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Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper, University of Oxford

‘Mass Migration’, Crime and ‘Decent People’:

The Portrayal of Polish Migrants

in British Newspapers

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Michaelmas Term 2008

Sponsor: Austrian Press Agency



Executive summary

The research paper “‘Mass migration’, crime and ‘decent people’: The portrayal of Polish migrants in British newspapers” focuses on the coverage of migration from Poland to the United Kingdom following the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004. The sample analysed is taken from three national newspapers - *The Guardian*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* - in the period between April 1 and May 14, 2008. The first part of the analysis concentrates on the amount of reporting, central issues covered and, most importantly, the question who is quoted and gets his or her arguments across. One of the central findings is that all three papers quote politicians, institutions and think tanks on a regular basis, while “ordinary” Polish citizens and their British neighbours very rarely seem to get a say. The second part of the paper is a case study of the first coverage of a report by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in April 2008 about challenges facing the police forces due to immigration from Eastern Europe. By means of a basic content analysis, it is shown that even though the three newspapers quote similar facts and arguments, the messages of their – supposedly rather neutral – news stories seem to be completely different.

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1. Introduction

“The great East European tide”, “Nurse killed in ‘Wild West’ gun crossfire”, “Gangmaster stripped of licence for abusing migrant workers”– different as they might seem at first glance, all of these headlines have one thing in common: in the centre of the stories they refer to are Polish citizens who came to the United Kingdom since their country joined the European Union in May 2004. It has been estimated that the enlargement of the EU more than four years ago has “produced the largest ever wave of immigration to the UK”, with Poles representing the biggest national group from Eastern Europe coming to Britain since then¹. Therefore, it does not seem surprising that immigration from this country should be an issue covered in some detail by different British media. But what happens once this migratory “wave” has ebbed away and considerably large numbers of immigrants are going back to their home-countries, as has, according to recent surveys, particularly been the case in 2007 and 2008²? Does the Polish community in Britain still remain in the headlines? And if so, what kinds of stories are told by some of the most influential newspapers in the country that arguably have the capacity to shape or at least influence their readers’ perceptions? Do the ordinary people concerned, be it Polish migrants or their British-born neighbours, ever get the opportunity to tell their stories or at least their sides of a story? And in how far does the coverage allow drawing conclusions about a possible editorial line that the papers might take on immigration issues in general? These questions were the starting points for the analysis of six weeks of coverage of Polish migrants in three British newspapers presented here.

Though attempting to provide as many insights as possible, it has to be stressed from the outset that a research project of such a limited scope can only ever make claims about the specific sample analysed rather than providing definitive answers about newspaper reporting in general. It can, however, aspire to raise important issues and highlight tendencies that seem of interest when looking at the coverage of migrants

¹ Cf. Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich 2006, 2.

² According to estimates by the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr), about half of the migrant workers arriving in the UK since 2004 have already left Britain. What is more, survey data provided by the think tank “indicates that the pace of return to Poland among migrants in the UK has accelerated during 2007 and 2008, indicating that anecdotal evidence that Poles are starting to return in greater numbers paints an accurate picture.” (Pollard, Latorre and Srisandarajah 2008, 20)

and minority groups in the British media, and this is indeed one of the objectives of this paper.

2. Project outline

The analysis focuses on the coverage of Polish migrants by three national British newspapers - *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* - which are commonly considered to represent different political orientations³, different market sectors⁴ and different audience segments⁵. With a circulation of 3,045,899 million, *The Sun* is the most widely read of the three dailies, followed by the *Daily Mail* with 2,193,715 and *The Guardian* with a circulation of 358,379.⁶

The research sample is taken from a period of six weeks between April 1 and May 14, 2008. This time span covers the fourth anniversary of Polish EU accession, thus “inviting” journalists to reflect on this recent migratory flow triggered by the enlargement of the European Union and portray the Polish community and Polish life in the UK. It also marks a time of election campaigning preceding the local elections in England and Wales on May 1 in which Poles (as EU citizens) were entitled to vote. In addition, at the beginning of April 2008 the Lords’ Economic Affairs Committee published its report about “The Economic Impact of Immigration”, also referring to Eastern Europeans coming to the UK. The articles analysed in this paper were collected from newspaper archives in Oxford (Bodleian and Public Libraries) and London (British Library). The online archives of the three dailies were then used as a

³ While the *Guardian* is commonly considered a centre-left paper, *Sun* and *Daily Mail* are seen to hold more right-wing positions (although the *Sun* supported Labour in all general elections since 1997). This, however, does not necessarily imply unwavering support for one particular political party. In his book “Politics and the Media in Britain”, Raymond Kuhn argues that there are five features of newspaper partisanship since New Labour first came to power: “First, while some national newspapers still tend to have a natural affinity with a particular party (such as the *Mirror* titles for Labour, and the *Mail* and *Telegraph* titles for the Conservatives), partisanship is more conditional than in the past. For example, the support given by *The Sun* to the Blair government after 1997, evidenced by the paper again backing Labour in the 2001 and 2005 general elections, cannot be compared with the unconditional adulation the same newspaper accorded the Conservative government and party during the 1980s.” Also, Kuhn argues, national newspaper partisanship has become “more volatile” and “more personalized”, “more issue-oriented than party-based” and “more pluralistic and multi-faceted”: “Coverage of – and even support for – different political options is now evident within a single newspaper.” (Kuhn 2007, 223/4).

⁴ In a recent essay about “UK National Newspapers”, Geoff Ward qualifies *The Sun* as “downmarket”, the *Daily Mail* as “midmarket” and *The Guardian* as “upmarket” (Ward 2007, 74). The Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) categorises *The Sun* as a “Popular”, the *Daily Mail* as a “Middle Market” and *The Guardian* as a “Quality” newspaper.

⁵ Cf. Richardson 2007, 80: “As most people are aware, broadsheet newspapers tend to sell more within the elite and upper middle classes, the mid-markets tend to sell to the middle and lower middle classes and the red tops tend to sell to the working classes.”

⁶ These figures published by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) refer to the period of 27 October 2008 to 23 November 2008. See <http://www.abc.org.uk>; last accessed on 19 December 2008.

corrective to make sure that the sample was as complete as possible in terms of the selection criteria defined for the analysis.

The aim of this paper is to give an overview of the coverage in the chosen period of time, but also to provide some in-depth analysis by means of a case study. The methodological approach follows the guidelines of content analysis. This method seems adequate, among other things, because, as Michelle Jackson points out, it lies to a certain degree “between the quantitative and qualitative divide”: “Content analysis is often considered to be a quantitative method, as the purpose is to turn complex material into a set of numbers within a relatively small set of categories. However, in some senses content analysis lies between the quantitative and qualitative divide – it embodies the qualitative features of interpretation and close reading of texts, and then turns these features into quantitative data.” (Jackson 2009, 78)⁷

The first part of the analysis focuses on the following research questions:

- Is there a comparable amount of coverage of Polish migrants in the three papers?
- What issues are predominant?
- What aspects are highlighted by which paper?
- Who gets a voice/his or her arguments across?

The second part consists of a case study of the first coverage of a report by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) about challenges facing the police forces due to immigration from Eastern Europe. The report was leaked to different media outlets and quoted by *The Guardian*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* in news stories, comments and editorials on 16 and/or 17 April 2008. The main aim of the case study is to highlight differences in the coverage of the three papers and to find out if there is an editorial line to be detected even in the supposedly (more) balanced news stories.

⁷ That is, of course, not to say that content analysis as a method has not got its limitations, as John Eldridge points out: “Clearly, the analysis of output through the method of content analysis [is] only one element in the study of the communication process. Before content is the production process: all the things that lead to the linguistic and visual encoding in one way rather than another. After output is reception. Because we can show that information is shaped in certain kinds of ways, that stories have certain kinds of predominating themes, and so on, we do not suppose, and never have, that those on the receiving end of these messages hear or see them in the same way. Yet, unless we have some method for analyzing content, we have no basis for discovering what it is that people are responding to.” (Eldridge 1995, 13)

3. The background - EU enlargement and “mass immigration”

When ten Southern and Central-Eastern European states (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) joined the European Union in May 2004, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom were the only EU-15 countries to open their labour markets from the date of accession⁸. British government estimates then famously said that only several thousand people would migrate from the accession countries to the UK each year. A report commissioned by the Home Office about the magnitude of potential migration flows to Britain stated in 2003 that “[t]he forecasts indicate that net immigration from the AC-10 to the UK after the current enlargement of the EU will be relatively small, at between 5,000 and 13,000 immigrants per year up to 2010.”⁹ However, the report also stressed that these figures had to be “interpreted with great caution” due to methodological problems:

A major shortcoming of the UK analysis is the lack of good data. The fact that no administrative figures on net migration to the UK are available means that survey data has to be used, which introduces a large potential error in the analysis. The approach used does not explicitly model return migrations and predictions are based on the assumption that the proportion of immigrants deciding to go back to their origin countries, as well as the return patterns, will be the same for the AC-10 countries as for the historical sending countries to the UK. However, this is a strong assumption, in particular given the strong indications that many East-West migrations will be temporary. (Dustmann et al. 2003, 58)

While the (ultimately inaccurate) estimates of 5,000 to 13,000 migrants per year continue to be mentioned and criticised by newspapers to this day and a lot is made of the fact that the migratory flows following the enlargement of the EU in 2004 were vastly underestimated, the reservations expressed by the authors of this and similar other forecasts seem to be largely forgotten or perhaps ignored. At the same time, the lack of adequate data and precise figures about the extent and nature of immigration to Britain is highlighted and in fact heavily criticised in many of the same media publications. This was also the case in the period of time analysed for this

⁸ Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich sum up the arrangements implemented in the UK as follows: “Nationals from two of the new entrants, Cyprus and Malta, were granted full free movement rights and rights to work, whilst transitional measures were applied to nationals from the other eight entrants, subsequently referred to as the A8. In particular, in order to take up employment in the UK, A8 nationals are required to register with the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). The access of A8 nationals to the UK labour market is further regulated by the restriction of access to welfare benefits.” (Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich 2006, 4)

⁹ Cf. Dustman, Christian et al. (2003). The impact of EU enlargement on migration flows. Home Office Online Report 25/03

paper.¹⁰ However, the fact that there seems to be so little adequate statistical information can also have a direct impact on the actual newspaper stories about immigrants, as the Chief Executive of the Immigration Advisory Service (IAS), Keith Best, points out: “A lot of it has been reporting anecdotally and on the basis of ignorance. This whole area is rife for the deployment of political prejudice, if you want to do it, with very little ability for anybody to gainsay that or negate what is said because you can’t confront an allegation with a counter-allegation because you don’t have the facts.”¹¹

As has already been mentioned, many of the predictions and forecasts made about migration to the UK following the EU enlargement of 2004 turned out not to be correct¹², and the estimated numbers were surpassed very quickly. The Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) indicates that 766,000 initial applications to register were approved between April 2004 and December 2007. However, there are limitations as to the validity of WRS data as the only basis for estimates about the number of Polish and other immigrants from Eastern Europe since 2004: “[T]hose who are required to register may not always do so and some workers are exempt from registering on the WRS, most notably those who are self-employed.” (Pollard, Latorre and Sriskandarajah 2008, 18). In addition, it does not seem clear how many of the people who registered on the WRS, especially in the first few months after the enlargement of the EU, may already have been working in Britain in the shadow economy. As Somerville points out, “the decision to allow A-8 migrants the right to work in the UK led to the overnight regularisation of all the nationals from those countries who had been working ‘illegally’ in the country prior to 2004.” (Somerville

¹⁰ To give just a few examples: In its article “The great East European tide”, the *Daily Mail* wrote on May 1: “Ministers had estimated there would be only 13,000 arrivals each year after the EU admitted eight new members. But the IPPR, which studied a range of official sources, said the true number to arrive seeking work since 2004 was 1,018,400.” (p. 10). In an editorial published on April 1 (p.8, “The Sun says”) the *Sun* said: “[I]n order to plan for our future – on healthcare, education and transport – we must know who is coming in and who is going out. We need to know broadly where they are, and what they are doing. A damning new report reveals we haven’t a clue. Government statistics are either ‘misleading or irrelevant’ - or don’t exist at all.” In a slightly different context, a perceived lack of adequate data was also mentioned by Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, director of research at the ippr, in a guest comment published by the *Guardian* on April 2 (p. 32): “Unfortunately, in the absence of good quality, timely, nuanced data, it is impossible to calculate the true impacts of immigration.”

¹¹ Interview, 5 November 2008.

¹² Among the reasons for the miscalculations given by experts are that forecasts did not take into account the restrictions imposed by four fifths of the EU-15, underestimated diversion effects caused by these restrictions and were based on permanent, rather than temporary migration flows. Another factor is that a “particularly buoyant economy, low unemployment rates and high labour demand produced a particularly strong pull factor to the UK.” (Pollard et al 2008, 16). Research by the ippr also found that “the patterns of post-enlargement migration are very different from those of significant waves of migration to Britain in the past. In contrast to previous migrants, it is financially and logistically possible for migrants from the new EU member states to come to the UK on a temporary or seasonal basis, and to regularly visit home while living in Britain.” (Pollard et al 2008, 5)

2007, 37). According to Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich, even though “it is virtually impossible to provide an estimate of undocumented migration by Poles prior to 2004, both qualitative and indirect quantitative data (e.g. of persons refused entry, the number of business trips, students, *au pairs* and tourists) suggests this is likely to have been substantial.” (Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich 2006, 5)

According to estimates by the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr), around one million migrant workers from the eight Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 have arrived in the UK in the past four years, but about half of them have already left Britain. Nevertheless, the number of Poles in the UK is still much higher than it used to be before May 2004: “Polish nationals have gone from being the 13th biggest group of immigrants in the UK before Poland joined the EU to being the single biggest group at the end of 2007. This rise can also be seen in those who were born in Poland, who are now estimated to be the second largest country-of-birth group behind those born in India.”¹³

It is perhaps not surprising that Poles comprise the biggest national group migrating to Britain after the EU enlargement of 2004. Poland is not only by far the largest (also by population) of all A-8 countries. It also has a history of migration to the United Kingdom:

Of the new accession countries, Poland had the most significant level of pre-2004 migration to the UK, with the migration route having been entrenched immediately after the Second World War. Many Poles came to the UK to set up businesses following the ratification in 1994 of the Europe Agreement, which allowed candidate country nationals to be self-employed in existing EU countries. It is estimated that the level of undocumented migration among Poles to the UK prior to 2004 was substantial (...), indicating that the number of Poles (and to a lesser extent other accession state nationals) counted by the 2001 Census was likely to be a significant underestimation.” (Pollard et al 2008, 16)

It seems far too early to try to assess what lasting impact recent migratory flows from Poland and other Eastern European countries have had and will continue to have on the British society. However, some consequences concerning immigration policy and legislation are already felt by particular groups: “The huge inflows (...) led to a new policy approach: there would [be] no further low-skilled migration from outside the EU (...) Thus, the decision to support enlargement and open the borders within the EU

¹³ Pollard et al 2008, 21.

directly altered policy, in particular ending the low-skill schemes.” (Somerville 2007, 34). Even more noticeable to a wider European public were perhaps Britain’s policy changes in connection with the latest round of EU enlargement:

The government did not permit the same labour market access rights to Romanian and Bulgarian nationals following EU accession on 1 January 2007. The political compromise has centred on opening up the labour market gradually. Highly skilled Romanians and Bulgarians can continue to access the UK through the HSMP and other work permit routes, and “low-skilled” Bulgarian and Romanian nationals were given exclusive access to the SAWS¹⁴ (up to the quota of 19,500 per year). (Somerville 2007, 34)

4. Media coverage of Polish migrants – general observations

The coverage of issues relating to immigration is not a new element of British news reporting, as Will Somerville points out:

Lurid headlines on every aspect of migration have been a consistent feature of the last decade, from worries over asylum seekers to concerns over unprecedented economic migration from Eastern Europe. Such headlines reflect the passions and deep anxieties that migration has aroused. MORI (2007), for example, has ranked race and immigration as among the top three most important issues facing Britain in nearly every one of its monthly opinion polls since 2003. (Somerville 2007,1)¹⁵.

This is the background against which reporting about migrants from Eastern Europe has to be seen. According to the Home Affairs Editor of the *Guardian*, Alan Travis, “a lot of these things are just another way of talking about race, it’s really about race and otherness. It’s not really about do we need Poles to come to Britain.”¹⁶ He argues that in many people’s minds immigration is linked to the idea of an “invasion” and adds that according to opinion polls, many people believe the percentage of foreign-born people in Britain to be much higher than it actually is. The material analysed in the course of this research project seems to indicate that often, when the focus of coverage is on individual Polish people, positive aspects tend to be highlighted. On

¹⁴ Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme.

¹⁵ In December 2008, Ipsos MORI’s monthly Issues Index showed that while the economy remained at the top of the list of the most important issues facing the UK for the fourth consecutive month, aside from issues surrounding the economy “the public also named crime/law & order (35%) and race relations/immigration (22%) as some of the most important issues facing Britain”. Cf. <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/content/economy-still-dominates-as-concern-about-other-iss.ashx>; last accessed on 19 December 2008.

¹⁶ Interview, 5 November 2008.

the other hand, when immigration statistics are in the forefront, more negative aspects are mentioned and the tone seems to be more critical.¹⁷ As Keith Best puts it: “The negative coverage is about the numbers of migrants, and I don’t think, frankly, it matters whether they are Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians or whatever.”¹⁸ According to Best, Polish people generally tend to have a positive image in the UK. He sees a “very close nexus that exists between Britain and Poland”, probably unique of all Eastern European countries: “I don’t think there is a great deal of knowledge about Eastern Europe [in Britain]. Probably there is still a latent affection towards Poles, because people may remember that they were allies during the war and that they were treated very badly, and after all it was the invasion of Poland in September 1939 that brought Britain into the war.” According to Best, another element of this positive image has to do with a perceived attitude to work: “I think the view in this country is that Poles (...) are very hard-working, I have never ever heard anybody, whether an employer or anybody else, speak ill of the work-ethic of Polish people.”

Nevertheless, even an analysis of a limited range of articles about Polish migrants shows that big differences can be found in the coverage of the different newspapers. Sir Andrew Green, Chairman of MigrationWatch UK, is of the opinion that no newspaper in Britain covers the issue in a truly balanced way: “There are big differences between the papers, in part because they are very partisan in their approach to the issue of immigration.”¹⁹ The analysis for this paper seems to indicate that a certain editorial line or, more broadly speaking, certain views about society as well as the benefits and negative impacts of immigration, do indeed inform the coverage by each of the three papers in question. This appears to be true even for short texts about crime cases.

Take the example of an article published by the *Guardian* on April 5. Towards the end of the story about the grief of a father for his murdered daughter, a Lithuanian migrant worker, there are three short paragraphs about the number of migrant workers and the range of jobs they have in the area in which the crime was committed. While it could be argued that some of the information given adds background to the actual case, the last paragraph seems a little surprising and superfluous in the context of the story. It reads: “Martin Cessford, chairman of Angus

¹⁷ At least this seems to be true for the coverage of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, as a close reading of features with quotes by Polish immigrants published by the two papers in comparison with news stories suggests.

¹⁸ Interview, 5 November 2008.

¹⁹ Phone interview, 4 November 2008.

NFU, said the industry was well-regulated. ‘The foreign labour is something we depend on, for farming vegetables, the fruit industry, the potato industry,’ he said.”²⁰

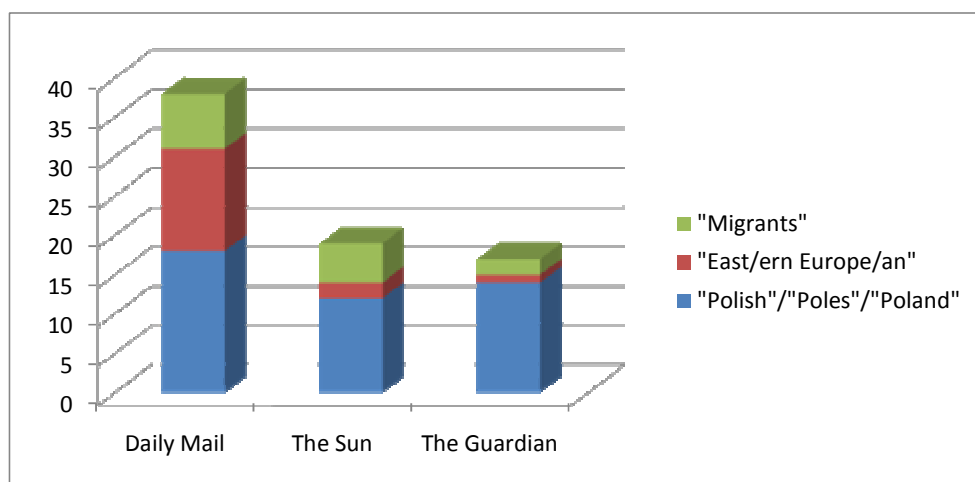
Similarly (though from a completely different angle), in an article entitled “Cops told: Don’t arrest illegals” published on April 23 by *The Sun*, the three paragraphs at the end of the text quite suddenly introduce a new topic, the teaching of English to migrant workers. The last sentence of the article reads as follows: “The row came as it emerged that a massive **ONE** in **FOUR** people in one English town – Boston, Lincs – are now Eastern Europeans” [emphasis in the original]. Again, it seems noteworthy that this particular piece of information is included in a text that does not really call for any figures on Eastern Europeans (who, in the case of the countries of origin that the text seems to refer to, clearly are not “illegals” in Britain, nor are they mentioned in connection with the issue of English courses).

In both articles the additional lines provide information about the presence of Eastern European immigrants in one particular place. However, the presentation – and, most probably, the intended interpretation – of this information is very different. While in the example taken from the *Guardian* it is stressed that immigrants are essential to the British labour market and therefore needed, the *Sun* article highlights the sheer number of Eastern Europeans living in Boston and qualifies it as “massive”, thus implying that the proportion given (“one in four people”) is worth criticising. Without wanting to stretch an argument on the basis of a very limited range of material, examples like the two mentioned seem to indicate that there might be a message between the lines when information is added that is not really required and does not even help to better understand the context of the actual story, especially when the readers’ attention is focused on particular aspects of an issue that make it appear in a more positive (as in the *Guardian* text) or more negative (as in the *Sun* article) light.

²⁰ “‘My beautiful daughter, thrown away like a bag of rubbish...’ Father’s grief over remains on beach”; *The Guardian*, 5 April 2008, p. 9.

5. The extent of coverage in the three papers

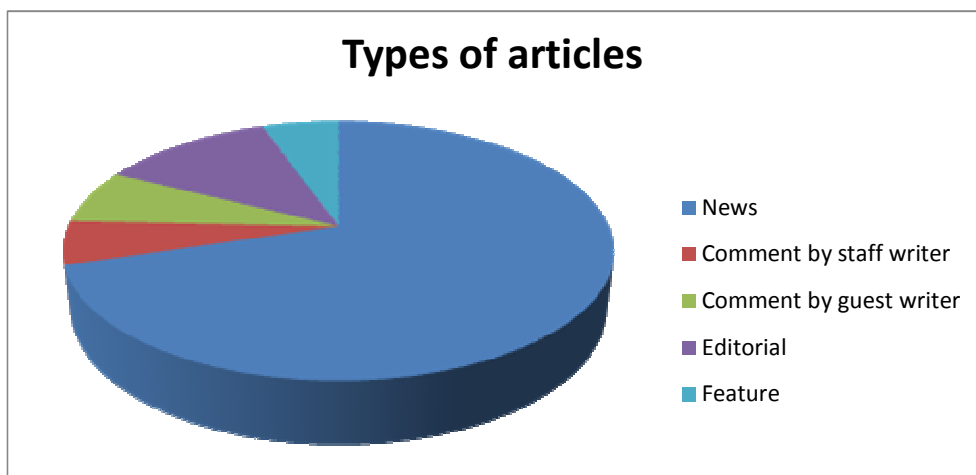
The sample – a total of 74 articles²¹ – mainly includes texts in which the terms “Poland”, “Polish”, “Pole” or “Poles” are used in reference to people who have migrated from Poland to the United Kingdom since May 2004. Due to the fact that Poles are by far the biggest national group among Eastern Europeans to have moved to the UK since their country’s EU accession²² and probably the one national group most British people would associate with immigrants from Eastern Europe, I argue that articles speaking about “Eastern Europeans” in general in many cases implicitly include Polish people, and that it would be a misrepresentation of the coverage to ignore these texts in the analysis. Therefore, if the context or the article itself does not make it clear that the group referred to is not meant to include Poles, such stories are included in the sample. Similarly, a small range of texts about “recent migratory waves” or “recent mass immigration” that seem to include Polish migrants to the UK since May 2004 form part of the analysis. About half of the texts that meet the defined selection criteria, 38 of the 74 articles chosen, were published by the *Daily Mail*, 19 by the *Sun*, and 17 by the *Guardian*. 44 of the 74 texts mention “Poland”, “Polish”, “Pole” or “Poles” in reference to recent migration from Poland to the UK (18 of them published by the *Daily Mail*, 12 by the *Sun* and 14 by the *Guardian*), 16 “East/ern Europe/an” (*Daily Mail* - 13, *Sun* - 2, *Guardian* - 1) and 14 only “recent migration” or “mass migration” (*Daily Mail* - 7, *Sun* - 5, *Guardian* - 2).



²¹ The sample includes news stories, comments, editorials and features, but no texts by columnists and no letters to the papers.

²² One of the indicators for this is the fact that two thirds (66 per cent) of all approved applications to the Worker Registration Scheme between May 2004 and December 2007 had been made by Poles (Pollard et al 2008, 24).

Among the 74 stories, a vast majority of 52 could be categorised as news, four as a named comment by a staff writer, five as a named comment by a guest writer, nine as editorials and four as features. It seems surprising that the number of features is so small, particularly considering that the period in question covers the fourth anniversary of Polish EU accession, a date that might invite journalists to visit and portray Polish communities in Britain. Three²³ of the four features were published by the *Sun*, the fourth by the *Daily Mail*. The *Guardian* did not publish any features about Polish migrants in Britain in the chosen period of time, but there was a “G2 special” about immigration to the UK in the past 60 years. Regarding Poland, it focused on inflows in the 1940s and was thus not included in the sample.



6. Central issues covered by the three papers

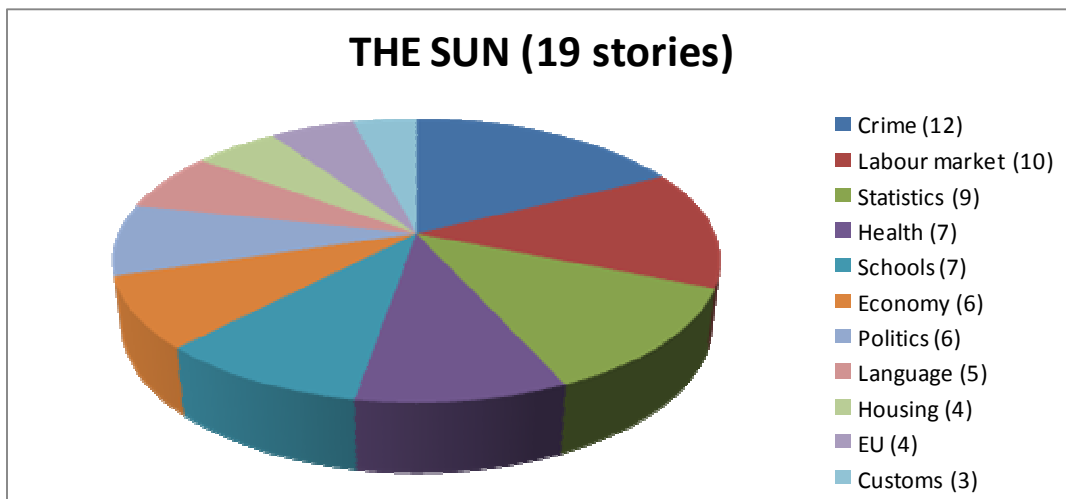
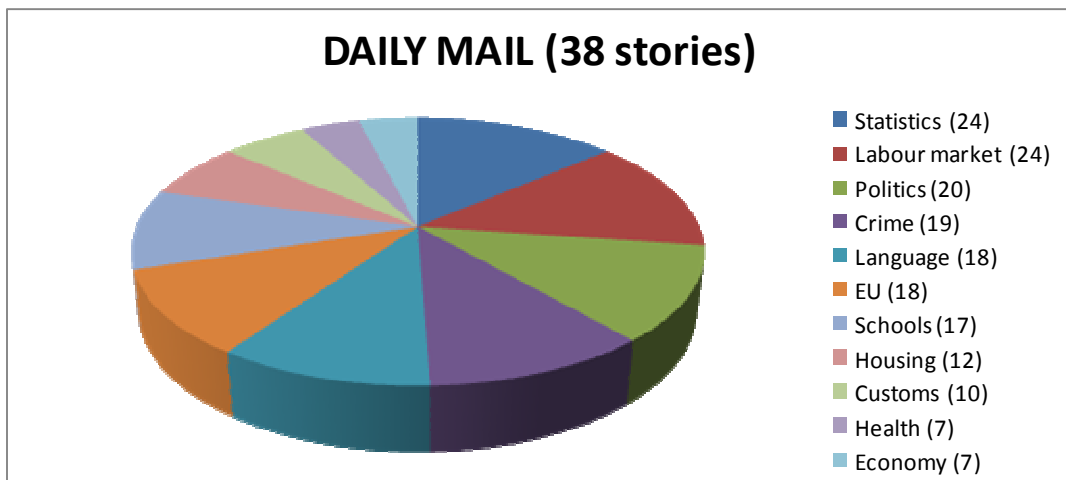
To analyse what topics were most frequently covered by the three papers in connection with Polish migrants, twelve broad issues were defined: crime, immigration statistics, politics, economy, labour market, housing, health, schools, language, culture, traditions/customs/typical food and European Union. Within each category, subcategories were identified to be able to make finer distinctions. The result of the analysis²⁴ was that of the twelve general issues, one – culture – was not mentioned in any of the 74 articles that form part of the sample, and three issues

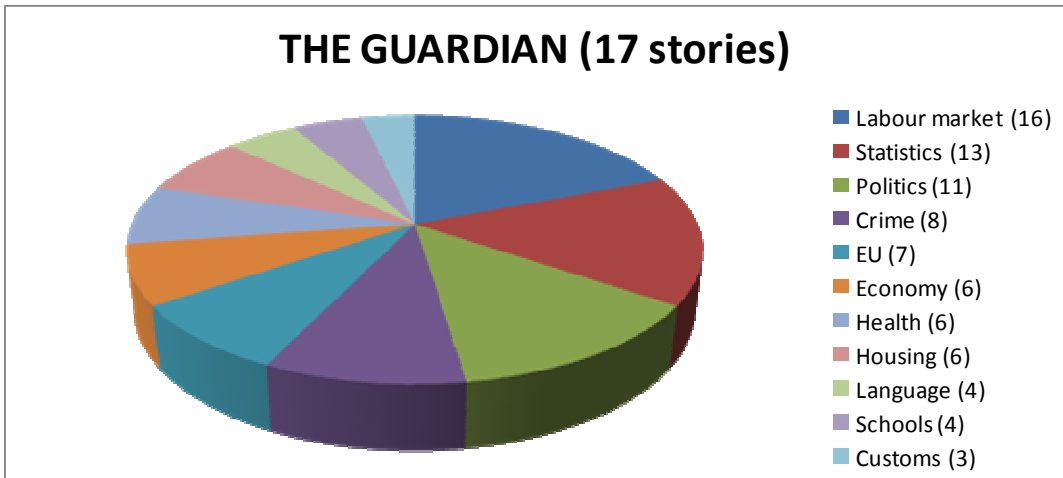
²³ One of the three texts published by the *Sun*, an article entitled “Case Study: East Europeans”, is not a feature in the classical sense, but bears more resemblance to one than to a news story and is therefore included in this category. It consists of two interviews with immigrants from Eastern Europe, a Polish and a Russian citizen.

²⁴ A chart showing what precise questions were asked and what elements were included in each category can be found in the appendix of this paper.

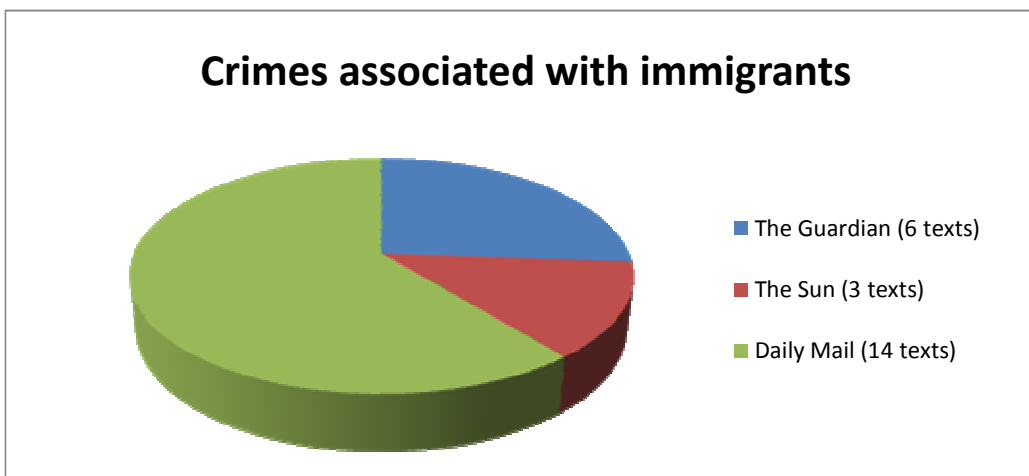
came up in more than half of all articles: labour market (50), immigration statistics (46) and crime (39). The next most frequent category was politics (37), followed by the European Union (29), schools (28), language (27), housing (22), health (20), economic consequences of immigration (19) and customs (16).

A comparison of the three papers shows some similarities. Labour market and immigration statistics are, for instance, among the top three issues in the *Daily Mail*, the *Sun* and the *Guardian*. On the other hand, the European Union seems to be mentioned in nearly half of all *Daily Mail* stories referring to Polish migrants in Britain and in seven out of 17 stories by the *Guardian*, but only in about a fifth of all stories by the *Sun*.





A closer look at two of the categories – labour market and crime – reveals considerable differences between the three papers. All of them covered both the impact of immigration on British-born workers and the impact of migration on Polish citizens, but only one, the *Guardian*, published (three) stories about the exploitation of migrant workers²⁵. Regarding crime, two of the three papers – the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* – published more stories about Poles as victims than about Poles as culprits (the relation was 6:1 and 3:2 respectively), whereas the *Guardian*, which in general covered a much smaller number of crime cases, had one article in which Polish migrants were described as culprits (of drink-driving offences), but none in which they were victims of crimes. Interestingly enough, in the period of time analysed the *Sun* was also the paper with the smallest number of stories in which immigration was associated with crime (3 – the *Guardian* had 6, the *Daily Mail* 14).



²⁵ The *Daily Mail* had one story in which the exploitation of workers was mentioned by a police officer quoted, but it was not an issue in the text. Cf. *Daily Mail*, April 17 2008, p. 12: "Migrant crime: 'We need cash'"

7. Who has a voice?

One of the choices journalists have to make on a regular basis when writing their stories is whose information to use and who to quote. It would go beyond the scope of this paper to enter into a discussion about the different factors that potentially influence this choice.²⁶ On the most basic level, the decision seems first and foremost based on what the story is going to be about, what (if any) message is intended to be conveyed and what the deadline is. Especially when it comes to the reporting of political debates and decisions, it appears obvious that the politicians concerned as well as critics (who might be politicians, but also experts or other members of the public) should get their ideas and their argumentation across. Also, stories that are triggered by the publication of a report by an authority, an institution or a think tank will necessarily focus on those findings and include statements by the authors and/or elements of their work. However, what often appears to be missing – and this is certainly the case in the period of time analysed for this paper – is the voice of the people who are actually affected by what the politicians decide or by developments in society that are documented by experts' reports.

It goes without saying that in many cases it may seem a more workable solution to show trends in public opinion by using statistics and polls rather than by quoting individual citizens. Not only does this method allow journalists to provide their readers with a broader range of views and an indication as to how wide-spread they may be. The bigger sample and the systematic methodology also help those who strive for objectivity and make it easier to deal with statements that might otherwise seem problematic to print. Nevertheless, polls and statistics cannot really be a substitute for actual statements by actual people. They are the ones who give a face to seemingly abstract news, capture the atmosphere of a place, time or situation and make the reasons behind attitudes expressed in opinion polls more visible and perhaps also more comprehensible.

In the six weeks of reporting analysed for this paper immigrants were often covered in relation to statistics, as was the British-born population mentioned in the same articles. Understandable as this approach may be in most of the given cases, it still

²⁶ Among the ones frequently mentioned by academics and journalists are world views and power structures, professional routines and practical aspects such as limitations of time and space. Cf. Eldridge 1995, 88; Kuhn 2007, 145ff.

seems a pity that British and Polish voices could not be heard (or rather read) more often, particularly outside the context of crime stories. One can only guess at the reasons in each individual case, but it seems there would have been occasions for stories with more such quotes in all three papers.

On April 23, the *Guardian* wrote in a news story entitled “Boston coping with migrants, says Blears”: “The communities secretary, Hazel Blears, yesterday told MPs that Boston and Arun had coped well with the arrival of new migrant workers, using welcome packs for new arrivals, ‘myth-busting’ leaflets distributed to the resident population, and two-way language classes for migrants and the local policing teams.” (p. 11). Leaving possible practical constraints aside: In an ideal situation, would it not have been interesting for the readers to learn, possibly in a feature story, what these “myth-busting leaflets” looked like and what the “welcome packs” included, as well as what some of the people concerned thought about them?

In a quite different way, for readers of the article “The number of unqualified teachers has risen six-fold in just ten years” published by the *Daily Mail* on April 16 it may have been interesting to find out what people in the profession think about such statistics. What do teachers have to say about the view of one of the authors of a report quoted in the article that only a third of trainees are “fully competent” (p.21), thus implying that the quality of teachers in Britain in general is not very high? Why has such a high number of foreign teachers not yet gained the required formal qualifications to teach in Britain, despite already being in the profession, as the paper claims? What reasons do teachers see for British-born colleagues to quit their jobs?

By contrast, in the case of the *Sun*, which had the highest percentage of articles quoting “ordinary” British and Polish people in the period analysed, it could be argued that such quotes were used mainly in specific types of stories and very often in connection with crime cases (thus veering the texts towards sensationalism), while it may have been worthwhile to include British and Polish voices also in political or economic stories.

These observations about examples taken from the three papers are not meant as a criticism of the individual choices made. They are merely intended to demonstrate that many stories, certainly not only in British newspapers, would theoretically allow for quotes by the people concerned. However, as the analysis of the media coverage

of Polish migrants between April 1 and May 14 presented here shows, very often their views seem not to be included.

In answer to the research question: “Who is quoted in the article?” four different categories were defined:

POLITICIANS

(representing government, parliament, parties; also reports or statements included)

– yes/no

INSTITUTIONS/AUTHORITIES/INTEREST GROUPS

(police, judiciary, lobby/pressure groups, think tanks; also reports or statements included)

– yes/no

“ORDINARY” BRITISH CITIZENS

(polls not included)

- yes/no

POLISH CITIZENS

(immigrants or people living in Poland; polls not included)

– yes/no

Due to the way the research question was formulated, an article could appear in all categories, in two or three of them, just in one or in none at all (especially when the text was an opinion piece or a very short news story). Both direct and indirect quotes were included in the analysis.

As has already been mentioned, one of the most interesting findings seems to be that in the period analysed Poles as well as “ordinary” British citizens rarely had a voice in the three newspapers – in eleven and seven articles respectively. At the same time, all three papers quoted predominantly institutions and pressure groups (in 51 out of 74 texts) as well as politicians (42 texts).



The Guardian had, perhaps surprisingly, the smallest number of articles in which Poles were quoted, only one crime story (“My beautiful daughter, thrown away like a bag of rubbish...”). *The Sun* quoted Poles in five stories, as did the *Daily Mail*. In both papers, it was mainly features and crime stories that included statements by Polish migrants or relatives living in Poland, as is reflected in the headlines of the respective articles. In the case of the *Sun*, they read: “Case Study: East Europeans”, “Welcome to Boston, Eastern Europe”, “I love Arsenal, pints of beer, Full English brekkies...and The Sun”, “Evil Ex’s 25 yrs”, and “I listened to sister’s last gasp on phone”, in the *Daily Mail* “Toasted in vodka, the groom aged 14 and his bride of 13”, “Carer died when she walked into a ‘Wild West shoot-out’”, “Click here for kielbasa”, “Protecting a predator”, and “British values mean nothing to me, says gipsy mother whose girl married at 13”. The number of stories in which “ordinary” British citizens were quoted was even smaller: *The Sun* had one such article, *Guardian* and *Daily Mail* published three each.

By contrast, there was a huge amount of articles in which institutions – in many cases representatives of the police or the judiciary – and think tanks were quoted. In this context, it seems particularly striking how much coverage the organisation Migration Watch got in the six weeks analysed, above all in the *Daily Mail*. Describing it mostly as a “pressure group”, the paper quoted Migration Watch and/or its chairman Sir Andrew Green in seven out of 38 articles, while the *Guardian* quoted the “anti-immigration pressure group” in one article²⁷. In the *Sun*, the “campaign group” was

²⁷ Cf. *Guardian*, April 1 2008, front page: “Row as Lords committee backs cap on immigration”

also mentioned once²⁸. The second think tank that was quoted by at least two of the three papers was the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr). It came up once in the *Guardian* (which just mentioned it by its name)²⁹ and once in the *Daily Mail*, which spoke of “Labour’s favourite think-tank” and the “Left-leaning think-tank, which has influence over New Labour policy makers”³⁰.

It has to be stressed again in this context how limited the scope of material analysed for this paper is. Nevertheless, the predominance of one specific think tank - as in the case of Migration Watch - , especially if it is considered to represent a specific line of argumentation or even political orientation, seems indicative of tendencies in the reporting of the paper in the specific period of time. In other words, it could be argued that if there is a pattern to be detected in such choices, they allow the readers a glimpse of the editorial line of a specific newspaper even if they only happen to read its (supposedly more neutral) news stories.

However, even though some think tanks seem to have got a disproportionate amount of coverage in the six weeks analysed here, one should not jump to any conclusions about how much impact these institutions may have on a practical political level. According to Raymond Kuhn, “[i]n general, the link between media coverage and political influence in the short term at least is a tenuous one. Getting an issue on to the media agenda does not guarantee that it will feature on the political agenda, or, if it does, that the pressure group will have its viewpoint acceded to.” (Kuhn 2007, 235). Will Somerville argues that the influence of some think tanks on actual decision-making is limited:

In particular, the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) has pushed the positives of labour immigration from the mid-1990s onwards and has been instrumental in both informing the evidence base and placing it on politically fertile ground (...). Other think tanks and research organizations in the UK, notably Migration Watch, Civitas and the Optimum Population Trust, have opposed large immigration flows. Their analysis has highlighted the limitations of certain policy approaches. (...) However, while these think tanks have made waves in the press (Migration Watch stands out in this regard), they have been largely excluded from the economic migration policy community, probably a result of almost Malthusian policy recommendations (placing them outside the ideological status quo) and because of politics (while think tanks generally have charitable status, they are strongly orientated to certain

²⁸ Cf. *Sun*, April 1 2008, p.2 : “Migrants ‘do not boost UK’”

²⁹ Cf. *Guardian*, April 21 2008, p.10: “Alleged jumping of housing queues by new arrivals is a myth, research reveals”

³⁰ Cf. *Daily Mail*, May 1 2008, p. 10: “The great East European tide”

political positions). Thus, they are not represented on advisory bodies or generally consulted by civil servants developing policy. Their outlets tend to be opposition (Conservative) MPs and media outlets such as the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and the *Daily Telegraph*: “classic outsider group strategy” (Marsh et al, 2001, p 184). (Somerville 2007, 110)

8. The coverage of a report on immigrants and crime – a case study

On the 16th and 17th of April 2008, the three newspapers covered a study prepared for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) about challenges facing the British police forces due to recent migratory flows from Eastern Europe to the UK. The report seems to have been originally leaked to the *Guardian* which on the 16th of April published its story with the headline: “Migrant crime wave a myth – police study”. One day later, the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun* followed with news stories entitled “Migrant crime: ‘We need cash’” and “Migrants ‘winning’ on crime” respectively, complemented by a number of comment pieces in the same editions.

It seems obvious from the outset that the texts in the three papers reflect quite different readings of the police findings. The focus of each article and its main message appear to be summarised in the respective headline, a very central feature of newspaper writing: “Headlines are seen as having crucial importance in the language of newspaper reporting. They are one of the most important devices for summarising and drawing attention to a story and, so far as the press is concerned, are also one of the strongest visual indicators of style.” (Eldridge 1995, 173).

What, then, do the three headlines here tell us to expect from the stories that follow? All three of them seem to include statements by someone other than the reporter. Only the *Guardian* gives the source – a “police study” – right away, while in the case of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* the punctuation makes it clear that it is not the newspapers themselves that claim that cash is needed or that migrants are winning on crime. But it is only by reading the articles that it can be found out exactly whose views or findings are presented by the two papers. The *Guardian*, on the contrary, does not only give the source in general terms in the headline itself, but also defines it in more detail in the subheading: “Acpo report concludes offending no worse than rest of the population”.

While it appears that the *Guardian* paraphrases (one of) the findings of the study³¹, the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* seem to use direct quotes within their headlines, thus giving them more immediacy. However, as the *Sun* does not provide the full quote in the article – indeed, there is not a single statement by anyone quoted in the text that is in any way similar to the headline – it seems as much a summary of findings of the police study as in the case of the *Guardian*. This hypothesis is also supported by the first line of the article which reads as follows: “POLICE are losing the war on crime committed by immigrants because foreign cops refuse to share files.” This sentence is most probably what the headline is based on. The source is then given in the second sentence: “Top officers say they are working ‘blind’ as nations such as Poland will not open up databases.”

In the case of the *Daily Mail* - whose headline (“Migrant crime: ‘We need cash’”) consists of only one more word than the *Sun*’s, but is printed in much bigger letters and spreads across two pages of the paper - the source of the quote is given in the subheading: “Police chief’s call as report reveals impact of influx from east Europe.” Again, the headline seems to be explained by the first sentence of the article: “A CHIEF constable led calls yesterday for a cash boost to fight the ‘significant challenges’ of migrant crime committed by eastern Europeans.” In both the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, the exact source is then given in the course of the article.

Even without taking into account the interpretations added through comments and editorials, on the basis of roughly the same data (the report itself was not published³²), the three papers seem to tell very different stories about the relation between crime rates and immigration rates. This is true even though the three news stories, particularly the ones published by the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*, have many findings and quotes taken from the report in common. The following basic content analysis of six aspects covered in relation with the report shows this more clearly.

³¹ Indeed, this is one of the criticism expressed by a commentator with the *Daily Mail* about the reporting of the *Guardian*, that in fact the study does not speak about “myths” at all, so they cannot be disclaimed, either.

³² What can be found on the ACPO homepage in connection with the report, though, is a press release first published on 16 April 2008, apparently in reaction to the media reports. The text entitled “ACPO comment on Migration and Policing” begins with the following sentence: “Responding to media reports concerning the impact of migration on policing, Peter Fahy, chief constable of Cheshire constabulary and co-author of an ACPO paper on the subject said: ‘Migration has had a significant impact on UK communities in past years but while this has led to new demands made on the police service, the evidence does not support theories of a large scale crime wave generated through migration.’”

Cf. http://www.acpo.police.uk/pressrelease.asp?PR_GUID=%7B017B1944-5CB2-43F6-BE22-E9AD91364597 (last accessed on 9 February 2009)

The question asked was if the following statements were true for the first news article about the report published in each of the three papers.

1. The crime rate is set in relation to the immigration rate. – yes/no
2. There is a crime wave due to the high influx from Eastern Europe. – yes/no
3. Eastern European immigrants commit more crimes than British people. – yes/no
4. Specific crimes are set in relation to specific groups of immigrants. – yes/no
5. The police say they need more resources because of higher numbers of foreigners in the country. – yes/no
6. More should be done concerning the sharing of intelligence by new EU member states with Britain. – yes/no

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6
Guardian	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sun	Yes	No	No	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Yes
Daily Mail	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Not mentioned

As can be seen in this very basic analysis, none of the three papers actually claims that the recent migratory flows from Eastern Europe led to a crime wave in Britain or that foreigners are in general more prone to commit crimes than British citizens. Both the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* quote the report as pointing to a possible link between certain types of crimes and offences and certain groups of immigrants, both the *Guardian* and the *Sun* mention intelligence sharing between “old” and “new” EU states as an area worthy of improvement (to put it mildly), and all three papers quote police representatives on challenges caused by immigration from Eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, the messages of the three news stories seem to be completely different. While the *Guardian* stresses that recent migration from Eastern Europe has not caused higher crime rates, both the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* highlight problematic aspects and seem to suggest that the British police find it difficult to fight crime successfully because of short-comings in cooperation with the new EU states and/or a lack of money to face specific challenges, such as higher numbers of offenders whose first language is not English.

This case study seems to support the argument that the different papers do take a specific line of argumentation, even when reporting the same study and quoting similar findings in a supposedly (more) balanced news story. For obvious reasons, this line becomes all the more visible when it comes to editorials and comments published in connection with the news stories discussed. Nevertheless, it seems of interest in the context of this paper to have a closer look at the opinion pieces and the specific aspects that are highlighted by each of the papers.

As was already mentioned, the report seems to have been first leaked to the *Guardian*, which on April 16 reported its findings in a news story on its front page without adding any comment pieces. One day later, the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* followed with their own news stories about the police study, complementing them with one and three opinion pieces respectively. In the case of the *Sun*, the text of the news story (without head- and by-lines) consisted of a total of 177 words and was therefore rather short in comparison with the articles in the *Guardian* (610) and the *Daily Mail* (689) on the same subject.

The 99-word comment piece published by the *Sun* – an editorial in the section “The Sun says” - was again shorter than each of the opinion pieces in the *Daily Mail*, although the latter had a total of three texts of a similar kind in its edition of April 17. The *Sun*’s editorial was entitled “EU know who” and focused on Eastern European member states and their duty to take “responsibility for the criminals they export to our shores”. In fact, the central message of the text seems best summarised by its first sentence: “If you join a club, you play by the rules.” The UK is presented as a country that has been and wants to continue to be very open towards immigrants (“Britain has bent over backwards to welcome migrants”), but within certain limits: “[W]e don’t intend to become the cesspit of Europe.”

In contrast to that, none of the three comment pieces published by the *Daily Mail* on the same day focuses on EU issues. They seem to be directed at British actors rather than addressing (if only rhetorically, like the *Sun*) the countries of origin of recent migratory movements to the UK. In two of the texts, specific media outlets are in the centre of criticism. Both the analysis entitled “Spinning and a gullible liberal media” and the editorial with the heading “Bias and the BBC” mention the *Guardian* and the BBC in a very critical way.

The author of the analysis attacks what he calls the “pro-migration lobby” and claims that some of the things that the newspaper and the public broadcaster (in its “Today” programme) said the day before about the ACPO report were incorrect: “The report itself, leaked in full yesterday, bore no relation to the BBC or Guardian headline claims.” There was “not a single mention of a migrant crimewave, let alone about one being ‘unfounded’ or a ‘myth’.” By way of an explanation, the *Daily Mail* journalist states that there has been a “combination of police spin, and complicity by all involved”, thus not blaming the two media organisations alone for what he believes went wrong. Nevertheless, his criticism seems quite severe, considering that it not only refers to differences in terms of political opinions (it is surely no coincidence that he speaks of a “gullible liberal media”), but also to professional criteria: “Even if accurate, the coverage would have begged several questions, not least who had claimed there was a migrant crimewave in the first place?”

The editorial³³ then strikes a similar tone, asking “how did the BBC get the story so spectacularly wrong?” The answer given is the following: “Apparently, the corporation’s staff repeated a slanted misrepresentation of the report which appeared (where else?) in yesterday’s *Guardian*, planted by a politically correct police chief. It’s what they wanted to believe – and so they believed it.”

The third opinion piece about the police study published on the same day, a commentary by a staff writer, bears the headline “Crime and migration: the facts”. Listing statistics referring to crimes and offenses committed by foreigners in Britain, the author argues that according to the evidence by the police, “[u]ncontrolled immigration has brought crime with it”. She also mentions additional costs for the police forces caused by immigration. Therefore, “[n]ot only does uncontrolled

³³ The text of the editorial was taken from the online archive of the newspaper, not from its paper edition. Cf. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-560153/Throw-lifeline-time-buyers.html>; last accessed on January 28, 2009.

immigration bring with it new crimes, it also causes the diversion of police resources away from other areas". The text ends with an appeal to the Home Office: "It is time the Home Office acknowledged the problem – and stopped trying to hide it."

On the same day, the *Guardian* published a news story about the meeting of Home Secretary Jacqui Smith with chief police officers to discuss the report that had been leaked to the newspaper the day before. The headline of the text reads as follows: "Police leaders to tell minister of demands caused by migration." The first subheading seems to reiterate the message of the article published on April 16 that had caused such mixed reactions – "Chief constables deny EU growth led to crime wave" – while the second subheading refers to the "need for more resources". In the article itself, a co-author of the police study is quoted as saying: "Migration has had a significant impact on UK communities in past years, but while this has led to new demands made on the police service, the evidence does not support theories of a large-scale crime wave generated through migration."

One day later, the *Guardian* wrote about the results of the meeting that the Home Secretary had "assured police chiefs that they will have access to a £15m-a-year 'migration fund' to top up public services under stress in areas of rapid population growth". The article again mentioned the term "crime wave": "A paper by the chief constables prepared for the meeting said the evidence did not support theories of a large-scale crime wave generated through migration." Under the headline "More heat than light" a text from the series "Michael White's political briefing" complemented the news story. It begins as follows: "Immigration is like climate change, one of those issues which arouses strong passions and throws up uncertain evidence which opposing sides can cherry-pick to prove their case. It happened again in this week's tussle over crime and immigration between Jacqui Smith, police chiefs and the tabloids."

To sum up, this case study of the first coverage of a report by chief police officers in mid-April 2008 shows clearly how different the approaches of the three newspapers analysed here can be even in supposedly (more) neutral news stories. At least in this particular case it seems obvious that the editorial lines these dailies tend to take in opinion pieces also shimmer through when it comes to deciding what elements of a report to include in a news story and, perhaps even more importantly, in what context to present those elements. As was demonstrated by this very basic analysis, the

same arguments can have quite different effects depending on how they are integrated into a story and what “drift” or general direction the article is given by its headline.

One of the questions arising from these observations is if it matters in a wider political context what line newspapers take, particularly when this line informs types of stories that readers may expect to be (more) factual, unbiased and not coloured by any (hidden) political agenda. More generally speaking, does it have an impact on policy-making if newspapers take a strong position on a specific issue or campaign for or against measures planned by the government? Opinion seems deeply divided as to how influential the media are on a practical political level, and any answer to that question beyond individual cases necessarily has to be highly speculative, not least because it often appears difficult to trace the ways in which politicians come to their decisions. However, there are situations in which the influence of certain media organisations becomes clearly visible.

In his book “Immigration under New Labour”, Will Somerville argues that the introduction of the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) in Britain, which also seems of particular interest concerning Polish migrants, could serve as a case study “of the media having a direct effect”: “The decision to offer A-8 nationals unrestricted access to the UK labour market was formally announced in December 2002, and was based on evidence that indicated there would be significant economic benefits, with few welfare claimants. Given such evidence, it may seem odd that the WRS was created and implemented in the space of two months in 2004 in the lead-up to EU enlargement, over a year after the original decision to open labour markets had been taken.”³⁴ According to Somerville, there are several further reasons which make the creation of the Workers Registration Scheme seem “puzzling”: “First, employers (quietly) opposed the scheme. Second, it was legally suspect in the context of reciprocal European social security agreements. Third, there were significant gaps in coverage – the self-employed did not have to register, for example.” He therefore concludes:

The only plausible explanation for the creation of the WRS is that it was a knee-jerk reaction to tabloid pressure. From January 2004, the prospect of EU enlargement and unrestricted labour market access provoked a media frenzy. *The Sunday Times* ran a story on 18 January 2004

³⁴ Cf. Somerville 2007, 136.

of 100,000 migrants waiting to come to Britain and raised concerns over welfare benefits; the *Sun* ran a front-page story the following day: "See you in May: Thousands of gipsies head for Britain" (19 January 2004); followed by the *Daily Express* (20 January 2004), where the front page read: "1.6 million gipsies ready to flood in". Coverage peaked in February 2004, when the *Sun* published 46 articles on immigration, 25 of which were dedicated to accession (Kalia 2004). (Somerville 2007, 136)

9. Additional observations

Although the articles discussed in this section of the paper were not collected as systematically as news stories, comments and editorials and do not form part of the actual sample, it seems of interest to include some observations regarding how columnists dealt with the issue of migration and how it was addressed by readers in their letters to the papers. Another interesting aspect appears to be how Poland was represented in the period of time analysed. However, it has to be stressed that the selection of texts presented here is not intended to be exhaustive and is used for illustrative purposes only. Its significance in the context of this paper can only be anecdotal. Each of the three aspects would indeed merit a research project of its own.

Columnists – the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*

The issue of immigration, also in connection with the recent influx from Eastern Europe, comes up quite often in texts by columnists with the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* in the six weeks analysed for this paper. In many cases, Polish migrants are mentioned in connection with criticism of British politics, in particular of the government, the British health-care and/or education system or the labour market. On April 29, the *Sun* published the following text by its columnist Fergus Shanahan:

Things are getting so bad that even the Poles are leaving. Many Eastern European migrants are upping sticks for Sweden, saying Britain is no place for a respectable immigrant to be raising a family. Who can blame them for moving on? They come here expecting a decent standard of living and find instead that they can't get a dentist, have to queue at the doctor's and their kids get sent to schools where lessons are taught in 50 languages.

In a similar manner, Jon Gaunt says in a text full of criticism of Gordon Brown: "Let's face it, things have got so bad in Britain that even the flipping Poles are leaving!"

(May 2, pg. 23) This theme of Poles leaving the UK can also be found in quite a different form in a text by another *Sun* columnist, Kelvin MacKenzie. He writes in what seems to be meant as a funny aside in his column on May 1: “It is said that Polish migrants are quitting skint Britain for Sweden. Who can blame them? It’s nearer their real home. The North Pole. Thank you.”

On May 2, the *Daily Mail* published a fictitious “postcard home from a young, single Polish man, living in Peterborough” by Richard Littlejohn. In his introduction to the postcard, which describes positive and negative experiences of the migrant worker (who in the end decides to stay in Britain because of “goodies” such as free health care, a pension and council housing) the columnist writes: “According to a new report, more than half the one million immigrants who arrived from Eastern Europe are heading home. If this is true, who could blame them? Violent crime, high taxes, soaring prices, strikes, panic at the petrol pumps – suddenly life in the former Soviet states doesn’t seem so bad.” (pg. 17)³⁵ Again, one of the conclusions of Polish return migration seems to be that things in Britain must be really bad if “even the Poles” decide to leave the country (one can make an informed guess on the basis of that as to what image Poland has in the authors’ minds). In any case, it seems interesting that the fact that migrants are returning to their home countries appears to be more of an issue in columns than in news stories published in the same period of time by the same papers.

Some of the columnists of the two papers combined the issue of migration with criticism of media organisations, notably the BBC and the *Guardian*. On May 2, Jon Gaunt wrote (most probably in reference to a study by the ippr published shortly before):

On Tuesday Wavy Arm Man [Robert Peston] was getting all excited because a Leftie thick-tank [sic] were claiming that half a million immigrants from Eastern Europe had gone home and that Britain was now facing an employment crisis. Really? What about the four million Brits who are allowed to lie in their pits while these immigrants do the jobs most Brits won’t do? The message from Wavy Arm Man was straightforward – immigration is good for us despite what two influential House of Lords reports have said recently. The Biased Broadcasting Corporation didn’t seem to think this important enough to mention. Instead we

³⁵ Interestingly enough, this is the third text in which the phrase “who can/could blame them” comes up in connection with Polish migrants deciding to return home.

got a visual version of Pravda, without the subtlety. With “balanced” reporting like this, why don’t they save time and our money, cut out the middleman and hand over the news slot to Labour for a five-day-a-week party political broadcast?

Even harsher criticism came from *Daily Mail* columnist Richard Littlejohn in connection with the police study leaked to the *Guardian* in mid-April. Under the heading “They’re liars, not liberals”, he wrote:

When are we going to stop dignifying deliberate distortions of the truth with the cosy-sounding word “spin”? Latest example is the grotesque misrepresentation by The Guardian and the BBC of the police report on the impact immigration has had on crime. And while we are on the subject, why do we allow dishonest, intolerant members of the Fascist Left to get away with calling themselves “liberals”. Let’s call them what they are. Liars. (April 18; pg. 17)

Another aspect that can be found in columns is direct criticism of migrants and their behaviour in Britain as well as the government’s reaction to it. Following reports about a “gipsy mother” who allegedly let her 13-year-old daughter marry a 14-year-old boy and reportedly does not send her children to school, in a text entitled: “Immigrants: Live by our rules or get out of Britain” *Sun* columnist Jane Moore warns of tolerating illegal acts and practices such as “honour” killings, human trafficking and underage marriages. The column ends with the following paragraph: “[I]f people want to come and live here then they must abandon any ‘custom’ or ‘culture’ we consider illegal and live by the rules that govern any civilised society. If they take the option of refusing, then they should be kicked out. If not, then Britain will become even more lawless than it already seems.” (May 14, pg. 11)

A more personal experience with an immigrant from Eastern Europe is recounted in a column by Clement Crabbe published by the *Daily Mail* on April 19. The columnist speaks about the “Iron Curtain charms” of an employee on Bristol airport. His text begins as follows, thus putting his experience with the lady in question into a wider context: “Let us praise the magnificent rudeness of many of our new immigrants from Eastern Europe. These unassuming souls, driven to our shores in search of food and mobile telephones, have introduced new standards of surliness to Britain’s job and service counters.” (p. 34).

As has already been said, the range of examples mentioned above is not intended to be exhaustive and does not allow for any conclusions about possible patterns or tendencies in column writing. What seems interesting, though, is that the *Sun* and the

Daily Mail choose to publish such texts at all – texts that seem very outspoken and often full of generalisations (to say the least), express criticism of colleagues that is sometimes very harsh, particularly regarding media organisations that they perceive to stand for different political views, and that even allow for wordplays or jokes that some people might not find funny at all.

Letters to the papers – the *Sun* and the *Guardian*

Letters published in newspapers suggest a great deal about the paper and its readers. First, and most obviously, letters are written by readers, using their ideas, observations and arguments, and these vary substantially across and between newspapers. Second, letters are usually written in response to previous articles in that newspaper; in this respect they therefore also say something about the news values of the newspaper. Third, the editorial staff in that newspaper select and print letters; again, this gives an indication of the newspaper's news values, but also about how the paper wants to represent the opinions of their readers. Fourth, like all editorial content, letters are edited in accordance with the papers' style guide, providing an insight into the interpersonal function of newspaper discourse. Fifth, they are often placed alongside letters that offer different standpoints, in ways that sometimes reveal the editorial line of the paper. (Richardson 2007, 151)

Indeed, the issue of letters to newspapers seems a particularly interesting one in the context of the analysis of differences in editorial lines and how they can be detected in different sections of papers. Unfortunately, the scope of the research project undertaken for this paper only allows for some anecdotal statements about the nature of letters published by some of the chosen dailies, the *Sun* and the *Guardian*.

In the period of April 1 to May 14, the *Sun* published quite a number of letters to the paper in which the issue of migration was mentioned. These letters – whether in the section “letters@the-sun.co.uk” or under other headings on the same page, particularly of course in the “txt us” part – tend to be very short. Some of them seem to have been written in reaction to particular stories, others are more generally addressed to the government or express political views without reference to any specific article. One example of the first category published on April 7 is the following text: “I was amused by the comments in The Sun by the Polish worker who said that we are workshy and won't do low-paid jobs. Who is doing all the low-paid jobs in Poland now? Not them.” The story this letter is referring to was published on April 2 under the heading of “Case study: East Europeans. Brits so lazy but we want to work

here” on a page that was predominantly dedicated to the issue of migration. There was an article about a “clash” between Prime Minister Gordon Brown and David Cameron on immigration issues following the publication of a report by the Lords’ Economic Affairs Committee alongside a comment by the Tory leader entitled “Labour myths destroyed” and two case studies – “Benefit fraudster” and “East Europeans”. On the same day, the *Sun* published another letter dealing with immigration - on the same page, but in the “txt us” format - which said: “Today’s immigration-mad Government won’t be around in 50 years to witness what this country will be like – but our kids will be.”

Several of the letters published between April 1 and May 14 are addressed to Gordon Brown, for instance the following one: “Here are five things Brown needs to do to save his job: Give us the promised European treaty referendum; restore the ten per cent tax band; cut fuel duty; halt the tide of immigrants; tell the truth. Are you listening Mr Brown?” (May 7) But there are also general statements about immigration, one of them starting with the sentences: “It’s a bit of an understatement to say half of Brits want migrants to go. I think the true figure would be more like 90 per cent.”

Quite a different point of view can be found in a letter by a union representative published by the *Guardian* on April 19 in reaction to the ACPO study first leaked to the paper some days earlier. It sums up several “myths” about migrants that in the author’s view have been disproven by official reports in the course of the week: “It has been a bad week for the myth-makers who demonise the migrants who come to our shores for a better life and to build Britain.” Towards the end of the letter, there is a reference to the media as having a part in that “myth-making”: “Will that end tabloid tales like, I kid thee not, “they’re coming over here to displace our tramps sleeping in doorways”? Oh no it won’t. But at least the public now knows the truth.”

In general, the issue of migration seems to come up in a very small number of letters to the *Guardian* compared with the *Sun*, but to fit this observation into a wider picture of editorial lines and assess different factors that lead to the decision to publish one particular letter and discard another, much more in-depth research would be necessary.

The coverage of Poland – *Sun*, *Daily Mail* and *Guardian*

In the period of time analysed for this paper, there were no major elections in Poland that would most certainly have been covered in more detail by papers in other EU countries such as the UK. Nevertheless, there were a number of other issues related to Poland that seem of international relevance, among them the debate about the US plans for a missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, Poland giving up its resistance against a new EU-Russia agreement or the dispute between the Polish president and the government in Warsaw about the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (at a time when the Irish “no” was not necessarily foreseeable). While some of these issues were covered by the three papers in the six weeks in question, what seems to stand out in the coverage about Poland are stories related to the Holocaust – a subject that came up in all three papers and in some of them even repeatedly.

Under the headline: “I escaped Schindler’s List butcher aged four”, on May 1 the *Sun* ran a two-page story about a visit by the Prince of Wales to Krakow and his meeting with a survivor of the Plaszow concentration camp. The day after, in a text entitled “Chelsea boss at Auschwitz. Holocaust nightmare of Avram” the paper wrote about the manager of the football team visiting the former Nazi extermination camp.

On May 13, the *Daily Mail* published a short article about Irena Sendler who in the 1940s had saved the lives of numerous Jewish children by smuggling them out of the Warsaw Ghetto. One day later, the *Guardian* published a more detailed obituary of the Polish social worker who had died aged 98.

Another story to do with Polish history during the Second World War was published by the *Guardian* in its “film & music” supplement on May 2: a long article about Andrzej Wajda and his then Oscar-nominated movie “Katyn” about the killing of thousands of Polish officers by the Soviet secret police in 1940.

It could be argued that this choice of subject has to do with journalists taking into account that many British people seem to be very interested in that particular historical period. (Anyone who has ever been to a bookshop in Britain knows how extensive the range of material on a multitude of aspects of World War II, National Socialism and the Holocaust is.) The selection of stories with an eye to the British audience also seems of relevance in the case of other stories that came up in

connection with Poland. Both the *Guardian* and the *Sun*³⁶ reported that one particular series of “Big Brother” had been sold to a Polish TV channel. According to the *Guardian*, the TV production was intended to be used for teaching everyday English. The *Sun* said – funnily enough: “Let’s just hope the Poles haven’t bought it to use as an educational tool” – which is, according to the broadsheet, of course exactly what they did.

10. Conclusions

Every newspaper seems to have its particular place in a society and, even if only in the broadest sense, its specific political orientation. This general orientation is arguably – to a greater or lesser degree – also reflected in the news it produces, in the first place perhaps in the choice of stories it deems newsworthy as well as the extent of their coverage. “News is from a distinct perspective”, says John Eldridge in one of his essays in the Glasgow Media Group Reader.³⁷

The first observation to be made in this context – which is at the same time the answer to the first research question formulated at the beginning of this paper – refers to the quantity of articles that each of the three newspapers dedicated to the issue of Polish migrants in the six weeks between April 1 and May 14. The *Daily Mail* stands out in this respect, providing 38 out of a total of 74 articles included in the sample, which is probably an indication of the importance the issue of (Polish) immigration seems to have in the view of the paper (and possibly also the readership it has in mind). Different as they seem in many ways, the *Guardian* and the *Sun*, on the other hand, published a comparable amount of stories that met the selection criteria defined for the analysis (19 and 17 stories respectively).

That is, of course, not to say that the content and style of their coverage was similar as well. On the contrary: Some marked differences could be seen in the choice of topics covered and, even more so, in the way the papers focused their attention on some aspects of these issues, often at the expense of others. The impact of immigration on the labour market, for instance, was a big issue in all three papers,

³⁶ Cf. “Goody English: Polish TV uses Big Brother to teach language” (*The Guardian*, April 12, p. 5) and “It’s the sarf pole. Jade BB3 sold to Poland (nowhere near East Anglar)” (*The Sun*, April 9, p. 25)

³⁷ Cf. Eldridge 1995, 31.

but only the *Guardian* wrote about cases of exploitation of migrant workers in more detail. Crime in relation to migration also came up frequently in the coverage, but the *Guardian* had by far the smallest number of stories about actual crime cases – and most certainly not because the sample taken from this newspaper was also the smallest, but rather because of what it considered to be of interest (to its target audience).

“Indeed”, says Raymond Kuhn, “audiences need to understand that *all* news on *all* media is the product of a process of selection and construction and that the version of events provided by any particular outlet may be reasonably accurate and at the same time biased.”³⁸ It is, therefore, not surprising that the newspapers analysed in more detail regarding their coverage of Polish migrants in April and May of 2008 also appear to have their preferred subjects and lines of argumentation. What does seem surprising, though – and this is most clearly shown by the results of the case study about the ACPO report – is that even when the same basic facts are used and largely the same arguments and statements quoted (i.e. the “process of selection” appears very similar), the message of a news story can still be completely different in each paper. Thus, it may sometimes be the “construction” that arguably allows a glimpse at the newspaper’s general orientation or even editorial line.

To go back to Kuhn’s statement, the story each paper published in its first coverage of the police study seemed, one could argue, “reasonably accurate and at the same time biased” – although “bias” in this context is definitely too strong a word. Perhaps the term “interpretation” would be more adequate – after all, the police findings had to be put into some kind of context, thus leading to a “foregrounding” of a specific reading of the study. Also, it cannot be excluded that the findings (which were leaked, not published) were presented to the journalists of the three newspapers in slightly different ways, thus steering them in different directions concerning what these findings might mean in practice. Nevertheless, it seems interesting that the broad messages of the three papers’ first coverage of the police report in news stories seem to be in line with the dailies’ general orientation. However, it was not the main aim of the analysis presented here to find out as much as possible about the editorial lines of the three papers and how they may manifest themselves in different sections of the dailies. Indeed, to provide a satisfactory answer to that, further research would

³⁸ Kuhn 2007, 170; emphasis in the original

be necessary. The choice of letters to the papers published and the range of opinions expressed by columnists might be a good starting point for that.

One central aspect on which this research project intended to shed some light is the question who is quoted in articles about Polish migrants by which newspaper. The answer that the limited scope of the project presented here can provide seems straightforward enough: It is the politicians, the institutions and the pressure groups that have a voice in most of the texts included in the sample, and neither “ordinary” British citizens nor Polish migrants seem to get their arguments across on a regular basis. And this is in spite of vast differences discernible between the world views and journalistic criteria adhered to by a quality paper like the *Guardian*, a middle-market publication like the *Daily Mail* and a tabloid like the *Sun*. It would, of course, be worthwhile to try to find out if the period analysed is exceptional or typical in that respect. In any case, even the findings of this small-scale research project could serve as a starting point to reflect on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in one’s everyday work as a journalist – certainly not only in the British context, and not only in newspaper journalism.

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Interviews

Keith Best, Chief Executive of the Immigration Advisory Service (5 November 2008; London)

Sir Andrew Green, Chairman of MigrationWatch UK (4 November 2008; telephone interview)

Alan Travis, Home Affairs Editor, *The Guardian* (5 November 2008, London)³⁹

³⁹ The original intention was to talk to journalists at all three newspapers to find out more about the reasoning and the motivations behind their reporting as well as their opinions about the media coverage of migrants in Britain in general. Unfortunately, not all of these efforts were crowned with success. In the end, only *Guardian* journalist Alan Travis agreed to an interview.

12. Appendix

The following chart shows what precise questions were asked when analysing central issues covered by the three newspapers and what elements were included in each category:

IS CRIME AN ISSUE IN THE TEXT? – yes/no

[includes crimes, offences, illegal immigration, the need for policing]

Poles as victims (only Poles counted here) – yes/no

Poles as culprits (only Poles counted here) – yes/no

Crimes associated with immigrants (other than Poles or Poles not identified as either culprits or victims) – yes/no

ARE IMMIGRATION STATISTICS AN ISSUE IN THE TEXT? – yes/no

IS POLITICS AN ISSUE IN THE TEXT? – yes/no

[includes political participation of migrants/immigration as a political issue]

IS THE LABOUR MARKET AN ISSUE? – yes/no

Impact of immigration on British(-born) workers mentioned – yes/no

[e.g. lower wages, fewer jobs]

Impact of migration to the UK for Poles mentioned – yes/no

[e.g. come to the UK for higher wages/a better life]

Exploitation of workers an issue – yes/no

ARE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF IMMIGRATION MENTIONED? – yes/no

Is it an issue if the British economy benefits from immigration? – yes/no

[in terms of growth, GDP]

Is it an issue if ordinary British citizens benefit economically from immigration? – yes/no

[e.g. GDP/capita; not in reference to labour market]

IS HOUSING AN ISSUE? – yes/no

[social housing and the housing market in general]

IS HEALTH AN ISSUE? – yes/no

[in general terms, concerning hospitals/NHS, Poles working in the health sector]

ARE SCHOOLS AN ISSUE? – yes/no

[immigrants going to school or not, problems at school, too few places; teaching, education]

IS LANGUAGE AN ISSUE? – yes/no

[immigrants' knowledge of English, need for British officials to speak Polish or other languages]

IS CULTURE IN TERMS OF BOOKS, FILMS, PLAYS, etc. AN ISSUE? – yes/no

ARE TRADITIONS/CUSTOMS/TYPICAL FOOD AN ISSUE (Polish/British)? – yes/no

IS THE EUROPEAN UNION MENTIONED? – yes/no

13. Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my employer, the Austria Press Agency (APA), for granting me the means and opportunity to spend three invaluable months at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in Oxford. In particular, I would like to thank Editor-in-Chief Michael Lang, CEO Wolfgang Vyslozil (ret.) and Head of the Foreign Desk Ambros Kindel.

Several people generously contributed their time, experience and insights to my research project. Many thanks to Michelle Jackson, David Levy, John Lloyd, James Painter and Jan Zielonka as well as to my interview partners Keith Best, Andrew Green and Alan Travis.

My special thanks go to the people at the Reuters Institute. Alex, Kate, Rima, David, James and John, I owe much more to you than I could ever properly thank you for. Your expertise, your dedication and your company made all the difference.

Last, but not least I would like to thank my fellow Reuters Fellows – Amel, Annikka, Haiyan, Jeremy, Kimmo, Ramata, Salla and Thuy – for the very interesting and enjoyable time we spent together at Oxford.