

# Rethinking the relationship between marginalisation, stigmatisation and social involvement: Young Muslims' responses to their construction as 'suspect communities'



**Necla ACIK & Hilary PILKINGTON,  
University Of Manchester**

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**promoting youth involvement and  
social engagement**



# Horizon 2020 PROMISE: Case Study- Youth Mobilisations of ‘Suspect Communities’



A screenshot of the PROMISE website. The header includes the University of Manchester logo and the title "PROMISE: Youth involvement and social engagement". Navigation links include "About PROMISE", "People and partners", "PROMISE newsfeed", "Research impact", and "Contact us". The main content area features a "People and partners" section with text about the project's scope and a group photo of participants. Below this is an "European partners" section with a list of countries: Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Slovakia, and The UK. A map of Europe highlights the participating countries in purple. A Twitter feed on the right shows tweets from @H2020Promise, including one that says "#H2020 PROMISE partners have forged impressive links with national and local stakeholders working with young people bit.ly/2uA6uDu".

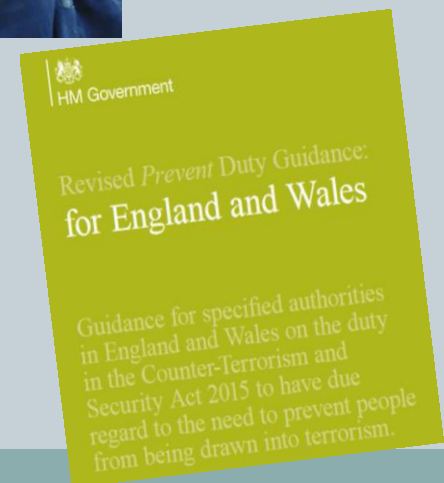
Full report available on:  
[www.promise.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk)

# 'Suspect Community'

- Anti-immigration & anti-Islam climate
- 'Home-grown terrorism'
- The UK counter-terrorism PREVENT Strategy
  - aims to identify people at risk of radicalisation and extremism and prevent them from being drawn into terrorism



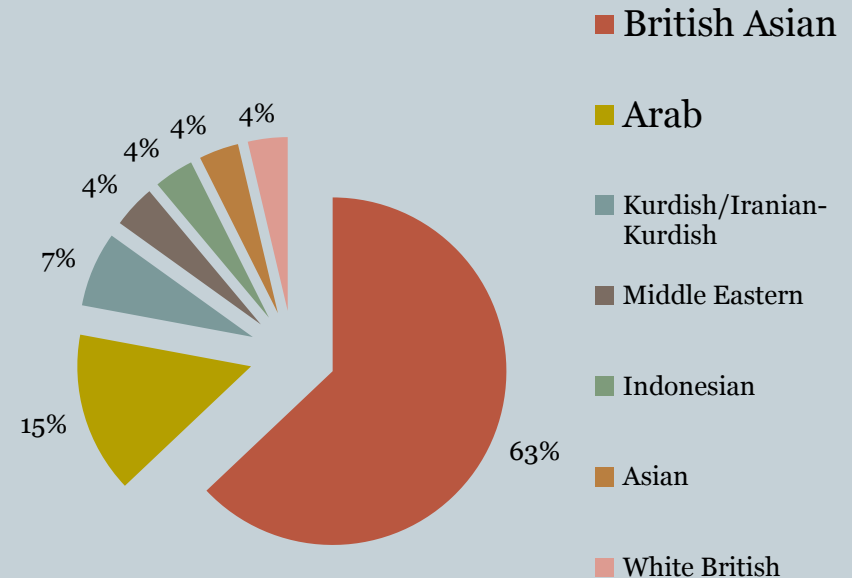
Promotional video by MEND on Islamophobia



# Method and Data

- Fieldwork Nov 2016 - Sep 2017.
- 26 semi-structured interviews
- 8 observed events
- Male=55.5, female=45.5%
- Age 14-32 (median 17-22)
- Religion: Muslim or Muslim background
- 2/3 of sample students or in full time education, single, living with parents.

Figure 1: Respondent set by identified ethnicity



# Organisations referred to/engaged in



<b>ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED IN</b>	<b>32</b> <b>(sources)</b>	<b>160</b> <b>(references)</b>
ISOC (Islamic Societies of Universities/Colleges)	19	104
FOSIS (Federation of Islamic Societies)	10	16
Student representative bodies i.e. NUS, SU	8	12
National organisations (Citizen UK etc.)	5	8
MEND (Muslim Engagement and Development)	4	4
Mosque youth committee	4	5
Interfaith groups	3	4
Local organisations (Reclaim, Youth Council)	2	5
CAGE	1	2

# Stigmatisation



- Negative connotations of Muslims/Islam
- Personal experiences of Islamophobia
- Feeling under constant suspicion

*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)*

*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)*



# Countering Stigmatisation: Prevent (Dis)Engagement



- Anti- PREVENT campaign
  - NUS ‘Students Not Suspects campaign’; called for a complete repeal of PREVENT

## Collaborative/localized approach:

- Negotiating with the authorities to mitigating the negative effects of PREVENT.
- Working with relevant bodies to ensure that PREVENT is appropriately implemented as a safeguarding policy similar to sexual exploitation etc.

Activities engaged in	Sources: 34	Ref: 288
PREVENT - implementing and resisting	19	33
Social media use	13	22
Volunteering	11	14
Fundraising and charities	11	25
Campaigns	10	48
Dawa	7	13
Sports	7	14
Street protest/ demonstration	7	7
Community activism	6	14
Debating	6	7
Advising, mentoring	6	7
Elections, being elected	6	12
Organising talks, lectures, religious education	5	8
Reading, learning, teaching	5	7
Writing, blogging	5	8
Feminism	4	4
Organising social events	4	8
Hanging out with friends, leisure and relaxation	4	5
Music, performing arts	4	6
Interest in politics, political issues, political organisations	4	14
Boycotting actions	2	2
Media	2	4
Anti-racism, anti-hate crime	2	2
Environmental activism	1	1
Petitioning	1	1



# Countering Stigmatisation: Doing Good Deeds



- Engagement in charity, volunteering, educational and social activities
  - aim to counter negative images of Islam and represent Islam in a positive way.
  - ‘doing good deeds’ can be a powerful weapon in the fight against stigmatisation.

*'Cause you very rarely hear positive new stories [about Muslims], and I think that's kind of why [Muslim] people feel that they have to promote when they're doing good work or they try to, to market things much more effectively. (Ruksana)*

*Kind of a giving back to your community, kind of thing, that's on the microcosm really. And, but it, it does help instil this or it helps dispel a lot of these stereotypes at a young age for a lot of these young people, because they would know a Muslim who's, who's been helping them. (Yardan)*

# Marginality & social activism

## Marginality acts as an enabler to social activism

*'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. [...] 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 whitekids off [sic] the school.'* (Dmitri)

## Prevent politicised young Muslims:

*'And I know, for example, like the Prevent agenda, has really politicised a lot of young people because they wanna campaign against that.'* (Ruksana)

*'(...) if I was just to go out and have a conversation with someone, I wouldn't bring that [talk about Prevent] 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.'* (Ahsraf)

# Conclusions



- Important to pay attention to stigmatisations-attack on self-worth
- Understanding the importance of charity work and fundraising as a vehicle to counter-stigmatisation
- Important to provide spaces for young Muslims to develop as political agents