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Youth mobilisations of ‘suspect communities’

UK

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Executive summary: This case study explores the stigmatisation associated with being a young Muslim in the UK. Rising anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments together with the securitisation of society, through counter terrorism legislation introduced amidst concerns about ‘home grown’ terrorism, have contributed to the construction of Muslim populations as ‘suspect communities’. Young British Muslims are particularly affected by the UK counter-terrorism Prevent strategy, which brings them into tension with a range of institutional sites that have a statutory duty to deliver that strategy. The findings detailed in this report are based on fieldwork conducted over 11 months including 26 semi-structured interviews (four by peer researchers) and participant observation. The findings suggest widespread negative associations with Islam and Muslims, amplified by the implementation of the Prevent strategy, result in a sense among young Muslims that they are constantly surveilled, scrutinised and silenced. This significantly problematises already complex identity issues young Muslims experience. It also shapes their propensity to engagement and the types of activism in which they participate; it mobilises them to defend the right to express their British Muslim identities. Thus, while social exclusion in general acts to inhibit social involvement, some young Muslims feel their own marginality can *enable* civic and political engagement. Such mobilisations may constitute a positive response to stigmatisation in the short-term. However, this focus on a politics of countering Islamophobia ultimately constrains young Muslims’ social involvement within a form of identity politics that fails to reflect their complex subjectivities and denies them the opportunity to make the broader contributions to politics and society that they desire.

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1. Introduction

This case was selected because it captures a key site of stigmatisation and conflict in contemporary British society but also the potential for social engagement of those young people affected by it.

The identified stigmatisation relates to the experience of being a young Muslim in the contemporary UK. Islam is an established part of UK society and culture. Census data (2011) for the population of England and Wales show that 2.7 million people (4.8%) identify themselves as Muslims making it the second largest religious identification and Islam the fastest growing religion (Jivraj, 2013: 16). However, the intense political, media and policy scrutiny of Muslims has also become an established part of society and levels of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiments have been steadily rising among the population. A meta-analysis of the findings of 64 opinion polls (2007-2010) on attitudes toward Muslims suggests that Islamophobia¹ is by far the most pervasive form of religious prejudice in Britain and is higher than it was in 2001-06 (Field, 2012: 158). According to Field (*ibid.*), depending on the specific question asked, between one fifth and three quarters of the UK population hold anti-Muslim or anti-Islam attitudes.

The generation of young Muslims that is the subject of this study has grown up in this climate but has been directly exposed also to events that have intensified expressions of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment. These are, firstly, the UK referendum on whether to remain or leave the European Union (23 June 2016) and a series of (both Islamist and extreme right inspired) terrorist attacks carried out in London and Manchester between March and June 2017. The research for this study was conducted from the autumn following the referendum through the spring when the attacks occurred and into the following autumn. This was a period of intense polarisation of political debate and strong emotions, around the referendum on EU membership and concerning the wave of terrorist attacks but also in response to the surge in verbal and physical violence towards immigrant and Muslim communities that followed both events. There has been intense debate concerning whether or not the referendum was responsible for unleashing hatred towards ethnic minority and immigrant groups. While we know that reported hate crimes increased immediately after the vote, it is less clear whether that spike has affected society in the longer term (shifting the threshold of what is 'acceptable' to say or do) and what other factors might be significant. A recent analysis of the daily and monthly data on reported hate crime immediately prior to, and after, the EU referendum and the terrorist attacks of 2017 shows two very clear spikes in such crime immediately after the referendum and after the terrorist events (Devine, 2018). Controlling for seasonal affects (reported hate crime figures always peak in June and July), other events at the time (e.g. the terrorist attacks in France) and the 'salience of immigration' among issues voters are concerned with, Devine nonetheless concludes that the evidence strongly supports the contention that the referendum led to an increase in hate crimes and suggests that the reason for this was the negative framing and focus on immigrants in the media during the referendum campaign (*ibid.*). Even such detailed analysis, however, cannot tell us whether such events are more significant than the underlying constant trends. Hate crime incidents

¹ 'Islamophobia' is an intensely discussed and contested term (see, for example: Runnymede Trust, 1997; Halliday, 1999; Allen, 2010; Garner and Selod, 2015; Pilkington, 2016: 125-30). Given the constraints of this report, this debate is noted rather than reviewed and the following working definition of what is meant by 'Islamophobia' adopted: 'a set of ideas and practices that amalgamate all Muslims into one group and the characteristics associated with Muslims (violence, misogyny, political allegiance/disloyalty, incompatibility with Western values, etc.) are treated as if they are innate' (Garner and Selod, 2015: 13).

have been rising since 2013, for example, and the spike in hate crime after the referendum was followed by a return to the same, or lower, level than prior to it. It is also possible that heightened sensitivity to hate crime due to the polarisation of debate had a significant impact on the reporting of incidents. Equally we know that even prior to the EU referendum, the media portrayal of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers was predominantly negative. A study of 58,000 news reports and other items carried in Britain's 20 main national daily and Sunday newspapers over the period 2010-12 conducted by Oxford University's Migration Observatory, for example, found the most common descriptor for the word 'immigrants' across all newspaper types to be 'illegal' (Migration Observatory, 2013).

A further factor contributing to a feeling among the Muslim community of being singled out for particular scrutiny relates to the implementation of the UK government's counter-terrorism Prevent strategy and Channel duty guidance in response to growing concern about 'home-grown' terrorist attacks. Significantly for our study, from 2015 the Prevent duty (Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) has required that a range of social institutions give 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' including 'non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism' where 'extremism' is defined as 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (HM Government, 2015: 2). This brings young Muslims into tension or conflict not only with the counter-terrorism agencies and police but also a number of institutional sites where that strategy is delivered, including schools, colleges, Further and Higher Education institutions, the National Health Service, local authority social and children's services and youth offending teams. As outlined below wider social prejudice combined with this particular securitisation of the political agenda has constructed the Muslim population – and especially young, male Muslims – as a 'suspect community' (Hillyard, 1993; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). At the same time, the very fact that this policy is implemented in educational institutions and affects not only multiply disadvantaged young people but also students and other young people with significant social and cultural capital, aspiration and networking capacity, led the researchers to anticipate that such stigmatisation and conflict might also generate social engagement in the form of critique, protest and mobilisations of resistance.

While this case has been identified through an inductive process – the observation of the emergence of campaigns and actions to challenge the construction of young Muslims as suspect communities – it draws theoretically from a number of key literatures, which help us to understand and explore: processes of inclusion and exclusion, specifically around religious, racial and ethnic markers; the relationship between structure and agency; and how, and why, young people become socially involved (or not). These literatures are not discussed exhaustively below but each is dealt with in so far as it frames the particular discussion here and illuminates the key findings outlined in Section 3 of this report.

1.1 Processes of inclusion and exclusion: Race, ethnicity and religion

The interlocking nature of ethnic and religious identities, and the fact that religious variables were not included in the census until the most recent survey (2011), makes the establishment of precise processes of social and economic disadvantage and exclusion for young Muslims in contemporary British society difficult. However, based on the 2011 census data, Stevenson *et al.* (2017: 5) conclude that 'Muslims experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in UK society.' This

disadvantage relates to all three key areas of social inclusion: employment, housing and education. Within the economically active population (aged 16-74 years), for example, only one in five (19.8%) of the Muslim population is in full-time employment, compared to more than one in three (34.9%) of the overall population (in England and Wales) while 24% of Muslims are classified as having 'Never worked/long-term unemployed' compared to just 6% for the overall population (ibid.: 6). In terms of housing, 46% of the Muslim population live in the 10% of the most deprived local authority districts (ibid.). In the sphere of education, there are positive findings in relation to educational aspiration and achievement of young Muslims; among the 16-24 year old cohort, young Muslims are no more likely to have 'no qualifications' than the population overall (Garratt, 2016: 3) while higher numbers of young British Pakistani men and women pursue higher education than their white peers (Shah *et al.*, 2010). However, while most data show an over-representation of Muslim students in UK Higher Education (HE), Muslim representation is not uniform: 60% of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students study in the post-1992 sector and research into Muslim students studying in HE business schools found that 77% of Muslim students attended post-1992 universities while just 4% attended Russell Group institutions (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 31).

These complex disadvantages are reflected in a disproportionate rate of poverty among the British Muslim community; in 2009-2011, half of Muslim households lived in poverty, compared to the national average of 18% (Garratt, 2016: 2). Moreover, Muslims of all ethnic groups face higher levels of poverty than for their ethnic group as a whole; this appears to constitute further evidence that ethnicity and religion can be unpicked in the analysis of inequality and there does indeed exist a so-called 'Muslim penalty' in employment disadvantage (ibid.).

As is noted in Section 3 (below), respondents in this case study often felt a strong intersectionality of both identity and disadvantage. This experience confirms emergent findings that seek to unpick the effect of different elements of individuals' backgrounds and their impact on life chances. Gender certainly intensifies disadvantage for the Muslim community in the UK, creating a 'double disadvantage' (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 6). However, it is also increasingly apparent that low socio-economic position ('class') adds a third. Testing the relative significance of gender, socio-economic position and ethnicity in terms of their disadvantage for young British Muslims, Stevenson *et al.* (ibid.) found that socio-economic position and gender both came ahead of ethnic identity in terms of affecting life chances. However, it would appear that employment chances do improve over generations; thus second generation Muslims suffer a smaller differential (in relation to the population as a whole) in terms of unemployment rate and wage gap than first generation Muslims (Garratt, 2016: 2). Paradoxically, however, the proportion of British Muslims who reported labour market discrimination increased between the first and second generations (ibid.).

In addition to the range of structural disadvantages experienced by the British Muslim community, they are also subject to daily negative media representation. Research into the coverage of Muslims and Islam in the British media showed that over 90% of the coverage was negative; negative associations relate primarily to terrorism in Britain, and to military and political conflict with Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran (INSTED, 2007: 18). Alexander (2013: 5) summarises the dominant representations of Muslims as appearing in three main categories: gender (the hijab/forced marriage/honour killings triad); gangs and grooming; and terrorists/extremists. This, she argues, has the effect of generating a sense that 'the term "Muslim" is too often a code word for a series of pathologies' (ibid.). A significant addition to this discursive bombardment, of particular importance to the study

outlined in this report, is the distillation of these pathologies – through the funnel of the wider securitisation of society – into the representation of British Muslims as a ‘suspect community’.

The term ‘suspect community’ was coined by Hillyard (1993) to describe the construction of Irish communities in Britain as ‘suspects’ and their criminalisation as a result of the terrorism prevention measures introduced to contain the political unrest in Northern Ireland. Subsequently this notion has been applied to Muslim communities in Britain and the role of both the media and counter-terrorism measures in forging Muslims as a ‘suspect community’ has been documented (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). A number of academic studies suggest that counter-terrorism legislation initiated and implemented in the wake of the ‘war on terror’ such as pre-charge detention, control orders, the glorification offense, and stop-and-search powers under the Terrorism Act of 2000 and Terrorism Act of 2006 has been targeted disproportionately at Muslim communities due to its extension (beyond acts of terrorism) to non-violent extremist ideologies (see, for example: Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011; Kundnani, 2014; Kapoor, 2018). Other studies have focused on the experiences of, and impact on, Muslim communities of the Prevent strategy (Awan, 2012; Acik *et al.*, 2018; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016).

A fundamental critique of the ‘suspect Muslim community’ has been made by Greer (2010) who argues that UK anti-terrorism legislation does not specifically target Muslims or whole communities and that the notion of ‘suspect community’ has no empirical or analytical foundation since to talk about ‘the Muslim community’ is to essentialise and homogenise a very large and diverse population group. He explains the disproportional effect of counter-terrorism legislation on Muslims rather by the nature of the current terrorism threat emanating from Islamist groups. In response to this critique Marie Breen-Smyth (2014) draws on Anderson’s (1991) concept of ‘imagined communities’ to argue that social and political discourses also contribute to Muslims being regarded (imagined) as suspect. She provides a definition of ‘suspect community’ that is constructed through both institutional and discursive practices:

A ‘suspect community’, then, can be seen as a group of people, or a sub-set of the population constructed as ‘suspects’ by mechanisms deployed by the state to ensure national or state ‘security’ and reinforced by societal responses and social practices. These mechanisms are directed at one specific population identified by an ethnic, religious, racial, national or other marker and the threat to that security is seen as emanating exclusively or primarily from them. The nature of the marker is contextually determined. So accent or home address is the marker of Irishness during the IRA campaign whilst dress or appearance is the marker for being Muslim in the context of a threat from Al Qaeda or other violent jihadi groups. Thus, counter-terrorist operations, practices of surveillance, profiling, arrest, detention, exclusion, control orders and rendition, and media coverage of these practices, are focused on them. This creates in the public mind a suspicion of people apparently in that category and renders them as a ‘suspect community’, in some senses, creating bonds of understanding between people with a common sense of being suspect. (Breen-Smyth, 2014: 231-2)

Breen-Smyth’s definition of suspect communities not only acknowledges the role of counter-terrorism legislation but also discourses of the nature of threat which profile Muslims as extremists and

terrorists contributing to the creation of the ‘suspect’ in the public imagination. Moreover, these discourses create a socio-political climate that tilts more towards security at the cost of civil liberties and human rights. It thus also has a significant impact on society and the quality of democracy, threatening to erode civil liberties and trust (Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016) and provoke forms of self-censorship especially in relation to political expression, with detrimental consequences for the possibility of participatory democracy (Breen-Smyth, 2014). This is a motif that emerges strongly in the findings of this study and is returned to in Section 3.

1.2 Beyond exclusion: structure and agency

A starting premise of this study is that we might anticipate finding, at the very site of stigmatisation, discrimination and exclusion, forms of social involvement. This hypothesis is underpinned by an assumption that structure and agency are interdependent. At the macro level, structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) understands structures as outcomes of accumulated practices and as not fixed but subject to change as agency is enacted upon them. We thus start from the expectation that structures - most notably in this case counter-terrorism/extremism discourse, legislation and surveillance but also those of race/ethnicity/religion, class, gender etc. – constrain the social involvement of those who are positioned as the object of surveillance. At the same time such structures may work to facilitate practices that contest, resist or challenge these discourses and, in this way, enable social involvement. It is important, therefore, to clarify our understanding of ‘surveillance’ in relation to ‘agency’. When we talk about ‘suspect communities’ and the experience of young Muslims of being ‘surveilled’ we are drawing on Foucauldian understandings of society as enacting forms of ‘disciplinary power’ on subjects through its institutions – in this case intelligence and police institutions but also, through the extension of statutory duties of Prevent in 2015, to a much broader range of institutions whose rules and regimes young people are subject to on a daily basis. At the same time we recognise the danger of seeing all kinds of disciplinary power as deeply intrusive and controlling and of over-emphasising such technologies of social control at the cost of denying the capacity (agency) of individuals to resist dominant forms of social power (Elliott, 2001: 82).

Thus in the findings detailed below we isolate structural and individual factors which both ‘enable’ and ‘inhibit’ social involvement of the respondents in this case study. However, while these are dealt with discretely - in order to facilitate comparison across the different cases of stigmatised youth in the PROMISE project - we will argue that in the case of ‘suspect communities’ many factors identified in the narratives of young people appear as both enabling *and* inhibiting, reflecting the deeply entwined nature of structure and agency. Further we explore how particular structures – of race, class and gender in particular – intersect and act to constrain or facilitate social involvement. Finally we consider some potential longer term negative impacts of the counter-terrorism agenda. We suggest that it is experienced by respondents as a site of stigmatisation since it is felt to identify all Muslims as a potential extremism or terrorism threat. We suggest that this stigmatisation may in the short term be a motivating factor for social involvement; the Prevent agenda may provide a focus for counter-mobilisation and thus act, in some contexts, as a resource or enabling factor. However, this is only the case in the presence of other strong enabling factors; supportive family environments and education are crucial while gender and class may have varying impacts. Moreover, in the longer term, the Prevent agenda may work to solidify binding and disabling structures of disadvantage. Thus, counter-terrorism agendas that are experienced as identifying ‘suspect’ communities and subjecting them to surveillance, may, at the individual level, result in the over-determination of the production of ‘self’ by religion in response to the conscious and unconscious experience of feeling ‘suspect’ as a result of

Muslim faith or heritage. At the same time, at the level of collective identity, this construction as a ‘suspect community’ may lead to common interests becoming identified around faith and reified where previously ethnic, cultural, doctrinal differences across practices of faith mediated the identification of such interests². In terms of the particular concerns of the PROMISE project – which seeks to understand and encourage the social involvement of young people – this is important because it means that even if in the short term social involvement may be facilitated in this way, in the long term, the securitisation of society acts as an inhibiting factor on the social involvement of those it constructs as ‘suspect’. By focusing social involvement on countering Prevent, young Muslims – or those who feel identified as Muslims – may find their social involvement skewed towards a form of identity politics that is constraining in as much as it focuses on a politics of race, ethnicity or religion (countering Islamophobia) that does not reflect the complex ways in which they identify and the broader contributions to politics and society that they would otherwise make.

1.3 Social involvement

The discussion of young people’s political and civic participation and/or engagement – or most frequently the lack of it - is well rehearsed (see, for example: Brooks and Hodkinson, 2008; Harris *et al.*, 2010; Norris, 2002; Pilkington and Pollock, 2015; Quintelier, 2008; Wattenberg, 2006). This debate is often concerned with disaggregating and defining different *types* of activities (conventional/non-conventional, formal/informal), spheres of their enactment (‘civic’, ‘political’, ‘civil’, ‘social’) and modes of interaction (‘participation’, ‘engagement’, ‘involvement’). For the purposes of this report, we are interested in the widest possible range of responses to the experience of stigmatisation as ‘suspect community’, whether they might be considered, according to classic political science variables to be ‘engagement’ (interest or informedness about social and political issues) or participation (action or behavior e.g. voting, membership of political party, attendance at demonstration etc.).

Different positions are taken in the published literature to date as to the best way to broaden our capacity to capture all forms of involvement without losing conceptual clarity. For Vromen (2003: 82-3) ‘participation need not be bifurcated into acts that are labelled “political” and those that are not; rather, participation can be seen broadly as acts that can occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in’. In contrast, Adler and Goggin (2005: 241) consider the term ‘civic engagement’ to have the most useful conceptual purchase, since it captures and describes ‘how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future’. Berger (2009) strongly disagrees, arguing that ‘civic engagement’ as a term is conceptually stretched and unworkable. His resolution is to retain the notion of ‘engagement’, whilst distinguishing between political, social and moral engagements and between: *engagement in* (activity without attention); *engagement by* (attention without activity); and *engagement with* (attention and activity). While Berger, therefore, considers the notion of ‘civic engagement’ to be ‘ready for the dustbin’, Ekman and Amna (2012: 287-90) argue for its retention but for a clearer distinction to be made between the terms *political* and *civic* and between *manifest* (more obvious and traditional, formal political activities or protest) and *latent* (less obvious and more nuanced forms of civic engagement and social involvement) activities. A crucial insight here is the importance of latent forms of engagement as ‘pre-political’ or ‘on standby’ actions and activities, especially among marginalised or politically disengaged

² On the difference between construction and experience of ‘self’ and ‘identity’ see, for example, Elliott, 2001.

groups in society; such activities ‘may not be directly or unequivocally classified as “political participation”, but at the same time could be of great significance for future political activities of a more conventional type’ (ibid: 287).

The point of briefly summarising here what might appear to be a somewhat introspective definitional exercise is to ensure that we do not write off young people as ‘apathetic’ or ‘disengaged’ simply because we fail to recognise the activities in which they are engaged as part of the civic or political realm. Often the academic response to this challenge has been to blame our conceptual (the employment of a very narrow conception of politics and ‘the political’) or methodological (too heavy reliance on the survey method) tools (O’Toole, 2003: 45-6). Such critiques seek to avoid any simple dichotomy between participation and ‘apathy’ by paying more attention to a range of responses on the ‘non-participation’ spectrum. Young people, it is suggested, may not participate due to apathy, alienation, contentment or because they choose to participate differently, including in ways not identified by research (ibid.: 53-4). However, in the case study undertaken here, our concern is not so much to reclaim apparently non-political activities as to understand how stigmatisation or conflict may, in some circumstances, generate responses of social involvement, even innovation, rather than solidify into alienation.

Thus, for the purposes of this study, we understand *social engagement* in the widest sense and are concerned not only with manifest political participation or engagement but with a broader, and more nuanced, set of activities that comprise what Ekman and Amna (2012: 295) term ‘*social involvement*’. For Ekman and Amna social involvement is a latent rather than manifest form of participation and consists of *attention to—and interest in—political and societal issues*. It is the feeling or awareness of being a member of society and part of a political context that can be a part of your identity and can be practised on an individual level (taking an interest in political and social affairs, perceiving politics as important) but also on a collective level (identifying with a group, party or ideology, adopting certain life-style practices that identify you with a group, belonging to a group with a societal focus etc.). This does not preclude our interest in forms of involvement that take manifest - conventional or unconventional - forms also, but by drawing on this notion of ‘social involvement’, we broaden our capacity to recognise factors that enable and inhibit involvement of stigmatised or conflicted groups within society.

2. Methods

The PROMISE project adopted a shared research design and common research instruments for the collection and analysis of data (see Introduction to D6.1 for details). In this section of the report, therefore, we outline only the specific ways in which these overall principles and guidelines were implemented in conducting this case study.

2.1 Approach

This case study employed a combination of interview and participant observation techniques. In some cases, potential respondents were identified through attendance at events related to the case study theme while, in other cases, respondents were accompanied to such events after having been interviewed. Photo elicitation was not used in this case study although visual images taken by the

researchers or respondents themselves were taken or discussed where appropriate. Peer research was employed in the project and its purpose and form is discussed briefly below.

Peer research is situated within the participation action research tradition and gives members of the target group the opportunity to shape the research process and take part in the research as co-researchers (Ryan *et al.*, 2011). The involvement of *young people* in research seeks to both empower them and allow research to be informed by them. In practice, however, the level and form of involvement ranges from working with young people to gain access to a target group through to involving young people in all aspects - from design to analysis - of the research (Fleming, 2010).

In this case study the involvement of peer researchers started at the stage of fieldwork³; peer researchers were drawn from among our respondents. While peer research is commonly used to gain access to hard to reach groups, our primary motive for engaging in peer research was to ‘give something back’ (Bennett and Roberts, 2004) to the young people who agreed to take part in the study. Those young people who became involved in the project as peer researchers saw it as an opportunity to: be upskilled; gain experience in doing qualitative interviews, have an insight into how research is carried out; and build their CVs. Collaboration with a university led research project was recognised also by the community organisations and gatekeepers the researchers were involved with as potentially opening up opportunities for their young people. In the course of the research process, three training sessions were conducted for respondents who expressed an interest in becoming peer researchers in the project. The peer researchers were trained in the ethics of doing research and in how to prepare and conduct qualitative interviews. Five peer researchers were trained and, of these, two carried out a total of four peer research interviews and wrote brief reflections on the interview process. Peer researchers were not involved in the transcribing, anonymizing or coding of interviews.

The peer research interviews were generally shorter (45 min on average) than the interviews carried out by the main researchers (90 minutes on average) and the questions covered were more selective. However, the peer research interviews brought an important ‘insider’ perspective to the case study and provided insight into the ‘interviewer effect’. The peer research interviews allowed the young people to take control of the interview and expand on issues they thought most relevant to them. Thus, during coding of data, it was evident that the peer research interviews tended to include more discussion of the experiences, benefits and effectiveness of respondents’ social involvement. This suggests that being recruited and interviewed by their peers provided interviewees with a greater sense of anonymity and generated more confidence in ‘speaking out’ about their motives and experiences of engagement.

While the primary involvement of peer researchers was to carry out qualitative interviews with their peers, it was not restricted to this. Two of the peer researchers also took part in the UK National Policy and Practitioners Network (NPPN) in May 2018, where the preliminary findings of the UK case studies were presented. Two respondents also took part in a press interview on the experiences of the Muslim community in the wake of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack, which was published as an extended feature piece in a national news outlet in Ireland (Ryan, 2018). Peer researchers will be invited to future dissemination events also.

³ Peer researchers could not be involved in designing the case study or developing the questions for the interviews as this was determined in advance due to the requirements of the Horizon 2020 programme.

2.2 Data collected

Fieldwork was conducted from November 2016 to September 2017 by two researchers, who are also the authors of this report. Data were collected primarily using participation observation and interview techniques and the final data set is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length	Average length
Respondents	27	n/a	n/a
Audio interviews	26	2,049 mins (34.15 hours)	79 mins
Observed events	8	Events include: demonstrations and marches; national and local Islamic Society meetings, events and conferences; mosque youth sessions; local and national NGO events; and community network events.	25 hours
Images	10	Taken at group events and demonstrations including events organised by the researchers	
Group discussion	1	45 mins	45 mins

Of the 26 semi-structured interviews conducted, 25 interviews were with individual respondents and one was with a group of three close friends (one of whom was subsequently re-interviewed individually). Four of the interviews were conducted by two peer researchers (see Section 2.1).

A total of eight ethnographic observation events were recorded and analysed as part of the data set. These included participation in: ISOC events and one FOSIS event; community events discussing Islamophobia and counter-extremism; and a mosque youth group session. They also included observations during participation in a street walk by young people organised by a local youth organisation and a demonstration in the city centre to protest against the proposed prohibition of entry to the United States by people from certain Muslim countries by President Trump. Informal communications were maintained with 12 respondents beyond the interviews and observations.

One event was organised with a group of pupils at an independent Islamic school (for girls) as part of their extra-curricular events day. It was led by a professional theatre worker and provided an opportunity for the pupils to engage in a walking tour of the local neighbourhood focusing on their sensory perceptions of it. This was followed by a group discussion with the pupils in which they talked about some of the sensations and experiences they had during the walking tour as well as wider issues of perceptions of safety, threat, comfort and discomfort in the city and specific environments and contexts. The details of individual pupils who took part in this discussion were not collected but informed consent was taken, the discussion was recorded and the transcript coded and analysed. Where cited, data from this discussion is attributed to 'Group discussion'.

2.3 Access and researcher-respondent relations

Gaining access to the field for this case study took a considerable time and required the simultaneous employment of several community, organisation and individual starting points ('gatekeepers'). The two primary points of access were the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) organisation; and a local University Islamic Society (ISOC). In the case of MEND, an initial meeting with the regional organiser led to invitations to attend a series of events organised in relation to Islamophobia Awareness Month (November 2017). Activists and community and mosque representatives met at these events led either directly to interviews or to other networks and organisations where respondents were recruited. In the case of the University ISOC, attendance at a number of ISOC events led to the recruitment of around half of the sample. In addition, several young people who were still at college were recruited through a number of community networks and youth based advocacy organisations as well as through personal contacts.

The role of gatekeepers, as well as the researchers having been seen at previous events, proved important in securing sufficient trust for individuals to agree to involvement in the research. Indeed in one case - where agreement to participate was withdrawn after one of the researchers had taken up an initial invitation to attend a session with the mosque youth group – the fact that the initial access had not been facilitated by a key gatekeeper may have been the reason for the group's withdrawal. However, even where gatekeepers and potential recruits responded positively to our initial approach, at the individual level some young people were sceptical and hesitant about getting more involved. One respondent recruited through an ISOC event, for example, later revealed that they had been very apprehensive initially about the aim of the research and uncomfortable about the presence of an outsider at their event. In other cases respondents who were interviewed promised to put us in touch with other potential recruits, but did not respond to further requests by the researchers. Even one peer researcher struggled to recruit respondents among their friends. Thus, establishing trust and gaining access took a considerable amount of time, effort and persistence by the researchers.

In addition to the role of gatekeepers, another key factor in securing participation from young people was the framing of the research. When explaining why we had selected young Muslims as our target group, it was important to make clear that we did not seek to position them as a 'problem' group or even 'victims' of the government's counter-terrorism strategy. When we outlined the research in relation to the overall concern of PROMISE with how young people *respond* to a range of stigmatising and marginalising discourses, we found a more positive understanding of the aims of the research. This suggests also that the focus on agency within the project was important in ensuring that participation in the research reduced rather than enhanced respondents' sense of stigmatisation.

Finally, we encouraged participation in the research by setting out our aims as not being just to access and recruit individual young people but to build a mutually beneficial relationship with the organisations approached. One institution to take up our offer to contribute to their activities was a local high school for girls, with whom we organised an arts-based activity for a group of 12 girls, aged 14-16, as part of the school's extra-curricular events day, followed by a group discussion. We also offered training in peer research and inclusion in the project as peer researchers to individual respondents (see Section 2.1), making clear, however, that this was our way of 'giving something back' and that there was no pressure to conduct interviews and no obligations attached to the

training. Thus, despite the initial difficulties in gaining access, the fieldwork process facilitated the evolution of the case study into a mutually supportive and collaborative piece of research.

2.4 Ethics and research practice: managing positionality

Whilst adopting a participatory research approach and attending numerous relevant events and being visible in the field over a longer period helped solve the problems of ‘access’ discussed above, that extended interaction raised other questions of positionality, the relations that develop between researchers and respondents and of ethical practice. The formal issues around ethical guidance and process (e.g. of gaining informed consent) are outlined in the Introduction to D6.1 and no issues in relation to the taking of informed consent or risk to either respondents or researchers were encountered in the course of conducting this case study. In this section of the report, therefore, we provide a very brief outline of some of the practical issues encountered in the field.

The ethical and practical issues that emerged in this case study relate to the positionality of the researchers, one of whom was white British and the other of whom was of an ethnic minority background from the Middle East. On a practical level this meant that much of the ‘access’ and participant observation was conducted by the latter researcher, since she had better insight and more frequent contact with our target communities. However, the white British researcher also participated in recruitment via networks and events targeted at both Muslim and non-Muslim groups (e.g. anti-Islamophobia and counter-extremism events and meetings) and both researchers conducted interviews.

For the white British researcher, the lack of shared ethnic or religious identity was a cause for constant concern. However, lack of insider knowledge was replaced with the expression of genuine interest in learning about the respondents’ experiences; the fact that the researcher had started to learn Arabic was often common ground for sharing experience. More interesting in terms of positionality, was the positioning of the second researcher as *both* insider (as a member of an ethnic minority group from the Middle East) and outsider (as she herself belonged to a religious minority group often treated as ‘not Muslim’ in Muslim majority countries). This dual positionality could be difficult to handle for the researcher; whereas, in one interview, when the researcher shared something about her own background it clearly made the respondent more relaxed, in another, the researcher noted in her field diary that she felt it had left the interviewee feeling uncomfortable. The researcher herself also experienced discomfort on occasion due to uncertainty about how she was perceived. Practical issues she had to address included knowing what the appropriate dress code and behaviour would be when attending events targeting mainly Muslims. At one of the first meetings she attended, for example, only after rushing into the lecture hall and taking a seat did she realise that she had disrupted the gender segregation of the audience; she was the only woman sitting among male attendees. In stark contrast, at another event, at which great care was taken that physical contact was avoided between men and women, a male attendee squeezed himself into revolving doors behind the researcher; apparently breaking every rule himself and making her feel extremely uncomfortable. At this, weekend-long, event, the researcher was also conscious that she stood out from other participants because she did not follow the unspoken dress code of covering her head. However, at different times over the course of the event, she experienced both being perceived more as a participant – albeit a non-conformist one – than a researcher but also feeling herself re-positioned by respondents as a white middle-class woman researching ‘others’. The latter experience was

particularly disorienting since she was used to feeling herself to be part of a ‘minority’ community. These experiences raise issues not only of the positionality of the researcher(s) but the ambiguity of that positionality, the importance of how it is perceived as well as experienced and how positionality can change in different contexts and over the course of the research.

2.5 Data analysis

Interviewees were immediately allocated pseudonyms (chosen by respondents themselves in some cases) before the recorded interviews (and group discussion) were transcribed by a professional transcriber and then checked and anonymised⁴ by the two researchers according to the procedures set out in the PROMISE Data Handbook (see Introduction to Deliverable 6.1 for a summary of this process). The observed events were recorded in a field diary by the relevant researcher and anonymised by them. Following anonymisation interviews, field diaries and a number of images were uploaded into the Nvivo database. Each ‘source’ was then coded using inductive coding but, at the axial level, employing the skeleton coding tree agreed by the PROMISE consortium.

In this case study, a total of just under 300 child (Level 1) nodes were created and two additional family (Level 2) nodes were created in addition to the Level 2 nodes imported from the skeleton coding tree. The additional Level 2 nodes were: ‘Activities, effectiveness of’; and ‘Organisations engaged in’. The introduction of these additional nodes reflected the extensive engagement of some respondents in this case study in Islamic Society and other community organisations, requiring a separate node to capture that experience as well as their reflections on the effectiveness of the forms of activities they were involved in. All the skeleton coding tree nodes were populated; ‘identity’ nodes on ‘Muslim identity’ and on ‘Ethnic identity’ were particularly rich.

The two researchers worked consequentially on coding, refining and recoding as the coding tree developed. A process of cleaning, merging and recoding was conducted following the coding of all documents.

Socio-demographic data were entered into the Nvivo database for each respondent and a broad profile of the respondent set by age, gender, educational level, occupation etc. produced from this (see Section 2.6).

Citations from interviews and field diaries included in Section 3 of this report are verbatim and not corrected for grammar or expression. ‘Sic’ is added in square brackets only where the verbatim speech might appear to be a typographical error rather than a true transcription of what was said. Where the meaning is not clear from the transcribed text (for example, due to a reference back to something earlier in the interview) clarification is added in square brackets.

2.6 Respondent Set

Respondents were drawn from across the target age range of the PROMISE project – the youngest in this case study being 14 and the oldest 32. The vast majority of respondents (78%) were aged

⁴ ‘Anonymisation’ is used here to refer the process of removing all material that could identify a respondent. The respondents themselves are given a pseudonym, however, rather than the data they provide being unattributed. In this sense the data were ‘pseudo-anonymised’ rather than ‘anonymised’.

between 17 and 22 with the modal age of respondents being 22 (8 of 27 respondents). There were more male (55.5%) than female (45.5%) respondents although additional experiences of young women were gathered in the ‘Group Discussion’ which was with a group of students at an Islamic School for girls. Socio-demographic data for each participant in the Group Discussion, were not recorded, however, and the participants in the Group Discussion are not formally included among the 27 respondents in the study. 78% of respondents were born in the UK; respondents not born in the UK were born in Pakistan, Germany, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

The most notable skews in the respondent set emanate from the fact that this was a study of young people mobilising against stigmatisation as ‘suspect communities’. Not surprisingly, given this, the vast majority (89%) are Muslim, of whom one was a white British Muslim ‘revert’⁵. Two respondents said they had ‘no religion’ although both were from Muslim backgrounds. The majority of respondents (63%) declared their ethnicity to be Asian British, 4% were white British and the remaining respondents were from other BME background (see Figure 1⁶).

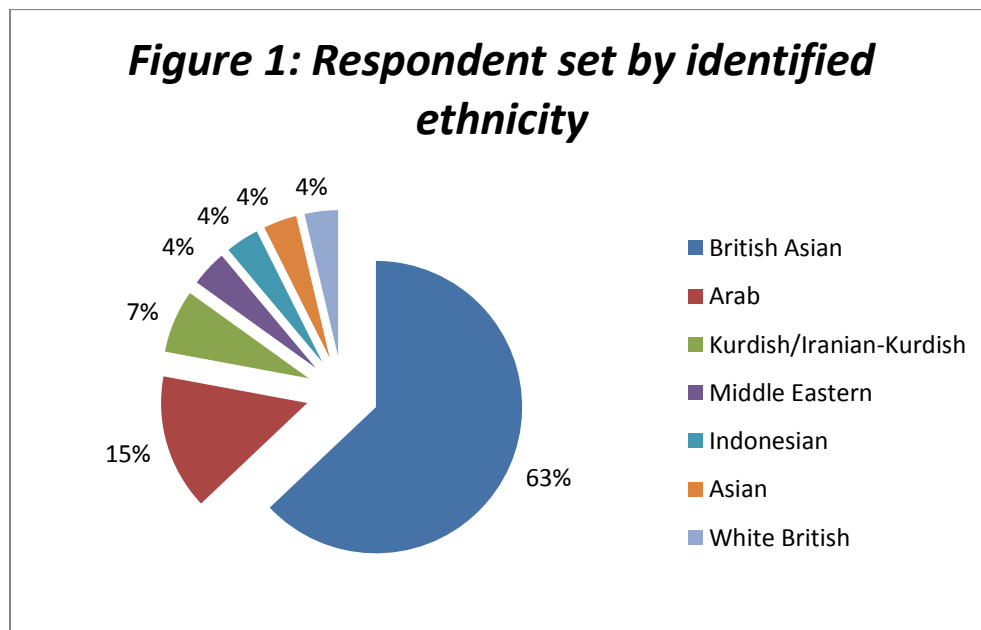


Figure 1: Respondent set by identified ethnicity

Another clear skew in the respondent set was that two thirds of the sample was in full-time education at the time of research. This is explained by the access points (including university Islamic Societies, colleges, schools and activist networks). The educational level of respondents is also high; 71% were either in, or had completed, higher education while just 4% had vocational education. As would be anticipated for a data set of this age range, the vast majority (89%) were single and 70% lived at home with parent(s) or other close relatives. This low rate of independent living (despite the high number of

⁵ The term ‘revert’ rather than ‘convert’ is used here as this is how the respondent described herself. Although ‘convert’ is the most commonly used term in English to refer to someone who adopts another faith than previously practised, or brought up in, some of those who adopt Islam prefer the term ‘revert’ as it reflects the Muslim belief that all people are born with an innate faith in God. Thus to embrace Islam (despite being brought up in another religion) is not to convert but to revert to that original, pure faith with which they are born.

⁶ The percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

respondents being currently at university) is in line with wider evidence that students from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than white students to live at home while studying; data from the 2011-12 Student Income and Expenditure Survey showed that 61% of Asian and Asian British students lived at home, compared with 19% of white students (cited in Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 31). The significance of these background data – especially in relation to the relatively high levels of education and low levels of independent living among respondents – are returned to in Section 3.3 and Section 3.4.

3 Key Findings

The rich data generated in this case study cannot be discussed comprehensively within the constraints of this report. The findings presented are limited to those that address the key question of the PROMISE project, namely how social involvement might be generated out of conflict or stigmatisation and the implications of this for promoting such involvement. To this end, findings are set out in four subsections which illustrate: the sites of stigmatisation and conflict experienced by young Muslim respondents; the activities engaged in which respond to it; the factors respondents identify as facilitating their social involvement; and the barriers to that involvement.

3.1 Sites of stigmatisation and conflict

Stigmatisation draws on Goffman's (1963) classic theory of social stigma to suggest the process by which individuals become categorised or perceived by others negatively due to an attribute, behaviour or reputation being associated with them and which is seen as socially discrediting or pernicious. While this socio-psychological conceptualisation of stigma focuses on the process of stigmatisation i.e. how the categorisation and labelling occurs, Link and Phelan (2001) suggest expanding the definition by making the issue of power central to the study of stigma. Unequal power relations, they suggest, allow stigma to unfold and discrimination to occur; thus to understand stigmatisation we need to study also the mechanisms and practices of exclusion and discrimination.

In the analysis of the findings of this case study, it follows, we are not only interested in how young Muslims are labelled and stigmatised, but how this is experienced as exclusion and discrimination and how it is facilitated through securitisation discourses and counter-terrorism policies. In this report, we therefore focus on three key sites of stigmatisation, raised by respondents themselves in interviews, that illuminate the mechanisms by which stigmatisation is intensified by counter-terrorism policy and increases a sense of discrimination or exclusion. The first site of stigmatisation relates to the negative connotation of Islam and Muslims. The second site refers to the experiences of racism and Islamophobia among respondents. The third site is connected directly to how respondents experience the part of the UK counter-terrorism strategy called Prevent. All three sites of stigmatisation shape the identity formation of the young people profoundly. For this reason, we preface this section with a brief discussion of how respondents reflect on their Muslim identity and when, and why, that identity became salient for them.

3.1.1 Muslim Identity

Young Muslims in this study talked about experiencing a number of stages of identity formation and, in some cases, identity ‘crises’. Given the focus of this case study, it is perhaps not surprising that ‘Muslim identity’ is the issue by far the most frequently talked about. The extent to which the issue of identity matters to young Muslims is, nonetheless, striking. Moreover, identity is a cross cutting theme; it was raised not only directly but also when talking about how it impacted on respondents’ experiences of being young, ethnicity, contexts of conflict, their friendships and peer relations and feelings of stigmatisation. It should be noted here that not all respondents in this case identified themselves as Muslim; when asked about religious affiliation, two young people chose to describe themselves as having ‘no religion’ even though they came from a Muslim heritage background and referred to shared experiences of being an ethnic minority in the UK. One respondent was a white British revert to Islam.

The experiences captured under ‘Muslim Identity’ are very broad and, even when grouped, generated 27 different sub-categories. Given the complex and diverse experiences of respondents, therefore, this section focuses primarily on the process of identity formation and when being Muslim became salient in the lives of the respondents.

In the narratives of the young people, ethnic diversity was seen as a positive aspect of their growing up and their neighbourhood. Some respondents grew up in a predominantly Asian working class neighbourhood with very few white people. Others were a minority among a white middle class community. Yet, the friendships forged during childhood were not determined by ethnic and religious differences. Becoming aware of one’s own religious and ethnic identity and feeling inclined to make friendships with co-ethnic and co-religious friends became more an issue in early adolescent years. Many respondents reported that when they moved to college at age 16 they began to hang out naturally with the few Muslim or Asian people there. For others this process happened when they moved to university. Reflecting on these processes of identity formation, many respondents described how they went through a period in which they were ‘adapting to fit in’ and attempting to ‘integrate’ with other, white, friends at school and college.

Khaled is of Libyan descent and describes how he tried to blend in at school only to realise later at college and university that he would never be accepted as ‘white’. Being from North Africa, his friends at school had not assumed that he was Muslim and he avoided speaking Arabic in order not to be identified as such. He observes the same pattern in his younger brother, as well as among other young Muslims, and frames this as ‘identity problems’:

So there's a lot of identity problems, I think, in young Muslims these days. And, like, I went through it myself. So people don't know... they feel like they don't belong either way. So they can try their best to disassociate themselves with everything that they, their family has and become white; but at the end of the day, they're never gonna be white. So they feel like they don't belong here, but then they also feel like they don't belong at home, because they don't speak the language, they don't know anyone, they don't know anything about their religion. (Khaled)

Khaled describes a common identity crisis young people from an ethnic minority background experience during which they reflect on feelings of belonging and loyalty towards the different cultures to which they are exposed (Phinney, 1989). For him this is a mutually exclusive process in which attempts to fit in lead to a neglect of one's cultural and religious heritage. He suggests that once young Muslims have come to the realisation that they will never be accepted as white, they come to embrace and explore their Islamic heritage.

Zuhair describes a similar experience. For him the process of turning to religion and exploring his roots began when he started studying at the university and he observed this process in himself and others around him:

So I think there is a point throughout teenager-hood where lots of people do go through that wanting to distance themselves from their identity. And I think university, for many people, can be a turning point, if they find spaces and people that introduce them to either literature or theories or, or just have honest conversations with them which can get them to start reflecting and wanting to feel more involved in their culture and wanting to reconnect with their roots in that sense. (Zuhair)

As Zuhair suggests, the significance of university life as a turning point for young Muslims may be the academic environment and the social networks that it provides (Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012). This enables young Muslims to meet other Muslims from different cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and explore aspects of Islam that they have not experienced in their families or in the communities in which they grew up. The significance of such networks for young British Muslims in our study is also reflected in their narratives about peer relationships and friendships. Many respondents describe how they have developed deep friendships with other Muslims on their courses or through engagement with ISOC. For these young Muslims the campus environment and the intellectual stimulation provided by meeting other Muslims triggered and strengthened the process of embracing their Muslim identity.

While some respondents feel that they have been through a period of neglect or denial of their Muslim identity, for others such as Dmitri it is about developing 'a connected approach' early on to avoid any splintering or denial of identities. He explains how this was facilitated in his case by the presence of Asian role models and prominent figures who display this connected approach in public and in official capacities:

And I feel just to match like leading political figures, like Baroness Warsi, like she may not be, obviously, same political views as me, but she's faced the same challenges as a young British Pakistani working-class person, in such a classist system. And she's sort of given me hope, because she wore our... my traditional Asian dress, a *shalwar kameez*, to Downing Street. Like who can say that she's a cabinet minister and she just came in wearing her traditional Asian dress, like it gave me hope that like you don't need to shun your identity to get by. You can use it to get by instead, and you can still be a proud young Pakistani. (Dmitri)

For Dmitri and other respondents, a key moment in their identity formation is the merging of their cultural and religious identity - the identity that has often been confined to the home and the private

- with other, more public, identities (as student or activist, for example). An important element of this process is to feel confident enough to appear with these intersectional identities in public. Thus being publically visible and standing by your identity as Muslim is a turning point in embracing emergent identities:

[...] Whereas now, like I feel like I can just say, 'I am Muslim.' And if anyone has an issue with that, they can say whatever they want, but I will challenge them on it. And I'm more comfortable. Comfortable in being Muslim, or being perceived as Muslim. (Meena)

These processes of identity formation are influenced and shaped by the socio-political context in which young people grew up. The securitisation discourse and the depiction of Islam as the 'new enemy within' is central to that context. It has contributed to the racialisation of Muslims, which is experienced by respondents as part of a stigmatisation they encounter in three main sites. These are addressed in detail below.

3.1.2 Negative connotations of Islam

In respondents' narratives the pervasiveness of stereotyping of Muslims and Islam is a recurrent theme. The most common association of Muslims and Islam is with terrorism. Other stereotypes relate to the association of Islam with gender oppression, grooming gangs, rigidity or dogmatism and with Muslims being aggressive and angry people. These associations are captured in the following excerpts from interviews with Aladdin, Jo and Ashraf:

[...] nowadays, you have like this negative perception where people are just, you know, just angry men, like when you think of the Middle East, you literally just think of like angry men shouting about stuff, and shouting at each other. (Aladdin)

[...] they presented Islam as being very, like... obviously the way that it's portrayed in the media as sort of, like, unwilling to bend, unwilling to be criticised or whatever. (Jo)

Then you have like the women's rights, especially in, like the Middle East, Saudi and those things. A lot of people have questions as to whether that's what Islam teaches. Then you also have like incidents in the UK that have been, things like grooming gangs, which have been, a lot of the coverage have been on Muslim grooming gangs and things like that. And a lot of statements are made by the people in those gangs that attribute certain statements to Islam, but it's not really the case. So I feel like, at times, I do need to explain myself, my religion, and explain that this isn't part of that, yeah. (Ashraf)

The obligation felt by Ashraf to explain himself indicates the emotional effect these negative stereotypes has on individuals; he feels compelled to dispel such stereotypes through counter-arguments. While Ashraf at times responds to such prejudice by engaging in debate, a common reaction to such stereotypes is the engagement in benevolent activities to re-present Muslims in a positive light. Aameena explains that she is surrounded by 'so much negativity' that as a Muslim woman she feels it is necessary to be 'doing something' and utilising her 'skills in the best way possible to help as many people as possible'. Thus, in this context, being stigmatised enables young people to become socially and civically active.

Remaining silent to everyday encounters that stereotype, and feel discriminatory, on the other hand, can be unsettling for respondents. Fiza describes how her white English neighbour congratulated her for doing well 'for somebody from her community' thus associating Fiza with the Muslim community and not the local white middle-class community she grew up in:

I should have said something to her there and then, but I didn't. But then now when I think about the story - and I tell that story a lot - I just think, 'What women in my community is she talking about?' She lives down the road from me. She is my community.
(Fiza)

Experiences such as the above encounter with her friend's mother are common encounters that lead Fiza to the observation that the integration of Muslims is not welcomed and that they will always be constructed as 'others' who are incapable of integrating. Rafi, one of the oldest respondents in his late 20s describes how he grew up being called the P word and was perceived primarily as a threatening young Asian man especially when out and about with his Asian friends. Now, in contrast, he is perceived primarily as Muslim with all the negative associations attached to that label. Thus, for him, the same discriminatory mechanisms are in place:

Muslims have been racialised in the same way that black people were, or Irish people were or people from the Indian sub-continent. (Rafi)

The association of Islam with terrorism and Muslims with the threat of terrorism is another prevalent form of stigmatisation that occurs in the narratives of the young people. Examples include experiences with airport security when travelling, terrorist jokes about Muslims and Arab respondents being called an 'ISIS supporter' or 'terrorist'. Abdullah describes how he was questioned extensively about his travel at the airport on his way back from his honeymoon. He felt he had been singled out due to his Islamic clothing, which is perceived as a sign of extremism and hence understood as indicating his support for terrorism.

I trust the authorities [airport security and airport police] that they are just doing their job. But I don't, in a sense, trust their suspicion. A lot of people dress like me, with the Islamic clothing, the thobe. A lot of people have beards. A lot of people have my skin complexion... but we aren't terrorists. If you understand what I'm saying. We are just people who want to pray, worship God, live our lives according to the teachings of Islam. But I feel like, because of the media, because of what's going on in the Middle East, the authorities or people in power do associate us with what is going on in the Middle East.
(Abdullah)

Patel (2012) refers to this type of suspect profiling as focusing on 'brown bodies' and argues that terror related surveillance singles out people of Middle Eastern, Arabic, South Asian and/or of Muslim faith and constructs them as members of suspect communities with serious consequences for those who are identified as such. The 'suspects' become particularly visible through their Islamic clothing and this image is reproduced and reinforced through media reporting on Islamist terrorism. For Putra such associations have allowed Islamophobic attacks to happen and made women in hijab a particularly easy target:

[...] the way how media play their cards sometimes. You know, they describe like the attackers, kind of with dress this way and you know. And then people are gonna judge everyone who dress the same way, will be the same bad person. I have, one of my friends told me that when he went to uni with that dress, you know, someone insult him or shock him, shouted at him in the bus stop in a very harsh way. So you know, those kind of... and especially the sisters. That'd be very difficult for them. With the hijab, they be more obvious they are Muslim, right. With a man, like they might not know, if I don't have like long beard and wear the... but with the sisters, sometime it might end up with the very bad... very risky to walk on the road after that kind of situation, with the identity. (Putra)

The strong association of Islam with terrorism has contributed to the creation of a suspect community that positions Muslims as a homogenous group which is collectively responsible for terrorist atrocities. This narrative legitimises the scrutiny of Muslims and treats them with suspicion.

Community organisations also face scrutiny. Nadira describes the difficulties she faces in her work for a community organisation when making public statements following a terrorist attack. She and her colleagues fear their views will be distorted in the media:

And like even if it, whether or not it's true, whether or not it's taken out of context and manipulated and warped into something else, the point at the end of the, the picture at the end of it is that we're seen as bad, we're seen as, you know, extremist or like retaliative to British society. (Nadira)

The powerful and dominant discourse on the association of Islam with terrorism is not peculiar to the media but occurs in everyday encounters. Ashraf describes how he risks facing abuse and hostility if he, as a Muslim, criticises the monarchy; a position many non-Muslims of his age can take without raising suspicion that they might be extremists. Meena, an activist within the Students' Union, also feels that she is denied the right to have a radical political view - an attribute that is usually celebrated among student activists. Thus, Muslim activists have to be more vigilant when making public statements or expressing their political opinion. These experiences of feeling silenced emerged as a strong theme across the respondent narratives and this is discussed further below (see Section 3.4.3).

Finally, it is important to recognise that negative connotations of Islam are not just discursive; they influence everyday practices. For young people they are materialised in experiences of racism and Islamophobia as demonstrated in the following section.

3.1.3 Racism and Islamophobia

The narratives of young people in this case study show that experiences of racism are intertwined with experiences of Islamophobia and that young Muslims experience racialisation as 'others'. Experiences of Islamophobia and racism reported vary from negative comments made to the respondent because of his/her religious identity to threats and physical attacks. Rafi, for example, describes how he attracts more attention when he is out with a group of male Asians and how they are perceived as 'threatening'. Nadira had experienced an incident when a male passenger had pulled off her headscarf while she was commuting to university on the local train. What shocked her most, she said, was the silence of the other passengers witnessing the incident. Aladdin describes how often

he gets approached and insulted by random people in public about his Arabic and Islamic background and how normalised such behaviour has become. Ruksana reports an Islamophobic incident that she describes as not being 'too dramatic' in which she was spat at and told to 'F off out of the country and go back home' by a man in public. She goes on to note the importance of reporting such incidents to the police and uses her experience as a positive example of Islamophobia being taken seriously by the police. Both Liyla and Fiza express concern about their younger siblings who go to a predominantly white secondary school where Islamophobic comments by other pupils are not dealt with appropriately by the school:

[...] And he [my younger brother] said he didn't want to go, because he didn't believe in the march [against the English Defence League (EDL)]. He said, 'I don't want to go. What they're saying is right.' I said, 'What, do you agree with the EDL?' And he goes, 'No British people want Muslims here. I've seen it all in school. I don't classify myself as a Muslim anymore. I eat what I want now.' And I was thinking... I said to my mum, 'It's okay what he does. He just needs to respect Islam. And he needs to stick up for us. And he needs to like be an ambassador. Because he goes to a Catholic school.' My stepdad and I, we both pressured my mum. We said to her, 'Don't send him to that school. It's full of white people. He's not surrounded by his own culture and he'll lose himself.' And that's exactly what happened. (Liyla)

This example of Liyla's younger brother, who is just 14 years old, illustrates how one response to stigmatisation is a rejection of Muslim identity. Liyla is concerned that her younger brother is internalising negative associations of Islam and that the rejection of his cultural heritage will have consequences for his self-perception and identity. Experiences of racism and Islamophobia can lead some young people to develop strategies that Zuhair and Khaled described as an attempt to fit in and adapt to mainstream culture in order to gain acceptance. These are the kind of experiences noted above that shape the identity formation of young Muslims and are influenced by racism and Islamophobia.

Young people also reported their fear of Islamophobic attacks following terrorist attacks. Several respondents described how they feared for their safety and avoided public places and transport particularly late at night. Meena recalls how her mum, and other veiled Muslim women, had had to take off their headscarves when getting on the bus in London immediately after the 7/7 terror attacks in 2005 in the city. At the age of 16, Ruksana was confronted by a member of the public on suspicion of being a terrorist as she was walking home following the same attack:

But then I remember, like a week or two later [after the July 2005 London bombings], I'd gone to PC World to buy a new printer, and walking back home, 'cause it was only about ten minutes from my house, with the printer in my hand and having a white van pull up next to me, and two men get out and demand that I open the box to prove that it wasn't a bomb. [...] just members of the public, so they were essentially accusing me of carrying a bomb with me. And again, I had no idea how to react. I did, I, kind of, just did what they told me to and then I, kind of, I think I must have made a flippant comment about, 'I'm not a terrorist,' or something like that, but again, it's one of those memories that's quite vivid. I guess that's when I realised that things are changing. (Ruksana)

For Ruksana, this incident was a turning point in her life through which she came to realise that she is no longer perceived as Asian British but as Muslim British and which played an important part in her decision to study politics and engage in advocacy work to raise awareness about Islamophobia. Other respondents also described how experiences of stigmatisation and Islamophobia were a contributing factor in reclaiming their Muslim identity as observed below by Zuhair:

And I think for, actually, for many second generation immigrants who are Muslims, being proud of the religion came into play even more as a result of the amount the religion was attacked. So as a result of the war on terror, as a result of growing Islamophobia and institutional Islamophobia and the persecution of Muslims and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the UK, many young Muslims immediately, like, came to the defences of Islam and immediately sort of became one of those front voices in the fight back against anti-Muslim rhetoric. (Zuhair)

These narratives show how the negative perceptions of Islam and Islamophobic attacks directly impact on how young Muslims understand their identities and shape them. Ruksana argues that it is more important than ever to wear the hijab and show publically that you are a Muslim in support of those Muslims who want to practice their religion publically. Thus, reclaiming their identity and reclaiming their space in public as Muslims is an important part of experiencing Muslim identity. All these statements demonstrate the importance of coming together with other Muslims and making the Muslim body publically and collectively visible in order to resist Islamophobia. Underlying these processes is the desire to challenge Islamophobia and be accepted as equal members of society:

I don't want to be assumed guilty without having done anything. You know, so if I go on the street, I want to be treated as any other respected citizen of the country. You know, I don't want to be treated guilty without having committed anything. (Tariq)

The next and final part of this section turns our attention to the Prevent strategy and how such counter-terrorism policies are experienced by the respondents as stigmatising.

3.1.4 Counter-terrorism and the Prevent strategy

Prevent is a key plank of the UK Contest counter-terrorism policy which makes it a statutory obligation of social institutions, including schools, colleges and Higher Education institutions, to include in their 'safeguarding' duty an awareness of any student showing signs of vulnerability to extremism (of all kinds). Where such cases come to the attention of these institutions they must report individuals for possible referral to the Channel programme – a voluntary programme designed to provide early intervention to prevent radicalisation.

Respondents reported experiences with Prevent at different sites including school, university and the mosque. In most respondent accounts, Prevent was evaluated critically although a few respondents were indifferent to it and one stated that she actually welcomed the policy.

An ISOC organiser among our respondents talked about the problems the society encountered when inviting an outside speaker to an event on campus including the stringent risk assessment procedures they were subject to. These risk assessment procedures were introduced with the Prevent duty in

2015 and include the vetting of external speakers. However, it is often not clear to organisers why a speaker is identified as problematic. Shareef describes his experience with the procedure as follows:

[...] we have, like, sometimes trouble getting a speaker in because of Prevent. Like Hamza Tzortzis, for example. He's, he's on that SU [Students' Union] watch-list or something. So every time we get him, we have to, we have to struggle with the SU. They have to record the lecture and stuff. He's a really nice guy, but for whatever reason, however, they have this guy on this list. I mean, every time, they're like, 'Oh, this guy's really nice.' But every time we invite him, we have to go through the same thing. [...] SU has to record the lecture. We have to... typically, what happens with our events is, like, we advertise the event. It's usually free, especially talks and things. So if you just walk in and sit down and... But with someone like Hamza Tzortzis, you have to, like, write down names of who came, and, like, was there an opportunity to ask questions and challenge the speaker, and things like this. (Shareef)

Risk assessment and prevention measures also include having security personnel at events, keeping an attendance list, audio recording the lecture and event and, if a speaker is flagged up as 'extremist' or controversial, the organisers are requested to bring in another speaker who will present an alternative view point and monitor any imposition of gender segregation. While this is a policy that applies to all student society events, Muslim students described their events as being subject to more rigorous risk assessment procedures than other student societies. At the same time, it is evident from the range of experiences captured in our study that there is significant leeway in how universities and Students' Unions (SU) comply with these policies:

I think we've been lucky in that our SU has been against Prevent. [Name of university] SU. And so I think we really didn't feel its effects. But, like, certain other ISOCs have. Like, their prayer halls have been installed with, like, cameras and, like, recording... like, they're recorded twenty-four hours a day. Like, I think they certainly feel the effects a lot more. Like, they feel like being watched and, like, just for going and praying and stuff. And so I think it does certainly have an effect in certain, like, certain universities and things. (Shareef)

Effective negotiating skills with the university and the Students' Union are therefore seen as an important part of the toolkit for Muslim activists in order to mitigate the negative effects of Prevent on their capacity to organise events. Fiza describes how she managed to get permission for her event on Islamophobia but had been frustrated that security guards had been deployed by the university to the event despite her prior agreement that security was not necessary:

[...] I said to them, you know, it was [male name] is the head of, Director of Student Experience or whatever his name, whatever the role is. And he said to me, you know, 'Security have asked me these questions. Blah, blah.' I was like, 'Okay, feel free to ask them.' But I said to him, 'I don't want any security at my event. There is no...' I said to him, I said, 'There is no need for security at this event. There is nothing controversial being said here.' Literally I was like, 'We are discussing Islamophobia. That is it. That's the issue we're talking...' He was like, 'Okay, that's fine.' I feel he was like, with my answers he was like,

'I'm very happy that you're kind of sorted.' And we had the first event and we had three security guards outside the event. Three security guards, literally. (Fiza)

While these types of measures are open and hence visible to the organisers and the participants, there is also a sense among the respondents that they are being monitored by the intelligence services. For Ahmed this is a simple fact which he takes into account when planning ISOC events:

I've had personal confirmation from individuals that have, that have told me that MI5 is watching the Islamic Society. We, that, that has been personally confirmed to me. I don't need to think twice about that, which again, involves self-censorship. So we're careful about which speakers we bring onto campus, what they can and can't say. So for example, for example, stuff about homosexuality, you know, we can't. So the, the question as to why Islam prohibits homosexuality is a valid question, but we can't discuss that at university because of, you know being watched by MI5 and regulations and the Students' Union and the liberal society that we live in it doesn't, it doesn't allow us to, you know marginalise, which we're not. (Ahmed)

Respondents also described the effect Prevent has in their communities and in mosques. Samira explains that they are not able to utter the word 'terrorist' anymore in the mosque without being 'shushed'. She goes on to express a concern that mosques have become complicit in Prevent due to the fear of being shut down or being accused of not reporting a potential terrorist. Zuhair on the other hand argues that the leadership of mosques, which often consists of first generation immigrants, has become more vocal in opposing Prevent, although they are generally reluctant to get engaged in politics.

While community centres and mosques might feel the pressure to report any signs of extremism and radicalisation, there is no statutory duty to do this. Schools and other public bodies on the other hand are subject to the Prevent duty which makes it a legal requirement for them to comply with the Prevent legislation. This involves staff training, risk assessment policies, IT monitoring, and promoting British values to build resilience against extremism and raise awareness about the policy. Since the introduction of Prevent as a statutory duty at schools (September 2015) there has been a 75% increase in referrals in England and Wales, under Prevent and around 80% of these referrals were judged by the local authority safeguarding panel not to require further action, suggesting that what constitutes a real risk of radicalisation is not easy to discern for those statutory agencies required to make referrals (Acik *et al.*, 2018). One of the respondents in our case study – Dmitri - reported having attracted the attention of the safeguarding officer at his school following his use of the Internet to research Nazi Germany. Samira who was at college at the time of being interviewed witnessed how Prevent made students and teachers more hesitant to talk about controversial topics and questioned whether Prevent was effective at picking up signs of radicalisation and extremism among young people. Instead, she argues, schools should focus on combating racism, Islamophobia and bullying, which were more prevalent on school grounds.

From 2015, the National Union of Students (NUS) has organised a campaign called 'Student not Suspects' to raise awareness about Prevent. This campaign was widely supported by Muslim student activists from within the NUS and local Students' Unions and Islamic Societies. Meena argues that Prevent has, on the one hand, mobilised many students across the country, but on the other hand, it

has contributed to Muslims being targeted as a security threat and made them subject to scrutiny.

I think it's, in one aspect it gets people, it gets Muslims, it gets them to mobilise, I think. Especially the people who are more political, political Muslims in that sense, I think. But it also does this other thing of vilifying any kind of speech that a Muslim may say. So for example, like there's two ends to it, so like a double-edged sword, in the fact that yes, it's been able to mobilise hundreds of student activists across the country and to make sure that, you know, their universities have an anti-Prevent policy and that they're standing up to Islamophobia, institutional Islamophobia. But on the other hand, it's also made people very, very conscious of the Muslims around them. So like if a Muslim says anything, they, they... they will scrutinise that and they will, yeah, they will scrutinise it and they will treat it in a way that they would never treat it if it was a white non-Muslim counterpart. (Meena)

Engagement in the anti-Prevent campaign has mobilised Muslim students active in the Students' Unions and ISOCs across the country. Meena suggests that this campaign has been both an enabler and inhibitor of engagement; an issue that is returned to below. The direct experiences of respondents with Prevent policies will be discussed in more detail in the following section since Prevent constitutes a particular site of stigmatisation for young Muslim activists. At this point, it is important to note that Prevent procedures are perceived by respondents to reinforce the association of Muslims with terrorism and experienced as making them subject to securitisation practices that work to stigmatise them.

In the following section, the report explores how these experiences of stigmatisation have a considerable bearing on respondents' attitudes to engagement and the types of activism in which they become involved.

3.2 Activities engaged in

This case study targeted young people who were engaged in organisations or otherwise socially and politically active. More than half of the sample consists of students who were recruited through ISOCs. Three of the students were also active in the Students' Union and held positions within the National Union of Students (NUS). The majority of other respondents were recruited through various initiatives, and were involved in local and national youth justice and/or advocacy organisations and community networks. A small number of respondents were not involved in any organisation but were nonetheless, interested and involved in debates at college and had participated in some events or demonstrations.

These young people were engaged in a wide range of activities, which were coded into 26 different groups. The most relevant activities for this case study relate to Prevent; this activity is also the most frequently mentioned. Other activities that are frequently engaged in by respondents include: charity work, fundraising and volunteering; the propagation of Islam (*Dawa*); social media based activities; campaigning; participating in protests; and a range of social, cultural and educational activities (particularly within ISOC). In this section, young people's experiences of taking part in these activities are explored, focusing on their role in countering negative images of Islam, representing Islam in a positive way and challenging stigmatising practices.

3.2.1 Doing good deeds to counter stigmatisation: charity work

Doing charity work, such as working in the community, volunteering and fundraising emerged as one of the most popular types of activities. This involved, in particular, raising funds for humanitarian aid, as well as for local and national causes, such as for homeless people, cancer research and local schools. Engaging in charity work was something that respondents felt comfortable with; as Samira states, it is something she grew up with as she watched family members raise funds at various occasions. Giving charity (zakat) is one of the five pillars of Islam and is deeply rooted in Islamic traditions. British Muslims give more to charity per capita than any other group (MEND factsheet). Doing charity work is thus felt to be an important element of Islam although not exclusive to it, as Ruksana describes:

And that's kind of why people would volunteer with us and come to this station in this community centre, 'cause it's kind of something that we all pride ourselves in, having that kind of mentality. So it's, I think that, I wouldn't say that's just an Islamic mentality. I think that's just a human mentality. But it's emphasised more for me in Islamic organisations than non-Islamic organisations [...] all the ones I've worked at, let's say. (Ruksana)

Like Ruksana, many respondents in the sample pride themselves on giving up their time to help others. There was frequent mention of being grateful for the support they received from others and from their religion and the importance of reciprocating this by supporting others; to show their gratitude to the society that supports them, as well as the religion that gives them strength. By doing this, some respondents said, they better themselves as Muslims. Thus, while the respondents often refer to their religion to explain the motivation behind their altruistic and benevolent behaviour, it is not the only factor at play. Charity work and volunteering is not only motivated by religion or spirituality. For Yordan, 'giving back to the community' and doing charity work and fundraising 'helps dispel a lot of stereotypes'. He argues that whenever his religion gets blamed for something negative, he feels compelled to do more 'charitable stuff'. Charity work helps young Muslims convey a positive image of Islam and their Muslim identity. The following quote by Khaled reflects the hope shared by many respondents about the effects of their voluntary work with people in the community:

So we [ISOC] have some projects which are, you know, open to all. So we have things like cleaning the park, you know, visiting care homes, giving out free hot drinks, for example. Just because, when you're giving out free hot drinks, people... especially if it's coming from a Muslim, you know, like a Muslim woman with a headscarf – if she's giving out a hot drink to someone, then they're not... people aren't gonna think, 'Oh, no, she's a horrible woman,' or... Just small things to show that, at the end of the day, we're normal people. (Khaled)

With these seemingly mundane activities, the respondents aim to destroy prejudices members of the public may hold about Muslims. By showing the caring and compassionate side of Muslims, they are enacting notions of a diverse and inclusive citizenship. As noted in the previous section, the stigmatisation of Muslims has contributed to a crisis of identity for some young Muslims while embracing their Muslim identity can be central to gaining public recognition of their different and contesting identities. Through undertaking good deeds in public and helping others, respondents find a way to reinforce their British identity and to claim their place as full members of the polity.

3.2.2 Political campaigning and *Dawa*

While the narratives of the young people in this study demonstrate an enthusiasm for volunteering and fundraising for charity purposes, political campaigns, protests, and demonstrations were talked about with less passion by a substantial number of respondents.

Most ISOC members interviewed for this study had experienced participation in some sort of campaign including those against Prevent and aimed at tackling Islamophobia and racism. However, these campaigns were often part of broader ISOC activities that were primarily charitable, social or educational. Thus, the majority of ISOC members had more experience of organising or taking part in social and educational activities than in political campaigning; indeed they were often cautious about the latter. Ashraf, for example, explains that he ‘pulled out from the whole student politics’ because ‘[...]I was never a fan of protests to be honest, but it was just, I thought I could help in different ways, so I, kind of, pulled away from the whole student politics.’ (Ashraf). Other respondents also reported feeling more confident engaging with humanitarian aid and charity events whilst being concerned about the impact political campaigns might have on their career.

Respondents recruited from outside of ISOC were more inclined to engage in political campaigning. One respondent was involved in the protests against the student fees hike and in a community-based, police accountability and monitoring organisation. Two young college students were actively engaged in youth advocacy groups against social injustice. One respondent was working professionally as a campaigner for a national civic organisation and three other respondents were primarily involved in Students’ Union politics (although simultaneously collaborating with ISOC).

For respondents who engaged in political campaigning, such as Fiza and Meena, politics was about giving a voice to Muslim students and making them visible in student politics. These respondents were often also critical of the level of activity of ISOC. Fiza, for example, observed a reluctance to continue the campaign against Prevent on the part of ISOC; indeed, she said, there was little appetite for engaging with any controversial political issues. Anas was also dissatisfied with the level of activism in ISOC. He expressed a desire to see an Islamic student society that was more religiously inspired and guided by the Koran and the life of the Prophet Muhammed. For him, this would provide a better platform for students to engage in action to bring about a better society:

ISOCs like and their role, it’s very, very bare and very, very limited and it could be something so much bigger. [...] Like if [...] you just inspire someone [...] They will eventually feel so motivated and they will realise that like their religion is something far greater to them than their university degree or just, it’s something far bigger than just coming over to the mosque and praying five times a day. It has the solutions to the problems of society. It has the solutions to his own problems. It can give him hope like nothing else can. When you actually just show people [...] what like, the religion is capable of, then you could like, it’s the best way to take people out of the streets and out of drugs and out of like extremism and make them productive citizens who will actually give to society [...] (Anas)

Thus, Anas sees the key role of ISOC as performing *Dawa*, that is the teaching and propagation of Islam. *Dawa* is undertaken by ISOCs in a range of ways - from organising public information stands to student study groups on Islam. A ‘Discover Islam Week’ to reach out to Muslim students on

campuses, as well as to non-Muslims, is a common form of activity undertaken by ISOCs across the country. While *Dawa* refers to the spreading of Islam and has a missionary side to it, according to Abdullah, the primary aim of *Dawa* in a non-Muslim majority country is to address misconceptions of Islam and to provide a context that allows for a more nuanced understanding of Islam:

Mainly, in this country, it's [*Dawa*] about rectifying any misconceptions. Almost always when you try to spread the teachings of Islam, people always ask about terrorism. People always ask about the negative aspects of our religion. So one way of teaching is also about rectifying misconceptions about the religion. And I feel honoured that I am doing that. I'm telling people about the correct Islam. (Abdullah)

Ashraf confesses that he initially joined ISOC so that he could engage in *Dawa* but he soon discovered that 'preaching' in an environment where Islam was associated with terrorism and sexual grooming, is not the best way to reach out to others, or to convince others of the positive aspects of Islam. Shareef also describes how the 'Discover Islam Week' was difficult to handle; people got into heated debates, generating the opposite effect of that which they had wanted to convey. Like Ashraf, Khaled questions whether *Dawa* is the appropriate means of fighting against the negative images of Islam and Muslims. He suggests that it is better to do it 'indirectly' through deeds rather than words:

And I always think... I call it, like, indirect *Dawa*. It's like, don't say, 'I'm a Muslim; I'm nice.' Just show that you're nice. You know, be yourself. So I always prefer events like, you know, the hot drinks or the cleaning the community, or just doing anything that our religion promotes in an event, with non-Muslims that people can see. Because then they see you for, you know, who you actually are rather than having to say, 'Oh, I do this and I do this and I do this.' People aren't willing to accept that. (Khaled)

Thus respondents disagreed on the meaning and importance of politics, whether ISOC should take a greater or lesser role in politics, and how best to practice *Dawa*. Across the many different positions taken by respondents, however, the common thread in their narratives was the importance of countering stigmatisation and negative images of Muslims, whether through engaging in debates and 'preaching', through volunteering and charity work, or by strengthening Muslim students' representation so as to fight Islamophobia and discrimination.

3.2.3 Social media and activism

Social media were used widely by respondents in this study in the course of their social engagement. A particularly important function of social media was its use as an alternative to the mainstream media. Carlito, for example, followed and shared news about Palestine or the Rohingya Muslims on social media. Ruksana, in contrast, consciously promoted her volunteering activities and that of the Muslim community on social media in order to provide an alternative to the purely negative associations with Muslims found in the media:

And even like right now with the whole fire in London, you know, a lot of the headlines have been saying, 'It's Muslim young boys actually, who've gone around saving people because they were awake for, because of Ramadan.' And you've got a lot of people on social media saying, 'Oh, why are you bringing their faith into it?' And the standard

response is 'Well, when it's something negative, everyone's more than happy to bring their faith into it, but when they've done something good, why are we not recognising it and actually there's a much more causal effect here because they were awake because of their faith, it's not, it's not incidental that they were Muslim.' (Ruksana)

Not all respondents were confident about 'bringing faith into it' when Muslims point out the important work their fellow activists do in society. Khaled sees it as a religious obligation to do charity work and help others, not as a public relations exercise. Yet, social media is an important site for young Muslims to become visible and to counter the negative associations with their faith. It provides a medium through which they can challenge Islamophobic and stigmatising practices.

This site is not without contestation, however. Respondents reported being scrutinised for their social media posts in a way that other young activists are not. Zuhair was inundated with hundreds of hate emails for weeks, following his criticism of a police drill that simulated terrorist attacks (in a way that made clear the anticipated perpetrator was a Muslim). Meena describes the scrutiny she had to face for her tweets whilst holding a post within the NUS:

[...] like we had so much scrutiny. Like to the point where if I tweeted something, it would be picked up and there would be an article about it the very next day. Like even the most trivial things, that now wouldn't raise any eyebrows, then did. (Meena)

These experiences have led Muslim student activists in the Students' Union to offer training and guidance to activists on how to use social media and deal with public scrutiny and abuse. This led Ruksana to act with caution when using social media:

I occasionally I would do media interviews or I'm quite active on social media. Sometimes you've just got to think about how things can be understood and so I think often as a, as a Muslim or within the Muslim community there are a number of frustrations that if you share publicly, aren't necessarily understood. And so it's about finding a way where you can express that in a constructive manner, without either feeding into the Islamophobes or putting people who are, who are understandably fearful and putting them, making them feel much more uncomfortable. (Ruksana)

Ruksana's concern about media misrepresentation does not relate only to her actions and statements; she is also worried that it will aggravate the misrepresentation of Muslims and further fuel Islamophobic sentiments. Muslim activists thus, feel the pressure to represent their greater collective appropriately and as Meena puts it, they 'have to maintain this polished image' to avoid being attacked publicly and in turn, inflict greater harm on the Muslim community. She notes that she had been very conscious about her tweets following a terrorist attack and made sure that she mentioned the great work done by the police and the Emergency Services; something she would not have thought of before. For others, such as Zuhair, the safest way to avoid being scrutinised is to avoid commenting on any political events, and to limit one's public postings on social media to comments about sport.

According to data from the British Household Panel Study and Understanding Society (2009-2011), Muslims have the lowest rates of civic participation of all religious groups (Garratt, 2016: 3). The

challenges of engaging in civic and political activities recounted by young Muslims in this study may provide some insight into why this is so. In this context, the majority of respondents emphasised the importance of maintaining ISOC as simply a social environment - a 'halal social club' – where young Muslims could feel a sense of belonging on campus and simply 'be' with other Muslims in a way that did not conflict with Islamic teaching. Thus although, as demonstrated above, stigmatisation, racism and Islamophobia play a significant role in shaping the Muslim identity of young people and the types of activities these young Muslims choose to engage in, they remain reluctant to engage in overtly political issues and prefer, instead, to promote a positive image of Muslims by 'doing good deeds'.

3.2.4 Mobilisation around Prevent

Engagement in Prevent-related activities was the most frequently cited of any activities reported by respondents in this study. These activities ranged from the experience of college students of receiving Prevent-related educational interventions through participation by university students in campaigns against Prevent to individual respondents who worked closely with local authorities and schools to clarify misconceptions about Prevent.

The 'Students Not Suspects' campaign (NUS Connect, 2017) became official NUS policy in 2015. It was a student-led campaign that consisted of a series of national tours to raise awareness about Prevent and to call for its repeal. The campaign received widespread media coverage and respondents who were involved argue that it was a great success as they managed to mobilise support across the country from academics, student societies and Students' Unions. Activists who mobilised against Prevent described the initial difficulties they experienced in getting ISOCs on board. Meena noted the hesitancy of ISOCs when asked to support the campaign, due to fear of getting into further conflict with the universities and reluctance to get involved in controversial political issues. Fiza also recognised that 'Prevent is not something that sells that well' in her attempt to get her local ISOC committee involved in the national campaign. Yet, this initial reluctance was overcome as the scale of Prevent became apparent for many ISOCs and they became aware of how they might be impacted by the new regulations.

Students' Unions are registered as charities and, unlike universities, the Prevent duty does not apply to them. In other words, they are not obliged to report signs of radicalisation among the people who use their services. However, most of the events organised by student societies are held on university-owned premises, which means that the event organisers are still subject to the Prevent policy and procedure. This includes, filling in a risk assessment form and the vetting of external speakers. The anti-Prevent campaign organised by Fiza's university included a series of events in which lecturers, local MPs and student activists were invited to talk about Prevent and Islamophobia. Fiza explains how the duty impacted on their ability to hold events and how she had negotiated with the university and the Students' Union, in order to get permission for their planned event. Having experienced how Prevent was enacted in practice, Fiza argues that many younger and inexperienced ISOC members might be intimidated by the level of scrutiny:

[...] So, having experienced that [going through the vetting process] [...] I realised that actually being in this position, even there's only one year between me and the students, [...] I was in a much better position than them [ISOC committee members]. Because, just because I filled in these forms, I got called into that meeting. Had ISOC filled in those

forms, ISOC would have gone to that meeting. And would they have had the confidence that I had because of... just because luckily I'm in this role, I meet with [name of head of risk and compliance] every few months. I know him really well, I'm really honest, you know, we have open discussion. But ISOC would be so scared, you know, you got an email saying the Director of Students... he's like one of the top guys at university, and moving on to the example I gave relating to Action Palestine, when they got called in. They were so worried, you have no idea. I had to, I had to like calm them down. They're like, 'They're gonna cancel all our events. Oh my god, why did they want to meet us? Blah, blah.' And I was like, 'Oh guys it's standard. They're just gonna tick box you.' And they were getting so, so worked up. And I just thought, 'Wow. It's like I'm just lucky that I happen to be in this position where I can just walk into these meetings now and go – what even is this?' But actually, it's affecting students because they're genuinely... because they're getting called the day before an event. The day before an event, and they've put like months of work into. And then they're thinking, 'My event is gonna get cancelled.' Like all this work, you know, all this publicity and it's gonna get cancelled. [...] technically, if you don't submit a speaker form, you're not allowed to have an event. And one of the girls that I work with, like English white girl, she forgot to submit a speaker form, and her event went ahead. And I just said, 'Imagine if I had done that. Imagine if I'd forgotten.' She had genuinely forgotten. But imagine if I'd done that. Can you imagine the scrutiny that I'd come under? (Fiza)

This lengthy quote summarises the scrutiny and the feelings of insecurity and intimidation caused by being subjected to Prevent and the related risk assessment procedures on campus. Effective cooperation between Students' Unions and ISOCs is needed to comply with the Prevent procedures without compromising their activities and engagement at the university. For this reason, Meena and Zuhair emphasise the importance of having Muslim representatives in Students' Unions, on the local, as well as national level and the importance of collaboration with ISOCs to mobilise against Prevent or other policies that affect Muslim students. Having organisational representation allows you to voice your criticism and to be heard more effectively. For Ashraf, being part of an organisation makes him more confident to talk about Prevent:

I feel like I did for a while, but I always did that as part of an organisation, so I was never by myself. But now, if I was just to go out and have a conversation with someone, I wouldn't bring that up at all, and I wouldn't, I'd stay clear from that topic. I feel like when you're with an organisation and you have that cover, but when you're by yourself, I wouldn't bring that up, yeah. (Ashraf)

The hesitation to bring up the issue of Prevent is not only felt among students on campuses. Zuhair describes how in his local mosque, an open discussion about Prevent had been silenced by the mosque management and the elders. This is in contrast to his experience in London, where young people are more involved and have a greater say in the running of the mosques.

Respondents who were still in college experienced Prevent as delivered within the classroom environment. In the case of Dmitri, the safeguarding lead in the college had been alerted because he had been seen to be accessing websites about Nazis in Germany, but no further action was taken against him. However, Samira argues that pupils are subject to Prevent way before any individual is

flagged up or referred under Prevent. To support her case, she described arguments in the classroom following a terrorist attack in Paris in which students were arguing that the victims of other terror attacks in the Middle East did not get as much attention as victims of terror attacks in Europe. The pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds felt that the teacher could not relate to their experiences of Islamophobia. Heated argument between them ensued. As a result of this debate, Samira felt the school tended to avoid discussing controversial issues that questioned British foreign policy and other sensitive topics that address the injustices experienced by Muslims:

Because they [the teachers] didn't want that conversation. They didn't know how to handle it. And more and more terrorist attacks are happening and more were being, more was being questioned, and we started seeing more sort of like the rise of sort of like Islamophobia and like, like that sort of, that sort of bigotry. And it was being questioned more by kids in school and we couldn't do it anymore. And so we had like Buddhist Monks a few weeks later come into school to teach us about Buddhism. And this is a highly, like there's a high Muslim, like a huge Muslim like population within the school. And someone asked about the, the massacre of Muslims, and like they stopped inviting people to the school like that. Like we have, we had some, a lady who was an Aboriginal poet from Australia, who came to our school to speak to us, and we were speaking to her about colonialism and how the British were wrong to do what they did. We never had her come back again. [...] I didn't even notice this at the time. I was just like, 'Oh, it's like the school's funding's probably run out and they've just stopped paying them to come in and stuff. Or like people don't care about our school anymore and it's not important.' But it was literally like systematic like, they were literally stopping us from having access to these things because they didn't want us talking about it, because it got sticky for them. It's so ridiculous. (Samira)

The Prevent duty emphasises that Prevent is not about shutting down debates in schools (HM Government, 2015) but research conducted among schools on the effects of Prevent has identified trends that confirm Samira's experience. However, in some other cases, the antagonism caused by Prevent was put down to the over-reaction of teachers and schools towards the strategy, as well as a lack of effective training (Acik *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, in some schools, it has been found, the focus on Prevent has meant that more resources were dedicated to discussing controversial topics (Busher *et al.*, 2017).

Ruksana recognises that Prevent has been perceived negatively by many people in Muslim communities and she has worked with local authorities, schools and Prevent panels to make sure that they identify correctly, children and young people who are at risk of being radicalised and see this as an important aspect of safeguarding.

So something like Prevent, rather than actually trying to tackle it as a national issue, I've worked with some young people to go to their local authority and be like, 'Look, you know, we, we want to be part of a Prevent Advisory Board, let's, let's better understand how it's implemented, let's see if we can maybe get an Imam in to do some religious sensitivity training for you, to make sure we're not conflating religious conservatism with potential non-violent extremism.' [...] I think the council were very, very receptive, quite surprisingly. [...] But [...] they [the local councils] are more than willing to engage with the

community and I think they actually quite value the participation of young people who, who know what they're doing. So as long as you're not simply going in there and criticising everything, but you're saying, 'I wanna work with you to create something, you know, let's co-create something,' there is that reciprocity. (Ruksana)

These narratives demonstrate that young Muslims have responded in different ways to the Prevent agenda. Although the student-led campaign has called for a complete repeal of Prevent, Fiza (who supported the campaign) discovered that negotiations with the authorities who implement Prevent can also be effective in mitigating its negative effects. Similarly, Ruksana prefers to have a local approach and work with the relevant bodies to ensure that Prevent is appropriately implemented as a safeguarding policy. Responses to Prevent have also mobilised ISOC members, who, as Meena and Fiza described, were hesitant to address such a contentious issue.

Perhaps most interestingly for this study, Ruksana, whose advocacy work takes her to various Muslim communities across the country, observes that Prevent has politicised young Muslims:

But I think over the years more and more people have gotten involved either through, kind of, like their Students' Union or through actually secondary school. And I know, for example, like the Prevent agenda, has really politicised a lot of young people because they wanna campaign against that. I know also, like the Iraq War politicises a lot of people, so it's about finding that key issue or event at times that can galvanise. (Ruksana)

Thus, Prevent, and the discourses of war on terror, are, on the one hand, felt to be a contributing factor to the stigmatisation of young Muslims. On the other hand, responses to it have activated young Muslims' potential to be active citizens. This is one of a number of enabling and inhibiting factors for social and political involvement to which discussion turns in the following sections.

3.3 Social involvement: Enablers

One of the key concerns of the PROMISE project is to understand better how social involvement⁷ might be generated out of conflict or stigmatisation and, in the light of such understanding, to identify channels to promote such involvement. As we have seen in Section 3.2, respondents in this case study were engaged in many activities including those that might be classified as primarily social (Islamic Society social events) through civic or pre-political (anti-Islamophobia awareness raising) to formal or informal political activities (elected positions and protest). In this section we consider those factors that appear in young people's narratives as *enabling* them to take up active positions. These factors emerged in the course of respondents' reflections on agents and sites of support for their positions and also in the discussion of how their ethnic or religious identity or other experiences of marginalisation (such as class) inspired their activity.

3.3.1 Family: 'there for us'

The single most frequently cited factor enabling young people's participation among respondents in this study is 'family'. This is notwithstanding what is said below about family also being the most frequently cited inhibitor of participation. The salience of family in both capacities is, in part, pre-

⁷ See Section 1.3 for a brief discussion of this concept.

determined by our respondent set of which 70% were still living at home with parents rather than independently (see Section 2.6). What is interesting about the data from this study, however, is that this prominence of family for respondents suggests that family might be a more independent factor than sometimes assumed. In general family is viewed as important in so much as it is a proxy for social inclusion or exclusion since it is the primary site of the experience of young people of low income, poor neighbourhood and low social capital (supportive ties and networks) and human capital (qualifications, work history) which influence the capacity of young people to be socially involved and engage in a range of civic and political activities (Brady *et al.*, 2012: 20-21). It has been seen as playing a role also in influencing the kind of activism in which young people engage; those living at home are more likely to be enabled to participate in ‘safer’ activities such as volunteering than riskier activities (Bynner, 2001). However, as will be seen from the discussion of findings below, the data gathered for this study suggest the family has a distinct *emotional* influence also that can have either an enabling or inhibiting function beyond that explained by socio-economic status or even social and human capitals.

‘Family’ is cited by 19 respondents as a source of support for their social involvement or political activity. While each family situation is, of course, specific, two common themes run through how respondents talk about the support received from family. The first is a general sense that parents are ‘incredibly supportive’ (Ruksana) at an emotional level. Khaled notes that ‘My parents have always been there for us. [...] even, like, when I wasn’t appreciative of my parents, they were, like, there to help.’ It is important to note that this is cited in Khaled’s case, and in other cases, even when the respondents acknowledged they were not achieving in the way their parents hoped. The fact that parents continued to believe that their children would ‘turn things around’, or provide emotional support through difficult periods is recognised and appreciated by respondents. The second is that parents are aspirational for their children and prepared to do all they can to help them realise their ambitions. As discussed in Section 3.4.1 (below), this can sometimes be experienced as pressure and become a site of conflict in the family. For many respondents, however, it is a positive enabler in terms of their own ambitions and engagement. Thus Maria even notes that she feels sorry for her white British classmates whose parents do not encourage their children in the same way, leaving them low in aspiration:

I think my English friends, a lot of them, find themselves demotivated and a little bit complacent because their families are so relaxed. But they don’t, even they don’t like it. Like my friends, they get upset, they’re like, ‘I went out for three days yesterday and my mum didn’t even ask me one time where I was.’ They want some sort of caring shown. I’m not saying that they don’t care about their kids, but I’m also saying that sometimes too much freedom can also be sometimes, perhaps, be an issue because I’ve personally seen it affect my English friends. Where, for example, my closest friend, she came round one night when it was GCSE time, for the first time to my house, and my mum gave us revision cards. And she was like, ‘Come on guys, your GCSEs are soon, let’s revise together.’ And my friend said to me, ‘Oh, my God, you’re so lucky to have a mum like that. My mum never tells me to revise, like, or pushes me to do anything.’ (Maria)

This confirms the finding in other published studies of consistent patterns of strong support amongst Muslim parents in relation to their children’s education and employment outcomes (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 13). Shah *et al.* (2010), for example, find a particularly strong emphasis on higher education and

high career aspirations among British Pakistani parents and refer to this as a form of ‘ethnic capital’. Their suggestion that these attitudes are embedded within parents’ own experiences of the labour market - which lead to higher education being viewed as a route to upward social mobility (ibid.: 1115) - is also confirmed by respondents in our study. In many cases, respondents explained this concern and aspiration as, at least partially, connected to the fact that their parents had not had the opportunity themselves to study, for example, or had sacrificed their own self-fulfillment in order to secure the future of the family. In our study, however, there is a strong emotional dimension to this influence that exceeds its status as ‘capital’. The recognition of their parents’ own frustration mediates what might otherwise be experienced as parents being too demanding of their children and means their own achievement carries an additional emotional responsibility.

With regard to their family’s attitude specifically to their social involvement or political activities, family concern or pressure is the most frequently cited inhibiting factor (see Section 3.4.1). However, many respondents also commented positively on family support for their social or political engagement. Ameena, who calls her parents ‘literally my best friends’, notes that she had talked to her parents about her involvement in the University Islamic Society (ISOC) and that they were wholly supportive:

[...] with regards to ISOC, they see the changes in me, they see how it helps me. And we discuss this as well actually. And yeah, they're absolutely fine and they're supportive. My parents are amazing in the sense that like even with ISOC, if ISOC ever needed anything, I would happily tell my parents and they would help out when they could. (Ameena)

Meena even notes that parents’ aspirations for their children might be beneficial in this regard: ‘I feel like with my mum, because she just wants something to be proud of. And you know, politics was something that she really, really did want us to go into.’ (Meena).

Other respondents express ambivalence on the part of their parents about their social involvement. Khaled, for example, had not told his parents about running for election to the national Federation of Islamic Societies (FOSIS) but once he had been elected he had informed them and reported that they had been happy about it. Yordan is also aware there are limits to his family’s endorsement of his extra-curricular activities (which included socially engaged spoken word performance and blogging); it was accepted as long as it ‘didn’t affect my studies’:

Because they’ve invested a lot of time and money into giving me what they never had, which was a good education. So, as long as it didn’t jeopardise that, as long as I’m doing something that would be helping other people, that won’t be detrimental. (Yordan)

This pattern of parents encouraging ‘safer’ forms of youth activism such as volunteering rather than riskier practices such as protest (Bynner, 2001) is not peculiar to Muslim families of course, but it speaks very clearly to the notion of ‘ethnic capital’ (Shah *et al.*, 2010).

A number of respondents, moreover, put down their own engagement in social and political issues and activities to having become interested in politics first at home through family discussion. As Fiza puts it: ‘I think from a very young age, it was reading the newspapers, my dad just speaking to us about politics and that kind of stuff. So that was definitely the start of it all. Just that's where your

interest begins.’ The importance of discussion of politics in the family environment for future development of political engagement and participation is established in other studies which suggest that political discussion both in the family and with peers is positively related to young people’s civic engagement and political participation. Family political discussions allow parents to share political knowledge and beliefs and convey the message that it is important to be engaged in the world in which they live. Dostie-Goulet (2009) (based on a panel study of 500 teenagers followed over three years in Quebec, Canada) suggests that family has the greatest influence on political interest; analysis of the findings confirmed that parents who often discuss politics have children who are more interested in politics and who are more likely to develop a political interest. Allen and Bang (2015), however, find that discussion with *family* is related to higher commitment to political activities for males, whereas discussion with *peers* is significantly related to greater unconventional participation for females.

The finding by Allen and Bang is interesting in interpreting another tendency among respondents in this study; reference to a gender differentiation in familial support. Although both female and male respondents noted positive support from parents and wider family, including for explicitly political activities, for some respondents mothers and fathers play distinct roles. This is how Rafi sums this up:

I mean, both of my parents are very supportive. My dad was kind of, pushed me to be like, ambitious. And my mum was always there as a kind of, you know, you know, playing the kind of comforting role and just saying like I was kind of capable of doing this, that and the other. (Rafi)

A number of respondents also talk about being inspired by their fathers who had achieved a lot despite poor backgrounds:

I think my dad had a very, very, very rough childhood. Like, he faced a lot of challenges and a lot of difficulties. So I always like to go to him for experience, 'cause he's a very, very experienced person. So he has, like, like, a fountain of knowledge that, you know, is always applicable. He's always giving good advice. So whenever I need, like, actual genuine advice, I'll speak to my father. (Khaled)

It is far from the case that only fathers are role models for our respondents. Liyla, for example, expresses deep admiration for her mother’s strength in resisting narrow and constrained roles for women in her ethnic community. Nonetheless, this gendered inflection of relationships with parents cannot be ignored. Particular constraints experienced by female respondents are discussed in Section 3.4.1 below and it might be tempting to explain this differentiation in relation to conservative gender norms within the ethno-cultural communities to which respondents’ parents belong. However, Allen and Bang’s finding, which is based on the study of young people’s political and civic engagement in Paris, points also to the greater significance of family discussion for young men than young women. Moreover, a similar conclusion is drawn by Levinsen and Yndigegn (2015) based on a study among young people in the city of Odense, Denmark conducted as part of the cross-European MYPLACE project. They find a significant gender difference between the roles of parents, with fathers appearing to be the most frequent political discussion partners (Levinsen and Yndigegn, 2015: 78). However, combining the findings from both survey and interview data from the study, they also find that while fathers are more engaged, they may often also be more prone to disagree or adopt a polemical tone

in discussion, leading young people to avoid discussing politics with them (ibid.: 79). This suggests that it is not only the presence or absence of political discussion in the family that enables or inhibits future social involvement but also its *quality* or tone.

Finally, although the vast majority of our respondent set were single (89%), in a small number of cases partners were mentioned as important supports in respondents' lives. This was the case, in particular, for Jo who was a revert to Islam. She noted that her boyfriend significantly helped her acculturate to his family (he was of Pakistani background). Maria also said that her boyfriend was the only support for her when she had major conflicts with her parents and constantly encouraged her to achieve educationally.

3.3.2 Significant 'others'

Family is one of 16 contexts of support for social involvement referred to by young people. Thus, although family may be the single most important factor, respondents mention a relatively wide range of contexts in which they feel supported. In this section, 'significant others' providing encouragement and support are discussed before, in the next section, organisations, services or institutions facilitating social involvement are discussed. It should be noted, however, that in some cases it is also individuals in particular organisations or institutions who are experienced as supportive rather than the institution itself.

Family friends or neighbours are 'significant others' for some respondents. This is mostly in those situations where respondents had problematic relations within the family (see Section 3.4.1) or lived in single parent families where significant non-family relationships had proved important at key moments. For example, Shareef noted that a neighbour was able to advise about university since his own parents had no experience of higher education; without this widening of his horizons, he says, he would have remained oblivious of the possibility that he had other options than to seek a job straight after school. This differential ability to actualise 'ethnic capital' (understood as a shared aspiration for your children and a belief in the value of education in enabling social mobility) to assist children in achieving these aspirations was identified by Shah *et al.* (2010: 1116) in their qualitative study (2004–2006) of the relationship between educational attainment and ethnicity among British Pakistanis. Nadira also notes that her social involvement had been facilitated by neighbours who had organised together a rota to clear litter from the neighbourhood streets. Four respondents also mention the Muslim community more generally to be a site of support. This is particularly important for Jo who, as a revert to Islam, relies on the wider community to help her: 'Muslims are always encouraged to be there for reverts, to be friends with them, to look after them'. She goes on, however, to note the limits of that support and acknowledge that it is really her partner who provides most support. This wider Muslim community support is recognised to be politically important too since, in student politics, the Islamic Societies were important in mobilising support for Muslim candidates:

And that's why ISOC is a huge voting body. So any candidate that runs will always rely on ISOC, will always ask for ISOC endorsement. So this year, every single person I think who was elected... every single person, well... first of all, every single person was elected by [names own university] Students' Union was Muslim. So all six of them. But also all of them, majority of them, had been, had been endorsed by the ISOC. (Meena)

'Non-Muslims' were also said to be supportive by two respondents. Specifically this was noted in the context of working together in inter-faith civic initiatives (Ruksana) and a personal incident when an elderly white couple protected the respondent from an encounter with an English Defence League demonstration (Nadira). However, it is important to note that in both cases – that is, among the citations of both 'Other Muslims' and 'Non-Muslims' as agents of support to respondents - there were references also to having experienced the *absence of support* from those groups when needed.

A key group of 'others' supportive to respondents was said to be other political activists. Other activists in a number of organisations – including the Students Union and Citizens UK – were cited as having facilitated respondents' own activism. The closeness between activists is partially – although not exclusively – attributed to the feeling that activists shared a commitment to social justice borne, often, of their experience of coming from minority communities themselves. This is expressed most directly by Fiza:

I think they [other political activists] care more about social justice. I think that's a big, big difference. And most of the time, they probably fit into a minority group. So it might not be BME; it could just be like LGBT, it could be disabled, it could be... and I think that's how you can spot them. Because I think sometimes the reason that you're... not forced, but the reason that you go into these political activism and achieving change is because it's affect... some part of your life has been affected by the fact that you are whatever minority you are. So you then want to create change, and change that. But if you've never felt to be a minority, you've never felt [...] marginalised or anything like that, well then you don't feel the need to create change. Because you don't need anything to change, because actually none of these issues are affecting me. (Fiza)

Important to respondents is the emotional support they gain from sharing commitment and positivity with others; this encourages them to continue their activism. Friends become co-activists and activists become friends:

Because I have been friends with them for a very long time and so when they get into things it is a case of we pull each other up. Like, if I get on to something that I know will be good for them, I will pull them up with me. And if they get on to something that they know would be good for me, they pull me up with them [...] they'll call me and be like, 'Hey, we're gonna have this event now, are you down to come?' Or I'll like call them and be like, 'Hey, I'm gonna do this now, are you okay to come like?' (Samira)

This reflects a growing acknowledgement in social movement literature that the affective dimension of activism may be as important as the cause or ideas the activism promotes (Crossley, 2002: 50; Goodwin et al., 2001; Jasper, 1998; Juris, 2008; Pilkington 2016: 177-202).

However, respondents also point to the need to have inner strength and develop a certain 'emotional resilience' at an individual level to maintain commitment to activism because 'when you raise your head above the parapet, you are putting yourself out there to also be attacked' (Ruksana). The formation of such emotional resilience may be one aspect of the emotional dimension of familial support that is not yet acknowledged sufficiently in the literature on what facilitates and inhibits young people's civic and political participation.

3.3.3 Organisations and institutions of support

Respondents in this case study talked about organisational or institutional support for their involvement primarily in relation to mosques or prayer halls or the classes they attended and individuals they encountered there. There was, in particular, frequent mention of a Muslim chaplain based at one of the prayer halls of the university attended by respondents. However, other local mosques were also praised:

One of the mosques that I go to concentrates heavily on how the youth are doing. They have a youth committee. The president of that youth committee is a young individual. This particular mosque does quite a lot for the young Muslim youth, to get them off the streets, to get them off anti-social activities, into the mosques. They educate them. So I feel like, from my experiences, yes they are doing their job adequately. (Abdullah)

It is important to note though that respondents were not unreflective about the role of these organisations or institutions. A number of respondents compared what they considered positive, progressive and community-oriented institutions to more 'traditional' ones which were less able to offer support and direction to young people. This is captured in the following comparison made by Anas:

Technically speaking [names prayer hall] is not a mosque, it's a prayer hall, but I'm gonna take it as an example of a good mosque in some aspects [...] it's very inclusive in that like there's not just one sort of group of people that pray there. You don't just find Arabs there or Pakistanis. [...] And it's kind of like, with regards to the youth, most students would tend to be youths and youngsters. So this is a very good thing and also how it's a very relaxed place, like mosques should be like, to some extent social places for Muslims in the UK. I'm not saying that you just talk loud in, in the prayer room. I'm saying like, you can, if you wanna relax you could go to the mosque and rest, like spiritually or mentally or physically you could, you could rest. So [names prayer hall] you could say to some extent it's, it does this. If I go to, if I take another extreme, for example, [names mosque], which is, it's a very culturally dominated mosque, so it's an Indian Gujarati. So there like, you'll find people who will come and pray and it's very good. Like, people, like you have a lot of people that pray there also in the community and stuff. But like kids are not allowed in it, for example. [...] And also the mosque is strictly limited to just praying and, you know, Islamic rituals. There's not really a social aspect to it [...] (Anas)

One respondent (Ruksana) reported that she herself had become head of the youth group at her local mosque and, in that capacity, had started mentoring young people.

Other organisations in which young people found support included community centres where youth workers and community leaders were praised for putting on activities for young people. Nadira, for example, talked warmly about local youth workers who 'will always be the ones that were making sure all of us were, like, not on the street corners, like in the community centre doing something'. Respondents also noted that youth work was not valued enough (Carlito) and that youth centres in the area had been closed leaving little provision for young people (Samira). In the case of Samira, this had inspired her to want to get different sorts of organisations and groups together and start a

community project. Other respondents had been active in the local youth council and a local youth organisation designed to promote activism especially among disadvantaged young people and spoke warmly of the support they had received there. One respondent also mentioned the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) organisation as having been successful in galvanising young people into activism (although recognising it had a particular political agenda that did not work for everyone).

Of the institutions, statutory agencies or services referred to as supportive, the most frequently cited are respondents' school, college or university. Perhaps the most striking case here is that of Samira who talked at length about her positive experience of an innovative community citizenship course set up by a teacher at her school, which inspired her to become active. The teacher, who had asked the students to go out and conduct real projects and campaigns in their local area, had given Samira a sense that she could really effect change, despite the disadvantages she experienced structurally:

Yeah, like I think the thing is what puts a lot of people off, especially like people from my background, is the idea like, 'What can I do? Like I'm useless, basically like there's not much influence you can have.' But then when you actually do it and you realise that there's that possibility, that kind of like, that sort of... that ignites something that sort of like pushes you further on. (Samira)

In two cases Social Services and in two cases the police were said to have been supportive. It is worth noting that the references to the supportive experience with the police relate directly to the response of the police to the Muslim community following the Manchester Arena bombing. Finally, one respondent even mentioned the counter-terrorism Prevent programme as potentially a source of support for young people:

I actually applaud the Prevent agenda. Like, I'm of the minority of Muslims who are, like, happy about it, that believe it's doing a good thing. [...] I feel like it will be very beneficial for some young people. Because I grew up in a very, like, isolated, narrow-minded small community. I didn't have much awareness or, like, or, like, exposure to different, like, opinions, viewpoints. (Aisha)

Aisha here recognises both the consensus that the Prevent strategy has been problematic, and possibly even counter-productive, in that it has stigmatised entire Muslim communities (Thomas, 2016: 172) but also that, when implemented positively, the Prevent duty is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem (Busher *et al.*, 2017: 60).

3.3.4 Marginality as enabling

It is axiomatic that social exclusion is a critical factor in closing down opportunities for participation; people with lower income and education levels are found to be less likely to take part in voting, volunteering and other participatory behaviours (Brady *et al.*, 2012: 20). In this context, a significant finding during the analysis of data in this case study was the unprompted mention – in six interviews – that having a marginalised subject position acted potentially as an *enabler* to social involvement or activism. This was expressed at a personal level – for example, by Dmitri who talks about how his poor, working class background, and struggle with serious illness in the family, had motivated him and his sisters to achieve:

Yeah, like my mum and my dad, they both didn't go to university. And my sisters have been through so much like hardships like when we were kids, and I have as well like, it's all motivated us like. We said, 'Enough is enough' like. We can't, in not the nicest words, fuck up our lives and just end up in this regressive class system. Like our focus was [...] and we were like, 'We want to have this. We want to have a degree. We want to be, in the nicest way, like the white kids off [sic] the school. (Dmitri)

This is reflected also in Samira's explanation of how her frustration that those young people elected to represent other youth tend to be privileged themselves had motivated her to be active. As noted above (see Section 3.3.3), respondents felt that activists are often inspired to act by their own marginalisation and this was demonstrated in the case of Dmitri and Samira who were both active in a local organisation providing a dedicated space for working class young people's social and political involvement. Specifically in relation to ethnic minority communities, Meena, said that she had been motivated to become active in the National Union of Students in order to 'do more for black and brown students. And do more for Muslim students.'

Of particular interest to this case study is the suggestion by two respondents that security responses to Islamist terrorism – such as the War on Terror – as well as growing Islamophobia had directly motivated their activism. For Ruksana, who had experienced a rise in Islamophobia following the 7/7 London attacks, this had been decisive in shifting her own future professional direction from medicine to politics. After 7/7, she says, she 'became much more politicised' and wanted 'to better understand what the current structures and systems were and how I could then work within that framework to create the changes I wanted to see in the world, and to, kind of, support minority communities predominantly' (Ruksana). Zuhair also makes a more general connection between the securitisation of politics, Islamophobia and the mobilisation of young Muslims:

[...] as a result of the war on terror, as a result of growing Islamophobia and institutional Islamophobia and the persecution of Muslims and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the UK, many young Muslims immediately, like, came to the defences of Islam and immediately sort of became one of those front voices in the fight back against anti-Muslim rhetoric. And I think it was almost the fire that came from that lent itself to many people then wanting to defend it as much as they could. (Zuhair)

At a more personal level, Nadira reported how, at school, she had found her ethnic minority background meant she could bring something new to creative projects. Later, while working as a teaching assistant in a difficult school, she also used her knowledge of what she terms 'Asian swearwords' to help her motivate, and control, pupils who often used racist terms out of ignorance or because they had heard them at home:

Like, with one of the kids, I had... to keep their attention span in, I used to tell them, 'All right, listen, kid. Smash out these ten science questions. Easy peasy. And I'll teach you Asian swearwords.' And then they're like, 'Yeah, miss, go on, then.' And they smash it out super-fast. They do it in, like, ten minutes flat. And then I just teach them random Bangla words, just like for chair or table. And the best ones were when... you know when you sneeze and you say, 'Bless you'? In the Muslim culture we say, '*Al hamdil'a*.' Means the

same thing, like God bless you. And they'd be like, 'What does that mean, *al hamdil'a*?' I'm like, '*Al hamdil'a*?' They're like, 'Yeah.' I go, 'It's a sick word. It's like such a new slang word you'll never hear it. Like you could be the first to say it.' And they go round saying, 'Miss, *al hamdil'a*.' And it's like, 'There you go.' That's extra blessing for me. Things like that. They just don't know any better, so it's like, you know, if it catches their attention and it cheers them up and it, you know, helps, eases my job as well, so it's, it's all good. (Nadira)

The connection between the Prevent agenda, the securitisation of British society and the stigmatisation of Muslim communities is relatively well established (Thomas, 2016: 172). This study of social involvement of young Muslims may show something new; that these processes can be taken as the starting point for positive social and political involvement by those they stigmatise.

3.4 Social involvement: Inhibitors

As noted in Section 3.3, one of the key concerns of the PROMISE project is to understand and promote social involvement among marginalised or stigmatised young people. Crucial for that is of course to understand what prevents young people from such groups becoming socially involved. For this reason, references to 'barriers to social involvement' were coded in all the ethnographic case studies conducted for the PROMISE project in order to capture directly the range of factors cited by respondents that inhibited their (or their peers') social involvement. In this case study, barriers to social involvement was an issue mentioned in all but one of the interviews and, across the whole data set, a total of 89 references were made to such barriers. Young people's discussion of these barriers was collated under 18 different experiences or 'factors' preventing or inhibiting the social involvement of respondents. These factors are illustrated in Figure 2 (below) where their relative density (number of references in each category) is reflected in the hierarchy chart.

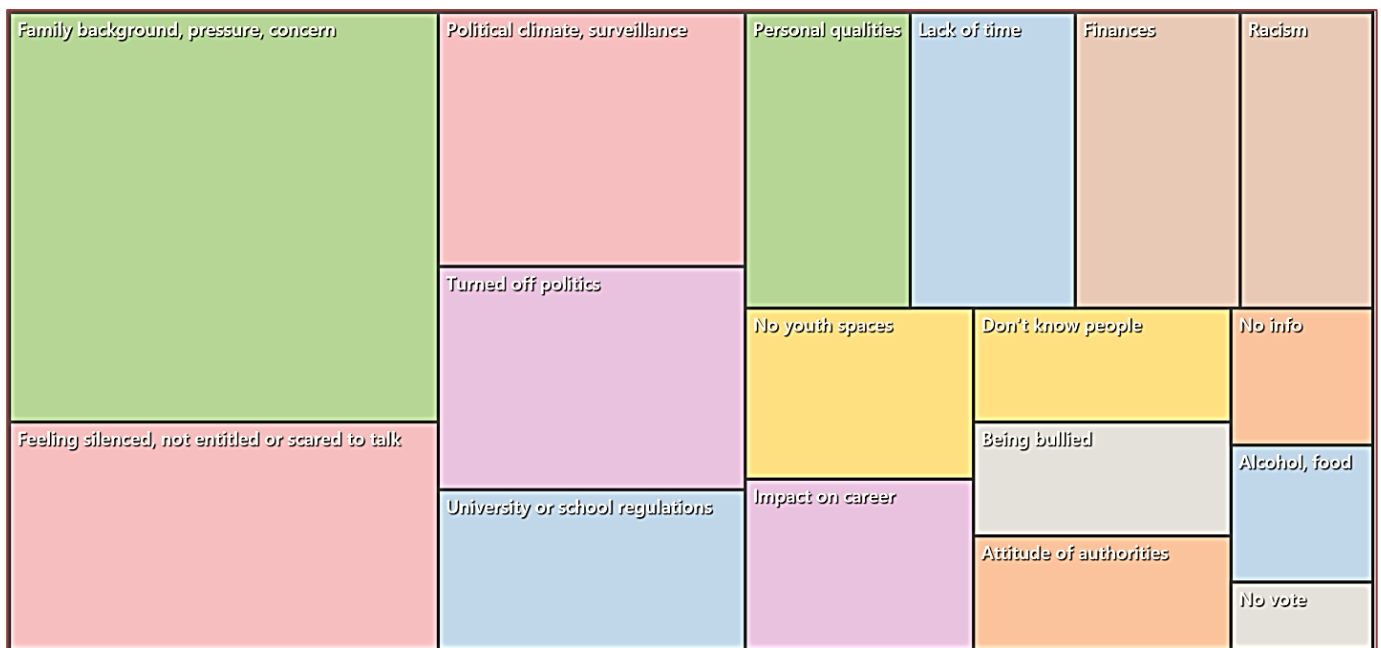


Figure 2: Barriers to social involvement cited (by number of references)

It should be noted that while mostly these factors are cited because they are experienced by the individuals themselves, in some cases interviewees were commenting on what they believed inhibited other young people from participating. In the discussion of findings below, it is the respondents' own experience that is referred to unless explicitly stated otherwise. In this section, the single largest inhibitor to social involvement – family concerns – is considered first. Thereafter factors are grouped and discussed as 'individual barriers to social involvement' followed by 'structural barriers to social involvement'.

3.4.1 Family concerns

As evident from Figure 2, the most frequently cited factor inhibiting social involvement is family background. Most usually this reflects the experience of young people of feeling pressure from family not to get involved or concerns of parents about involvement; 11 respondents cited such pressure or concern. These concerns were in some cases related to the prioritisation by family (usually parents) of education or work over political or civic engagement or even leisure activities. Dmitri, for example, reports that his family is 'really negative' about his political activism because 'of the financial and the time constraints' (that is that it takes time away from study and he spends his own money on such activism). In other cases they reflected more specific concerns about participation in particularly 'risky' activities. As noted above (see Section 3.3.1), the preference of parents for their children to engage in 'safe' activities such as volunteering is not unusual. Among our respondents, however, there was a particular inflection of this concern related to the wider securitisation of society and the positioning of Islamic faith as 'risky' in this regard. Thus, for example, participation in a university Islamic Society (ISOC) might raise concern among parents that their son or daughter was becoming 'too religious' and thus might appear more 'suspect' to agencies of surveillance. Or, as Ashraf recounts, parents felt being politically active made you more visible in a political/security climate that made that undesirable:

But also, in terms of getting more politically active, it was something that my parents and family weren't too keen on at the time, especially with like Prevent coming out and things like that. So just on the advice of everyone, I just, kind of, gave it up. (Ashraf)

The majority (more than two thirds) of the references to family pressure or concern inhibiting social involvement are found in the narratives of female respondents (see Figure 3).

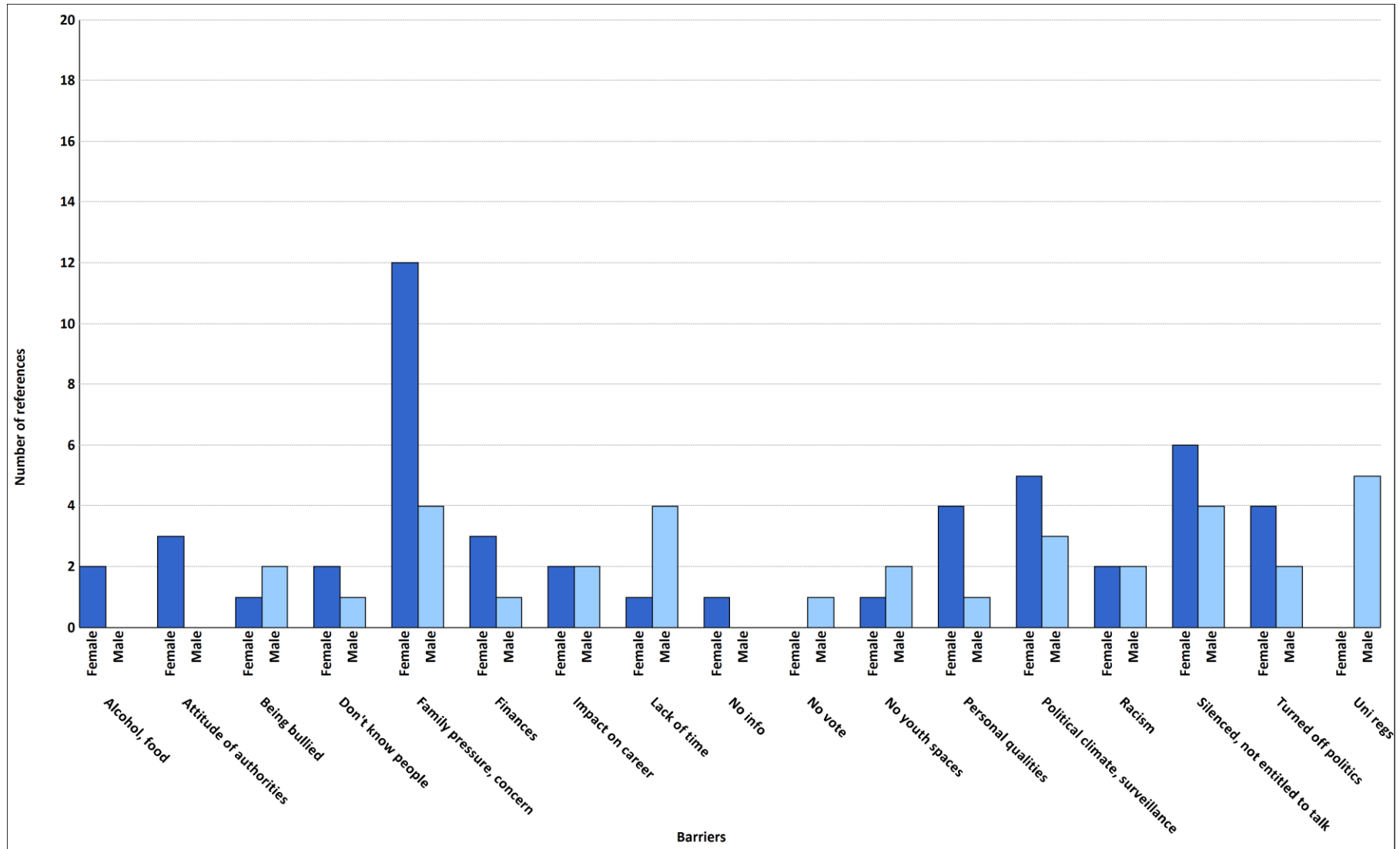


Figure 3: Barriers to Social Involvement by Gender

Female respondents frequently reported constraints on them going out or participating even in routine extra-curricular activities after school or college. Liyla recounted repeated constraints on her development. She had had to fight to be allowed to pursue drama at GCSE level, had not been allowed to attend an open day at Cambridge University organised by the school and had been prohibited from getting a part-time job in a bookshop in the city centre. This is how she explains a particularly painful prohibition on her social involvement when she was forced to give up sporting activities that she loved:

I always loved my stepfather as my normal father. But as soon as I went to high school, the game's changed, the rules changed. Everything changed. And I was thinking, 'Why?' Because in primary school, in my last year, I did lots and lots of sports, because my teacher said I was really good at it. And in high school, I was trying to carry on with it. In Year Seven I did fine. In Year Eight, I wasn't allowed to go to certain ones. And in Year Nine, I was like forbidden to go to them. [...] because they said 'it's not for girls'. (Liyla)

For another female respondent – Maria - the oppressive nature of these familial concerns (in this case the struggle is with the respondent's mother) were expressed as an almost existential struggle to 'be':

I want to go out, I want to explore, I want to be around people. They make me, you know, to make me happy, to get some free time to myself. That's how I like to spend my free time - to go out, but it's like she has to put me in a position that I don't wanna be in all the time and change me and I don't wanna be changed; I wanna stay as who I am, but... (Maria)

However, male respondents also report parental concerns about them being out late or attending social events where there is alcohol and mixed company. Dmitri, an 18 year old student between college and University, for example, noted that he was required to be home by 10pm if he attended events as his mother was concerned for his safety; she felt young Muslims were particular vulnerable to attack. Ahmed also felt that his mother did not understand how important it was for his future career to be visible at social events after work:

[...] so, for me for example, my mum would have a problem with me going out to a work social if there were drinks involved. Whereas, from my perspective I don't really have a choice, because if I don't go then I, it looks really bad and there's Islamic opinions that say that it's okay within certain limits to go to these sort of events. And obviously you know you need to boost your career. But then my mum doesn't understand that. (Ahmed)

While the absolute number of respondents and references to family imposed constraints on social involvement is too small in a qualitative study of this kind to draw meaningful conclusions, the combination of references to the gendered nature of support (see Section 3.3.1) and of constraint is indicative of a question worthy of future research and analysis.

3.4.2 Individual barriers to involvement

The imprint of what Beck calls the individualised society in which 'the individual must therefore learn [...] to conceive of himself or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to

his/her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships [...] (Beck, 1992: 135) is clearly visible in some of the individual factors respondents say inhibit collective action, civic engagement or social involvement. Thus respondents see 'personal qualities' such as being shy or lacking confidence as being an important inhibitor. Aisha, for example, describes herself as 'a very uninvolved person'. Comparing herself negatively to her friends at school who were much more 'on the ball', Aisha recognises her own shyness as a constraint upon her agency; alongside others at school who were much more confident, she says, 'I felt a bit of obstruction in my capacity to act'. Other respondents (who are themselves highly active) reflect that 'others' – especially 'traditionally Asian Muslim girls' according to respondent Ruksana - lack the confidence to get involved in politics. In one case (cited by the respondent himself as well as his sister) being bullied had inhibited the respondent from taking part in sporting activities that he enjoyed and led to his further social exclusion. Other respondents describe themselves as being inhibited from participation by their lack of sufficient passion to maintain what is required to be seriously involved in politics or recognise this trait in other people (especially if they have not been brought up to be interested in politics). Respondents also blame themselves or others for not having found out about particular events or groups earlier or not knowing enough people in the right places to get elected to positions.

The individualisation of responsibility to make your own biography is evident also in reference to a number of inhibitors that reflect the pressure young people feel to be successful in multiple ways. Respondents talk about the lack of time for social involvement due to work or study commitments or long periods of time commuting between study place and home. This is recognised by Carlito to have affected his own and others' social involvement:

I think some people are more passionate about it. And some people don't have the time for it. They've got a lot going on themselves. [...] I think it's normal to get involved. But it's not normal not to get involved as well. Just like I say, young people I think are quite pressured a lot to expectations nowadays. (Carlito)

These pressures to succeed, one respondent noted, meant that many young people came to university to get their degree and then to get a job and that is all they cared about (Fiza). Others were inhibited from running for office in student politics or gave up political participation because they feared the exposure they would get from this would negatively impact on future job prospects. This is exemplified by Meena's explanation of why she chose not to run for office in the National Union of Students (NUS):

[...] so right after national conference this year, I was asked to run for president of NUS. But I turned that down because I can't, I can't... yeah, once I leave student politics, I need to have an actual career, and I can't take that hit of like going through what [names earlier NUS president] did or going through what [names another activist] did. You know people do Google searches now when you're going for a job and I don't want something coming up. So yeah, even though, even though I really did want to consider that at least the position of vice-president at NUS, I don't think that will be happening [...] (Meena)

This scrutiny to which young people are subjected, particularly via social media, is discussed also above (Section 3.2.3) and is an important barrier to involvement that disproportionately affects young people since they were born into the age of social media and their footprint is relatively greater as they use these media more than older generations.

3.4.3 Structural barriers to involvement

Inhibiting factors to social involvement can take the form of more structural or institutional barriers to participation. As discussed above (Section 1.1), British Muslim communities experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in UK society and suffer a disproportionate rate of poverty. In this study, financial barriers to social involvement were noted by a number of respondents. These include the fact that young people in general, or they themselves in particular, do not have money to travel into the city or get involved in social events. Samira expresses her frustration that well-off young people are able to participate in activities organised by a group dedicated to promoting participation by working class young people just because they can afford to:

It still does frustrate me when like we do get like, like, like private school, rich kids that it, it happens a lot. We get a lot of them, 'cause obviously they can make it. It's easier for them to get there and it's easier to, for them to invest that time and have that time to go to those things and have the money to get there and stuff. (Samira)

Financial barriers to involvement sometimes intersect with religious identity in an exclusionary way. Two respondents, for example, mentioned that taking student loans went against Islamic principles (because you were required to pay interest on the loans) and made study at university particularly difficult.

Inhibiting factors intersect with the experience of being young to compound exclusion; one respondent noted his frustration that attempts to get a private member's bill on lowering the voting age to 16 had been thwarted. Social involvement is also restricted, according to respondents, because of the failure to provide youth-oriented infrastructure. Respondents were frustrated that there were not community centres or leisure spaces (such as affordable gyms or milk bars) for young people just to hang out at (Samira) and that any youth provision that did exist was designed primarily 'to keep young people out of trouble' rather than facilitate young people's political engagement (Rafi). Local mosques were also criticised for being too 'traditional' and not community oriented enough and having youth groups that were youthful 'in name only' (Anas).

It is recognised in the literature on youth participation that a key challenge to the civic engagement of young people is 'adultism', that is 'the tendency of adults to control the nature and content of young civic engagement activity' (Brady *et al.*, 2012: 22). In this study, attitudes of those in authority are cited by a number of respondents as inhibiting involvement. Liyla, for example, found that suggestions and initiatives she took in one organisation in which she participated were ignored by the organiser. Institutional – school and university – rules and regulations also inhibited social involvement or political participation. A particular source of frustration were university regulations that monitored invited speakers and insisted on bag searching at Islamic society events (see Section 3.2.4). These were experienced as a form of surveillance that made respondents feel as if they were being watched until they made a mistake. This is how Khaled describes the impact of one of these regulations:

And another thing is, like, when we have our welcome day, for example, there's several events that happen in Academy where people come in with their bags. When we had our welcome dinner, everyone's bags had to be searched before we went in. And I think it makes Muslims feel victimised. (Khaled)

The most frequently cited structural barriers to social involvement, however, were related to the security-focused ‘political climate’. This securitisation of society and politics made respondents nervous about what they said; this was a particular anxiety for respondents who were engaged in public dissemination such as Nadira. Respondents also mentioned concern that organisations they participated in might be infiltrated (Rafi) or the fear amongst the community that if they were to get involved in community counter-radicalisation work, they themselves would be accused of being extremists. The intrusion of security into activities – even Muslim worship – is described by Meena as one of the reasons young Muslims do not get involved in politics:

I think you have a clamping down on like, on Muslims who are involved in political, politics in general. Like for example, I feel like they were already having issues. So for example like they have issues with you know, institution maybe wanting to install cameras, you know, with the institution sending in people from... we have like a chaplain service. And they would every once in a while send in someone from the chaplain service to check if everything was okay. And they would like randomly show up to the prayer room to, I don't know, check. So they knew that they were... there was already that culture of suspicion that existed. (Meena)

In some cases this is experienced directly as racism. Thus the abuse received by politically active people on social media was reported to be much worse for Muslim activists than others. One such politically active respondent described how his personal capacity to act ‘democratically’ had been questioned because of his Muslim background:

As a Students’ Union representative who's Muslim, yeah. So I've had my ability to represent students be questioned. I had my ability to follow democratic procedures be questioned because of who I was. (Zuhair)

One of the impacts of feeling targeted as a security threat was a sense of being silenced, excluded, not entitled to talk or afraid to talk. This feeling was mentioned in six interviews. Ashraf’s experience of feeling silenced because of his ethnicity and faith is cited at length below as it captures the vicious circle of stigmatisation and exclusion experienced by respondents:

But I think, also with this, with the whole media thing about Muslims, it makes you hold your tongue a lot more. Like you want to talk about an issue that doesn't really affect Muslims or doesn't really have anything to do with Muslims, but you know the fact that you're a, like a Muslim immigrant that you're not allowed to say certain things. Like for example, with the monarchy. You have people, you have like a legitimate debate on people who don't believe there should be a monarchy. But suddenly if you're not a white British, and you say something anti-monarch, about the monarchy, but about a negative way, suddenly you get all these comments about, ‘Oh, go back to your own country,’ things like that. [...] So one thing I've found is like when you're talking about the whole ISIS thing, of course, we don't agree with them, but I think it's important to have, like a frank discussion as to where they started from. And you have a lot of journalists, you have political commentators who will tell you that it started after the Iraq invasion, and things like that. But suddenly as a Muslim, if you try and put the blame on the Iraq invasion,

you're suddenly apologising for what ISIS are doing, when it's [...] you're suddenly like an ISIS supporter or something like that. So it becomes a very tight ground to walk, even with the whole anti-terrorism thing. (Ashraf)

Respondents also expressed fear of talking about particular topics – such as Islam or jihad – while one respondent who worked as a presenter at a Muslim radio station noted that sometimes she was 'too scared to say anything' in case it reflected badly on the whole station (Nadira). In two cases respondents said that they felt negative media coverage of Muslim student activists or social media abuse of them were consciously designed to deter Muslim students from becoming politically engaged. This is how Meena articulates her experience:

I think a lot of people are aware that Muslims are becoming, a lot of Muslims are becoming increasingly political, particularly within the university spaces. And they're occupying positions that are of importance. So the reason they run these stories, and run these relentless stories about one person or the other person and so forth, is because... is to scare people. Is to scare people into silence. (Meena)

If the aim of extending the Prevent agenda into broader social institutions and spaces has been in order to encourage open discussion and community ownership of the safeguarding of young people and safety of communities as a whole, it appears at the moment to be having the opposite effect.

In the Introduction it was noted that although factors that 'enable' and 'inhibit' social involvement are discussed separately in this report, in practice many factors identified in the narratives of young people appear as both enabling *and* inhibiting, reflecting the deeply entwined nature of structure and agency (see Section 1.2). While these processes generally take place outside the consciousness of individual actors and are normally discussed at an abstract level, in the following example the process by which constraining structures invoke agency, which then confronts, and impacts on, those structures is laid bare. In the interview excerpt below, Rafi, who had been (wrongfully) arrested following a political demonstration, describes how the overwhelming sense of powerless he felt had been transformed into agency:

I managed to interpret the feelings that I had as powerlessness. And that was kind of a common theme that a lot of people who have police contact have, is that sense of powerlessness. And I was like, 'That's really unfair, you know. We have these rights, that are meant to protect us from like police abuse and stuff. But why do people continue to feel powerlessness in the face of the police?' So part of me was thinking about how can we organise round that. And you know, the thing that resulted from that eventually was the [names regional police monitoring project]. (Rafi)

Rafi was not only wrongfully arrested but had to spend some months fighting prosecution and extremely negative exposure in the media due to the arrest. In his narrative we see how structures of race/ethnicity/religion, class and gender constrain the social involvement of those who are positioned as the object of surveillance but also how the practice of confronting those structures - and the institutional powers that support them - itself produces agency that acts back on those very structures and institutions.

4 Conclusions

This report presents the provisional findings of a study of the responses of a group of young Muslims to the stigmatisation, and conflict, they encounter as a result of their construction as a ‘suspect community’ in contemporary British society. The case study is an example of a group of young people whose stigmatisation is not rooted in troubled family, education or employment trajectories nor early criminalisation. On the contrary, the respondent group in this study is predominantly well educated and aspirational, mainly still living in the parental home and well supported by family. However, at the structural level, as young Muslims, respondents in this case study experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in the UK (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017: 5). This is confirmed by the descriptions of many respondents of their family backgrounds, material circumstances and expressed, by some, in strong working class identities. Moreover, and critical to this study, respondents experience stigmatisation through belonging to what is constructed as a ‘suspect community’. Drawing on Breen-Smyth (2014: 231-2) we understand a ‘suspect community’ to be a sub-set of the population - identified by an ethnic, religious, racial, national or other marker - constructed as ‘suspects’ by mechanisms deployed by the state to ensure national or state ‘security’ and reinforced by societal responses and social practices. In this case, those state mechanisms relate to a series of legislative responses, specifically the Prevent element of the UK counter-terrorism Contest strategy, to concerns about the threat of, predominantly Islamist, ‘home-grown’ terrorism. The societal response to this has included the daily reinforcement through media reporting of associations of Islam and Muslims with terrorism, oppression (especially relating to gender and sexuality) and dogmatism as well as the constant feeling of being under surveillance and scrutiny. This feeling among respondents in this study of ‘being watched until they made a mistake’ is due, not least, to the consequences of the implementation, since 2015, of the Prevent duty across a range of social institutions such as schools, colleges and universities with which young people have daily contact.

This report starts by presenting findings that confirm that young Muslims experience a strong sense of stigmatisation due to: the widespread, negative connotation of Islam and Muslims; personal experiences of racism and Islamophobia; and their interactions with the Prevent strategy and its implementation. While this is far from the first study to document the impact on young Muslims of negative representations of Islam and Muslims and the rising incidence of hate crime, two important findings emerged. First, the data from this study suggest that Prevent procedures are perceived as reinforcing the association of Muslims with terrorism and experienced as making them subject to securitisation practices that work to stigmatise them. Secondly, this additional stigmatisation problematises already complex and sometimes troublesome identity work that young Muslims face. Getting to the point of feeling ‘comfortable in being Muslim’ is already a struggle for many young British Muslims; the depiction of Islam as the ‘new enemy within’ makes that challenge harder.

The report proceeds to consider how these experiences of stigmatisation shape respondents’ attitudes to engagement and the types of activism in which they become involved. The data from this study demonstrate that respondents are engaged in a wide range of activities including: charity work, fundraising and volunteering; the propagation of Islam (*Dawa*); social media based activities; campaigning; participating in protests; and numerous social, cultural and educational activities. However, the most frequently mentioned activity is that which is Prevent-related. This includes both the experience of college students of being on the receiving end of Prevent-related educational interventions and participation by university students in campaigns such as the NUS ‘Students not

Suspects' campaign, which aims to get the Prevent duty repealed. It also includes the close collaboration of individual respondents with local authorities and schools to clarify misconceptions about Prevent. While it is impossible to discuss in this report the meaning, experience and effectiveness of the wide range of activities in which young people are engaged, one important conclusion emerges from the provisional analysis set out here. While Prevent (and the wider discourse of the war on terror) contributes to the stigmatisation of young Muslims, it has, at the same time, encouraged young Muslims to be active citizens. In the words of one respondent, 'it gets them to mobilise'. While for some respondents this might take the form of participating in targeted 'prevent Prevent' campaigns or protest actions, for many more it is expressed in charity, volunteering, educational and social activities which aim to counter negative images of Islam and represent Islam in a positive way. For young Muslims 'doing good deeds' can be a powerful weapon in the fight against stigmatisation.

Thus, in the short term, stigmatisation might appear to be a motivating factor. For some young people, the Prevent agenda provides a focus for counter-mobilisation and acts as a resource or enabling factor in social involvement. The findings of this study on what enables and inhibits young people in becoming socially involved provide some confirmation of this proposition. While it is well-established that social exclusion in general acts to inhibit social involvement, some young Muslims in this study felt their own marginality *enabled* their civic and political engagement; it was what inspired them (and their peers) to seek social change. This finding stands in stark contrast to existing data on the relationships between socio-economic disadvantage, Muslim religious background and low levels of civic participation (Garratt, 2016: 3). It may be that we are seeing here a generational shift between first and second generation Muslim populations in the UK similar to that already identified in the spheres of employment and education (*ibid.*: 2). It is possible that an 'ethnic capital' (Shah *et al.*, 2010) has accrued among second generation Muslims that facilitates not only their educational achievement but also access to the social networks and organisational resources that impact positively on young people's propensity to participate (Soler-i-Marti and Ferrer-Fons, 2015: 110). Whatever the explanation, it is important to recognise that the mobilising power of the stigmatising effects of the Prevent agenda only holds in conditions of a range of other supportive contexts for social involvement experienced by young people.

Of these contexts, the role of the family is the most intriguing as it is the single most frequently cited factor both *enabling* and *inhibiting* young people's social involvement. The salience of the family is not unexpected given the age and ethnic backgrounds of the young people taking part in this study. However, studies to date tend to understand the importance of 'family' primarily in relation to socio-economic status - as a kind of proxy for class, neighbourhood and access to social networks and capitals. The findings of this study suggest that the family plays a more independent and active enabling and constraining function: in the (gendered) socialisation of young people into social involvement (*inter alia* via political discussion within families); through setting limits and priorities with regard to the balance between social involvement and 'real' life (study and employment); and by guiding young people towards, and away from, certain types of social involvement. In considering this more complex role of the family, this study also identified an important emotional dimension of support or constraint on social involvement emanating from the family. This manifests itself in often contradictory ways. The high aspirations of parents encourage educational achievement but may constrain extra-curricular activity thought to endanger future career plans. Close parental involvement in young people's lives is experienced in some cases as unwavering support that allows

the fulfilment of potential but in others as a constraining force that prevents them being who they are. Parental narratives of self-sacrifice (not having had the opportunities they wish to give their children) are inspiring and motivational but, at the same time, constitute an emotional pressure to provide a return on the, profoundly personal, investment. This emotional dimension of family support and constraint might be considered alongside other emotional or affective factors mentioned by respondents such as the emotional impact of constant exposure to negative representations of Islam and Muslims or the importance of ‘emotional resilience’ and being together with other activists who share their commitment for sustaining their participation. Taken together, these findings suggest the need for greater attention to emotional factors facilitating and constraining young people’s social involvement.

Finally, we turn to the equally ambiguous role of securitisation of society, and the construction of young Muslims as ‘suspect communities’. In the short term, the stigmatisation experienced by respondents constructed as objects of surveillance appears to enable social involvement by ‘mobilising’ them to counteract the negative associations with Islam and Muslims. However, in the longer term, by focusing social involvement on countering this discourse, other aspects of structural disadvantage go unchallenged and many young Muslims are left feeling silenced and unentitled to speak, not least on matters that are important to them (foreign policy, the appropriation of Islam by terrorist actors, and everyday British politics). This, in turn, reinforces their identification (by others) first and foremost as Muslims whether or not they themselves choose the primacy of this aspect of their identity and despite the fact that they are acutely aware of the importance of the intersectionality of privilege and disadvantage. Thus while, mobilisation against ‘suspect community’ status may constitute a positive response to stigmatisation in the first instance, in the longer term it may constrain young Muslims’ social involvement within a form of identity politics that fails to reflect their complex subjectivities and denies them the opportunity to make the broader contributions to politics and society that they desire.

5 Future analysis

5.1 Themes for cross-case analysis

An interesting theme emerging from this case study is the strong awareness of ‘stigmatisation’ among respondents. This exists notwithstanding that many of respondents were extremely successful students and many were actively engaged civically (e.g. in youth councils or NGOs) or had gained elected office in organisations (ISOC or the NUS). It is also manifest in, as one respondent puts it, ‘feeling victimised’ by regulations (such as the security screening of bags) that are universally imposed but are experienced as targeted at the Muslim community. The question then arises of how to understand this ‘stigmatisation’ and how it works to inhibit their involvement. Can we distinguish between ‘objectively existing’ and ‘subjectively experienced’ stigmatisation? If we can, do these two forms of stigmatisation work in the same way? And do they have the same effects on young people? Does this stigmatisation reproduce across generations? And, if it subjectively experienced rather than objectively present, how can it be tackled? It would be useful to explore this theme across other cases where young people articulate a strong sense of stigmatisation.

A second theme warranting further investigation is whether the kinds of social involvement of stigmatised and marginalised youth conform to, or resist, classic typological distinctions around forms

of ‘civic’, ‘political’, ‘latent’ and ‘manifest’ engagement/participation. This could provide a useful multi-case and transnational contribution to the attempt to rethink our categories of ‘participation’ in a way that captures what young people *do* rather than what they do not do.

A third question arises from this – and potentially other – case studies as to what it is that fuels the social involvement of stigmatised or excluded young people in the absence of many of the socio-demographic characteristics with which propensity to participation is associated? The notion of ‘capital’ – social, cultural, economic, ‘ethnic’ – as a crucial factor is worth further investigation. As discussed above, however, this study also identified emotional support and ‘resilience’ as important factors that do not appear to be recognised in the existing literature and the presence of which it would be useful to identify in other case studies in the PROMISE project.

5.2 Questions for further investigation (through triangulation)

This case is unusual in that it presents the experience of young people who clearly articulate a sense of their own stigmatisation in contemporary society; there is also reason to propose that this would be a shared experience for young Muslims across many European countries where they constitute a religious minority usually of (first, second or third generation) immigrant background. At the same time, the young people in this study are strongly aspirational and have high levels of education and ‘ethnic capital’. They are also very socially involved and politically engaged, in some cases, they are politically active also.

One question that could be usefully explored both across qualitative cases but also using the quantitative data gathered relates to the key variables that might explain why some young people who are stigmatised respond with non-activism while others become engaged and active assuming, as this case would lead us to believe, there is no straightforward correlation between socio-economic status and levels of activism. The key variables that might be tested, which appear significant in this case, include: religion; level of education; immigration experience (in family or self); and ‘ethnic capital’.

The question posed might be: *In the presence of similar levels of socio-economic disadvantage, does i) religion; or ii) level of education; or iii) immigration experience determine propensity to become socially involved?*

The reason for testing this also across other qualitative case studies is that the key variable may be subjective, or captured better through interview than survey data, e.g. ‘aspiration’ or ‘ethnic capital’. For example, it may be the aspiration of parents which, first, orients young people towards higher education and thus opens networks and capitals to them, rather than the higher education level itself, that is the key factor in them becoming active.

6 References

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Appendix: Socio-demographic data of respondents

	Age	Country of Birth	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Residential status
Abdullah	22	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Married or living with partner	Male	Muslim	Lives independently alone
Ahmed	22	UK	Completed postgraduate education	In full-time employment	Arab	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Aisha	19	Hong Kong	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Aladdin	17	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Arab	Single	Male	No religion	Lives at home with parent(s)
Ameena	22	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Anas	22	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	Arab	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Anastasia	17	Germany	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Middle Eastern	Single	Female	No religion	Lives at home with parent(s)
Ashraf	22	UK	Currently at university	In part-time employment	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with other relatives (brother)
Carlito	21	UK	Completed university	In part-time employment	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Dmitri	18	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Fiza	21	UK	Completed university	In full-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Jo	20	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	White British	Married or living with partner	Female	Muslim	Lives independently with partner

Khaled	20	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	Arab	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Liyla	17	UK	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Maria	18	Germany	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Iranian Kurdish	Single	Female	Other: Spiritual	Lives at home with parent(s)
Meena	22	UK	Other On one year sabbatical year from University	In full-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Nadira	24	UK	Completed university	In part-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Putra	32	Indonesia	Studying for postgraduate education	In full-time education	Indonesian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Rafi	28	UK	Completed postgraduate education	Working and in part-time education	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Ruksana	27	UK	Completed university	In full-time employment	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Samira	17	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Shareef	24	Pakistan	Completed university	Unemployed	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Tariq	22	Pakistan	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Married	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with own partner/children
Valentina	18	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Kurdish	Single	Female	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)
Waleed	14	UK	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)

Yardan	18	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	British Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives independently with friends
Zuhair	22	UK	Currently at university	In full-time education	Asian	Single	Male	Muslim	Lives at home with parent(s)