Special Edition: Islamophobia and Crime – Anti-Muslim Demonising and Racialised Targeting
Guest Editor's Introduction

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This special issue deals with anti-Muslim racism, crime, criminalisation and attacks – both ideological and material – on Muslims and their communities in countries like Britain, Canada and Australia. A new spectre is haunting these places: an imagined 'other' is seen to be subversively spreading Muslim 'extremism' and exhorting anti-Western violence from within these societies, supporting global terrorism abroad and at home, and espousing hyperpatriarchal, homophobic and sexually exploitative culture. The 'Muslim other' has become the folk demon of our time in a racialising ideology that circulates internationally and has strikingly similar effects in quite different local contexts.

This has drastic consequences for the lived experience of Muslims (and sometimes those mistaken for them) as differences become fixated upon as deviance, the perceived deviance becomes amplified, harsh measures are demanded of the state by right-thinking moral entrepreneurs, and vigilantes step in where they see the state as holding back from its moral duty. Criminalisation of the 'Muslim other' makes unlawful a range of practices that had previously been lawful, and makes suspect communities out of those going legitimately about their everyday lives. Targeting by the state and vilification in the media embolden anti-Muslim hate crime, and sometimes constitute it. The victims are routinely blamed for not integrating in 'western' societies that have shown little collective commitment to incorporating their Muslim members such that they can participate and belong

Thus, in the month before this issue goes to press, the British Prime Minister (in July 2015) has made a landmark speech about 'extremism' (Cameron 2015). Two types of 'grooming' figure in this speech and, in popular demonography, there is slippage from one to the other. The same word is used for what 'Muslim extremists' do when they 'radicalise' (usually young and mostly male) vulnerable and disgruntled Muslims who are marginalised in western societies. It is also what supposedly hyperpatriarchal Muslim men do when they (and, of course, they alone) sexually exploit vulnerable young woman, as in the lately notorious sexual abuse crimes in Rotherham in northern England, instanced in Prime Minister Cameron's speech and examined for their racialised blaming in Waqas Tufail's article in this issue. Whole communities are held to be responsible for these wrongs, and are charged with righting them. Meanwhile, in the same month, two principals of a British paedophile ring convicted in Norwich Crown Court of rape, conspiracy to rape and inciting a child to engage in sexual activity did not have their crimes attributed to their faith or their culture, since they were apparently white and English (Baker 2015).

In the tradition of critical criminological study of deviance and social control, this special issue examines, across a range of empirical contexts, processes by which Muslims are being collectively criminalised – processes of immense consequences for the daily lives of those so targeted, and with obvious implications for social justice, democracy and the rule of law more generally.

Barbara Perry's rich qualitative study based in Canada explores the factor of Muslims' 'visibility' in their experiences of ethnic targeting by the state for security surveillance and of Islamophobic hostility and hate crime. Fittingly, she draws on her analysis to explore some ways forward that go beyond the collective pulling in of heads that such mechanisms of social control often serve to enforce. **Tahir Abbas** and **Imran Awan** analyse the British state's recent counterterrorism measures that target Muslim communities – and especially their young men – in the name of preventing 'extremism'. As well as undermining the civil rights of the communities concerned and departing from the rule of law generally, such policies are shown to be ineffectual and probably counterproductive. In addition, these measures encourage far-right racist groups by resonating with their ideology and singling out the same likely suspects for racialised scapegoating. Genuine community consultation and inclusion needs to replace policies that blame Muslim minorities for their social marginalisation and thus exacerbate social inequalities that foster discontent.

Waqas Tufail examines, in a perceptive ethnographic study, how the recent 'grooming' scandals in Rotherham and Rochdale in northern England manifest Islamophobia on the part of moral entrepreneurs in politics and the mass media. Muslim young men especially are racialised as violently sexually predatory and exploitative in their supposed endemic misogyny. Both forms of deviance are ideologically labelled with the term 'grooming'. This adds to and compounds the experiences of British Muslims in these areas, and across the nation, of being criminalised collectively as supporters of religious extremism and thus international terrorism. In **Irene Zempi**'s and **Neil Chakraborti**'s contribution, we see a close-up ethnographic account of Muslim women in the United Kingdom being victimised through hate crime and acts of Islamophobic incivility. There is an irony here in the targeted groups being deprecated for 'keeping to themselves', when it is intimidation within the dominant culture which leads them to 'keep to themselves' for their own safety and wellbeing. An especial irony, justifiably seen by some Muslim woman as hypocrisy, is the assertion by oppressors of veiled Muslim woman, including violent and vilifying oppressors, that the practice of veiling is itself simply the oppression of Muslim women.

Selda Dagistanli offers, in the Australian context, a nuanced analysis of approaches that purport to accommodate cultural difference and to counter ethnocentrism within the criminal justice system, at the peril of essentialising and racialising deviances of misogyny and sexual violence as somehow ethnically specific. In examining the handling of the notorious cases of group sexual assault by the 'K' brothers in western Sydney in the early 2000s, Dagistanli suggests some ways forward that might avoid such pitfalls that have lent themselves unwittingly to Islamophobic injustices. **Nicole Asquith** develops an elegant argument that 'honour based violence' (including *in extremis*, 'honour killings'), far from being deviance culturally determined by the Muslim faith, is arguably a special case of the ongoing and culturally widespread violence of heteronormativity which too often goes unremarked. What makes the special case 'special' in this instance is merely the selectivity of Islamophobia.

In **Shakira Hussein**'s telling case study of Islamophobic panic over halal labelling in Australia and beyond, we see Muslims demonised for keeping invisible, sneakily foisting their dietary prescriptions onto an unwitting 'mainstream'. Here a purportedly pernicious 'invisibility' is attacked and panicked over, as being just as problematic as the excessive 'visibility' of Muslims earlier examined by Barbara Perry. Heads you lose, tails you can't win. **Monish Bhatia** brings a

telling ethnographic study to bear on the contemporary criminalisation of asylum seekers in the UK and indeed the European Union. This piece tells the story, in asylum seekers' own words, of their experiences of British immigration authorities, of being racialised as 'dangerous' and criminalised as 'illegals'. Bhatia shows how restrictive immigration policies and their enforcement not only construct asylum seekers ideologically as law-breakers but also actually set them up more or less inevitably to fulfil this prophesy. The stories of Ali, Inam, Rizwaan, Rafiq and Mustafa convey graphically their lived experience of this Kafkaesque policy trap.

Finally, **Linda Briskman** comments on the 'creeping blight' of institutionalised Islamophobia in Australia over the last year. We have seen the media-driven and politically manipulated panic over supposed support among Australian Muslims for *Daesh* (or the 'Islamic State'), with highly publicised and media-accompanied 'terrorism raids' including seizure by security forces of a plastic wall-decoration 'sword'. Shortly thereafter, in December 2014, an 18-year-old young man, Numan Haider, was shot dead by a police officer after he allegedly attacked his colleague with a knife during an interaction strangely arranged to take place on a Melbourne suburban street, nearby the police station. He had reportedly been targeted by anti-terrorism officers and had his passport withdrawn for his 'extreme' views, and was quite clearly suffering from mental illness. Much was made in the media of his Afghan refugee background. The Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, had said that anyone with a smart phone and a knife could be a terrorist, and everyone that knew he meant Muslims. In December 2014, we saw the siege in the Lindt Café on Martin Place, Sydney, by a mentally deranged man with a domestic motive and grievance, turned into a terrorist attack of purported Muslim extremism. Briskman sees a causal connection between the media construction of these occurrences, their political exploitation, draconian actions by the state in the name of counterterrorism, and right-wing populist Islamophobia in a country where the attorney general recently espoused people's right to bigotry.

This institutionalised Islamophobia in Australia is found in similar forms throughout the global 'west', which includes the UK, Europe and North America, as we see in all the articles of this special issue. Together, these articles contribute to the better understanding of this racialised criminalising of Muslims, with a view to confronting and ultimately dismantling it. Some of the authors herein suggest some concrete useful ways of working towards this; all are implicitly committed to this project. Justice and democracy demand no less.

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