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Policing Campus: Muslim students and Prevent

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Dedicated in loving memory, to my Grandfather Abraham Dualeh and Grandmother Ibado Dualeh, who walked me to the finish line but didn't get to see me cross.

Policing Campus: Muslim students and Prevent

Abstract

Academic, governmental and social interest in Muslim youth, radicalisation and political violence has ballooned since 9/11. This has been with a view to understand and discover how social, political and individual factors mapped onto religion and culture lead individuals to carry out attacks, or leave their homes and join terrorist organisations to ultimately mitigate this threat. This study does not attempt to add this literature but rather examines the outcomes of measures taken by the British Government – specifically the Prevent wing of the Counter-terror strategy – on a highly implicated demographic – Male Muslim students. In 2015 Prevent became a statutory duty for all “specified authorities” of which universities are included. Informed by literature which views radicalisation as a linear process, taking citizen from normalcy, to non-violent and then violent extremism, the British government views radicalisation as primarily being related to failed integration processes and troubled identities which have promoted segregated ghettos in which parallel cultures develop which oppose British values. Sensitive to radicalisation literature, this study draws on empirical data through focus groups to explore how Prevent has been received by Muslim students and its impact on university campuses.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

the Merciful.

In the name of God, the Beneficent,

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Introduction

In modern Europe the Liberal values being pursued by governments, or at the very least the employment of these values in discourses popular among commentators and governments provide an attractive political identity (Sageman 2008b). In the British context these are democracy, tolerance of difference and the respect for rule of law (Home Department 2011, p. 36). Following 9/11 and specifically in the British context 7/7, a plethora of issues has surfaced concerning religious identities, Islam's increasing public role and visibility; this has converged with questions about security, and the upholding of the above mentioned values against the threat Islam poses them. In response security discourses in the United Kingdom have absorbed issues related to identity and values as part of the battlefield. Islam's role in contemporary Europe has polarised policy makers in Europe's parliaments, the academic community and citizens about whether it is Islam which will be Europeanised, as Kepel predicts, or whether Europe will be Islamised (Meijer and Bakker 2012; Hunter 2002; Ye'Or 2011; Kilpatrick 2000).

Commentators of course differ on how Islam will be accommodated in European [read British] societies and what integration means. Some such as Silvestri (2010, p. 267), argue that Muslims are engaged in a process of integration, and are becoming ever more Europeanised. She doesn't however explicitly define what's meant here but rather outlines some of the institutions Muslims have developed to respond to new challenges. Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2015) does outline exactly what's needed, calling for Muslims who she does recognise to generally be peaceable people, to rebuke certain parts of their sacred texts which sanction violence among a minority prepared to activate these texts if needed. Muslim leaders such as Ramadan (2010) argue that Islam is not exactly a culture, but a body of ontological principles, adaptable in different contexts. For a 'European Islam' to emerge then according to Ramadan, Muslims must adapt their values, and animate them with European tastes and styles. Among the scholars cited above – Ali, Silvestri and Ramadan – only Ali (2015) frames her position as a security issue. But Klausen (2005, p. 211) argues that the European transformation of Islam is an irreversible sociological process, to which the growth of political violence in the name of Islam is an incidental feature rather than essential. These discussions aren't any longer just interesting subjects for sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists to ruminate on, as governments have increased the temperature of the discussion by adding features of culture and religious interpretation to issues of security.

This polarity has partly emerged following War on Terror discourses which conflate Islamic radicalism with Muslim religiosity risking the diffusion of Islamophobic prejudices into counter-terror

strategies (Pantazis and Pemberton 2010). This thesis is an attempt to explore this theme generally with a particular focus on a microcosm in which an attempt to "Europeanise Islam" by the British government in the Prevent wing of its counter-terror strategy (CONTEST) is impacting British Muslims on university campuses. Prevent as its name indicates is the forward looking component of the British government's counter-terror strategy, which is operating on agenda to enhance the UK's long-term security by manufacturing attitude changes through a network of public institutions which must uphold compliance to British values (Home Department 2011). Universities are among these institutions, as Prevent became a statutory duty in 2015, and is due to be introduced in September 2016.

Literature Review

In my literature review I aim to demonstrate where my research is positioned relationally to wider discourses on questions of national security, freedom of religion and integration challenges of minorities, and then discuss how these inter-related themes bear on policy responses to mitigate security threats in society generally and on university campuses specifically.

Although Muslims have had a presence in many European societies going back to the advent of Islam, Gilliat-Ray explains that the “specifically religious” aspect of the Muslim world has at times been ignored, or emphasized, but always subject to fresh interpretation “to serve newly emerging interests” (2010, p. 3). Writing about a much shorter time horizon than Gilliat-Ray, Bleich (2009, p. 353) confirms this as Muslims he argues, weren’t initially defined by their religious identities during the more contemporary migratory waves, but were typically viewed through racial, national, ethnic, or policy status terms such as Black, Arab, Turkish, guest-worker or asylum-seeker. For purposes of succinctness and relevance, I will confine representation and identification of British Muslims from the 1970s onward, although I recognise that large inflows of Muslim migrants did take place during the operations of the British East India Company and the many Muslim sailors (lascars) who also travelled to Britain during the British imperial era (Lewis 2002, p. 11).

Ansari (2009, p. 3) describes the Muslim community as ‘internally fissured’ rather than a monolith. Here he refers to the ethnic and sectarian religious breakdown of Muslims, but this could be extended to the differing circumstances which brought these various ethnic groups to the United Kingdom. Lewis (2002, p. 14) begins with the rudimentary distinction between South Asian Muslims and Muslims from the Arab world. The latter he argues had often worked here, rather than taking up permanent residence, and often temporarily settled as political refugees, the former however were typically from ex-British colonies searching for work in the declining industrial sector; they made contacts, formed communal organisations, and congregated in industrial towns and London¹. Initially labelled ‘Black’ then ‘Asian’, Muslim migrants often mobilised politically under these categories to resist racism which was common during an era in which migration to the United Kingdom was primarily from the Commonwealth (Modood 2003, p. 103). The initial move from racial identification, to religious can be associated with a variety of developments but to avoid straying too far from the purview of this literature review, the focus will be on the more permanent character of settlement and religious accommodations required to facilitate this, the attacks on the World Trade Centre, and the 7/7 bombings.

¹ Whilst these distinctions don’t capture the entire spectrum of Muslim settlement it is a rough but conceptual usefully way to loosely categorise the early Muslim community.

Ansari (2009, p. 4-5) explains that constructions of identity aren't necessarily fixed, but are malleable, constantly being re-fashioned by the various categories which form an identity – class, gender, religion, ethnicity and so on – in accordance with external and internal demands. Muslim identification specifically, Ansari (2009, p. 5) argues, along with Hussain (2012, p. 626-627) took on a more prominent feature in the public lives of Muslims when they felt that this aspect of their identity was under siege. Hussain looks to the Iranian Revolution and the Rushdie affair as early watershed moments which galvanised Muslims to rally around Islamic symbols and assert their policy claims as they fell “through the cracks of old race relations legislation which failed to adequately recognise, and therefore deal with, the growing religiously motivated hatred against them” (2012, p. 626).

Along with greater demands for religious accommodation in social policy, Ramadan (2010, p. 253) and Abbas (2007, p. 289) pick up on another important cleavage in the British Muslim community – half of the British Muslim population being born British. The emergence of a new generation of Muslims has resulted in the ‘indigenisation’ of Islam, as Muslims born in Europe identified to a lesser degree culturally with the historical homes of their parents and to a greater degree with their new homes in Europe (Ramadan 2010, p. 256)². Some scholars such as Croft (2012) point to the fact that this assertion of a British Muslim identity has caused insecurity in some parts of the host community – muddying meanings, and symbols traditionally attached to notions of Britishness³. However, events like 9/11 and 7/7 have led to an inter-subjective transformation in how Muslims relate to society, and more importantly in the case of this study, the state (Allen 2010; Abbas 2007; Bleich 2009).

Allen (2010, p. 222) takes the 7/7 attacks, and the heightened national profile of Islam as an important point of departure for policy makers. Indeed this was when Prime Minister Tony Blair emphatically announced that the “rules of the game are changing” (Jeffery 2005, para. 4). This occurred in response to the fact that the four young men of Muslim heritage not only claimed the attacks in the name of Islam, but were also British born. Unlike the 9/11 attacks, this enemy was *within*. Abbas (2004, p. 27) highlights attacks like these as being critical to the inter-subjective shift in how Muslims are constructed as social actors and how they are perceived, moving from colour/ethnicity during early settlement, to religion in response to the perceived, growing, Islamic security threat in the present climate. These events argues Bleich (2009, p. 354), have added a layer of security over pre-existing concerns about immigration and the integration of Muslim minorities, he adds that the security dimension is vital to understand Muslim-government relations today. The British governments response to the security risk presented by Islamists has taken the form of an “all-encompassing counter-terrorism strategy called CONTEST that aims to ‘Pursue’, ‘Prevent’, ‘Protect’ and ‘Prepare’ the country for a potential terrorist attack” (Bonino 2013, p. 386).

² A claim supported by a poll carried out with Demos published in a report titled *A Place for Pride* (2011, p. 39).

³ Modood (2011a, para. 8) similarly argues that it is “white reticence, not minority separatism that is an obstacle to an inclusive national identity”.

The reception of this development has notably diverged especially attitudes toward the policy responses but also how to understand the phenomena. Joppke (2009, p. 464) attempts to explain the negative aspects of the British governments security response by highlighting the added efforts the British government has made to accommodate concerns of minorities who have the misfortune of being associated with religious extremists clustering among them. “There was no doubt”, he continues, “that terrorists, and not Muslims as such were targeted by the anti-terror measures” (2009, p. 464). Comparing the British and French experiences Joppke’s (2009) argument is that the British Muslim population’s increasingly extreme demands for respect are red-herrings, things which a liberal state *should not* but also *cannot* offer. Joly uses stronger language to describe the British government’s response to the security threat. The British government has according to Joly adopted a dual strategy of “repression in parallel with outreach initiatives addressed to Muslims in Britain” (2012, p. 16).

Others have identified ideology as the problem, attributing instances of terrorism with a development from non-violent extremist ideas. The reports published by the Policy Exchange and Quilliam Foundation, respectively titled *Choosing Our Friends Wisely* and *Counter-Extremism: A Decade on from 7/7* locate the problem in a distorted interpretation of Islam, which seeks to subvert liberal freedoms, with the eventual aim of transferring political sovereignty from State to God. Both organisations advocate more robust training for public servants to ideologically assess Muslims, and then specifically target radicalised or vulnerable individuals but *Choosing Our Friends Wisely* goes a step further, recommending a government boycott of Muslims unless and until such individuals confirm their commitment to British values. Equally Lord Carlile of Berriew’s preface to the Prevent Strategy 2011, urged any organisation wishing to engage with or secure government funding to unequivocally declare that they oppose extremism and its consequences (Home Department 2011, p. 4). This view is echoed by an array of thinkers including Toynbee (2004) and Phillips (2016) who attribute the spread of extremist ideas to a lack of commitment to common values. Goodhart (2004) picks up the ‘fragmentation of society’ much earlier. He promotes a ‘realistic liberalism’, which recognises the fact that people will favour their own communities, but should still feel like they belong to a common society which isn’t so diverse that it renders the collective meaningless.

The negative reaction to this method of tackling extremism has been widespread. Fox and Akbaba (2013) following a sweeping study from 1990 to 2008 conclude that religious discrimination has increased against Muslims, as well as restrictions on religious freedoms which they do not believe are likely to increase security. Wynne-Hughes (2011, p. 624) argues that the counter-terror strategy attempts to efface Western responsibility for creating these grievances. According to Wynne-Hughes (2011, p. 624) such a policy creates an environment in which any Muslims adopting a critical view of foreign policy can be deemed at risk of extremism or being labelled as having sympathy for it, foreclosing the possibility of dissent that is not based on an *a priori* acceptance of government values

or government policy as an expression of those values⁴. Another reading of the problem is that presented by William Connolly (cited in Malik 2007, para. 7) who identifies the potential for a link between an exclusionary interpretation of European history as Judeo-Christian and internal security. Malik (2007) and Allen (2010; 2015) describe this as ‘cultural racism’ where differences from “religious culture are pathologised and systemically excluded from definitions of ‘being British’” (Malik 2007, para. 6) and then securitized.

Along similar lines Tyrer and Sayyid (2012) bring Foucault’s idea of bio-politics into the contemporary discussion around Muslim integration in the West. The nation-state they argue defends the life of a population premised upon the deployment of a physical, ‘racial’ or symbolic ‘cultural frontiers’, which the Muslim presence interrupts, creating un-wanted racial-religious tensions. Kundnani (2012; 2015) concurs with the above points but adds that the goal to produce a population of ‘moderate’ Muslims, will lead to state instrumentalization of religion, in ways that run “counter to the secular principles of liberalism” (2012, p. 164). Elsewhere Kundnani (2008) argues that government policy, which is influenced by un-sophisticated understandings of ‘Islamism’ in Europe, insulate its Islamophobia by making a distinction between ‘Traditional Islam’ and ‘Islamism’, with the latter being perceived as a modern totalitarian threat to European democracies akin to Fascism or Stalinism. Kundnani argues that there are many divergent trends in European Islamism, many of which are more likely to lead to democratic activism and integrated identities rather than political violence a view shared by Klausen (2005), Ramadan (2010) and Lynch (2013). Vidino (2010, p. 146) cites Kepel explaining that Western Muslims have, and will continue to undergo the same moderating evolution as the ‘Euro-Communists’. Roald (2012) similarly speaks of a “secularisation” of Islam in European contexts, described as a watering down of ideology, allowing Islamists in Europe to address modern challenges increasingly according to contexts, rather than exclusively with recourse to text.

The discussion on security is largely divided along these lines with dramatic instances of political violence, and abuses of discretionary governmental power (counter-terror policies) giving impetus to the respective camps arguments for or against. To increase our sensitivity to some of the above discussed issues it’s important to briefly consider how Muslims have been framed in the ‘Western’ imagination, to better understand how continuities and discontinuities might bear on policy responses.

Orientalism and Islamophobia

Said’s (1995) seminal text *Orientalism* is a good theoretical foundation from which to begin an inquiry into Western [including British] (mis)representations of Muslims. Said argues that the “more advanced cultures, have rarely offered the individual anything but imperialism, racism, and

⁴ Butler (2004, p. xix-xx) speaks similarly about charges of Anti-Semitism, given how heinous the accusation is and the social stigma attached to it. Dissent against Israeli policy or Zionism is quelled in her view as the social actor must choose between being branded with the social stigma of an ‘un-inhabitable identification’ (anti-Semite), or conformity to received ideas. This makes criticism a suspect or ‘fugitive activity’.

ethnocentrism for dealing with ‘other’ cultures” (1995, p. 204). In this case he takes the theme Orientalism to describe a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction” made between two categories called the Orient and the Occident (1995, p. 2). Said emphasizes the fact that the discursive consistency underpinning representations of the Orient aren’t ‘natural’ reflecting some ‘Oriental’ essence, but reflect prejudices on the part of the writer or storyline in question as well as the embeddedness of these “representations in first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer” (1995, p. 272).

Said relies heavily in his work on Foucault’s anti-essentialist ‘self’ in opposition to the ‘other’, denaturalising human subjectivity by drawing our attention to its constructed nature and thusly the sensitivity of such constructions to the effects of power (O’Leary 2002, p. 11). The self, according to Foucault is a category which is instrumental in the process through which disciplinary power converts itself into an “insidious, normalising regime of truth” (McNay 1994, p. 103). Said develops this idea of an oppositional difference between Orient and Occident based on Foucault’s self/other, by drawing our attention to how the modern Occident represents itself, as “rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior” (1995, p. 300). *These are however – whether fictional or real experience – based on generalised stereotypes which don’t represent the Orient as such, but represent the Orient as it is Orientalised* (1995, p. 26). Whilst Said spends much of his time analysing literature, imagery and institutions during the colonial era, Francois-Cerrah (2016, para. 16) highlights the fact that many of the epistemic aspects of colonisation endure, and a failure to recognise this shields the present from much-needed critical reflection.

The precursor to “modern-day Islamophobia” says Abbas, “which is defined as the fear or dread of Islam, has its origins in classical Orientalism” (2010, p. 131). The global rise in politically motivated violence has once again raised the spectre of Islam as the principal nemesis of Western civilisation, and in the midst of this increase in violence and fury, Islam and the West “are once again posited as the principal coded categories of this global confrontation between two irreconcilable adversaries” (Dabashi 2008, p. 1). In this iteration of the conflict between the West and Islam “populists all over Europe use these ‘dramatic events’ and radical discourses to state that all Muslims should be treated with suspicion and they routinely warn against the alleged ‘Islamization’ of Europe” (Vanparrys, Jacobs and Torrekens 2013, p. 210). This has coincided with an increase with an increase in unfavourable views of Muslims across Europe (Taylor 2016).

This increase in unfavourable views of Islam coupled with contemporary security challenges, has led to the re-emergence of Orientalist clichés in media⁵, scholarship⁶ and among policy-makers⁷ (Allen

⁵ Saeed (2013) notes that Muslim communities are often represented as passive, separatist or insular; Islam is also often characterized as a retrograde religion, which is foreign and violent.

⁶ Joppke (2009) argues that Muslims have worn down multi-culturalism in Britain with their increasingly extreme religious demands as well as separatism asking what the limits to integration policy should be.

2012; 2015; Joppke 2009; Kapoor 2013; Kundnani 2008; Poole and Richardson 2006). Here I take Orientalism, and the continuities we find in contemporary Islamophobia to be concerned primarily with (re)creating and sustaining a binary opposition of self/other, erected upon an ideological edifice which manifests itself through the ontological and epistemological distinction between Islam and the West, which in the contemporary era find expression through cultural anxieties and security issues. The next part of the literature review will hone in on Prevent, a policy of great controversy which has acted as the government's conduit through which it ensures compliance with British values as a pre-emptive measure against violent and non-violent extremism.

Prevent

Whilst Prevent itself has stirred considerable controversy, it is actually just one of the four P's that make up the British Government's COuNter-TError STRategy (CONTEST). CONTEST itself was launched in its first version in 2003, but remained a confidential document. The aim of strategy was "to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence" (Smith and Brown 2009, p. 8). Since its inception CONTEST has evolved to combat ever changing threats. I will attempt here to highlight key developments in CONTEST, then Prevent as the forward looking, speculative aspect of that strategy, with some discussion around its controversial points before placing this in the university context.

March 2005 was the first major change in counterterror legislation when, with the oversight of Home Secretary Charles Clarke, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 was introduced. This Act stirred up controversy because it permitted the Home Secretary to impose control orders if she/he felt there was 'reasonable grounds'. This directly contravened article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Wagner 2011). In July that year four co-ordinated suicide attacks brought London to a standstill, targeting both buses and the underground. The attackers were British which presented a new kind of threat prompting Prime Minister Tony Blair to propose his '12-point plan'. The bill was significantly watered down in some cases struck out as illegal in court.

In July 2006 CONTEST was significantly updated, and Prevent was introduced with a sole focus on the threat posed by 'Islamist terrorism'. The scope of Prevent was initially much wider adopting a three pronged strategy to tackle terrorism: (1) address structural issues such as inequality and discrimination which may contribute to radicalisation, (2) deterring those who facilitate terrorism by encouraging violence by changing the environment in which these 'radicalisers' operate and (3) engaging in the "battle of ideas – challenging the ideologies that extremists believe can justify the use of violence" (Blair 2006, p. 1-2). Little changed between 2006 and 2009 when CONTEST was

Kundnani (2008) criticizes both policy makers and neo-conservative commentators for their un-attentive and at times insidious views on Islam.

⁷ Prime Minister David Cameron described Muslim women as traditionally submissive (Hughes 2016). Imam Suliman Gani was also described as an ISIS sympathiser (Oborne 2016).

updated and presented to parliament by Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Home Secretary Jacqui Smith (2009). However, the policy came under sharp criticism for distributing Prevent funds to localities with larger populations of Muslims (Kundnani 2009, p. 6; Thomas 2009, p. 284). In effect Kundnani (2009) argues, the Muslim community was treated by policy makers as a security challenge and ‘suspect’ community.

The next major shift in counterterror policy took place when the Conservative government came to power. Home Secretary Theresa May (Home Department 2011, p. 1) began with an honest acknowledgement of the flaws in the implementation of the previous policy: “The Prevent programme we inherited from the last Government was flawed. It confused the delivery of Government policy to promote integration, with Government policy to prevent terrorism”. In doing so May argues, the strategy failed to confront the “extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face”, with funding sometimes reaching the extremists organisations which the strategy should be confronting (Home Department 2011, p. 1). To dislodge the extremist ideology with a counter-narrative the Home Secretary (re)constructed the Prevent strategy around the idea of British values defined as: “democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind” (Home Department 2011, p. 34). The initiative is based on the assumption that support for terrorism is associated with a “rejection of a cohesive, integrated, multi-faith society and of parliamentary democracy” (Home Department 2011, p. 5). The Home Secretary also mentions a lack of trust in democratic institutions, a desire to protect Muslims who are under attack, a feeling that UK media coverage is biased, as well as differences on UK foreign policy, with notable regard to Palestine and the war in Iraq (Home Secretary 2011, p. 18). The strategy would work in four ways: (1) differentiate between the extremist ideology and legitimate belief, challenging the former and not working with organisations that espouse such values, (2) build on Channel’s work to de-radicalise vulnerable individuals, (3) work with all sectors where there maybe people at risk of radicalisation and (4) the Home Secretary vowed to do more to support integration of minorities but separating this work from Prevent. Then in 2015 the Counter-Terrorism & Security Act was passed which placed Prevent on a statutory basis for ‘specified authorities’, namely all public institutions including hospitals, colleges, prisons, government agencies, schools and universities (Bouattia 2015, p. 5).

Prevent on Campus

Literature devoted to studying the impact of Prevent in schools, particularly its drawbacks is expanding but widely available (Thomas 2009; Pantucci 2010; Awan 2012; Coppock and McGovern 2014; Chadderton 2015; Rights Watch UK 2016). There is however a lot less about the outcomes of Prevent on university campuses. Prevent has operated on university campuses through Student Unions primarily and is due to be introduced among academic staff in September 2016 (Bouattia 2015). This

section will briefly attempt to contrast civil liberties before Prevent on campus, with the form civil liberties have taken post-Prevent on campus, juxtaposing viewpoints of those who advocate the policy with the burgeoning academic literature which challenges its fundamental assumptions locating the gap into which this study will fit.

In the Prevent strategy (Home Department 2011, p. 71) Theresa May explained that she recognises the function of universities as a space to “promote and facilitate the exchange of opinion and ideas, and enable debate as well as learning”. The Government she continues “has no wish to limit or otherwise interfere with this free flow of ideas”, but that considerations for civil liberties must be balanced with national security, and the duty of care universities have toward their students (Home Department 2011, p. 71). Whilst most would recognise the seriousness of the position advocated by the Home Secretary, former Liberal Democrat Cabinet Minister Vince Cable warned that this would eventually lead to universities becoming places where there would be “a bland exchange of views which are inoffensive and politically correct” (Tran 2015, para. 4). This view was echoed by Greater Manchester chief constable Sir Peter Fahy who warned that the government response was disproportionate, threatening free speech, and undermining the very values the government set out to protect (Dodd and Travis 2015). The National Union of Students (NUS) additionally advocated a boycott of Prevent, launching the ‘Students not Suspects’ tour with the support of the University and College Union (UCU), the largest trade union for lectures and academics in further and higher education (McVeigh, 2015). A variety of other organisations have also expressed concern about the capacity for this new legislation to both criminalise dissent, erode the free exchange of ideas, and increase government surveillance, including Liberty, Prevent Watch, Cage and Federation Of Student Islamic Societies among many others (Bouattia 2015, p. 37).

Sageman (2008a) and Kundnani (2016) have attempted to critique the ideational basis of the counterterrorism strategy employed by the Government, with Sageman’s (2008a, p. 157) research demonstrating the fact that terrorists aren’t necessarily ideologues or intellectuals, in fact he encourages policy makers to guard against the temptation to make this conflict a contest of ideas, or the legitimacy of an extreme interpretation of a religious message. “It is not about how they think” he concludes but “how they feel” (2008a, p. 157). A Home Affairs Committee report titled *Roots of Violent Radicalisation* undermined this further finding that there is “seldom concrete evidence to confirm” that universities are where students are radicalised, in fact it concluded that in spite of the fact that some universities have been complacent, “the emphasis on the role of universities by government departments is now disproportionate” (House of Commons: Home Affairs Committee 2012, p. 44). Pantucci (2010, p. 258) actually anticipates that such issues could have developed, explaining that Prevent is a forward-looking policy, which is inherently speculative in character and

as a result, offers practitioners a sledgehammer to solve a problem which they aren't entirely clear about⁸.

Another difficult issue also arises when the subjects of the security concern – in this case Muslims – are understood through a lens which problematizes a particular interpretation of faith, as the vital link which leads mechanically onto violent extremism. Kundnani (2008; 2015), and Pantucci (2010) outline the risks associated with a secular government entering theological discussions which make permissible, or proscribe, certain religious interpretations considered dangerous. Bunglawala (2014) explains that current understandings of radicalisation often end up divesting religious conservatism of its legitimacy as a form of religious expression. She continues that this is based on the “mistaken belief that by enhancing a secular Islam we bring Muslims closer, philosophically and behaviourally, to the mainstream” (2014, para. 10), ultimately rendering ‘observant’ Muslims invisible or dangerous.

Whilst the problems with Prevent on campus are multi-faceted ranging from a negative impact on academia, to civil liberties such as free speech and impartiality of the state in dictating private religious decisions, Greer (2010) argues that it's important to distinguish between state-level Islamophobia and civil-society level Islamophobia. This distinction is important for him because, much like Joppke (2009) he argues that it is absurd to posit that the British government is acting in a manner that would deliberately target its Muslim population because of their faith. Similarly, Sutton (2015) of the Henry Jackson Society maintains that it is opposition to Prevent which has been a hindrance for its effective implementation, which is actually fuelled by the extremist narrative. The Quilliam Foundation in a report titled *Radicalisation on British University Campuses* (2010), insisted on the link between conservatism and radicalisation. Elsewhere, the Quilliam Foundation founder Ed Husain went further, advocating spying as something he considered “morally right” considering our circumstance (Dodd 2009). Kundnani (2008) has criticized the fact that the current government policy has relied too much on think tanks such as the Policy Exchange, Quilliam Foundation and Henry Jackson Society, who have vested interests.

A more recent Joint Select Committee (UK Parliament 2016) challenged the government to review its counterterrorism policy, on grounds that it unfairly targets Muslim students, damaging community relations and undermining academic freedom, as it's difficult to ascertain whether conduct amounts to an opposition to British values, or whether it falls within section 202 of the Education Reform Act 1988 which guarantees staff and students the right to question, test and challenge received ideas, and propose controversial or un-popular opinions freely. Awan (2012, p. 1173) also warns that introducing these security measures on university campuses and colleges risks undermining staff-

⁸ Pantucci highlights the potential freedom of speech issues with the example of a student at Nottingham University, who was detained in police custody for a week for being in the possession of Al-Qaeda documents related to his research – which the police said was an “illegal document not to be used for research purposes” (2010, p. 260).

student trust. It is at the intersection of these competing discourses that I hope to position this study. In the Prevent Strategy (Home Department 2011, p. 36) Theresa May mentioned the fact that whilst the government has made modest progress in measuring output, it hasn't been so successful at measuring outcomes. And whilst literature devoted to measuring the outcomes has grown at a considerable rate as outlined above, few studies have looked at how Muslim students perceive these developments in policy. This study will investigate the outcomes of the Prevent Initiative on Muslim students on British university campuses within the following areas: how it has impacted their activities on campus, their civil liberties and what they anticipate this will mean for their relationships with academic staff.

Research Methodology and Research Method

As mentioned previously, this study will investigate the ‘outcomes’, and impacts of the Prevent initiative on Muslim students at university campuses. As Duggleby (cited in Morgan 2012, p. 163) explains “the goal of the research must determine the use of the methods”, the most appropriate method to explore those themes in depth is qualitative, with focus groups specifically being employed but before the research method is discussed I will give a brief theoretical methodological grounding for my work before outlining some of the practical considerations for this research.

Methodology

Despite differences registered by a variety of scholars explored in the literature review, the government has diagnosed the threat posed to the UK as primarily an ideological one (Home Department 2011, p. 5). The solution proposed by the former Home Secretary, a view shared by the Prime Minister, was a more ‘muscular liberalism’, to enhance social cohesion by fostering a commitment to British values and a stronger British identity among Muslims (Allen 2015, p. 1-2). How this identity is imagined and constructed is my point of departure, as well as how this identity is placed relationally [read hierarchically] to others focussing on a more discourse oriented Foucauldian epistemology, that studies and juxtaposes discourses, as a pose to relating Truths.

Modood (2011b) speaks of multiculturalism on three levels: (1) the *sociological* fact of multiculturalism i.e. that different racial, religious and ethnic groups exist in society; (2) the attempts made to *politically* include, and secure the rights of individuals of various backgrounds as a means to tackle racism; and (3) the *imaginative* level which goes beyond acknowledgement of diversity, and legal rights, but involves enlarging the focus to consider broader understandings of citizenship, and multicultural integration. Modood suggests that it may be on this level – which has been least emphasized in his opinion – that complications arise, leading to polemical attacks on multiculturalism as it has encouraged ‘minority difference’, rather than focusing on commonalities with a vision of a greater good. He places his suggestion in a context of race relations in the UK, where the category British acts as a pseudo-ethnicity, a context which in his opinion Muslim/non-Muslim relations are mapped onto white/non-white relations in wider society. The manner in which this category British is imagined, and the actors which determine this is important here, not just because of its implications for multiculturalism, but also because it is a central pillar of the Prevent Strategy.

Dyer argues that the position of a white person when speaking is one “that white people now almost never acknowledge and this is part of the condition and power of whiteness” (1997, p. xiv). What he means is that white people claim and achieve authority for what they say by not admitting, and often not realising that they only speak from and in terms of that subjectivity. As a result white people are not ‘raced’, “other people are raced, we are just people [read human]” speaking as essential subjects, not inessential others (1997, p. 1). Jackson (2005) explains that these ‘false universals’ develop by a process through which history is internalized, normalized then forgotten as history which “invariably leads to the tendency to speak in universal terms but from a particular cultural, ideological, or

historical perspective” (2005, p. 9). Sensitive to some of the concerns highlighted in the literature, ‘British values’ and a ‘British identity’ may also be determined by these asymmetries which outline the contours around what constitutes a legitimate expression of ‘Britishness’. Foucault’s power/knowledge is pertinent here to assist with the deconstruction of this phenomenon in discussions of epistemology.

Foucault’s importance to my methodology is based on his denaturalisation of human subjectivity, placing the constructed nature of reality at the centre of his *weltanschauung*. According to Foucault truth is a currency linked in circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain this truth – as well as induce and extend its reach through the lifeworld (Foucault and Ranibow 1984, p. 74). Foucault’s power/knowledge maxim provided a very useful tool to post- and de-colonial thinkers by highlighting the problems of epistemology and its cultural embeddedness⁹. By relativizing all truth claims, there are ontological and moral implications which I am aware of, but these issues are not the focus of this work. However, Foucault’s work offers a useful tool within which subaltern voices can seep through offering the opportunity to compare various discourses in analysis which is the perspective from which I will generate the problematic.

Returning to the subject of investigation, the Home Secretary said the government has had difficulty measuring outputs but not outcomes of the Prevent initiative (Home Department 2011, p. 36).

Recalling the solution suggested by the Home Secretary – belonging and British values – my methods have to be geared towards assessing the extent to which these subjective goals have been achieved, and their impacts which is why qualitative methods are most appropriate. Whilst Greer (2010) plays down the usefulness of qualitative approaches, focussing instead on a state-centric analysis which distinguishes between Muslims and Islamic extremists legally, Spalek, El Awa and McDonald teach us that: “...individuals’ perspectives and experiences can produce new and different ways of viewing and understanding counter-terrorism policy, and as such constitute a way through which social policy can be explored” (2008, p. 8). Paying attention to some of the critiques of hegemonic ideas presented by feminists, this study will explore the impacts of Prevent qualitatively enabling me to appreciate how individuals experience their social worlds.

Harding (1987, p. 4) argues that defining needs, and framing subjects for investigation often occurs from the perspectives of dominant groups, employing inappropriate epistemologies, leading to partial and often even perverse understandings of social life. Feminist research¹⁰ challenges these dogmas by generating its problematic from the perspectives of women’s experiences, who she argues often share spaces with men, but live in different worlds. The Foucauldian approach, and the points highlighted by Harding are combined in the assumption that “discourses are the possessors of various subject-

⁹ It’s fallibility as well, or inherent inclination to forms of ethnocentrism as a result.

¹⁰ Examples include De Beauvoir’s (1997) *The Second Sex*, Oakley’s (1984) *The Sociology of Housework* and Butler’s (2006) *Gender Trouble*.

positions” (Abbas 2010, p. 125), the subject position of interest in this study is the ‘Muslim male student’. Qualitative methods follow logically on from this as I hope to interrogate competing discourses, and investigate the stated experience of a small sample of male Muslim students and the impact of counter-terror legislation on university campus. Quantitative methods are inadequate for this enterprise as they lack the depth necessary to gain an appreciation for the concerns of participants; they also blot out nuance with the sharpness and precision of numerical data not opening up too many channels for critical inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, p. 10).

Practical Considerations

Whilst I was aware quite early on in the formulation of my research that the project would be qualitative in nature, a series of practical considerations arose, about exactly which qualitative method would be best. In the end I settled on a focus group, as the method most conducive to managing practical considerations whilst also carrying out the research in a manner conducive to its goals.

Before discussing some of the benefits and drawbacks of focus groups I will explain what my practical concerns were, and why the focus group have been useful. Research is often enhanced in what it can teach when the sample reflects to the greatest possible extent the diversity among the demographic of the intended study and with students based all over the country, from Aberdeen to Portsmouth to collect a sample of students only from Cardiff wouldn’t generate the kind of data that would allow for a comparison of experiences on the individual as well as institutional level. It is likely that students in Cardiff have particular types of relationships with their Prevent officers, which is why I had to firstly disqualify the possibility of exclusively using students from Cardiff and had to reconsider how practical individual interviews might be. To find participants from a variety of different universities, organise time-slots for individual interviews, and travel, as well as find time to transcribe and analyse data proved virtually impossible with the given time frame to complete this research, and as a result structural changes had to occur not just with *objectives* of the research but also *how* and *when* the research would be carried out.

Initially my hope was to carry out interviews with both male and female participants, with a gender balanced sample that would allow me to explore impacts of Prevent with the gender dimension incorporated into the study. However, considering the above mentioned logistical problems that became difficult. Another logistical difficulty associated with this was my concern of how feasible it would be to quickly gather a female Muslim sample for a focus group considering my gender and accessibility complications. In addition to logistical complications of carrying out the research, the size of the project meant an adequate analysis of gender differences couldn’t be given ample attention to do justice to the complexities of inter-sectional analysis¹¹. As a result the scope of the study was

¹¹ Assuming as some literature has suggested that experiences of Islamophobia differ across genders including Brown (2013), Perry (2014), Delphy (2015) and Hopkins (2016).

constrained to looking at how male Muslim students have coped with Prevent on campus. The lack of female representation here then isn't a naïve oversight, but a practical consideration.

Similarly, during the development of my research questions, and discussions with peers it became apparent that my interviews would be long and detailed to ensure I would be able to explore the stated research areas, whilst allowing for extra questions to be integrated into interviews, should particularly interesting points come up with participants. A unique opportunity presented itself whilst contemplating how to overcome these challenges; the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) 53rd Annual Conference (FAC)¹². FAC is the largest nationwide gathering of Muslim students (FOSIS 2016), where Muslim students from across the country gather to network, listen to lectures, take part in workshops and scrutinize and elect their National Executive Committees for the coming year. I attended the Conference and whilst at the accommodation I announced that I was in need of some participants to partake in my research on Prevent. Due largely to the busy schedule it proved difficult to find a free slot, but on the second evening a group of four students gathered and I carried out the focus group in a private seminar room with me leading the discussion. Whilst this didn't necessarily solve the sampling enigma presented by only using a local (Cardiff based) group of students, with the exploratory nature of this research this isn't intended as a definitive statement, as the sample couldn't possibly allow me to reach the epistemological threshold that would permit this. Exploring the 'outcomes' of the Prevent Initiative the fitness for purpose of this sample might highlight useful themes for future research and assess the usefulness of my line of questioning. The focus group method then presents itself as a cost- and time-effective way to get a distribution whilst minimizing the drawbacks associated with carrying out the research on an individual basis.

Focus Groups – Semi-structured discussion

I have explained why focus groups were expedient for my research, here I intend to outline some of the considerations a researcher must make in using this particular research tool, especially its impact on the production of primary data.

The key distinguishing features between focus groups and one-to-one interviews are that focus groups are collective activities, social events and take place as interactions, not just between participants and researchers but also between participants. This creates a variety of social dynamics that must heighten the role and awareness of the facilitator, to allow open discussion that doesn't marginalise any of the participants, whilst not making erroneous assumptions about the data's content (Gibb 1997). The interactive aspect of focus groups is most important, and I will proceed to outline the strengths and drawbacks of the approach notwithstanding some of my practical concerns mentioned in the previous section.

¹² Established in 1963, FOSIS (2016) is an umbrella organisation that represents and caters for Islamic Societies and Muslim students in universities and colleges across the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Focus groups are particularly useful because they allow respondents to “react to and build on the responses of other group members” (Steward, Shamdasani and Rook 2007, p. 42), the semi-structured approach used also allows participants to assume the initiative, in a collaborative endeavour that allows me to pick out specific points for further inquiry, creates space for other participants to interject, whilst protecting the free-flow of discussion. This semi-structured method is very useful for researchers in my position who are only able to conduct one research session with participants to maximize reliability of results and explore narratives and discourses (Bernard 2000, p. 191). This openness is also important because the nature of this research is exploratory. Whilst there is an abundance of literature on the impact of Prevent, and the securitization of Islam in the UK, to make too many direct causal links between those experiences and the experiences of students on campus might ignore the many ways in which said experiences are specific for students on campus (Steward, Shamdasani and Rook 2007, p. 41). With different views being asserted, tangling, clashing, being reviewed or agreed upon, focus groups are a useful way to probe little understood phenomena.

The interactive nature of focus groups however adds another dimension to which the facilitator must be acutely aware. Whilst a plethora of writers on qualitative methods (particularly interviews) encourage reflexivity on the part of the researcher, and the importance of recognising his place in the formulation of questions which create his data (Davies 1999; Nicholls 2014, p. 52), the facilitator of the focus groups must also be conscious of various group dynamics. Whilst one of the major strengths of focus groups is the study of how and why individuals accept or reject the ideas of others, Davies (1999, p. 105) warns of the possibility of the creation of an ‘artificial consensus’. In this research this is particularly important because of the sensitive nature of Prevent as a topic. Prevent has been described as a ‘toxic brand’ not just by Muslims, but politicians, police officers and teachers (Halliday and Dodd 2016), and whilst it’s likely that the majority of the population is unaware of what Prevent’s content or goals are, it’s highly unlikely that Muslim students who attend the FOSIS Annual Conference are completely ignorant¹³. This might well reduce the likelihood of dissenting voices against a negative view emerging especially in the presence of peers who may have had an adverse experience with Prevent. During my fieldwork there were a total of fourteen instances where participants expressed agreement with each other, with one participant saying to “kind of summarize what the previous speakers have said, and I agree with them. I don’t think they have taken away our civil liberties...”.

This was interesting for two reasons, whilst the participants did regularly agree with each other their experiences also indicated a great deal of similarity of their experiences with Prevent. But this was also interesting because this participant also dissented in his view from the group who suggested, if

¹³ This variable cannot be overlooked considering the strong stance FOSIS has taken viz. the Prevent Strategy 2011. A FOSIS (2015) Press Release said: “Within the revised guidance is worry that Muslim students will be further treated as suspects on campus”.

not explicitly specified that their civil liberties had been encroached upon. Whilst this was not necessarily an instance of ‘artificial consensus’ as he differed with them nominally or linguistically but not in the substance of his assertion, it does give merit to the concerns highlighted by Davies (1999) about this phenomena in focus groups. Although this became apparent upon a few readings of the focus groups transcript I was aware that this was possible before the focus group and to counter it, I ensured that every participant had the opportunity to address my questions by re-stating the question for every participant and informally organizing their responses so that each responded one at a time. The semi-structured method of questioning also gave me freedom to further explore the answers posed by individual participants to allow them to elaborate their respective discourses before creating an opportunity for participants to respond or add anything at the end of each round of questioning.

The other alternative to ‘artificial consensus’ is also an important concern, Davies (1999, p. 106) points out that participants responses may become polarized so that in the heat of the argument participants present views more extreme than what they might in an individual discussion or another setting. This concern was more immediate for me before the study began as my sample was largely voluntary and I didn’t know what to expect from all but one of the participants. I intended to manage this in a similar way to the previous problem by allocating each individual a specific opportunity to share their views on any question, however these fears were allayed when I recognized shortly into the study that their experiences of Prevent were very similar.

Additionally, working with researchers on a more equal level can be empowering for participants, making them feel more valued, a feeling which can be enhanced when there is greater trust, among participants (Gibb 2007). Before the research began I had short discussions with each of the participants individually, who recognized me as a peer which was vital in the enhancement of rapport which I believed made the discussions more candid as the data will reveal. Returning to Harding she makes the point that the most insightful feminist research should place the inquirer on the

“Same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviors of the researcher must be placed within the frame of the picture they are trying to paint” (1987, p. 9)

The assumptions of the students, that I as a Muslim student also may have had similar encounters with Prevent, and will likely as a result share their antagonisms with the initiative placed me ideally as a potential conduit for their grievances, rather than as an anonymous authority attempting to inspect their attitudes to the sensitive issue of counter-terror policies. Whilst this raises concerns about objectivity and impartiality, especially considering the size of the sample and the legitimate criticism made by Greer (2010, p. 1173) that such samples tend over-represent those with negative experiences of the phenomena being investigated, Harding’s (1987, p. 9) view has to be juxtaposed with this, as

claims to objectivity are veils which often mask prejudices held by social scientists themselves. Relativism, she continues, only poses a problem when hegemonic ideas are challenged, and is a response which attempts to preserve the legitimacy of a particular perspective to the exclusion of others (1987, p. 10). Lewis and Nicholls (2014, p. 52) explain that researchers do often begin with workings ideas or embryonic notions, they do however warn against ideological hegemony on the part of the researcher but encourage openness to remedy this. With the goals of my research, my method for collecting data, my background as well as the literature I've consulted laid out, my research process and data can be recovered and become available for reflection, as well as scrutiny, for redeemable content.

I also intend to allow the focus groups to follow a semi-structured pattern of interaction. To explain why I will contrast semi-structured techniques with structured. As far as this study is concerned the foremost weakness of using a structured approach is the inability to explain questions and follow questions up with more should need arise. Structured methods resemble surveys and questionnaires, which usually have relatively larger sampling targets, than detailed qualitative methods, with the goal being to produce descriptive data which grants the researcher a limited capacity to make some generalizations about the target population. In the unfortunate circumstance that a participant isn't clear on some of my questions – as did occur – a disciplined commitment to one's method would prohibit the interviewer from expanding too much on the question, or rephrasing it in a manner conducive to his research interests. A related problem to this is the lack of liberty afforded to the researcher to pursue key unexpected themes which may arise during the focus group, as well as the possibility of asking other participants what they make of the answers of their peers. The semi-structured method here is crucial in leaving participants as well as researchers maximal freedom within a set framework to maximize the richness of data, and allow participants to generate and expand upon their respective discourses (Harrell and Bradley 2009, p. 26). The sensitive nature of discussions about extremism requires thoughtful consideration to avoid misunderstandings occurring and to ensure participants feel that they can articulate their answers without undue pressure.

Whilst I also assumed that these students were familiar enough with Prevent to hold a discussion about how it has impacted them in the areas relevant to my research, before I began the interview with a brief introduction of who I was, and what my research was exploring, I explained what the declared goals of Prevent were, and the three pillars upon which the strategy was erected. I also posed a few of my questions with direct quotes from the Prevent Strategy published by Theresa May in 2011. The aim here was to ensure that the themes of the research were not prejudiced by ill-informed understandings of what the Prevent initiative's formal goals are, attempting to control any extraneous variables on my part (as a novice interviewer) as well as on the part of my participants.

Introspective Note

It is always important for the researcher to reflect on where he is positioned with regards to his research, his own biography and how this impacts development of the research questions and how these factors may bear on collecting, interpreting and analysing data. I will categorise my reflexive considerations into my how my biography supported the development my research question and how this allowed me to gain access.

Narayan (1993, p. 676) argues that our identities are multiplex, consisting of a variety of categories which can inter-penetrate but also create cognitive dissonance. The identity which is given prominence is contingent upon the contextual factors which confront a social actor in a given circumstance. Ansari (2009, p. 4-5) concurs with this, however as previously outlined, he also suggests that the religious aspect of the Muslim identity has become more pronounced in the post 9/11 era. There is merit in this consideration as I myself haven't been immune from the repercussions of that event, as my religion has also began to play a more prominent role in how I identify myself and what that means for my relationships outside that subjectivity, as I assume it has for many other young Muslims who grew up in the 'War on Terror' era. I am an active member of the 'Muslim community', who now consciously attempts to take part in public life to encourage more charitable, well-informed understandings of Muslims, campaigning against Islamophobia in a variety of settings. I also recognise merit in the argument posed by Ramadan (2010, p. 256), that as part of a new generation of Muslims born in Europe, my experiences in Wales have formed my outlook more fundamentally than the ancestral homeland of my parents – Somalia. In the context of my research on Muslim students then, the tag 'native researcher' cannot simply be shaken off, but I intend to leverage it as "a resource that can be developed in ways that augment and *intensify* social research" (King and Horrocks 2010, p. 126), whilst reflecting upon and examining how I am placed relationally to my research participants – as both part of the 'community' but also an individual with distinct experiences, who is a researcher standing outside (Narayan 1993, p. 678).

Abbas (2010) argues that being a Muslim particularly from a minority ethnic background can potentially provide an insight that scholars outside that subjectivity may not have because of a lack of 'grounded empiricism', which may potentially detach them from the everyday lived realities in marginalised communities. The capacity to reflect on one's own experience, allows one to analyse, makes sense of, learn from and judge experiences, and develop research techniques. Whilst this isn't a license for complacency¹⁴, Bergson argues that reflective thought cannot be assumed to be the highest form of knowledge. Of course its holds greater authority than mere hearsay, but a "true empiricism is one that sets itself the task of getting *as close as possible to the original*, of sounding the depths of

¹⁴ Abbas (2010) himself warns against this.

life, of feeling the pulse of its spirit by a sort of intellectual *auscultation*¹⁵ (Bergson cited in Durrant 2006, p. 595).

As both a member of the target group and a researcher studying it, my assumption that there was an opportunity to conduct his research was based on three things: (1) a political awareness of debates and campaigns taking place on my campus about Prevent (in its content) and its implementation and scholarly work related to this. Initially I became aware of some of the complications this could create for Muslim students particularly but also campus life generally. (2) I had many conversations with peers about disruptions of Islamic Society events and activities including speaker cancellations, as well as extra security measures being taken with regard to Islamic Society events which I hadn't experienced with my activities related to the Model United Nations Society or Finance Society. And finally a personal discomfort on campus as a speaker at events on Islamophobia and a member of the audience at the knowledge that Prevent Officers were present to monitor students. Their presence was conspicuous for me as again, they weren't present at similar events I attended at the Catholic Society, or Model United Nations Society.

My theoretical grounding in Foucault, as well as the assumption that Muslim students may not experience Prevent in a way consistent with the government's goals and desires develops from this. Abbas (2010, p. 131) explains that there is much that needs to be demystified in the current era about Islam and Muslims, and whilst a lot of literature has demonstrated the ineffectiveness or risks associated with Prevent, particularly in an arena where this policy has been disproportionately applied (House of Commons: Home Affairs Committee 2012, p. 44) very little has been done to illuminate the experiences of Muslim students, as active subjects and targets of the policy. Both sensitive to the differing wings in the literature, combined with an "open but not empty" mind (Janesick cited in Lewis and Nicholls 2014, p. 52), my assumptions and background are here laid so that readers "can connect in an emblematic dialogue with the author" (Abbas 2010, p. 129), and open the discursive arena for critique enhancing the studies applicability, authenticity and credibility *or* errors. Like Abbas (2010, p. 132) I recognise the gravity of this area of research and the immense accountability which comes with it as a result, and I have work closely with my supervisor to ensure that the content avoids politicisation and is responsible.

Findings

¹⁵ Auscultation is the act of listening to vital organs typically with a stethoscope. In repackaging this metaphor I mean to suggest that generating my research question experience holds a weight authority on its own account of being a different form of 'empiricism'.

The fieldwork involved four participants whose backgrounds adds detail to the study. One of the participants said he is generally considered White, but like to consider himself “White-other” referring to his Albanian ethnicity as distinct from “White British”. He considered himself as observant Muslim, though he acknowledged very little in his appearance would suggest as much was active on campus with his Islamic Society and also worked with FOSIS’s Student Affairs Committee. The next student was an out-going President of his ISoc and also considered himself an observant Muslim. Similar to the previous participant, he believed there was little to give away his religious identity as he was of African heritage, except a “smallish beard” and occasional choice of attire. The third student believed he accurately fitted the stereotype of what he believed to be a “typical Muslim”. He is also involved with his ISoc. The final student was also President of his ISoc and also considered himself to be “visibly Muslim”, with a noticeable beard, but he also said he regularly wears traditional Muslim clothing and like the rest of the participants, said he was an observant Muslim.

In order to make sense of and attempt to present the large quantity data coherently, I have analysed the primary data through themes which consistently arose during my readings. Thematic analysis is an instrument employed by researchers in a variety of fields, but has particular expediency in the organisation of qualitative data in the social sciences (Boyatzis 2008). Thematic analysis as the name suggests, delegates discretionary power to the researcher to inductively extract themes in the data which are deemed to be of sufficient significance to facilitate understanding in the investigated phenomenon. Whilst themes are generated almost exclusively from the data itself, the assumption that the researcher’s prejudices are bracketed during this process is naive. Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) teach us that “patterns, themes, and categories do not emerge on their own” (2009, p. 77), they are driven by the inquirers interests, “theoretical frameworks, subjective perspectives, ontological and epistemological positions and intuitive field understandings” (2009, p. 77). Rather than relying purely then on literal, or nominal reading of data, this approach is more semantic, stressing interpretation in a theoretical and social context, seeking comprehension and juxtaposition of the participants discourses rather than just description.

I organised the data into three themes which are as follows; (1) discriminatory implementation of Prevent, in ways that disproportionately targeted Muslim students. (2) The use of Prevent as an instrument which problematizes Muslim subjectivities through securitization and the subsequent effort to engineer attitudinal changes. (3) And the final theme will explore how Prevent outcomes have impacted the manner in which Muslim students engage with and present themselves to the wider university community.

Theme 1

The first theme which will be analysed was a recurring concern mentioned by participants about problems associated with implementation of Prevent, which disproportionately targeted Muslim students. Whilst Joppke (2009) and Greer (2010) explain that the United Kingdom’s anti-terrorist

laws aren't exclusively directed at Muslims, they also acknowledge that the nature of the security threat posed by some Muslims will increase the likelihood that the Muslim community may experience some adverse effects because of this. Greer (2010) explains that "even if all the recent allegations about Prevent are true, the only credible conclusion to be drawn is that *some* Muslims have fallen under unwarranted official suspicion, not that Muslims in Britain have become a suspect community" (2010, p. 1183).

However, despite changes to Prevent, from a policy which specifically targeted areas with Muslim majorities, to a policy directed at confronting extremist ideologies generally, with funding being allocated according to risk (Home Department 2011, p. 34), experiences of participants suggest this distinction is rhetorical rather than substantive. This problem was relayed by one participant who said:

"The Muslim community *feels* [my emphasis] that the legislation is particularly targeted at them, rather than any other particular community even though the legislation is explicit by it applies to everyone. But its application indicates that it's applied to a particular community and those people who are Muslim, such as us"

In the university space the experiences of the participants indicate that this has translated into recurrent disruptions of Islamic Society (ISoc) activities. Continuing on the theme of Muslim exceptionalism with regard to Prevent application, the same participant explained that Muslims on campus experience a great deal of difficulty with regard to organising lectures for speakers, who he insisted are not advocates of controversial ideas. "Maybe" he said, "their views on certain topics, on certain moral social conservative ideas differ from *some* members of society but they are also concordant with other members of society, more practising Christians, more practising Catholics". This participant repeatedly contended that Muslim students did differ from *some* members of society, but that signifying markers of extremism distinguished them from others who held similar social views, whose adherence to British values he felt are rarely questioned. The same interviewee extended his point when he explained that an Islamic Society he was overseeing as a member of FOSIS's Student Affair Committee was explicitly requested to declare their subscription to British values and were expected to send out invitations specifically to LGBT Societies, and a member from a Women's Society. It did not again however seem that the interviewee had a problem with the content but rather its selective application saying:

"They [ISocs] have to subscribe to rules, to ideas, that other societies don't have to subscribe to... I could not image an email being sent to a Jewish Society or Christian Society that they have to conduct themselves in certain ways over and beyond the standard rules that apply to everyone on campus" [verbatim].

In addition to this, the participants mentioned a variety of other security measures, from cameras in prayer rooms, to police attendance at events and requests for lists of member's names. The

participants agreed that these measures have made it more difficult for ISocs to function, not necessarily by simply encroaching upon civil liberties – as two participants said – but by making Muslim students feel uncomfortable on campus through the creation of an ‘atmosphere of suspicion’. It is important here to return to the assertion of Greer (2010, p. 1172) that a distinction between Islamophobia in civil society (civil society version) and legal, state-level (state version) Islamophobia need to be understood. He acknowledges that there is evidence to suggest growing Islamophobia in a ‘civil society version’ analysis; it is however for Greer,

“...quite another thing to claim that the United Kingdom’s anti-terrorist laws, underpinned by an anti-Muslim official political discourse, have turned Muslims nationwide into a community under systematic and pervasive official suspicion” (2010, p. 1172)

Pantazis and Pemberton (2011) critique such a reading as ‘state-centric’, and insensitive to the fact that “the experience of a young Muslim person being stopped and searched will be interpreted alongside a host of discourses that construct him or her as ‘suspicious’” (2011, p. 1057), as the participant referred to above makes clear. The frequent disruptions of ISocs and not other societies on campus, have given this student the impression that Prevent’s sole focus is Muslim students, casting their activities as suspicious in ways other, similar religious societies – referring to Jewish and Christian Societies – he believes are not likely to experience. Greer (2010) criticizes this as he believes the feeling of being a ‘suspect community’ is not necessarily the same as *legally* being a ‘suspect community’, but as Sageman (2008b) argues in managing such a security threat “the explanation for their [Muslims] behaviour is not found in how they think, but rather how they feel” (2008b, p. 226). When asked what they felt was causing this mis-implementation of counter-terror policy¹⁶, the participants responses are illuminating.

One participant who described himself as “visibly Muslim”, referring not just to his physical appearance but also his style of dress¹⁷, described some of his concerns and the concerns of other Muslim students in discussions he had during a campaign on his campus. In his conversations with his peers he said:

“I asked politics students and the majority of them bar one, said that they feel that they can’t express themselves properly in an essay or in a classroom; they feel like if they commented on something, because they are visibly Muslims or because they have a Muslim name, anything they say might be caught on by their peers or by their professor or teacher, and will be looked down upon, or will go an extreme case of reporting to Prevent”

¹⁶ The Home Secretary recognised that “research suggests that counter-terrorism legislation and wider policing power can contribute to the radicalisation process” (Home Department 2011, p. 26).

¹⁷ He has a long beard, and regularly wears a thobe as well as a *kufi* (a brimless rounded hat).

As a Politics student himself, he believed Politics students are likely to experience real challenges; when discussing his own experience, he also added that under current circumstances he's increasingly unwilling to give a candid analysis or opinion on political problems particularly discussions on the Middle East. He did not mention why this problem may not extend to other subjects, but he concluded that this issue is making discussion suspect, and restricting Muslim students in an already incredibly sensitive environment. He believed that Prevent isn't however the primary cause, citing instead "the stories in the media and things like that", Prevent he believes introduces these problems right into "the conversation that's happening in the classroom". From this student we gather that he judges appearance to be rather arbitrary in determining extremism, but another participant who also described himself as appearing to be "typically Muslim" more explicitly said his experience with Prevent indicates that the Prevent Officers are "very un-educated about Islam". He went on:

"They themselves, from my experience don't seem to know what the criteria is. They don't know what to look for. Because of that, they look for anything. Anything they can use, they look for it. And because of that, and because they already see everyone as a potential suspect, anyone can be a potential terrorist, and any Muslim can become a potential victim"

The mixture between a lack of cultural awareness, religious literacy, and a securitized environment that perceives minority difference as a potential security issue is mentioned by Tyrer and Sayyid (2012), Malik (2007) and Bleich (2009). And the frequent combination of the participant's own experiences and the experiences of their peers gives weight to the proposition of Pantazis and Pemberton (2011, p. 1057) that the feeling of being singled out is not necessarily restricted to one's own encounters with the state. The small size of the sample certainly does not permit generalisations, but if we juxtapose the experiences of these students with the form, substance and implementation of Prevent, to assume these issues are insulated from potential Islamophobic prejudices by making rudimentary distinctions between nebulous terms like 'Traditional Islam' and 'Islamism' or 'Islamic extremism' does not go far enough in protecting otherwise regular citizens from unwarranted suspicion. According to one interviewee this process "Others" Muslims, through what Delphy would describe as an ideological construction, "as one of their physical or behavioural characteristics is posed not as one of the countless traits that make individuals distinct from other individuals, but as a marker defining the boundary..." (2015, p. 16). This led to a near consensus, with the exception of one participant that Prevent doesn't actually have anything to do with preventing political violence, but is just an attempt to target minority difference. The student who didn't question the goals of Prevent questioned the 'conveyor belt theory' on which it's based, saying that this is "a bit misleading".

Tying these various ideas together, whilst the former Home Secretary does make a distinction between the "ideology of extremism and terrorism" and "legitimate belief" (Home Department 2011,

p. 1), at the point of application, and assessment one student explained that “the signs we’ve been given are really vague signs of radicalisation, what radicalisation even means is subjective to different people”. Another mentions concerns about possible paranoia, because anything from reading the Quran, or praying maybe deemed a signal marking extremism. By expanding executive power into issues related identity and values, a great deal of discretion exists for Prevent Officers, to judge what is a legitimate expression of British values, with the added urgency of a supposed security threat being presented by those who do not conform (Kundnani 2015, p. 31-32). The psychological outcome this policy is described by a student who says the suspicion is a factor that made him want to change his speech, his actions and even led to worries about his dress to ensure he appeared “normal”. Contrasting this with what might often be benign intentions by Prevent Officers or staff in public institutions to monitor extremism, the securitization of spaces which Pantucci (2010, p. 257) argues don’t benefit from such an approach, is being interpreted by those on the receiving end as problematizing Islamic identities by producing “a bitter sense of racial and religious discrimination and ethnic profiling that is experienced by some Muslims in their daily lives” (Bonino 2013, p. 388). Far from promoting values which Muslim themselves would benefit a great deal from defending, and recognising as vital to protecting a pluralistic and democratic society, as Sageman (2008b, p. 224) argues, these programs may well be viewed as an “exercise in cynicism”.

Whilst many of the concerns and problems associated with the implementation of Prevent on campus do not necessarily differ greatly from the critical literature cited in the literature review, it is important to note the continuities and the impacts they have specifically in this context. As two participants explained, one of whom was a former ISoc President, Prevent has made it incredibly difficult for ISocs to function, restricting the scope of the capacity for these Muslim students to engage fully in campus life. Of the two participants mentioned, one did not necessarily believe the government’s goal was to disrupt ISoc events, or disband them as he generally had a charitable attitude to the problems related to maintaining security, but considering the climate, the interviewee said this has been the impact of this policy in practise, which to conclude is alienating a demographic, which according to the same interviewee would otherwise be a willing partner.

Theme 2

The second recurring theme from the focus group was concerns by participants about attempts to socially (re)engineer the Muslim community into a mode of behaviour deemed more palatable to the government and an imagined wider community. All participants in the focus group expressed concern that the government was involved in a systemic campaign to ‘re-educate’ the Muslim community.

As previously explained a major change in the Prevent Strategy introduced a novel concept – non-violent extremism – as the missing link in developing a comprehensive agenda to rout extremism and political violence in the United Kingdom (Home Department 2011, p. 1). Islamists which interpret their faith in a manner which glorifies violence then have to be challenged as this is perceived as a

factor which contributes to the problem of terrorism (Home Department 2011, p. 8). As pointed out however by Kundnani (2012) this unwittingly involves government in discussions which under different circumstances might be considered an intrusion into questions of theology, although the Home Secretary does attempt to explicitly make the distinction between legitimate belief and extremism. There was however, difference in how the participants interpreted this.

One participant – who identified as “white other” – primarily viewed the problem as discomfort in the native population and government around the fact that far from assimilating and diluting their Islamic identity, Muslims have become more vociferously attached to it. He contrasted this with the secularisation of British society, arguing that young British Muslims have held onto some of their ancestral markings of identity, such as clothing and observance of faith, which in his view has come to be viewed as an issue that has to be mitigated. Prevent he then believed is the institutional arm to ensure this process, he said:

“I think the Prevent Strategy ultimately stems from that idea of socially engineering a more acceptable, a more subdued, more passive form of Islam. While it may be being applied sometimes ineffectively, sometimes anti-intellectually, fundamentally the premise behind it is that of social engineering and what in my opinion is a more acceptable view of Islam”

This tension in his view, when he elaborated, had its source in the peculiarities of the “Muslim community” – likely referring to more conservative Muslims – their normative understandings of the world, and their strong commitment to that set of beliefs. This idea of a state-sponsored version of the faith came up with another participant (who said he looked quite visibly Muslim Asian), who insisted that the government practise of favouring a minority among the Muslims who appear well integrated¹⁸ indicated that the government was implicitly endorsing an Islam which it finds comfortable, what he called the ‘right version’. This ‘right version’ in his view was different from what he considered the ‘Traditional Islam’ which he said he grew up with, studied and practises now – contrary to the government’s vague use of this term. Another participant described the type of Islam he believed the government preferred as ‘Islam lite’. Of course this might not come necessarily as a surprise, with many scholars having pointed to this likelihood in their research also¹⁹. The participants however differed in how they interpreted this, and what they believed its goals were and I will add details of their backgrounds to speculate as to why this might be the case.

When asked to comment on the fact that the Home Secretary frequently insisted in the Prevent Strategy that most Muslims didn’t have sympathy for terrorism one participant said that such

¹⁸ Although he didn’t explicitly say, it’s likely he was referring to organisations like the Quilliam Foundation, the Sufi Muslim Council and others who now hold favour in Whitehall. These are organisations with political dimensions but are not vocal in their opposition to government policy. Ramadan (2009, p. 171-172) problematizes this arguing that Muslims who challenge government are likely to be viewed “as not completely integrated”, not necessarily concerning cultural issues, but regarding questions about national loyalties.

¹⁹ For example, Allen (2010; 2015), Bunglawala (2014), Kundnani (2012; 2015).

pronouncements often leave him in two minds. On the one hand his view is concordant with Žižek's who explains that in War on Terror language, "respect for the 'Other' is the very form of the appearance of its opposite, of patronising disrespect" (2011, p. 14). Much like Žižek the interviewee argued that such proclamations often only end up masking the extent to which counter-terrorism legislation impacts on the daily lives of Muslims. He also argued "there is no right version of Islam"²⁰, the government's insistence on such an idea then was interpreted by him as a process which would first make Muslims uncomfortable practising their faith, exercising that liberty through legislation (referring to Prevent) which creates an atmosphere of suspicion that makes Islam dubious. Then rather than explicitly attacking civil liberties through authoritarian legislation which this participant didn't believe the British government would do, he believed the discomfort would cause Muslims to disguise and hide their religious identities, forcing the faith "underground" eventually causing Muslims to leave their religion. This process isn't explicitly to do with legislation according to this participant, but develops through a complex relationship between social and cultural trends now crowned with legislation which will intensify the impact of societal prejudices on Muslims by securitising these issues.

To understand how identities might be important I will contrast the above two students with the experience of another of African heritage, who said there was little in his physical appearance to suggest that he's Muslim, except his occasional choice to wear Islamic clothing. He described Prevent as "oppressive" because of the impact it has on Muslims, forcing them to censor and filter their behaviour so that they can appear as "normal human beings". When I inquired as to what he meant by 'normal', he made a direct conflation between conforming to British values, and an attempt to make Muslims more "White". British values from his perspective were not necessarily about directly attacking Islam, as he argued that the values espoused are not particularly unique to Britain, but hold universal significance. The manner in which they are being instrumentalised in his view, serve the purpose of casting a symbolic frontier of who is to be considered British, designating Muslims – whose adherents he will have assumed generally are not white – are not a part of this. Much like Modood (2011b) this student interprets the 'Britishness agenda'²¹, as an attempt to impose the norms of the pseudo-ethnic group – 'native Britons' – on a heterogeneous group of minorities. However, Jackson (2005) provides what might be a more revealing insight that could create opportunities for further research in the British space. Citing Lincoln's famous studies of religion among African Americans, Jackson (2005, p. 55) argues that religion among Black people generally has tended to resist "unwarranted assimilation", because religious views among this demographic have usually addressed or been sensitive to prevailing issues related to race.

²⁰ In this context he was referring to the variegated interpretations of the religion, of which he was implying there are many which are legitimate.

²¹ A term coined by Allen (2015).

The extent to which this logic can be extended into this context is of course speculative, this is however based on the assumption that the experience of Black people in the West has been very different to that of Asians and other minorities, indeed Modood (1994) explains why such distinctions are of increasing importance for both Asians and the Black community. When contrasted then with the reasoning of other members of the focus group, only one referred explicitly to race but made different remarks. The first participant who identified as “white-other” viewed Prevent through a prism of an attempt to domesticate what was being perceived as an unruly religion, which needed to be de-politicized, and socially liberalized. Race in this participant’s experience of dealing with Prevent has not played such a prominent role, as he is both White and Muslim, but values did. Similarly the second participant mentioned – who described himself as “visibly Asian Muslim” – viewed the problem as one of an incapacity for the government to come to terms with Muslim agency in defining for themselves what is and is not a legitimate expression of their faith. And finally the other participant who also described himself as visibly Muslim (of Middle Eastern appearance), saw the policy as the continuation of a wider social hostility towards Muslims which would cause Muslims to hide their faith.

I have deliberately de-contextualised the comments of participants to emphasize their points although on many issues including this to a lesser degree there was considerable overlap in their views. But what we might gather from this, as Narayan (1993, p. 676) explains, is that as social actors we belong to several communities, and the aspects of those variegated identities to which we give primacy are shaped by the osmotic flux of varying social contexts and the demands these contexts place upon us. The research of Ansari (2009, p. 5), Hussein (2012, p. 626-627) and Ramadan (2010) demonstrate how the Islamic aspect of many Muslims identities have taken a more prominent role in the lives of many Muslims due to heightened social discrimination against Muslims. If we indulge the hypothesis that the experiences described by the students might be viewed through a prism of Islamophobia, we get a wider picture of how Islamophobia might be experienced by Muslims of different ethnic backgrounds, which Bonino (2012, p. 25) argues is important in understanding the various audiences to which government strategies will refer. Although I certainly do not intend for this statement to be taken as definitive proof or a final statement on this matter, these findings do coincide particularly with the arguments of Pantazis and Pemberton (2011) who highlight the differing ways in which experiences, identities, cultural trends and legislation intermingle in ways that may lead to members of the Muslim community *feeling* as though they are being singled out, as a “suspect community”. Acknowledging the fact that this is subjective then could open doors for further consideration about how different positionalities and subjectivities within the “internally fissured” Muslim communities experience and negotiate a perceived “state-version”, as well as the “civil society version” of anti-Muslim prejudice if we take these categories to be mutually exclusive as Greer (2010) has. This is however beyond the scope of this investigation, but the frequent references to wider culture by

participants indicate, that from their perspectives such a distinction – whilst conceptually useful in some cases – is not always optimal when attempting to understand phenomena like the ones in question here.

Where there was greater agreement among participants was what they perceived as an intolerance or hostility toward more conservative, pietistic, visible or adherent expressions of Islam in the public sphere. One of the participants, both related an experience of one of his peers as well as shared his own views. A friend of his who he described as an adherent Muslim, who both memorized the Quran and attending mosque regularly was interviewed by Prevent Officers at a local college. Whilst he did not reveal too many details about the context within which this altercation occurred, it clarified his own fears. When his friend as asked if he attended mosque, whether he prayed, and considered himself a practising Muslim he answered all the questions to the negative, the interviewee said:

“He felt the need that he had to lie about these things. He had to say that he’s not practicing, that he only goes to the mosque on Fridays, and that he was just a casual Muslim. I think this is what happens and what Prevent actually does, is that it makes a Muslim think, what is the ‘right version’ of Islam, compared to what a wrong version is”

Whilst it’s difficult to tell what answers those Prevent Officer were anticipating, or indeed what a positive or negative answer to the questions would have meant for them, that participant explained that he was concerned the social pressure created because of the policy would cause Muslims to slowly dilute their identities until they adopt a mode of behaviour which will they believe will satisfy Prevent Officers. Although this participant claimed that he’s both adherent and clearly is not afraid to wear clothes that make clear his religious affiliation publicly, he appeared to express a paternalistic concern for other students as they are unlikely to “follow something that is going to shun them away from society”. His worries were echoed by another participant who said “many Muslim students are engaging very slowly in a form of self-censorship”. This participant continued explaining that those who want to observe religious rites are likely to become fearful, and shy away as a result from their community and the public sphere more generally if they want to continue practising – or abandon. Needless to say, if we indulge this concern echoed in fact by Bunglawala (2014), the participant said this can create complex problems for Muslim communities were individuals become more susceptible to misinformation due to alienation.

However the most interesting answer to this particular issue was provided by another student, whose answer provides a window for further discussion. When asked what he felt about the primacy of British values, as an important part of the Prevent Strategy, this participant responded that he believed the manner in which Prevent Officers are likely to understand this “is that unless you act and behave and look... [like] a native British person then you don’t have these values”. Race here is not the

critical issue, as when the participant expanded he explained what he meant by the above – rather vague – answer:

“For example, the normal British person goes to the pub. They don’t go to the masjid²² so the way they’ve understood this quote is, that if you don’t do the same thing as a British person, for example go to the pub and have relations before marriage and are not clean shaven, then you do not believe in democracy, you don’t believe in rule of law, and you don’t believe in equality of opportunity”

This statement can be interpreted through two reading grids. The participant’s reference to tokenistic aspects of British culture, can be placed in the realm of reductive Occidental²³ discourses which view Western culture and society as decadent, hedonistic and rootless. In this reading the participants statements are to be understood as value-judgements emanating from the students own moral compass causing understandable objection on his part to a punitive application of British values to produce a ‘good Muslim’ along those lines. This is not a stand-alone phenomenon; in his preface to Modood’s (2005) book *Multicultural Politics*, Craig Calhoun also views the caginess of Muslims to assimilate in Britain as the “resistance of many Muslim communities to the liberal individualistic hedonism of the larger culture and society” (2005, p. xii). However, whilst I do not intend to argue the validity of such a reading, I would argue that the conflicting values thesis is platitudinous here and adds little to enhancing our of understandings contemporary racio-religious challenges.

If we place the student’s statement in a security perspective with a keener eye on the impacts of the War on Terror and how this might have influenced Muslim subjectivities, the analysis of his statement can be expanded. The language used when discussing the nature of the security threat posed by Islamists is an important point of departure. Ghannoushi explains how in the “fog of the War on Terror”, a list of -isms – extremism, Islamism, terrorism – “have been employed as potent weapons in a range of battles” (2008, para. 8). Extremism is a particularly important word, as it implies that too much Islam, or a serious commitment to the faith is the problem, in spite of various attempts outlined by policy makers to distinguish between Islam and extremism. It is important here to make clear that dismissing dogmatism or over zealousness as a potential contributing factor to political violence is as unhelpful as declaring it to be singular cause. However, when language like Islamic Extremism, or Islamism are mapped onto the public profiles of committed Muslims who have a visible and disciplined commitment to their faith the problem becomes clearer. In the case of these students this provides an interesting way to understand how ‘religiosity’ might be mistakenly conflated with potential extremism in a securitized context. The students above reference to what might appear as

²² Masjid is the Arabic word for Mosque, often used interchangeably by Muslims.

²³ Occidentalism is an idea developed by Buruma and Margalit (2005) outlining the different ways ‘The West’ has been essentialised by ‘The Rest’. Noteworthy is there thesis that these ideas are of European [Western] parentage going back to 18th Century Romantics in Germany.

stereotypical aspects of British culture, such as going to pubs, pre-marital sexual relations, or being clean shaven in a War on Terror context as a pose to the Occidental context, demonstrates his belief that presenting himself in that way might reduce the likelihood of inviting suspicion from Prevent Officers. He believes being too 'Islamic' has led to problems. Another student expressed this more succinctly: "It seems like it's trying to constrict everybody in the population of Britain to doing one certain thing, to fill one certain role and if you do not fit that role, then you're just going to be suspect".

This suggests that essentialisations of British culture and an imagined cultural demand to comply with these essentialisations, is leading these students to believe behaving more hedonistically would imply a weaker commitment to faith and thusly a lower likelihood of behaviour being interpreted as suspicious or in opposition to British values. It is worth paying attention to the fact that the two of the student did not appear to object to these values being read literally as "democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind" (Home Department 2011, p. 34). Indeed, the initial participant, argued that the values mentioned in the Prevent Strategy are not uniquely British, but are values that hold a universal importance, "that everyone looks for in every society". Problems arise when ideas in popular imagination come into contact: Asad asks the question of "how Europe [in this context Britain] is represented by those who define themselves as authentic Europeans [read Britons]" (2002, p. 210), but here it is also important to inquire as to how Britain is represented by British Muslims. Asad explains that these are not purely issues which can be reduced to how legal rights and obligations are formulated, but "concerns exclusions and the desire that those excluded recognise what is included in the name one has chosen for oneself" (2002, p. 211). If pub culture, pre-marital relations, being clean shaven and so on, are important constituent physical markers that safely identify one as British and thusly not a security threat as articulated by the student, these are of course difficult features of British culture to reconcile with reverse representation of British Islam as conservative, traditional and possibly dangerous. A gap does appear here on the *imaginative* level as Modood (2011b) discusses of what we can consider an integrated individual if this is the case.

This reluctance by Muslims to fully assimilate and its often xenophobic reaction in wider society is described by Allen (2010; 2015) as "cultural racism", by Tyrer and Sayyid (2012) as an interruption of a cultural frontier, and by Malik (2007) as an attempt to systemically exclude Islamic religious culture and minority difference from how we imagine what it means to be British, and securitize these features. Whilst their research does suggest as much, as Greer (2010) argues the burden of proof is higher when levelling such accusations as the explicit goals of policy makers, even though the participants felt this way. And of course to make conclusive statements about Prevent Officers to this effect, research would have to investigate what influences Prevent Officers to behave the way they do, and how they are likely to interpret conservatism and public displays of religious piety from their

perspective against a backdrop of a securitized understanding of British values being threatened by Islamic extremism. However, with the securitization of university spaces, this of course raises the stakes for Muslim students, but as the two participants in question demonstrate having a commitment to British values whilst being an adherent Muslim, i.e. too much Islam, should not be viewed as problematic²⁴. The logic of the respective discourses is difficult circle to square.

The self-censorship mentioned by another participant of what I will refer to shorthand as ‘Muslimness’²⁵, because of the securitisation of features of religion which set themselves apart from the ‘mainstream’, fail to recognise as Kundnani (2015, p. 32) points out, that British Muslims exercise agency in developing unique notions of Britishness, which do not produce conflicts which might lead to political violence from their perspective. And if the stories and experiences related by the participants reflect wider attitudes and experiences of Muslim students on university campuses, far from creating a more inclusive society and safer campus, the culturalisation of security is alienating a high implicated demographic. Discussions of ‘cultural racism’ are important conceptually, but when specifically discussing issues related to religiously adherent Muslims who view their faith as an important part of their public profile, Klausen’s critique might be more apt; she argues that “European debates revert to the same syllogism, again and again. If they have not abandoned their faith, Muslims are religious fundamentalists” (2005, p. 209). The hyperbole in this statement indicates that it should not be taken literally, but it does highlight the fact that Prevent as a speculative measure introduced at the university level as these students have explained, perhaps casts the net of what might be considered a security issue further than what might be legitimately justifiable which leads on to the final theme: the consequences of Prevent on campus, and how this has impacted the way Muslim students present themselves to the external university community.

Theme 3

The first two themes – discriminatory implementation of Prevent and social (re)engineering – focussed loosely on how Prevent has impacted the Muslim student community internally if we can think about ‘Muslim students’ as a grouping. It might appear strange that the consequences of Prevent in how it forces Muslims to present themselves to the external university community is being cordoned off as a specific theme when there is considerable overlap between this section and the last two. I have chosen to use the internal-external dimensions to organise the three sub-themes – which do not fit neatly into either of the previous two major themes – into a different sub-grouping here. These sub-themes are the creation of an atmosphere of suspicion, how staff-student relations are likely to impacted and isolation of Muslim students from campus life which will be considered in a wider

²⁴ A finding consistent with a study published by Lynch (2013, p. 257) who found that increases in religiosity or use of religious symbols does not equate to a rejection of notions of ‘Britishness’ *per se* but represent an increased security in one’s identity and ability to incorporate multiple elements into that identity.

²⁵ Bonino (2013) and Allen (2015) use this term when referring to features, and modes of life typically associated with Muslims.

theme thinking about how Prevent has caused Muslim students to consider how they present themselves on campus.

In March 2008 *The Spectator* published a controversial cover story titled “How to Spot the Jihadi Next Door”, displaying a turbaned Muslim with a crooked nose and thick beard (MEND 2014), which gives an indication of both how the category ‘Islamic extremist’ is represented and how it is imagined. It becomes clear on this note why Tyrer and Sayyid (2012, p. 361) argue that the problem of how to spot an extremist is increasingly being both racialized and entwined with how to spot a Muslim. In the context of Prevent here we consider how counter-terror legislation is effecting the university experience of Muslim students. One participant discussing the atmosphere of suspicion that Prevent has created said that because the approach is top-down, this has created an atmosphere of suspicion, which places students, staff and Prevent Officers in an antagonistic relationship; of subjects of security, and implementers of security legislation. This antagonism is likely to appear as another participant suggests when Islam enters the visual horizon in the form of a beard, kufi or hijab. The same interviewee explain the problem. He said he’s very conscious first and foremost of his “alleged privilege” coming from a European background, he said he

“Can appear like the average white British person, or I can be assumed to be another white European and therefore my religious beliefs don’t automatically come to the forefront. Many times if I tell people I’m Muslim, they’ll be surprised”

He added that even when he tells people he’s Muslim, they often forget, because he believed there is a stereotype of what a Muslim looks like – according to him, brown skin, and an unkempt beard. His ‘Muslimness’ therefore is largely rendered invisible, and as a result this participant said he did not have any direct altercations with Prevent outside the institutions he’s involved in. However he did allude to something which touches on two of the issues I intend to discuss in this section whilst explaining situations in which problems are likely to occur. He said:

“Maybe if a student comes in wearing the hijab all of a sudden in university, people often start thinking more in universities; they maybe want to become more religious. Now that becomes a problem, in which a university member of staff may feel that they have to deal with it”

He continued that this policy makes three grave mistakes, (1) it increases pressure on staff to have a keen eye on issues relating to vulnerability to extremism; (2) it creates a conduit for staff who might hold prejudiced views on Islam to target Muslim students; and (3) it might lead to well-meaning staff mis-interpreting ‘Muslimness’, particularly when it entails a change from the normal behaviour of a student, causing staff or Prevent Officers to err on the side of caution to avoid legal ramifications themselves. The student here is referring the securitization of the university space, with a particular sensitivity to Muslims. The hypothetical parable he uses can theoretically be extended to any change

in the behaviour of a Muslim that makes their faith more visible, but his concern about how this might be problematized by staff or Prevent Officers is revealing. To argue that Prevent Officers or staff target changes like this, or ignore them is difficult given the lack of data though I do not rule this possibility out²⁶, but it does highlight the extent to which Islamophobia might be internalized by Muslim students. Lynch (2013) and Kundnani (2015) demonstrate in their studies, how Muslims are increasingly appropriating British culture, and redefining it in a unique amalgamation between multiplex identities. However, Lynch (2013, p. 258) also points how assumptions about “Muslim youth” have linked radicalism and violence with behaviour traits that are on the whole normal, and linked to individual and social processes in their communities. The perspective added by the above participant also adds the extent to which Muslims students are cognizant of societal trends, and how this might cause them to reconsider how they present themselves as Islamophobia in a perverse way turns inward. But if we analyse the idea of non-violent extremism as a step before ‘violent extremism’ we may be able to better understand the concerns of these students.

A report published by the Henry Jackson Society (HJS) titled *Community Policing and Preventing Extremism* gives a robust account and defence of the idea. The report begins with the assumption that the scale of the problem of individuals travelling from the UK to join groups in Syria suggests that the government’s current counter-terror strategy is not working, and welcomes the “developing policy consensus on the need to challenge both violent and non-violent extremism as a precursor to or a conduit for terrorism” (Henry Jackson Society 2015, p. 7). Specifically in relation to Islamist inspired terrorism the report argues, a response should begin by providing an effective ideological response to the “global jihad”. Citing the 2011 Prevent review and the 2013 extremism taskforce, the report explains that the government has been too reticent about challenging extremist ideologies in the past, which is what has caused the failure to tackle non-violent as well as violent extremism (Henry Jackson Society 2015, p. 7).

The twin phenomena of violent and non-violent extremism, are dangerous from this perspective as they create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism, popularise views which terrorists exploit and then legitimate terrorism, and although a meaningful definition is largely avoided by both the Government²⁷, as well as the HJS report both refer to a rejection of Western political institutional arrangements, intolerance and Islamism as the problem (Home Department 2011; Henry Jackson Society 2015). Nowhere does the Henry Jackson Society, the Government or the Quilliam Foundation as well for that matter explicitly mention piety or conservatism as part of the problem but instead

²⁶ The students referred to various examples of Prevent Officers and Police Officers requested lists of ISoc members, visiting the homes of Muslim students, obstructing and monitoring ISoc events which makes it unwise to ignore the possibility that markers of ‘Muslimness’ make Muslim students vulnerable to punitive counter-terror measures.

²⁷ As mentioned previously the Home Secretary understanding of how and why Muslims use political violence or leave the UK is linked to a lack of belonging and/or rejection of British values (Home Department 2011, p. 5)

avoid specific definitions²⁸. All however believe that radicalisation is not an event, it is a linear process, which takes a Muslim from a state of normalcy, through non-violent extremism, ending with political violence. The responsibility of Prevent from this perspective is then to block this process, and the only way to recognise that is through an ideological assessment which considers both appearance, speech. If these assumptions are taken as true, as one of the students pointed out, stopping radicalisation from an abstract perspective is certainly a worthy goal. Its efficacy on an operational level is very different.

Many of the participants frequently referred to the vagueness of what is to be considered radical or an indicator of extremism. In this context the atmosphere of suspicion created around Muslims indicates why the student who mentioned the hijab, as well as the concerns of two others, might lead them to both question the efficacy of Prevent and highlight some conceptual weaknesses. Although I have previously linked this to an internalisation of Islamophobic discourse, thinking about radicalisation as a linear process its clear why these students have demonstrated discomfort with the nature of relationship at university with the introduction of Prevent. But also how changes in their behaviour might be misinterpreted should they wish to demonstrate on their person a deeper commitment to Islam's outward prescriptions. Presentation of the self is increasingly problematized in their view, in a self-alienating manner. Again bearing in mind the antagonistic legal relationship created by the statutory duty to carry out the responsibilities of Prevent it becomes clear where this might become tricky for both staff and students. Criticising the policy, one student said:

“I'm thinking that Prevent might be just the kind of rushed plan just to meet public demand for better security. They wanted to please the public, but didn't know how to do it, so they quickly rushed this strategy, and now they don't really know what they're doing”

This type of criticism of contemporary policy decisions has also been previously raised by social critic Christopher Lasch. Lasch (1979) argues that as social life becomes increasingly complex, immediate experience plays a progressively smaller role as a source of information, losing out to symbolically mediated information about these events. His views on the consequences of this development are worthy of being quoted at length:

“The contagion of unintelligibility spreads through all levels of government. It is not merely that propagandists fall victim to their own propaganda; the problem goes deeper. When politicians and administrators have no other aim than to sell their leadership to the public, they deprive themselves of intelligible standards by which to define the goals of specific policies or to evaluate success or failure” (1979, p. 78)

²⁸ Friedrichs (2006) explains why specific definitions of terrorism, whilst perhaps conceptually useful are not always desirable as flexibility allows cases to be judged on merit. He does however warn that this creates a space within which hegemonic social actors can manipulate this flexibility to further political ends.

The complexity of managing the process of radicalisation has caused the British government to largely ignore the impact of Prevent, and its speculative nature as other research has pointed out despite many of its practical problems. The new “art of crisis management” as Lasch (1979, p. 79) describes it, has forced leaders into the position of resorting to bold and decisive action even in situations which call for prudence and caution, such as this one. This critique bears fruit when we wonder how we might define success and whether the government has given due consideration to some of the strategic and political implications of failure. This question might well be considered antagonistic, but the Prevent Strategy does recognise that “people who are prepared to support violent extremism in this country is very small” (Home Department 2011, p. 5). Recalling their negative attitudes to Prevent it should not appear as a surprise that these students have deep seated reservations of its content and application. Given that the British government’s assessment of the security threat is a lack of commitment to British values, how do we deal with polls which suggest British Muslims are actually more patriotic than the UK average,²⁹ and at which point is the government to be satisfied with sufficient ‘Britishness’ among UK Muslims? Additionally as one participant indicated, given that influential secession movements exist in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, how are Muslims to receive questions about their commitment and loyalty to the United Kingdom – their Britishness – as these events occur around them? This participant also wondered why discourses of ‘Britishness’, British values and other tropes are not conjured up with the same immediacy to combat far-right extremists?

The same speaker would later explain that British values have become the new criteria by which Muslims are judged, assuming that there was is a difference in this regards between Muslims and the general population. “The assumption” he explains is that “Muslims somehow weren’t behaving as other members of society, and so now the Muslims, because they weren’t behaving, so now we need to define what these values are”. The problem he has with this does not appear however to be in content necessarily, as I will later explain, but how ‘Britishness’, in spite of an attempt to make this identity as inclusive as possible, is being imagined as exclusive because of the experiences of these students. In this frame Prevent then, is actually counter-intuitive, actively undermining the policies stated goals. One of the participants describing a personal experience of his said, a major annual event that his university puts on Discover Islam Week, was ruined as their ISoc was not able to publicize its event due to added bureaucracy in approving speakers. The speakers were eventually approved but far too late, turning an event which the year before attracted a few hundred, into an event with had around 20 people. From a security perspective it is important to wonder what the benefit of such an approach might be especially considering the likely impact. The participants said this would likely lead to fear among Muslim students, or deter them from joining ISocs. Such an outcome in one of the student’s opinions would create an environment more conducive to the spread of extremist ideas because the

²⁹ Demos published a report titled *A Place for Pride* in 2011.

securitisation of 'safe spaces' would intimidate Muslim students and cause alienation as a pose to facilitating integration.

Goffman's (1959) classical approach to understanding interaction with the 'dramaturgical analogy' can be *useful* here to add further light to the discussion. Goffman used the metaphor of a theatre to draw out commonalities between social interaction and theatrical drama using the notions of the front stage performance, back stage and off-stage to demonstrate the different ways in which people choose to present the Self. The social setting for Goffman was vital as different audiences require different performances for the presentation of the Self. If we extend his analogy into the university space taking ISoc campus activities, or classrooms as a 'front stage', the responses of the participants suggests that Muslims will increasingly have to tone down their 'Muslimness' to ensure they do not invite suspicion. One of the participants said "it's so oppressive that you try to change your actions, your speech, your appearance even to appear a normal human being". Goffman (1959, p. 114) would explain this phenomena by saying that when on the 'front stage' one's activities take place in the presence of other persons, they are likely to accentuate or suppress aspects of their identity which might discredit the impression which they are trying to foster – in this case a well-adjusted and reasonable moderate British Muslim. To the extent that a student conforms to what he/she believes is the behaviour of a 'normal human being', this activity would be described by Goffman as 'impression management'. In this case Foucault would describe this behaviour as the product of the 'gaze', which works through a process of normalization relying on un-interrupted surveillance (McNay 1994, p. 95).

The 'back stage' is an arena which exists in relative terms to the 'front stage', where the performer is present but the audience is not (Goffman 1959, p. 123). As a result, the demand to present the Self as 'moderate Muslim' recedes, and one can just be 'Muslim'. This model is useful for understanding the concerns about alienation and isolation for these students as the more hostile the 'front stage' appears the greater relief they are likely to experience in the 'back stage', where more 'authentic' identities can be expressed. Another interviewee added that a participant at an ISoc event who asked a question was days later visited by Prevent Officers at his home as well as the police who searched and interrogated him reinforces this perception. These are just small examples among many from the focus group which demonstrate a feeling among the participants that public outward expressions of 'Muslimness' might not be welcome in a manner conducive to harmonious campus relationships. The idea that the government can actually create "no un-governed spaces in which extremism is allowed to flourish without firm challenge and, where appropriate, by legal intervention" (Home Department 2011, p. 8-9) is an unrealistic expectation. 'Back stages' have always and will continue to exist. The same student said that "by scaring the people away from these [ISoc] talks, you increase it [the threat posed by extremism] because you make people hide away". He believed that these lectures, which often encourage Muslim to take larger roles and responsibilities in society, are the only organic

antidote to the problem posed by extremists, implying that by taking on easy targets – Muslim students and ISocs – the government is making an unnecessary and unhelpful mistake.

Concluding Findings

The three themes discussed in the findings were attempts at discriminatory implementation of Prevent, social (re)engineering and how Prevent has impacted the Muslim students in how they relate to their peers on campus. The first theme found studied the different ways Prevent has disrupted ISocs by selectively targeting ISoc to ensure compliance with British values. Whilst Prevent according to two participants does not directly infringe upon civil liberties directly, in the same way a legal ban would, the bureaucracy associated with Prevent's procedures to vet speakers, and as well as complicate other ISoc activities has produced data which suggests ISocs are being singled out in ways other societies are not. One student described the process as a dampening of civil liberties.

The second theme looked at social (re)engineering, or the perceived attempt by government to bring about attitudinal change in Muslims. This discussion took on a more general tone exploring questions of identity, race, culture, and religious interpretation and how Prevent in university enters this discussion. Whilst the participants differed in slightly in how they approached the questions, some referring primarily to questions of faith and others race, there was overlap between their responses in that they all felt that Prevent created a climate which subtly coerces Muslims to conform to ideas of Britishness as government infringements on their agency to define this for themselves. This problem was frequently linked by participants to wider social trends where anti-Muslim prejudice was more salient, highlighting the fact that Prevent Officers and staff do not live in vacuums, highlighting links between anti-Muslim prejudice in society and punitive measures by government to counter extremism.

The final theme provided analysis of three sub-themes which dealt primarily with how Muslim students presented themselves externally in the newly securitized spaces. The three sub-themes were the creation of an atmosphere of suspicion, staff-student relationships and the isolation of Muslim students. The themes warranted analysis in their own right and interlinked during analysis. The students reported that the securitization of university with a particular focus on markers of radicalisation strained the manner in which they present themselves and behave to avoid the possibility of their religiosity being misunderstood as extremism. They expected that the introduction of the statutory duty on university staff could potentially strain staff-student relations as it placed them antagonistically on either side of a security issue. The students feared the securitization of these spaces would push Muslim students away from ISocs, but also out of the public sphere, which indicates some of the problems of associated with this approach to countering terrorism. The findings overall, though critical of the implementation, goals and consequences of Prevent demonstrated the different ways in which Muslim students are articulating resistance to this policy, often as some

examples in the study have demonstrated with the same discursive resources which they also felt are being mis-applied to them.

Conclusion

Through this research I have attempted to understand how Prevent has impacted the university lives of a cohort of male Muslim students in the three key areas: staff-student relationships, civil liberties and the campus activities of Muslim students. As this research was exploratory it was also an attempt to test a line of inquiry carried out on Prevent by other researchers in the university context to draw out any similarities and attempt to illuminate any discontinuities or features of Prevent which might be more unique to university situations. By analyzing the impacts and content of the Prevent wing of the UK's counter-terror strategy, I've attempted to juxtapose the competing narratives of what we consider extremism, what is being treated as a threat and how Prevent is playing out against the 'lived' experiences of students who are implicated in the punitive dimension of this policy. In this way my study dynamically and interactively draws out a narrative of Muslim students, in a securitized context.

As expected the results in many ways conformed to reservations expressed by many other researchers such as Allen (2010; 2015), Kundnani (2008; 2012; 2015), Bunglawala (2014), Bonino (2013), Pantucci (2010), Wynne-Hughes (2012) and a host others mentioned in the literature review. These included issues such as intrusion on questions of theology giving preferential treatment to more subdued interpretations of faith, attempts to socially engineer a depoliticized, liberalized Muslim community, cordoning off or introducing the security state is arenas which discourage engagement on the part of Muslims and accusations of Islamophobia and Islamophobic prejudices diffusing into security policy. The participants all mentioned things to this effect at some point during the focus group. What's more participants also added to the contemporary discussions about Prevent, problems of targeted implementation, and the knock on effects particularly on ISocs. These ranged from Prevent Officers delaying speaker approval, to other bureaucratic methods to disrupt ISocs or intimidate members of these societies but securitizing benign issues. The study suggested that the civil liberties of these students have certainly been dampened, by adding bureaucracy which has cast a shadow of suspicion on the activities of Muslim students, but has also created concern of the part of some students that their behavior is increasingly likely to be misunderstood.

Though this study certainly doesn't attempt to present itself as a definitive statement on this issue, just a modest contribution one interesting line of further inquiry did appear during the study. A gap appeared when one participant said he believed he might not be a suspect if he engaged in tokenistic aspects of British culture such as pub-going, being clean shaven and others. My assumptions, derived from the literature, suggested that a social pressure was playing itself out on Muslim subjectivities, between Superego demands to 'conform' (Ahmed 2008), a desire to redefine and expand definitions of Britishness (Kundnani 2015, p. 31-32) or different forms of rebellion. The students in this study opted for charting out new definitions of Britishness, with one student responding that Muslim students with their articulations of resistance relying on liberal discursive resources are in many ways "more British than the British".

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