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When counter-extremism 'sticks': the circulation of the prevent duty in the school space

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ABSTRACT

This article contributes to scholarship in Muslim geographies to show how the Prevent Duty is a racializing and securitizing policy, which exists in an already unequal school space. Through the concept of 'stickiness', it shows how the Prevent Duty creates associations of violence and extremism with gendered Muslim bodies and considers the spatial politics of Prevent Duty training. By attending to the effective nature of Prevent, this paper considers how these policy documents create negative attachments that shape how Muslim teachers experience the school space, as both the implementers and potential targets of the policy. In-depth interviews with current and former teachers working in London schools were conducted in 2018, with a particular focus on the experiences of Muslim teachers. The results indicate that when the Prevent Duty is in circulation, it creates an atmosphere in which 'Muslimness' feels under surveillance, lingering beyond the training space.

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1. Introduction

The UK's War on Terror has had profound impacts on how Muslims in Britain navigate their ethnoreligious identities. The 7/7 bombings in London as well as the London Bridge and Manchester Arena bombings of 2017, have crucially highlighted how Muslims are collectively held responsible for violence. In these instances, condemnation must be sought from Muslims to distinguish between those who can be trusted, and those who should not. Those who do not condemn may be seen as untrustworthy and such feelings of concern are evident in schools, especially after the Trojan Horse affair and the travels of the three Bethnal Green girls.

In 2013, news emerged that educators associated with the Park View Academy in England were part of an 'Islamic plot' to 'Islamicise' schools,

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known widely as the Trojan Horse affair. The claims emerged when an anonymous letter was sent to Birmingham City Council, detailing 'Islamist advice' to take over schools as part of a five-step plan called 'Operation Trojan Horse' (Shackle 2017). The plan included details of disrupting schools with Muslim students and co-opting their 'Salafi' parents 'to agitate for an Islamic agenda' (Shackle 2017). Despite the veracity of the letter being in doubt, a political storm brewed, centring Muslims in Britain and Muslim educators specifically as security concerns.

Media outlets reported that 'Muslim hardliners', 'extremists' and 'terrorists' were deeply involved in the affair, words which continued a long trajectory of securitization and racialization of Muslims as 'suspects' and 'strangers' in a post-9/11 era. This narrative was further bolstered by the Government commissioning a former counter-terrorism officer, Sir Peter Clarke, to publish a report on the affair. The Trojan Horse Affair podcast by Serial Productions and The New York Times released in 2022, brought a renewed interest in the scandal to a global audience. Through years long investigations, speaking to key council figures and teachers, and ploughing through endless documents, the podcast uncovered several discrepancies found within the official government version of events and highlighted their failure to answer basic, yet important questions, such as who wrote the initial letter, which led to a national security crisis. The release of the podcast was met with criticism from those within the UK Government such as Michael Gove, calling the New York Times 'useful idiots' (Adams 2022) and those in the Labour party, claiming that the New York Times podcast 'has it in for Britain'.

Following the allegations, Ofsted, the Education regulatory body in England and Downing Street, threatened to conduct 'no-notice' inspections on all schools, although these plans were later ditched for a more targeted approach, in which five Birmingham schools were downgraded to Ofsted's lowest rating, Inadequate, for a lack of 'awareness of the risks arising from extremism' (Sparrow and Adams 2014). The Trojan Horse affair confirmed that schools needed to do more to tackle extremism and radicalization and so began raging debates in Parliament about the possibility that Islamists would use schools for their extremist desires. It cemented the idea that Muslims could not be trusted and instead, should be inspected and monitored for ulterior motives. To further reduce the potential of extremism in schools, the Government imposed the teaching and promotion of 'fundamental British values' in curriculums. A direct link was forged between fundamental British values and extremism, considering the Government's definition of extremism as the 'active or vocal opposition to the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'.

The educational landscape was rocked further when it emerged that Shamima Begum, Kadiza Sultana and Amira Abase travelled to join ISIS in

2014. They were students at Bethnal Green Academy and later became known as the 'Bethnal Green girls' and 'jihadi brides'. Their families were invited to give evidence to Parliament and in response to whether Shamima showed 'signs' of being radicalized, her sister replied that Shamima, 'was into any normal teenager things [...] she used to watch "Keeping up with the Kardashians" [...] there was nothing that indicated she was radicalised in any way [...] not at home' (Akunjee 2015). In the months to follow, there was an enhancement of surveillance practices and counter-extremism measures placed on a statutory footing, most notably the enforcement of the Prevent Duty in 2015. As said by then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, 'The battle against it [terrorism] begins at school, where young people learn to be active, resilient and tolerant citizens who are ready to seize the rich opportunities of modern Britain' (Hansard 2015).

This article contributes to scholarship which interrogates the spatial politics of Prevent Duty training in schools and queries how the circulation of the duty contributes to a racialization and securitization of Muslim teachers. Some of the Prevent training sessions were conducted in-person, usually by a Home Office approved private organization or were conducted online using e-learning software. In schools, the Prevent training could also be conducted by a safeguarding lead, such as the headteacher or safeguarding lead. Using the concept of 'stickiness', I argue that the Prevent training space is a 'sticky' space for Muslim teachers as it is here where they experience intense affective encounters, such as fear and anxiety which changes the way they navigate school life. I draw on the affective responses of Muslim teachers during the Prevent training session to help us understand how Muslim teachers attach or detach from the spaces in which Prevent circulates. As Sara Ahmed (2004, 27; original emphasis) says, 'emotions *do things*, and work to align individuals with collectives – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments'.

Through stickiness, I consider the lingering impacts of Prevent training and how it shapes the way that Muslim teachers move around the school. This paper recognizes that Muslim teachers are working in a space that is already historically racially charged, but their ethno-religious identities as Muslims intensifies because of the Prevent Duty. Stickiness also recognizes the significance of time: 'spaces stick differently to different people at different times' (Potts 2022, 1278). This suggests that for those racialized as Muslim, the Prevent Duty not only renders Muslims as unable to speak out, but also it pulls them back to periods of time where their identities as Muslims are fused with notions of securitization. Encounters are not just about the present, but can 'open past encounters', framed by 'broader relationships of power and antagonism' (Ahmed 2000, 8). For the Muslim teachers discussed, they are essentially 'stuck' during Prevent training sessions where conversations about

Muslim identities and signs of extremism are frequent. I now turn to thinking about the logics of the Prevent Duty in schools.

2. The prevent duty in schools

The scope of Prevent has changed since created by the New Labour Government in 2003. Following the attacks on 9/11, there were concerns that the UK would be subject to a terrorist attack. The rise in 'homegrown' extremism and terrorism, brought to light by the 7/7 bombings in London, prompted the New Labour Government to introduce Prevent as a mechanism to pre-emptively respond to concerns about extremism within Muslim communities (Qurashi 2018; Younis and Jadhav 2019). As insisted by Tony Blair after the 7/7 attacks in London, 'the bombers would not impose their "extremism" on us' (Fernandez and Faure-Walker 2021, 98).

The Prevent Duty is one of four strands of the UK's counter-terrorism framework and as of 2015, it was placed on a statutory footing in public sectors such as schools, universities, and healthcare providers. Its aim is to 'prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' and frontline workers are now required to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (HM Government 2015, 2). Educators must complete Prevent Duty training, and this can be conducted online or in person. If a concern on radicalization is raised, it is passed onto a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and if further concerns emerge, this is then passed onto a multiagency panel who determine whether the individual should be 'voluntarily' referred onto Channel (Gov.uk 2018; Lakhani 2020, 662). For those outside of the DSL network, their confidence with implementing Prevent was found to be lower but were reassured by the fact that 'if in doubt speak to someone' and to use their 'gut instincts' (Busher et al. 2017, 6; Dresser 2019; Lakhani 2020, 662). In recent years, Prevent has become more localized in its operation, moving away from referrals to Channel being screened by the police to local authorities instead (Pettinger 2020, 134).

When the Duty was first enforced on a statutory basis in 2015, the highest number of referrals came from schools, particularly in relation to 'Islamist extremism' (Busher and Jerome 2020, 3). Lakhani (2020, 661) found that 'there were widespread fears concerning its potential to be draconian and discriminatory in nature', which accompanied media framings of young Muslim students 'being referred through Channel due to some oversight in assessment'. To remove Prevent from its securitizing critiques, the policy was embedded within safeguarding procedures, already a core responsibility for teachers. As found by Busher and Jerome (2020, 3), 'those supportive of the Duty argued that it was a necessary response to a very real social problem and that its continuity within existing practice meant that it would cause little

if any disruption to education provision'. What distinguished Prevent from other forms of safeguarding in schools was its deep-rooted connection to national security and its positioning as a pre-criminal measure.

Scholarship on the Prevent Duty in schools is well established (Bryan 2017; Busher and Jerome 2020; Busher, Choudhury, and Thomas 2019; Lakhani 2020; Lundie 2019; Scott-Baumann 2017; Winter et al. 2021). Consideration of Prevent training is often related to thinking through a teacher's agency and 'policy enactment' (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012) but also how the policy can discriminate against Muslim students (Elwick and Jerome 2019; Lakhani 2020; Lundie 2019). In this article, I argue that the consequences of the Prevent Duty in schools has a lasting impact on Muslim students and teachers because the threat of terrorism is racialized to Muslims in public consciousness, irrespective of the Government's intent. A colourblind counter-extremism approach may deflect from the racism inherent in a policy like Prevent (Younis and Jadhav 2020; Younis 2021). An example of the racialization of terrorism is put forth in Lakhani and James' (2021, 74) paper, that some respondents who worked in white predominant areas, did not consider Prevent to be 'a pressing issue due to the continuing association between Prevent and "Islamic extremism"', whilst others claimed that terrorism was 'just a Muslim thing'. The shift to focus on 'Islamist extremism' more than the far-right is exemplified in the Independent Review of Prevent, which suggested that "'Islamist" terrorism represents a greater threat than far-right terrorism' (Prevent Watch 2023, 21). This is despite data¹ from 2021 to 2022 indicating that 13% of all referrals to Channel were predominately related to far-right concerns.² Rather than ascribe Prevent's failures to its underwhelming focus on far-right terrorism, it remains true that its core infrastructure further exacerbates stigmatization and overt securitization of those racialized as Muslims. Prevent fundamentally depends on an 'unseeing of [its] racialized bordering', for it to be considered as legitimate (Ali 2020, 580).

Elwick and Jerome (2019, 339) have considered the role of a teacher's agency in relation to Prevent to understand 'why people do different things in relation to policy' and how 'teachers are adopting rather different interpretations of the policy, with the result that the policy is enacted in quite different ways'. Their 'ecological approach to agency' recognizes that a tension exists between a teacher's agency and the statutory nature of Prevent in schools. In relation to Prevent training, they found that responses to the training varied depending on who conducted it (Elwick and Jerome 2019, 347). As such, 'when training is delivered in a more open and collaborative way, staff in some schools suggested it helped them to be more open in their own practice and was a powerful enabler of their agency' (Elwick and Jerome 2019, 348).

Despite the paper demonstrating that tensions exist between a teacher's agency and implementing Prevent, what is absent is how Prevent contributes

to a racialization of Muslims as potential extremists. Discussions around agency speak to Gramscian frameworks of hegemony and consent, given how the language used by advocates of Prevent suggests it relies on consent which in turn normalizes 'citizen-led surveillance' (Kaleem 2022, 270). This paper follows the arguments made by scholars (Sabir 2017) who recognize that situating Prevent as a form of consent rather than coercion is false. Given that the Prevent Duty is statutory in schools, there is little scope for educators to resist it and resistance to state measures is further complicated for Muslims who are fearful of being branded an extremist. This paper contributes to scholarship that looks at Prevent Duty training in schools to show how despite attempts to present itself as a colourblind policy which targets all forms of extremism, Muslim teachers remain at the centre of discussions of what an extremist is. I argue that when the Prevent Duty circulates during Prevent training sessions, it creates a sticky space for Muslim teachers who are struck with fear and ultimately stuck because of perceived consequences of speaking out.

3. Literature on 'stickiness'

This paper explores the concept of 'stickiness' and the spatialization of stickiness, and specifically, how training on the Prevent Duty in schools creates sticky encounters for Muslim teachers given how counter-extremism and counter-terrorism is associated with Muslims and Islam (McQuade 2020; Stampnitzky 2021). I use stickiness to refer to how negative emotions are generated in the Prevent training space, and how this is gendered, resulting in restricting Muslim identities in the school. Gender is particularly important given the complexity in how gender is understood and utilized in secular framings of countering extremism, which derides Muslims (Muslim men especially) as being uniquely regressive and therefore more predisposed to terrorism (Khan 2021; Mikdashi and Puar 2016). The centring of women in efforts to tackle extremism has been argued as necessary to tackle gender-based violence and to promote peace (Couture 2014; Kundnani and Hayes 2018). However, as argued by Abu-Lughod (2019, 9) and others (Kanji 2022; Shepherd 2022), such a reading of 'secofeminists' 'who are outside of official military and security sectors' yet contribute to securitizing objectives, 'implicates them in pervasive forms of suspicion of Muslims (that they disavow) and aligns them with Islamophobic public discourse'.

Going back to the literature on stickiness, the concept is used in a range of ways, from encounter and multiculturalism (Ahmed 2000; Amin 2013; Hallam and Street 2000; Wilson 2017), emotions and affect (Ahmed 2004; Tolia-Kelly 2006), as well as spatial politics and time (Potts 2022; Laketa 2018). Scholars have also drawn on the notion of racial markers sticking bodies together. Arun Saldanha (2006, 10, 2006b, 174) uses the term 'viscosity' to capture how

racialized bodies are 'gradually becoming sticky and clustering into aggregates' and how as 'bodies become sticky, they collectively acquire surface tension and become relatively impenetrable by other bodies'. His reading of stickiness through viscosity amplifies claims that stickiness is fluid, that 'there are local and temporary thickenings of interacting bodies, which then collectively become sticky, capable of capturing more bodies like them' (Saldanha 2006a, 18). Saldanha's (2006a) writings are useful to this article's reading of stickiness and Prevent: rather than suggest that Muslim teachers under constant securitization in the school space, their identities are 'charged' and misrecognized as being potential extremists when the Prevent Duty is in circulation.

Sara Ahmed (2004, 119) uses stickiness to convey how emotions 'do not positively reside in a subject or figure' but 'work to bind subjects together'. Stickiness is conceptualized as a binding force, both negative and positive, bringing individuals together in particular moments. Ahmed (2004, 120) describes how emotions move: how they ripple, moving 'sideways' through its 'associations between signs, figures and objects', and moving 'backwards' to recognize the presence and absence of historicity. Certain bodies encounter fear and how this emotion sticks to individuals transcends time: 'fear opens up past histories that stick to the present' (Ahmed 2004, 126). Fear in this case demonstrates how bodies are 'differentiated', to mark a difference between the white and black body for example but more so, how fear 'works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others' (Ahmed 2004, 127). Despite emotions moving backwards and sideways, sticky spaces can immobilize individuals to not speak out, which this paper interrogates in relation to how Prevent Duty training creates similar conditions for Muslim teachers.

Following the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism, Ahmed (2004, 121) argues that feelings operate in the same way, as they are 'shaped by histories, including histories of production', which are often concealed when these emotions are in circulation. Ahmed (2004, 128) recognizes that given the concealment of such histories, not all bodies are affected in the same way. Saldanha (2006, 11) sees this in Fanon, whose racial identity is 'charged' when his Blackness is seen as a threat by a white child, 'chaining him to the histories and geographies of race and colonialism'. At that moment, when the child on the train exclaims that he is 'scared', Fanon (1986, 112) declares that 'I was responsible not only for my body but also for race and my ancestors'. This is an integral argument, which I bring to this paper that the Prevent Duty training creates an unequal experience for those racialized as Muslim who must bear the responsibility of past histories of terrorism associated with their Muslim practices and beliefs.

As argued by Ahmed (2004) emotions, such as hate, gain value when they are in circulation with other objects and signs. It is the assemblage of

words uttered by those in power which create feelings of anxiety and discomfort for racialized individuals. Examples of 'sticky words' include language used by politicians talking about immigration, such as 'swamped', 'dirt' and 'sewage' to 'create impressions of others as those who have invaded the space of nation' (Ahmed 2014, 122). Essentially, sticky words generate feelings of being out of place and feeling unable to express oneself for fears of the consequences. Rather than suggest that words alone generate feelings and encounters, Ahmed (2004, 121) argues that emotions do not reside in a singular body but rather, they are 'one nodal point in the economy'. Saldanha (2006) also recognizes that language alone does not determine how racial bodies are recognized but rather, that racial markers of difference existed prior to the utterance of 'sticky' words. This paper draws on this notion of sticky words to show that when the Prevent Duty is in circulation, words such as 'extremist' and 'terrorist' evoke feelings of anxiety and discomfort for Muslim teachers. It imagines how the Prevent training is a space which pulls Muslim educators to times when their visibilities as potential Muslim extremists is heightened, thus arguing that the existence of the Prevent Duty in schools fortifies claims that the War on Terror's frontlines have expanded and remain firm.

4. Methodology

The fieldwork for this paper was conducted in 2018 as part of a PhD. London was the research site as it accounted for 28% of Prevent referrals in 2018 and given my teaching experience in primary schools, I had established connections with teaching networks (Home Office 2018, 4–5). Although there have been operational changes to the management of the Prevent Duty and Channel (Pettinger 2020), Prevent Duty training remains mandatory for educators in England. The findings of this paper therefore remain relevant in understanding how Prevent Duty training has contributed to a racialization of Muslim teachers as potential suspects.

Teachers who worked in state primary or secondary schools in London were recruited for this study and a total number of 28 educators were interviewed using a semi-structured format. The interviews selected for this paper were those that spoke about the Prevent training they received or conducted and their experiences of being a Muslim teacher in school or working with Muslims. State schools were selected given their adherence to state requirements and educational frameworks such as the National Curriculum and being subject to Ofsted inspections. Of the 28 participants, 17 identified as Muslim and both male and female Muslim teachers were interviewed. As a Muslim woman researching a controversial and complex topic, I was aware that some participants, Muslim included, would be hesitant

to discuss issues they may have encountered with Prevent in schools, but assuring them with anonymity and the right to withdraw participation provided some comfort.

Participants were recruited via social media and through online networks, such as the Teach First Muslim group. Although I was part of the Teach First Muslim Network during my teacher training, I did not know the professional or personal beliefs of those I was interviewing prior, given the heterogenous nature of the group. Interviews were conducted either in person, on the phone or online depending on participant preference. Transcripts were analysed using a decolonial and feminist research approach to highlight themes of power and exclusion in spaces such as where Prevent training occurred (Lugones 2010). Using a decolonial and feminist approach was important given the way in which gender is articulated vis-à-vis security and the War on Terror as discussed above, and secondly, given the way that Islam and Muslims have been positioned as outsiders in public discourse pertaining to terrorism. Similarly, scholars have argued that counterextremism and counter-terrorism measures are extensions of colonial power, which seek to discipline and regulate communities considered as ‘Other’ (Kumar and Kundnani 2015; O’Donnell 2016; Ahmad and Monaghan 2021). Employing this framework helped to understand the positions Muslim teachers were faced with when told they were required to implement Prevent and attend its training. The names of the participants have been changed, although the borough that they work(ed) in, and gender was disclosed. The next section will include testimonies primarily from Muslim teachers on their experiences of Prevent Duty training.

5. Circulating fears: Muslim teachers in prevent training

Imran was a secondary school teacher in East London who identified as a practicing Muslim male of Bangladeshi heritage. Schools in the surrounding area of Bethnal Green Academy, including Imran’s, were required to attend mandatory Prevent training as a result of the perceived increase in Muslim teenagers travelling to Syria. The training at Imran’s school was conducted by an organization called *Inspire*, whose director at the time, Sara Khan, went on to become the Government’s first Commissioner for Countering Extremism.

During the Prevent training session, Imran said the trainer mostly spoke about the threat of ‘Islamist extremism’:

I found the training to be very negative . . . my colleagues came into it with good faith and the training was that people who follow certain religious views and start to become what will be perceived as more conservative are at risk of terrorism . . . I think it was portraying students who are Muslim as all potential suspects, and I found that was problematic.

When asked whether he could challenge the trainer, Imran described feeling worried because 'you sound like a terrorist yourself saying, "you know what I disagree with you"'. As a Muslim, he 'felt like a bit of an outsider' considering how well the training was received by his non-Muslim colleagues. Harun, a Muslim secondary school teacher in Essex, faced a similar dilemma, pointing to the sticky nature of Prevent training. His training was delivered by the headteacher who suggested that 'if you see changes in a person', you must report them. Harun felt that such vagueness could increase the chances of teachers referring Muslim students due the associations between Muslims and extremism. Like Imran, Harun could not challenge the content:

I wanted to question that but then the headteacher backed it up like 'you cannot intellectually try to rationalise [these] things'. So it's like ok, if I now try to question some of these concepts that you're saying about Prevent ... if I try to question that in a logical rational way, now fingers will start pointing like 'yep we told you that was a sign of extremism ... he fits the bill because of his appearance as well'.

Imran and Harun's inability to challenge the trainers because of fears that they could be labelled as potential extremists, aptly demonstrates how the concept of stickiness works. Given their outward appearance as visible Muslim men, both Imran and Harun found that words such as 'extremism' and 'terrorism' could potentially be used against them if they were seen to diverge from the training content. The visibility and racialization of the teachers' Muslimness and their gender corresponds to popular associations of the Muslim male as the terrorist.

This was compounded further by the interviews conducted with non-Muslim teachers. Emma, a primary school teacher in Southeast London, spoke about conducting Prevent training and feeling like the contents was 'outside' of her experience. Emma noticed that some Muslim staff were uncomfortable but understood that 'you've got to tell us this', given its mandatory nature. Emma suggested that Muslim teachers disagreed about their 'subject knowledge' on the training material: one Muslim teacher felt she would 'be aware of the kind of things that would come up in terms of Islam vs radical Islam', whilst another Muslim teacher disagreed, stating 'we're not the experts in being radicalized ... or anything to do with terrorism'. Emma knew that Prevent training could be uncomfortable for Muslim teachers, but there was a reluctance by some Muslim teachers to consider themselves as 'experts' on extremism just because they were Muslims. In another example, Kathy, who worked in a secondary school with a majority white student demographic, said that Prevent training was delivered on the basis that, 'it's not about us but when it is about us it's obviously going to be something so extreme'. This further demonstrated how Prevent was particularly viewed as a 'Muslim issue' in which concerns

about the far-right or white students would be something 'so extreme' and quite rare. According to Elwick and Jerome (2019), who conducted the training was important to their participants. Being able to designate someone as a potential extremist is associated with power and there was a clear reluctance by Imran and Harun to disclose their grievances to those who had the power to potentially call them extremists, in comparison to the discussions Emma had with Muslim colleagues. Prevent's colourblind façade becomes apparent when we examine who can and cannot voice concerns or participate in critical discussions which require educators to become actively involved in national security.

These encounters show how the training space is not experienced equally. To Ahmed (2014 online), atmospheres are already 'angled' even if it is a shared atmosphere; you can 'inhabit the same room but be in a different world'. Because Imran and Harun knew that the Prevent Duty has a unique relationship with Muslims, they arrived at the space knowing its past and how the policy is used in the present. They attend the training as visible Muslim men, who are 'saturated by histories that surface in the atmospheres that surround some bodies, hovering, a thickening of air' (Ahmed 2014 online). They attend the training session in a school setting which historically is already heavily racialized and unequal. Their rebuttals may create feelings of discomfort in the already tense room, and at risk of excluding themselves further by causing others in the training space to feel uncomfortable, they chose not to engage.

The Prevent training session can therefore be described as 'spatially sticky', where experiences vary depending on one's religion, racialization and gender. Despite attempts to differentiate between 'moderate' and 'hardline' Muslims through the term 'Islamist', Prevent allows for the possibility that these Muslim teachers *could* become extremists. This comes back to the histories of Prevent which made clear that the risk of terrorism is primarily associated with Muslims, and arguably remains despite Prevent including other forms of 'extremism'. In comparison to the interviews with Muslim male teachers, the responses of Muslim female teachers varied, as some felt able to challenge the trainer's content. Zara, a Muslim secondary school teacher, received Prevent training from a Muslim Prevent officer. She worked in East London where it was common to find young Muslim men distributing leaflets about Islam. The trainer suggested that some of these men could be considered as 'extremists' which made Zara question whether Jehovah's Witnesses would also be considered, or if it was just the 'Muslim boys down the road'. The trainer responded that 'Prevent just knows who they [extremists] are', insinuating that there is specific racial knowledge on extremism which only Prevent knows. Dina, also a Muslim secondary school teacher, challenged the trainer during her Prevent training session saying it would be 'doing a disservice' to her students if she referred them onto Prevent because

'they will be on the radar for years to come'. Dina felt like the trainer was sensitive towards her question because it was 'coming from me (a Muslim woman)'. The visibility of Muslim female teachers in the training room, as indicated by their *hijab* may have reinforced the idea that they had an 'authority' to correct what was being said, as is reflected in Dina's comments.

I hesitate to suggest that this was a uniform experience, as Hanan, an English teacher in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, felt worried about her activities as a Muslim. She recalled that raising money for Palestine was used as a sign of extremism during the Prevent training. Hanan thought that she could be reported to Prevent for this, not because she identified as an extremist, but because of how the signs of extremism were closely related to normative Islamic practices and beliefs. The 'could be anyone' attitude that Prevent tries to adopt falls short, it does in fact 'point to some bodies more than others' (Ahmed 2012, 3). In Prevent's case, this is pointed towards Muslim bodies, thus creating the conditions for the affective stickiness to occur.

Although stickiness can be temporary, perhaps only lasting until the end of the training session, there are other situations where this stickiness re-emerges, as Muslim teachers find that their ethnoreligious identity is associated with practices and beliefs deemed as potentially risky. The Muslim teachers were reminded through their encounter with Prevent training that their relationship with the security state is volatile, that there is also a concern about extremism amongst Muslim teachers as seen in the Trojan Horse affair. For the Muslim teachers interviewed, although they are required to implement the Duty as education professionals, they are reminded that there is a need to securitize aspects of Muslim identity, especially those associated with religiously conservative practices. The histories of Prevent may be hidden during the Prevent training sessions but the Muslim teachers remain alert to the fact that 'Islamist extremism', and some of their Islamic practices and beliefs by default, are a firm societal threat, both in the present and the future. The next section will turn to the lingering affects to highlight the circulation of Prevent and associations between Muslims and extremism has impacts beyond the training space.

i. Lingering affects: practicing and performing Islam in the school space

There are times when the fear and anxiety experienced by the Muslim teachers during Prevent training materialize beyond the training space. Although atmospheres and emotions generated during the training sessions may fade, there are moments when associations between extremism and Muslims re-emerges in the school space. The aftermath of the Trojan Horse affair also fuelled feelings of panic amongst Muslim staff. Combined with the

presence of the Prevent Duty in schools, there was a heightened awareness amongst some Muslim teachers that their Islamic beliefs and practices could be viewed as something more sinister.

Khalid was a secondary school teacher who felt like he was always under scrutiny because of his Islamic identity. Before his employment commenced, Khalid asked senior management whether he could attend Friday prayers. Upon receiving this request, senior management met with Khalid to emphasize that this was a 'secular' school due to concerns he would 'form religious societies ... a Muslim society in school'. His request was denied but Khalid was able to pray during his breaks and led Friday prayers in school. Khalid recalled that once when he completed his prayer, a senior leader him praying with other Muslim students. He was called into a meeting and told that leading Friday prayers in school was 'unacceptable' and a 'serious thing', with no reason why.

Praying in a congregation was viewed as risky by schools because of the proximity of Muslim teachers to Muslim students. For Rizwan, he found that his school was hesitant to allow prayers because of what others would think:

They didn't want me to pray in congregation with the students ... then it was 'you can pray with the students, but you have to pray in an enclosed room because we don't want other people to see'. And then it was 'we don't want non-Muslims to go into the prayer area because parents might mind' and then I said why would parents mind ... it's open to everyone. They're like 'we don't want non-Muslim mums and dad think[ing] they're being forced into it ... they [headteacher] says isn't it a safeguarding issue and then they shot themselves in the foot because I said how is this a safeguarding issue? What makes it a safeguarding issue? So, then they mention the obvious reference ... it's a safeguarding issue because it's a religious thing.

As indicated by Rizwan, his school suggested that praying in congregation with other Muslim students would be considered a 'safeguarding' issue, even though all teachers are screened for safeguarding concerns prior to employment. This corroborates with Puwar's (2004, 53) argument that 'the coming together of these [racialized] bodies is [seen as] a potential act of aggression" which "mark themselves out as potentially risky bodies'. With Prevent highlighting the visibility of Muslims as potential Islamists, the accounts of Khalid and Rizwan shows how the presence of multiple Muslims in a singular space in the school generates questions around safety and appropriate behaviour.

This leads then to thinking about how some behaviours are considered as disruptive. Disruptions occur when there is an interruption or disturbance which derails routines and structures. With every terrorist attack, we are reminded of the severe disruptions they bring to everyday life. Prevent's primary aim is to disrupt terrorism through interventions in the pre-crime space but in doing so, the policy simultaneously designates some bodies as disrupting more than others. These disruptive bodies are specific; they are

more likely to be Muslim because of how Islamist extremism and terrorism is framed as the primary threat. Because of this framing, some participants spoke about employing ‘disruptive techniques’ to avoid being accused of extremism. Usually, this occurred in the classroom space where the level of interaction between educator and students is high. Hanan, for example, avoided using the term ‘beheading’ when talking about Henry VIII, due to the circulation of ISIS beheading videos and being conscious that as ‘a Muslim teacher . . . a lot of things I will say are perceived in a different way compared to . . . white or a non-Muslim teacher’. Zara also avoiding using word ‘Shariah’ in her lessons on alternative models of finance in case it was misinterpreted as her promoting Shariah law. Despite Zara knowing that ‘it’s not even a controversial issue’, she maintained that she was ‘very, very reluctant to say that in my class’.

Both Zara and Hanan felt like they had to disrupt their teaching practice by censoring particular words from their lessons due to their Muslimness. They were weary that if their Muslimness was misinterpreted, there would be repercussions beyond the school space. Dina for example spoke about how other Muslim students would sometimes seek religious advice from her. She was once asked whether sending Christmas cards was *haraam* (Islamically prohibited):

If I said, ‘we don’t celebrate Christmas’ and she goes and tells another teacher then I’ll probably end up on the headline of the Daily Mail [laughs]. In that sense, I didn’t feel like it was a safe space for me to express my views on anything that wasn’t conventional. I tried not to engage in any religious conversation with students or teachers. With this whole Prevent thing, I didn’t want to get myself in this mess.

The question itself was not strange for Dina and yet she chose to avoid answering the question in case she is misinterpreted. Referencing the Daily Mail was a way to show that there could be public repercussions, as seen in the Trojan Horse affair.

Conclusion

One of responses to terrorism since 9/11 has been the creation of abundant legislation to counter violence. This paper sought to follow how one of those policies, the Prevent Duty, travels through schools and the impacts on Muslim teachers. The analysis found that the Prevent Duty impacts Muslim teachers profoundly, with Muslim male teachers feeling it acutely. As a counter-extremism measure, Prevent is positioned as a form of safeguarding, suggesting that it is a supportive mechanism, despite the ambiguity associated with terms like extremism and mechanism. Just as the notion of terrorism is socially constructed and politically charged (Stampnitzky 2021), extremism and radicalization are too, with Muslims bearing the brunt of these securitizing policies.

This paper has highlighted the conflicting experiences of these Muslim teachers, somewhat absent in scholarship, to show how their Muslim identities have been a source of discomfort and anxiety. The Prevent Duty brings forth the security state into the school space, which has accelerated feelings of securitization and surveillance for Muslims. Whilst I acknowledge how gender and Muslimness is understood in relation to Prevent, there seemed to be a similar experience whereby Muslim teachers felt unable to outwardly perform their faith in given situations.

By focusing on the Prevent training sessions, I consider the spatiality of stickiness and how everyday spaces are transformed into racially charged spaces in which associations of extremism stick to racialized Muslim bodies. I also examine the relationship between stickiness and time, to trace how the Prevent training continues to be felt beyond the training space and is bound to specific histories of terrorism. With the circulation of the Prevent Duty in schools, it becomes difficult for Muslim teachers to disassociate from claims of extremism and terrorism given how normative practices such as prayer is considered a safeguarding issue. The existence of Prevent in already racially charged spaces contributes to how it can attach itself onto Muslim teachers who are already concerned about being racialized and securitized as extremists themselves. It is not necessary, therefore, to be referred onto Prevent to experience or feel its powers, which allows us to understand and scrutinize the policy beyond referral statistics.

Notes

1. Channel refers to the deradicalization programme following a Prevent referral. Further information about the Prevent to Channel process will be discussed in section two of this paper.
2. According to data published by the Home Office for 2021–22, the total number of referrals to Prevent was 6,406, mainly from the education sector. Most referrals came from the 'Extreme Right Wing' ($n = 1309$), followed closely by concerns relating to 'Islamists' ($n = 1027$). Only 12.5% of these cases made it onto Channel ($n = 804$), a majority of those relating to the Extreme Right Wing (42%), followed by those referred for Islamist extremism (19%) (gov.uk 2023).

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