

**Social representations of peace in terrorism talk: a UK talk-radio analysis**

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## **Abstract**

This paper employs combined critical discourse analysis/ membership categorization analysis to examine social representations of peace that appear within two UK talk radio debates about terrorism. After an initial overview of how and where social representations of peace feature throughout the data, three extended sequences of talk are subject to detailed discursive analysis. Whilst a range of Muslim and non-Muslim callers participate in these debates, analysis identifies that it is only Muslim speakers who engage social representations of peace. Analysis of three differing elite Muslim speakers reveals that in these debates: (i) peace is positioned as central to Muslim identity but also as a common value that is accessible to non-Muslims and Muslims alike; (ii) upholding and maintaining peace and challenging violent ideologies is constructed as an ongoing moral duty for Muslim communities; (iii) upholding peace as core to Islam does not mandate an absolute rejection of all violence in all contexts. These findings are discussed in the context of mainstream UK terrorism discourse where Muslim category membership and adherence to Islam is routinely linked to concerns regarding the presumed threat of extremist terror attacks in the UK.

**Keywords:** Social representations, discourse, peace, identity, terrorism

## Introduction

This paper examines how and when social representations of peace are occasioned within two talk radio debates in which speakers are addressing concerns with contemporary terrorism in the UK. It further analyzes the internal characteristics of the given social representations and considers how these representations serve as communicative resources for speakers during terrorism talk. The paper begins by introducing social representations theory (Moscovici, 2008), before reviewing relevant prior literature and emphasizing the importance of identity for social representations. The benefits of adopting a discursive approach to enable a detailed study of social representations of peace are then outlined and a discourse analysis is presented which examines a small number of social representations of peace as they feature in these UK talk radio debates about terrorism. These findings are discussed within the context of contemporary terrorism discourse.

## Social representations theory

Social Representations Theory (Moscovici, 2008) fundamentally asserts that individuals and groups are continually and actively engaged in the production and communication of shared social knowledge. Social representations provide a “way of acquiring and communicating knowledge, a way that creates realities and common sense” (Moscovici, 1981, p. 186). The central function of social representations is to facilitate groups and communities in arriving at everyday ways of understanding the world. Jovchelovitch (2007) maintains that representations simultaneously act across societal and interpersonal levels, such that social representation “relates to the construction of

worldviews, to the establishment of systems of everyday knowledge” and “actively express projects and identities of social actors and the interrelations between them” (p. 12). Hence, social representations involve more than a passive development and transmission of knowledge, they are active phenomena which individuals are personally and socially invested in constructing and communicating during the cut and thrust of everyday interactions.

The emphasis that social representations theory places on communication positions language centrally. Moscovici (2008) states that language and thought are wholly integrated in the production of shared social knowledge. Kilby (2015) asserts that social representations are *“co-constructed, negotiated, dynamic forms of social knowledge that are powerfully realised through language and put to various use by members, both within and between groups”* (pp. 231-232). Forms of mass media therefore provide important vehicles for the proliferation of social representations. (See Höijer, 2011 for discussion of social representations theory in media research). Social representations that find voice in mass media communications occupy a critical position in the development of shared social knowledge, providing widely shared forms of mundane truth. Hence, the study of social representations of peace that feature within UK national talk radio debates about contemporary terrorism allow some purchase on widely accessible social representations of peace that are occasioned and developed in the context of terrorism.

## Social representations and peace

Galtung (1985, 1996) distinguishes between negative and positive peace, maintaining that positive peace requires more than the absence of physical violence, it involves positive social interactions which build and sustain peace. Peace psychology generally accords with this distinction and asserts the importance of pursuing peace as something which is more than merely the absence of violent conflict (e.g., Christie, 2006; Sarrica & Wachelke, 2009; Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008; Wagner, 1988). However, within the area of social psychological peace research, where the current research is positioned, Vollhardt and Bilali (2008) suggest that whilst the concept of positive peace is largely accepted, there is limited work that examines it. The current research facilitates the study of positive peace by inductively enquiring *how* is peace constructed by people in a given social, political, historical context, and how might we understand peace as a resource that people draw upon to particular ends during social interaction. In addressing these concerns, we witness the social identities of actors come to the fore, as people situate themselves in the relevant contextual space, and develop social representations of peace that are fitting for them and for their interactional aims.

When it comes to accounting for why people adopt differing perspectives and work to develop and maintain varying social representations whilst disputing others, wide ranging social representations research has demonstrated that identity is a critical factor (Duveen, 2001; Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011; Howarth, 2002, 2014; Moloney & Walker, 2007). Typically, social representations research concerned with peace has adopted a comparative approach, examining and comparing social representations of

peace with war and conflict. Whilst the current research specifically concerns itself with peace in the context of contemporary terrorism, the findings of this existing area of research are highly informative regarding social representations of peace, and offer insight regarding the relationship between peace and identity, hence it is reviewed here. Building upon prior studies that report relatively well-defined representations of war but limited or less stable representations of peace amongst various groups (e.g., Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998; Orr, Sagi & Bar-On, 2000; Wagner, Valencia & Elejabarrieta, 1996), Sarrica and Contarello (2004) contend that social representations of peace and war are fundamentally linked to identities and social practices. Members directly involved in peace activism are thus anticipated to hold distinct representations of both war and peace. Comparing social representations of 'peace', 'war', and 'conflict' between peace activists and non-activists, the authors report that activists construct peace as a more dynamic phenomenon, whilst non-activists construct a more static, objective concept. However, the clearest differences found between activists and non-activists relate to social representations of conflict. Activists viewed conflict in more positive terms and as a normative feature of achieving peace, whilst non-activists framed conflict in more negative terms, distinguishable from war only inasmuch as conflict is a more local interpersonal concept (Sarrica & Contarello, 2004). The authors argue that these findings evidence the significance of identity and social practices for the formation of social representations of peace.

Subsequent research with peace activists found further evidence regarding the centrality of identity and social practices within social representations of peace and war (Sarrica,

2007). The representations held by these participants led Sarrica (2007) to report that peace is “characterized by the prominence of intrapersonal and relational aspects [...] Moreover, peace is described in positive terms and not only as the absence of negative behaviors” (p. 267). Sarrica and Wachelke (2009) examined representations of peace and war amongst Italian students and identified structured representations of both peace and war. However, representations of war were especially stable and could be categorized under the themes of 'experiences', 'objects' and 'causes of war', whereas peace was found to be a more abstract concept, related to emotions, experiences and symbolism. The findings led the authors to reject common assumptions that social representations of peace and war are structurally organized as straightforward antonyms. Rather, they suggest, peace and war are “conceptions based on different themes” (Sarrica & Wachelke, 2009, p. 328). Van der Linden, Bizumic, Stubager and Mellon (2011) examined relationships between attitudes to peace and war, and between social representations of peace and war amongst participants from the United States and Denmark. They similarly rejected any simple dichotomy in the attitudes people hold toward peace and war and found that notions of peace were not strongly associated with the absence of violence. Moreover, whilst participants from both nations represented peace in terms more aligned to positive peace than negative peace, dominant representations of peace were found to differ between these nations. Van der Linden et al (2011) propose that the differences in representations of peace and war can be seen to reflect differences in national political culture which in turn relate to a nation’s history of engagement with war. Thus, it is not only personal and group based identity, but also national and cultural identity which is seen to be relevant for social representations of peace.

## Peace and conflict as labors of culture and nation

As indicated above, the potential that a straightforward dichotomy might exist between peace and violent conflict is challenged by the findings of social representations researchers. Thus, space is created to explore how members who may be supportive of violent conflict, may simultaneously uphold values of peace and how they may potentially strive for peaceful ways of living, and vice versa. This is reflected in the findings of Gibson (2011a) who undertook a discursive psychology analysis of British speakers involved in debates about Britain's participation in the Iraq war. He reported that amongst speakers who strongly asserted a position which was broadly 'pro non-war', were members simultaneously supporting UK military action in Iraq. Such findings highlight the importance of studying how members themselves normatively engage with and reproduce social representations of peace and conflict. This focus on members' everyday use may be particularly important for alerting us to the ways in which representations of peace and war are bound up with political and national identity (Van der Linden et al, 2011), but also other aspects of group based identity including ethnicity and religion. As Hewer and Taylor (2007) point out, we need to recognize that culturally derived ideas about peace are just that. Via reference to culturally embedded representations of European histories of war and conflict, Hewer (2012) demonstrates how the same events of war are understood and experienced differently both between cultures but also within cultures across time, arguing that "representations generated by the culture thus serve to endorse the culture so that they are both source and recipient; and the circular nature of the process largely shields foundational assumptions and beliefs from test or challenge from within" (p. 4). He further maintains that that shared

cultural assumptions such as those that underpin notions of democracy, justice, human rights and war are “not universal truths, but moral positions founded upon knowledge, values and beliefs, all of which are linked to power” (Hewer, 2012, p. 4).

In addition to the literature outlined above, a further body of work has identified that social representations of war occupy a position of global importance. Based upon a range of studies which analyze extensive data amassed from many Eastern and Western nations, Liu and colleagues provide compelling evidence that war and conflict dominate global social representations of world history (Liu, 1999; Liu et al, 2005; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Liu & László, 2007; Liu et al, 2009). Of particular interest for the current research, Liu et al (2009), reported that, alongside the two world wars, the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terror attacks in the US were ranked by participants from a range of Western and Eastern nations as amongst the three most important events in world history. These findings appear even more striking given that the research did not include data from the US or the UK. Whether this can be read as evidence that terrorism occupies lay consciousness as a modern form of war, or whether war and terrorism are categorized as distinct forms of conflict is not clear, what is clear however is that concerns with contemporary terrorism in the West occupy a central position in global public consciousness alongside war. Hewer and Taylor (2007) contend that the study of terrorism is greatly advanced by examining the content of cultural worldviews and shared social beliefs. They further argue that, in the UK context, we need to be concerned with exploring the identity of British Muslims who often find themselves experiencing contradictory social representations from differing cultures. In the current research, examining UK media

debates about terrorism where British Muslim speakers are participating, affords a valuable opportunity to examine these issues.

## Discourse and social representations of peace

Dedać (2003) states that “The fragility of peace and the precipice of war seem to hang, as it were, on words and how we say them and how we hear them” (p. 7), and whilst much of the social representations peace research has utilized survey or experimental methods, the importance of studying discursive constructions of peace has been strongly asserted by Gibson (2011a, 2011b). Outlining the need for critical discursive peace research, Gibson (2011b) aligns with Hewer and Taylor (2007), pointing out that mainstream peace psychology broadly perpetuates a highly individualistic approach to the study of peace and violence which underplays the significance of the shared social, historic and cultural foundations in which social representations thrive. The issue of shared thinking is key to social representations theory, which posits that rather than the product, or preserve of individual minds, social representations are fundamentally derived in and through the given social, cultural, historical context. (De Rosa, 2006; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). The position adopted in this research echoes Gibson (2011a; 2011b), and contends that discourse provides a central means through which members construct modes of understanding that serve to provide forms of agreement about what constitutes peace and violence, as well as enabling subtler distinctions including differentiation between forms of legitimate and non-legitimate politically oriented violence. In making his call for the advancement of critical discursive peace research, and highlighting the relative lack of research of this kind, Gibson (2011b) suggests “we might

be well advised to begin by scrutinising the very terms 'war' and 'peace' themselves. Rather than treating these as straightforward and transparent terms, it is instructive to explore when they are used, and what they are used to do" (p243). This research pursues that ambition by examining how members actively work up and make use of social representations of peace within debates about terrorism.

## **The current research**

This research seeks to contribute to an understanding of how cultures of peace might develop within the context of UK terrorism by examining how social representations of peace are used as culturally contingent resources by speakers during debates about terrorism. Given the context of this research, this analysis offers some purchase on social representations of terrorism as well as peace. However, the focal aim is the study of peace, and the data is selected solely to enable the study of how social representations of peace feature in the context of terrorism talk. The research questions are defined as: (i) who talks for peace in public debates about terrorism; (ii) what is the structural context and narrative content of their peace talk; (iii) (how) does the peace/violence dialectic feature within the talk.

## **Methodology**

Discursive psychology is a well recognized and increasingly prominent approach, particularly within European Social Psychology, and within peace psychology there is indication that discursive approaches are beginning to make a contribution (E.g. Bretherton & Law, 2015; Gibson, 2011a, 2011b). Whilst the social constructionist

ontological and epistemological underpinnings of discursive psychology render it apart from more mainstream social psychology approaches where empiricism is judged by the use of familiar quantitative methods, and where statistical findings are the benchmark by which analytic claims are judged, discursive psychology is no less analytically rigorous. Whilst it typically coheres with a more relativist position which does not seek, or make claims to any kind of absolute or objective truth, it remains a grounded scientific undertaking and, particularly for those working in the realms of conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis, the analytic method is highly empirical (Wetherell, 2001). This typically necessitates the inclusion of large data extracts such that "the claims of the analyst are open to test by the reader or other researchers on the basis of the data" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; 5). The potential contribution that discursive psychology can make to peace psychology is emphasized in the review paper by Vollhardt & Bilali (2008) who contend that social psychological peace research should seek to undertake more contextual research where peace is studied in people's everyday real world contexts and away from the confines of laboratory settings. Moreover, they point to the need for multiple levels of analysis within peace research which rejects both 'methodological individualism' and 'methodological holism' and instead engages a range of methods in the pursuit of knowledge which helps us understand the complex relations that often exist between differing levels of analysis. With this in mind the current research proceeds.

## Data

The data comprise two, hour-long programs that aired following two terror related events in the UK. The first, entitled 'What more can we do to stop the terrorists?' was

broadcast on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007 and the second, entitled 'Why do some British Muslims want to blow us up?' aired on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013. Both were broadcast by BBC Radio 5 live, a British national radio station devoted to live news and current affairs broadcasting. These two shows featured in a regular weekday morning slot which is devoted to live debate and generally concentrates upon a pre-selected current affairs topic or dominant news story. Both shows feature talk from the host, alongside contributions from pre-selected 'elite' callers chosen due to some degree of topic-relevant expertise, and everyday 'lay' callers.

The data was transcribed in full and treated as a single dataset. In this sense, it is helpful to view the research as a single case analysis which facilitates detailed purchase on how peace is constructed by a small number of speakers engaged in terrorism talk designed for a public audience. As the specific interest is with social representations of peace, all appearances of 'peace' were coded using the Microsoft Word 'find' facility. This equated to a total of six occasions. It is unsurprising that peace appeared relatively infrequently in debates that were directly addressing concerns with terrorism. Rather than diminish the study, it is perhaps even more crucial to examine how and where peace does feature, in the pursuit of knowledge which might begin to facilitate peace having a greater stake in such discourses. A subset of sizeable extracts, where each extract encompassed all talk related to the deployment of the word 'peace' were collated for analysis. Analysis was strongly influenced by the body of work concerned with the study of talk radio (e.g., Fitzgerald & Housley, 2002; Hutchby, 1992a; 1992b; 1996; 1999; 2001; 2006; Kilby & Horowitz, 2013; Thornborrow, 2001a; 2001b; Thornborrow & Fitzgerald 2002), and the

central concern with identity focused the analysis toward speakers' membership category work.

## Membership categories

Originally developed by Harvey Sacks (1995), membership categorization analysis, is concerned with studying how membership categories are invoked by speakers during conversation, and how the invocation of a given membership category enables and/or requires speakers attend to certain category rights and obligations during the interaction.

Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) describe membership categories as "*culturally available resources which allow us to describe, identify or make reference to other people or to ourselves*" (p. 35). They further point out that one of the key features of membership categories is that there are always multiple membership categories that might be invoked by the speaker to categorise self or others. For example, in the context of the current paper, a speaker might be categorised, or self-categorise according to gender, ethnicity, religion, location, profession, or age. What is of interest here is which categories are invoked, and what interactional work might the given categories entail and/or achieve in the local context of the talk. Jayyusi (1984) demonstrates that membership categories have moral qualities which can reduce or remove the need for actions to be explicitly accounted for by speakers, as actions are often 'category bound' (e.g., participation in illegal activity is routinely bound to the category 'criminal').

Subsequent work has examined additional category related properties such as knowledge, rights and obligations. All such category related properties are commonly referred to as 'category predicates' (Hester, 1998). Furthermore, the study of membership categories as resources for the local accomplishment of social organisation

facilitates the analysis of talk as morally grounded practice (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002; 2009; Jayyusi, 1984), and as an environment where relations of power play out (Kilby & Horowitz, 2013).

## **Analysis and Discussion**

Analysis afforded insight regarding (i) *who* speaks peace; (ii) *why* they speak peace; (iii) *how* they speak peace. *Who* relates directly to salient categories of identity that are identifiable for speakers who introduce peace; *why* is explored by examining common features of the talk which can be seen to stimulate the introduction of peace, and *how* involves analysis of the dominant narrative themes that members realize when developing social representations. An overview of key findings which outline (i) *who* and (ii) *why* is presented, subsequently analysis of data extracts examines how social representations of peace are discursively constituted and how they act as resources within this terrorism talk.

In addressing the question of *who* talks for peace, the most striking finding relates to ethnic religious identity. The normative structure of talk radio introductions has been studied in detail elsewhere (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2002; Kilby & Horowitz, 2013; Thornborrow, 2001b). Kilby and Horowitz (2013, p. 733) report various established “name plus” provisions that hosts use to introduce lay and elite callers to the air. The current research similarly identifies that a typical ‘name plus’ structure for lay caller introductions includes forename and location (“*We got John in Birmingham; Abdul in Leicester*”), and elite caller introductions comprise forename, surname and some indication of professional position or expertise linked to the topic at hand (“*Jahan*

*Mahmood is with us, er works with young Muslim men in Birmingham on anti-radicalization projects”).*

Schegloff (1972) highlights that when names and location details are provided, listeners inspect them as potentially revelatory regarding matters of class, sex and ethnicity. The institutional norms of talk radio introductions offer just such a site in which routinely disclosed information can be heard as indicative of ethnic category membership (Kilby & Horowitz, 2013). In this sense a lay caller's 'call relevant identity' and their 'topic relevant identity' can potentially blur. (See Fitzgerald & Housley (2002) for detailed discussion of the flow of talk radio identity categorization practices). In the context of terrorism talk in the United Kingdom where Muslim members are regularly treated as a suspect and dangerous 'other', and conflation between Muslim identity and terrorist identity are commonplace, (Hussain & Bagguley, 2012; Mythen, Walklate & Khan, 2009; Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009), 'Abdul in Leicester' is not only routinely presumed Muslim, but his Muslim category membership is implicitly relevant for his contribution to the debate. In the case of elite introductions, the provision of caller ethnicity indicated by name and location 'Jahan Mahmood from Birmingham' is coupled with explicitly stated professional credentials, namely [Jahan] *“works with young Muslim men” on “anti-radicalization projects”*. Thus, call relevant identity is doubly bound to Muslim category membership.

Implicit indication of Muslim identity, is a regular feature of caller introductions in the current data, and, as subsequent analysis will reflect, Muslim identity is routinely treated by all parties as relevant to the contributions these callers might go on to offer. However, the primary concern of the current paper is not simply that Muslim identity is treated as

relevant in this terrorism talk. Rather, it is the discovery that, whilst the speakers in these debates can be divided reasonably evenly between Muslim and non-Muslim 'name plus' introductions, on all but one occasion, peace is introduced solely by Muslim speakers. On the single occasion where peace is introduced by a non-Muslim speaker, it is the host who does so. In this instance the host responds to arguments made by a prior caller, maintaining that *"there's a big difference between moderate **peaceful** Muslim people of whom there are millions in this country and nutters who go around planting bombs"*.

Thus, even on the occasion where a non-Muslim speaker introduces peace, he does so in the construction of Muslim identity. Finding that, within this UK terrorism talk, peace is voiced almost exclusively by Muslim members, stands stark against the backdrop of widespread, contemporary terrorism discourse which constructs British Muslims as a risky and suspect community (Mythen et al, 2009; Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009), and where Islam is repeatedly conjoined with the concept of fundamentalism, such that 'Islamic fundamentalism' refers to an ideology discursively positioned as a centrally motivating factor underpinning acts of terrorism against the UK and the West (see Gunning & Jackson, 2011; Jackson 2007, for critique of mainstream discourses of 'Islamic Terrorism'), leading to an increasing securitization of Muslim communities (Hussain & Bagguley, 2012).

The discovery that peace talk is primarily the achievement of Muslim speakers within these debates is further developed by examining where in the talk peace is introduced. Evaluation of the local context enables some initial appraisal of *why* peace is deemed by speakers to be relevant at particular junctures. Analysis revealed that, on every occasion, peace is introduced in response to prior constructions of Islam and /or Muslim identity

advanced by non-Muslim speakers. Alongside non-Muslim callers, the host regularly introduces Islam and concerns with Muslim members as relevant topics for discussion and directs Muslim callers to respond to such concerns, (*"I think you wanted to help us out with this question that was raised by an earlier caller on this programme. Whether all Muslim people in this country want this to be a Muslim state?"*). Such forthright, yet seemingly uncontroversial requests indicate a routine acceptance by all participants that Islam can, and should, be rightfully debated as a central topic within the realm of contemporary UK terrorism talk. Muslim speakers are not found to reject such positioning of Islam or their Muslim identity, however they are often seen striving to reconstruct the dominant representation of Islam and/or Muslim identity that is presented to them, and it is here that peace is drawn into view.

Furthermore, on every occasion that social representations of peace are developed, they are constructed in and through reference to Islam and/or Muslim identity. There is no other representation of peace developed by these speakers, either one which positions British or Western identity as core to the representation, or one in which peace is constructed as a facet of a speaker's personal identity. On each occasion, the social representation of peace is solely concerned with Muslim identity and Islamic values. Hence, whilst these initial findings lend further support to the argument that social representations of peace are forcefully bound up with aspects of identity, they differ from prior research that has reported on the significance of national political identity for representations of peace (e.g., Van der Linden et al, 2011). Given that prior research has indicated that ethnic and religious identity is of central importance in historical representations of nations and nationhood (László & Ehmann, 2013; Liu & László, 2007;

Liu & Hilton, 2005), the current findings compliment the findings of Van der Linden et al (2011), highlighting ethnic and religious identity as complexly interwoven with national political identity within representations of peace.

Having outlined *who* talks for peace, and provided some initial indication of when and *why* peace becomes relevant in these debates, analysis now turns to data extracts to further examine the discursive characteristics of these social representations, and consider the local context of the talk in which peace is deemed to be relevant. As discussed above, Muslim speakers introduce peace on five of the six total occasions. It is also notable that on four of those occasions, peace is introduced by speakers who have been accorded some level of elite or expert Muslim status. This might be indicative of the potentially differing objectives of lay and elite callers on talk radio. Elite callers are typically pre-invited to participate and often seek to shape the agenda of the debate, whereas lay callers phone in whilst the show is airing and are therefore more typically responding to the focal concerns of the talk. However, given there is only a single instance of a lay caller referring to peace, it is not feasible here to meaningfully explore potential differences between lay and elite social representations of peace. In total, three extended extracts of three differing elite Muslim speakers are analyzed below. Of the three instances not analyzed, the host occasioning of peace and the Muslim lay caller occasioning of peace have been excluded. Initial analysis identified that one elite Muslim speaker introduces peace on two separate occasions, however these two instances reflect comparable themes of social representation, hence, for reasons of space, only one instance from this speaker is examined. These three lengthy extracts reflect the varied features of social representations of peace that were engaged by elite British

Muslim speakers in these debates. In keeping with social representations theory, it is important to re-state that social representations do not operate at the level of the individual, when members construct and communicate social representations they are drawing upon and contributing to widely accessible forms of shared social knowledge. Hence analysis of these extracts facilitates an exploration of peace as a shared social construct that elite British Muslim speakers occasion to undertake particular interactional business in the context of terrorism talk.

In the preamble to the first extract the caller is introduced by the host as *“the spokesperson for the Muslim association of Britain in Scotland”*, credentials which furnish the caller with a level of elite expertise to speak on behalf of a Muslim community (see Kilby & Horowitz 2013; Thornborrow 2001b for work on elite credentials). The caller is then asked by the host to address the issue of *“whether or not all Muslims in this country want Britain to become a Muslim state”*. In response, the caller firmly rejects this proposition before outlining calls for dialogue between varied communities about what kind of society people might aspire to. The extract below picks up directly following this initial action-opposition sequence (Hutchby, 2006, 1996).

### **Extract 1**

- 1           Host:    so what you're saying is there are quite large numbers of Muslim's who  
2                    would like to see the introduction of some kind of Sharia law in this  
3                    country  
4           O.S:    no uhm just by choice uhm we already have many aspects of Sharia law  
5                    in this country. I'm married by Sharia, I've got a Sharia compliant bank  
6                    account, and sometimes people go over the top when you talk about

7                    Sharia because there's just minor aspects of your life your looking to live  
8                    in a more godly fashion but people just associate it with chopping off  
9                    hands and so on  
10                  Host:    and they're wrong to do that are they?  
11                  O.S:    Yeah I mean it's, y'know, in fact, many so called Muslim states around  
12                    the world have got a wrong conception of Sharia, they think y'know just  
13                    by having these arbitrary punishments that they somehow are living a  
14                    more, running a more Islamic country, when in fact y'know this isn't Islam  
15                    at all y'know, the religion of soul, of **peace**, of godliness that we all want  
16                    to see

At the start of this extract the host packages his question as a reformulation of caller's own prior contribution "*so what you're saying is there are quite large numbers of Muslim's who would like to see the introduction of some kind of Sharia law in this country*" (lines 1-3). The caller has in fact made no mention of Sharia law, however the power relations between host and caller, make the reformulation difficult to strenuously refute without appearing either antagonistic, or self-contradictory. (c.f. Fitzgerald & Housley, 2002; Kilby & Horowitz, 2013; Thornborrow, 2001a for discussion of omni-relevance and host/caller relations of power). The caller responds with an initial rejection of the claim before turning the debate toward a discussion of Sharia itself which prefaces the notion of choice, "*no, uhm just by choice uhm, we already have many aspects of Sharia law in this country*" (lines 4-5). He goes on to develop an account whereby Muslims who seek to live in accordance with Sharia are already able to do so, thereby downgrading any potential need for British society to change in order for Muslim members to uphold these values should they want to. In developing this response, via use of the pronoun 'we', the caller shifts footing (Goffman, 1979), moving from a position of speaking *for* Muslims in his capacity as spokesperson, to speaking *as* a Muslim.

Explicitly affiliating as a Muslim in this manner further advances the caller's personal membership credentials which in turn invokes the moral rights and responsibilities associated with membership of the category Muslim. Speaking as and for Muslim members in this way potentially affords an increased moral right to be heard on the matters at hand.

Billig (1995) points out that words such as 'we', 'I' and 'you' are deictic utterances. Deictic words are words where the semantic meaning remains fixed but the referent varies according to the context of use. Billig (1995) refers to deixis as "a form of rhetorical pointing" (p. 106), wherein the full meaning is always context dependent. The use of deixis throughout extract 1, and particularly the shifts between the person pronouns 'we', 'I', 'you', 'your', 'they', are complex. They reflect a blurring of varying membership categories that resists an assumptive treatment of Muslim/non-Muslim membership categories as an 'us and them' standardized relational pair (c.f Leudar Marsland & Nekvapil 2004). In repeatedly shifting pronouns, the speaker constructs alignment and potential overlap between some categories, whilst also drawing attention to the potential for categories to subdivide and thereby problematize the use of overly inclusive membership categories. Following initial reference to "we" (line 4) and "I" (line 5) which implicitly presents the caller as Muslim, he moves to introduce and challenge a representation of Sharia in which "*sometimes people go over the top*" (line 6). Common concerns which underlie this 'over the top' reaction are preemptively addressed by the caller as he highlights that "*there's just minor aspects of your life your looking to live in a more godly fashion*" (lines 7-8). Thus, the distance between Sharia and non-Sharia ways of life is minimized. Presenting a non-specific contrast between what 'people' think and

the implied reality of Sharia enables the caller to avoid confrontation with any particular membership category and retain emphasis on the positives of Sharia itself. However, the non-specific use of 'people' is contrasted with the use of the person pronouns 'you' and 'your' which serve both to personalize this account, and to present followers of Sharia as a potentially inclusive category, which extends beyond the speaker, such that it is treated as normative that *you* could be living your life in this way irrespective of who you might be.

The catch-all 'people' is again used as the caller offers a contrast between the construction of Sharia in which members seek to *"live in a more godly fashion"* (line 8), and a view of Sharia in which *"people just associate it with chopping off hands and so on"* (lines 8-9). At this juncture, the host intervenes with a request for clarification. In asking *"and they're wrong to do that are they?"* (line 10) the host maintains a position where such a view that 'people' are claimed to hold could, in principle, be correct. Note however, that neither host nor caller have yet offered any indication as to who is potentially holding such views. In offering a response which affirms that such a view of Sharia is indeed 'wrong', the caller brings into question the Muslim credentials of *"many so called Muslim states around the world"* who hold a *"wrong conception of Sharia"* (lines 11-12). Here then we see caller construct a conflict, not between Muslim and non-Muslim members based on acceptance or rejection of Sharia per se, but one which pits Muslim against Muslim along the lines of incompatible representations of Islam. The caller comprehensively rejects the ideology of those who *"think y'know just by having these arbitrary punishments that they somehow are living a more, running a more Islamic country"* (lines 12-14,) and as we witness the pronouns shift again, the 'so-called Muslim

states' in question are clearly distinguished as 'they'. Hence, forms of punishment in the name of Sharia become a benchmark by which correct adherence to Islam can be evaluated, and members who endorse such violence are outside of the categories to which 'I' and 'you' might belong. In doing so the caller makes the case that, whilst Muslim members might seek to uphold the values of Sharia, they also categorically reject the use of random or capricious violence which stands in fundamental contradiction to Islam. As the speaker puts it "*y'know this isn't Islam at all*" (line 15).

Having developed an account which rejects arbitrary violence as incompatible with Islam, the caller concludes his turn by positioning Islam as "*the religion of soul, of **peace**, of godliness that we all want to see*" (lines 15-16). Here then, peace is introduced toward the end of the callers turn, within a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990) alongside soul and godliness. All three virtues are positioned as core to Islam, thereby driving a social representation of peace where peace is fundamentally embedded within Islamic ideology and thus, integral to Muslim identity. However, in building this representation, the person pronouns shift once again as the caller refers to 'we all', a category to which, theoretically, everyone can belong. Coupled with the caller's prior work aligning Muslim and non-Muslim members through a rejection of violence, a representation is developed in which Muslims and non-Muslims alike can be reasonably expected to share agreement upon the claim being made. I.e. 'everybody wants to see peace'. As with the caller's earlier use of the person pro-noun 'your', reference to 'we' blurs the boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims, and focuses upon common values that are shared

by members of a common society. In this way, the caller can represent Islam as the religion of peace and represent peace as a set of shared values accessible to all.

In sum, extract one reflects the host undertaking varied membership category work, drawing upon the normative affordances of his role, the host pursues controversy (Hutchby, 1992a), which serves to position the caller and hold him to account over Muslim ways of life. For his own part, the caller invokes a range of entitlements, both as an elite speaker, and as a Muslim member to uphold and defend Islam against widely circulating discourses which serve to divide Muslim from non-Muslim along lines of presumed ideological incompatibility between Islam and Western democratic norms and values (Said, 1997; 1978). Membership categories are repeatedly blurred in developing an account where fears around Sharia are de-escalated and peace is positioned as central to Islam and thereby Muslim identity. Furthermore, Muslim and non-Muslim members are brought together via a presumption of the more broadly shared values of peace and love.

Analysis now moves to consider how peace is brought to bear in relation to an issue that is repeatedly seen within the dataset whereby Muslim communities are positioned as having a moral duty to police the ways in which all Muslim members seek to represent the fundamentals of Islamic ideology. Extract 2 is the culmination of an extended turn of talk by an elite Muslim caller that articulates an unequivocal challenge to *“radical preachers who preach violence”* and maintains that such individuals should be publicly confronted. Extract 2 picks up as the caller approaches the end of his turn of talk.

## Extract 2

1 U.H: Muslim communities have to stand up, the congregation have to reclaim  
2 the mosque and say quite openly we do not want divisive extremist  
3 messages of hate. We come to the mosque to the love of God and to  
4 attain him at **peace**, and we don't want this constant anger about erm  
5 world events which you know will always continue, and faith should  
6 provide a tranquil approach to these things and not one which reinforces  
7 the anger narrative

In demanding that *"Muslim communities have to stand up, the congregation have to reclaim the mosque"* (lines 1-2) we see Muslim members constructed as a collective, who can be expected to demonstrate unity along the lines of Muslim category membership. A moral duty is then discharged which mandates that this group regain control over Muslim places of worship. This call to 'reclaim the mosque' constructs the mosque as currently lost to the Muslim community, and the need to reclaim it implies that it is currently under the claim of an 'other', as opposed to merely being an empty place to which Muslims should return. Given the callers stated concerns with 'radical preachers', a reading is premised which implicitly but categorically distinguishes between 'Muslim communities' who are referred to as 'we', and 'radical Islam'. Moreover, the demand that Muslim's 'stand up' implies a current level of Muslim submission in the face of this radical aggressor. Via the use of the person pronoun 'we', the Muslim caller then moves on to reject *"divisive extremist messages of hate"* (lines 1-2) calling upon other Muslim's to *"quite openly"* (line 2) do the same. As in extract 1, a clear division within the membership category Muslim is constructed along the lines of adherence to particular readings of Islam, with radical Islam positioned as anathema to Muslim communities. In

contrast to extract 1 which flagged a rejection of physical violence, extract 2 rejects negative emotions and violent ideologies as counter to Islam. An alternative representation of Islamic religious practice is then offered whereby “*we come to the mosque to the love of God and to attain him at peace*” (lines 3-4). Like extract 1, peace is introduced sequentially close to reference to ‘God’, and positioned as a cornerstone of Islamic faith. It is through this representation that the physical and structural violence associated with radical Islam is rejected.

So far analysis has served to demonstrate how in the current data: (i) Islam is routinely treated both as relevant, and as an accountable matter for Muslims during terrorism talk; (ii) Peace is constructed as core to Islam and thus to Muslim identity, (iii) Muslim members are called upon to protect and defend Islam from ideological insurrection which challenges its peaceful fundamentals (iv) Via a blurring of membership categories, peace is represented as common value around which Muslim and non-Muslim members can cohere.

The final extract enables a further close examination of the way in which these social representations of peace orient to, and position violence. The prior extracts have demonstrated a strong rejection of violence with respect to the normative values of Islam and specifically Sharia law (extract 1), and a rejection of hatred and disunity (extract 2). However, as outlined earlier in this paper, peace and violence do not necessarily operate as antonyms (Sarrica & Wachelke, 2009), nor do social representations of peace inevitably mandate a complete rejection of violence (Van der Linden et al, 2011), and prior discursive research has indicated, how members can

uphold general values of peace whilst also demonstrating support for specific occasions of war (Gibson, 2011a). In the context of UK terrorism talk where contemporary and visceral acts of violence are routinely represented as being motivated by 'Islamic fundamentalism' and where connotations between Muslim identity and terrorist identity are commonplace, positioning peace in relation to violence might be particularly challenging for Muslim members without leaving themselves vulnerable to charges of extremism or terrorism sympathies. The following extract reflects how a caller works to maintain a representation in which peace is integral to Islamic values and Muslim identity whilst simultaneously refusing to categorically denounce all forms of violence.

We join this extended sequence between an elite Muslim caller and the show host as the caller seeks to build a response to the host formulation of the Qur'an whereby "*people always point to the bit where it says wherever you find the infidel slay them*". In making use of the open membership category 'people', the host not only avoids personal ownership of the controversial proposition, but also avoids any explicit reference to who these 'people' might be. However, in the context of these debates, and given that adherence to the Qur'an is an unassailable aspect of Islamic faith and therefore integral to Muslim identity, the 'people' who seemingly raise concerns about the Qur'an are constructed as non-Muslim. In his initial response, the caller sets out a position which seeks to debate this issue in accordance with the literal text of the Qur'an. Space restrictions preclude presentation of the entire exchange, but suffice to say, during the early turns, the caller offers direct quotations of the Qur'an, and stresses a clear contrast between 'offensive' and 'defensive' forms of violence.

### Extract 3

- 1 JM this is a defensive war when you're caught on the back foot right, this is  
2 not an offensive no way does it say in that verse that you can blow yourself  
3 up or kill innocent people
- 4 NC Yes but if a preacher, if a wicked preacher teaching hate can say look it is  
5 a defensive war because our people are being killed by drones, hey fellas  
6 it's a defensive war
- 7 JM Yeah but look
- 8 NC Hey look all I'm saying to you is you can see how the message is getting  
9 mangled can't you?
- 10 JM No but any message could be mangled, it just takes an idiot to mangle it,  
11 someone with a, someone with a completely mangled brain in the first  
12 place is gonna turn **peace** into war, is gonna turn a defensive war into an  
13 offensive war, is going to turn something that in is in some cases sacred  
14 into taking the lives of innocent people. His own book, the same book that  
15 you're saying he misinterpreted clearly states you cannot take innocent  
16 lives

At the start of extract 3 the caller repeats his distinction between "*defensive*" and "*offensive*" war (lines 1-2) which is immediately followed by a strenuous rejection that there is any potential to inadvertently misinterpret this section of the Qur'an "*no way does it say in that verse that you can blow yourself up or kill innocent people*" (lines 2-3).

The host interjects during this point (line 4), in a manner which is both sequentially interruptive and morally combative (Hutchby, 1992), and precedes to develop a representation of Muslim members, pursuing the possibility that category distinctions upheld by the speaker can fall victim to ideological manipulation " *Yes but if a preacher, if*

*a wicked preacher teaching hate can say look it is a defensive war because our people are being killed by drones, hey fellas it's a defensive war"* (lines 4-6). In the context of the wider debate where repeated reference has been made to Muslim religious spokespeople, and given the sequential appearance of the phrase 'wicked preacher', there is little doubt that the intended preacher is Muslim. Hence the host develops a representation which utilizes well-worn cultural depictions of evil (c.f. Edwards, 2004; Erjavec & Volcic, 2007; Leudar et al, 2004) to construct a mythical Muslim preacher who is represented as 'teaching hate'. Malevolent Muslim ideology is then presented as the motivation for blurring ideas between offensive and defensive wars. The host also distinguishes between Muslim and non-Muslim members with reference to *"our people"* who are *"being killed by drones"* (line 5) and in this context, 'our people' are implicitly constructed as Muslim.

Alongside the negative representation of 'Muslim preachers', the attempt by the host to undermine the speaker and muddy the water between offensive and defensive wars is a wider and deeper argument which potentially cleaves Muslim and non-Muslim members apart. Following the rationale of the hypothetical position offered, the death of Muslims during drone attacks, is assumptively categorized as an action which should not merit any kind of 'defensive war' response. Hence dominant Western ideological and political sanctioning of drone attacks which kill Muslims are implicitly upheld, whilst any form of politically motivated violent response is positioned as being an 'offensive war' driven by a 'wicked' interpretation of Islam.

The host then offers the air back to the speaker and requests affiliation with the proposition stating " *you can see how the message is getting mangled can't you?*" (lines 8-9). The speaker does not affiliate but resists being drawn on the detail stating " *No but any message could be mangled, it just takes an idiot to mangle it* " (line 10). It is here, again as the caller is reaching the conclusion of his turn of talk, that peace appears. On this occasion the caller constructs a representation of peace via a series of contrasts whereby " *someone with a, someone with a completely mangled brain in the first place is gonna turn peace into war, is gonna turn a defensive war into an offensive war, is going to turn something that in is in some cases sacred into taking the lives of innocent people*" (lines 11-14). In this three-part list (Jefferson, 1990), the caller introduces 'peace' as a concept which is first contrasted with 'war', but then immediately followed by a second contrast between 'defensive war' and 'offensive war', and rounded off with a contrast between 'something sacred' and 'taking the lives of innocent people'. On one side of this peace/violence construct sits 'peace', 'defensive war' and 'something sacred', whilst on the other lies 'war', 'offensive war', and 'taking the lives of innocent people'. Hence, in keeping with Gibson (2011a), this social representation of peace does not exclude all forms of violence, rather it distinguishes differing forms of violence according to what motivates it. Moreover, offensive violence in the name of Islam is treated as the province of irrational or warped individuals and rejected as entirely incompatible with Islam.

## **Conclusion**

This research examines how members introduce and develop social representations of peace in terrorism talk. Analysis revealed that non-Muslim and Muslim members orient

to Muslim category membership, and to Islam as relevant concerns. Moreover, Islamic ideology and Muslim identity are routinely treated as accountable issues for Muslims. Crucially however, when peace features, it is almost exclusively introduced by Muslim speakers, and on every occasion, social representations of peace are developed through a focus on Muslim identity and Islamic ideology. Analysis of extracts highlighted that these elite Muslim speakers not only position peace as central to Muslim identity, but also treat peace as a core common value around which non-Muslims and Muslims can cohere. Upholding and maintaining peace, and rejecting radical ideologies is constructed as an ongoing duty for Muslim communities. However, positioning peace as core to Islam and to Muslim identity, is not seen to mandate a rejection of all forms of violence. Similar to the discovery that speakers in UK television debates simultaneously upheld general anti-war attitudes, whilst articulating specific support for Britain's involvement in the Iraq war (Gibson, 2011a), in the current analysis we witness Muslim speakers draw distinctions between differing forms of 'offensive' and 'defensive' war such that one can reject 'offensive' violence but maintain that on some occasions violence is a necessary means of defense.

What is striking in the current findings is the way in which these social representations of peace implicitly and explicitly challenge dominant UK terrorism discourse which positions Islamic ideology as a centrally motivating factor underlying the perceived ongoing threat of terrorism in the UK, and which constructs Muslim members as a dangerous 'other' (e.g., Hussain & Bagguley, 2012; Mythen, Walklate & Khan, 2009; Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009). Whilst calls for tolerance toward the Muslim community regularly feature in mainstream UK media discourse, these calls routinely construct Muslim extremists as the

exception amongst British Muslim communities, an argument which does little to challenge widespread assumptions that terrorists are rooted in Muslim communities (Tsoukala, 2008), and perpetuates a conflation between ‘terrorist’ and ‘Muslim’ category membership.

Hewer and Taylor (2007) argue that, in contrast to social representations concerned with terrorism in Northern Ireland, or Israel, which draw upon linguistic distinctions between religious identity and political ambition (I.e. Catholicism/ Irish Republicanism; Judaism/Zionism), “there is currently no word or phrase in the English language to distinguish between the actions of politically motivated radical Islam and ordinary Muslims. In the world of labels and categories, they are all Muslims – all adherents of Islam” (p. 207). The findings reported here maintain that, in the context of contemporary terrorism in the UK, this ‘world of labels and categories’ presents a serious challenge for Muslim members, and for wider society alike. Whilst there is increasing deployment of terms such as Islamic Fundamentalism, Radical Islam and Islamic Extremism in attempts to differentiate Muslim members according to their support or denouncement of particular ideological positions, such language does not offer robust categorical boundaries. These terms have a discursive potential to slide and merge, something which a participant in the current data exemplified with the statement “*where does extremism start and end.*” (See Ahmed (2003) for a detailed discussion of metonymical sticking and sliding in relation to Muslim identity and terrorism discourse). The current analysis reflects the ease with which a construction of Islam which rejects peace and promotes violence, can be mobilized. In this data, we witness repeated

instances of the host invoking such constructions for comment by Muslim speakers, this activity serves to emphasize divisions between non-Muslims and *all* Muslims in the UK along an illusory fault line of Western peace and Muslim violence. In endeavoring to combat this construction we witness elite British Muslim speakers introducing social representations of peace, such that peace itself acts to reject this damaging construction of Muslim identity and Islamic ideology, and offer an alternative to which all parties can coalesce.

This paper presents a contextual study of social representations of peace as they feature in two, hour long UK talk radio debates about terrorism. Moreover, these findings relate only to elite British Muslim constructions of peace. (Although it should not be overlooked that non-Muslim speakers had equal footing in this talk and yet there were no instances, other than that of the host, in which non-Muslim speakers sought to occasion peace in these debates). The theoretical approach emphasizes the role of context for social representations, and the discursive method examines each facet of the social representation in fine detail, addressing the complex interweaving of peace and identity in the representation. This research does not make any claim regarding social representations of peace in other contexts, however, the current paper is not aware of any other research which examines social representations of peace in the context of contemporary UK debates about terrorism, or indeed any research which has applied discourse analysis to study this issue. Thus, this research affords an important insight regarding how peace is discursively constructed by elite British Muslim members in the context of terrorism talk. The findings presented reflect that, in the given context, peace

is fundamental to Muslim Identity, and equally that Muslim identity is crucial to social representations of peace. More than two decades ago, Cohen and Arnone (1988, p. 180) argued that it was essential for those involved in conflict resolution to “recognize that for parties in conflict, identity precedes peace as a basic value”. The hope of the current paper is that by exploring how peace is represented by members in their own terms and examining the role that identity plays in the construction of peace during terrorism talk, it is possible to develop an awareness of how these speakers talk *for* peace. Such understanding offers potential for shaping conversations of varying kinds both within and between differing communities, such that communities and societies seeking to counter terrorism and potentially other forms of conflict are more disposed to listen when peace talks.

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