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### Spies, surveillance and stakeouts: monitoring Muslim moves in British state schools

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## **Spies, surveillance and stakeouts: monitoring Muslim moves in British state schools**

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This article will provide a critique of the PVE initiative and its implementation within the context of primary education following the events of 9/11, the 2001 riots and 7/7. Drawing upon empirical data I will argue that the monitoring of young Muslims and ‘extremism’ is problematic and reinforces the logics of Islamophobia through practices of governmentality. Moreover I will examine how whilst the monitoring of extremism is prioritized in many schools, training for teachers on race equality, tolerance and accepting difference is weak if not absent. This, I suggest, demonstrates a clear manifestation of contemporary hegemonic post-racial politics which increasingly silences the critique of institutional racism. Additionally this article will explore how Muslims in the sphere of education have been implicated and problematised against the backdrop of a ‘muscular liberalism’ intent on the return of assimilationist discourses.

**Keywords:** PVE; education; extremism; Islamophobia; post-racial

### **Introduction**

The sphere of education and its relationship with Muslims has been a key focus in the political arena against the backdrop of the war on terror. The emergence of a Muslim public identity in such a militarised, surveillance context produced a situation in which the concerns of the national majority community were made increasingly vocal. Such concerns can be seen manifested throughout the British education system which has undergone a number of shifts in policies and provisions to increase the regulation and governing of Muslim bodies at both a local and national government level (Law and Swann 2011, 35). Following the attacks of 9/11 the critique of state multiculturalism further flourished with the assumption that multicultural policies had created ethnic segregation and increased racial divisions.<sup>1</sup> as Shirin Housee (2012) points out:

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The 1970's multicultural debate in education spoke of co-existence, integration, tolerance and diversity. Whilst these policy changes were important for its time, within a decade, these multicultural policies were soon accused of tokenism (Housee 2012, 103).

As a response, government policies and institutions initiated the change from what David Gillborn (2008) refers to as 'naïve' to 'cynical' multiculturalism, and called for the return of assimilationist logics which dominated the political and social imaginary in 1970s (Gillborn 2008; Law and Swann 2011, 35). As a result of such global, national and local events also including the 2001 riots and 7/7, discourses surrounding education have been saturated by a rhetoric of assimilation, community cohesion, integration and security (Law and Swann 2011, 36). These transformations have seen the implementation of the extensive monitoring of Muslim pupils and 'extremism' in an attempt to ally national and local anxieties provoked by the Muslim subject who has come to embody a 'threat.'

This article will develop a critique of the practices of governmentality of Muslims by examining the impact of monitoring extremism in primary schools within the British context. Based on an analysis of the UK findings generated from 11 semi-structured interviews with respondents from Leeds including school teachers, academics, third sector representatives and local council representatives for part of the TOLERACE project (2010–2013),<sup>2</sup> This article will explore how in the context of primary education current counter-terrorism strategies concerned with combating extremism are prioritized, however, teacher training on race equality, tolerance and understanding difference has increasingly fallen by the wayside. This account as such will examine how young Muslims have been increasingly subject to scrutinized and systematic forms of disciplining and regulation across Britain's education system whilst the promotion of diversity and race equality is marginal if not absent.

### **Perplexing priorities: monitoring 'extremism' and teacher training**

Islamophobia in education is perhaps particularly repellent... Education settings can be the first arena in which battles can be fought against Islamophobia. It is to education that our attention should be directed. (Sheridan 2004, 176)

Following the events of 9/11 and 7/7 the UK government heavily invested in counter-terrorism initiatives in attempts to reduce and contain the 'threat' of extremism. This is perhaps most clearly manifested with the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda. The initiative was first introduced in October 2006 by the Labour government and implemented across the country through various channels and institutions including government

offices and local authorities. Following this the programme saw a further expansion over the coming years. Initially £6 million was pumped into the initiative and spread across 70 local authorities who had a population of 5% or more of Muslims, as well as communities who were seen most susceptible to the ‘risk’ of recruitment or ‘grooming’ by ‘extremists’ (Thomas 2009, 2). For 2008–2011 further funding was provided and the PVE agenda expanded to cover, ‘youth offending teams and young offenders institutions, police forces, and further and higher education institutions, which were regarded as key recruiting grounds for Islamist extremist organisations’ (Thomas 2009, 2). Through these developments there was the hope that extremist activity could be identified and countered more effectively. As such the PVE initiative was enforced in schools and educational institutions and extended to cover the entire age range of children, youngsters and teenagers in primary, secondary, further and higher education (Thomas 2009, 3). The PVE policy agenda is composed of several key approaches including, tension monitoring, the promotion of shared values and challenging ‘extremist ideologies,’ building civic capacity and leadership with Muslim communities and strengthening the role of faith institutions in Muslim communities (Thomas 2009, 3–4). It is suggested that as many as 44,000 people, most of them young people, have been involved in the PVE programme, however the findings from the monitoring research and evaluation data generated by the programme remains insufficient, distorted and generally unconvincing on the whole (Thomas 2009, 4).<sup>3</sup>

The main government publication produced for monitoring the threat of extremism in primary education comes in the form of a booklet published in 2008, entitled *Learning Together to be Safe*, subtitled, *A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*. The *Learning Together to be Safe* toolkit has been widely circulated throughout educational institutions across the UK and provides a handbook for teachers and staff in preventing extremism and offers advice for teachers and staff surrounding support, leadership, values, the curriculum, supervision of potential risks and managing and containing events if and before they occur. Generally aligned to the broader PVE discourse, the handbook seeks to establish respect and understanding and building relationships and networks between the local community, local organizations and groups, and local authorities. It sets out a number of guidelines on what to look for in pupils ‘vulnerable’ to extremism as well as how to monitor and report risks (Mirza 2010, 21). Reflecting the wider PVE agenda the objectives in the toolkit focus on gaining the trust of the communities, the pupils and the parents (Akram and Richardson 2009, 50).

Reading through the toolkit it is remarkable to see from the outset the focus on Muslims and the ‘threat’ of Islamic extremism, the document opens with the following statement:

Dealing with violent extremism is nothing new. Throughout history there have been groups prepared to use violence to achieve their aims. Twenty years ago the major threat we faced was from Irish terrorism. Today we face a different threat. A small minority seek to radicalise young people with an ideology which justifies the use of violence through a distorted interpretation of a peaceful religion. While violent extremism influenced by al-Qaida poses the greatest threat to life, other forms of extremism and prejudice are also affecting individuals and communities across the country and can be a catalyst for alienation and disaffection and potentially lead to violence<sup>4</sup>.

Here the ‘threat’ of Irish extremism 20 years ago is pointed out, yet it must be noted that there were never any initiatives in schools 20 years ago to prevent such activity. Moreover, al-Qaida is specifically named as a ‘threat’ whereas activities of, for example, the English Defence League (EDL) and associated far right movements, remain unmarked and are simply dismissed as ‘other forms of extremism and prejudice.’ The focus on Muslims shapes the document from beginning to end in which all concerns raised are centered upon the Muslim ‘problem,’ as such a sense of fear is cemented throughout:

The Government assesses that the UK is a high priority target for international terrorists aligned with al-Qaida and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. In practice this means a threat from British nationals and UK-based terrorists as well as from foreign terrorists planning attacks from abroad. The majority of violent extremist networks are located in major urban conurbations such as London, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. However recent arrests in Bristol and Exeter also demonstrate that violent extremists are widely distributed across the UK. Experience suggests there is no typical profile of UK-based violent extremists influenced by al-Qaida. They can come from a range of geographical areas, from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and include a number of converts to Islam. The nature of support for violent extremist activity varies but can include recruiting others, training, fundraising and procurement of support for terrorist activities. Training can include outward-bound type courses to encourage bonding either in the UK or in camps operated by al-Qaida overseas<sup>5</sup>.

This reinforces a particular construct of a Muslim ‘threat’ and embeds a nebulous danger that Islamic extremists lurk both inside and outside the UK. It is also stated that there is no typical profile for such an extremist, this ambiguity seems to brand the entire Muslim population as potential extremists which is problematic for a number of reasons, not only does it single out and target Muslims it dismisses other forms of extremist activity. Throughout the toolkit, Muslim extremist activity is almost exclusively remarked upon, yet the information remains vague, for example the document also goes on to say that ‘the key conclusion from available evidence is that there is no single profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism, or single indicator of when a person might move to adopt

violence in support of extremist ideas'.<sup>6</sup> This is curious, as if, as the document states, there is 'no single profile or indicator' of someone becoming involved in 'extremism,' then why is there such an insistence on specifically Muslim activity? The lack of clarity and speculation enables assumptions to flourish and both amplifies and perpetuates an Islamophobic discourse which treats Muslims as suspects. M.G Khan (2010) argues PVE works to facilitate an almost complete identification of extremism with Muslims and particularly the image of the 'homegrown Angry Muslim Young Man' (Khan 2010, 85). This sentiment is also reiterated by Thomas (2009) who argues that:

Such a clear focus within PVE on Muslim communities, and the associated lack of focus on racist extremism within white communities could well have the unintended consequence of hardening a defensive and antagonistic 'Muslim' identity amongst those involved in response to a perception that their whole identity and community lifestyle is being implicitly criticised and scrutinised. (Thomas 2009, 7)

The handbook presents a variety of speculative reasons as to why Muslims may become involved in 'extremist' activity ranging from questions about faith, identity and belonging, excitement and adventure, a grievance triggered by experiences of racism and discrimination, to enhancing self-esteem and 'street cred' and identification with a charismatic individual and attraction to a group which can offer identity, social network and support.<sup>7</sup> However, when discussing factors influencing far right activity, reasons include, 'need for protection,' 'youth rebellion,' 'anger' and seeking 'family, friends, community and father substitutes.'<sup>8</sup> As such those seen entering far right extremism appear to be constructed as victims who are more vulnerable 'seeking father substitutes' and 'needing protection,' additionally the factors are more generic in this case, such as youth rebellion and anger, whereas within the Muslim example there is an emphasis on faith, culture and religion, for example:

Adolescents exploring issues of identity can feel both distant from their parents' cultural and religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in society around them. Extremist ideas can help provide a sense of purpose or feeling of belonging.

And:

The experience of migration, local tensions or events affecting families in countries of origin may contribute to alienation from UK values and a decision to cause harm to symbols of the community or state<sup>10</sup>.

These culturally deterministic approaches have become all too easy explanations to narrate and appropriate diasporic South Asian youth (Sian 2011;

Brah 2006, 53–55). Such frameworks of explanation are prominent within popular and academic literature examining Asian youth whereby generic activity is translated within a cultural paradigm, as such the very category of Asian youth becomes pathologised (Alexander 2000).<sup>11</sup> In other words, general negotiations and questions, such as a sense of belonging, are read as being particularly ‘Asian’ and rooted within religion and culture (Brah 2006, 53–55), these stereotypical explanations remain essentialist and reductive and are insufficient in explaining ‘extremism.’

The ‘culture clash’ continues to haunt diasporic South Asian youth in which it is assumed there is a continuing struggle for such groups to adjust to both their Western and Asian identity (Alexander 2000; Brah 2006, 53–55). Cultural schizophrenia or the ‘culture clash’ thus becomes one of the key causes of the identity crisis that is assumed to afflict diasporic South Asian populations especially its youthful cohort (Sian 2011, 117). What is interesting is that this youthful element remains constant even though we are now describing a multigenerational population (Sian 2011, 117). This approach has been attributed to diasporic South Asian youth from the earliest days of mass settlement (for example Anwar’s [1998] *Between Cultures*, summed up this view of an innate ‘tension’ between young Asians wanting to enjoy the westernised lifestyle, while being restricted by family and communal authority from doing so), so it must be questioned why previous generations of Muslims did not engage with such forms of extremism when they were also seen to be affected by the same sorts of issues? Farzana Shain (2011) similarly argues that the language of PVE reproduces the familiar themes of the culture clash discourse which has dominated policy frameworks centred on South Asian and Muslim communities since the 1970s, as a consequence such readings continue to deny agency to Muslim youth (Shain 2011, 32).

This paradigm is almost always recycled to explain a myriad of ‘Asian problems’ be it gang violence, to petty criminality and now extremist behaviour. Ideas of identity crisis, struggles for autonomy, etc., are a lifecycle phenomenon and not just specific to South Asians. What is problematic about this view is precisely the way it translates a general phenomenon into a marker of cultural specificity (Sian 2011, 117; Brah 2006, 53–55) in a way it does not for white populations, this is clearly demonstrated throughout the document which continually evokes that Islamic extremism has a religious or cultural essence where as white extremism does not. The rehashing of such accounts including the ‘culture clash,’ religious hatred, alienation and so on (Alexander 2000, xiii), are never deployed to explain white activity, as such they remain locked into assumptions replete with elements from the immigrant imaginary (Sian 2011, 118), that is a series of discursive representations based around the ontological and temporal distinction between host and immigrant (Hesse and Sayyid 2006).<sup>12</sup> As David Tyrer (2003) points out the specific marking of Muslims reinforces and ‘...fixes the

representation of Muslims as criminalised, and thus valorises the logics of racist pathology' (184).

The targeting and criminalizing of an entire community is embedded throughout the PVE agenda (Khan 2010, 91). For Khan, PVE and Islamophobia go hand in hand, they 'legitimize one another whilst desensitizing the wider public by portraying Muslims as self harmers' (Khan 2010, 91), he goes onto argue that:

Islamophobia and PVE are both structured by iterated polarizing dichotomies of good and evil, with us or against us, part of the solution or part of the problem, fighting the good war against terror or enabling terror's warmongering. (Khan 2010, 85)

I follow this argument and also suggest that PVE is stitched together by the logics of Islamophobia. Here I think it would be useful to draw upon S. Sayyid's conceptualization of Islamophobia (2010) which departs from framing Islamophobia as simply a set of distinct attitudes reducible to individuals holding 'closed' views as presented in the Runnymede Trust report, *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*<sup>13</sup> Rather, for Sayyid, Islamophobia can be defined as 'the disciplining of Muslims by reference to an antagonistic western horizon' (Sayyid 2010a, 15), that is, the heart of Islamophobia comes not in the form of unfounded hostility, but instead, through the 'maintenance of the violent hierarchy between the idea of the west and Islam' (Sayyid 2010a, 15). I find Sayyid's definition a more helpful way to proceed as it shifts the focus from daily incidents of names calling and harassment to a wider critique of structural operations of power which govern and regulate Muslim bodies. This governing or 'disciplining' of Muslim bodies can clearly be seen at work in the PVE initiative.

For Khan discourses surrounding community cohesion set the stage for the acceptance of Islamophobic measures in public and political spheres promoted by PVE and associated counter terrorism initiatives. As a consequence negative, reductive and stereotypical constructs have been played out to represent Muslims as 'something of a congealed mass, both impenetrable and inassimilable' (Khan 2010, 86). Such depictions both reinforce and escalate fears about the Muslim 'other' whereby all Muslims come to embody a 'danger,' even young Muslim children in primary schools. Examining the toolkit further to demonstrate such Islamophobic underpinnings, we can see an attempt to raise awareness for schools in which staff are encouraged to make a positive contribution, protect the well being of particular 'vulnerable' pupils and groups and providing advice on managing risks.<sup>14</sup> Staff are also encouraged to adapt the curriculum to raise issues around 'extremism' as well as look out for the following:

- Graffiti symbols, writing or art work promoting extremist messages or images
- Pupils accessing extremist material online, including through social networking sites
- Parental reports of changes in behaviour, friendship or actions and requests for assistance
- Partner schools, local authority services, and police reports of issues affecting pupils in other schools
- Pupils voicing opinions drawn from extremist ideologies and narratives
- Use of extremist or ‘hate’ terms to exclude others or incite violence.<sup>15</sup>

This impractical and somewhat outlandish list on ‘how to spot a terrorist’ is futile and appears to promote a culture of spying. This is further reiterated by Khan who is critical of the way in which PVE puts those working with young Muslims in an increasingly precarious position (Khan 2010, 87). Khan argues that such initiatives pose an attack on communal forms or life by destabilizing trust and confidence whereby some young Muslims may be more reluctant to talk about problems in the fear of running the risk that they will be reported to the police or school. Additionally youth workers also run the risk of being charged if they do not notify police that young people may be displaying the ‘signs’ of extremist views (Khan 2010, 87). This surveillance of young Muslims is also reflected across Britain’s university campuses whereby an article in the Guardian published in August 2011, reported that under new measures to counter extremism university staff have been asked to inform on ‘vulnerable’ Muslim students.<sup>16</sup> As Shain (2011) argues:

... recent governments have segregated the communities they seek ostensibly to unite. Such divisions have been sharpened through policies in education which, through the PVE strategy, have become suffused with counter-terrorism and surveillance. (Shain 2011, 37)

Such rigorous practices of surveillance can be seen explicitly manifested throughout the *Learning Together to be Safe* toolkit, which similarly states that, ‘if members of staff do have concerns about behaviour patterns, they should seek advice from other partners and use their professional judgement to consider whether a young person might be at risk.’<sup>17</sup> We interviewed several schoolteachers; two were from the same primary school and taught at reception level, as such the children they teach start from the age of 4- to 5-years-old.<sup>18</sup> Both had been involved in PVE training put on by the school which has a high Muslim and Black Minority and Ethnic (BME) intake. When asked about what exactly the training entailed the following was stated:

A lot of the examples were secondary school related, but I just think in our area kids are growing up really fast and they are exposed to a lot of things that young children might not usually be exposed to... It was different patterns of behaviour that were out of the ordinary. Basically it was very kind of child protection like, we were told to look for things where children were saying things which were racially charged or using inappropriate language which they may have picked up elsewhere. They talked about children's extended family coming to a parent evening and not ever seeing the parents and language barriers and all of that kind of thing... We also talked about social factors that might lead people to become extremists or have extremist views and the psychological implications and how it can start at school the feelings of isolation and not being understood by your community and that kind of thing. (Interview 2)

Keeping in line with the document the training appears to have a similar focus on cultural differences such as extended families and language barriers, although this was not directly stated as a Muslim specific concern it certainly seems to be conveyed. A different teacher who had been on the same training was asked what staff were told to look for when judging whether or not a child is engaging with extremism, the participant responded with the following:

If the pupils are sat telling you that in their household they are sat making some kind of contraption with shampoo bottles or something, or they have got video cameras out all the time or if one of the family members is back and forth to Pakistan or Afghanistan and for long periods of time, or they might say to you that they are going to a camp somewhere or visiting family somewhere. I mean ... it could be something simple and it might be that they are visiting family somewhere, but you always have to question the; 'what if?', no matter what, just because it might well be if you knew and you had that question about it in your own mind then you would want to dig a little deeper ... we have a lot of children who spend a lot of time flying back and forth for long periods of time in Afghanistan and come back with more extreme behaviour and different views, so that is what we have to look for ... (Interview 1)

This is worrying as the respondent appears to have uncritically internalized the Muslim 'threat' logic, what makes this more alarming is that the teacher teaches children at reception level, yet essentially spying on 5-year-olds is never questioned or regarded as problematic, rather the contrary. The message of never making too many assumptions, and always questioning the 'what if?' demonstrates the pervasiveness of the PVE agenda in establishing the construct of the 'dangerous' Muslim. Moreover, if it is the case that a Muslim child is visiting family in Pakistan or Afghanistan this is subject to scrutiny, whereas a white pupil going away on holiday to visit relatives is not questioned. It is deeply troubling that the teacher states that when coming back from Afghanistan she has noticed that 'they' have come back with

‘extreme’ behaviour and ‘different views,’ despite never really being able to explain what she regards as ‘extreme’ behaviour and ‘different views.’

The following response is from a teacher working in a school across the road from the school of the other two teachers interviewed, this respondent had no PVE training and brings to surface yet again the focus on Muslim extremism throughout the PVE agenda:

Her school is across the road from my school literally across the road, actually it is quite a different catchment, her school has got loads more Muslim children because they offer halal meals... We have a low average of children from different ethnic backgrounds, the kids are mainly White British, numbers are rising and changing, but at the moment it is mostly White British... We have had nothing about extremism at all. We have had awareness on the gypsies. We had some general Education Leeds training about tolerance, something like that, about what words you can and can't use if you are being racist, like a little quiz, but it wasn't about spotting extremism, it was just about being aware of other cultures, like being more culturally diverse and accepting. (Interview 8)

This seems to sum up the nature of the PVE initiative and its exclusive focus on Muslims whereby we can see from these cases that the school with a higher Muslim and BME population holds the training on preventing extremism, whereas in the school with a higher percentage of white students, such training is absent. This begs the question that if, as the toolkit states, it is concerned with all forms of ‘extremism’ and there is no ‘single profile’ of an extremist as well as the notion that ‘extremism affects us all,’ then why are schools with a higher intake of white pupils not also engaging within PVE training, and moreover where is the stress and concern of white pupils at the ages of four to five upwards entering far right ‘extremism’ especially in the wake of the Norway attacks by Anders Behring Breivik in 2011. This clear disparity reveals the blatant and specific focus on the governing, regulating and spying on almost exclusively Muslim children.

As we saw earlier, it states in the toolkit that causes for concern are based on ‘professional judgement,’ however, previous responses have demonstrated the ambiguity surrounding what actually constitutes extremist behaviour, with this in mind it has to be questioned how can teachers be qualified to make such judgements and accusations? The ability to make judgements on extremism is clearly open to interpretation, speculation and bias and also appears to mirror the McCarthyism logic of the 1940s, in addition to this there seems to be a voyeuristic element in the ‘digging deeper,’ and trying and find evidence of extremism. It is highly unlikely that children in reception level hold extremist views and the fact that this is even thought to be the case by teachers is even more problematic. This concern is also highlighted by Mirza (2010) and Stevens (2009) who argue:

Central government policy is left to teachers, head teachers and local authorities to interpret and act on; for teachers and administrators often with limited training in diversity and equality this may prove challenging... The vagueness of the strand in PVE on monitoring of risks is also troubling, for it encourages the scrutiny of students, individuals and groups connected with the school. It is not the intention to argue that the threat of violent extremism is imaginary, but this strategy of monitoring (essentially spying on your neighbour), also raises the spectre of PVE being seen as a 'witch-hunt' against Muslim communities; especially in light of the wide berth in terms of interpretation afforded to the relevant stakeholders in PVE by the government. Ultimately, PVE may prove counterproductive as many Muslim communities may feel singled out and further marginalized rather than part of an inclusive and accepting Britain. (Mirza 2010, 21–23; Stevens 2009)

This is made further inexplicable when teacher training on race equality, ethnicity, diversity, tolerance and understanding difference is extremely poor across British state schools, for example a study in the UK conducted in July 2011 by an anti-racist charity 'Show Racism the Red Card' supported by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) found from a survey of 148 teachers, plus interviews, pupil observations and a research journal, that more than 84% of teachers questioned said that they had witnessed racist attitudes or behaviour among students, which included name calling, comments, jokes and racial stereotyping.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, it was found that such attitudes were not only restricted to pupils whereby 31% expressed they had seen similar behaviour among teachers.<sup>20</sup> Here it was noted that in some cases teachers used racist terminology or had lower expectations of ethnically marked pupils.<sup>21</sup> Additionally the findings revealed that 39% of those interviewed said that they had not received any training in tackling racism and 'there was evidence of a lack of action against racist attitudes and behaviour and a lack of understanding of the mechanisms and reasons for reporting racist incidents.'<sup>22</sup> Racism in some instances was seen by teachers as unintentional thus they were reluctant to report the incident. The level of knowledge by teachers on these issues is extremely weak and from the teachers we interviewed it was expressed that they were not actually specifically trained on these issues throughout their careers in education, it was implied in such responses that teachers already know about different cultures and ethnicities and that in itself is enough, for example one respondent said:

Diversity and different ethnicities and cultures is not really something you get trained on; I think it is just as you go you meet different people. I did a GCSE RE I think so you learn bits from that, but as far as I can recall we did a little bit of RE on the PGCE but it wasn't something that we really got trained on. (Interview 8)

It is somewhat alarming that this teacher gained her knowledge around such issues from her GCSE in religious education (RE), taken over 10 years ago,

and coming into contact with ‘different’ people. With such poor awareness it is problematic that teachers are able to teach young children of diverse backgrounds whilst occupying such a limited understanding. Another teacher interviewed expressed a similar response demonstrating a clear lack of training provided for staff:

I think a lot of the time there is an assumption that you already know about different cultures and ethnicities, you might not ever have been taught it at university but you hear about it every day in the news, you hear about everything when you read it in a newspaper and just from things you have learnt along the way. I don’t know if they would ever put on training just to teach you about different religions, but when you are doing your own teaching and if that is what you had to teach to other people then that is when you yourself would have to learn it, you would have to go online and you would have to speak to different people; it is up to you to learn about what you are going to teach someone else. (Interview 1)

There appears to be a great degree of discrepancy when it comes to teacher training and awareness on debates around race equality. It is clearly not compulsory or formally taught to teachers and as the respondent points out there is an assumption that teachers will already know these issues and furthermore it is up to the teacher if they chose to understand such issues. This respondent states that her only information surrounding different ethnicities/cultures is drawn from the media, newspapers and personal experiences. Similarly examining the implications and limitations of such training Mirza argues that, ‘the qualified teacher status standards are interpreted in a narrow way and there is very little consistency in the approach adopted by providers in terms of preparing future teachers to teach pupils from ethnically diverse backgrounds as well as to prepare all pupils to live in a multicultural society.’ (Mirza 2010, 38–40)

Training thus does not appear to be a priority in schools and it is problematic that the same teacher in this case had received intense PVE training but nothing on dealing with racism and race equality. This presents a depressing picture where teachers are not trained or equipped with the sufficient tools to understand race equality, instead, in schools with a particularly high Muslim and BME population they are trained on essentially ‘how to spot a terrorist.’ The marginal focus on promoting race equality throughout Britain’s educational system, I would argue, demonstrates the current hegemony of the post-racial discourse which is characterized, ‘... by a sense that we have seen the “end of racism” and its expulsion from the public domain’ (Sayyid 2010b, 3). In others words racism is denied, hidden or simply dismissed as no longer relevant, subsequently discourses surrounding inequality, anti-racism, and institutional racism have very little purchase as racism despite its prominence, is increasingly seen as a thing of the past, this can

be further elaborated by David Theo Goldberg (2010, 2009) who argues that:

Structurally, postraciality is about new markets and the new identities to support them emanating from but exceeding any traditional mode or expression of raciality. It is a raciality that in its enigmatic drive to exceed the bounds and bonds of race, to multiply or proliferate the inputs, does so through denial. A denial not just of historical conditions but of the contemporary constraints – the legacy of racially driven inequalities – structured by those historical conditions reproduced across time. The postracial buries, alive, those very conditions that are the grounds of its own making. (Goldberg 2010, 3, 2009<sup>23</sup>)

The post-racial thus abandons the structural effects of racism and furthermore implies that the solution for racism is that of ‘individual reform’ rather than projects around ‘social transformation’ (Sayyid 2010b, 5). What makes this all the more ironic is that there are far more clearer cases of racism to be found in teachers, for example a disturbing case was reported in February 2011 when a teacher was banned from classrooms after spraying young children of Asian origin with air freshener if she said she smelled curry. It was noted that the teacher Elizabeth Davies aged 48 would say, ‘there is a waft coming from paradise’ before using the air freshener. She was accused of having a ‘smug look’ as she sprayed children in the class, where half the pupils were of Bangladeshi origin.<sup>24</sup> It was also alleged the teacher occasionally used the words ‘black bastards’ when referring to ethnically marked children. The disciplinary panel found her guilty and she was removed from the teaching register. Alongside this example, practices of institutional racism remain embedded across Britain’s education system as represented through the poor representation of BME staff occupying professional positions.<sup>25</sup> In light of this it must be stressed that there is not yet one single case of ‘extremism’ to be found among Muslim pupils in primary schools which seems to demonstrate a curious inconsistency surrounding teacher training agendas and priorities.

There has been much critique of the PVE agenda and this account has sought to demonstrate the numerous problems and implications riddled throughout the initiative in the primary school context. First and foremost is the focus upon the regulation and governing of primarily Muslim children, whilst other forms of extremism are overlooked. Secondly is the ambiguity surrounding the conceptualization of extremist behaviour. Such activity is constructed as being culturally or religiously rooted, this essentialism dismisses the impact of structural inequalities, the consequence being a pathologisation of Muslim subjects who appear to be biologically predisposed to engage within extremist behaviour, as Mirza argues:

While PVE measures do endorse dialogue and greater awareness it does not redress structural barriers such as institutional racism evident in schools, the job market, housing and provision of social services. It amounts to a form of deficit thinking whereby the attraction of extremist Islamist ideology, while seen as rooted in the marginalization and social exclusion of many young Muslims, is thought best addressed through changing ideological threads rather than the structural nature of their isolation. In this way, those that are attracted or potentially so, to extremist views also become the problem themselves as extremism becomes constructed as something inherently embodied. (Mirza 2010, 23)

Thirdly, the spying culture ingrained within PVE undermines any capacity for building networks of trust and cooperation. The monitoring and scrutiny of Muslims begins at such a young age which is can only be damaging for children, moreover, such surveillance only reinforces Islamophobic discourses by heightening a climate of fear, suspicion and hysteria. Moreover, the initiative does not seem to allow for the fact that teachers and staff in schools are likely to hold different perceptions, interpretations and biases, thus what one teacher may judge as extreme behaviour another may not. The overall training of teachers is weak on issues surrounding difference, race equality and tolerance thus demonstrates the prevalence of the post-racial discourse, however, there remains a clear focus on the managing of Muslims and countering extremism, this imbalance of priorities destabilizes moves for inclusion and acceptance of difference within the school environment.

## **Conclusion**

*We are the heroes of the time.*

*We are the proud youth.*

*We are the hairy lions.*

*We live in the stories now.*

*We live in the epics.*

*We live in the public's heart.*

*We are the shield before the oppressor.*

*Our courage is like a mountain.* (Ustad Badruzzaman Badr 2007, 28)

In the wake of the war on terror, the governing of Muslim bodies has heightened across western plutocracies, from tighter airport measures, and increased domestic security, to the banning of the Burqa in many European countries. The construction of Muslims as bodies that require intervention and regulation has become one of the hallmarks of the post racial condition. The post racial refers then, not to the erosion of racism but rather its replacement from ethnically marked bodies to those that are considered to be only religiously marked. The racialisation of Muslims occurs in the

context of the dismissal of racism and its critique in general society. The monitoring of Muslims is thus a signifier of how post racial logics are coming to hegemonise Britain's ethnoscapas.

The various shifts in the British context to establish the 'disciplining' and 'reforming' of Muslim bodies have been, according to Yahya Birt (2010), furnished with the integration debate following 9/11, the 2001 riots and 7/7. As a result recent years have seen the 'solidification' of a new perspective occupying the discourse on the left:

... that Muslims self-segregated for reasons of cultural aversion, rather than for reasons of industrial decline, white flight and institutional racism, and therefore cross-community projects were refocused on encouraging community cohesion rather than addressing inequality. (Birt 2010, 126)

The return of the discourse on assimilation combined with contemporary assaults on multiculturalism,<sup>26</sup> has meant that against the current backdrop of 'a muscular liberalism' all Muslims have been targeted as constituting a 'threat' or at very least a 'problem' (Birt 2010, 126). This article has demonstrated how such targeting and singling out of Muslims has been manifested in the sphere of education. The implementation of the PVE agenda in primary schools I have argued is problematic for a number of reasons. The very heart of PVE is informed by a myriad of Islamophobic logics whereby young Muslims are subject to various forms of racialised governmentality,<sup>27</sup> reflected primarily through the monitoring of extremism and as Khan argues:

The reinforcing logic of Islamophobia and PVE inheres in a self-referential circulation of assumptions, which both places Muslims under suspicion and denies their sense of grievance the kind of moral recognition by the wider community which is extended to victims of injustice. It also, and very fundamentally, works through ambivalence. (Khan 2010, 90)

The monitoring of Muslim extremism through the PVE agenda appears to occupy center stage in Britain's schools, not only does this undermine inclusivity and tolerance, but it also reinforces, rather than challenge, negative representations of Muslims as 'dangerous extremists.' Furthermore it silences the critique of structural inequalities embedded throughout the schooling system. Fully implementing the eradication of PVE across educational institutions could certainly go a long way in disrupting racialised, segregationist and exclusionary practices (Law and Swann 2011). The governing of Muslim pupils only reinforces Islamophobia and furthermore restricts young Muslims from participating fully within the education system. In order to develop useful policies and practices that encourage and promote multiculturalism, acceptance and tolerance the needs of Muslim pupils must be considered outside the dominant framework of assimilation.

## Notes

1. For example, in his first speech as British Prime Minister, David Cameron argued that state multiculturalism had failed (Feb: 2011), see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12,371,994>.
2. The analysis throughout this paper is based on UK team findings generated from the European Commission 7th Framework research project: TOLERACE (2010–2013) which studies the semantics of tolerance and (anti)racism in Europe, <http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/tolerance/pages/intro.php>. See also: Sian, Law and Sayyid (2011) 'Debates on Difference and Integration in Education: Muslims in the UK, University of Leeds (working paper produced within the TOLERACE project).
3. In 2011 the Coalition government reviewed and refocused the PREVENT initiative introducing a greater focus on preventing extremism at community levels. Additionally £36 m will be spent in 25 'priority' areas across England, see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13,679,360> (8 June 2011). The initiative is currently guided by the following principles: work to stop people becoming terrorists will deal proportionately with all kinds of terrorist threat; Prevent will focus on some aspects of non violent extremism where it creates an environment conducive to radicalisation; the strategy draws a distinction between Prevent and work in support of integration, with responsibilities weighted appropriately between the Home Office and Communities and Local Government respectively; the strategy reaffirms the government's commitment to deny public funds (including specifically Prevent funding) to any group that has recently espoused or incited violence or hatred. See: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/prevent/prevent-strategy/>.
4. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 3.
5. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 11.
6. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 16.
7. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 17–18.
8. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 19.
9. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 18.
10. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 18.
11. For a further critique of this pathologisation, see Fauzia Ahmad (2006) 'The Scandal of 'Arranged Marriages' and the Pathologisation of BrAsian Families,' in Ali, Kalra, and Sayyid, eds. (2006) *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, Hurst and Company: London.

12. See Hesse and Sayyid (2006) 'Narrating the Postcolonial Political and the Immigrant Imaginary,' in Ali, Kalra, and Sayyid, eds. (2006) *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, Hurst and Company: London.
13. See: Runnymede Trust, Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia: *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All: Report of the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia* (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997).
14. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 5.
15. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 34.
16. See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/aug/29/university-inform-vulnerable-muslimstudents?INTCMP=SRCH>. Aug 2011.
17. See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *Learning Together to be Safe: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, 19.
18. Keeping to the ethical guidelines of social research by the British Sociological Association (BSA), I ensure to safeguard and protect the anonymity and privacy of those who have participated in the research, thus throughout the account I will refer to the interview respondents as numbers, I am unwilling to add anymore information as this could compromise issues surrounding confidentiality.
19. See: [http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/mainsection/racism\\_still\\_an\\_issue\\_in\\_english\\_schools\\_1\\_3541101](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/mainsection/racism_still_an_issue_in_english_schools_1_3541101). July 2011.
20. See: [http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/main-section/racism\\_still\\_an\\_issue\\_in\\_english\\_schools\\_1\\_3541101](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/main-section/racism_still_an_issue_in_english_schools_1_3541101). July 2011
21. See: [http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/main-section/racism\\_still\\_an\\_issue\\_in\\_english\\_schools\\_1\\_3541101](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/main-section/racism_still_an_issue_in_english_schools_1_3541101). July 2011.
22. See: [http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/main-section/racism\\_still\\_an\\_issue\\_in\\_english\\_schools\\_1\\_3541101](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/at-a-glance/main-section/racism_still_an_issue_in_english_schools_1_3541101). July 2011.
23. See: Goldberg (2009) *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*, Blackwell: Oxford
24. See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/feb/15/teacher-banned-air-freshener-asian>. Feb 2011.
25. For an example of the under-representation of black school head teachers in Britain's schools, see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/apr/21/black-male-headteachers-state-schools>.
26. See David Cameron multiculturalism speech, Feb 2011: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12,371,994>.
27. For elaboration of racialized governmentality see: Hesse (2007) 'Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythologies,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30: 4, 643–663, Hesse and Sayyid (2006) 'Narrating the Postcolonial Political and the Immigrant Imaginary,' in Ali, Kalra, and Sayyid, eds. (2006) *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, Hurst and Company: London, 13–31; Birt (2010) 'Governing Muslims after 9/11,' in Sayyid and Vakil, eds. (2010) *Thinking Through Islamophobia*, Hurst and Company: London , 117–127.

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