just over half (51 per cent) of the coverage in media monitoring periods 1 to 4 related to crime and, as Chapter 2 discusses, four in ten stories about young men and boys being related to crime across the entire study.<sup>21</sup> Since the news media play a powerful role in shaping people’s understanding of crime and social issues, the overwhelming focus of young men and boys in this context could impact on the way they are viewed and treated by society.

At the same time, we did identify a range of alternative subject matter that presented young men and boys in the context of wider social issues such as education and health as well as explicitly ‘positive’ stories about the achievements or positive role played by young men or boys in the community. While these stories clearly provide an alternative narrative to understanding the lives of young men and boys, they were, for the most part, notably less prominent than crime related stories.

In the next chapter we turn to the coverage of black young men and boys more specifically, drawing comparisons with young men and boys more generally when significant.

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<sup>21</sup> Includes the 10 per cent representative sample collected in monitoring periods 5 to 8 in addition to the sample collected in monitoring periods 1 to 4 – see methodology for further details.

## CHAPTER TWO

# A content analysis of black young men and boys in the news

Chapter Two presents a more detailed study of the news coverage of black young men and boys from May 2008 to November 2009. Our analysis here is based upon a larger time frame of analysis than young men and boys generally, examining national and regional print news, as well as radio and television news broadcast during eight periods<sup>22</sup>:

Monitoring period one	May 12 – May 25 2008
Monitoring period two	July 7- July 20 2008
Monitoring period three	September 1 – September 14 2008
Monitoring period four	October 27– November 9 2008
Monitoring period five	January 26 – February 8 2009
Monitoring period six	April 27 – May 10 2009
Monitoring period seven	July 27 – August 9 2009
Monitoring period eight	October 26– November 8 2009

The analysis explores several key areas, including the volume and distribution of coverage of black young men and boys between and within media types, the prominence of the coverage in the news agenda and the subject matter of coverage. The subject matter of coverage of black young men and boys is explored in detail, with a particular focus on examining stories about crime. Where significant points of comparison are noteworthy between coverage of black young men and boys and young men and boys more generally, we draw upon our representative sample of coverage for young men and boys (the composition of which is explained above in the Methodology Chapter).

This chapter provides a statistical basis of evidence for examining the representation of black young men and boys in the news media. However, it also serves as a context for reading our in-depth qualitative case study about gun and knife crime in Chapter Three.

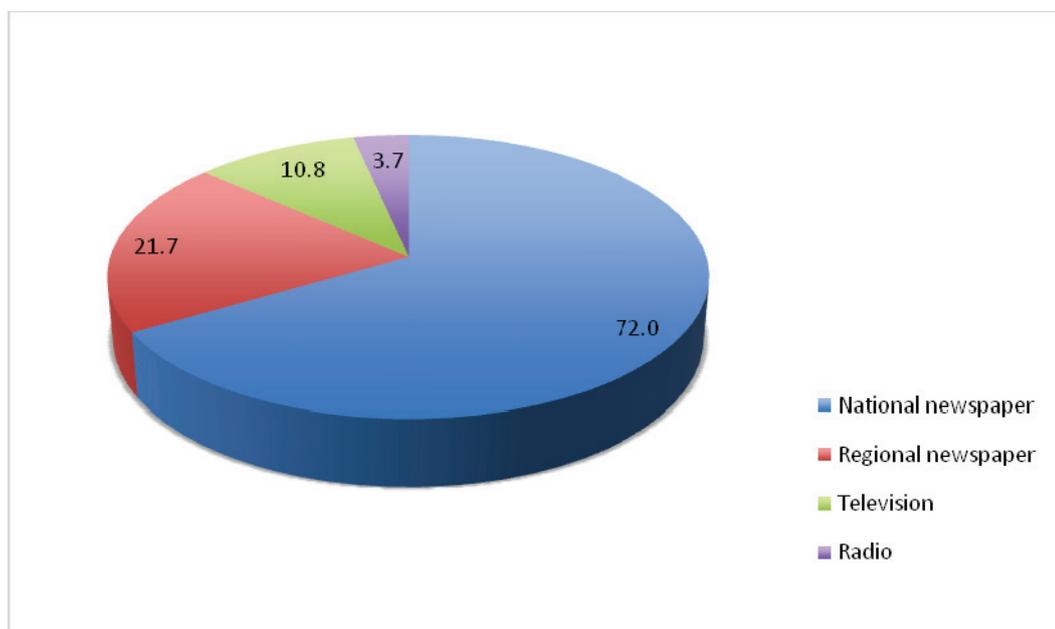
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<sup>22</sup> As previously noted, broadcast news (television and radio) was only included in the analysis from Monitoring period four onwards (October 27-November 9 2008; January 26-February 8 2009; April 27-May 10 2009; July 27-August 9 2009; October 26-November 8 2009) as a more retrospective broadcast news analysis was not possible due to the starting date of the project.

## Volume of news coverage about black young men and boys

As Graph 1.6 illustrates, as with the coverage of young men and boys in general, national newspapers were the largest media type within which coverage of black young men and boys at 72%. Regional newspapers were the next largest category at 21.7%, followed by television coverage at 10.8 per cent and radio news at 3.7%. In the next section, we examine the distribution of coverage within media types in more detail.<sup>23</sup>

**Graph 1.6: Distribution of coverage across media types: Black young men and boys (n=499)<sup>24</sup>**



## Volume of news coverage within national newspapers

The volume of coverage of black young men and boys was fairly evenly distributed across different national newspaper publications. Consistent with our findings relating to the coverage of young men and boys in general, every newspaper reported stories about black young men and boys.

<sup>23</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages on the distribution of coverage, please refer to Appendix C, Table 2.7

<sup>24</sup> The data here refers to national and regional newspaper coverage for Monitoring periods one to eight (May 12 – May 25 2008; July 7- July 20 2008; September 1 – September 14 2008; October 27– November 9 2008; January 26 - February 8 2009; April 27 - May 10 2009; July 27 – August 9 2009; October 26 - November 8 2009) and for television and radio broadcast news, Monitoring period four onwards.

**Table 1.4: Volume of coverage within national newspapers:  
Black young men and boys**

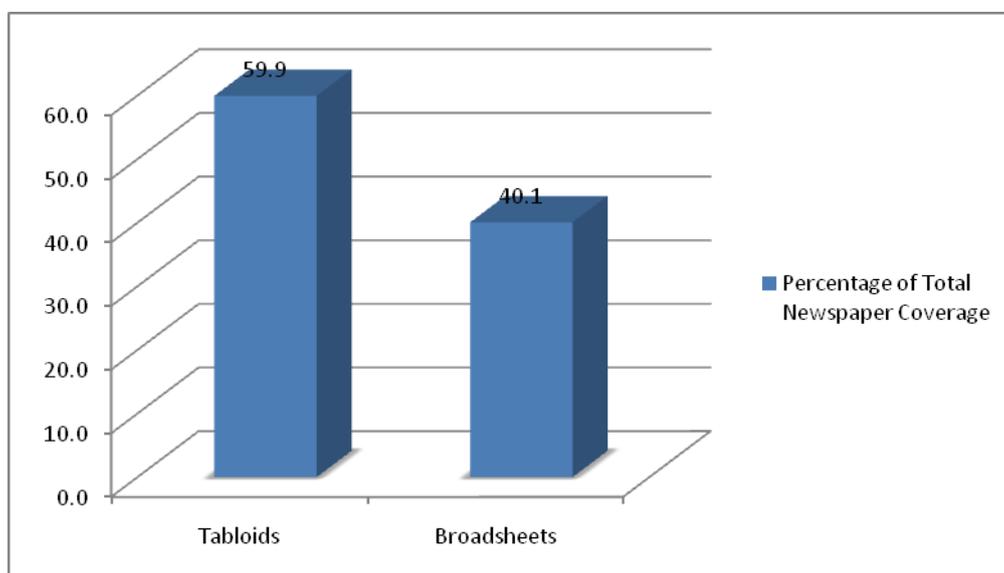
National newspaper	Number of articles	Percentage
The Mirror	42	12.7
The Sun	39	11.7
The Times	33	9.9
Daily Express	32	9.6
The Guardian	31	9.3
Daily Mail	29	8.7
The Independent	26	7.8
Daily Star	24	7.2
Daily Telegraph	22	6.6
Independent on Sunday	9	2.7
Sunday Mirror	8	2.4
News of the World	7	2.1
The People	6	1.8
Sunday Express	6	1.8
Sunday Telegraph	5	1.5
The Observer	5	1.5
Sunday Star	5	1.5
Sunday Times	2	0.6
Mail on Sunday	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100</b>

The Mirror featured the largest number of news items about black young men and boys overall (12.7%), followed by The Sun (11.7%). Of the Sunday newspapers, the Independent on Sunday featured the most articles about

black young men and boys with 2.7 per cent of national newspaper coverage, followed by the Sunday Mirror with 2.4 per cent.

As with coverage of young men and boys in general, Graph 1.7 shows that tabloid newspapers had a greater tendency to cover stories about black young men and boys than broadsheet titles; 59.9 per cent (n199) of news items appeared within tabloids, compared with 40.1 per cent (n133) within broadsheets. However, the disparity between the volumes of tabloid and broadsheet coverage was less pronounced in the coverage of black young men and boys than we found for the coverage of young men and boys in general, with broadsheets forming a larger proportion of stories about black young men and boys than they did for young men and boys in general.

**Graph 1.7: Volume of coverage within national newspapers:  
Black young men and boys (n=332)**



## Volume of news coverage within regional newspapers

Within regional newspapers, coverage featuring black young men and boys again featured across the sample. There were, however, substantial differences between the volume of coverage within different regional publications.

Table 1.5 shows that of the five regional newspapers examined and The Metro, The London Evening Standard contained by far the largest number of news items about black young men and boys with 52 per cent of the coverage, and with significantly fewer articles the Birmingham Mail was second largest at 19%. The small number of news items covered by the Nottingham Evening Post (8%) contrasts to its coverage of young men and boys in general, which was proportionately larger and similar to that of the Birmingham Mail and of the London Evening Standard. The Bristol Evening

Post also carried far less coverage proportionately of black young men and boys than it carried for men and boys in general, with only 2%, while the Manchester Evening News, also at only 2%, was roughly comparable to the percentage distribution of its coverage for young men and boys in general.

**Table 1.5: Volume of coverage within regional newspapers:  
Black young men and boys**

Regional newspaper	Number of articles	Percentage
London Evening Standard	52.0	52.0
Birmingham Mail	19.0	19.0
The Metro	17.0	17.0
Nottingham Evening Post	8.0	8.0
Manchester Evening News	2.0	2.0
Bristol Evening Post	2.0	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Volume of news coverage within television and radio broadcasts

Within our sample of television news, there was a fairly even spread of coverage across the programmes monitored. However, unlike the coverage of young men and boys in general, the programme containing the largest amount of coverage of black young men and boys was Newsround at 28%. Channel Four News at 7pm was next largest at 22 per cent of the coverage, followed by the News at Six on BBC One at 22%, SKY News at 6pm with 16 per cent and lastly ITV News at 6.30pm with 14%.

**Table 1.6: Volume of coverage within television news:  
Black young men and boys**

Television programmed	Number of news items	Percentage
Newsround	14	28
Channel Four News at 7pm	11	22
BBC One News at Six	10	20
SKY News at 6pm	8	16
ITV News at 6.30pm	7	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

As Table 1.7 shows, the radio programme that covered stories about black young men or boys most frequently was Radio 4's Six O'clock News with 41.2 per cent of the coverage. There were an equal number of news items featured on the Today Programme and on Radio 1's Newsbeat.

**Table 1.7: Volume of coverage within radio news:  
Black young men and boys**

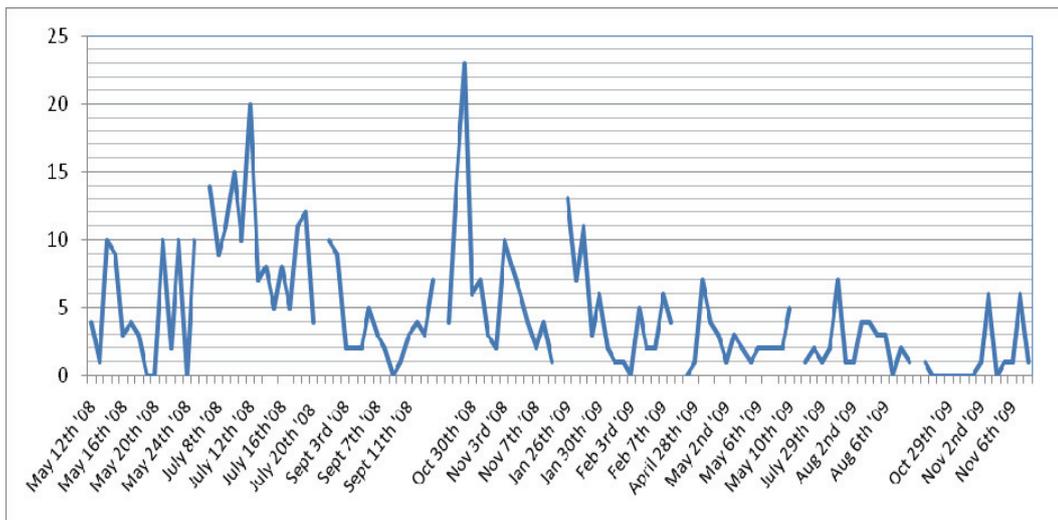
Radio programme	Number of news items	Percentage
Radio 4 Six O'clock News	7	41.2
Radio 4 Today Programme	5	29.4
Radio 1 Newsbeat	5	29.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

The number of news items within our broadcast news coverage of black young men and boys was small overall, but proportionately less small than in our study of the coverage of young men and boys in general. Nonetheless, the percentage findings (especially within our radio sample) should be treated with caution and read in this context.

## Newsworthiness of black young men and boys

In Chapter One, we explained how young men and boys were found to be highly newsworthy, with notable peaks and troughs suggesting a shared journalistic sense of news values associated with this group. Graph 1.8 below displays the spread of coverage for black young men and boys more specifically.

**Graph 1.8: Distribution of coverage during monitoring periods May 2008 – November 2009 (n=499)**



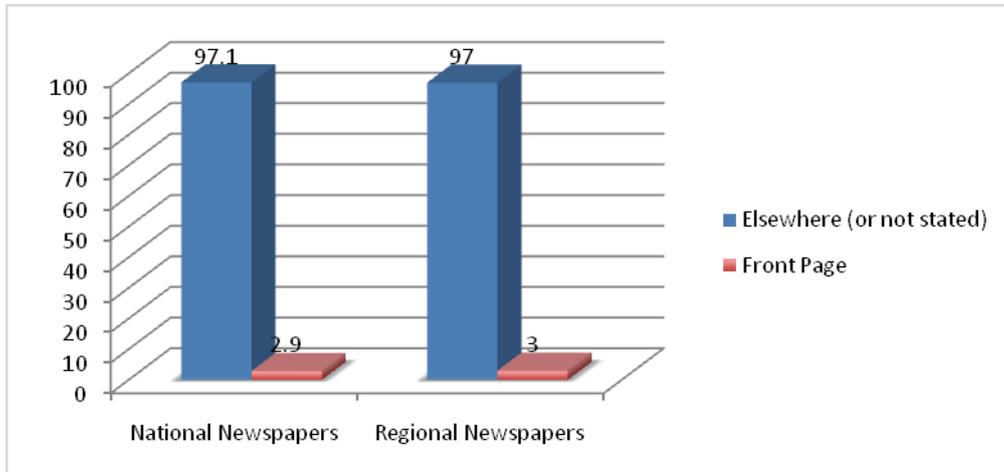
Stories about black young men and boys made the news on 87.5 per cent (n98) of the days monitored during our study. On the most newsworthy days, there were twenty or more news items featuring black young men or boys, and on average, per day, black young men and boys generated 5.1 news items. Our data demonstrates that stories about young black men form a small but stable part of the news agenda in the UK.

## Prominence of coverage in the print news

Stories about black young men and boys very seldom made the front page, and at only 2.9 per cent of the coverage were almost equally unlikely to do so in regional newspapers as in national newspapers.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages on the prominence of coverage, please refer to Appendix C, Table 2.8

**Graph 1.9: Prominence of coverage within the print news:  
Black young men and boys %(n=442)**



Of the 13 news items to make the front page, the majority (n12) were stories about crime. The remaining front-page story was about Theo Walcott's hat trick, which helped the England football team to qualify for the 2010 World Cup.

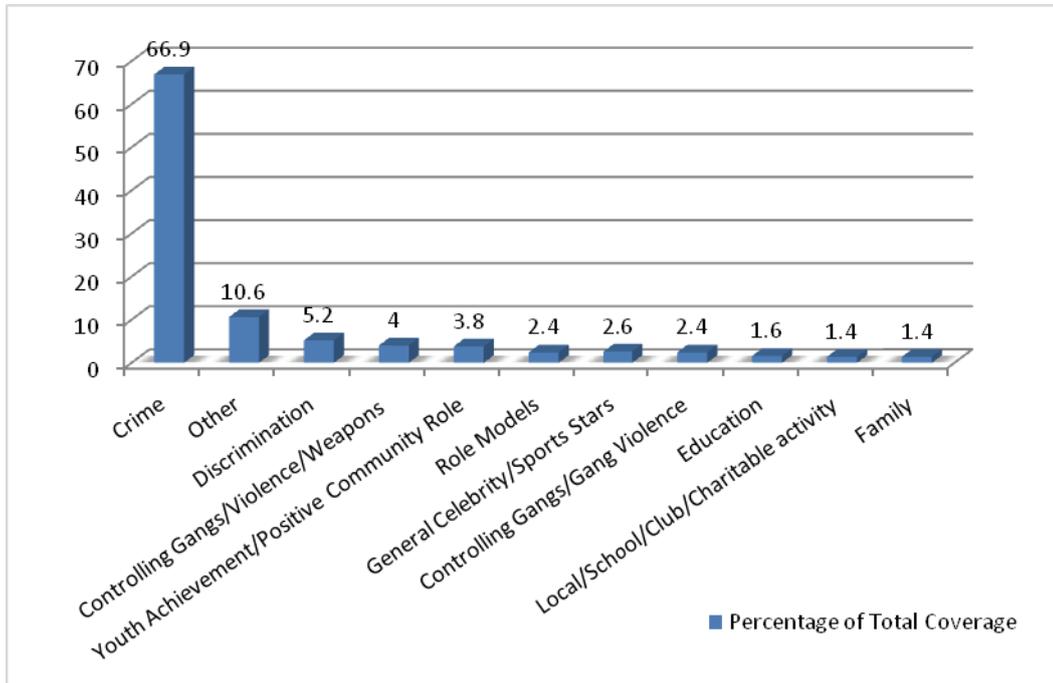
## Subject matter of coverage of black young men and boys within print and broadcast news

Within our sample of 499 news items featuring young black young men or boys, a range of subject matters characterise the stories in which they play a role. Graph 2.0 shows how the volume of coverage was unevenly distributed across these different subjects.<sup>26</sup>

Even more so than the coverage of young men and boys in general, news about black young men and boys was heavily focused upon crime, with crime stories making up 66.9 per cent of the coverage. Again, crime coverage far outweighed that of other, more positive stories, for example news items about the achievement or positive role of young people in the community (3.8%), or other local activities, school events, club activities or charity work (1.4%).

<sup>26</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages on the subject matter of coverage, please refer to Appendix C, Table 2.9

**Graph 2.0: Subject matter of coverage of black young men and boys in print and broadcast news (n=499)**



Other story topics, such as discrimination at 5.2 per cent and controlling gangs, gang violence or weapons in schools at 4%, however, featured within the coverage more significantly than we found in our study of young men and boys in general, and we shall return to this point of comparison in further detail below.

## Subject matter of coverage of black young men and boys within print news

When we compared the subjects of news items featuring black young men and boys within the regional and the national press, some interesting similarities and differences were identified. Table 1.8 shows that within both, crime was the largest category, although it comprised a larger proportion of the national print news (73.8%) than the regional print news (65%). Discrimination was the next largest single subject matter for coverage in both the national and regional press, and at roughly similar proportions of the coverage within each at 4.5 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. While stories about local, school or club activities or charitable work were more likely within the regional (5%) than the national press (0.3%), news items concerned with controlling gangs, violence or weapons were more likely in national (5.1%) than in regional newspapers (2%).

**Table 1.8: Subject matter of coverage of black young men and boys within print news**

Story subject	National print news	Regional print news	Total print coverage
Crime	73.8 % (n245)	65% (n65)	71.8% (n310)
Other	6.9% (n23)	10% (n10)	7.6% (n33)
Discrimination	4.5% (n15)	4% (n4)	4.4% (n19)
Controlling Gangs/Violence/ Weapons	5.1% (n17)	2% (n2)	4.4% (n19)
Youth Achievement/ Positive Community Role	3.9% (n13)	3% (n3)	3.7% (n16)
Role Models	1.2% (n4)	4% (n4)	1.9% (n8)
Family	1.8% (n6)	1% (n1)	1.6% (n7)
Education	0.9% (n3)	3% (n3)	1.4% (n6)
Local Activity/School /Club/ Charitable Work	0.3% (n1)	5% (n5)	1.4% (n6)
Accident Involving a Young Person	0.3% (n1)	3% (n3)	0.9% (n4)
Drinking/Drugs	1.2% (n4)	0% (n0)	0.9% (n4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% (n332)</b>	<b>100% (n100)</b>	<b>100% (n432)</b>

### Subject matter of coverage black young men and boys within broadcast news

Within the broadcast news, it is necessary to be more cautious in comparing the proportions of coverage due to the low numbers of news items identified within each category. However, as with the print news, crime clearly comprised the largest part of the coverage both within television news at 30%, and radio news at 47.1 per cent (Table 1.9).

**Table 1.9: Subject matter of coverage of black young men and boys within broadcast news**

Story subject	Television news	Radio news	Total broadcast coverage
Crime	30% (n15)	47.1% (n8)	34.3% (n23)
Celebrity/Sports Stars	18% (n9)	23.5% (n4)	19.4% (n13)
Other	14% (n7)	5.9% (n1)	11.9% (n8)
Discrimination	8% (n4)	17.6% (n3)	10.4% (n7)
Role Models	8% (n4)	0% (n0)	6% (n4)
Health	6% (n3)	0% (n0)	4.5% (n3)
Young Person Achievement	4% (n2)	5.9% (n1)	4.5% (n3)
Controlling Gangs/Violence/Weapons	4% (n2)	0% (n0)	3% (n2)
Education	4% (n2)	0% (n0)	3% (n2)
Drugs/Drinking	2% (n1)	0% (n0)	1.5% (n1)
Local activity/School event/Club activity/Charity work	2% (n1)	0% (n0)	1.5% (n1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% (n50)</b>	<b>100% (n17)</b>	<b>100% (n67)</b>

The most notable difference between the subject categories identified within broadcast and print news concerned coverage about celebrities or sports stars. Whereas they did not feature to any extent in the print news, such stories comprised 18 per cent of television, and 23.5 per cent of radio coverage respectively.

In the following section, we combine the data across all media types to compare the subject matter of the coverage of black young men and boys with that of young men and boys in general, drawing upon our representative sample of the latter, as explained in the Methodology Chapter.

## Comparison of top ten subjects in coverage of all young men and boys and black young men and boys

When we compared the top ten subjects of news stories across all media types featuring black young men and boys with those featuring all men and boys there were some clear similarities in the coverage, but also some important differences. Table 2.0 shows that crime was the number one subject for both groups, but the proportion of coverage focusing upon crime was much greater within the black young men and boys category (66.9%) than within the coverage of young men and boys more generally (41.9%).

**Table 2.0: Comparison of top ten subjects in coverage of all young men/boys and black young men/boys**

Coverage of all young men/boys <sup>27</sup>		Coverage of black young men/boys	
Subject matter of coverage	Percentage /Number of news items	Subject matter of coverage	Percentage /Number of news items
1. Crime	41.9% (n1428)	1. Crime	66.9% (n334)
2. Education	10.8% (n370)	2. Discrimination	5.2% (n26)
3. Local Activity/School event/Club activity/Charity work	6.9% (n234)	3. Controlling Gangs/Violence/Weapons	4%(n20))
4. Youth Achievement or Positive Community Role	6.2% (n211)	4.Youth Achievement or Positive Community Role	3.8% (n19)
5. Accident Involving a Young Person	5.3% (n180)	5. Role Models	2.4% (n12)
6. Health	4% (n138)	6. General Celebrity/Sports Stars	2.6% (n13)
7. Family	2.5% (n87)	7. Education	1.6% (n8)
8. Policy Discussion/ Critique/Proposal	2.1% (n73)	8. Local Activity/School event/Club activity/Charity work	1.4% (n7)
9. Drinking/Drugs	2% (n67)	9. Family	1.4% (n7)
10. Controlling Gangs/Violence/Weapons	1.2% (n41)	10. Drinking/Drugs	1% (n5)

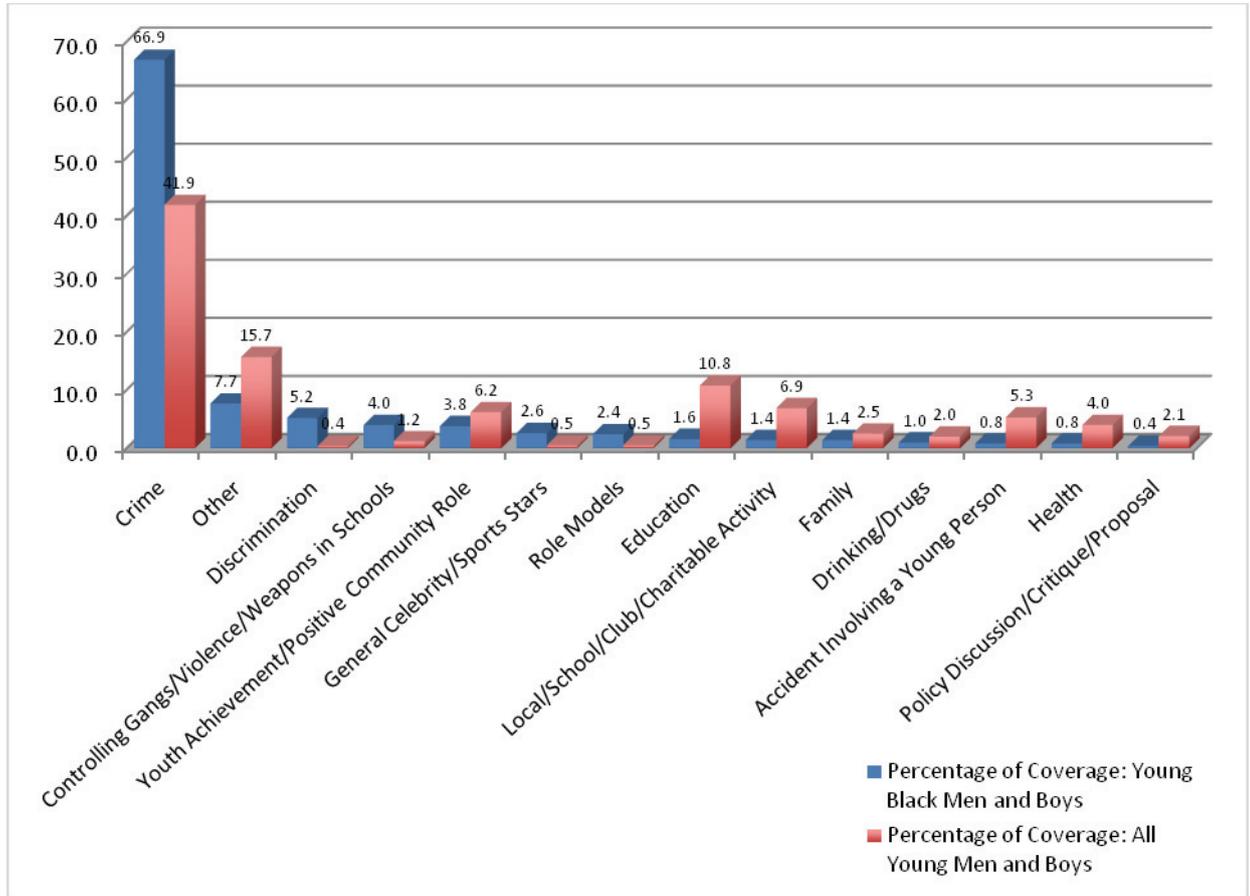
<sup>27</sup> Graph 2.1 includes figures generalised from our 10 per cent representative sample of the coverage of all young men and boys generated for the second phase of the study (Monitoring periods 5-8), as detailed in the methodology chapter

When we looked beyond crime, a similar list of subject categories were found to characterise the top ten subjects covered for both black young men and boys and young men and boys in general. Important differences, however, included stories concerned with discrimination (ranked second) and about role models (ranked fifth) in the coverage of black young men and boys , which did not feature in the top ten story subjects for young men and boys in general. In addition, stories about controlling gangs, violence or weapons (ranked third) were far more prominent in the coverage of black young men and boys than in that of young men and boys in general, where they were ranked only tenth. Concomitantly, the prominence of education (ranked second) within the coverage of all men and boys was notable in comparison to its place in the coverage of black young men and boys where it is ranked only seventh. Also important are the differences in the ranking of stories about local, school or club activities or charity work – third within the coverage of young men and boys in general, but only eighth within that of black young men and boys, and in the ranking of policy discussions or proposals which feature eighth for young men and boys generally, but do not feature in the top ten story subjects for black young men and boys.

From this, we can say that some story subjects were more strongly associated with black young men and boys in the news than with young men and boys in general. These subjects included crime and other threatening issues such as controlling gangs, violence or weapons. However, we can also say that there were other story subjects also more closely associated with black young men and boys which included, for example, stories about discrimination, but also stories about role models, or about celebrities or sports stars.

Graph 2.1 shows that the pattern of coverage for young men and boys in general was more evenly distributed across a variety of subjects than the pattern of coverage for black young men and boys. The difference in the patterns of coverage is signified by a flatter series of blue bars (representing black young men and boys coverage) than red (representing all young men and boys coverage).

**Graph 2.1: Comparison of subject matter within the coverage of black young men and boys (n499) and the coverage of all young men and boys (n3412)<sup>28</sup>**



In other words, after crime, the next largest single story subjects for all young men and boys were more important in terms of the proportion of the coverage represented than those for black young men and boys . For example, although it was ranked as the second largest single subject category about black young men and boys, discrimination comprised only 5.2 per cent of the coverage. By comparison, the second most highly ranked subject for coverage of young men and boys in general, education, represented a larger proportion of the coverage at 10.8%.

<sup>28</sup> Graph 2.1 includes figures generalised from our 10 per cent representative sample of the coverage of all young men and boys generated for the second phase of the study (Monitoring periods 5-8), as detailed in the methodology chapter. A table including detailed numbers and percentages is included in Appendix C – Table 3.1

## Crime coverage

As crime was the subject matter in 66.9 per cent of the coverage of black young men and boys across all media, and it was proportionately more important within this coverage than that of all men and boys in general, we have looked more closely at the ways in which crime was reported.

## Type of crime story

Within the crime coverage, black young men and boys featured within a variety of stories, including news items about murder, violent and non-violent crime. A smaller proportion (8.7%)<sup>29</sup> of the crime-related news items focused upon discussing crime more generally as an issue, either in relation to government policies or those proposed by other parties.

**Table 2.1: Type of story within crime coverage: Black young men and boys**

Crime story	Number	Percentage
Young Person as Victim of Murder	153	45.8
Young Person as Perpetrator of Murder	107	32.0
Young Person as Perpetrator of Violent Crime	23	6.9
Young Person as Victim of Violent Crime	12	3.6
Gun/Knife Crime Policy Proposal	11	3.3
Gun/Knife Crime Policy Discussion	10	3.0
Critique of Gun/Knife Crime Policy	8	2.4
Young Person as Perpetrator of Non-Violent Crime	8	2.4
Young Person as Victim of Non-Violent Crime	2	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>100</b>

In crime stories about black young men and boys, young people appeared both as victims and perpetrators of crime. Murder victims featured as the most prominent category of crime coverage (45.8%), and stories focusing upon crime victims more generally (50%)<sup>30</sup> outweighed those focusing upon perpetrators of crime (41.3%)<sup>31</sup>.

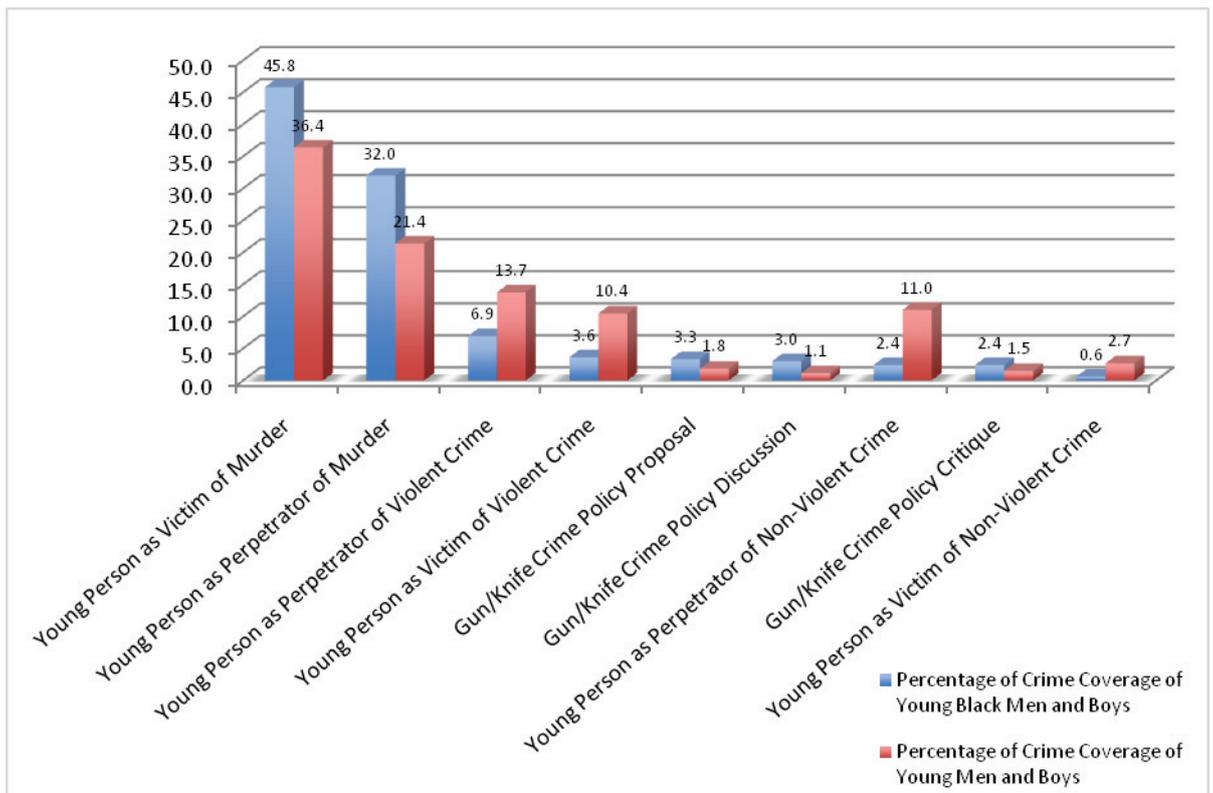
<sup>29</sup> Includes 'Gun/knife crime policy proposal' (3.3%), 'Gun/knife crime policy discussion' (3.0%) and 'Critique of gun/knife crime policy' (2.4%)

<sup>30</sup> Includes items featuring young person as a victim of murder (45.8%), violent crime (3.6%) and non-violent crime (0.6%)

<sup>31</sup> Includes items featuring young person as perpetrator of murder (32%), violent crime (6.9%) and non-violent crime (2.4%)

We have drawn upon our representative sample of the coverage of young men and boys more generally in order to contextualise these findings about the crime coverage. Graph 2.2 shows that while murder victims were the largest crime subject category in the coverage of black young men and boys (45.8%), there were proportionately more stories about young people as murderers within the black young men and boys sample (32%) than within the sample featuring young men and boys in general (21.4%).

**Graph 2.2: Comparison of crime stories within the coverage of black young men and boys (n=333) and the coverage of all young men and boys (n=1427)**<sup>32</sup>



Indeed, murder stories dominated the coverage of black young men and boys (77.8%) more so than within the coverage of young men and boys generally (57.8%). However, violent crimes other than murder were proportionately more significant within the coverage of young men and boys in general (24.1%) than they were in the coverage of black young men and boys (10.5%) and the percentage of reports about non-violent crime was noticeably higher within the coverage of young men and boys in general (13.7%) than within that of black young men and boys (3%). Very little of the crime coverage within stories about young men and boys in general focused upon

<sup>32</sup> Graph 2.2 also represents statistics generalised from our 10 per cent representative sample of the coverage of all young men and boys generated for the second phase of the study, as detailed in the methodology chapter.

crime more generally as an issue, with only 4.4 per cent by comparison with 8.7 per cent for black young men and boys .

## Reasons for crime

In the vast majority of news items about black young men and boys focusing upon crime no reason for the crime was clearly given. Table 2.2 shows the range of reasons that were suggested in the small proportion (16.3%) of items where a reason was offered. There was no one reason that dominated.

**Table 2.2 Reasons provided for crime: Black young men and boys**

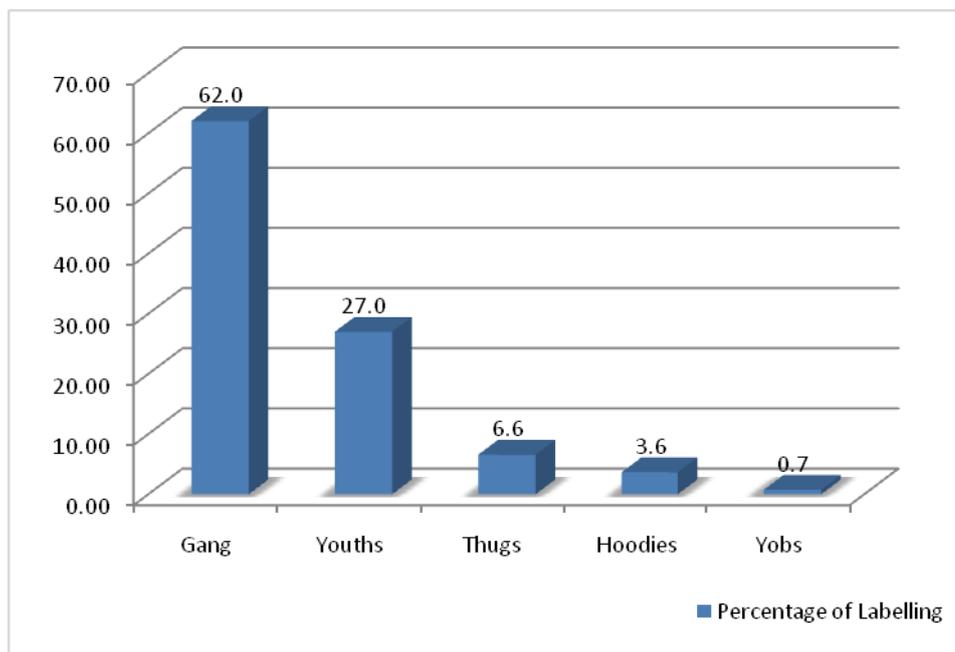
Reasons for crime	Number of news items	Percentage
Social Deprivation	3	21.4
Lack of a Father Figure	2	14.3
Poor Parenting	2	14.3
Drug or Alcohol Use	2	14.3
Anger or Revenge	2	14.3
Gang Rivalry	2	14.3
Under Achievement Educationally	1	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

The absence of reasons for crime would suggest either a general lack of social context in the coverage of crime or that it was not a priority within crime stories to seek to understand the conditions of possibility for, or reasons underpinning, crimes involving black young men and boys more specifically. The findings presented here only allowed us to determine that for most crime stories, it would appear that seeking reasons for the crime committed was not the way that they were framed. However, we will return to these questions in Chapter Three and explore them in more depth within our qualitative case study analysis dealing with crime issues.

## Labels attached to groups of black young men and boys within print and broadcast coverage

In exploring the coverage featuring black young men and boys, we also monitored the ways in which groups of young people were talked about and, more specifically, labelled within the news media. Labels were identified within 117 news items (23.4 per cent of the coverage), although in some news items more than one label was identified. Only five different labels were identified, and of these, 'gangs' was by far the most commonly used (62%).<sup>33</sup>

**Graph 2.3: Labels attached to groups of black young men and boys (n=137)**



## Reference to role models

Finally, we surveyed coverage of black young men or boys for any specific mention of role models. Role models were mentioned in only 18 news items, or 3.6 per cent of the coverage overall and in all but one instance occurred within stories about famous individuals. A separate analysis, in which we specifically examined media coverage of the REACH programme, found only 19 articles which mentioned REACH or the REACH role models (see Appendix D for further details).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For detailed numbers as well as percentages on labelling, please see Appendix C, Table 3.0

<sup>34</sup> The analysis of the REACH programme examined broadsheet and tabloid newspapers as well as black and minority ethnic publications The Voice and The New Nation between 1 December 2008 and 30 November 2009. A full account of this study is included as Appendix D.

In view of the focus of the REACH programme on role models for black boys and young men, we undertook some qualitative analysis of the small number of media stories about black role models.

The majority of role model stories that appeared featured Formula One racing car driver Lewis Hamilton and his achievement to become the sport's 'first black champion', winning the World Championship in November 2008. An item featured on Radio 4's Six O'clock News explicitly highlighted his 'role model' status:

*At 23, Hamilton is the youngest man to win the formula one title, and also the sport's first black champion. He says he hopes to inspire people of all cultures to try out motor racing and that he's comfortable with the pressure of being a role model. (Radio 4 Six O'clock News, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008)*

And similarly, the London Evening Standard reported,

*Mr. Hamilton's youth makes his win remarkable at 23, he is the youngest ever world champion and his dignity, restraint and extraordinary capacity for hard work make him an inspirational role model for other young men. (3rd November 2008, London Evening Standard),*

In other examples, Hamilton's role model status seemed to be used as a point of comparison through which to complain about youth crime:

*'He's the best role model a youngster here could have. If only more people had his drive and commitment there would be a lot fewer street crimes and teenagers hanging around.'* (9th July 2008, The Sun).

Others stories considered the election of Barack Obama, also in early November 2008, and his position as a role model and political inspiration for young people and the aspirations of young black people in particular. A report on Sky News on 6 November covered Obama's victory with an explicit focus on the British context. Introduced under the banner graphic, 'black Role Models' the news anchor frames the news item as part of an exploration of 'powerful impact' of Obama internationally, explaining that, 'even British teenagers are being encouraged to find a role model in the President Elect'. The report draws on the views of school children at two London schools, the Lambeth Academy and the St Francis Xavier School in Clapham, in South London. In both settings, the transformative impact of Obama upon young black people's attitudes towards politics is emphasised.

At Lambeth, three black boys describe what Obama's election 'means to them':

*'It motivates young people, young black people to actually go ahead and try and be something'*

*'I think it would be nice, like, to see that happen over here - you know - if you see a black person or a black prime minister over in this country, because we don't really have a lot of black representatives'*

*'It shows that no matter what you want to do, if you put your mind to it and you work hard you can become whatever you want to be'*

In national and regional newspapers, Obama and Lewis Hamilton were specifically described as role models for young black males. An article in the Guardian ('IF OBAMA GETS IN, I'M MOVING TO AMERICA': YOUNG BLACK BRITISH MEN ON THE ROLE MODELS THAT GIVE THEM HOPE', 4 November 2008, Guardian) reports the views of a group of young black British men on the election of Obama and success of Lewis Hamilton. The successes of each are described with enthusiasm, heralded as historic and inspirational for young black people.

In a similar vein, but from a different political standpoint in the article: 'BORIS: WE NEED MORE BLACK MEN IN TEACHING' (5 February 2008, London Evening Standard) Boris Johnson, then soon to be Mayor of London, asserts the need for black male teachers in order to provide 'Barack Obama-style inspiration' to address London children's lack of 'drive and ambition'. This example illustrates how, in promoting the idea of a need for role models for young people, a certain - perhaps problematic - image of those young people is inevitably also constructed.

Coverage of the REACH campaign provides another example of the potentially negative messages that can arise. An article in the London Evening Standard promoting the REACH campaign ('ROLE MODELS' SCHEME TO BOOST YOUNG BLACK MEN', 15 July 2008, London Evening Standard), was contextualised by the story of fashion designer, Ozwald Boateng's involvement, 'to help choose 20 black male role models as part of a government drive to combat under-achievement among Afro-Caribbean boys', asserting that the project 'has massive potential to change the way that our community addresses some of the issues around young black men's underachievement'. However, the definition of role modelling offered is largely articulated through, then Communities Secretary Hazel Blears' encouragement of young black men to become involved in REACH, as 'great examples for black boys to follow', offering, 'positive images of black male achievement', and an 'alternative to the culture of "crime, drugs and gangs" into which some are lured'. The framing of the REACH role models as a response to "crime, drugs and gangs" reproduces the problematic image of black young men and boys that we have critiqued in this report.

The REACH role modelling campaign is again mentioned, but in a more critical way, in an editorial piece in the *Guardian*: ‘Shared experience, not race, makes a role model relevant: Simplistic efforts to salvage young people by elevating black high-flyers skim over the true sources of disadvantage’ (18 July 2008, *Guardian*). This article highlights the individualising facets of ‘role modelling’ initiatives, arguing that they focus attention away from fundamental structural inequalities in society in terms of wealth and opportunity. Author Lynsey Hanley, claims that, ‘exceptions are doomed to remain exceptions until the conditions that set the rules are changed’, and:

*By promoting the "role model" model through its Reach programme for black teenagers and young men, the government is trying to make rules out of those exceptions. "I'm a lawyer, so you can become one too!" the testimonials will go.*

These examples illustrate that although some very uplifting stories linked role models with young black men and positive images, role model stories could also introduce a more negative or even stereotypical image of black young men or boys into the coverage.

## Summary

Our more detailed study of black young men and boys shows they regularly featured in media coverage. Once again, however, black young men and boys are mostly reported in crime-related stories. Close to 7 in 10 stories related, in some form, to crime, a comparatively higher figure than in coverage of young men and boys more generally. When black boys and men were a lead story, invariably this was crime related. We looked, in detail, at these crime stories and found violent crime – murders, gun and knife crime – accounted for most crime coverage. We found little context or explanation for the reasons why crime was committed or the wider social factors that may inform criminal behaviour amongst black young men and boys.

More positive, upbeat stories about black young men and boys were, compared to young men and boys more generally, proportionally less also. Stories that might feature the achievements or positive community roles black young men and boys play in society appeared even less so than in coverage of male youth overall.

In summary, while there are similarities in the extent and nature of coverage of all male youth and all black youth, our data suggest black boys and young men are reported more negatively around crime related issues. In our view, media coverage of black young men and boys, overall, paints a highly distorted picture. There is a high volume of crime related stories which tend to overshadow news or comment on the economic, social and political problems which young black boys and men routinely face in society. Chapter 3 explores this issue further with an in-depth qualitative analysis of violent crime stories involving black boys and young men.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Black young men and boys in gun and knife crime news

## Introduction

In the following chapter we present findings from a qualitative analysis of the news media coverage of black young men and boys. In the form of a case study, our analysis deals with mainstream media news content drawn from national and regional newspapers. Our intention was to explore the discursive construction of black young men and boys across a range of the most significant and newsworthy topics as highlighted by the quantitative findings. Expected topics - such as education, and other areas of interest to the REACH programme - notably role models, did feature in the news agenda surrounding black young men and boys. However, as crime reporting so dominated the coverage it is this – and in particular the reporting of gun and knife crime - that forms the focus of this chapter.

The qualitative case study therefore presents a thematic and comparative analysis of gun and knife crime reporting developed from a close reading of the media texts with a main aim of exploring the nature of the narratives through which ideas about black young men and boys have been articulated in gun and knife crime news. This includes a critical examination of the ideas with which black young men and boys have been strongly associated and in relation to which their images have been contextualised, the key presuppositions of news narratives and the connotations of images and forms of language use.

It reports that black young men and boys featured in a variety of different roles, and considers how they were represented as both victims and perpetrators of gun or knife crimes within news narratives. The analysis identifies how the coverage often brought to the fore, or was contextualized by, the notion of a culture of gang or street violence. Although the case study does not contend that there is any clear stereotyping in the press of black young men or boys as more likely to be involved in violent crime or gang culture, it does note the emphasis upon the scale of knife crime as a problem, and considers how a generalised gang threat functions as a significant context for much coverage. It also identifies some notable characteristics within news narratives through which victims and perpetrators are defined, including contrasts between the assumed irrationality of perpetrators, and the careful representation of socially 'legitimate' or valued victim images, and their importance to the construction of tragedy narratives.

Finally, while newspapers rarely commented upon the 'race' of young men involved in gun or knife crime, very occasionally 'race' did function as a signifier of difference within stories, seemingly separating the law abiding from criminal, and identifying the 'social problem' of gang violence with young black men, and perhaps their families.

## Petty disputes and gang violence: the tragic loss of promising young people

Crime is a newsworthy topic and violent crime especially so. It is also a topic frequently associated with young people in the news. It is perhaps not surprising then, that violent crime should have featured frequently in the large sample of news material analysed during this study. However, stories about violent crime featuring black young men and boys were notably common, especially in respect of murders and crimes involving the use of guns or knives. The characteristics of these stories, how they were constructed, and the ways in which young black men were associated with gun or knife crime are the focus for the analysis in this case study. As highlighted in our quantitative study, black young men or boys appeared frequently as both victims and as perpetrators of crime during our monitoring period.

## Street violence news narratives

Many stories included within the crime coverage concerned street violence involving black young men or boys. However, within this category there were significant variations in news narratives and black young men or boys featured in different roles – as victims and as perpetrators of crime.

### Trivial rows take a serious turn

A key news narrative entailed stories where seemingly trivial altercations or encounters suddenly escalated to become seriously violent incidents involving knives. In such stories, disputes between boys or young men, evocative of playground disputes or of bullying scenarios, unexpectedly became violent with life threatening or even fatal consequences.

One such example fitting this news narrative was a story reporting the trial of an unnamed 14 year-old accused of stabbing to death 17 year-old Jahmal Mason-Blair in Hackney, East London in November 2009. Key features of the news representation of Jahmal Mason-Blair were important to constructing his image as a victim. On the television news, for example, shots zoomed in to feature photographs picturing Jahmal Mason-Blair wearing a suit in close up, whilst a commentary described him as a, 'promising young footballer' training with the Tottenham Hotspur youth team (2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009, *Sky News at Six*). The tragedy of Jahmal Mason-Blair's death was signified strongly in this piece by contrasting emphases in the commentary: the

meaning and value of his life was first highlighted, rendering images such as flowers lain on the street at the scene of his death more poignant. As the camera shots pan up from this scene of remembrance, to images of police guarding the scene of crime, the audience is invited to bring their reading of this loss to bear on the interpretation of the crime.

A further important element constructing the victim's image in this case, however, was that his death was directly connected to a worthy sense of social responsibility, his intervention reported to have been motivated by an attempt to keep the peace. Jahmal Mason-Blair was killed 'as he tried to break up a fight' over a bicycle (2 November 2009, *Sky News at Six*). This point was also reported in the print news, *The Times* article, 'BOY KILLED FRIEND DURING BIKE ROW' emphasising that, 'Jahmal, 17, had tried to protect the boy from another youth' (3 November 2009, *The Times*). Elsewhere the story was linked with another, apparently similar case in which a young man was killed intervening in a dispute in an attempt to defend others, mentioned at the end of an *Evening Standard* article that mainly focused on the stabbing to death of another 17 year-old, Rizwan Darbar, who had been killed in London in July 2009 while trying to prevent a gang of robbers stealing his friend's mobile phone (31 July 2009, *Evening Standard*).

Indeed, the Jahmal Mason-Blair murder story draws attention to some important elements of the news narratives surrounding gun and knife crime: the tragedy of a young life lost emphasised by reporting details about the victim's talents, achievements and promising future denied. In the representation of Jahmal Mason-Blair as a victim of street crime, a clear emphasis is placed upon his respectability and worthy moral instincts. Although there were no direct links in this story to wider narratives about street or gang violence, it could be argued that the very absence of these elements served as an important factor within the narrative, supporting the construction of the victim's social value. Although little detail was presented about the perpetrator of the attack (primarily due to legal restrictions on reporting crime perpetrated by minors), the idea that young men might be involved in gangs and knife crime was one possibility against which this story could work in reinforcing the image of the victim's life as socially positive and valuable. The counterpoint of the tragic loss of a victim of worthy qualities, we would suggest, is the notion that - should such qualities be lacking, the loss of a young life might be considered somehow less tragic (and perhaps also less newsworthy). It should be noted, however, that in this story neither the victim's nor the perpetrator's ethnic or cultural background was represented by journalists as a significant element of the narrative - Jahmal Mason-Blair's identity as a young black man was revealed only through images of him featuring within or accompanying news reports.

### Distancing the victim from gang culture

Many stories reported during our monitoring period more explicitly associated young males with a wider culture of knife or gun violence. However stories often also distanced victims from the representation of gang culture as if this were a necessary move in order to secure their status as 'legitimate'. In

addition, in some cases, the 'race' or ethnic background of the young men as either victims or perpetrators functioned within such news narratives in some subtle yet, we would contend, important ways.

For example, a widely covered story in the national press reported the killing of an 18 year-old actor, Robert Knox, who had recently been working on the latest *Harry Potter* film. The story was covered across the Sunday press on 25 May 2008 reporting details of the attack, which took place outside a bar in Sidcup, Kent, following a fight over a mobile phone. In this, the story shared some characteristics with the Jahmal Mason-Blair murder story: a dispute over an item of property seemingly having escalated to serious acts of violence and descriptions of the victim's selfless actions serving as a key element of the discourse of victim hood in both stories. Perhaps because Knox was murdered whilst 'intervening on his brother's behalf', the victim's apparent selflessness was a heavily emphasised aspect of the narrative, and a central element of some press headlines:

'HARRY POTTER STAR MURDERED; ACTOR IS STABBED SAVING HIS BROTHER OUTSIDE NIGHTCLUB' (25 May 2008, *Sunday Express*)

'HE WASN'T VIOLENT. HE WASN'T IN ANY GANG. HE WAS JUST STICKING UP FOR HIS BROTHER. IT'S ALL SO POINTLESS; HARRY POTTER ACTOR ROBERT STABBED TO DEATH IN TWO-KNIFE HORROR AT BAR' (25 May 2008, *The People*)

Of central importance to this story, however, was the explicit refutation that Robert Knox may have been involved in a gang. The negation of such an idea in headlines, such as in the example from *The People* above, drew attention to the idea of gang culture, even as it was refuted as an interpretation of these specific events. Indeed, the tension between the particularity of this story as non-gang related and a wider supposed context of gang violence in contemporary Britain was a notable characteristic of the coverage. On the one hand, generalisations linked a variety of cases of young male victims of knife crime, illustrating the magnitude of a contemporary social problem, while on the other, the victimhood narrative demanded that such connotations of gang violence should not be associated with Robert Knox, as we will explore in further detail below.

The newsworthiness of this story was clearly enhanced by Robert Knox's identity as a promising actor and his association with the *Harry Potter* series of children's films - headlines such as: 'HARRY POTTER ACTOR KILLED IN BAR FIGHT' (25 May 2008, *The Observer*) presenting an extraordinary juxtaposition between this association and a violent murder in the adult world. However, several articles also included police statements directly refuting an association between Robert Knox's murder and gangs. Instead, the motivation for the attack was explained as 'revenge' and was linked with a previous altercation in which the attackers had been warned to stop accusing Robert Knox's friends of stealing mobile phones: 'HARRY POTTER ACTOR

STABBED TO DEATH IN MOBILE PHONE VENDETTA' (25 May 2008, *Sunday Times*).

Despite the distancing of this particular crime from gang activity, the story was nonetheless articulated within a wider discourse concerned with a culture of knife crime and gangs in Britain, the Harry Potter connection seeming to signify a chilling proximity between childhood innocence and adult violence, as the following headlines illustrate:

'HARRY POTTER BOY KNIFED TO DEATH IN ROW OVER MOBILE; BLADE-MAD BRITAIN' (25<sup>th</sup> May 2008, *Sunday Mirror*)

'HARRY POTTER ACTOR, 18, IS STABBED TO DEATH IN ROW OVER MOBILE; YOUNG WIZARD ROBERT IS 14TH TEENAGE VICTIM OF KNIFE AND GUN CULTURE THIS YEAR' (25<sup>th</sup> May 2008, *Mail on Sunday*)

'YOUNG 'HARRY POTTER' ACTOR IS KILLED IN KNIFE ATTACK; ROBERT KNOX, 18, IS THE 14TH TEENAGE VICTIM THIS YEAR OF THE CAPITAL'S GANG AND KNIFE CULTURE, AS MET INCREASES STOP-AND-SEARCH' (25<sup>th</sup> May 2008, *Independent on Sunday*)

'TEENAGE ACTOR STABBED TO DEATH PROTECTING HIS YOUNGER BROTHER AS FIGURES SHOW HOW FEW OFFENDERS ARE GIVEN MAXIMUM SENTENCES FOR POSSESSING A BLADE, THE LATEST VICTIM OF THE KNIFE CRIME EPIDEMIC IS AN 18-YEAR-OLD WHO PLAYED RUGBY WITH THE YOUNG MAN FATALLY STABBED NEARBY JUST TWO WEEKS AGO' (25<sup>th</sup> May 2008, *Sunday Telegraph*)

As the final headline here from the *Sunday Telegraph* demonstrates, the story was also newsworthy for its connections with another notable knife murder story in the region – the murder of Jimmy Mizen in South East London in May 2008. Although unconnected incidents, the two young men had attended the same rugby club in earlier years and the coincidence of their murders in May 2008 was mentioned in several reports, as if to signify the extent to which knife crime had become a problem in London. Indeed, the Mizen murder connection provided cause for more than one article to expand on this theme, including lists of recent victims from different types of knife crime, for example: 'GRIM TOLL OF 14 TEEN SLAYINGS' (25 May 2008, *The People*) and 'THE UK TOLL' (25 May, *Independent on Sunday*). Despite the attempts to distance Knox and his murder from gang related violence, therefore, as a feature of the coverage these lists served to reintroduce the idea of gangs through the similarity of cases such 'tolls' implied.

## Racialising perpetrators and victims?

However, contrary to the connotations of this element of the story, Robert Knox's friends were not objectified as 'a gang', but rather were afforded an authority of voice in the reports as individuals and as witnesses to the crime. As such, they were positioned as subjects and provided with an opportunity to account for the events and their own actions. In this they were also clearly distinguished from the alleged perpetrators of the attack: in contrast to Robert Knox's actions in defence and protection of his brother, the violent aggression of his alleged murderers is unexplained. In a Daily Star headline for example, a witness and friend of Robert Knox related the alleged threats of one of the attackers: 'I'M GOING TO SLIT YOUR THROAT: CHILLING THREAT THAT LED TO MURDER' (25 May 2008, *Sunday Star*). The alleged attackers are introduced and described within the news item through the use of witnesses as journalistic sources:

*"A group of friends were in the bar having a drink as normal when word went round that someone was coming down tooled up with knives.*

*"We told the bouncers but they told us not to worry. Then two black men turned up outside. It kicked off straightaway.*

*"One of them said to Jamie, 'I'm going to get you, I'm going to slit your throat'."*  
*(25<sup>th</sup> May 2008, Sunday Star)*

The description of the alleged attackers as young black men would appear to have been incidental to witnesses' accounts of the attack - neither highlighted nor explored further by journalists as a particularly important element of the story. Yet, despite the apparent lack of relevance attributed to this by journalists, a similar mention of the identity of Knox's attacker's as black men is nonetheless included across several different articles:

*"We got the black man in the bushes but he pulled out another knife - he had two knives on him, one in each hand - and he was just lashing out. It was terrible. Rob was lying on the pavement."* (25 May 2008, *Sunday Express*)

Another friend Charlie Grimley, 17, was cut in the arm and face trying to stop the attack. He said:

*"The black lad pulled out two knives and shouted, 'Who wants this?' Then he picked Rob out and he came for him. He didn't like the fact that Rob had been sticking up for his mates."* (25 May 2008, *Sunday Mirror*)

References to the perpetrators as black serve an important function in the witnesses' narratives - distinguishing the perpetrators from themselves as victims. Whilst this does not mean that a crude opposition is constructed

between white victims and black perpetrators, in most news items the uncritical inclusion within the witnesses' descriptions of the attackers as black does mean that a normative whiteness is encoded within the story. In other words, in reproducing the witnesses observations that the attacker was a 'black man' or 'black lad' (without noting the ethnic identity of any other figure in the story), an implicit assumption that a black identity is 'different from the rest of us' is allowed to stand. By contrast, Robert Knox's friends were not explicitly identified as 'white' - their racial or ethnic identity remained unmentioned. In telling the story primarily through these sources, therefore, the articles afford the witnesses an authority of voice and a privileged position - the witnesses can seem to speak more directly to the newspaper readership. As such the reader is invited to take note that the attacker was a 'black lad', the unidentified whiteness of the witnesses' 'us' functioning to include the reader in its address.

## Gang violence news narratives

### 'Postcode war' gangsters and innocent victims caught in the crossfire

Other stories contributed more directly to a news narrative about young men and gang violence. The story of the fatal shooting of 17 year-old Tarek Chaiboub in Sheffield in July 2008, for example, was widely reported in the print news media. The murder was unambiguously represented as a story of gang rivalry, articles reporting that, 'Detectives fear a violent feud has erupted between gangs from rival areas' (15 July 2008, Daily Telegraph). In contrast to the victims of knife crime discussed above, the death of Tarek Chaiboub was not articulated through an entirely sympathetic narrative. Nicknamed 'GT', or 'Global Threat' and reported to have also been carrying a pistol at the time of the attack, the tragedy of Chaiboub's death was somewhat tempered within the news narrative by his alleged involvement in violent crime and gang culture:

The teenager, whose parents are believed to be from a Syrian background, was not a youthful innocent. He is believed to have been a member of a gang called the S3 Army, which is engaged in a feud with the S4 Army. The gangs are named after the postcode areas from which they originate. (14 July 2008, The Times)

The perpetrators were four young black men, and although their ethnic background did not feature as a central element of the narrative, the images of their faces were presented in 'mug shot' photographs accompanying some of the articles (7<sup>th</sup> August 2009, *Daily Mail*). Headlines reporting the trial noted that the murder was a revenge attack deliberately targeting Chaiboub, ordered from prison by Nigel Ramsey, a young man calling himself 'The General' according to a Daily Express article, 'GANGSTER ARRANGED EXECUTION FROM JAIL', and carried out by three other young men (21 year-old Michael Chattoo, 20 year-old Denzil Ramsey and Levan Menzies a 17 year-old), described as 'hoodies' (8<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Daily Express) and part

of a 'postcode gang' (7 August 2009, Daily Mail). The story derived its news value from its association with gangs and the extraordinary combination of gun and knife violence in the attacks, the victim having been repeatedly stabbed less than a week before he was shot dead: 'STAB BID ON SHOT TEEN' (Sunday Mirror, 13 July 2008) and, 'STAB VICTIM, 17, SHOT DEAD A WEEK LATER' (The Times, 14 July 2008). In this story, perhaps more than the other examples included within our monitored sample of coverage, black young men and boys were clearly represented as involved in gang culture. Some articles reflected further upon the involvement of young men in gangs, highlighting unvigilant families as partly responsible – parents dangerously out of touch with the culture and activities of their children's lives. The testimony of Tarek Chaiboub's father: 'FATHER'S WARNING TO FAMILIES AFTER SON IS SHOT DEAD' (Daily Telegraph, 15 July 2008); 'I ASKED COPS TO JAIL MY SON; EXCLUSIVE' (The People, 20 July 2008), as well as references to the commentary surrounding the events on social networking sites, both served to substantiate this explanatory context, the latter suggesting an established and perhaps celebrated violent youth culture operating a distance from the adult world, for example:

One message left on a tribute page on the Bebo social networking site said:

*"I bet you and 'Ven' are repping Sheff to da fullest up dere man."*

Several messages described the victim, whose nickname was GT, in gangster slang as *"a fallen soljah (soldier)"*.

The Bebo site dedicated to him is titled *"Rest In Peace Terror Kid"* and attracted hundreds of messages over the weekend. (14 July 2008, The Times)

The suggestion that the activities of young people were far removed from the images of childhood and assumptions of adults was also emphasised in other stories featuring gangs. The stabbing to death of a black teenager, Shaquille Maitland-Smith in Hackney, East London for example, generated 14 news articles across the broadsheet and regional press during our monitoring period. According to an article in the *Evening Standard*, 'I CRADLED MY DYING SON AS KNIFE ATTACKERS FLED; ARMY CADET, 14, STABBED BY BMX GANG ONLY YARDS FROM HIS HOME' (1 September 2008, Evening Standard). Shaquille Maitland-Smith and his sister, Tahiri, were both attacked by 'a gang on BMX bikes' calling themselves the 'Field Boys' whilst walking a friend's dog in the park close to their home. As with the connotations of Harry Potter in the Robert Knox murder story, reports of the Shaquille Maitland-Smith murder were more disturbing for the symbolic images of childhood they featured - BMX bikes in a park and the narrative setting of the events close to the victim's home rendering the attack 'out of place' in the normal order of things. Because of this, articles not only told a story about the tragic death of a young black man, they also contributed to a wider social narrative concerned with a loss of innocence and the disruption of childhood due to youth gang cultures and violent turf wars. As the Evening Standard noted, 'Shaquille had been caught in the crossfire of a postcode

gang battle he had nothing to do with' (8 September 2008, Evening Standard).

As discussed in relation to the positioning of innocent victims in other stories discussed above, Shaquille Maitland-Smith was emphasised as a respectable, responsible and valued young man. His interest in the army cadets particularly, served as a conduit for this image as represented in headlines such as: 'KNIFED BOY, 14, WANTED TO JOIN THE ARMY CADETS' (2 September 2008, Metro) and 'STABBED ARMY CADET LAY DYING IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS' (2 September 2008, Daily Mail). Reports emphasised that Shaquille Maitland-Smith was not involved in gangs himself, but rather, through the testimony of friends and family, constructed an image of a popular and personable young man: 'I have known him all my life. Shaq's a good guy - the class clown. Everyone knew him but for good reasons. He was innocent' (2 September 2008, Independent). However, gang violence was nonetheless heavily emphasised in newspaper headlines as the framework through which the murder should be understood:

'STABBED TEENAGER "A VICTIM OF GANG FEUD", SAYS FRIEND' (2 September 2008, Independent)

'SCHOOLBOY STAB VICTIM, 14, 'WAS ATTACKED BY GANG' (2 September 2008, Guardian)

'STABBED BOY, 14, 'WAS VICTIM OF TURF WAR BETWEEN RIVAL GANGS' (2 September 2008, Daily Express)

The Daily Mail quoted unattributed sources, local youths and friends of Shaquille Maitland-Smith, for their insights into this context, for example: 'This all goes back to a fight at the (Notting Hill) Carnival in 2006. It's gone from fists to knives to guns and back to knives' (2 September 2008, Daily Mail), as well as police sources who represented gang violence as a turf war, and a danger to all young people:

*Police believe he was the innocent victim of a long running 'postcode war' between gangs. Members cross into enemy 'turf' looking for youths to attack. Local people say a gang called the Fields Boys, after the local park, London Fields, was responsible. (2 September 2008, Daily Mail)*

The general threat to, and of, young people in gangs was an idea reinforced through connections drawn with other recent stabbings, for example: 'THREE MORE TEENAGERS DIE DURING WEEKEND OF VIOLENCE' (*Independent*, 1 September 2008); 'TWO MORE TEENAGERS KILLED IN WEEKEND KNIFE VIOLENCE' (*Guardian*, 1 September 2008); 'STABBED BOY IS CAPITAL'S 25TH TEENAGE MURDER' (*Telegraph*, 1 September 2008), suggesting a widespread problem beyond the particular murder of Shaquille Maitland-Smith.

Indeed, this was also a key feature in another widely covered story concerning the murder of 14 year-old David Idowu, the 'toll' of other knife attacks featuring heavily in headlines, for example: 'BOY, 14, IS YOUNGEST LONDONER TO DIE FROM STABBING' (Times, 8 July 2008); 'DAVID, 14, IS THE LATEST VICTIM OF KNIFE CULTURE' (*Metro*, 8 July 2008); 'BOY, 14, IS 19<sup>TH</sup> TEEN MURDER VICTIM' (Independent, 8 July 2008). Like Shaquille Maitland-Smith, David Idowu was depicted very clearly as an innocent young man in most articles - caught in the crossfire of a gang feud in which he was not involved. Indeed, this characteristic was a news hook for the story in several articles since David Idowu had been preparing to make a speech on knife crime: 'STABBED BOY DUE TO SPEAK OUT ON CRIME' (*Evening Standard*, 8 July 2008); 'KILLED ON EVE OF KNIFE SPEECH' (*Metro*, 9 July 2008); 'STABBED BOY HAD SPEECH FOR CAMERON' (*Evening Standard*, 9 July 2008).<sup>35</sup>

However, in some articles, where the tragic irony of the circumstances of David Idowu's murder had not been noted, such as in the *Daily Express*, 'KNIFE GANG KILL BOY, 14; BUT STRAW RULES OUT JAIL FOR YOBBS CARRYING BLADES' (*Daily Express*, 8 July 2008), David Idowu's position in relation to gang violence was not necessarily so clear. Although David Idowu is first described as having been 'attacked after getting caught up in a feud between youths from rival schools during a game of football', a turn of phrase which distances him from the rivalry and feud, his non-involvement appears far less clear in the later phrase: 'David was having a kick about with friends three weeks ago when a row broke out with a rival group of youths' (8 July 2008, *Daily Express*). This would suggest a ready assumption that a young victim of knife crime might be involved in gangs when facts to the contrary are not positioned as a central element of the story. Although other articles clearly distanced David Idowu from involvement gang culture and furthermore emphasised his professed opposition to street and gang violence, the *Daily Express* article presented a notable example of how, despite the availability of such information to a story, the distinction between a young black man as an innocent victim of knife crime and as being otherwise proactively involved in gangs and violence, could be blurred. In this case, perhaps the potential for misrepresentation of the victim in this way was due to the focus of the article resting less upon explaining the specific events of the case, and more upon representing the weaknesses of politicians in the face of knife crime as a general problem:

But despite the shocking recent wave of killings it emerged yesterday that new rules could see knife-carrying thugs escape with just a fine. Justice Secretary Jack Straw claimed he was powerless to stop controversial new court guidelines on knife offences coming into effect next month. Instead, he would only pledge a "stock take" of all recent measures to tackle the knife

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<sup>35</sup> These news items also resonate strongly with others in which individuals involved in anti-knife crime activities or campaigning against street violence or gangs have themselves been attacked, for example, reports on 30 and 31 October 2009 about Church volunteer and youth worker Simon Somerville who was stabbed while protecting children from a gang outside an anti-violence event in London.

menace to see if any further reviews were necessary. (8 July 2008, Daily Express)

## A culture of gun and knife crime

### 'Broken Britain', gang violence and anti-knife crime campaigns

As indicated above, general commentaries upon knife crime as an issue often featured as an element within reports, or to otherwise further contextualise news items. For example, in the reporting of the murder of David Idowu and other gun and knife crime stories, *The Sun* often presented articles within a special section entitled 'Broken Britain' ('ARMED AND DANGEROUS ON BEBO', 9 July 2008, *The Sun*; '20 TEENAGE DEAD', 12 July 2008, *The Sun*; 'A BOY OF 16 HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH THE MURDER OF DAVID IDOWU', 16 July 2008, *The Sun*; '46 YEARS FOR STAB MOB', 16 July 2008, *The Sun*; 'LIVING GHETTO LIFE...BULLET BY BULLET' 8 September 2008, *The Sun*)

However, in the summer of 2008, several other national newspapers also ran campaigns against knife crime in Britain, producing news and feature articles that primarily told the story of knife crime as 'an issue' in Britain (rather than reporting individual stories), for example: 'THE TRAGIC TOLL OF TEENAGE LIVES THIS YEAR' (*Evening Standard*, 12 May 2008); 'TRAGIC TOLL OF DEAD KIDS' (*Daily Star*, 11 July 2008); '2 DAYS 8 DEAD: THE HORRIFIC FIGURES THAT WILL SHOCK EVERYONE IN BRITAIN' (*The Mirror*, 12 July 2008).

A key characteristic of such articles was the reporting of lists or 'tolls' of victims of knife crime. The nature of knife crime cases included varied in its specificity, in some articles, such as, '2 DAYS 8 DEAD: THE HORRIFIC FIGURES THAT WILL SHOCK EVERYONE IN BRITAIN' (*The Mirror*, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2008) the stabbings of adults in domestic settings were classified together with attacks on young men on the streets. Despite the very different crimes involved, such inventories served to inform or support the idea that a very dangerous new 'spate', 'epidemic' or 'scourge' of knife crime existed as part of youth culture in Britain. For example, a centrefold article in *The Mirror* newspaper reported a coincidence of recent 'knife assaults' as a 'scourge', contextualising this with a number of images and inset news items through which these events might be understood. On the first page of the piece, a small inset report 'PARENTS GET THE BLAME' reported a general statement attributed to a Head teacher and government advisor that, 'greedy and rude parents are to blame for kids turning to violence.' However, the headline 'PARENTS GET THE BLAME' was positioned on the same horizontal axis as a headshot image of a young black murdered man, Yusef Miro. Although the text of 'PARENTS GET THE BLAME' did not refer to the Yusef Miro case and there was no explicit connection, the visual vectors encoded within the page layout nonetheless were suggestive of a link

between the two. At a glance at least, the problem of knife crime, parental blame and the young black male victim might be connotatively linked. On the one hand in this article, a variety of crimes involving stabbings were grouped together to signify the magnitude of a 'knife crime problem', and on the other, young black males (and their families) were positioned in such a way that it would be possible to read them as symbolically representing this problem.

In another example, 'TRAGIC TOLL OF DEAD KIDS' (*Daily Star*, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2008), the article was accompanied by a headshot image of a young black victim of knife crime, Shakilus Townsend, who was killed in Thornton Heath in July 2008. Beginning with the assertion that 'Knife crime and street violence has claimed 19 teenage victims in London alone this year', the article was positioned immediately below (as if a postscript to) a larger feature: 'LILY: "WE GOTTA HAVE KNIFE AID" POP BABE'S BIG EVENT FOR BORIS', which called for a concert to raise funds for schemes to reduce knife crime. This article was accompanied by several large images of figures campaigning against knife crime: Lily Allen, actress Brook Kinsella (whose brother Ben Kinsella was murdered), Mayor of London, Boris Johnson and the band, Razorlight. It is perhaps merely coincidental that the effort to combat knife crime was represented in this article entirely by white faces, whilst the face of a young black man was selected to represent the victims and symbolise the problem of knife crime. However, when viewed in contrast to coverage in which forums *were* afforded to black sources to comment on wider social issues, such as news narratives in the black and minority ethnic press for example (as we explore in Chapter Five), the exclusion of black voices from shaping news narratives here would appear significant, whether intended or otherwise.

## Summary

In the major stories reporting violent crimes involving black young men or boys during our sample period, black young men and boys featured in a variety of different roles. Notably, they were represented as both victims and perpetrators of gun or knife crimes, and within news narratives that brought to the fore, or were contextualized by, the notion of a culture of gang or street violence.

Within stories that called attention to the role of gangs or a culture of street violence, black young men and boys featured prominently, both as victims of violent crime (for example, Jahmal Mason-Blair, Shaquille Maitland-Smith, David Idowu) and as perpetrators (the killers of Robert Knox and of Tarek Chaiboub). Whilst it would not be accurate to claim that there was any clear stereotyping of black young men or boys involved in violent crime or gang culture, there were some notable characteristics in how narratives concerning gun and knife crime were constructed. These included the irrational motivation (trivial rows take a serious turn) of perpetrators, while the idea of the 'tragic loss' of murdered victims depended upon the construction of a socially 'legitimate' or valued victim image. A generalised threat of gangs and gang culture also featured in most news items (either as an accepted or

negated element of the story), with many stories also clearly linked to a wider news narrative concerned with documenting the scale of the social problem associated with young men or boys and gangs (through the inclusion of death tolls, and other characteristics of journalistic commentary).

Newspapers rarely commented upon the 'race' of the young men involved either as perpetrators or victims. However, on occasion when this element was introduced, for example through journalistic sources in the coverage of the Robert Knox murder, it did function as a signifier of difference, separating 'us' (the law abiding onlookers) from 'them' (the perpetrators of crime). In its uncritical representation of this distinction, some articles in the coverage of this particular story did construct the black identity of the perpetrators as a significant aspect of the crime story, and implicitly at least, therefore suggested an equivalence between whiteness and a normative law-abiding identity. We also found evidence that when gun and knife crime was reported in more general terms as a 'social problem', the manner in which these concerns were articulated in some articles most closely associated the problems of gang violence and knife crime with young black men, and perhaps their families. From the selection of articles we have analysed, it was not the reporting of individual crimes and the way that the image of particular roles were constructed within those reports, so much as a generalised commentary surrounding violent crime as a social problem that most clearly associated young black men (perhaps more so than young men or young people in general) with knife crime and gang culture.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Black young men and boys in current affairs documentaries<sup>36</sup>

Within the time frame of the REACH Media Monitoring project, we analysed the documentary programmes *Dispatches*, *Tonight* and *Panorama* in order to consider the issues covered surrounding black young men and boys, and the nature of their representation.

In total we identified six relevant documentaries featuring black young men or boys between 12 May 2008 and 8 November 2009: four episodes of *Dispatches*: 'The Truth about Street Weapons', 'Lost in Care', 'Rape in the City' and 'The War against Street Weapons', and two episodes of *Panorama*: 'Kids Behaving Badly' and 'Jailed for a Knife'. In addition to sexual bullying and abuse within the care system, it was evident that the most prominent appearance of black young men or boys within these programmes revolved around issues of crime – most specifically street violence (gun and knife crime), gang rape, murder (as both victims and perpetrators) and gang violence. Indeed, common to each documentary is the positioning of young people either as victims or perpetrators of criminal or abusive behaviour. Violence was a central theme across the five programmes: a clear focus of concern that functioned to distance the represented experiences and/or behaviour of the young people featured from those of 'mainstream' adult society.

## The truth about street weapons/the war against street weapons

Broadcast on 30 June 2008, 'The Truth about Street Weapons' focused on teenage violence and knife crime on the streets of Britain, and followed Dr Tunje Lasoye, Head of Accident and Emergency at a London hospital as he talked to teens and gang members about the impact of this violence. The programme was part of Channel Four's "Disarming Britain" season, which, "*facing up to some uncomfortable truths about gun and knife crime... [explored] the effect of this disturbing trend on offenders, victims and society at large*". The season ran from May to August 2008 and included a selection of documentaries and original dramas.

Near the beginning of the episode we are shown a collection of images of teens killed on the streets during 2008 and are subsequently informed that, "*black males are the victims of almost two thirds of murders in London. So much promise ahead of them, all victims of violence inflicted by gangs and knives*". To illustrate this, throughout the programme there is a focus on

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<sup>36</sup>This chapter was written by Lucy Bennett and edited by members of the management team: Moore, Jewell and Cushion.

young black individuals who have been murdered, such as Henry Bolombi, Halton McCollin, Devo Roach and Sharmaake Hassan, in addition to young white murdered men: Jimmy Mizen and Robert Knox. The programme also gives attention to efforts by the police to reduce teen crime, with a specific emphasis on stop and search. We follow the police undertaking a stop and search on a number of young black people, one of whom is found to possess cannabis. The police then follow a report about a “group of Somali males”, informing us after the incident that *“one of them became quite aggressive and due to the manner of his behaviour he was stopped and searched. There were no weapons found, there was however a blue bandana, indicating his membership to one of the gang faction groups”*. Despite the acceptance of police claims about the symbolism of gang membership in this scene, it creates an impression that young black men are often targeted by the police for stop and searches. One young black male is shown as commenting: *“stop and search is going to create a problem because there is a lot of innocent youths getting stopped for no reason”*.

‘The War Against Street Weapons’, broadcast 3 August 2009, follows Cherie Booth on patrol with the police to assess the current situation of weapons on the streets in Britain and how this has developed since 2008. The programme includes details of three young black males that have been murdered - Jamal Mason Blair, David Nowak and Giuseppe Gregory - alongside white youth Ben Kinsella. In assessing this problem of teen violence, a youth leader at the Street Weapon Commission is shown as commenting: *“I’m absolutely convinced that what it’s not now is a Moss Side phenomenon, not a black phenomenon, it’s a youth culture crisis and needs to be addressed in that way”*.

## Rape in the city

‘Rape in the City’, broadcast 22 June 2009, focuses on the frequency and cause of gang rapes in Britain. In the introduction to the programme, the presenter informs us that they will *“reveal that a disproportionate number of men guilty of gang rapes are black or mixed race and that some are as young as twelve or thirteen...from that is it evident that it’s a problem within the black community or amongst black young men”*. This apparent pattern for gang rapes is a continued focus throughout the programme, including accounts by victims of attacks perpetrated by young black men. A youth worker is interviewed and asked by the presenter if he feels that the *“gang rape thing is a black problem?”* He responds that *“I don’t think it is, but there is a disproportionate amount of young black boys involved in it and that is why I am very concerned, because we’ve got a situation in our community that needs to be addressed and I don’t believe...that we in the community are addressing it”*. Another youth club worker is interviewed and believes that *“it is a problem with the black community. I also work with white young people in the area. Their relationships are quite different...they are relating to young women quite differently and from that it is evident it is a problem within the community, or amongst black young men”*. We are introduced to a number of young black males, who put forward some disturbing sexual attitudes towards females and are then confronted by a group of young black females towards

the end of the programme, who challenge their views. The programme does acknowledge that *“not all [gang rapes] are by young black men”* and proceeds to give an account of one incident with four young white males as perpetrators. However it is important to note that the ‘balance’ here is constructed through comparing the alleged crimes of young black men with those of young non-black men. Whilst the documentary makers are careful not to suggest that sexual violence is exclusively a problem associated with young black men, there is also a lack of alternative roles with which they are associated. Indeed, by introducing young black women to voice opposition to sexually abusive attitudes, it is implied that it is necessary to look beyond young black men to find such a perspective. Thus it is not ‘race’, but gender which functions to mark the difference between legitimate and illegitimate perspectives on sexual violence, and through which the problem of gang rape is represented as, on the whole, connected with young black males.

## Jailed for a knife

‘Jailed for a Knife’, broadcast 12 January 2009, opens with a shot of five young black men. The presenter states that, *‘these young men have all carried a knife...these young men have all used a knife...and these have killed with one’*. All of these five young men that they speak to in prison for knife crimes are black. Most notably, the only appearance of a young white male is as a victim of one of the black perpetrators. However, the presenter informs us that he *‘didn’t speak to these young offenders on the basis of their race or where they came from. I spoke to them for their insight on why teenage boys, and at times girls, are carrying knives’*. However, once again there is a lack of alternative roles with which young black men are associated.

## Lost in care

Broadcast 11 May 2009, ‘Lost in Care’ looks at children in care in the UK who are fostered, adopted or in residential care homes. The programme features both white and black young people talking about their experiences within the care system. The young black people featured talk about their bad experiences with carers and how they feel they were victimised. As one black male describes: *“I’ve had a bad carer, but she wasn’t necessarily hitting me or nothing like that, she just couldn’t kind of connect to my needs...I’ve had carers where I’ve got a separate fridge to them...there wasn’t much in there, so we’d be like...can’t I go in the bigger fridge, everyone else eats from there”*. In this programme, young black people appear only in the section focused upon bad experiences within the care system, thereby narrowly positioning them as victims.

## Kids behaving badly

By contrast, *Panorama's* 'Kids Behaving Badly', broadcast 5 January 2009, confronts the problem of sexual bullying amongst young people, and here a different attitude by young black males towards females is represented. At a workshop in London, a 16 year old black male is shown as defining this form of bullying as *'the touching of girls in inappropriate places, like where they don't want to be touched, where they shouldn't be touched, especially in a public place like school...the teachers aren't aware, they're like oblivious to everything'*. Later in the programme, another 16 year-old black male considers the prominence of sex in the media and how *'they should censor it'*. In this sense, the young black males in this programme are not positioned as perpetrators or victims, but rather as individuals expressing dismay at sexual violence, and attempting to contribute to solving the problem

## Summary

In some areas of the documentary coverage, the experiences of young people and of black young men and boys in particular, are explored in terms of the failures or inadequacies of institutions and official systems to protect them or provide them with the opportunity to grow up in safety. However, in a large part of the coverage, narratives focus upon crime and sexual violence and are framed in such a way that positions black young males as dangerous or threatening. As such, the documentaries we have examined either explore the systemic issues shaping the experiences of black young men or boys as vulnerable young people, or they represent them as individuals whose behaviour or views would imply they pose a potentially violent or criminal threat to wider society.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Black young men and boys in black and minority ethnic media

In this section, we present findings from our qualitative analysis of the representation of black young men and boys in a selection of black and minority ethnic media. We focus upon print and broadcast media, including BBC and commercial radio aimed at young black people, BBC 1Xtra and Choice FM, as well as the weekly black newspaper The Voice. It is relevant to note that at the outset of our study, two newspapers published primarily for the black British community, The Voice and the New Nation were to be included in our analysis. However, in January 2009, before our analysis of these publications had begun, the New Nation folded as its parent organisation Ethnic Media Group was forced into administration. The New Nation was identified as the number one selling black newspaper in Britain and had positioned itself as a rival publication to The Voice. The first section of this chapter focuses upon The Voice, followed by our analysis of the radio coverage.

## How The Voice reports on black Issues

The Voice is a weekly tabloid newspaper published every Monday and is aimed primarily at the African/Caribbean population of Britain. Launched in 1982, it enjoys a considerable reputation among the black people of Britain. Many of this country's most prestigious black writers and journalists have written for it – amongst them Rageh Omar, Martin Bashir and Equality and Human Rights Commission Chair, Trevor Phillips.

The front pages of The Voice follow a conventional tabloid format. That is to say, slightly alarmist headlines about topical stories. For example, the issue of 4 May 2009 proclaims, 'WHY YOU COULD BE AT RISK FROM DEADLY SWINE FLU'. However, the front pages do not stand alone in The Voice – there is always a follow up story, which usually abandons the sensationalism of the first page to concentrate on the serious issues inherent to the story. In the issue of 27 April 2009, for example, the front page proclaims, 'THE END IS NIGH? THE SHOCKING STATISTICS THAT REVEAL THE FUTURE OF THE FAMILY IN BRITAIN.' On pages 4 and 5, though, we have an in-depth discussion of the report upon which these headlines are based. Here, the article asks, 'Is the future bleak for the black family?' What is interesting here is that we get black sources and commentators providing opinions when they do not, ordinarily, have that forum in the mainstream press. For example, among the people consulted are Anjula Mutanda, a consultant psychology expert on family and mental health and members of the public such as Kwan Osborne, a student from North London.

Pages 2 and 3 of every edition of The Voice are given over to a combination of serious news stories and celebrity news that any other tabloid might cover. In the issue of 26 January 2009 we have this exemplified. Alongside a story about singer, Mutya Buena leaving Big Brother, and X Factor boy band, JLS signing a record deal, is a story about the gang rape of a schoolgirl with a mental age of eight who was also doused in caustic soda. Reporting the conviction of three of the perpetrators, who are black, the story spares none of the horrific details and prints their pictures. In general, The Voice does not shy away from commenting or reporting on crimes committed by black young men and boys. What it does do, though, is attempt to address some of the issues that may lead to such deviant behaviour.

This is evident in an education special published inside the newspaper on 2 February 2009. In it, Diane Abbot, MP addresses the fact that black children in London are three times more likely to be excluded from school than white children. Alongside this article, several celebrities including boxer, David Haye and DJ Dynamite MC offer opinions on why they think there are such high rates of black exclusion. More than this, the paper offers constructive advice to their younger readers – offering definitions and explanations of qualifications such as NVQ and A levels. By contrast with our findings from a content analysis of the mainstream press, education is a theme returned to with some frequency here, not least by The Voice columnists. On 27 July, Dr Tony Sewell, a leading educationalist, writes that, *'racism isn't the reason our kids are failing in school'*. In the article Sewell writes of the dangers of a politically correct mentality and the reality of peer pressure.

Articles and special features such as these are evidence that *The Voice* is very much a part of the black community and not *apart* from it, looking in. In our interview with Dotun Adebayo, once a reporter for the paper and now a regular columnist, he stated that with The Voice:

*You have a much closer relationship to your readership, they feel that it's their paper. That's how The Voice came about, as a campaigning newspaper and also there's no other. So a lot of times when black people are frustrated with trying to get the news across through the other means, they go to the black press.*

The Voice does actively report 'good news' stories. In the 2 February 2009 edition, page 3 contains two stories, which could be said to be about black achievement. One is headlined, 'FORMER VULNERABLE TEEN GETS ON BOARD' and focuses on a 19 year-old who has turned his life around and hopes to be an inspiration for others. Akien Millar is given a platform to air his ambitions. Next to a photograph picturing the young black man, he says of his election as a client representative to England's largest social support organisation, 'It feels good I have the opportunity now to maximise my full potential'. Akien's ethnicity is not mentioned in the text at all – his photograph confirms the presupposition that a young man featured in The Voice in this way would be black. This is undoubtedly a positive story of inspiration, with

Akaim himself stating that he is 'really keen to change some of the negative stereotypes and perceptions there are about young people.'

Indeed, the dominant images in the mainstream media associating young black men with violence and crime are continually countered in *The Voice*. As part of a campaigning series on how the black community can beat the credit crunch entitled 'YES WE CAN!', the issue of 18 May 2009 devotes a full-page article and picture feature to young tailor, Benjamin Vaughan. Benjamin is one of the youngest bespoke tailors in the country and the article traces his background to grammar school, his recent training and the commitment to his vocation. All this of course subverts popular media stereotypes of young black males and the picture with accompanying the story portrays a well dressed, smiling young man enjoying his profession – a clear contrast to the unsmiling mug shots often accompanying crime coverage of young black men in the mainstream media.

On page 9 of the September 2009 edition, we have a story and picture of versatile Levi Positive, who hopes to have a song he has written, *All the Colours*, adopted by the British Olympic Committee as the official tune. The picture here depicts Levi smiling broadly next to the Olympic logo. The text of the article emphasises the range of Levi's talents and his optimism:

*A part time singer, martial arts instructor and film stunt man, Levi thinks his song would be a fitting Olympic tune because it captures the spirit of many nations coming together in friendship.*

On the same page we have evidence of the importance of *The Voice* to the black community. In a story entitled, 'FAMILY'S FRUSTRATION OVER LACK OF ANSWERS IN DEATH PROBE', the newspaper reports the failure of an investigation into the death of Sean Rigg, who died in police custody. This story was largely ignored by the mainstream press, yet here we have not only the retelling of the case, but also quotes from Rigg's family, a black Mental Health organisation and Blaqqfair - a research group.

Around stories of gun crime and violence involving black young men and boys, the news reporting can be matter of fact, brief and unsensationalised. The 19 October 2009 edition includes a very brief story on page 2 under the 'Newsround' banner. Next to a small photograph of the boy in question, the headline reports: '15 YEAR OLD GUNNED DOWN'. This is the text in its entirety:

*A 15 year-old boy was gunned down in broad daylight, in south London. Ryan Bennett was shot in the chest at around 2.35pm in Clapham on October 9th. He was found by police minutes later. Anti gun crime unit Trident have appealed for witnesses. 'It is not clear whether Ryan was the intended victim. This appears to be an unprovoked attack', said Detective Chief Inspector, John Crossley.*

The positioning of this story, its brevity and the lack of alarm or surprise in the tone of the writing is itself surprising. The language employed in this article does little to convey the sense of shock that is usually the characteristic of the way mainstream press reports apparently random shootings of children in broad daylight. However, this report, across our sample, appears to be anomalous. Where incidents of violence are reported, there was often an attempt to identify and sympathise with the victim's family. In the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009 edition, a page 2 story tells of Guiseppe Gregory, a sixteen year old boy shot dead in Manchester. Much of the article is given over to Gregory's mother, her lament for her murdered son and the police efforts to apprehend the killers.

In summary, in 'The Voice' we have a weekly tabloid newspaper which has black sources and commentators providing opinion and news when they do not, ordinarily, have that forum in the mainstream press. Our analysis of The Voice has revealed it be a serious newspaper, an entertainment sheet, and opinion outlet all in one. It does not shy away from reporting issues around black youth and crime and generally seeks to provide the background and context to the events it describes. The Voice actively seeks to report on successful black boys and young men. Its opinion pieces, editorials and campaigns accept realities but offer solutions and hope – they do not deal in sensationalism or stereotype.

## Coverage of black young men and boys on 1Xtra

BBC Radio 1Xtra is a national digital radio station, which plays predominantly 'new' black music. First broadcast in 2002, the network has a target audience of 16 – 25 year olds and its own dedicated news team whose output and delivery is tailored to appeal to the perceived tastes of its demographic.

In the timescale of our research, news broadcasts concentrated mainly on celebrity stories, the election of Barak Obama and young people and crime. There were also a number of documentary features dealing with issues of interest to young audiences, such as truancy in a programme called *School's Out*, broadcast on the 29 July 2009.

The news items dealing with Barak Obama were interesting because they focussed not so much on his achievements but on the racism he is subject to. On the 28 October 2008 it was broadcast that two neo Nazi skinheads had been charged in Nashville, Tennessee, with plotting to kill Obama and black students. The same racism angle could also be said to be characteristic of the coverage afforded to Lewis Hamilton, Formula One racing driver. Although it was highlighted that he had become World Champion there was also the fact, reported in bulletins on the 31 of October, that he had been subject to racist abuse at the racetrack and on websites.

Hamilton is perceived as a role model and 1Xtra gave much airtime to the use of role models. On 11 of November 2008 a number of items dealt with gun

and knife crime and celebrities who have spoken out against it. Boxer James DeGale and singer Estelle were reported to have taken part in a new campaign on MTV in opposition to knife and gun crime. This was met with derision by a number of telephone calls from teens in Southeast London; three said that using celebrities as 'role models' wouldn't stop gun and knife crime because teens today look up to gang leaders but not to celebs; one female caller said, 'it is families and parents who are the real role models'. The 1Xtra coverage also followed an interview with Claudia Webb, head of Trident Independent Advisory Group, which deals with gun crime in the black community. She explained how they came up with the campaign: concentrating on celebrities who have had humble beginnings but have gained respect because of their talent and opportunity.

The documentaries broadcast covered serious and worthy issues. On 28 October 2009 as part of black history month, for example, *black British* looked at black culture in Britain. This programme included items on under-achieving black boys, interviewing Dr Tony Sewell, the head of Generating Genius, a charity working with inner city black boys with an interest in science. He spoke of the importance of 'father figures' in boy's lives and of a 'culture of gangsterism'. The programme was an historical chart of Caribbean experience in Britain, which highlighted the problems of seeing black people in stereotypical ways. Two boys aged 13 and 15 stated that when people saw black people in the street they imagined 'drug dealers' and 'gangsters' – individuals judged 'on their colour, not their character'. What this documentary did was provide young black boys with a voice and a platform to challenge that stereotype. For example, Jamil, aged 15, spoke of 'gun crime and alienation being a symptom of poverty'.

Jamil was part of 'Reclaim,' a project involving black boys and girls in south Manchester created to challenge the negative images surrounding young people. In an earlier documentary, broadcast on 30 October 2008, teenagers from Reclaim complained that most media coverage about them involved robbery, gangs and shooting. Their positive contribution to society was ignored. The group wrote a letter to the media encouraging them to publish positive stories about teens and 'the media' went to see them. However, they assert, when it was learned that all forty-five members of the group were black boys, they were told that 'nobody would want to read about that story'.

There were also positive stories. For example, on 11 November 2008 an interview with Tim Campbell, of BBC One's *The Apprentice*, had him explain his work with young black people and his role in the government's REACH campaign for black role models.

It is true to say, though, that a significant proportion of news bulletins featuring items about black young men and boys on 1Xtra featured crime. On the 2 October 2008 it was reported that a fourth teenager had been arrested in connection with the stabbing of Stephen Lewis. On 3 January 2009 a bulletin announced that a father had been stabbed at a bus stop and a 22

year-old man arrested. On 28 July 2009, it was announced that a 22 year-old black man had been found guilty of murdering his girlfriend in her flat, repeatedly stabbing her. The victim was Hollyoak's actress, Amy Leigh Barnes. It is interesting to note that there was a mix of celebrity and crime in the coverage. During our monitoring period we found that there were also items on young black Brazilian footballer Robinho's alleged assault on a young woman in a bar, and coverage of singer Chris Brown's conviction for violence towards his girlfriend, Rhianna.

However, though it is true to say that 1Xtra news items concentrated on crime, the documentary programmes and longer programmes sought to explore and further contextualise issues pertaining to young black people. In these programmes, young people were granted a voice and experts from the black community offered their opinions on society and culture. What was evident throughout was an acknowledgement of the problems that existed but also a willingness and capability to confront and tackle them. The longer bulletins on 1Xtra provided a forum for these views.

## Coverage of black young men and boys on Choice FM

Choice FM began broadcasting in March 1990 from Brixton and is generally considered to be Britain's first 24-hour black music radio station operating with an independent licence. Although owned by a corporation, which includes Capital Radio, and not therefore a 'black' station in terms of its ownership, programming or editing, it is aimed at a black audience. *Choice FM* covered very similar ground to *1Xtra* in terms of its overall news output, and the majority of news bulletins in our monitoring period about black young men and boys featured crime. On the 29 October 2008, for example, it was reported that one teenager had been acquitted of murdering another teen, Etem Celebi, who prosecutors alleged was part of a long running gang war. On 28 April 2009, it was reported that 14 year-old Shaquille Smith, 'was stabbed to death by a gang of ten teenagers on bike last summer'. On 5 May 2009 we learned that, 'a gang of eight teens carried out a violent five month crime spree in North London and then bragged about it on the Internet'. On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2009, it was reported that:

*Eight teens in a gang called G-Block have been jailed for a total of 32 years for a series of violent street robberies in South London. The group carried knives and hammers while carrying out at least 56 robberies over a 5-month period. The youngest member was 13.*

Similar to 1Xtra, though, *Choice* did attempt to address some of the issues behind crime and engage with politics. On 5 November 2008, as part of its 'Peace on the Street' project, the station reported how young people went to the House of Commons to talk to the Home Secretary and MP Dawn Butler about solutions to the problems of gun and knife crime.

In summary, Radio 1Xtra's shorter news bulletins concentrated on celebrity, the election of Barak Obama and crime. The feature documentaries, though, explored worthy issues featuring a range of opinions from black commentators and members of the public. The output of Choice FM was similar – there was effort to see behind the headlines and bring their audience to the debate on crime.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Interviews with journalists and editors

In this section we examine how and why the news coverage of black young men and boys is constructed by engaging with how journalists and editors working in print and broadcast news media in Britain reflect upon their practice. We report here on a series of interviews in which our respondents explain their experiences of reporting stories featuring black young men and boys, and their views about how these stories fit within the wider news agenda. We also seek to explore the contexts within which the news discourse surrounding black young men and boys is produced, including the institutional settings within which our participants work, their sense of professionalism as journalists or editors and the wider social discourses which may influence what it seems possible or meaningful to report about in relation to these issues.

All respondents here are anonymous, but, of the ten journalists interviewed it can be stated that: four are journalists or editors working in television news, two work for national tabloid newspapers, one for a local newspaper, two are columnists on national newspapers and one is currently a radio broadcaster with extensive experience of working across a variety of media. The majority of the respondents are white, which reflects the ethnic make-up of the industry, but the sample includes two journalists who are black and one who is Asian.

In the interests of brevity we have decided to concentrate upon the interviewees' responses to the following questions:

1. From where do you get your stories about black young men or boys? What status do stories about black young men or boy have in the newsroom agenda?
2. Are there specific newsroom guidelines you follow when reporting stories around 'race', and particularly black young men or boys?
3. Where do you think public opinion is on the specific issues associated with black young men and boys?
4. How would you define the term 'role model'? Who are the positive role models for young black men?
5. While crime is by far the most newsworthy topic involving black young men and boys, the broader sociological reasons for crime or how criminality should be dealt with are scarcely featured in the news. Why do you think this is?
6. Do we need to address the negative portrayal of black young men and boys in the media?

Although each interview utilised the same questions for all interviewees, it should be noted that certain issues and topics emerged organically out of the process of conversation. The themes emerging from the interviews are discussed below, with common themes identified and, where relevant, comparisons and contrasts drawn between how these main themes have been constructed within and across the responses of participants.

## Reasons for stories about black young men and boys and their place in the news agenda

There was a perhaps an unconscious admission that most stories involving black young men or boys were crime related. One tabloid journalist stated, *'As with most of our stories, it's either reactive so it comes from something on the news wire or it comes from a police press release.'* Getting such stories from the police had inherent problems, as the radio presenter said, *'journalists are perhaps over-reliant on stories coming from the police, to a certain extent, because the stories come with a bias attached to it, which is the police want a conviction and the journalists are helping them in that respect'*. A picture began to emerge which suggested journalists were not actually 'out there' looking for stories – items were coming into news desks almost fully formed. The reporter on the local newspaper said, *'It'd either be phone calls from the public, press releases from the police, stories involving the police, stories about community groups or events, emails that are sent to newsdesks, emails that are sent to me as a reporter.'* Most journalists were at pains to emphasise, at the very outset of the interview, that they did not identify 'race' as an issue in any story, *'rightly or wrongly, if it's a strong story, then to me that's the judgement that's made and then the colour or ethnicity or whatever of the individuals concerned is a secondary issue, an irrelevant issue in a sense'*. One broadcast journalist was particularly adamant, *'There is no such thing as, oh, it's black we'll do it. In fact that would never come into it. It's: is it a murder; is it a rape; is it a shooting?'* That said, there was awareness from all respondents that crime and young black men had a certain status within a news story, *'It does feel to us that the easiest way for a young black person to get into the papers is to pull out a gun and if he shoots somebody or not, better still if he shoots several people or stabs somebody in the heart or gets stabbed. Either you shoot or get shot, is the easiest way for a young black person to get into the national newspaper'*. Whilst there was widespread denial that any of the journalists would treat a story differently depending on colour, there did seem to be an 'us and them' mentality which contradicted this, *'Well, the problem is, is that we only go to black areas when there's been a crime. And that may be a question where one could actually ask: why do we go? And we go because there's been probably a major crime, or there's been a huge drug bust, or indeed a shooting and/or a murder or a stabbing. You go to black areas when they happen. And there's no judgement on that. You go because of the weight of the crime; you do not go because of the colour. The colour, in my experience, has never come into it and it never would'*.

## Reporting on black young men and boys: guidelines and regulations

The broadcast journalists who worked for the BBC were particularly mindful of the status of the Corporation and its reputation. They operate in a climate of wariness, *'The BBC has hundreds of guidelines which have to be followed. The BBC is a big target and if we don't follow the guidelines we get hammered in the papers, mostly in The Daily Mail and elsewhere.'* They were, however, of the opinion that this was the correct way to function, the BBC navel gazes to an enormous extent, quite rightly. We have a lot of meetings, a lot of discussions, a lot of internal debates about how we ensure that we are impartial, fair, accurate etc. So it matters.' The print journalists followed similar codes but were aware that there were ways and means of highlighting a person's race, *'[in] the IPCC code, I think there is a sub-section in that which says that you should only bring someone's race into a story when it is relevant to the story. From my point of view, as I said earlier, if it's a crime story and it's about identifying a culprit, then I think it is important.... if we've got a picture of the person you're talking about, you don't really need to mention it'*.

## Journalists' perceptions about public opinion on young black men and boys

The journalists linked public opinion to what appeared in the news media, and one tabloid journalist admitted, *'I think you're probably going to make the connection to crime.'* The radio presenter – who is also a regular contributor to the print media - indicated that the media dealt in stereotypes, saying, *'Many times, for example, if I ask most people to tell me their opinion of young black men from what they read in the newspaper, they would have to conclude that young black men were often in gangs; young black men, even according to the former Prime Minister, don't take responsibility for their children; young black men are often unemployed, mostly likely unemployed, which may be the case; and young black men have got a chip on their shoulder.'* This view was endorsed by a feature writer for a national broadsheet, *'if you talk about people's perceptions of young black men, in a way, I can only say what information people are given about young black men and that is, generally speaking, quite negative and stereotypical'*.

Respondents were keen to highlight that there was violence or fear at the heart of perceptions, one columnist on a national newspaper describing a nightmarish scenario: *'I think, on the whole, there is this assumption that they're there to take your wallet, slit your throat, slit each others' throats. It really does play out.'* One BBC journalist recognised the stereotypes, but also the reality, *'there are real issues about the behaviour of young black men in*

*some parts of the country, and yes, we need to be careful that we don't label everyone the same, but there are real issues there'.*

## Opinions and concerns about role modelling

This proved to be a divisive issue. From the feature writers on the broadsheet national newspapers there was resistance and scorn towards the very concept of a 'role model'. One respondent answered, *'I just think that's the biggest load of baloney going. I think that the role model that a child needs are its mother and its father, and all these kinds of ideas about, oh, if we show a couple of black men going around saying 'I've done well, you can be like me', it's so superficial. It's so bogus'.* The other stated, *'I have anxieties about role models.... What does it mean? And actually very few people can explain what role models mean. I never had a role model – I've never had a role model.'* The radio presenter was similarly dismissive, *'I say straight away I'm totally uncomfortable with the concept. And I think it is a little bit insulting that young black men need role models.'*

The broadcasters were more expansive and optimistic about the concept and the range of black role models in Britain today, one stating: *'I think what the black community needs are individuals who will make the next generation of young black boys or girls growing up in this country set their ambitions in a different way, so their horizons are slightly further, that they think that, actually, people like them can achieve more. I think we are seeing some really important ambassadors for the black and Afro-Caribbean community in this country coming through now in all areas, whether it be in politics or whether it be in industry, in lobby groups and so on. I'm seeing those faces come through - intelligent, opinionated, interesting, challenging, bright people who will be role models for a new generation. They've grown up and they've seen their best friends murdered or whatever by gangs and a lot of them are involved in youth work, a lot of them are doing really good community projects and I think they're fantastic, but they don't necessarily have the same impact as celebrities.'*

## Reporting crime and its context(s)

Whilst acknowledging that crime was the most newsworthy topic involving black youths, some journalists were keen to stress that they saw beyond the headlines and focused on positive stories. *'I think we have, at various times, done quite a bit of stuff on different projects and so on, which are seeking to address offending and offer positive alternatives to younger people. I think we do do those stories'.* There was a sense too, that the general public needed to understand the constraints that affected the production and distribution of news, *'I'd say it probably comes down to constraints on individual journalists, time constraints, space constraints. For example, a lead story in our newspaper is about 450 words – you're not going to be able to go into great depth or background'.* But there were institutional issues which meant that

the reporters and editors – the cultural elites – were divorced from the realities about which they wrote, *'The people who make decisions, who have the power in terms of our news media are editors and columnists and critics. The editors - basically they decide what's going in their pages and the columnists, the staff and regular columnists, they decide what they're writing about and they're the opinion formers. And if you look at that band of people, newspapers are predominantly white as it is but if you look at those key people, they are probably over 99 per cent white – maybe they're 99 per cent white... I'll be nice!'*

## Concerns about negative media images of black young men and boys

All respondents were of the opinion that something needed to change, and some were radical in their approach, *'We have to put black editors, black director-generals in charge of the BBC, black editors in charge of the newspapers. That's the only way. I'm sorry but it's never going to happen.'* What was needed, respondents suggested, is a whole rethinking of the news media, so that it reaches out from beyond its narrow 'home counties' base, *'It's a case of news editors and newspaper editors and section editors thinking, we want to cover Britain as it is, not just as it appears from the perspective of a home counties, white, public school Oxbridge educated person... It's about let's have lots of black and Asian journalists and reporters'*. The regional newspaper journalist pointed to the need for communities to be more involved in the news process, *'I think it needs the community or the people in black communities to have more interaction with their local media or more interest, more cooperation... They can go to the newspaper with positive stories, negative stories, appeal stories and we'll happily report them. But we can't be everywhere at once, so we need to be told about things. If there's a positive story in an area that's traditionally of high crime, high drug problems etc, we will cover it - it's just we need to know about it.'* Most journalists spoke about balance and fact facing – yes, crime is an issue in the black communities, but reportage of this needs to be counterbalanced with focus on the various outreach work being done: *'I don't have any apology for us focusing on those crimes sometimes, but it's important also in doing it that we hear from the parents of people, as we do I think, who have been the victims of this crime; the efforts being made by black people themselves in black communities to try and do more: Mothers Against Guns for instance; Mothers Against Drugs. There are a lot of organisations, which are working within communities trying to solve these problems. So yeah we have a job to do that.'*

In the final analysis, one of the print journalists, who is a feature writer for a national daily, said that things had actually improved in terms of coverage – but that there was still some way to go, *'the gravity is moving, the world is global, white power isn't going to be white power any more, and you have to be able to cover stories and penetrate communities and families and really give that picture constantly, daily, all the time, not only when a crisis erupts. I*

*think editors have to look at themselves but editors don't. I've been moaning about this for 25 years about the coverage and it's got better. It's got a whole lot better. I really do believe it's got a whole lot better but it's too slow and until the employment practices change, I think coverage will always be inadequate.'*

All journalists and editors were open to the notion that the coverage of black young men and boys was intrinsically negative. That said, many were keen to point out that their particular organisations were interested in furthering positive images. So what emerged was that whilst they were understandably protective and defensive of their own professional standards, journalists and editors acknowledged the problems inherent in the media as a whole. Structural change, in the upper echelons of the industry, was heralded as the way forward.

## Conclusion

This report has provided the most extensive analysis to date of the coverage of black young men and boys in the British news and current affairs media, with the aim of establishing an empirical basis in relation to which the dominant news media discourses surrounding black young men and boys might be better understood. The study has focused upon the research question: Does the news media present negative images or stereotypes of black young men and boys, and if so, how are such images constructed and to what extent do they characterise the coverage?

In our survey of the mainstream news media, we have clearly identified that black young men and boys are regularly associated with negative news values. The nature of the news media coverage bears both similarities and differences with that of young men and boys in general. Young men and boys in general were regularly reported in relation to negative news values, just over 4 in 10 stories being crime-related, while stories about wider social issues, such as education and health, were not as frequently or prominently reported. By contrast, however, close to 7 in 10 stories of black young men and boys related in some form to crime - a comparatively higher figure than in coverage of young men and boys more generally.

Indeed, the most significant characteristic of the news media coverage surrounding black young men and boys was their association within news narratives with crime. Although this does not mean that black young men and boys were more likely to be represented as criminals than young men in general (and there was no clear stereotyping in this respect), it was the case that crime was a more dominant news narrative in coverage featuring black young men and boys, whilst a proportionately more varied news agenda appeared to characterise the coverage featuring young men and boys more generally. In focusing more closely upon how the coverage of black young men and boys in relation to crime was constructed, it appeared that often, little context or explanation was provided in news reports regarding why crime may have been committed. Crimes such as knife attacks and murders were often represented as irrational, senseless acts of violence, or motivated by trivial petty rows or immediate concerns apparently particular to the young male peer group, such as gang rivalries. Very little commentary concerning possible systemic or structural factors, which might provide the conditions of possibility for, or otherwise contribute to, crime was evident. Nonetheless, the magnitude of knife crime as a contemporary social problem involving black young men or boys was emphasised in many articles, and often equivalence was drawn between a variety of stories involving knife crime fatalities, despite their very different circumstances or contexts. Indeed, from our examination of the news content, as well as from our interviews with journalists, it would seem that an image associating black young men and boys with gun and knife crime does clearly exist within the news media, and that stories articulating this image appear to be high on the news agenda.

However, the picture here is not simply or straightforwardly one of a media stereotype surrounding black young men and boys. Indeed, the journalists and editors interviewed for this study appeared to be very aware of press guidelines concerning the reporting of 'race' or ethnic identity. Respondents firmly asserted that, in reporting crime, they did not consider the black identity of perpetrators to be relevant to the news value of a story, and indeed, in gun or knife crime news, the 'race' or ethnic background of the young men, as either victims or perpetrators, was rarely explicitly mentioned. However, as explored in Chapter Three, we did discover a very few examples, all tabloid newspaper articles, where young black males (and their families) were constructed as if symbolically representing problems associated with knife crime. There was also some evidence of an assumption in certain sections of the tabloid press that a young male victim of knife crime may be involved in gangs. The subtlety of inferences and construction of connotations by no means renders such examples less problematic in their construction of an image of black young men and boys. However, within our sample at least, the irregularity of such clear assumptions or symbolic representations concerning the involvement of young black males in gangs or knife crime would suggest that the news media in general is not clearly promoting a stereotype to this effect. What was evident, however, was a prevailing concern about gangs within knife crime narratives – including those featuring young black men as victims as well as perpetrators - both within the mainstream news and current affairs media. When young people featured as victims of knife crime in the news, sympathy for them, even in death, often appeared conditional upon an image of their social respectability and legitimacy – a condition signified especially through a lack of connection to gangs or gang culture.

There were some key differences between the coverage of black young men and boys and news coverage in the mainstream and black and minority ethnic news media. While the black and minority ethnic news media did not shy away from commenting or reporting on crimes committed by black young men and boys, they did attempt more clearly to provide a context for, and to address, some of the issues that may lead to crime. In addition, the discussion of education and of issues such as discrimination and racism in various spheres were more prominent within the coverage of the black and minority ethnic news media than in the mainstream news. This suggests a wider perspective on the newsworthy issues affecting and involving black young men and boys in the black and minority ethnic news media, and perhaps a closer attention to these topics as potentially racialised social and political issues, albeit a focus often introduced via sensationalist headlines or a celebrity driven news lens. What was also clear from our analysis of the black and minority ethnic news media was that these news outlets afforded black sources and commentators a forum to present opinions that did not seem, ordinarily at least, to be available to them within the mainstream press. Moreover, the black and minority ethnic news media also provided young black boys themselves with a voice and a platform to challenge perceived stereotypes.

In reflecting upon their practice in reporting stories featuring black young men and boys, journalists and editors acknowledged that coverage tends to be predominantly negative. Reporting in this area would seem to be the way it is due to a range of institutional and ideological constraints. The journalists we interviewed did not demonstrate overtly prejudicial or discriminatory views towards black young men and boys. Indeed, several voiced deep concern about what they saw as a problematic image associating young black males with gangs and violent crime. However, whilst our respondents were open to covering other, potentially more positive, stories about black young men and boys, they also pointed to what they regarded to be restraints upon more diverse reporting patterns, particularly the desk-based nature of contemporary journalistic practice, in which journalists tend not to proactively investigate and uncover stories by engaging with communities, but rather to rely on electronically delivered information and established sources in finding news stories. Furthermore, interview respondents also highlighted that there are still comparatively few people working in mainstream journalism from a black or minority ethnic background. Whilst it would be highly problematic to assume that the ethnic identity of a journalist somehow determines what stories they are likely to cover or their attitudes towards any issue, our interview respondents did suggest that the current coverage of black young men and boys was not likely to be helped by the remoteness of the majority of journalists from the daily lives and experiences of black young men and boys, and that such a remoteness was particularly likely in the case of decision makers in higher-level jobs.

Overall then, the news media discourse surrounding black young men and boys is clearly negative, associating them (even more so than young men and boys in general) with violent crime, especially murders involving knives and/or gangs. These subjects dominate the coverage of black young men and boys in mainstream newspapers as well as broadcast news and current affairs media, and they are also a clearly established part of the news narrative in black and minority ethnic media. Current institutional practices and constraints in mainstream journalism appear to lend themselves to the reproduction rather than transformation of this dominant news discourse. However, the different characteristics of reporting within the black and minority ethnic news media demonstrate that alternative news discourses surrounding black young men and boys is possible, including more socially contextualised stories, a diversity of news narratives, the inclusion of young black male perspectives as sources, as well as campaigning voices concerned to challenge discrimination and disadvantage in society, not just to combat crime in isolation.

Without knowing to what extent black young men and boys themselves access these news sources it is not possible to assess what impact the coverage may have on their own self-perceptions and, linked to that, their aspirations. It is however reasonable to assume that the negative portrayal of black boys and young black young men in the news media may well impact on the wider readership and viewing public's perceptions of these groups.

Although, as we have argued, whilst of central importance, the news media remains one among many sites of production of discourse which may contribute to that perception (others are likely to include for example, mainstream political discourse, educational or academic discourses). News media is therefore part of a range of social forces responsible for the construction and reproduction of ideas informing and sustaining identities and social relations, which may impact upon black boys and young black men to a significant extent.

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## APPENDIX A

# Coding frame for quantitative analysis

Identifier:

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CODER
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**National newspaper/Regional newspaper/TV/Radio**

**N-NP:** The Sun, The Mirror, The Daily Star, The Daily Mail, The Express, The Independent, The Guardian, The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Times, The Sunday Telegraph, The Independent on Sunday, The Observer, The News of the World, The Sunday Mirror, The Sunday Star, The People, Mail on Sunday, Sunday Express

IMAGE
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**R-NP:** The Evening Standard/Manchester Evening News/Birmingham Mail/ Nottingham Evening Post/Bristol Evening Post/Metro

**TV:** BBC 6pm / ITV 6.30pm/ CH4 7pm/ SKY 6pm/ BBC Newsround

**Radio:** Today 7.30-9am/ Radio 4 6pm/ Radio 1 Newsbeat

**Summary of story:**

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Length (time or words) \_\_\_\_\_

Item news agenda \_\_\_\_\_ front page/elsewhere

**Type of TV broadcast News item:**

Anchor only (must be standalone or 30secs+)	Reporter studio package	Interview
Anchor + package	Reporter/anchor 2-way	Studio discussion
Reporter package on location	DONUT	N/A

**Male/Female/Both/NC**

**If black youth**

**Genre of news for newspapers:** 'straight' news/crime/education/politics/analysis/editorial/human interest/op ed

**Role Models.** Is a specific actor described as a role model (potential or otherwise) for black youth or others in society? **Yes/No** **Positive/Negative influence**

None present/label (s) e.g. lack of father role model or Rio Ferdinand is a good role model for young people  
**None PresentLabel** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reference to REACH intervention:** **yes** **or** **no:**

**If more than one youth represented, how are they labelled?**  
 N/A Gang peer group youth thugs hoodiesyobsother

**News Hooks:**

**Crime/Anti-social behaviour**

Knife/gun crime policy discussion	Youth murderer (general)
Knife/gun crime policy critique/problem	Youth murdered (general)
Knife/gun crime policy proposal	black youth murdered
Gangs / violence / knives in schools	black youth murderer
Controlling gangs/youth gang violence	Youth commits Crime – other (violent)
Controlling anti-social behaviour	Youth as victim of crime – other (violent)
Youth as terror suspect	Youth commits Crime – other (non-violent)
Young person as victim of sexual abuse	Youth as victim of crime – other (non-violent)
Girls or young women behaving violently/committing violent acts/girl gangs	
Drinking as a cause of youth violence	Drugs as a cause of youth violence
Drinking as a cause of youth health problems	Drugs as a cause of youth health problems
Drinking as a cause of crime/antisocial behaviour	Drugs as a cause of crime/antisocial behaviour

**If crime story involves black young men and boys**

**Role of young people.** Are young black people perpetrators of crime/victims/or other \_\_\_\_\_

**Implied reasons for criminal behaviour.** Social deprivation/poor parenting/poor parenting specifically lack of father figure/history of abuse/drug use/alcohol use/mental health issues/poor educational achievement or aspiration/unemployment/or other \_\_\_\_\_

## Education

Education system policy discussion	Education policy proposal
Education system policy critique/problem	Think tank policy discussion/critique/proposal

## Other policy (not education or crime)

Local government policy discussion/critique/proposal	Think tank policy discussion/critique/proposal
National govt policy discussion/critique/proposal	

## Family

Inter-generational conflict	Parental irresponsibility/neglect
Absent fathers/family breakdown	Family – other

## Health and safety

Teenage pregnancy	Sexual health
General Health	Eating disorder
Accident involving a youth	

## Achievement/Activity

black youth achievement	Local activity / school event / club activity/ Charity work
Youth achievement (general)	Lack of youth clubs/activities
Positive role in community	

## Discrimination

On grounds of 'race'	On other grounds (e.g. gender, disability, sex)
Lewis Hamilton as a black role model	Barack Obama as a black role model
Lewis Hamilton and Barack Obama as black role models	General Celebrity / sports stars
Role model – other	

## Role Models

### Other



## APPENDIX B

# Detailed tables of data relating to coverage of all men and boys

**Table 2.3: Distribution of Coverage of Young Men and Boys across Media Types**

Media Type	Number of Articles	Percentage
National papers	1020	66.6
Regional papers	443	28.9
Television	44	2.9
Radio	25	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1532</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2.4: Subject Matter of Coverage of Young Men and Boys in Print and Broadcast News**

Subject Matter of Coverage	Number of News Items	Percentage
Crime	788	51.4
Other	225	14.7
Accident Involving a Young Person	130	8.5
Youth Achievement or Positive Role in the Community	101	6.6
Local Activity/School event/Club activity/Charity work	74	4.8
Health	38	2.5
Family	37	2.4
Young Person as Victim of Sexual Abuse	35	2.3
Education	30	2
Gangs/Violence or Weapons in Schools	21	1.4
Role Models	17	1.1
Young Person as Terror Suspect	19	1.2
Drinking/Drugs	17	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1532</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2.5: Sources Cited Within Print and Broadcast Coverage**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Number of Times Cited</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Law and Order	245	26.8
Older Member of the Public	220	24.0
Young Person	134	14.7
Politician	71	7.8
Crime Witness	52	5.7
Sports Person/Celebrity	41	4.5
Education	33	3.6
Not Clearly Identified	29	3.2
Other	28	3.1
Non-Governmental Organisation/Pressure Group	20	2.2
Religious Figure	15	1.6
Government Agency	15	1.6
Media	6	0.7
Business	4	0.4
Military	1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 2.6: Prominence of Coverage within the Print News**

<b>Prominence in Newspapers</b>	<b>National Newspapers</b>	<b>Regional Newspapers</b>	<b>Total</b>
Elsewhere (or not stated)	98.7% (n1007)	96.4% (n427)	98% (n1432)
Front Page	1.3% (n13)	3.6% (n16)	2% (n29)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% (n1020)</b>	<b>100% (n443)</b>	<b>100% (n1463)</b>

## APPENDIX C

# Detailed tables of data relating to coverage of black young men and boys

**Table 2.7: Distribution of Coverage across Media Types**

Media Type	Number of Articles	Percentage
National newspapers	332	72
Regional newspapers	100	21.7
TV	50	10.8
Radio	17	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2.8: Prominence of Coverage within the Print News**

Prominence in Newspapers	National Newspapers	Regional Newspapers	Total
Elsewhere (or not stated)	97.1% (n332)	97% (n97)	97.1% (n429)
Front Page	2.9% (n10)	3% (n3)	2.9% (n13)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% (n342)</b>	<b>100% (n100)</b>	<b>100% (n442)</b>

**Table 2.9: Subject Matter of Coverage of black young men and boys in Print and Broadcast News**

<b>Subject Matter of Coverage</b>	<b>Number of News Items</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Crime	334	66.9
Other	53	10.6
Discrimination	26	5.2
Controlling Gangs/Violence/Weapons	20	4
Youth Achievement/Positive		
Community Role	19	3.8
Role Models	12	2.4
General Celebrity/Sports Stars	13	2.6
Controlling Gangs/Gang Violence	12	2.4
Education	8	1.6
Local/School/Club/Charitable activity	7	1.4
Family	7	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3.0: Labelling of Groups of Young People**

<b>Label</b>	<b>Number of Uses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gang	85	62
Youths	37	27
Thugs	9	6.6
'Hoodies'	5	3.7
Yobs	1	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3.1: Comparison of Subject Matter of Coverage between black young men and boys and all young men and boys**

<b>Subject Matter of Coverage</b>	<b>black young men and boys</b>	<b>All Young Men and Boys<sup>37</sup></b>
Crime	66.9% (n334)	41.9% (n1428)
Other	7.7% (n38)	15.7% (n583)
Discrimination	5.2% (n26)	0.4% (n22)
Controlling Gangs/Violence/Weapons in	4.0% (n20)	1.2% (n41)

<sup>37</sup> The figures for all men and boys include actual figures for Monitoring periods 1-4 (May 12th – May 25th 2008; July 7th- July 20th 2008; September 1st – September 14th 2008; October 27th – November 9th 2008) and figures generalised from a representative 10% sample for Monitoring periods 4-8 (January 26<sup>th</sup> - February 8<sup>th</sup> 2009; April 27<sup>th</sup> - May 10<sup>th</sup> 2009; July 27<sup>th</sup> – August 9<sup>th</sup> 2009; October 26<sup>th</sup> - November 8<sup>th</sup> 2009) Broadcast coverage was included in the sample from period 4 onwards due to the start date of the project.

Schools		
Youth Achievement/Positive Community Role	3.8% (n19)	6.2% (n211)
Role Models	2.4% (n12)	0.5% (n17)
General Celebrity/Sports Stars	2.6% (n13)	0.5% (n16)
Education	1.6% (n8)	10.8% (n370)
Local/School/Club/Charitable activity	1.4% (n7)	6.9 (n234)
Family	1.4% (n7)	2.5 (n87)
Drinking/Drugs	1.0% (n5)	2.0% (n67)
Accident Involving a Young Person	0.8% (n4)	5.3% (n180)
Health	0.8% (n4)	4.0% (n138)
Policy		
Discussion/Critique/Proposal	0.4% (n2)	2.1% (n73)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (n499)</b>	<b>100 (n3412)</b>

## APPENDIX D

# Analysis of the REACH campaign and role modelling programme coverage

In our media monitoring we have identified all coverage explicitly mentioning the REACH Role modelling programme for the period of one year, between 1 December 2008 (just before the launch of the REACH campaign) and 30 November 2009 (to just beyond the end of our official media monitoring period, which ran to November 8 2009).

In our monitoring we have included all mainstream national newspapers and the regional publications as in our main media-monitoring sample (London Evening Standard, Birmingham Mail, Manchester Evening News, Nottingham Evening Post, Bristol Evening Post). We have also monitored the online versions of the black and minority ethnic newspapers, The Voice, and (until its demise in February 2009) the New Nation online.<sup>38</sup>

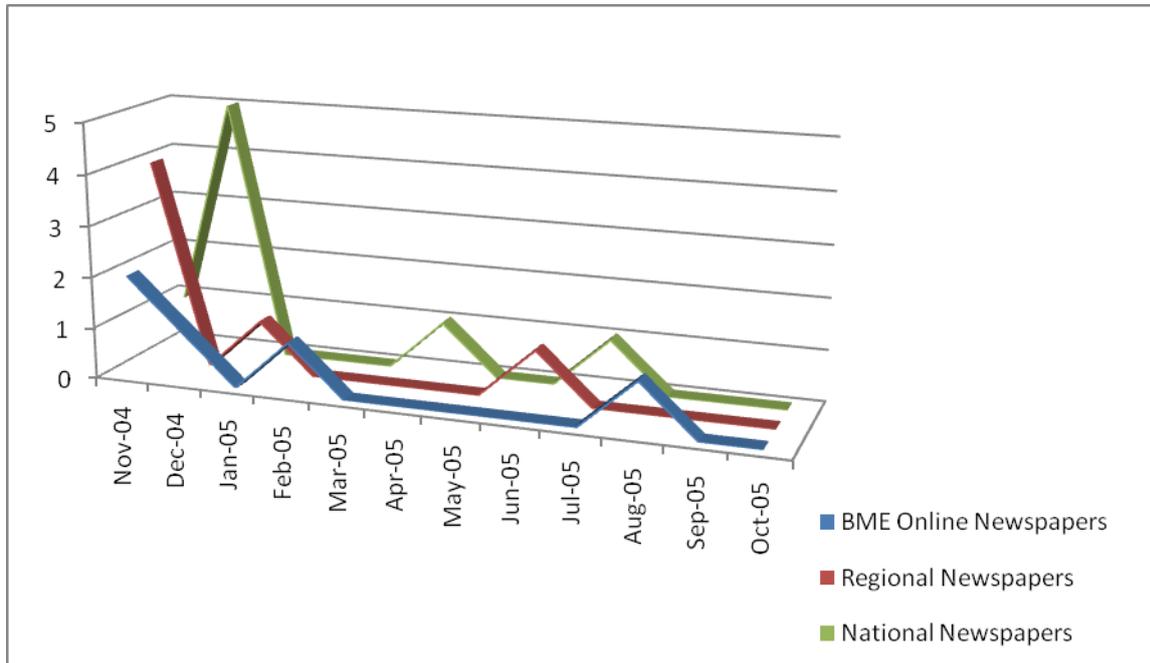
Overall, we did not identify very many news items that explicitly mentioned the REACH campaign or the individuals involved in the programme as REACH role models. Within our sample, there were only 19 news items mentioning the REACH campaign. The majority of this coverage featured in the first couple of months of the REACH campaign (December 2008 and January 2009), with only occasional articles appearing since that time.

A larger number of news items appeared in the mainstream press (n14) than the black and minority ethnic news (n5) overall, and more in the national (n8) than the regional press (n6), although this should, of course, be seen in the context of a far larger number of publications included in the mainstream news category (from the end of January, The Voice has been the only publication in our black and minority ethnic sample), and also in the context of the composition of the mainstream newspaper sample (which includes all national newspapers, but only five regional newspapers).

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<sup>38</sup> A string of keywords used to search the Nexis database between 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2009 were as follows: black AND "role model" OR "Reach programme" OR "Reach campaign" OR "Michael Barrington Hibbert" OR "Alexander Beresford" OR "Neville Bryce" OR "Junior Crawford-Brown" OR "Karl George" OR "Dorian Leatham" OR "Clive Lewis" OR "Piers Linney" OR "Aleck Matambo" OR "Rob Neil" OR "Orobi Nwofor" OR "Buchi Onwugbonu" OR "Kevin Reynolds" OR "Adrian Rollins" OR "Matthew Ryder" OR "Karl Sewell" OR "Lanre Sulola" OR "Mark Sutherland" OR "Phillip Thompson" OR "Clive Lewis" OR "Richard Reid"

**Graph 2.4: Distribution of News Items Mentioning REACH Campaign December 2008-November 2009 (n19)**



Of the news items mentioning REACH appearing in the mainstream national print news, seven appeared in broadsheet newspapers and one in a tabloid. In the mainstream regional press, the 6 articles identified appeared across the five regional newspapers monitored. Of the 5 articles appearing in the black and minority ethnic news media, one featured in the New Nation and four items appeared in The Voice. It should be noted, however, that until March, a set of You Tube testimonies from the REACH role models were featured prominently as a feature on the Voice online. Although these were published on a continuous basis during this period, this item was counted as just one mention in the figures above.

Overall therefore, the REACH programme was seldom explicitly mentioned during the monitoring period and sample included within our study. This is not to suggest, however, that this means that it has had no impact upon the news agenda. Indeed, as our quantitative research has demonstrated, the idea of promoting role models for black young men and boys clearly does feature within news agendas. Although difficult to measure, and beyond the scope of our particular research remit, it would be fair to suggest that REACH may well have contributed to and/or influenced the nature of news representations of the wider public and policy discourse surrounding role modelling in general. Furthermore, the work of REACH role models may well have also been more widely covered, although not explicitly related to the REACH programme.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> For example, the work of Piers Linney has been mentioned in the national news media, but not necessarily connected to REACH. 'IT IS TIME THAT THESE CITY WALLS CAME DOWN; PIERS LINNEY, ONE OF BRITAIN'S 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL BLACK PEOPLE, HAD MANY HURDLES TO CLEAR TO TAKE HIS SEAT IN THE BOARDROOM OF UK PLC.' (The Times, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2009)