# White or not White?

# The Racial Representations of Poles in the British Media

# After 2004.

By

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# Abstract

This thesis examines how Poles were represented in the British media in the period before and after the 2008 economic crisis and argues that the fact that Poles are white affected the way in which they were portrayed. It analyzes the articles of four papers between 2004 and 2011 to discover that the initial, surprisingly very positive image of the white Pole is substituted by a negative racialized one. It shows how the entanglement of racial and economic discourses in both periods, projected on the Polish migrants in the UK, situates them in the position of an "inbetween group", one which is neither white nor black.

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# INTRODUCTION

According to the IPSOS Mori Political Monitor opinion poll, the issues of immigration and race relations have become one of the most significant subjects of public debate in Britain since 2000 (Moore, Clifford 2007:451). This situation is and has been reinforced by the EU enlargement in 2004 when the Labor government opened the job market to citizens from the new member states. As a result, thousands of A8 nationals have come to the UK in search of a job; from this group the biggest number have been from Poland (Moore, Clifford 2007:451-452). For that reason in 2004 British media devoted an unprecedented amount of attention to this particular group ignoring workers coming from smaller countries like Slovakia or Lithuania (Burel, 2009)[1]. As Fomina and Frelak (2008:47) argue, although Poles were subjects of both positive and negative representations (until 2007), in fact they were portrayed by journalists in a very positive light, something that could be seen as an exception when covering the subject of migration by media.

The case of Eastern Europeans in the UK is interesting, because this group of migrants, being white and European, can either be portrayed in the Press as "one of us" (white Christian) or as an outsider (East European, not "Westerner", immigrant taking jobs). For that reason, in this thesis I ask: How does the fact that Polish migrants are white affect the way this group is represented in the British Press? What tactics do journalists use to discuss migration, and race "problems"? I follow the stories in the articles to see how non-white and white migrants are juxtaposed in the British press, and to what purpose. Do racializing[2] discourses emphasize or erase the whiteness of Poles?

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[1] For that reason I will use the words Poles and Eastern Europeans interchangeably as the press do, but I will include in this group only countries that entered the EU in 2004 (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, and Estonia).

[2] "Racism starts with the use of race categories. Yet another way of emphasizing this same principle is to be found in the concept of *racialization*, which Omi and Winant define as: 'the extension of racial meaning to a

Some of the answers to these questions can be found in the media studies literature that I present in the first chapter. Media studies scholars, interested in the subjects of race/ethnicity in the UK, show how racism is reproduced in the press (Moore, Clifford 2007:454). Literature on British migrants chronicles the ways in which particular groups of newcomers are treated, starting from the nineteenth century Irish influx (McDowell: 2009:27). The literature on Polish migrants in the UK characterizes them in terms of numbers, their living and working conditions etc., but does not discuss the importance of their skin color,

My hypothesis is that being white but coming from Eastern Europe can, but does not have to, be an advantage in the eyes of the British media. In the second chapter I present Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method that is designed to analyze how the external political and economic circumstances affect the perception of minority groups in media (Spohn, Triandafylidou, 2003:12). By following CDA's guidelines, in the third chapter I identify that that Poles are represented in a schizophrenic way as an "inbetween group". Before the economic crisis they were seen positively, nearly, but not yet fully, as a white group. After the crisis their portrayals became racialized, falling closer to the category of blackness, but never quite reaching it.

In the conclusion I show that these seemingly opposite images of Poles created by two different discourses have one thing in common. They are permeated by an economic discourse that positions Poles in the category of "inbetween people". Despite being presented in a good or bad manner, depending on the circumstances they in fact stay in the same position in the economic ladder.

previous racially unclassified relationships, social practice or group … it is an ideological process, an historically specific one'" (Omi and Winant in Downing (2005: 4).

# CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter I begin by sketching the historical context of racism, focusing mainly on the representation of migrants in the media in the UK, starting from the 1950s ending in late 2000s in order to draw a historical background to locate my case in a context. Then I present the literature on media and racism on migrants in the UK documenting that social scientists devote attention mainly to existing binary oppositions between whites and blacks or discussing definitional problems like the difference between ethnicity and race; they do not devote a lot of attention to less fixed concepts as whiteness and to the category of "inbetween people" (often white immigrants, among them Poles) (Garner, 2007: 66) that are crucial for my research, since I am analyzing racial representation of white immigrants in Europe. The history shows that "inbetween people" can belong to marginalized or dominant groups depending on economic, social and cultural circumstances, and they can be seen as useful barometers to register changes occurring within society.

In my research I am trying to see how racializing discourses are affected by external events. More precisely, how the economic crisis in 2008 influenced the media representation of Poles. Thus, the method of Critical Discourse Analysis stemming from Critical Theory and Cultural Studies is designed for doing such research. First of all it specializes in conducting analysis of media representations. Second of all that it sees text as immersed in the broader social context.

## 1. 1Racism in the UK

### 1.1.1 A Short History of Racism Against Migrants in the UK

Although Black people lived in Britain already in the sixteenth century (Fryer, 1984 in Malik, 2002:12) their presence became much more visible, due to the mass migration after

WW II(Malik, 2002:12). In that period various migrants (e.g. Poles), also from colonies were invited by the British government to help to restructure the country and fill labor shortages. According to the 1948 Nationality Act everyone who came from Britan's former colonies could be granted British citizenship. Among the new visitors was a group of a half million Afro-Caribbean people that was later joined by South Asians (Weedon, 2004:7, Malik, 2002:12). The newcomers settled in big and port cities. According to Weedon three groups (Asian, Black and Irish) were discriminated in the areas of access to health care, housing, and education (2004:68). Discriminated groups were in a position in which they were rejected, or encouraged to assimilate fully to British lifestyle, forgetting about their own roots (Weedon 2004:63). The idea was to re-paint Asian and Blacks into white people, so there will be no difference between in-group and out-group. The 60s and 70s saw a further development of racist sentiments. Members of flourishing anti-immigration organizations like National Front (Weedon, 2004:71) attacked people of color. At the same time black political movement fighting against discrimination developed. Black became a category that encompassed people of Asian, African and Caribbean origin communicating that common ancestry is not necessary to fight with racism and colonialism (Kundnani, 2007:34).

In the strict Thatcher policies, liberal multiculturalism that "did little to eradicate extensive racial inequality produced by the state and its institutional agencies" (Malik, 2002:18) in combination with growing discriminations between white and black population, increase in arrests of blacks (Malik, 2002:18), in order to destroy the growing strength of black movement, led to the uprising (Kundnani, 2007:42). The "new racism" that emerged when Tony Blair was in power replaced the idea of racial superiority with that cultural one (Kundnani, 2007:56). Now, the "national cohesion" was threatened by cultural backgrounds of immigrants not their skin pigmentation (Kundnani, 2007:43). In such circumstances anti-racist strategies were exchanged by cultural recognition practices that could not help to

dismantle racism (Kundnani, 2007:56). Soon racist practices returned in a less visible form. As long as culture recognition was not threatened, ethnic minorities had no right to complain, but they did. In the 2001 Afro-Caribbean youth "rebelled against racist policing in Britain's inner cities" (Kundnani, 2007:54).

The global inequalities that led to 9/11 terrorist attacks and bombings in July 2005 made already present hostility towards Muslims even bigger (Kundnani, 2007:6). The idea of 'multi-culturalism' understood more in Stuart Hall's manner as "heterogeneous social landscape of contemporary societies in which different cultural communities live together and attempt to build a common life while retaining something of their 'original' identity" (in Pitcher, 2009:21) was accused of creating a society that is segregated. As a result the politics of ethnic difference was replaced by the politics of integrationism. The latter approach assumed that "any kind of ethnic identity undermined solidarity" (Kundnani, 2009:12). The integration (mainly of Muslims) and the need to create a "cohesive society" (Kundnani, 2007:124) hid the problems of institutional racism that in such circumstances were not tackled.

Although migrants throughout the years were coming to the UK due to existing uneven world development characterizing globalization (Harvey, 2005), because only in such places they could survive, the citizens of host countries saw them not as desperate people who had to migrate, but as a threat. As a consequence of occurring economic reforms connected to global changes the hollowed out state could not secure its citizens as it used to, and media began to blame for these changes asylum seekers and non-white migrants (Kundnani, 2007:65-66). "The icon of the 'asylum seeker' became a screen onto which wider anxieties associated with 'globalization' could be projected" (Kundnani, 2007:66). In 2004 the UK opened its labor market to economic, allegedly culturally similar, migrants from Eastern Europe. They were welcomed with opened arms as flexible white workforce that

allowed restricting access to asylum seekers and migrants from impoverished regions of the world. They were no longer needed (Kundnani, 2007:148).

### 1.1.2. Racism Against Migrants in the British media

One of the first studies on British media and racism was done in the 1960s by Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband. Their book, *Racism and the Mass Media*, showed that white Briton's negative approach to immigration was based on the messages that they received from media. (van Dijk, 1991:17). Already then "immigrant" was a synonym in the articles for people of color (Downing, 2005:27), and this word together with "racial relations" and "crime" were the most popular subjects (van Dijk, 1991:107). A decade later, as van Dijk reports, not the issue of immigration itself, but the allegedly detrimental effects of migrants' presence in the country were presented as a threat to the society. In 1985 van Dijk analyzed 2700 articles from major British newspapers draws a picture of the racist and racializing discourses in the national media. He notes that at that particular time British media language changed from overtly racist to more subtle. In other words racism is replaced by ethnicism (Barker, 1981 in van Dijk 1991:28). Among many observations that van Dijk makes at least a few deserve mentioning. Headlines of the right-wing tabloids discussing ethnic affairs provide a very negative, "dramatic and aggressive" picture of black youth. Never are they depicted as ordinary citizens in their everyday roles of family members, employees etc. Paradoxically the quality press is not so much different in that respect from tabloids (van Dijk, 1998:85). Among other recurring topics are: ridiculing foreign traditions, accusing wasting taxpayers money on immigrants, bringing up the numbers of incomers (van Dijk, 1998:166). Although van Dijk acknowledges the presence of white immigrants like Irish or Eastern Europeans in the UK, he does not recognize that their absence in media is also a case of reproducing racism. Thus, whites also remain invisible in van Dijk's book.

Despite the fact that media sustain the binary Us (whites)/Them (the rest) van Dijk infers from coverage a certain racial hierarchy. One group that is positively depicted is "hardworking Asians". They are similar to British people, because they own small businesses. "They are more like us, and share in the Indo-European cultural tradition" (van Dijk, 1991:136). At the same time they are victims of Afro-Caribbeans, who are presented as threat also to whites. To sum up, there are groups that are seen as a complete threat and the ones that are somewhere in between. There is a scarcity of research on representations of "inbetween people"[3] (Garner, 2007:66), or "inside outsiders" (Garner 2007:100) that would answer what allows them to gain this ambiguous status.

Tessa Blackstone, Bhikhu Parekh and Peter Sanders (1998:112) look at the institutional racism present in the British media in the 80s and 90s and they conclude that there was a small change for the better. In the 80s Asians and blacks worked in cafeterias, or as cleaners. Ten years later situation is slightly different, there are around two dozens of journalist employed coming from ethnic minorities. The media, especially television coverage has altered. People of color can be seen more often on the screens than ever before. The transformations taking place in television are not accompanied by shifts in the press (Parekh, Sanders, 1998:119). Still very few non-whites are hired as journalists. Despite changes, even before London attacks, in the 90s British media are strongly prejudiced against Muslims. *The Times* writes that Muslims are "repulsive from the point of view of Western post-enlightenment values" (Parekh, Sanders, 1998:124), later by contrast its journalists will discover "culturally similar" Poles (*The Times* 17 October, 2007).

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[3] This term is explained in the section 2.2.

### 1.1.3 Polish Migrants in the UK and in the British Media

According to the Home Office at least 540,000 Poles have been working in the UK since 2004 (Burrell, 2009:1).[4] This huge group was put under magnifying glass by sociologists; different types of migrants are identified taking into account gender, age and the length of stay. It is argued that the majority of migrants do not plan to remain in the UK. It is a group of young, mostly educated people (mostly men) who often speak poor English and whose primary aim is to earn money and return home (economic migrants). Poles are recognized as people who can help to boost the Polish and the British economy The types of jobs that they take up are mainly manual (i.e. legendary plumbers) (Eade et.al, 2006:8).

Further research discusses coping strategies of migrants; for example the significance of establishing a network of friends and relatives in the UK in helping to settle down in the country. Sociologists characterize geographical dispersion of migrants who are scattered across the whole country (Burell, 2009:7). They present the history of Polish migration to the UK, starting from 1946 (Burell, 2009:2-3). According to McDowell between the period of three years until 1949 83,000 Eastern and Central Europeans were allowed to work in the UK (2009:20). Social scientists describe difficult relations between different waves of Polish migrants those who came after WWII, in the 80s and in 2004 (Burrell, 2009, Morawska, 2001). Despite the extensive research on Poles in the UK, there is scarcity of research discussing their representation in media, or the significance of their skin color for the integration. Only Eade reports that Poles stress that their skin pigmentation or European descent helps them getting jobs (2006:16). According to him Poles choose to emphasize their

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[4] "The most recent estimates by Poland's Central Statistical Office, based on census data, put the number of Poles who have migrated for work at 2.21 million in 2008, of whom 650,000 are in Britain. In 2007 the figures were 2.27 million and 690,000 respectively, and in 2006 1.95 million and 580,000" (23 January 2010, *Guardian*)

race, rather than ethnicity, in this case understood as nationality, because this brings them closer to white, middle class.

There has been only one article written on media coverage of Poles in the UK. Its authors Justyna Frelak and Joanna Fomina come to the conclusion that the images of Poles are surprisingly positive. Their religiosity, hard work, cultural closeness and willingness to integrate are appreciated by majority of the analyzed papers. The results of the research stand in a stark contrast to the observations made by other scholars like Burrell (2010:301), Eade (2006) and Rabikowska (2010:286). The discrepancy perhaps can be explained by the different time frame. Frelak and Fomina talk about a relatively economically stable period of time, whereas Burrell documents situation in 2008 after the economic crises started. Nonetheless, Burrell does not connect the negative media coverage to bad economic situation. What she notes, however, is the lack of research on Polish presence in media in terms of their ethnicity and race.

## 1.2 Racism, Ethnicity, Whiteness

### 1.2.1 Discussion over Terminology

For some, ethnicity cannot be conflated with race, although these notions are similar (Eriksen in Hutchinson et. al., 1996:29)[5]. For others, these notions are interchangeable[6] (van Dijk, 1991:27), but do they really mean the same? According to Virginia Lam and Gordon Smith ethnicity can bring to mind "ethnic" nationalism in former Yugoslavia, but at the same time it has very good connotations. It is about sharing meanings, stories and values (Lam, Smith, 2009:1266). Furthermore, ethnicity refers to building community, nurturing ethnic

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[5]"Race has been for years a part of the discourse on ethnicity; race refers to biology, and always has that biological element. Ethnicity is very like the race, but without biology" (Tonkin, McDonald, Chapman in Hutchinson, 1996;21)

[6] Conflating race with ethnicity runs a risk of putting "emphasis on cultural differences that become the modern variant of racial differentiations of earlier western ideologies. Hence, racism is being transformed into ethnicism" (Mullard in Hutchinson, 1996:26)

identity and fighting for cultural recognition (Gillespie 1995:8). Race on the other hand, used to refer to ideology that saw phenotypical differences as signs of inferiority (Wodak, Reisigl in Schiffrin et.al, 2001:373), but now as Ambalavaner Sivanandan points out, it is about maintaining economic inequality and the power of hegemonic groups mediated through broadly understood culture. Racism becomes more intangible and sophisticated ("symbolic racism") (Dovidio and Gaertner in Triandafyllidou, 2001). Burgesss coins the term cultural racism to emphasize that the "inferiorization of Eastern and Central Europe on a civilizational slope as a 'cultural racism'" (Burgess in Melegh, 2006). Another version of racism is offered by Balibar who introduces "racism without race", or neo-racism. His approach sees biological characteristics as less important than socio-cultural (Balibar in Garner, 2007:163). Finally, there is an institutional racism that limits access to resources of in-groups (Downing, Husband, 2005:11).

Since there is such abundance of different types of racism in my research I will refer to Sivanandan's understanding of racism, xeno-racism. This type of racism is the fear of others, people of color as well as Eastern European migrants and it is aimed mainly at economic migrants with no financial means (Sivanandan in McGhee, 2005:68). In other words, this framework sees racism as underpinned by phenotypical, cultural and economic differences. For that reason I find Sivanandan's approach the most suitable for my case[7]. Because In my thesis I will be discussing a group of white (skin pigmentation), mainly indigent (economic status) Eastern Europeans (different than Western culture) who enter a multicultural country[8] that is ruled by white elite; thus the analyzed group will occupy a very unclear position. They most probably will not belong to the most marginalized groups, as

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[7] Each time when I will be talking about racism I will be referring to his concept of xeno-racism.
[8] Understood as control (Pitcher 2009: 21, Malik 2002: 16), not as creating a common community at the same time nurturing "original" cultures- multi-cultural society (Hall, in Pitcher 2009:21)

well as to the dominant ones. Apart from using Sivanandan's concept of xeno-racism I will refer the theory of whiteness.

### 1.2.2 Whiteness

According to Twine and Gallagher the first wave of scholarship on whiteness starts with W.E.B. DuBois who argues that white workers instead of fighting for their rights in coalition with black workers they choose to differentiate themselves from perceived as biologically lower group of former slaves (Twine, Gallagher 2008:7). The second wave represents views of US black scholars deconstructing whiteness and rendering it visible (Twine, Gallagher 2008:10). The third wave of whiteness studies sees how whiteness is embedded in economic, socio-political context and recognizes how "whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented" (Twine, Gallagher 2008:5). I find the third approach very useful, because it concentrates on analyzing empirical forms that allow whiteness to be expressed or hidden.

Whiteness, as Mills points out, means supremacy in the areas of economy (whites are wealthy), culture (civilized), politics (they create the law), metaphysics and biology (they are invisible, universal category) (Mills in Garner 2007:24). For Dyer whites are in control of themselves and others; they have the will to introduce changes and to have agency (Dyer, 1997:31). Although they control the material world, they are like pure spirits, and as Lloyd would put it, they "aspire to *dis*-embodiedness, to be without properties" (Dyer, 1997:38). Whites constitute a human norm, since it is not noticed and since everyone else compares themselves to it (Dyer, 1997:1). In contrast blacks are ugly, thus their bodies are noticeable, moreover they "internalize white ways of constructing the world and they see themselves as ontologically inferior" (Yancy in 2004:7). Presented descriptions uncover that for social scientists (Frankenberg 1993, Garner 2007); whiteness is not just about skin color. It does not exist only in the opposition to blackness. To demonstrate this Bronwen notes the experiences

of Irish female immigrants to the UK is exactly the same as Afro-Caribbean women (2001:2) which means that privileges of whiteness of Irish are not there. The same can be stated about the American "white trash" whose whiteness is negotiated through class (Garner, 2007:74). To sum up, whiteness is a relational and socially constructed category (Frankenberg, 1993; Dyer, 1997).

New research on whiteness tries to dismantle the binary structure and to look at the historical, economic conditions in which whiteness is produced and established as norms that are temporary (Frankenberg, 1993:27). Whiteness is an unstable, "permeable" category, because it is molded by the circumstances; it can in fact have nothing to do with skin color. According to Ruth Frankenberg whiteness alters in time and space (1993:24). Therefore, history, "local, regional, national and global relations" transform whiteness. Conclusions about transformability of whiteness are crucial for my research from few reasons. First of all, whiteness can refer to white immigrants. Second of all, it is shaped by context. Third of all, it assumes that the region where a person comes from can have significance in defining whether someone is white or not. This seems to be especially relevant in the European Union where the majority of population is white and the division on white, whiter, and the whitest Europeans depending from which part of Europe they come from (Melegh, 2006) still matters.

To make the constructiveness of whiteness more tangible it is worth presenting some examples. Cultural belonging can help some people to be perceived as whiter than others (Garner, 2007:72), in this process phenotypically non-white groups can become "honorary whites" (Asians in the UK). For example Southern, Central and Eastern Europeans can, depending on their gender, class, be seen as white or less white (Garnern, 2007:63). Members of these groups are described as "inbetween people" (Garner, 2007:74), who are phenotypically white, not black and who, because of this biological trait, if they have the

possibility, they can think of themselves as if they were a part of the dominant, white group. The "inbetweenness" does allow them to be like whites or, as Charles Mills names it "ambiguously white", at certain moments, but it does not make them black, "unambiguously nonwhite", either (Garner, 2007:100). They still come from "a place of peripheriality" (Garner, 2007:100).

The most explicit example of the instability of whiteness is the case of Irish. In the 19th century they were seen as racially lower class. Their religion, Catholicism, was perceived by Americans as "back warded" and "not modern" (Garner, 2007:122). It was assumed that Irish are not ready to be competitive and entrepreneurial. They however reversed this situation by distancing themselves from blacks and by gradually taking over the police (Garner, 2007:129). Soon they had access to power and resources. To put it differently from "inbetween" group they turned into whites. McDowell shows the similarity between the situation of Poles and Irish as post-WWII migrants has a lot in common with the A8 nationals (McDowell, 2009:27).

> the new Europeans are less visible because of their skin color and have a European identity and heritage in common with their host population. (…). A range of interesting questions is thus raised for students of migration about the economic and social relationships between the new migrants and people of color in Britain (McDowell, 2009: 27)

In my research it will be interesting to see if Eastern Europeans are presented in the British media in comparison with people of color. Are they simply white, or maybe they are an "inbetween group". Through analyzing discourses describing them I can "identify qualifications required to be considered approximate to the dominant culture at a given moment" (Garner, 2007:99). To put it differently not only can I find about the perception of Poles by the British society, but also I can become more familiar with the British society itself.

## 1.3 Critical Theory, Cultural Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis on Racism

### 1.3.1. Racism and Passive Audience; in the Interviews of Theodor Adorno

Critical theory that is represented by the Frankfurt School is one the first that deals with racism and prejudice. This philosophical school does not only aim at understanding societies, but, following Marx, it also wants to criticize and improve them. In other words social science does not have a goal to discover an objective truth and is not value-free from the definition (van Dijk in Mathelson, 2005:352). In my research I will follow such a critical and engaged approach.

In their theory of culture industry philosophers from the Frankfurt School Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno explain the influence of capitalism on culture. Culture, becomes an industry, producing similar products like on the assembly line. Moreover, it can also turn into ideology (perceived as popular culture) (1944) that creates masses of passive consumers of culture who do not participate in contributing to the development of the society (1950:7). They become completely vulnerable to ideology, such as racism. Moreover, as it is argued in *Authoritarian Personaliy* racist attitudes are also expressed by people who release the tension caused by the repression of their needs (also "destructive tendencies") through directing their negative feelings onto marginalized groups (1950). In the chapter of this book, *Prejudice in the interview material,* Theodor Adorno, (1950:7) tries to identify "certain differential patterns within the general structure of prejudice" by conducting interviews with people asking them about their prejudice towards "Jews and Negroes" (1950:7). All his interviewees are given a list with negative features of Jews most of them confirming that all of these traits of Jews are true. Adorno notes that when provided with a "pre-established and commonly accepted" characteristics, interviewees just confirm them as real, without undermining it in any manner. In other words, for Adorno people nearly "automatically" take over other's views.

Adorno perceives racism as other Frankfurt School scholars would, as the products of specific historical moment (Wodak and Reisigl in Mathelson, 2005:375). He sees individuals as more and more alienated from the reality in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, they find a "substitute" (a Jew) that they can blame for their own "destructive tendencies". However, this "substitute" in order to earn its status it must possess certain features. It must be an object of a tradition that justifies a scapegoat-like treatment of it. From the perspective of my research what Adorno does is he recognizes the significance of the social, economic context for the fuelling the prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, perhaps being unaware of it, Adorno identifies the role of tradition, that we could call today discourse, in sustaining prejudice. He notices that prejudice has always a big narrative accompanying it, but not strongly enough. In this piece he does not explore the external circumstances (for example political structures) feeding the racial attitudes, he just notes their significance.

### 1.3.2 Text, Active Audience and Racist Ideology

Post-colonial theorist Stuart Hall criticizes Adorno's and Horkheimer's idea of the culture industry for taking away the agency from the audience. He disagrees with their concept that the "consciousness of viewers, listeners" is completely compatible with "reproduction needs of the capitalist order" (Marris, Thornham, 1997:9). Instead Hall proposes a model in which viewers, readers or the receivers of communicates become much more active. Text is not anymore a closed container that offers one meaning. What the author wanted to say might be decoded by the reader in a completely different manner (Talbot, 2007: 8). As Fiske and Hall note the process of message/ text consumption is nothing but mediation between (Hartley, 1992:82) readers, the message, belief systems and ideologies of all parties. Nonetheless, it has to be stressed that there is no symmetry between the encoding and decoding moment. There exists a favored meaning that is "encoded in media discourses"

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(Marris, Tornham, 1997:10). As he argues one of such preferred meanings has racist undertones.

For Hall racism is an ideology which provides frameworks for explaining and grasping the intricacies of social life. Ideologies never existing in a void are attached to "chains of meanings" (Hall in Marris, Tornham, 1997). Therefore, one topic usually refers us to other discourses and every statement is immersed in some kind of ideology or ideologies. Ideologies have the power to produce identities for their subjects. That means that people's lives are delineated by ideologies they are a part of. This remark is of unprecedented significance for my research, because it becomes obvious that presenting by media one group only in particular way can create limitations for that group (its members as and the society) which is an example of subtle, symbolic violence that needs to be noticed (Hall in Marris, Tornham, 1997).

The more invisible ideology is, the more imprinted it is in our way of thinking and the perception of the world that we have becomes something that is not critically challenged (Conboy, 2006:112). Hall notes that race exists as a part of "naturalized" ideology, that is seen as something obvious (Conboy, 2006:113). Media representations of black people are full of racializing discourses, some of them are very conspicuous (*overt racism)*, others are hidden (*inferential racism*) (Conboy, 2006:113). According to Hall the *inferential racism* becomes now more prevalent than the *overt* one. His distinction is suitable for my analysis, because it seems that nowadays only inferential racism is accepted in the UK press.

While criticizing media representation Hall introduces the concept of hybridity that underlines that no-one is fully black, white, British etc. Therefore, essentializing various groups by media makes no sense, because everyone is in the middle. A question arises if "inbetween people" can be perceived as the exemplification of an ideal hybrid identity? It seems that is not the case. The fact that "inbetween people" can be identified only in certain

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circumstances, but never fully, as Us or Them means that they never cannot have mixed identities. Paradoxically, they are the ones who are either closer to the one end of the scale, or the other, because they are compared, or they compare themselves to the socially constructed "ideal" categories.

### 1.3.3 Looking at Racism from a Broader Perspective

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multifaceted theory that stems from the Frankfurt School's objective of pursuing a socially responsible science, CDA concentrates on analyzing the manners in which inequality and dominance are "enacted, reproduced or resisted" by various texts (Dijk in Mathelson, 2005:352). Its goal is to put an end to inequality through exposing its presence in the different types of texts. CDA proposes a multidisciplinary approach that wants to explain discourse structures, by referring it to social structure and social interaction (Dijk in Mathelson, 2005:352). This method is useful for my case study, because it shows how discourse "confirms, reproduces, or challenges relations of *power* and *dominance* in society" (Dijk in Mathelson, 2005:352). From the perspective of my research it is interesting to see how a positive discourse about a marginalized group (Poles) produced by hegemonic group changes in a very short time period into a negative one without undermining the credibility of the dominant group. This example allows seeing the discursiveness (hence instability) of power relations within the society more clearly, because they are a result of external circumstances and each time they have to be renegotiated.

Racist discourse seems to be a bit different, It has a long history dating back to the 19th century (Wodak and Reisigl in Mathelson, 2005:374) and although it has been deconstructed and "turned around" many times it still seems to be very strong and resilient ideology (Wodak and Reisigl, 2005:373). Why is that the case? One of the answers provides sociocognitivist strand of CDA represented by Teun van Dijk who was doing research for years on representation of ethnic groups in the European media. For him prejudice not only

exists in the minds of individuals and stems from their particular sets of beliefs, but it is "a shared form of social representation in group members, acquired during processes of socialization and transformed and enacted in social communication and interaction" (van Dijk 1984:13). In other words people's racist behaviors "have social functions" like the "protection of the interests of the ingroup" (van Dijk in Mathelson, 2005:379) and are shared by group members. Van Dijk in his writing concentrates on this Us –Them relation, a relation that is present in various ideologies, also racist. Van Dijk can be criticized for thinking in terms of binaries. How would his theory treat people belonging to two oppositional groups (i.e migrants, transgender people etc)?

For Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough from discourse-historical strand of CDA only multi-layered analysis can account for racism (Wodak and Reisigl in Mathelson, 2005:379). Three major claims that underlay their approach. Firstly, "discourse does ideological work"; secondly, it is historical (van Dijk in Mathelson 2005:353), and finally people interpret texts differently, therefore we cannot identify a proper interpretation. For that reason a lot of work should be put into providing background information, describing historical circumstances, looking for overlapping (reinforcing or weakening) social divisions (like class, gender) that can explain why race and for who at a particular moments it becomes an issue. This approach assuming the complexity of the social reality sees the race as a convoluted category under which "inbetween people" can be subsumed.

# CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

In this chapter I use mostly the method of Critical Discourse Analysis on four daily papers that will enable me to answer my research question, whether Poles' whiteness matters for the ways in which they are portrayed in the media. My other choice could have been quantitative analysis, frequently used in media research, in which key words are identified and from that conclusions about the social world are drawn (van Dijk, 1996:18). Nonetheless, in my case I choose to compare newspapers from two different genres (tabloid and quality press) for which a quantitatively grounded content analysis that counts words and establishes relations between then, would not be enough.

While reading these two genres of newspapers I had to bear in mind that, since they are using a different language in order to attract various segments of readership, they are not easily comparable (Fairclough, 1996:19). For that reason my interpretation of the text was affected by, to use Michel Foucault's terms, "genre expectations about the text" (Talbot, 2007:15). To put it differently, I assumed that the hyperbolic [9] language of tabloids slightly distorts reality and makes it more overstated than it actually is (van Dijk in Schiffrin et.al, 2001:362). At the same time the political correctness of the quality press required me to look for phrases that carry extra meanings because certain things cannot be written explicitly in the British press (van Dijk 1991:143). Or, as Teun van Dijk notes, "the analysis of the 'unsaid' is sometimes more revealing than the study of what is actually expressed in the text (1991:144).

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[9] Hyperbole, according to van Dijk (1991:191) "if our negative actions are to be softened, theirs will of course need to be exaggerated(…) a semantic move and a rhetorical operation (…) hyperboles are known to be frequent in the right-wing Press"

Although I had to keep in mind that his approach can lead to overintepretation, I followed his idea. Thus, while on some occasions I had to dismiss an exaggerated tabloid language, on others I had to carefully look for meanings, often expressed through omission of particular topics conveyed in the quality press. Despite the fact that I used Critical Discourse Analysis that specifically was designed to analyze press and TV coverage, I still felt that the problem of the potential arbitrariness of my interpretation was not solved. I could misunderstand the context or add too much value to particular statements. Therefore, I included in my research interviews with the readers, as a method which was not only fulfilling the task of testing (confirming or dismissing) the arbitrariness of my interpretations, but also which opened new questions on my scrutinized subject.

## 2.1 Sources of Evidence

### 2.1.1 Papers

Justyna Frelak and Joanna Fomina analyzed the content of eight popular papers over 16 months in order to provide a general characteristic of the ways in which Poles are depicted in media. In my research I wanted to look at the period between 2004 and 2010 and I read the following papers: the *Guardian*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, and the *Daily Mail*. Firstly, I selected papers with a very high circulation (Dijk, 1991:29). Secondly, although as Van Dijk (1991:9) stresses, various papers can be perceived as either conservative or liberal depending on the reader, I picked papers that, according to Young and Light, represent different political options. *The Times* can be seen as Euro-skeptic and as conservative economically and socially right-wing; *The Guardian* as pro-EU and liberal; *Daily Mail* right-wing, also Euro-skeptic; and finally supportive of Labor Party *The Sun* (Young, Light, 2009: 286). Thirdly, I utilized van Dijk's classification of these papers' class distribution of readership (Dijk, 1991: 29): *The Guardian* and *The Times* to middle and upper classes, *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* to working class and unemployed people. The decision to scrutinize these papers was connected

to the fact that I planned to examine the variation of racial representation of Poles across different groups of readers.

### 2.1.2 Interviews

I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews. Although I covered papers read by the whole social strata, due to time limitations I conducted interviews only with university educated people and members of middle class. I spoke to journalists and young researchers who could provide a characteristic of *ideal subjects* (Fairclough, 1996:50), that is, ideal readers of particular papers, especially of tabloids. My respondents helped me to become at least partially familiar with the working class voices. Therefore, among my interviewees were people who read, or at least try to read papers of different genres every day, and people who are able to recognize obvious, racializing discourses when they encounter them.

My interviewees can be divided into two groups: outsiders and insiders. It has to be stressed that the division is not rigid and some of the interviewees can belong to two groups (Judit, or Ewaryst born in Eastern Europe, but lived all their lives in the UK). They are insiders and outsiders to Polish community. The insiders are eight, first generation migrants to the UK, young professionals coming from Eastern Europe and the outsiders are eight British people, who even if they are the first generation of migrants[10] consider themselves British and middle class. Since middle class is said to be very appreciative of Eastern Europeans (12 March 2005 *The Times*) I expected that comparing their opinions about the racial discourses about Eastern Europeans, with the opinions of the successful Eastern Europeans (Hungarian, Polish, and Slovak) might provide critical insights into some racial tropes especially among first group.

Another difference that can be drawn between my interviewees is that among them there are readers as well as journalists and social scientists. Journalists know a bit more about

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[10] Two of my respondents came to the UK in their early childhood and consider themselves British

the media industry as opposed to the 'ordinary' readers. Therefore, I consider the researchers, journalists of both nationalities as slightly more informed and as my key informants (Ela, Stephen, Richard, Marina, Peter).

## 2.2 Methodology

### 2.2.1 CDA

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method of analyzing media coverage as a part of social life, a part that is determined by it, as well as determining it. As Norman Fairclough points out (1996), none of the existing disciplines allows us to see speech acts as immersed in a broader social context (as John Searl understands it[11]). To repeat after Fairclough linguistics concentrates on language as an artificial system of rules detached from the world (Fairclough 1996:7), whereas cognitive psychology, while looking at the ways our minds work, forgets to ask about the "social origins" of cognitive operations (Fairclough 1996:11). CDA offers one way of filling that void and it proposes methods of identifying "the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination" (Van Dijk, 2001:96). However, CDA is often criticized for "unrepresentativeness" (Haig, 2004:2) that is connected to its interdisciplinarity. Since it lacks structured methodology it is difficult to believe that it can "produce valid knowledge" (Haig, 2004:5).

Since Norman Fairclough's method seems to be a well-structured version of CDA I use it in my research. The most significant theoretical statement of his theory is that "language is social practice that is not external to the society" (Fairclough, 1996:17). All his further views stem from this standpoint. I use Fairclough's version of CDA for two reasons.

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[11] "In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer." Searle, John. 1991. "Indirect speech acts." In *Pragmatics: A Reader*, ed. S. Davis, pp. 265–277. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The first is, because I find his method is more sociological than Teun van Dijk's who is relaying on social and personal cognitions in the process of mediation between the discourse and society. Although social cognitions understood as "the system of mental representations and processes of group members" (Fairclough, 1996:18) make sense for a sociologist, the assumption that mental representations of individuals are not affected by the social context force me to reject van Dijk's approach. The second reason is, because in analyzing the relationship between language and power, Fairclough focuses on Britain.

For Fairclough text is a product and a resource in the social interaction (also called discourse) which comprises of: the process of text production and of text interpretation (1996:24). These processes have a lot in common. In both cases text is created (by the producer) or re-created (by the interpreter) through using individual resources, such us views, knowledge, assumptions of producers, or interpreters[12]. However, these resources are socially determined and indirectly, through producers and interpreters, the process of mediation between the text and social structures, takes place. Therefore, analyzing texts of various kinds involves "analyzing the relationship between text, processes of production and interpretation, and their social conditions" (Fairclough, 1996:25).

Fairclough, parallel to his theory, constructs a matching method that has three stages. The first is a text description that concentrates on "formal properties of the text" (Fairclough, 1996). That is we look for occurring patterns, repetitions, omissions, and so on. The second stage is concerned with cognitive processes of participants in relation to interpreted/produced texts. This phase requires answering the following questions: "what is going on?", "who is involved?", "in what relations?", and "what is the role of the language?" In the first question the person conducting the text analysis should be able to identify its *activity*, *topic* (e,g description), and *purpose* (Fairclough, 1996:140). In this part formal properties of text are

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[12] He calls individual resources member's resources (MR). I chapter III I refer to this concept.

not analyzed, but social actors present in the discourse are identified (in what roles they appear and who they represent). The third stage, explanation, is interested in understanding the connection between the production and interpretation of text with wider social context, that is, social and power structures etc. In this stage it is also revealed that socially determined discourses can either reproduce existing social structures, or change them. As Fairclough points out, often the interpretation is inseparable from the analysis.

Applying Fairclough's method required following three stages, but before I could proceed to the first one I had to select texts that I wanted to analyze. In order to do that I used internet newspaper's archives in which I typed the following words: 'Poles', 'Polish' and 'Eastern European', because it seemed that Eastern Europeans are used interchangeably with the word Pole.[13] Through skimming thousands of articles I chose more than a thousand articles that could be relevant for my research. Later I selected only the ones that contained, in my view, racializing discourses. I labeled each of them: I created categories for example: 'reliable employees', 'homeless', and then instead of counting them, as would probably be done in content analysis, I looked for repeating patterns, or irregularities and in this manner I arrived at the first stage of Fairclough's method. Then I moved to analyze the process of interpretation and of production of the text. The interpretation of texts was provided by me (as a reader) and my interviewees. I did not specifically ask them how they understand a particular article, but I wanted to know what they make of the fact that papers write about Eastern Europeans in a particular way. The second part of asking about the production of the text was only partially fulfilled since interviewed journalists were not comfortable to talk about their employees. The final part of connecting all the dots and explaining social determination was done separately by me as well as my interviewees.

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[13] Since the gathered material confirmed that Eastern Europeans are considered to be Poles and vice versa in this paper I refer to Poles and Eastern Europeans as to one and the same group. In cases when I want to separate Poles from Eastern Europeans I emphasize that. I either talk about Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs, or I write "Poles and Eastern Europeans, which suggest that Poles somehow stands out in a particular case.

Norman Fairclough stresses that CDA for media products (for example papers, or TV programmes) is different than in normal interaction when producers and interpreters can somehow communicate and exchange their opinions, in a direct face-to-face interaction. He notes that media discourse is a special case in which producer and consumer are separated and in which producers create texts for *ideal subjects*, that is, ideal readers, since they cannot know what their mass audience is like. In other words, partially at least journalists create the readers of their papers (Fairclough, 1996:50). For this reason I interview journalists as producers of the text and readers as its interpreters.

### 2.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

After reading papers I identified recurring themes that were significant for my research question and I discovered new directions that needed to be explored further (Shensul et al, 1999:151). This task of gathering more detailed data after doing initial research can be fulfilled best by semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have core questions that need to be asked, but they give space for the interviewee to discuss particular issues in more detail if they wish to do so (see the Appendix 2).

Among various advantages of semi-structure interviews, such as keeping the conversation on the right track, instead of changing the subject, is the possibility to compare answers of different interviewees, since they were asked similar questions (Bernard 1995, Kvale 1996, Shensul et al, 1999). Seeing the differences in respondents' answers and knowing their occupation (or as Fairclough would call it, interpreters' and producers' resources, their beliefs and worldviews) could help me to interpret what they were saying in a more adequate manner. The disadvantage of semi-structured interviews might be that the inexperienced interviewer can formulate questions in a manner that narrows down the interviewees' responses to a specific area (Schensul 1991:151).

I followed Schensul's advice to begin with easier topics and then to move to a more sophisticated ones. Similar questions were clustered, and I tried to apply the rule of asking first "the concrete questions" and later the "abstract ones". I also discussed the media coverage in the chronological order starting from 2004 when Poles were allowed to work in the UK (Shensul et al, 1999:155).

### 2.2.3 Interviews Seen Through Lenses of CDA

For Fairclough method the situation of conducting interviews that I arranged qualifies them to be analyzed using CDA, because for Fairclough every speech act is a text, including interviews (1996:27). Thus, before I will conduct the analysis of the texts I will write more about a few conversations with my interviewees looking at them as well as myself through the lenses of CDA and applying the three staged approach to our conversations.

I met the majority of interviewees in cafes or pubs; or at their homes this made the conversations very smooth and relaxed. However, on a few occasions I met them in their workplaces which affected their responses, because they were talking to me more in the role of a journalist, a spokesperson etc., not necessarily giving me their personal opinions. The difference was noticeable on the level of language they used.

I should mention the position of the interviewer as well. I was talking to my interviewees having in mind a goal to get answers to my questions. I tried to adjust to the way of being of my interviewees. I was more official with Stephen and more relaxed with Ela. Obviously talking in my native language and to Poles was easier, because there was no "cultural and linguistic barrier". Conversations with the British were a bit more difficult, especially from their perspective, because I could sense that they were worried that I might be looking for a proof that they are racist towards Eastern Europeans which I told them was not the case, or that when they heard that I am Polish they might not want tell me for example that Poles are said to be drunk drivers.

# CHAPTER III: EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

## 3.1 White Swans

The order of the following chapter was inspired by my interviewees, who while talking about media representation of Poles, noticed that at the very beginning when the job market was opened in 2004 the media coverage was so positive that, as one of them said "it was really a bit too much"; however, later it has changed a great deal. In this chapter, following Fairclough's CDA method, I will identify topics appearing in reference to Poles in four newspapers, describe the language used in these articles, interpret them and finally attempt to find the connection to social context (Fairclough, 1996:109).

After WW II the British government invited migrants from various parts of the world to come and help rebuild the country. Among them were 5000 Polish single women, prospective factory workers, who were expected to be the future mothers of young British. This action was advertised by the government by depicting Poles as white swans ("Baltic cygnets") symbolizing the innocence, youth and fertility, but also their whiteness (Young, Light, 1991). Sixty years later, in 2004 white Eastern Europeans working in the UK are still portrayed positively except they are not white swans anymore

### 3.1.1 People with a Good Work Ethic

Tabloids present Poles by using various positive adjectives such as "punctual", "efficient", "entrepreneurial", and what seems to be the most important, "very cheap". The *Daily Mail* writes, "they tend to be more willing to work flexibly, and be satisfied with their duties, terms and conditions and productivity requirements" (8 October 2007). They are seen as highly-skilled artisans, "plasterers, tillers and electricians" who work hard, "fill shortages across the economy, particularly in the construction and hospitality sector" (23 August 2006 *The Sun*). *The Sun* repeats that "The Polish are such hard-working people that Britain wouldn't be the same without them" (18 October 2007). In short, the word Pole tends to be

described as workforce that helps to "contribute", or to be a "benefit" to the economy. To put it differently, A8 migrants seem to play a similar role as "Baltic cygnets".

The *Guardian* and *The Times* although they also sustain a very positive image of white, hard-working Poles by writing for example in the *Guardian* that "in recent years they have made a more positive contribution to the public finances than native workers" (17 October 2007), the results from these broadsheets are slightly different than from the previously analyzed two tabloids. For the *Guardian* and *The Times*, work ethic is again what Poles are admired for, but they are not seen only as manual workers. More often the words Pole or Polish goes together with "bilingual", "highly-motivated graduates", "engineers", "nurses" and "dentists" (1 November 2006 *Guardian*). The previous section showed, tabloids tend to depict Poles as people who will "boost" the economy as contemporary masculinized versions of working class "Baltic cygnets"., The *Guardian* as well as *The Times*, on the contrary, presents them also as working-in-the-city, "self-reliant", disciplined, goal-oriented, (obviously white) people who are "leading humanity forward" (in Dyer, 1997:26).

**3.1.2 Interpretation: Those Who Want to 'Have It'**

Following Fairclough's method of interpreting the text through identifying its *activity*, *topic* and *purpose* it can be stated that the manner in which Poles are depicted in tabloids gives an impression that newspapers' goal is to advertise Poles as cheap workforce (*purpose)*. This impression is sustained by the fact that there are very few descriptions of Poles in other social roles like as family members etc. The articles from the quality press, however, are rather informative (*activity)* that create a different image of Poles than the one taken from the red tops. They publish descriptive (*topic*) articles that transcend the positive, but simplistic stereotypes of a ubiquitous Polish plumber known from the tabloids. It becomes clear that quality press wants to distinguish itself and its readers from tabloids (*purpose*).

Fairclough's method also requires to answer the following questions: what kind of belief systems are behind such articles and what sets of norms are readers as *ideal subjects* exposed to. Journalists of the tabloids for instance express how white workers with a good work ethic are suitable for the capitalist economy of the country. The quality-press-journalist position is similar, but not identical. On the one hand they also portray Poles as young professionals, on the other hand this shows their own attachment to an entrepreneurial, Western, capitalist, modern culture. As Ruth Frankenberg points out (in Dyer, 1997:26), an entrepreneurial approach is a trait of upper-class white men who have the "energy, will, ambition, the ability to think and see things through" that allow them to build nations, enterprises, accumulate wealth and manage their enterprises in which "racially lesser humans" work (in Dyer, 1997:26). Poles could be presented as sharing such a value system. They are white, strong willed, disciplined and prepared to control themselves and others (in Dyer, 1997:26). According to John Hodge (in Dryer, 1997:31) it is Will that divides the world into those "who have it" and those "who don't". In my samples (until 2007) Poles are presented in a manner that could subsume them under the category of whites who want to "have it"

### 3.1.3. Culture and Whiteness

The manner in which tabloids write about Poles differs from previous representations of migrants in one aspect: Poles are presented as a positive example for the strata of British population that chooses to live off social benefits. This is expressed in the *Daily Mail* through the usage of comparative phrases ("unlike Eastern Europeans British", "compared to their British equivalents") (24 July 2006), but also through contrasting phrases in which Poles are seen as hard workers and British as lazy ("British workers were being put to shame by hard-working east Europeans", "Workshy British force boss to recruit Poles") (9 February 2005 *Daily Mail*). Such rhetorical strategies as comparison and contrast, as van Dijk (1991:197)

notices, aim at maintaining the division of us (good) and them (bad). Here the question arises who plays the role of a good group in tabloid representations, Poles or British? It is clear that Poles do not simply become the new dominating group in the UK. What is interesting, nonetheless, is that Poles before 2007 were rarely presented as similar to non-white, non-European immigrants , which suggests that they were seen as whiter than people of color.

In *The Times* the word "white" goes together with "European", "from our circle", with "a common history", "habits", "values" and "beliefs". As respondents to an article by Richard Ford (18 May 2006) confirmed the color has significance for the employability of Polish immigrants. One reader admitted that "no-one is afraid of being swamped by Poles as much as they are of being swamped by Somalis" (11 April 2004). *The Times* often contrasts Poles with non-white minorities, foreigners, and Muslims, no matter if they are British citizens or not. This is done in an indirect manner. Usually one paragraph discusses problems with Pakistanis, Somalis, or Bangladeshis who do not want to accept British values or learn the language, and a few chapters further there is a reference to energetic, English literate and white (this is not mentioned) Poles. To use van Dijk's terms, the "implicit contrast", "vagueness" and "implications" help the journalists to convey a racializing discourse (1991:182). Not being white is again portrayed as a "problem".

To sum up, one of the methods of showing the superiority of a marginalized group over another is to compare it with the dominating group; this is what takes place in *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* (van Dijk, 1991). At the same time praising Polish immigrants over Pakistanis and Bangladeshis and thus showing the inferiority of the latter ones is a good example of *inferential* racism towards non-white newcomers (Hall in Marris, Thornham, 1997).

The *Guardian* is one of those few papers describing Poles straightforwardly by using the adjective "white". The skin color of this group is thus identified as a factor improving the

chances of Poles on the job market (21 July 2006). Moreover, Poland is presented as a culturally close and well-known country as opposed to representations that depict Poland as a remote land whose only relevant quality is the production of low skilled workers (10 February 2005 *The Times*). Thus, in the *Guardian* Polish politics as well as Polish-British common history is widely discussed. The word Polish often goes together with "pilots", "officers" recalling their historical role in the WWII. Here we can apply Spohn and Triandafyllidou theory, about blacks being devoid of legible history in the eyes of whites (2003:93-94): since Polish history and culture seems to be recognized by the British this would mean, in a binary structure, that Poles are situated among the group of whites.

### 3.1.4. Interpretation: The color of culture

The *Daily Mail* strongly emphasizes that Poles and British belong to the same white, European, (capitalist) culture. One can pose a question why journalists tend to frequently stress that. Is seems that the 'whiteness' of Poles, understood in all possible ways (cultural, phenotypical etc.), is a way of showing readers and the public that it is the Eastern European, and not any other worker who is the most suitable for helping boosting the country's economy. Why him or her? Probably because they are similar to British and they might go back home later; in case Poles decided to stay this would not be such a problem, some journalists suggest, as it would be with non-white minorities (9 December 2007 *Daily Mail*).

*The Times'* stance is similar to that of the *Daily Mail's,* but is perhaps slightly more sophisticated. Poles are an ideal workforce who is cut out for working in the UK, because of cultural similarities. Journalists from *The Times* are interested in Britain's economic prosperity; however they are not supportive of multiculturalism (Blackstone, Parekh, 1998:124). Thus, Poles are an instrument in an ideological discussion. They are used here as a positive example of "our type of" people who help to strengthen the economy in opposition to all those who "do not want to adjust to the British ways", "who do not work" and who "do

get into trouble and who cause trouble" (1 August 2006). Or to use a quote from *The Sun* from Tony Blair's replicating the tabloids' views: "Irish, Italian and Polish people have all done their bit in building a modern, prosperous Britain". Is it an accident that all the above mentioned groups are white? (27 April 2004)

By contrast, journalists from the *Guardian* reject the obvious colonialist, imperialist, racist views from the tabloids that see the UK as a white, homogenous, coherent country (Bronwen, 2001:5), defining themselves as natural against the 'other'. In my sample the *Guardian* journalists tend to avoid comparing the Poles to the British in a manner that could make the latter a universal point of reference (Dyer, 1997:39). It is clear that the *Guardian* journalists condemn racial discourses and are very politically correct. Thus although, they know that Poles, by the fact that they are white, are more welcome in the country than other groups, for them the whiteness of Poles is not seen as an advantage, it is rather their skills that are (17 January 2010 *Guardian*). On various occasions the *Guardian* jeers at the *Daily Mail's, or The Sun's* articles about Poles. As I already mentioned the *purpose* of such action might have been be to promote the *Guardian* as a quality press vis-à-vis tabloids (Richardson, 2007:116).

### 3.1.5 .Religion

While discussing Polish religiousness *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* uses an exaggerated language. "Catholics now outnumber Anglicans for the first time since the Reformation partly due to the massive migration from Catholic countries". The *Daily Mail* asks in a headline if this "huge influx could make Catholicism the main religion in Britain" (16 February 2007).

Nonetheless, the religion of Poles is also seen as a bonding element between them and host population. Polish children who go to normal schools on weekdays and to Polish schools on Sundays, learning Polish and religion, are praised by public school teachers for being very

hard working students "who are here to study" (the *Daily Mail* 18 May 2006). Poland is presented as a religious country whose people "brought with them their enthusiasm for their faith and their commitment to attending Mass" (the *Daily Mail*16 February, 2007). Thus, contrary to the white skin color of Poles that usually remains invisible (Twine and Gallagher, 2008:9), religiousness is openly mentioned and safe to discuss. But is it possible to separate whiteness from Catholicism here?

It seems that it is not. The *Daily Mail's* and *The Sun's* articles, praising Polish Catholicism as a religion which British are familiar with, reveal journalists' preference of (white, European) Christians over non-white followers of other religions. A look at these papers' previous coverage shows that none other group (like African Pentecostals, Muslims) receives a similar positive attention. Arguably one of the most offensive examples of presenting non-white religious practices is provided by *The Sun* which describes a Muslim killing a swan, "because he is so hungry from Ramadan fast" (4 November 2006). As van Dijk writes it, non-white groups experience "symbolic control" (1991:203) on the part of journalists who talk about minority groups only in a certain way and in reference to a certain (usually negative) context. To sum up, whiteness under the disguise of Christianity seems to be valued by journalists, but it is never explicitly expressed.

The *Guardian* also registers the change that is taking place in the British landscape, but it refrains from using exaggerated language about the religion of Eastern Europeans. Its journalists also comment on this euphoria surrounding Polish Catholicism present in the media asking what happens if all the white workers return home: "Most of the immigrants have been white and Catholic; what happens when they are replaced by Muslims from Africa and Asia? (4 May 2006 the *Guardian*). Thus, the *Guardian* suggests that interest in Polish Catholic workers has racist undertones.

*The Times* shares an enthusiasm for the religiousness of Poles with the tabloids. It shows stories describing their participation in pilgrimages, mourning after the Pope's death (4 April 2005), and discussing high Church attendance. Furthermore, *The Times* publishes letters from readers revealing that the Catholicism or the Christian values that Poles follow, again, are elements that glue the Polish and the British society together (17 October 2007).

### 3.1.6 Interpretation: Laborers with a Religion

The articles on Polish Catholicism from all four newspapers are descriptive and informative. Despite the discrepancies in the style of presenting these groups (flooded churches vis-à-vis crowded ones) there is an agreement that Catholicism of Poles is seen as something positive. Even the *Guardian* that presents the lack of understanding or "inconceivability" of Polish religious devotion in the secular West, appreciates the role of the Church in recent Polish history and sees it as an element constituting the national identity of many Poles (5 April, 2005). It does see that other newspapers automatically connect Catholicism to the white race, to the European common values that Poles and British share, but it tries to deconstruct such thinking. Moreover, it also disrupts the claims that all Poles want to be seen as Catholics (17 December 2008).

Articles in *The Times*, while talking about Polish religiousness, indirectly emphasize this community's discipline. Through assuming the existence of certain implicit meanings shared by the readers (van Dijk 1991:180), the high church attendance can be a sign of certain attitudes valued by individuals. For example "in the head of journalists/readers" (Fairclough, 1996:167) through "the chain of meanings" (Hall in Marris, Tornham, 1997) a high church attendance can be connected to devotion, strong will and character. Religious Poles who, after a very long workweek, choose to go to church instead of resting, can be seen as mature, reliable, and resilient. "You can see them standing or kneeling in the streets outside church if they cannot squeeze inside" (23 December 2006). In other words, through

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religion, paradoxically and perhaps inadvertently *The Times* shows the reader that all the traits of Poles make them perfect potential employees, because their faith demands from them learning to be consistent, disciplined and humble. Analogically *The Sun*, by depicting Polish students as "responsible, always well prepared and punctual", portray them as prospective disciplined workers.

*The Times* writes "Depends on your immigrant. Some will argue that Nigerians will produce social welfare- dependent babies but that white, Catholic, Polish babies will become high-tech graduates and play football for Ireland. (*The Times* 31 August 2008)". From this quote it can be inferred that here Catholicism is of white color and that *The Times*, by using techniques described by van Dijk as "the denial of racism", repeating the racial statements of "someone" to hide one's racism (1991:186), supports that opinion. Moreover, it suggests that Catholic Poles, will end up as high-achievers.

### 3.1.7 Interviewee's responses: Almost, but not white

The analyzed press material on Poles was confronted with the opinions of Eastern European and British middle class respondents in my interviews. The answers of the two groups were very similar. Majority of my observations about a racializng discourse on Poles were confirmed by their statements with one exception, that of religion.

Stephen a former religious correspondent to the *Guardian,* author of article on Polish Catholics, whom I met in the headquarters of the newspaper, told me "There are many things about Poles that British like, for example the fact that they are religiously devout. This was a strong feature, British people don't go to church themselves but there was a feeling that these people brought their country, their religion and their culture with them is not hugely resented". Moreover, he verified that religion has significance for the ways Poles are presented in media, but he suggested that religion in general is a sensitive matter in the UK due to Islamophobia. I had an impression that his knowledge about Polish Catholicism was

above average, because he specialized in religious topics and otherwise he would not have been so aware of the issues around the religiousness of Poles.

The rest of my interviewees dismissed the importance of religion. Ania. a psychologist conducting antiracist psychological workshops for Poles, claimed that the "British consider religion to be a private matter". However, another respondent Wojtek, spokesperson for one of the biggest organizations of Poles in the UK who was very cautious of what he was saying, rejected the relevance of religion for media representations. Nonetheless, when he was talking about why British like Poles, in a way repeating what was written in the newspapers, his statement had the form of a religious discourse. Wojtek said that "our devotion to work" made Poles "in the eyes of British perfect employees. Our system of values fits British very much". Furthermore, he commented on cultural and religious similarities between the UK and Poland: "sharing the same culture, celebrating the same holidays, understanding what Christmas is all about" (Wojtek); this makes Poles likeable and mentioned positively in media.

Cultural similarity between Poles and the British was also recognized in the interviews. Richard, whose father used to be a member of the Polish government in exile, emphasized that "Poles are considered Westerners in the UK, because they have had democracy for centuries and because they fought side by side with British during the WWII". The common historical past was also brought up by Wojtek who stressed that Poles who remained after the war created a very positive myth of Poles that allowed them to integrate easily into the British society.

The significance of work ethic in the positive media representation of Poles was also corroborated. As Ela, a journalist with a vast knowledge on the media coverage of Eastern Europeans in the UK said, the "the ability to work long-hours" in combination with "a kind of expectation that Eastern European will want less money and" made Poles so popular. In

contrast to that, Judit, an art journalist whom I met in her cluttered with designer furniture flat and who seemed to know mainly young professional Eastern Europeans, made a statement that Poles "work very hard in the city, they speak immaculate English, so in fact they are already British".

When asked about the significance of skin color for the processes of integration into the British society only one person said that it is completely irrelevant. The rest backed up that is crucial. One respondent, Richard, a photographer and a former journalist who lives in the remote and peaceful suburban area of London, told me that "looking in a similar way to white British (Richard) is very important, but no one will say it openly. Certain things cannot be said. There are lots of reasons there. There are always laws and regulations. So in practice you cannot do certain things". Ewaryst, working in a publishing house, pointed out that admitting in the press that "skin color still matters in the case of Poles would have never taken place in a British paper due to political correctness". Marina, a Kazakh journalist employed by various British papers added "it is assumed automatically that whoever is white can integrate more easily".

All the Eastern European interviewees and the ones of Eastern European descent (Ewaryst, Judit, Richard) supported the claim that one of the ways in which Poles are depicted as white (phenotypically or culturally) is that they are compared with non-white groups, especially "Romanians and Bulgarians". Ania said that "Romanians are described as criminals in comparison with Poles", and according to Judit "they seem to be depicted as people who had fewer skills, and are seen as a burden on social services, receiving benefits. Poles, the first influx, all of them have jobs and found employment". Furthermore, the interviewees stressed that the representation of Poles or other Eastern Europeans is very positive if compared with the depiction of Muslims. Marina elaborated on this: "Muslims are seen as those who do not want to integrate, they are much more difficult than Polish. You

know Muslims tend to stick together, some of them don't even bother to learn English properly. For British if you cannot express yourself in English no one is going to bother from clearly pragmatic reasons!" Thus Poles who speak English indeed are white swans in comparison with non-white groups in the UK.

## 3.2 Swan Eaters

"Can Poles and Brits live happily side by side?" is a question that was posed by Peter Dobbie from the *Daily Mail* at the end of 2007. Around that period the media coverage on Poles and Eastern Europeans started to change significantly and reached its worst moment around 2009. The white swans of the growth period transformed symbolically into swan eaters in the times of economic slowdown. Here I will analyze *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* together since their manner of discussing migration is similar. Nonetheless, I will stress the difference between these two tabloids when necessary.

### 3.2.1 Work in crisis

In this new economic climate the situation of Poles in their workplace slightly changes. As the *Daily Mail* reports "Eastern Europeans are exploited by gangmasters who bring workers to the country, pay them poverty wages, and make them live in crowded accommodation at exorbitant rents" (the *Daily Mail*19 June 2007). For many Poles the migration to the UK ends in working in horrific conditions. For example *The Sun* describes a tragic story of a fruit picker "who was electrocuted by an overhead power line" (25 May 2010). Due to financial cuts the health and safety regulations are not kept properly and many Eastern European builders become victims of accidents at construction sites (10 January 2009 *Daily Mail*); many of them lose jobs or work for the lowest wages (17 January 2008 *The Sun*).

Although tabloids do mention the exploitation of Eastern Europeans they devote much more attention to Poles taking jobs from the British. The *Daily Mail* asks "Why British graduates are losing jobs to immigrants?" (23 August 2010). In the headline it writes about the "flood of migrants causing wages to plummet" (15 August 2008). It also reports on trade unions expecting from the government to secure "British jobs for British workers" who are replaced by a less financially demanding Polish workforce (6 April 2008). In addition to this, *The Sun* documents the growing hostility, especially in the rural areas, towards Poles who are "coming over and take our jobs" (10 June, 2009). At the same time there are those Poles losing jobs, being accused of "living of social benefits", (*The Sun* 13 July 2010), "claiming child and housing support" (the *Daily Mail* 8 January 2009). In other words, from hard workers who boosted the economy a few years ago, Eastern Europeans turn into a lesser category of workers taking money from the British state.

The *Guardian's* coverage of Poles after 2007, shortly before the economic crisis starts, is no different than that of the tabloids. The articles of the analyzed sample mainly portray them as victims. We read about "slave-labor wages, and organized criminals who fleeced them for passports and savings" (17 July 2007). The word "Poles" goes together with "underpaid", "easy to sack" and "threatened" (24 September 2007). Apart from protesting against exploitation, the *Guardian* comments on the way Eastern Europeans are criticized by tabloids, especially by the *Daily Mail.* There is a series of articles in the *Guardian* aiming to dismiss accusations against Eastern Europeans that they "do not pay taxes" (22 November 2007) or that they caused the crisis (16 December 2008).

Similarly to the *Guardian*, *The Times* also documents Poles' exploitation. The long hours they work in combination with the low wages they earn are seen by *The Times* as a case of "slave work". Cristine Odone in her article addresses Poles by writing "You there, stop

slavering", as if they were responsible for the exploitation. And there are at least two articles accusing Poles of accepting low working standards (July 27 2008).

### 3.2.2. Interpretation: Flooded by immigrants

The *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* portray Eastern Europeans as a competition to the British on the job market. The exaggerated language used by tabloids to give estimation number of immigrants in the country is excessive and it makes the readers afraid that they will be "flooded by foreigners". The *Daily Mail* warns "this is the biggest migration in 300 years" and predicts that a "The influx greater than the population of Warsaw" (25 April 2006). Discussing the numbers of Eastern Europeans coming and leaving the UK in tabloids falls in line with what Stuart Hall calls "numbers game" (in Marris, Thornham, 1997). Immigration is seen as a problem, as Hall explains, "there are too many blacks [or in our case Eastern Europeans] over here". Eastern Europeans in tabloids become, like in Hall's model, "immigrants= Eastern Europeans=too many of them=taking jobs= send them home. As Hall concludes; "that is a racist logic". Immigrants become reduced to numbers (in Marris, Thornham, 1997). The *Guardian* contests numbers given by The *Daily Mail* using their own results from an independent research institute. In this manner, the *Guardian* could be accused of following the same racializing logic. Its journalists, by analyzing the coverage of tabloids, situate themselves outside of this kind of a discourse, but can they really be outside if they are playing the "numbers game" themselves?

*The Times*, apart from concentrating its attention on the economic crisis and the growing fear of joblessness as the other papers do, focuses on the middle class's goal of saving money by giving jobs to cheaper Eastern Europeans instead of hiring their own compatriots (12 March 2007). As Julie Burchill points out

By all means hire a polite Polish plumber rather than a bolshy British one, and then get your tragic kicks gloating over the little saving you've made. But don't kid yourself that this makes

you a bona fide member of the brotherhood of man; it merely makes you a penny-pinching saddo who cares more about getting a bargain than social justice and fair wages for all

### 3.2.3. Culture chasm

In recent years the tabloid press has emphasized more and more the distance between Poles and the British. In a *Daily Mail* article a Polish Gypsy claims that "British values mean nothing to [her]" (11 May 2008). Her story represents a thematic group of articles that depict Poles/Eastern Europeans as a culturally and/or racially different group from the British. Poles are perceived as similar to and are compared with Romanians, Pakistanis, Somalis, of which I found no instance in the preceding period.

Recently Poles have been connected in the media with topics usually reserved for marginalized groups like the Roma. The logic of racializing discourses creeps in when "the proximity of people to Nature" becomes emphasized (Hall in Alvara and Thompson, 1990) and when *primitivism* accompanies racial representation of the discussed groups. That seems to be the case with Poles who suddenly poach, squat or live in tents in forests. They pick mushrooms; they eat swans and carps from local lakes. Furthermore, the language used to describe poaching is overdrawn: "organized groups and gangs" of "hungry, knife-wielding Eastern Europeans" "target specific lakes". One has the impression, assuming that these stories are true, that the paper is discussing mafia affairs rather than the dramatic situation of desperate people. One of the articles about poaching finishes by quoting a guard "they just don't seem to understand our culture" (27 June 2007 *Daily Mail*). The motive of connecting cultural difference with crimes is pretty common. It seems to suggest that this is not just an individual that breaks the law, but that it is his or her belief system, his or her culture that is partially responsible for it. Eastern Europeans are one of the groups that are prone, like Iraqi Kurds, to "carry knives" and promote a "knife culture" in the UK (4 June 2008 *Daily Mail*). Also, whereas a typical article today on immigration would feature a big picture of a woman

in burka with the picture of Polish plumbers (Appendix 4), and would be titled something like "Britons 'lose out on jobs and housing': Race chief inquiry into claims of bias against whites" (1 November 2007 *Daily Mail*) focusing on differences between non-European migrants and the British, in which conflict Poles are still claimed to be "less alien to British ways", it is also quickly added that "they will form their own communities rather than integrate" (15 December 2007). Or to refer to Hall, the immigrants are often perceived as living "in tribes and hordes"; supposedly sticking together and thus posing a threat (in Alvara, Thomson, 1990).

In 2007 The *Daily Mail* devoted a number of articles to portray white British as victims of migrants. Often words like "white British" are accompanied by the verbs "discriminated against", "oppressed" (29 February 2008 *Daily Mail*). One could ask why only white British people "lose out to foreigners on jobs and houses" and not black British. At this point it appears that there is an assumption that the British nationality has a particular color. A question is does immigration have a color? Especially in the light that as it has been shown by various statistics[14] that the biggest groups of migrants who have been coming to the UK recently are white Eastern Europeans. Even though these immigrants are white, in their media portrayals as criminals, trouble-makers etc., they are nonetheless depicted in a manner reminiscent to the treatment black immigrants in the past and to this day, that is, in the language of "clashes", "tensions" and "riots" (Dijk, 1991).

*The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* alarm the public that the police cannot deal with the growing numbers of foreign perpetrators because of "language barrier". The relation between Poles and British emerging from *The Times'* articles is described in terms of a "culture

[14]According to Home Office in 2004 "The largest group by nationality to register were Polish with 56%, followed by Lithuanians (17%), Slovaks (10%), Latvians and Czechs (both 7%), Hungarians (3%) and Estonians (2%).The number of Slovenians was given as less then 0.5% of the total" (10 November 2004 *Guardian*) . In 2008 "Poles are now the single biggest group of foreign nationals in the UK. In early 2004, they were 13th, the report states ( 30 April 2008 *Guardian)*"

clash", and a "culture chasm". For *The Times'* journalists Polish ways are completely different than the British. In one article the journalist infers from a student's comment, studying women's rights in the UK and wanting to go back to Poland to work in her field, that Poland is a country of domestic violence (16 April 2007 *The Times*). Furthermore, since Polish drunk drivers cause accidents in the UK, journalists deduce that the law in Poland is not strongly obeyed (4 January 2008 *The Times*). This and other generalizations create the portrait of Poles as culturally different or even inferior. Such a semantic strategy, as van Dijk points out (1991:187), is not only informing the readers about the current situation, but also creating a bigger narrative that Poland is an underdeveloped country of law-disobeying people.

For *The Times*, Poles who previously were culturally more similar to the British, now become very different. Before they were "better skilled" than Romanians; now they work side by side them in take away places, they pick gherkins with Turkish, live in Islington next to Somali residents, and Polish children together with Romani overcrowd schools (20 May 2007 *The Times*). Moreover, a *Times* article reports that white women are giving birth to a smaller number of children than non-white women in London (8 August 2010). Attached to the article there are two pictures of Britain, thirty years ago and now, to show the "changing ethnic makeup" of the country (8 August 2010). The old picture features a group of white kids eating lunch and being watched from the distance by their white mothers sitting down in the background. The new picture presents a dark skinned woman wearing a burka crossing the street (see the Appendix 3).

### 3.2.4 Interpretation: From Multiculturalism to the Fear of Others

Based on the articles of the employees of *The Times* it can be guessed that they are against immigration and they stress its negative effects. They also dislike the idea of multiculturalism. They most probably are convinced that they report on the situation of

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immigration in the country for the British public who deserve an agora to discuss this issue, express their opinions of losing their job to cheaper foreign worker in a bad economic climate[15]. Articles about immigration and multiculturalism in *The Times* seem to be underpinned by uncomfortable questions: how can one claim that multiculturalism is a success when there were attacks in July 2005; and why does the government let in so many Eastern Europeans during the economic crisis if they undercut British jobs.

Again, journalists from the *Guardian* seem to be against racism, xenophobia, and widely understood social injustice. They blame the economic crisis for the racial violence, but for them the growing fear of losing jobs has been fuelled by the tabloids, so they put the major responsibility on them. The newspaper also notes that since it is no longer possible to write in a hostile manner about "black and brown people" tabloids make use of "substitutes" like Poles and Eastern Europeans (11 August 2008). However, the *Guardian* readers and journalists might not be entirely free of racist discourses themselves as they are sometimes caught up in an insincere politically correct use of language.

### 3.2.5 Criminal Offenders

The change of language around 2007 makes Poles more often appear next to words like "problems", "tensions", "arguments", "fights", and "disagreements" (e.g. 17 April 2008). An imperative mode helps to express what Poles "should and should not" or "must not" do, suggesting that Poles are not following the rules or they do not understand them. According to the *Daily Mail* the government prepares a "DOs and DON'Ts pack" so that "immigrants will know that drunk-driving is forbidden" (6 October 2007).

Eastern Europeans are more and more explicitly presented as criminals. They are described as "murderers", "rapists", "shoplifters", "stalkers", "sexual offenders", "burglars",

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[15] Here, following Fairclough I am trying to reconstruct *members resources* that is "appropriate norms (discourse types, interpretative procedures)" belief, norms that people follow when they read text and interact with the world (Fairclough, 1996:165)

to name just a few. Such images are presented in an exaggerated manner; among the words describing crime offenders, that are used repeatedly, are ""beast" (e.g. *The Sun* 3 December 2009), "killer" and "monster" (*The Sun* 14 January 2008)[16] .Suddenly from devout Christians working long hours they turn into unemployed criminals.

*The Times*, as well as the *Guardian*, discusses the growing violence against Poles. Language that describes it is rather strong: "racist attacks" on migrants appear in many titles of articles about migration or Poles (e.g. 13 August 2006). "Fear of having British values undermined" (1 August 2006 *The Times*), of "foreign invasion", and hostility, lead to attacks on Easter Europeans (3 February 2007 *The Times*). At the same time the *Guardian* looks at the language of tabloids that stirs up strong emotions against migrants in their readers ("tabloid-generated fears").

### 3.2.6 Interpretation: Workers in Crime

The deterioration in the representation of Eastern Europeans can be explained by the economic crisis and fears accompanying it. Tabloids thrive on fears (Conboy, 2006:15); a good example of that is *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* emphasizing that the presence of Eastern Europeans bears the threat of job loss. In this new climate of the financial crisis, to use van Dijk's terms, the acceptance of migrants becomes conditional (1991:205).

> Minorities should be meek (like the hard-working Asians), satisfied with what 'we' give them (and hence not make unreasonable demands), adapt themselves to the dominant white British culture, be self-reliant (they should not cost the taxpayer too much), accept their lower position in all sectors of social life and generally avoid being a 'threat' to 'our' safety, interests, privileges, well-being, and position.

There is an interesting shift happening here in the press. In the beginning Poles are seen as white, devout Christians and a very moral and reliable people. When the economy

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[16] Nonetheless, it has to be noted that *The Sun* more than the *Daily Mail* devotes attention to the fact that Easter Europeans are not only criminal offenders, but also the victims of crimes.

changes, they gradually become racialized and criminalized. It seems that the positive discourse about Polish religiousness, previously seen as something that added to the value of white Polish workers, now is replaced by a negative discourse of unemployed, immoral, culturally different crime offenders. In other words, instead of religion, crime becomes the story about Poles that covers the real economic problems that the whole British society is dealing with.

One of the most dramatic examples confirming this hypothesis is a famous case of an overworked Polish bus driver who killed a crane operator (8 July 2008). In the headline the *Daily Mail's* emphasized the fact that the driver did not speak English so he could not read the signs. The information that he was not trained to drive a double decker and worked for "31 days consecutively" was not emphasized. In other words the story about immigrant criminal offender is more important than that of a worker's exploitation (8 July 2008 *Daily Mail*).

### 3.2.7. Interviewee's responses: "Somewhere on the bottom shelf"

I asked interviewees about the negative racial representations of Poles and the reasons for the change in the discourse referring to Eastern Europeans, and there were some discrepancies between answers of Eastern European migrants and of the British. It seems that as Judit said "if you are from the region you pay more attention to what is written about you".

The majority of respondents said that economic crisis was to blame, however, there were also opposing voices. For example Marcus said that "there was a decline in references in the media to Polish immigrants", his opinion was repeated by an anonymous artist "Poles are not a hot topic anymore". Nonetheless, Ela a journalist writing on Poles, summarized the state of affairs in the following way

> Before 2004 there were only 3 references to Poles in the *Guardian*. Dramatic change occurs in 2004 and in 20005. In fact Poles were praised by Western media, but then appeared articles

about exploitation, bad living and working conditions. Around 2007 media started writing about job agencies that were appropriating money from Poles and tabloids continued to present Eastern Europeans in a more negative manner. It was in 2008 that two papers were the most aggressive *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail.*

Her opinion was upheld. For my Eastern European respondent Poles in recent years have been seen as "a bit frustrated and aggressive" (Ela), "taking British jobs", thus "hard-working people who use dirty words all the time" and "are badly dressed and look poor" (Ania), sometimes they "become unemployed and homeless". Peter, a social scientist whom I met with at his Goldsmiths University provided very "sociological" answers. He said that Poles are associated with "lower standards of consumption and this are associated with lower cultural standards" (Peter). In other words, immaculate English and politeness are replaced by "funny accents, being rude and abrupt".

The "cultural chasm" between Poles and the British embraced by tabloids emerges from these conversations. "For British there is no difference between Central, Eastern Europe and Bulgaria or Russia. In the minds of British journalists, apart from quality press, there is the division on Western (better) and Eastern (worse) Europe". "We still belong to this worst part" (Wojtek). Following the West-East divide plot Peter referred to the Spanish and the English and said that "Eastern Europeans are not seen as like them, there is an image of otherness. Media always talk about culture, but this culture is not known in London, or it is not identified as Easter European. I have a feeling that there are different shelves to which different values are attached. Eastern Europeans are somewhere on the bottom shelf." Therefore, interviewees confirm that Poles are presented in the media as outsiders, foreigners, not as people of color, but also as not white.

I asked then what is the meaning of the attention devoted to Poles by the media? Are Poles really posing a threat carrying knives around? As Ela says, "Poles are not dangerous, but "inner-city black youth is". She said:

Poles were a substitute to discuss any non-white migration. There are many people of color in the UK and they are often associated with gang crimes etc. Nonetheless, black community in the UK has learnt that they have to right to fight for their rights in court. I am not sure, but I suspect that there were many law suits against tabloids for discriminating black minorities. Eastern Europeans are a safe target it is really difficult to prove racial discrimination to a population of white immigrants. I think that Eastern Europeans and Poles filed a gap.

I asked the respondents what they think about Ela's and British MP Daniel Kawczynski's opinion that Poles are used as a substitute (Kawczynski) to discuss the presence of non-white minorities. The majority of my respondents, apart from Wojtek, agreed with his statement.

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

According to Stuart Hall, globalization, that is the increasing mobility of people, transnational migration, the accelerating pace of exchanging information etc., can have two different consequences for the construction of identities. One in which people stick to their original cultures (*Tradition*), and an other where people's identities are not rooted anymore in their national culture; they become hybrid (*Translation*). Hybridity is about being able to "inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, and to translate and negotiate between them" (Hall, 1992). In other words, it is about movement, shifting and fluidity. It is about forgetting the "pureness of identity" (*Tradition*). Hall connects the emerging hybrid personality with migration. (Bailey, Georgiou, 2007: 36). While recognizing the potential benefits of Hall's theory for my research, I would argue that Garner's concept of "inbetween people" can be applied much more productively to the case of Polish migrants in the UK.

When in 2004 Poles came to the UK the articles depicted them through emphasizing their religiousness, work ethic, cultural similarity, in which I identified discourses showing an implicit preference of whiteness. The media admitted the significance of the Polish workforce for the British economy. What they did is; they constructed a very positive image of Poles. So positive, that some Poles believed that they could really, through hard work, become a part of the dominant (white) group of the society. As Richard Ford notes "Almost two thirds say that they have advanced socially. Even if some see themselves as on the very bottom of the ladder, they are full of hope and belief in the myth of the meritocratic paradise". (Richard Ford, *The Times* May 18 2006). However, as my research also suggests, Poles at that time did not exactly rank high in the society: they were doing menial, low-paid jobs. Thus, although racializing discourses suggest that they could reach the status of British whites, it seems not

to have been the case. As I showed in my research, even though they are phenotypically white, in the end they are "not quite" white[17].

In 2007, when the economic climate changed; Poles were presented in a less favorable manner. In contrast to the previous period, through media discourses Poles were now constructed as culturally different people who commit crimes and are 'slavering'. In this way, they were moved to the other end of the racial spectrum; they became non-white. Previously positive discourses were replaced by negative ones changing the representation of Poles, leaving, however, their position in the British society the same. Poles continued doing low paid jobs, but now they were offered even less money than before. Since they were constructed as nonwhite, one could ask if not being white equals being black? As Garner shows on a similar example of "Italians who were subject to the same kind of racializng discourses, placing them at a lower level of civilization to Anglo-Saxons ", "it is worth reiterating that 'not white' does not necessarily mean 'black'. (Garner 2003:67)". This is also confirmed by newspaper data showing, for instance, that although racial violence against Poles since 2007 increased significantly (11 May 2010 *The Sun* ), the racial attacks on "Muslims, Africans, and Gypsies from Eastern Europe" have been still much worse (1 April 2009 *The Sun*). As Garner elaborates, "being a member of an 'inbetween' group is not the same type of peripherality as that experienced by groups categorized as neither white nor 'inbetween' [i.e. black]" (2007:99).

Thus, the "inbetwenness" of Poles in the UK can be understood as occupying the position of neither black, nor white in a binary structure. It also means a relative lack of movement between the two poles, which is the opposite of the shifts and movements in the hybrid identity. Moreover, "inbetwenness" tends to subsume the subject under one category at a time in the oppositional structure without actually being fully able to identify or being

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[17] *"*not quite/ not white" is a reference to Frantz Fanon's book *Black Skin. White Mask.* (Fanon in Babha, 1994: 93)

fully identified with it. Or as in our case, it is about being able to aspire to be white and ending up not quite white and not quite black either.

In my research this "inbetweeness" has also another dimension that differs from that of Garner's. "inbetwenness" of Poles is not only referring to the construction of the group's identity in the middle of a socially existing racial scale, but also to their economic status. To put it differently, there is a correlation between the racial "neither, nor" positioning of Poles and the economic discourse accompanying it.

In the third chapter I showed how the media created a favorable image of Poles as White Swans. However, after a closer look inside this seemingly positive racial discourse I found the depiction of cheap, obedient Polish manual workers who "know their place". This is the moment when racial "inbetweeness" emerges, I would argue, as it is the economic glass ceiling that is the obstacle for Poles not being able to fully reach the status of whiteness. By contrast, in the section describing the situation after the economic crisis, Poles were negatively depicted as Swan Eaters. This time, an overt negative racial discourse shows the demoralized, disobedient Polish manual worker who causes troubles, but still "works long hours" for the lowest wages and remains in fact in the position where he/she was before, but this time he/she is "the best from the worst", a white European doing "black people's jobs".

It can be concluded that, although the positive representation of Poles before 2008 changed during the financial crisis for the worse; throughout this whole period their economic discursive position ultimately remained the same. They were neither white, nor black, but simply cheap workers.

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# APPENDIX 1

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# APPENDIX 2

INITIAL QUESTION:

1. What press do you read?

CONCRETE QUESTIONS ABOUT POLES:

2. What are the most common representations of Polish people in the press?

3. Are Poles seen more as manual workers or as young professionals?

4. How their religion is presented in media?

5. Is there a difference in the representations of Poles and 'non-British', other groups (in the sense of religion and ethnicity) for example non-white immigrants and Muslims?

6. Was there a change in media discussions about Easter Europeans?

MORE ABSTRACT QUESTIONS ABOUT BRITISH MEDIA:

7. Do you think that media show that it is easy to integrate into British society for a non-white person?

8. What is the stance of media on the integration process into British society for a white person?

9. What is more important for the process of integration ethnicity, education or language skills?

10. What do you think about British press? (probes: is it racist?)

# APPENDIX 3
## Birth rates reveal ethnic fault lines

NHS data reveals how the UK's ethnic make-up is changing, with white British women being a minority on maternity wards in 27 hospital trusts

*The Times*, 8 August 2010

Richard Woods and Jack Grimston



The UK is increasingly diverse - a long way from the days of this 1953 street party (Jonathan Hordle) Fewer than one in 10 mothers giving birth is of white British origin in some parts of Britain, according to new figures from the NHS. In 27 hospital trust areas, white British women are now in a minority on maternity wards.

# APPENDIX 4
# Britons 'lose out on jobs and housing': Race chief inquiry into claims of bias against whites

*Daily Mail*, 1 November 2007

Trevor Phillips



Polish plumbers. Eastern Europeans are getting jobs as the number of Britons in work falls



Immigration: Is 'forcing Britons out of work'