



## Group of White Men Jailed for Raping Child.

**UPDATE:** This article was originally published on 6.10.2013. The most frequent response to it is not to ask why the mainstream media did not cover this case of white men targeting a child for sexual exploitation and rape. Nor have questions been raised about the euphemistic language used to describe the sexual abuse and rape experienced by the child. The consistent response has always been "[why did you use the term white men](#)" to describe [the perpetrator](#). This question is *never* asked when the perpetrator is Muslim or a member of a BME community. In cases of child sexual exploitation and rape involving perpetrators who are not defined as "white British Christians", the ethnicity, nationality or faith of the perpetrator is always deemed newsworthy. When the perpetrator is a white man, ethnicity, nationality and faith are deemed irrelevant. The media is more likely to cover violence against women and girls as a systemic problem *if* the perpetrator is a Person of Colour. They are more likely to [make excuses](#) for a [perpetrator](#) who is [white](#) - you only need to examine [the coverage of men who kill their wives and children](#). White men who kill are deemed 'jealous', 'distressed', 'depressed' and 'hurt'. BME men who kill are 'savages',

Ending a victim blaming culture requires challenging white supremacy as much as it requires challenging patriarchy. The two are not distinct entities but the very basis of our culture. If you have asked why we included the ethnicity of them men in the title of this article but have never even questioned the use of race, ethnicity of faith in media coverage of other cases, then you need to reflect on your own racist assumptions about child sexual abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls because the problem here is not that we have identified the perpetrators as white men, but that the media is responsible for misleading and offensive coverage of violence against women and girls based on racist assumptions and stereotypes that have detrimental impacts on the safety of children and the ways in which child protection and the criminal justice system respond to CSE.

['10 men jailed over North Yorkshire girl's sexual exploitation'](#)

The reporting in this case has been scarce, to say the least. Whilst we're aware that the case was embargoed due to the high number of trials that happened simultaneously, 12 defendants have been sentenced, with a further 18 men either given cautions, or had no action taken against them. Full details of this case can be found via the local press in York, who have [covered this case in some detail](#).

The BBC reporting erases the reality of what has actually happened in this case. It seems that due to the age of the victim (13 years old), the men have been prosecuted under Section 9 of the Sexual Offences Act - [Sexual Activity with a Child](#). Had she been 12, it's likely that the offences charged would have been [rape and/or sexual assault](#).

"Some of the men were married with children and individually preyed on the girl,



committing offences including having sex with her."

This comment is puzzling. The men 'had sex with' a 13 year old child? 'Have sex with' suggests consent. Sex without consent is rape, and so by its very nature, sex is consensual. If it isn't consensual, it is rape. This seems very difficult for people to grasp, and yet it is actually very simple.

If the BBC reporter is trying to tell us that the men raped the child (as they must have, because she was 13 and unable to consent), why doesn't s/he say that? It looks to us like this is an example of 'othering' the victim. She 'wasn't like' the men's children. It suggests she was 'different', which is why they chose to abuse her, and not their own children. Use of language such as this is inappropriate for all of us discussing child sexual abuse, and the media continue to conflate issues and use euphemistic terms when talking about sexual abuse and exploitation.

The article includes a quote from Det Ch Supt Simon Mason, who states:

"the offenders included a teacher, a travelling salesman, a shop worker and an unemployed mechanic.

They came from all walks of life, all types of professions, including one man that was located in Europe.

We're not quite sure of the relevance of these quotes. If it's to tell us that the men involved were 'ordinary men with ordinary lives', then perhaps he should have said that. We know that men abuse children regardless of their occupation or economic status.

There were a variety of marital relationships and the fact that they had access to their own children and other children."

What does this mean? The men had children of their own, but chose to abuse anyway? Lots of men who are charged with sexual offences against children have their own children. Some men sexually abuse their own children. Some men sexually abuse the children of others. Is Det Ch Supt warning us that these men had regular contact with children, and chose to abuse only one



of them? We've asked North Yorkshire Police for comment and we'll update this piece if they respond to us.

What does this case say about media reporting of child sexual abuse and exploitation? If we refer back to the Oxford case, there were lots of media comment and opinion pieces about 'Muslim' or 'Asian' men, abusing white girls. No mention of race in the York case.

The men were all white.

How is it acceptable to report on race in some instances, and not in others? We think we can safely say that the media reporting won't be talking of 'white gangs' or 'Christian gangs' sexually abusing and exploiting young girls.

Many media reports have previously included use of the term 'gang' to describe [men in sexual exploitation cases](#). Not so in the BBC article above. It is difficult to tell whether or not the perpetrators knew one another due to the limited information available. If we are looking at the definition of a 'gang' to include those with a shared interest, these men certainly fit - their shared interest or activity was one of sexually abusing children. So why are these men not a 'gang' when other men who commit child sexual abuse would be labelled as such by the media.

Whether they knew one another or not, it's unlikely that these men thought they were the only adult engaging with sexual activity with the child in question.

Another angle that hasn't been able to be used in this case is service failure. In many of the previous 'sexual abuse gang' cases, the victim(s) have been from families with additional support needs and some of the children involved were under the care of the local authority. Bashing services involved in these cases is almost a national sport - we see many criticisms of children's services by the mainstream media, but limited analysis as to why the system may fail; and certainly almost no discussion about the impact of funding cuts on already-stretched services being expected to safeguard more children with less funding and increased caseloads.

The victim in this case is seemingly from a 'nice, middle class' background, with no additional indicators that could be seized on by mainstream media. The absence of poverty, family breakdown or substance misuse means the media don't have a 'troubled families' agenda to cling to.

We need to ask the media to respond to concerns about these issues. We need to say - it's not acceptable to slant a story with racism. It's not acceptable to slant a story to criticise services. It's not acceptable to *only* focus on victims or perpetrators in order to fuel an underlying racist or classist agenda.

We need to ask our law makers - why are terms such as 'child pornography' or 'sexual activity with a child' still on our statute books? Why are we differentiating between the sexual abuse of a 12 year old child, and the sexual abuse of a 13 year old?

We need to keep questioning, and we need not to be distracted.



## Everyday Victim Blaming

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