

Exploring the Othering Discourse in the Australian Press

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Abstract

Recent research has revealed that the 'othering' discourse regarding Islam and Muslims has been increased significantly in the international media. Findings of the latest research provide considerable evidence that Islam and Muslims have been constructed and portrayed in a predominantly stereotypical and problematic way wherein they have been Othered by the Western media. This research paper is set to explore the existence of 'othering' discourse in the editorial coverage of Islam and Muslims-them by the two nominated Australian newspapers during January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016. This study has incorporated lexicalization and ideological square strategies within the CDA paradigm proposed by Van Dijk to analyze the editorials published on Islam and Muslims in The Age and The Australian. The results have confirmed that both the newspapers have Othered Islam and Muslims in their editorial contents quite explicitly thus produced the 'Othering' discourse during the period under study.

Keywords: , Othering, Representation, Islam, Muslims, ideological square, lexicalization

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INTRODUCTION

There is a plethora of research evidence that substantiates the 'Othering', Us versus Them categorization, in-group and out-group discriminations, Orientalism, stereotypical, and negative discourses in the representations of Islam and Muslims by the Western media. However, quite recently, research conducted in the UK, France, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, and Spain have illustrated a gradual but significant change in the discourse regarding Islam and Muslims from 'exotic Islam' to 'threatening Islam' that cause danger to the European values and safety (Mertens and Smaele, 2016). Roza Tsagarousianou refers to this transformation of discourse as 'Securitization' of Islam (Tsagarousianou, 2016).

Orientalism is a pioneer work and a dynamic scholarly work by Edward Said which helps researchers to understand the 'power relationship' between the East and the West (Said, 2003). This work is an exploration of the justification of the Western imperialist ideas i.e. the concept of the Western superiority over the East. There are three prominent claims presented by the author in the Orientalism. First of all, the author stresses that the orientalism is politically motivated set of ideas which provides the ideological validation of the 'Western control' over the 'oriental' parts of the world. Secondly, Edward Said explains the way such tactics have been used by the European world to construct its image and how they have created and maintained their 'others'. Relying on this defined image of self and the 'other' Europe has constructed its culture superior to the Islamic culture. Thirdly, Edward Said claims that through orientalism a false and distorted image of Islamic culture has been created (Ibid.).

Spivak coins the term 'Othering' for a process in which the discourse of power is creating where the 'other' is 'mastered', 'marginalized', and 'excluded'. Spivak puts forward three examples of 'Othering' process; the first is 'worlding' (identification) whereby the 'consolidating the self' is occurred. Second one is the 'debasement' (negativization) whereby the 'other' is described in terms such as; 'brutality', 'treachery', 'perfidy', 'depravity', and 'surrender'. Third example is the 'separation' (exclusion) of the 'other' from 'our' self (Spivak, 1985). It is pertinent to mention that 'othering' is a multi-dimensional process as described by Spivak. It covers many social differentiations and deals with different aspects of the society. The concept of 'self' and 'other' is most rampant in Simon de Beauvoir's The Second Sex. Beauvoir explained the importance of gender while theorizing the concept of 'othering' as how males are regarded as the 'standard' and females as the 'other'. Referring to Hegel's concept, de Beauvoir gave more universalization to the theory of 'self' and 'other' in relations of both genders as well as other hierarchical social differences (Beauvoir, 1997).

The "us" versus "them" strategy assumes the "exotic culture" as "inferior", "ancient", "partial and belated", and "incomplete" as "compared" to the Western culture (Deltombe, 2005; Poole, 2002). The binary relationship between "us" and "them" is stressed by emphasizing on "our" tolerance being abused by "them" who want to impose "their" life style on "us" (Poole, 2016 in Mertens and de Smaele, 2016). The "marginalization" and "demarcation" of "them" illustrate

“social categorization” i.e. the division of society into two prototypes; in-group and out-group. In-group (we) and out-group (them) members are compared on the basis of various characters (Hogg, 2001). Numerous attributes and drawbacks are associated with the out-group members such as; collectivism, backwardness, laziness, religiousness, violence, low education, being economic burden, crime, poverty, high fertility, and hard to be integrated (Abadi, 2017; Abadi, d’Haenens, Roe, & Koeman, in Mertens and de Smaele, 2016. p.54; Elund, 2007).

As a concept the “Other” has a lot of complexity and it is difficult to explain what it means. We all are others for someone; similarly, everyone is other to us. We cannot understand the whole concept of “other” as it is changeable and dynamic. When we indicate someone as other, concurrently, we are also other to them and they think about us as we think about them (Engelund, 2012).

According to Michel Foucault, othering has deep relations with knowledge and power. As no one is innocent and everyone has flaws, we mostly point out other’s perceived weaknesses to make ourselves look better or stronger. It is all because of power and to perceive other’s as inferior. Colonialism is one best example of the power of othering (Engelund, 2012).

The concept of “Otherness” has most centralized status in sociological analysis that how minority and majority identities are built. This is because that the most powerful political group within the society has control over representation of different groups/identities. Sociologists/social scientists are needed to put a serious spotlight on methods and techniques in which social identities are constructed to understand the idea of “other”. We often think that identities are innate and natural, and everyone has his/her identity by birth, but it is surprising that many sociologists considered this view as not a truth/erroneous/inaccurate (Zevallos, 2011).

The study is set to explore the ‘othering’ discourse in the editorial coverage of Islam and Muslims by the Australian newspapers during January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016. Therefore, the study mainly focuses on a key research objective; to explore the othering discourse regarding Islam and Muslims in the Australian press.

This researcher has examined the editorials about Islam and Muslims published in two Australian newspapers; The Age and The Australian. The selected newspapers are considered as representative and appropriate sample of the ‘Australian Press’ for the intended objective because of their candid, explicit and lucid ideological lines.

The Age is an Australian daily newspaper. It was founded in the year 1854 and is still running successfully. It is distributed from Melbourne, Victoria but it sells copies in other cities of Australia as well. It is not only a print newspaper but it is also digital. The website is available for anyone from around the world to read the news. It has its headquarters in Victoria, Australia. The newspaper is said to be a pretty large newspaper working in Australia. Also known as ‘newspaper of record’ which means that it is considered authoritative and can publish public or legal notices. It is known for its investigative reporting. The newspaper has been publishing news for 167 years. The first editors of the newspaper were T. L. Bright and David Blair.

Currently, the editor is Gay Alcorn who is an Australian journalist and newspaper editor. The newspaper was founded by three people, two of them were brothers, John Cooke, Henry Cooke and Walter Powell (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2017; Ramirez, 2017; Reimers, 2017; The Age, 2017).

From the newspaper itself, they believe that it is important to keep economic and social progression, liberty, equity, justice and compassion in mind while writing for the newspaper. It also believes in the importance of openness of government because a government plays a role in building a strong and fair nation for its citizens. While all that is said by the newspaper itself, there have been a lot of mishaps down the line like it’s editor in chief Mark Forbes undergoing sexual harassment investigations, the incident in 2014 of them exploiting an innocent man by putting him on the cover in an incident. They had to donate to a mosque as a part of settlement because it became a legal matter. Their columnist Michael Backman was also suspended due to his alleged anti-semantic column (Ibid.).

The Australian is a broadsheet newspaper in Australia. It has been running since 1964. It is the only daily newspaper which is distributed nationally. This newspaper is also both, print and digital. Their headquarters are in New South Wales, Australia. Its first editor was Maxwell Newton. The newspaper also has a Saturday edition which goes by the name of Weekend Australian. The newspaper has been publishing for 57 years now. It was founded on 14th July 1964 by News Corp Australia. The newspaper is owned by News Corp Australia which is the largest media corporation in Australia. Its founder is James Edward Davidson and it was founded in 1923. Its editor is Michelle Gunn and editor in chief is Chris Dore who is the former editor of The Daily Telegraph, The Courier-Mail and The Sunday Times (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2017; Ramirez, 2017; Reimers, 2017; The Australian, 2017).

The newspaper works on both platforms, print and digital. It’s distributed throughout the nation and the website is available online for everyone around the world. In June of 2013, average print circulation was 116,655 and 254,891 for the Weekend Australian. The editorial line of the newspaper has been said to be ‘centre right’ which means they lean more to the political spectrum but are also closer to the centre than others and ‘right wing’ which means that social orders are normal and desirable on the basis of economics, traditions and law. The newspaper is said to be of a business and political type (Ibid.).

CONCEPTUALIZATION & OPERATIONALIZATION

Othering is a psychological and/or social process in which one group (imperial/powerful) creates its ‘other’ to construct its own identity as a superior. In the process the ‘other’ is marginalized, dehumanized, ‘excluded’, ‘collectivized’, and ‘mastered’. The comparisons are made between ‘our’ and ‘their’ social, cultural, religious, and economic standards and characteristics whereby ‘they’ are placed as inferior to ‘us’. The process includes the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ strategy and division of society into an in-group (we) and an out-group (they).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research endeavor is an effort to explore the ‘othering’ discourse on Islam and Muslims in the editorials of *The Age* and *The Australian* from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016. The researcher assumes that the identification and exploration of the ‘othering’ discourse on Islam and Muslims in the Australian newspapers will be a useful addition to the existing body of knowledge because of the over-all multicultural and migrant-friendly nature of Australia (Alharbi, 2017). Statistics show a 77% increase in the Muslims population in Australia during last ten years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016; Tolj, 2017). Muslims have migrated and settled in Australia from over 120 different countries including Lebanon, Turkey, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, America, and Europe and from many Arab countries. There are also some converts in Australia (Issues Deliberation Australia/America, 2007). So, exploring the editorial portrayal of such a significant minority in Australia would be an interesting add in the existing body of knowledge. Generally, media tend to focus and highlight the unusual, odd and sensationalism in the society. Therefore, a significantly major part of the news coverage regarding Islam and Muslims contains negativity including terrorist and violent incidents. Accordingly, the media consumers who heavily rely on media for information and awareness understand Islam and Muslims as portrayed by the media. Just like many other Western countries this is the case in Australia. Wider societies do not have direct contact with Islam and Muslims and they are made ‘known’ to them by the media (Said, 1997).

Similarly, Creutz-Kämpfi conducting a research on the Swedish language newspapers in Finland pointed out four major ‘Othering’ discourses on Islam and Muslims. He distinguished ‘clash of civilization’, ‘securitization’, ‘colonialist’ and ‘violence’ as prominent discourses in the coverage of Islam and Muslims by the newspapers. The author argues that after 9/11 the coverage of Islam and Muslims is dominated by the terms like political violence and terrorism. Some historical events have been presented by the media in such a way that create an impression about Islam as a religion with a violent tendency. He points out that there is a clear dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ in the discourse of violence (Creutz-Kämpfi, 2008). The ‘colonialist discourse’ constructs Islam as a backward religion. The Muslims have been depicted as the individuals who are unable to manage themselves. In this discourse, the author maintains, Islam is portrayed as a religion needed to be ‘reformed’ and Muslims to be ‘enlightened’. The ‘securitization’ discourse contains an image of Islam and Muslims as a security threat to the West (Ibid).

According to the researcher the ‘colonialist discourse’ constructs Islam as ‘harmless but backward’. This discourse portrays both Islam and the West as ‘two antipodes’. Drawing on the concept presented by Samuel P. Huntington in his famous book, *The Clash of Civilization*, the researcher argues that the ‘clash of civilization discourse’ constructs Islam as ‘threatening’ and as an ‘ideological antipode’ (Ibid).

In another study, Nurullah argues that the phenomenon of ‘Othering’ i.e. the process of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ in the media portrayal of Islam and Muslims is predominantly evident. The media emphasize and highlight the differing traits and attributes like

race, ethnicity and religion to create dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ (Nurullah, 2010).

Similarly, Izadi and Saghaye-Biria analyzing the editorial coverage of Iran’s nuclear program in the US newspapers point out that the US press constructed an in-group versus out-group identities. Drawing on Said’s ‘Orientalism’ and Dijk’s ‘ideological square’ the researchers argue that the newspapers produced the orientalist discourse by portraying the West as ‘us’ and Iran as ‘them’ (Izadi and Saghaye-Biria, 2007). In the same way, Behnam and Moshtaghi argue that the coverage of Iran’s nuclear program in the British press is also biased and negative. The researchers pointed out a dichotomy between EU as ‘us’ and Iran as ‘them’ (Behnam and Moshtaghi, 2008). Koosha and Shamas also point out the same kind of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy in the coverage of Iran’s nuclear program in the UK press. They indicate a discursive dichotomy in the news contents wherein EU has been constructed as ‘savior’ i.e. ‘us’ while Iran has been portrayed as ‘danger’ i.e. ‘them’ (Koosha and Shamas, 2005).

So, drawing on the conclusions from literature reviewed, it can be established that the depiction, portrayal and coverage of Islam and Muslims in the Western as well as in the Australian media is problematic. Research findings from America and from many European countries have evidenced the existence of ‘othering’ discourse in the depiction of Islam and Muslims. Therefore, it is pertinent to explore whether and to what extent the editorial contents of the selected newspapers contained the ‘othering’ discourse regarding Islam and Muslims during the period under study.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

For this research paper, the researcher has employed purposive sampling method to select two editorials from *The Age* and two editorials from *The Australian*. Considering the main objective of the study, the researcher has used the Ideological Square and the Lexicalization devices within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to analyze the editorials from the selected two Australian newspapers. The data has been collected using ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’ as the key terms from a reliable source ‘LexisNexis’ for the time period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016. Employing the ‘Census Sampling’, ‘Data Cleansing’, and the ‘Purposive Sampling’ the researcher has selected the most pertinent and related editorials from the whole data. Two editorials from each selected newspaper has been selected as sample using the purposive sampling.

Data Analyses

The data has been analyzed and interpreted using the ideological square and lexicalization proposed by Teun A. van Dijk within the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk, 1998b). The process includes identifying and exploring prominent verbs, phrases, adjectives, adverbs, and sentences within the headlines and the overall text of the editorials. The researcher has employed

ideological square and lexicalization as lenses to carry out the process of data analyses and interpretation.

The 'Ideological Square' approach incorporates binary positions emphasizing 'Our' good, 'Their' bad and de-emphasizing 'Their' good and 'Our' bad. This strategy, as proposed and advocated by Teun A. van Dijk (1998a; 1998b), of positive in-group and negative out-group is manifested through various lexical choices and many other linguistic facets within a discourse (van Dijk, 1998b). So, in terms of the 'ideological square' the in-group and out-group are presented in a polarized way wherein in-group (Us) is portrayed in a positive and favorable way while out-group (Them) is portrayed in an unfavorable and negative way (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005). The 'ideological square' is a theoretical and methodological model that lays emphasis on media texts' examination to determine and unpack journalistic ideological positions that establish distinguishable projection and construction of various social groups (Philo, 2007). Lexicalization and polarization (Us vs. Them categorization) are two out of numerous analytical techniques within the domain of the 'ideological square' wherein the former is associated with the 'style' and the latter is related to the 'meaning' aspect of the critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2004).

The strategy of 'lexicalization' is incorporated through 'lexical choices' i.e. employing positive and negative evaluations within a text to portray 'Us' (in-group) favorably and 'Them (out-group) unfavorably. The lexicalization is the manifestation of the 'ideological polarization' within a discourse (Shojaei, Youssefi, & Hosseini, 2013).

So, keeping in view the relevance and appropriateness with the nature of this study, the researcher has incorporated lexicalization and ideological square strategies within the CDA paradigm proposed by Van Dijk to analyze the editorials published on Islam and Muslims in The Age and The Australian..

Discourse of Othering in the Age and the Australian

Main objective that was set at the outset of this study was to identify if there was any Us versus Them categorization in the contents of the selected newspapers while representing Muslims during the period under study.

The analyzed editorial contents of The Age prove the Us versus Them categorization in the editorials. The findings show that the newspaper portrayed and constructed Muslims as; exotic, poor, rigid, brutal, immoral, corrupt, nonsense, and illiterate. The editorials contained emphasis on 'their' bad and 'our' good while 'our' bad mitigated. The editorial contents of The Age did not highlight a division between in-group (us i.e. Australians, Europeans and Westerners) and out-group (Them i.e. Muslims within and outside Australian boundaries) rather there was emphasis on 'our' good and 'their' bad only in the editorials. Wearing the lenses of 'lexicalization' and 'ideological square', the researcher has found out following relevant dominant themes that validate the 'Othering' discourse in the editorials of The Age;

The editorial entitled; 'Indonesia tested by the raging mob', published on December 18, 2016, was the first one in the selected sample that carried 'Othering' discourse. The editorial contained following 'Othering' themes; ...extraordinary trial, ...and sends a worrisome signal about the political and social trajectory of Australia's most significant neighbour... (Indonesia tested by the raging mob, 2016).

Lexical choices used by the newspaper in this lead paragraph such as; extraordinary trial, Christian governor, monumental importance, worrisome signal, Australia's most significant neighbour, imply polarized reporting of the situation by The Age. The newspaper categorizes the trial as an 'extraordinary trial', 'monumental', and 'worrisome signal' for 'Australia's most significance neighbour'. It is extraordinary because it involves a 'Christian' as an accused, and because the country is 'our' neighbour where 'democracy' is under threat. Emphasizing 'Christian' identity of the governor and the country's identity as 'the most significant neighbour' implies polarization strategy in the reporting. And the opinion of the newspaper contains the 'Othering' discourse wherein the religious 'difference' has been emphasized. Also, being a Christian governor in a 'world's largest Muslim-majority nation' is an indication of true democracy which is mitigated by The Age in the whole article. Lexical choice popularly known used by The Age for representing Mr. Ahok imply newspaper's tilt in favor of him. His 'Christianity' and Chinese 'ethnicity' has been used as indicator of 'difference' from 'them' and as indicator of part of 'us'. In terms of polarization strategy, the newspaper emphasizes Mr. Ahok's religious and ethnic identity as a reason he is being 'accused' for. The comments and choices quoted here from his speech to 'fishermen' activate the ideological differences between 'us' and 'them'. The newspaper places Mr. Ahok in a favorable space by quoting his statement in front of judges as his defense.

By quoting Mr. Ahok's statements from his speech to fishermen and his statement to judges, The Age places him in 'our' space, compares him the politicians who 'lie' and those who 'don't want to compete fairly in elections'. By highlighting his 'popularity', his 'different' ethnicity and religion in a 'largest Muslim population nation', the newspaper emphasizes 'our' good, 'their' bad, and 'their' good is mitigated.

Lexical items such as; religious precept, contested, guilty, most disturbing, hardline Muslim, mass protests, turned violent, conservative enclaves, disturbances, forced, fears, deliberately fomenting, undermine the national government, portray a negative image of the people (Muslims i.e. them) who are 'deliberately fomenting the blaspheming campaign to undermine the national government'. Muslims have been 'Othered' as 'hard line Muslims' who are 'mobilized' in 'mass protests' and those who are being 'ferried in' from 'conservative enclaves' of the country. In terms of polarization strategy, the newspaper places 'them' in a negative space. These comments portray Muslims of Jakarta in a 'collectivized' manner, which are 'fomenting blasphemy campaign' against a person who 'served' the country.

The newspaper emphasizes 'our' good by presupposing Mr. Ahok's win as; His campaign...derailed. Ideologically, portraying 'accusations' against him as

‘political’, the newspaper follows the emphasizing their bad strategy. By questioning the timing of the trial and by presupposing his win, The Age emphasizes ‘their’ bad and ‘our’ good. Statements such as; Hundreds of thousands of people...national government, imply newspaper’s tilt towards Mr. Ahok who has been characterized as the one who holds qualities of ‘us’ and who has ‘served’ the country. Lexically he has been compared with ‘hardline Muslims’, ‘conservative enclaves’, and with ‘opponents who deliberately foment the blasphemy law’.

There is a stereotypical and decontextualized representation of Muslims and Islam (them/other) where Muslims are categorized as; mass protestors, violent mob, hardline Muslims, conservative enclaves, and the blasphemy law has been portrayed as a tool used by Muslims to ‘undermine’ and ‘defeat’ the one who champions the religious and political freedom.

Using lexical terms such as; understandably jittery, religious extremists, atmosphere, violent radicalization, consequences, subject to calumny, ethnic slurs, Chinese bastard, Chinese Infidel, ugly reminder, race riots, the newspaper portrays a negative and stereotypical image of Muslims. Structurally, Mr. Ahok has been poisoned as the one up against ‘religious extremists’ and ‘violent radicals’ who make him subject to their ‘calumny’ and ‘ethnic slurs’ such as ‘Chinese infidel’ and ‘Chinese bastard’. In terms of polarization strategy, ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad is emphasized by presenting Mr. Ahok as a victim of ‘religious extremism’, ‘violent radicalization’, ‘liar and opportunist political opponents’, and by portraying him as ‘democratic’, and ‘popular’ politician. Ideological polarization is also activated in the article while projecting ‘consequences’ of Mr. Ahok’s ‘guilt’, ‘acquittal’, and/or ‘conviction’.

Through the lexical choices such as; persecution of minority sects, threat, religious and political freedom, grappled, authoritarian rule, dictator Suharto, the newspaper opines that the case along with the ‘persecutions of minorities sects’ is a ‘threat’ to the ‘religious and political freedom’. The newspaper evaluates the case as a turning point for Indonesia to become a country with ‘mobocracy’ or ‘democracy’. In terms of polarization strategy, the newspaper emphasizes ‘their’ bad as; the threat to religious and political freedom appears to be growing in the country.

The editorial entitled; ‘Western voices must swell as IS grip slips’, published on July 11, 2016, was the third one in the selected sample that carried ‘Othering’ discourse. The editorial contained following ‘Othering’ themes;

A hint of ‘Othering’ discourse and creating ‘other within the other’ strategy is evident from this comment presented in a polarized way; the biggest victims of Islamist terrorism continue to be Muslims themselves.

The analyzed editorial contents of The Australian overwhelmingly prove the Us versus Them categorization. The findings validate that the newspaper portrayed and constructed Muslims overwhelmingly as; exotic, inferior, backward, misogynist, censorious, poor, economic burden, rigid, brutal, deceitful, untrustworthy, immoral, corrupt, nonsense, illiterate, and as an out-group. The editorial contents of The Australian contained a clear division between in-group (us i.e. Australians,

Europeans and Westerners) and out-group (Them i.e. Muslims within and outside Australian boundaries) wherein all positive attributes have been associated with ‘us’ and explicitly negative attributes have been associated with ‘them’. Wearing the lenses of ‘lexicalization’ and ‘ideological square’, the researcher has found out following relevant dominant themes that validate the ‘Othering’ discourse in the editorial contents of The Australian;

First editorial in the selected sample of The Australian that contained the Othering discourse was published on December 23, 2016, titled; Islamist terrorism re-emergent. The use of ‘Islamist’ with ‘terrorism’ and presupposing its ‘re-emergence’ by The Australian makes the headline ‘polarized’ and ‘lexical’ in terms of its style. On the other hand, by conflating Islam with terrorism and by emphasizing the ‘reemergence’ of ‘Islamist terrorism’, the newspaper presents a securitized, stereotypical and biased image of Islam. Overall, the headline gives an impression as if terrorism is a teaching of Islam and its reappearing. So, Islam has been portrayed as ‘terrorist threat’ in the editorial contents under this headline. Following ‘Othering’ themes were prominent in the editorial contents; the deep tensions surrounding the unprecedented blasphemy trial of Jakarta’s respected Christian governor... Seeing a way of striking at Indonesia’s moderate President, Joko Widodo, a close friend of Ahok, extremists have been whipping up mass public fervour to ensure his conviction... (Islamist terrorism re-emergent , 2016).

This paragraph contains an obvious division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ wherein highlighting the religious identity of the ‘respected Christian governor’, the newspaper emphasizes ‘our’ good. The governor has been evaluated as ‘universally known’ and the President as ‘moderate’ because he is a ‘close friend’ of the ‘respected Christian governor’ Ahok. Dividing ‘us’ and ‘them’ on the basis of religious identity, The Australian emphasizes ‘their’ bad by portraying ‘them’ as ‘extremists’ who ‘seeing a way of striking’ (using blasphemy law against Christian governor) are ‘whipping up’ the ‘mass public fervor’ against ‘us’. It warns Australians to be extra vigilant at Christmas and New Year gatherings when Westerners could be targeted... (Ibid).

The newspaper produces an ‘othering’ discourse by emphasizing on ‘Westerners could be targeted’ i.e. ‘our’ identity.

In next editorial entitled; ‘Jihadist’s deadly hit on liberty, equality, fraternity’, published on July 16, 2016, the newspaper has created ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ dichotomy as; Palestinian militants have been using cars to run down Israeli civilians... The fact Muslims and their children also suffered would not trouble the jihadists one iota... (Jihadist’s deadly hit on liberty, equality, fraternity, 2016).

This paragraph contains classic examples of ‘Othering’; emphasizing ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad, and ‘securitization’ of Islam and Muslims. Lexical items, ‘Palestinian militants’ and ‘Israeli civilians’, are true examples of ‘their’ bad and ‘our’ good. Also, the statement; Palestinian militants have been using cars to run down Israeli civilians, represents a ‘polarization strategy’ on the part of the newspaper while reporting on Muslims. Muslims (they/other) have been dehumanized in the

comment; the fact Muslims and their children also suffered would not trouble the jihadists one iota, which portrays ‘them’ as inhuman and barbaric.

Overall, there is a clear evidence of Muslim Othering in the editorial contents of The Australian during period under study. The selected editorials produced the ‘Othering’ discourse regarding Islam and Muslims. The newspaper ‘othered’ Islam and Muslims in its editorial contents by associating following prominent themes with ‘them’; economic burden, inferior, misogynist, problematic other, emphasis on ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad, exotic, rigid, dehumanization, backward, collectivization, stereotyping, hate preachers, decontextualization, us versus them division, in-group versus out-group dichotomy, illiterate, orthodox, confused, corrupt, medieval, perplexed, to be monitored, to be scrutinized, deceitful, untrustworthy, disadvantaged, mismanaged, and incompetent.

As for as comparison is concerned, both The Age and The Australian have othered Islam and Muslims quite explicitly thus produced the ‘Othering’ discourse during the period under study in their editorial contents. However, The Australian highlighted ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad, constructed the in-group more positively and the out-group more negatively. The Australian in comparison with The Age has been found to be drawing more clear line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ thus increasing more polarization in Australia. According to the findings The Australian constructed ‘us’ (Australia, Europe and the West) more positively and ‘them’ (Muslims within and outside Australia) more negatively.

CONCLUSION

Inspired by the work of Edward Said (2003) and Spivak (1985) the study at hand explored if the Australian press ‘misrepresented’ Islam and Muslims (other) in its editorial contents. The findings show that the selected sample of The Age contained ‘Othering’ discourse. Prominent ‘Othering’ themes in the editorial contents of The Age were; religious differences, mitigating ‘their’ good, emphasis on ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad’, stereotyping, decontextualization, rigid, and collectivization. On the other hand, there is a clear evidence of ‘Muslim Othering’ in the editorials of The Australian during period under study. The newspaper ‘othered’ Islam and Muslims in its editorial contents by associating following prominent themes with ‘them’; economic burden, inferior, misogynist, problematic other, emphasis on ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad, exotic, rigid, dehumanization, backward, collectivization, stereotyping, hate preachers, decontextualization, us versus them division, in-group versus out-group dichotomy, illiterate, orthodox, confused, corrupt, medieval, perplexed, to be monitored, to be scrutinized, deceitful, untrustworthy, disadvantaged, mismanaged, and incompetent.

So, as it was confirmed by previous studies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013; Creutz-Kämppi, 2008; d’Haenens & Bink, 2007; Elund, 2007; Nurullah, 2010; Ottosen, 1995; Poole, 2016 & 2002; Tsagarousianou, 2016) the study at hand provides an overt evidence of the ‘othering’ discourse regarding Islam and Muslims in the Australian press during the time period under study.

Consequently, this study confirms the existence of the ‘othering’ process in the selected Australian newspaper during the under study time period. Both The Age and The Australian have othered Islam and Muslims quite explicitly thus produced the ‘Othering’ discourse during the period under study in their editorial contents. However, The Australian highlighted ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad, constructed the in-group more positively and the out-group more negatively. The Australian in comparison with The Age has been found to be drawing more clear line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ thus increasing more polarization in Australia. According to the findings The Australian constructed ‘us’ (Australia, Europe and the West) more positively and ‘them’ (Muslims within and outside Australia) more negatively.

Such an explicit and extensive discourse, wherein Muslims have been ‘othered’ and portrayed negatively, would widen an already existing divide between mainstream Australians and the Muslims. The consequences of Muslim othering in a country like Australia would cause more hatred, racial attacks, discrimination, and prejudices against Muslims. This would be a severe dent to the multicultural image of Australia, and loss of peace and harmony in the country.

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