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Muslims as a suspect community: a typology to support classroom discussions

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ABSTRACT

The problematic, illogical, arguably unethical concept of 'Muslims as a suspect community' has been explored in the literature for over a decade, following early discussions. We seek to offer a novel set of questions and responses to the debate with the intention of offering a means by which fruitful classroom discussion can be facilitated. We set out the problem of regarding Muslims as a discrete community, consider the ascription of 'suspect' to the notion of a Muslim community, and discuss ways in which Muslims as a suspect community are accused of terrorist acts. From an analysis of the literature, policy initiatives, the role of the security services, educators, and the media, we have developed a typology of 'Muslims as a suspect community' which represents the intersectional layers of society's views of tolerance, risk, and perceived risk. The typology is designed to enable teachers to approach complex discussions fruitfully by understanding how educational purposes and spaces might differ from those of government and security services. The shedding of 'Muslimness' and adoption of 'least Muslim role' is discussed through the typology which has evolved from within the British context and yet which has broader application.

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Introduction

This article constitutes one of the outputs derived from professional discussions between three female professors in the context of our roles in Teacher Education and our collaborations in research projects. While not being an empirical research project nor systematic literature review this work is a theoretical conceptual paper drawing on a variety of sources, and a methodological framework but not in the conventional sense. The guiding principles this piece of work follows are rooted in our own positionality while at the same time acknowledging our diverse motives. So our methodological framework could be described as a philosophical mashup (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013:31) because boundaries are blurred between philosophical perspectives. On the one hand we adopt a post-modernist belief in the simulation of reality and

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impossibility of truth, and on the other hand the literature we have selected and the typology we have devised draw on social constructionist beliefs to illustrate how different groups construct reality in different ways.

Our selection of sources is in the main drawn from qualitative empirical studies, media reports, governmental policy and from a range of disciplines including education, health and policing. There is a wealth of literature which supports our overall argument of pervasive Islamophobia, summed up in T. Abbas's (2020, 497) description of the dominant hegemonic discourse which 'others' Muslims, positions them as both a 'risk to national security' and their 'voices of resistance as untrustworthy'. In addition Babacan's (2023) reminder of everyday racism experienced by Muslim women, in particular in his study of Turkish Muslim women living in Britain, relates to our focus on Muslim women in our typology. Our selections included both respected authors in the field and lesser known studies in order to answer our four research questions, outlined below, which address the concern we have about the negative positioning of Muslims in the educational context. 'Muslims as a suspect community' is used throughout this paper, not because of the handful of papers which we refer to, but because the term sums up an Islamophobic attitude particularly in the context of the British Prevent policy with its roots in anti-terrorist legislation.

Our motives and aims in writing this conceptual paper were firstly to understand and theorise the current situation and identify pedagogical implications and secondly to provide an approach (the typology) for teacher educators and teachers to appreciate the ways in which Muslims might be viewed as a suspect community, with the ultimate goal being to challenge discrimination and promote more inclusive practice. Work in progress explores how teachers are positioned (Elton-Chalcraft 2024) but here we explore why many Muslims, as recounted in the literature and in the media, might feel compelled to adopt a 'least Muslim role' as a result of being considered a 'suspect community' and we consider implications for education.

The problematic, illogical, arguably unethical concept of 'Muslims as a suspect community' has been explored in the literature for over a decade, following early discussions between Greer (2010) and Pantazis and Pemberton (2011). In this paper we seek to offer a novel set of questions and responses to the debate, namely:

- How can we understand and represent the intersectional nature of layers of society in relation to Muslims as a suspect community?
- In relation to Muslims as a suspect community, what is the interplay between tolerance, risk and perceived risk in contemporary post-9/11 Britain?
- If it is not possible to describe Muslims as a discrete community, how can we understand 'Muslimness' and its inherent complexities?
- What approach and terminology might best support teachers and students in engaging in complex classroom discussions?

We firstly set out the problem of regarding Muslims as a discrete community. Then, we consider the ascription of 'suspect' to the notion of a Muslim community, and move from here to the ways in which Muslims as a suspect community have come to be accused of terrorist acts. In this work we draw on the theoretical work of Wendy Brown (2006, 2019, 2020) to cast light and shade on our discussions of tolerance and democracy. From an

analysis of the literature, policy initiatives, the role of the security services, educators, and the media, we have developed a typology of 'Muslims as a suspect community', a typology that is designed to support teachers and learners, having evolved from within the British context and yet which may have broader applications.

The problem of viewing Muslims as a community

We begin by considering how the Muslim community is conceptualised and how this may impact on educational practice. It has been argued that Islam is not a homogenous community but comprises different groups and sects, all of whom believe and practice differently (Greer 2010). There is a danger, Greer (2010) proposes, in conflating a complex diverse community under one umbrella term. In her book, *the Enemy Within*, Warsi stresses that Muslims are not a monolithic block, despite suffering from attacks and Islamophobia – which she terms anti-Muslim sentiment – originating variously from the 'continent of Africa, European mainland, South and central Asia with some being descendants of Anglo Saxons' (Warsi 2018, 3).

A consequence of this is the challenge of identifying individuals or groups that can realistically represent Muslims. In their ESRC/AHRC-funded qualitative project 'Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance', Jones et al. (2015) interviewed 42 participants including MPs, civil servants, Muslim civil society actors and faith leaders who have 'engaged in governance at the national level to understand how the atmosphere of hostility has emerged towards Muslim representation' (Jones et al. 2015, 207). They chart the attempts by government to find organisations that can authentically represent the voices of the Muslim community given the diversity of theological and ethno-cultural traditions among British Muslims. The concept of Muslim representation is unhelpful, it is argued, because there is no 'Muslim community' to be represented; the Muslim population of Britain is divided on most social and political issues. It has come to be accepted that most Muslims in Britain do not feel their views are entirely represented by any one organisation, with one of Jones et al.'s participants stating that there 'isn't a Muslim community; there are Muslim communities' (Jones et al. 2015). Indeed, many Muslims would agree that the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is not able to represent the diverse Muslim population despite being successful in its campaign to strengthen religious discrimination legislation which included Muslims irrespective of ethnic origin. Accusations against the MCB have included simplistic stigmatisation of being 'Islamist-infused', with a secretive agenda coupled with a large number of Muslim civil society organisations being treated as 'toxic' (Jones et al. 2015).

The MCB's website claims that it represents the diverse Muslim community and details projects and support sections. However, by privileging the perspectives of religious or community the voices of women and young people have arguably remained unheard (Jones et al. 2015). This has relevance for educational practice because teachers may be unaware of the diversity of the Muslim community.

In contrast, the Quilliam Foundation was heavily funded by successive governments to target Muslim extremism and yet went into liquidation in April 2021 with very little media attention (N. Ahmed 2021). The Quilliam Foundation's focus on non-violent extremism was encouraged by government and yet it is suggested that 'Starting life as an instrument of the British state under New Labour, Quilliam transitioned into

a handmaiden of "Big Society" conservatism before gradually devolving into an extension of pro-Trump lobbies' (N. Ahmed 2021). By 2010 there was already suspicion in Government that the 'conveyor belt' theory of radicalisation, moving from 'grievance, through radicalisation, to violence had been called into question with undue weight given to 'ideological factors' (N. Ahmed 2021); by this time MI5 had pointed out that many who were radicalised lacked religious literacy. The Quilliam Foundation lost its credibility with its hard-line 'conveyor belt' theory and, ergo, governmental backing, closing in April 2021. It could be argued that the Quilliam Foundation's legacy resulted in the reporting of those suspected of being radicalised by teachers who were unaware of the nuances of religious motivation – and disproportionaly from the diverse Muslim community.

Muslims are clearly not a homogenous whole but have come to be viewed as such in areas of social and political life, such as political and media debates. The tensions felt by Muslim MPs is captured by Jones et al. (2015) who show Sadiq Khan (then Labour MP and Shadow Lord Chancellor) refusing to speak *for* Muslims, insisting he had been elected by all constituents of Tooting rather than two million British Muslims. However, Khan did speak out after the July 7th terrorist attack in London, believing that Muslims were not given a voice and were in danger of being termed, collectively, terrorists. In essence, a suspect community.

A 'suspect community' and its ascription to Muslims – impact on education

Pantazis and Pemberton (2011, 1054) argue that the 'creation and sustenance of a suspect community' needs to be understood in terms of the 'complex interplay between the legal machinery of the state and social and political discourses' so becoming a 'social phenomenon' and 'not solely . . . a legal construction based on rules of evidence'. Breen-Smyth (2014, 234) and Anderson (2016) refer to an 'imagined community' in the eyes of the public which does not necessarily bear resemblance to an actual community. Greer (2010) suggests that qualitative and narrative data studies are not sufficiently objective to confirm the reality of the term 'suspect community', calling for a 'much more nuanced, multidimensional, accurate and productive account of the relationship between Muslims and the United Kingdom's anti-terrorist laws' (1171). In return, Pantazis and Pemberton (2011, 1054) refute Greer's criticisms and his 'state centric' analysis which privileges legal judgements and statutes.

However, Greer's argument that Muslims are a diverse group centres on his belief that the term 'suspect community' should not be applied because a substantial majority of Muslims are not under suspicion (Greer 2010, 1178). Greer thus disagrees with attributing the term 'suspect community' to Muslims because this would suggest that the majority of Muslims are under systematic official surveillance by the security forces. However, Pantazis and Pemberton (2011) maintain that Muslims are indeed viewed as a suspect community and they challenge Greer's imprecise use of the term 'majority'; Muslims, they argue, are a suspect community not because they are all under direct legal surveillance but because they all feel they are viewed suspiciously, even in educational settings, which, arguably, should promote non-prejudicial attitudes.

There are numerous examples of self-mistrust among families and communities, for example Welply (2018, 371) refers to 'cultural pathologizing' and

M. Abbas (2019, 8) discusses 'pathologised constructions' where parents spy on their children and are in conflict feeling both 'proud yet fearful of their daughter's religiosity'. Heath-Kelly (2020) on the other hand uses a medical model where she discusses the epidemiological imaginations of radicalisation in her article concerning the geography of pre-criminal space. Muslims are perceived as being a suspect community in Heath-Kelly's (2020) ideology because they are a risk as an epidemiological concern in areas showing a 2% or higher demography of Muslims and the whole community, including other Muslims and racialised others are potentially vulnerable to 'contamination' by extremism. Thomas, too, employs medical imagery, in his exploration of whether Muslim youth in educational settings feel they are viewed as 'a risk to society and at risk of catching the terrorist disease' (Thomas 2016).

There is an abundance of research supporting the premise that Muslims have become stigmatised as a suspect community; N. Ahmed (2021) discusses the politics and pedagogy of schooling Muslims termed 'the enemy within'. In a similar vein Ali's (2020) research in a drama education journal discusses the way the Prevent policy (DfE, 2015) has alienated those it aimed to reach resulting in institutionalised suspicion of Muslims. Kundnani (2015) provides analysis of the way Muslims are perceived including discussions of Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror. Similarly, Bonino's book outlines how the UK prevent policy encourages hatred and hostility towards Muslims.

In the debate surrounding Muslim schooling, Breen (2018, 223) suggests that there have been public policy narratives which 'allow for a misleading account of the extent to which Muslim communities have been enfranchised through state funding for Islamic schools'. Breen (2018) argues that, while there have been gains in the expansion of state-funded Muslim schools in Britain, nevertheless this has been adversely affected by the negative attitudes towards Muslims in the political and educational contexts. Using a critical race theory approach, Breen (2018) provides compelling evidence supporting the ascription of Muslims as a 'suspect community' because of the realities of the limited expansion of denominational state-funded Muslim schools in more recent years under successive policy frameworks.

The disenfranchisement described in Breen's (2018) research can also be seen in the findings of Pearce and Lewis (2018), who describe the disadvantaging of Muslim students in school as a result of policy which leads to an essentialising view of Muslims. They argue that 'neoliberal and neoconservative schooling policies in England legitimize a long-standing neglect of cultural difference in schools'. They provide evidence of the damaging effect on Muslim children evidencing more distant relationships between teachers and Muslim families as a 'result of a complex series of pressures on teachers' working lives' (Pearce and Lewis 2018). Their interview data from eight primary teachers suggests that 'the most frequent response to issues involving Muslim families is avoidance' because teachers did not see Muslims as individuals, but as representatives of an essentially different group (Pearce and Lewis 2018). Nevertheless, Pearce and Lewis (2018) argue that this is not irreversible and 'when teachers were able to make connections with families, they gained a more complex understanding of the realities of the Muslim children in their classes' (Pearce and Lewis 2018).

Blaming the Muslim community for terrorist acts

Having discussed the use of the term 'suspect community' and its ascription to Muslims, attention is now turned to interrogate more deeply how Muslims, as a perceived suspect community, are blamed for terrorist acts. Membership of suspect communities as discussed by Breen-Smyth (2014) is defined in the imagination of non-members (Anderson 2006, cited in Breen-Smyth 2014, 231), who blame 'Muslims' as a collective noun, for terrorist acts. Muslims become a fantasy product of the securitised imagination and there is an over-estimation of risk (Breen-Smyth 2014, 232); Muslims are thus imagined as an amorphous threatening mass.

Negative societal attitudes have implications for the educational context because many Muslim youth are familiar with unjust treatment. For example, Qureshi (2015) highlights the case of the judge who described a woman, Umm Ahmed, as a 'good' Muslim woman who was not guilty of any illegality and yet he nevertheless sentenced her to a '12-month prison term for possessing the magazine *Inspire* which she had been reading to understand her charged brother's case'. While not sharing her brother's ideology she was subjected to a de-radicalisation programme. Quereshi argues that such de-radicalisation narratives particularly in 'schools, universities and hospitals has led to the criminalisation of large sections of the various Muslim communities in the UK'. Quereshi's article and his work in the advocacy group CAGE reveals the extent of the abuse of the terrorism narrative and how, as a result of the Prevent and Channel strategies, Muslims are being wrongly blamed with a 'false presentation of narratives' which can lead 'to a person becoming an "extremist" or "terrorist", while the truth may lie in a completely alternative place' (Qureshi 2015, 181). Such treatment of Muslims arguably abuses the 'rule of law' to subjugate those who are different, in what Brown calls the 'dark others' who are 'metonymically associated with each other' and as a collective group signal the 'presence of barbarism, liberalism's putative opposite' (Brown 2006, 172).

As an active advocate, Querishi draws on research which gives voice to the lived experiences of Muslims such as Qureshi (2020) who describe a young Muslim woman, Yasmeen Omran, returning 'home' to the UK from holiday just after the attacks on the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in 2015. Qureshi (2020) report that she had considered herself, and presumed others would see her, as a 'good' Muslim, however, after being stopped at the airport under counterterrorism laws, Omran realises that she was now seen as a threat to the UK:

> What I was experiencing was so surreal after years of television and online newspapers fooling me to believe that it could never happen to someone like me . . . I found as a Muslim and Arab, I no longer needed to inhabit or have roots in states of war or dress in my religious garments to be placed in the box of potential terrorist. My identity and my appearance had condemned me to fight for my right to simply exist within this state without some sort of ulterior motive. (Omran, in Qureshi 2020, 5)

Thus, individuals carry ascriptive identities which 'provoke rejection or hostility' (Brown 2006, 45). By contrast, Munnik (2018) argued that some Muslim children in his study positioned fellow Muslim children as the 'bad other'.

Implications of being a suspect community, in educational contexts

In educational settings many Muslims have, to varying degrees, been on the receiving end of negative attitudes which position them as members of a suspect community. Here we explore this dilemma. Positioning Muslims, despite their obvious diversity, as a suspect community validates a binary mentality. In her work on tolerance Brown calls for a liberalism which is 'less invested in the absolute and dangerous opposition between us and them' in favour of a liberalism which is 'more modest and restrained in its imperial and colonial impulses' (2006, 175). Brown questions whether democracy is always 'destined to be captured and co-opted by the socially dominant' (2019, 203) with equality overthrown by market forces resulting in winners and losers. White the Western majority ascribing the Muslim community as suspect exemplifies what Brown theorises as 'cultural imperialism' (171). It is easy, but lazy and indeed damning, to use phrases such as Muslim culture and Western culture because 'collective identities represent the dangerousness of the group' (169). She goes on to argue that 'culture, family and religion are all formulated as "havens in a heartless world" rather than as sites of power, politics, subject production and norms'. So, in a liberal, secular culture, the individual can access the culture, choose the culture and the culture of belief does not 'have him or her' (170). In the case of the Muslim community as suspect, however, the suggestion is that the suspect community digs their talons into vulnerable individuals and takes possession, resulting in some Muslims being blamed for radicalising and others blamed for being victims of these radicalisation practices, particularly in the educational context.

The implications of the UK Prevent policy and Channel strategy for epistemic justice are outlined by O'Donnell (2018) in her research which charts the way in which vulnerability is conceptualised and those who are regarded at risk of radicalisation are positioned as vulnerable and requiring intervention. A therapeutic/epidemiological language is used to describe interventions, with the use of terms 'such as contagion, immunity, resilience, grooming, virus, susceptibility, therapy, autonomy, vulnerability and risk – a constellation of images/concepts resonant with therapeutic and epidemiological theories and practices' (O'Donnell 2018). She claims that, when students, teachers, and parents feel that their voice is not heard this leads to testimonial injustice and positions Muslims as a suspect community with 'hermeneutical injustice' (O'Donnell 2018). Similarly, Mythen (2012) draws on her empirical research to illustrate the implications of Prevent policy on some Muslims; for example, one of the participants in her study commented 'Yeah they talk about freedom of speech, but where's the freedom of speech for us?' and 'We don't have freedom of speech. Democracy is for white people'.

In the European Union funded Horizon research, ETHOS, Dupont (2018) reminds governments and other stakeholders of the implications of the political representation of Muslims and how certain policies may impede the realisation of ideals of justice. One of the aims of ETHOS was to study the relationship between the ideal of justice and its real manifestation in 'the highly complex institutions of modern European society' (Dupont 2018, 3). The report outlines the UK context of the increasing segregation and alienation of Muslims following the Trojan Horse affair where the teachers who, although not permanently barred from the profession, were nevertheless not afforded an opportunity to disprove the allegations; the subsequent Cantle Report (Cantle 2001) warned of a British society 'sleepwalking into segregation'.

In research that took place after the Trojan Horse affair, Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2021, 457) question the binary logic of positioning the potential jihadist and

Islamophobia victim. Their article seeks to contextualise Muslim men's experiences of being in a suspect community through ethnography. This ethnographic methodology 'hanging around' various locations to speak informally with Muslim men aged between 18 and 25 allowed Mac an Ghail and Haywood to access perspectives such as some Muslim men's irritation that the government saw them as dangerous and under-achieving. The idea of a defining identity as a Muslim in the educational context is raised by one of their participants which Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2021, 462) frame in their post-colonial analysis of the lived experience of young men:

> Abdul: Yep, cos you're a Muslim, it's the main thing for teachers, whatever you're doing at school, just ordinary stuff, working in the lab, playing football, even probably when you're having your lunch, they just see a Muslim but in a bad way (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2021, 462).

Given their methodological design, Mac an Ghail and Haywood realised that the 'category of Muslim is not static' but rather their participants' narratives led them to understand that it became a 'negotiated subjectivity' that was at the same time 'rejected and advocated' (2021, 463) and they subsequently came to the conclusion that they did not really know their participants. The rich data generated illustrates that a school's attempt to 'contain' these men in a fixed religious Muslim identity denied them 'the social power of self-authorisation' (2021, 463). The findings pointed to an education system which had moved away from multiculturalism and a common aim to learn about and be enriched by differences and similarities between and within communities to an agenda of securitisation which positioned Muslims as 'a suspect community'. Such a change has implications for Muslims who, unsurprisingly, are left aghast – as summed up by participants Ghanem and Dameer:

> Dameer: To be fair religion is also difficult for a lot of Muslims to talk about, there's a lot of differences among Muslims, like for different generations. But the atmosphere now makes it very hard to find a place to discuss it that everyone would feel comfortable with. (Group interview)
>
> Researcher: So, do you see a way forward?
>
> Ghanem: But they have failed to look at serious questions like, what is the role of religion in schools? And do they have a problem with Islam or a version of Islam or with Muslims or what? There are important questions about religion and education, but no one is asking these questions. (Individual interviews) (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2021, 464).

Despite confessing that they were not able to 'really know' these young men nevertheless their findings reveal a shift in public perception of Asians as ideal citizens with their extended family networks to young male Muslims as 'dangerous brown men' (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2021, 466). The participants felt disenfranchised from education – their view of the best teacher cited by these Muslim young men was a History teacher who, despite talking about Black History and being very inclusive, nevertheless predominantly spoke about 'black people rather than (South) Asians' (468). The young Muslim men dis-identified with the emphasis on anti-racism that concentrated on a 'black white oppositional logic' rather than seeking to understand the importance of ethnicity and religion. Such findings have implications for how a range of teachers view and discuss topics with pupils from diverse backgrounds. In addition, governmental policy has impacted on teacher agency as well as in communities.

Some Muslims reacted to the UK Prevent policy by being 'ambassadors' (Breen-Smyth 2014, 237). Others were infuriated at the need to do this and resisted exhortations to

deradicalise vulnerable young Muslims. M. Abbas (2019) discusses the tensions Muslims feel when 'imposed' identities are thrust on them, for example, Mohammed is clean shaven yet holds what he terms fundamentalist views. M. Abbas's (2019, 11) interviewees told stories of their family members fears about 'new' mosque members who might infiltrate the mosque which was viewed as a suspect site; and Hamida's family sat her down to check she was not being subjected to extremist views 'the wrong stuff' as she grew more religious after joining the Islamic society.

Typology of Muslims as a suspect community

The complexity of capturing the arguments surrounding the concept of, and experiences of, Muslims in contemporary Britain, is challenging, influenced as these debates are by government policy and the security forces, academic research findings, professional practices in schools and portrayal in the media. The sections in this paper above have brought to the fore many of these perspectives and debates: Can Muslims be defined as a homogenous group? In what ways are Muslims viewed as a suspect community? How and in what ways is a perceived Muslim community blamed for terrorist acts? From a classroom perspective, teachers and students negotiate these complex issues in the quotidian spaces of the school. The challenges inherent in answering such questions have led us to produce a typology of Muslims as a suspect community based on findings largely from the literature and also in conversation with some Muslim teacher educators in our wider role as teacher educators and white allies (Diangelo 2018; Reid 2022; Saad 2020). While simple in form – namely nine points, it should be seen as a continuum to aid teachers' and students' understanding of a complex multi-dimensional reality.

Our typology demonstrates a variety of stances – Muslim and non-Muslim, security forces and the general public – and intersects perceptions with ideal types of Muslims ranging from 'bad' Muslim to 'good' Muslim. The 'bad Muslim' is exemplified by Umm Ahmed in Qureshi (2015) and by Omran in Qureshi (2020) from the literature above. The 'good' Muslim is exemplified by Abdul in Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2021) and Munnik (2018) in the literature above.

Typology to show Muslims as a suspect community.

	Perceived as a terrorist (violent extremist)	*Perceived as a potential terrorist ('bad'/ extremist Muslim)*	*Perceived as harmless ('good' Muslim)*
***Suspicious of/zero tolerance** towards extremist views: Security forces and government*	1 **Incarceration** and **zero tolerance** towards violent extremist Muslims	4 **Anti radicalisation** and suspicion of extremist/'bad' Muslims	7 **Use** 'good' Muslims to 'win hearts and minds' of 'suspect' Muslim community
***Fearful** of extremist views: Muslim and non-Muslim communities*	2 **Surveillance and referral** of perceived violent extremists to security forces	5 **Suspicious** of extremist views and 'bad' Muslims Preventing violent extremism	8 **Toleration** 'good' Muslims who assimilate into secular society
***Tolerant** towards extremist views: Muslim and non-Muslim communities*	3 **Countering** violent extremism **Aware** of devastating effects of violent terrorists Being Muslim is only one aspect of identity	6 **Facilitate** communities of disagreement to explore extremism Consider counterterrorism initiatives as counterproductive	9 **Trust and respect** diverse Muslim identity

Despite the focus on education this must be set within the larger context of counter-terrorism policy which impacts on other spheres of society. The typology provides a way of comparing the perspectives of a range of groups such as government, the security forces, educationalists, and members of society, some of these groups possibly having limited knowledge of counterterrorism policy and perspectives from education. It offers teachers a frame, an approach, and terminology within which to situate classroom discussions.

While reality is obviously more complex, the typology above describes three standpoints: the security forces and government, who ontologically have zero tolerance towards extremist views; fearful people who ontologically assume a suspicious stance; and tolerant people who ontologically view Muslims as a diverse community who are unfairly stigmatised. These three standpoints are intersected with perspectives towards three 'types' of Muslims: those perceived as violent Muslim extremists; 'bad' Muslims, perceived as (potentially) extremist; and 'good' Muslims perceived as 'harmless'. Again, terms that have emerged from the literature.

Each of the nine points in the typology of suspect communities is discussed below in terms of three female 'types' of Muslims drawn from the literature, society, and the media. First, Shamima Begum, perceived as a terrorist, went to Syria in 2015 to become an Islamic State bride and is (to date) stateless in a Syrian refugee camp. Second, Hamida is an interviewee in Abbas' investigation (2019), perceived as a 'bad' Muslim. And third, Nadiya Hussein is the British Bake Off 2015 champion and celebrity, perceived as a 'good' Muslim. Muslim women have been deliberately chosen as types in our typology because discrimination is rife concerning gender and religion. Brown reminds us that both women and non-Christian religions are tolerated because of their 'difference in status and social location that sharply distinguishes them from Christian men and their privileges' (Brown 2006, 61).

To reiterate, postulating three ideal types does not capture the complexity of a diverse Muslim community, nevertheless the typology reveals the extent to which different 'types' of Muslims are positioned as belonging to a 'suspect community'. Brown (2006, 44). discusses marginalised, relatively homogenous groups where the object of tolerance is not the group but individuals who carry the group identity. She argues that children are 'taught' to tolerate neither groups nor individuals but 'rather, subjects carrying what the sociologists call ascriptive identities . . . cast as significant enough to provoke the rejection or hostility that makes tolerance necessary' (Brown 2006, 45). The typology seeks to capture attitudes towards these three women seen as individuals who carry the group identity of 'Muslims as a suspect community' and reified 'othering' of two of the women who are explicitly seen as 'different'.

Perceived as a terrorist/violent extremist (Shamima Begum – ISIS bride aged 15 in 2015)

Points 1, 2, and 3 of the typology relate to the extremist Muslim perceived as a terrorist – characterised as Shamima Begum who, aged 15, left her Muslim family and country (Britain) to flee to Syria in 2015 and marry a Dutch Islamic State fighter. Aged 19 Shamima was discovered by a British reporter, Anthony Lloyd, a *Times* newspaper war journalist, in a Syrian IS refugee camp in 2019. The British government revoked her

citizenship and refused to allow her to return, thus demonstrating absolute suspicion of this suspected extremist. However, the then Home Secretary backtracked and offered her a house in Bolton which she declined, preferring to remain stateless in Syria. Throughout the period from 2019 when she was discovered in the Syrian camp to 2021 when her appeal for British Citizenship was quashed, Shamima Begum's case has been played out in legal, media and moral yo-yoing (BBC News 2019; Jackson 2021). At the time of writing, Shamima Begum remains in Al-Roj camp in North East Syria, distancing herself from the other camp dwellers by helping to make food parcels in exchange for money to buy hair dye and western clothes. In 2021, a British Broadcasting Company documentary revealed the complexity of Shamima Begum's life story with interviews from Begum herself coupled with comments from a range of people in her life including childhood friends, her family, her ISIS husband and others who evaluate the decisions she made and the challenges she encountered (BBC 2021). What is particularly fascinating about this documentary is the way the director captures Shamima Begum's own commentary on her life interspersed with sometimes contradictory accounts from others. Our typology captures such contrasting views towards three different Muslims by different layers of society.

Point 1 captures the viewpoint of the security forces and the government as articulated in the media – Shamima is viewed as a suspected terrorist, who is a radicalised, extremist Muslim, and is considered to be a threat to the general public and thus would need to be brought to trial, incarcerated and have her citizenship revoked. Zero tolerance positions her as a 'foreign, erroneous, objectionable or dangerous element' threatening to destroy the 'host' as Brown's discussion of tolerance indicates (2006, 27). Brown describes the use of 'tolerance' in a range of contexts – plant physiology, medicine, policing and engineering, all of which reveal the extent to which the 'host' is able to tolerate what is foreign or strange and how it can endure what is 'patently toxic' (2006, 26). Such imagery underlies a conceptualisation of the security forces and government of the 'threat' posed by Shamima, particularly when she remains seemingly non-contrite.

Shamima's story, viewed through the eyes of a fearful Muslim and Non-Muslim community in Point 2 on the typology, contrasts with the security forces and governmental seemingly non-forgiving stance. Point 2 characterises fearful people, highly suspicious of Shamima, positioning her as a terrorist in need of de-radicalisation training, possibly never able to be fully trusted again; the press reveal how the public have lost faith in Shamima (ITV news 2022). The point 2 stance encapsulates the 'toleration' which inhabits a 'middle road between rejection . . . and assimilation' a road which is 'paved by necessity rather than virtue' (Brown 2006, 27). In this perspective, Shamima, a toxic, threatening and different entity,is to be 'managed' somehow. In this context, Shamima is an outsider, having lost the privilege of being tolerated as 'weak or minoritised' because of her defiance. She is seen as a 'danger to the civic and political body' (Brown 2006, 28) by a fearful community.

Point 3 on the scale captures the views of a more socially justice motivated tolerant Muslim and non-Muslim community who believe that this teenager has been manipulated, or even radicalised but should nevertheless be shown mercy and should not be ostracised. This conceptualisation of tolerance differs from that of the first two communities described in points 1 and 2 above. We would argue that education inhabits such a socially justice-inspired toleration which is rooted in autonomous critical thinking and

choice, as opposed to security or psychologically fearful contextualisation. In this educationally tolerant context, there is a choice involved in drawing moral boundaries. Shamima Begum is not back in the UK (to date) despite recent legal battles and Jackson (2021) reports Begum as saying

> if allowed back into the UK, she could advise on the tactics used by IS to persuade people to go to Syria and could share ways to speak to people who are at risk of being radicalised . . . and she felt 'an obligation' to do so, adding that she did not want any other young girls to destroy their lives like she had.

Having discussed the three perspectives towards Shamima Begum we now take a second character positioned as a 'bad' Muslim and consider the three contrasting attitudes towards her.

Perceived as a 'bad' Muslim (Hamida – interviewee in Abbas's study 2019)

Points 4, 5, and 6 viewpoints are focused on an ideal type of Muslim who is considered 'bad' as opposed to a 'good' Muslim (Kundnani 2015). Hamida is a Muslim young woman and interviewee in M. Abbas's (2019, 1) study that investigated the divisive effects that can occur if family members consider an individual to be a 'bad' Muslim.

Security forces characterised in point 4 would be keen to monitor the whereabouts and movements of a young person whose behaviour has caused suspicion, which Hamida's family believed to be the case. As with Shamima, point 1 above, the security forces and government may adopt a highly suspicious attitude, positioning Hamida as a potential terrorist in a pre-crime context requiring a de-radicalisation programme. This perspective anticipates engagement from both fearful and tolerant communities to report on such individuals through anti-terrorism identification channels. This position echoes the West's position as 'broker of the civilised, delimiting what is "intolerable" and therefore legitimate for imperial conquest cloaked as liberation' (Brown 2006, 37). Indeed, Brown outlines the 'global moral superiority of the West' which legitimates 'Western violence towards the non-West' resulting in 'Western empire in the twenty-first century' (37). There is an essentialising of political conflict, to conflict of culture, most notably recognised by vulnerable young people who reject Western culture in favour of supposedly dangerous fundamentalist Muslim culture, highlighted in the attitudes of fearful communities discussed below.

Point 5 'Fearful Communities' are encapsulated by Hamida's family who 'sit her down on the couch and check she has not been radicalised' (M. Abbas 2019). Parents have the 'preacher's cults and robes pre uni-talk with their young rather than the sex, drugs and clubs talks' (Warsi 2018, 146). Point 5 displays a suspicious attitude, albeit as a protective strategy to ensure a beloved daughter is not being radicalised. However, while not exactly adopting a surveillance role, as indicated in Point 4 security forces, nevertheless the Muslim family or non-Muslim friend could be described, using Abbas's definition as 'internal suspect body operation through intersectional fears of young Muslims being turned into extremists and culpably endangering others' (M. Abbas 2019, 12).

In a similar vein to the treatment of Hamida, M. Abbas (2019, 13) describes Samrina's negative view of government and media towards Muslim households which are treated as 'suspect sites based on racialized assumptions'. M. Abbas

(2019, 14) narrates the story of Samrina supporting the family of a man charged with training for terrorism after two of his friends undertook a family trip to Pakistan; the man was incarcerated for 2 years and later exonerated, but the whole experience had a devastating effect on both the man and his family who were constantly viewed as 'suspect' in their own local community; fear and suspicion characterise the position of point 5 communities.

Point 6, the 'social justice tolerant' group, incorporates the educational stance with an attempt to explore the disagreements, conflict, and extremist views and understand that counterterrorism initiatives in the UK may have been counterproductive. Educationalists arguably support Muslims who are viewed by some communities as 'bad' by facilitating communities of disagreement (Iverson 2018) rather than reporting supposedly 'vulnerable' individuals to security forces in a pre-crime context.

Perceived as a 'good' Muslim (Nadiya Hussein – British Bake-Off champion 2015)

Points 7, 8, and 9 relate to the ideal type of a 'good' Muslim as opposed to a 'bad' Muslim and suspected terrorist/violent extremist described above. An example of a 'good' Muslim is Nadiya Hussein, winner of 2015 Great British Bake Off. Point 7, the government and security forces attitude towards such a model citizen as Nadiya may be predominantly positive but only in so far as she can be used as a role model to 'win the hearts and minds' of other Muslims (Warsi 2018).

The perspective of point 8 is similar to the security forces because fearful Muslim and non-Muslim communities are grateful for 'good' Muslim role models (Kundnani 2015; Warsi 2018). So Nadiya is seen as an assimilated 'good' Muslim, comfortable in a secular society which does not encourage ostentatious demonstration of religious identity, particularly Muslim identity. It is interesting to note that on her website Nadiya makes little reference to her Muslim identity (Nadiya 2021).

Point 9, the trusting Muslim and non-Muslim community perspective ,contrasts with points 7 and 8 because, although the good Muslim is seen positively there is a feeling of disappointment that good equates with 'Western', and perhaps the Muslim identity is side-lined. We have already noted that Begum adopted Western dress in order to distance herself from her former IS life and perhaps from her Muslimness, and Hamida's family were wary of her fervent Muslimness manifest in her attire. Nadiya can be understood as an example of the 'good' Muslim and she herself confessed to being cast as the token Muslim possibly because she is occupying what we describe as a 'least Muslim role'. This tolerant community, including educationalists, reject the ascription of Muslims as a suspect community preferring to trust and respect Muslims and their diverse identities. However, as Brown argues in her chapter concerning the continued stigmatisation of Women and Jewish people, even the 'good' Muslims while supposedly gaining political equality' nevertheless cannot fully shed the 'stigma of their difference' (Brown 2006, 76, 77). The act of tolerating Muslims, particularly 'good' Muslims whose difference from the white non- Muslim norm is fading, is nevertheless discriminatory because it 'veils its own role in deactivating these differences and hence its own work of subordination' (Brown 2006, 77).

'Least' Muslim role v perceived violent extremist

The typology demonstrates how the literature and different communities view Nadiya, the 'good' Muslim, in comparison with Shamima the violent extremist Muslim, thus highlighting a continuum between acceptability and rejection. Even Hamida is part of the 'suspect' community because her views are considered extremist by her own family (M. Abbas 2019) and is thus cast as a 'bad' Muslim.

We acknowledge that this typology, drawn from the literature, does not capture the nuances of attitudes and behaviours towards Muslims. Rather it exemplifies a range of views by a range of people belonging to a variety of organisations and walks of life towards three very different types of women, all of whom are Muslim. The typology provides an attempt to distinguish varying perspectives towards a range of Muslims to show that the aims of one community cannot be transplanted into the aims of another. In other words, the security forces' agenda to identify terrorists and view individuals with zero tolerance may well be an appropriate behaviour in their context, but it is less appropriate in the education arena, where few young people are terrorists, potential terrorists, or violent extremists. There is growing opposition to governmental policy, which even those who have been hurt the most from terrorist attacks have described as anti-Muslim hate (BBC 2024). Survivors and relatives of those killed in the London, Manchester, and Brussels attacks have signed a letter condemning politicians for equating terrorists with British Muslims, thus emphasising our claim that Muslims are viewed as a suspect community. The signatories of the letter state 'the single most important thing we can do is to isolate the extremists and the terrorists from the vast majority of British Muslims who deplore such violence' (BBC 2024). We believe that such a task has implications for educationalists which we describe in the next section.

Pedagogical implications

While space prohibits an extended discussion concerning the pedagogical implications raised in our argument thus far, in this final section we briefly outline some principles which we think teachers might find helpful for their practice. We draw on Biesta, Allan and Edward's collection of essays concerning theorisation in education (Biesta, Allan, and Edwards 2014) which is establishing education as a discipline in its own right, distinct from sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc., while at the same time drawing on these disciplines to enhance our understanding. Indeed throughout the paper we have endeavoured to draw on papers from health, criminology and law which have relevance to the educational context. The way we hope teachers will use our typology and theorisations which we believe resonate with the idea of education as 'a process' which 'supports the emancipation of children towards (a certain degree of) self-determination.

Firstly the typology calls for teachers to understand the issues and become more reflective, critical teachers aware of their own ethnicity and sufficiently brave to take moderated risks, encouraging their pupils to engage in frank age-appropriate discussion about racism and its consequences, avoiding 'chilling' and providing space for all voices to be heard. In other words the typology invites the teacher to re-evaluate the purpose of their practice. The typology asks them to consider their attitude towards governmental policy – would they position themselves as an agent of surveillance for the state akin to

the security forces and fearful stance, or would they adopt a tolerant inclusive and educational stance facilitating communities of disagreement (Iverson 2018).

Secondly we outline how teachers can support classroom activity, not only in teaching about the subject of Islam (for example in Religious Education, or humanities lessons); but also how a teacher approaches classroom discussions which includes a Muslim pupil/s or involves discussion about the Muslim community. Earlier we mentioned the work of Pearce and Lewis (2018) who call for teachers to make stronger connections with Muslim families, adopting a critical race theory approach to counteract essentialising of Muslims and appreciate more fully the diversity of the Muslim community. So the typology invites the teacher to consider their stance – on the one hand engaging in the Prevent Policy's referral process of possible violent extremists, assimilation of Muslims into the dominant culture or on the other hand exploring extremism, appreciating Muslim diversity and facilitating communities of disagreement discussions in a trusting and respectful context.

Not only in the UK is anti-terrorism policy considered unfit for purpose, Howell and Richter-Montpetit (2020) consider whether securitisation theory is racist in their investigation of anti-black thought in the Copenhagen School. They argue that 'Classic securitisation theory advances a conceptualisation of 'normal politics' as reasoned, civilised dialogue, and securitisation as a potential regression into a racially coded uncivilised 'state of nature'. Such othering of non-white people is exemplified by positioning Muslims as a 'suspect community' which is justified because they are considered terrorists by the 'white, West' majority. This is articulated in our typology where security forces have a zero tolerance towards extremist views and the implications for teachers to distance themselves from such a stance which promotes an 'us and them' mentality. In educational settings many Muslims have, to varying degrees, been on the receiving end of negative attitudes which position them as members of a suspect community. The 'us and them' narrative is part of the problem of anti-terrorist policy such as 'Prevent'. Positioning Muslims, despite their obvious diversity, as a suspect community validates a binary mentality such as secularism/fundamentalism, West/Non-West, and White/Black, Brown and racialised others. We have already mentioned Brown's analysis of the subjugation of the minority group resulting in winners and losers, this has implications for teachers whose approach in classroom discussions can either reinforce the 'winner loser' and 'us and them' hegemonic mentality or challenge it. As discussed earlier, O'Donnell (2018) explains how those who are regarded at risk of radicalisation are positioned as vulnerable and requiring intervention, so the teacher's stance is crucial, either reinforcing a Muslim young person belonging to a suspect community needing anti-radicalisation therapy, or on the other hand an educationalist who listens and encourages frank debate in communities of disagreement (Iverson 2018). Some young Muslims may have violent extremist sympathies but the typology shows that, in an educational context, particularly in classrooms where teachers and students have developed a positive relationship, this can be explored and addressed through trusting and respectful dialogue.

Conclusion

Within a challenged secular national agenda in a sensitive political environment, Muslims are both at risk and risky. In answering our initial research questions by drawing on existing research, media representation, societal and policy initiatives, we argue that this typology is valuable in the following ways which relate to our four research questions:

First, the typology will assist teachers in demonstrating the intersectional nature of the ways in which layers of contemporary society (Muslim communities, government, security services, education, the media and other communities) are invested in the debates regarding Muslims as a suspect community. In this way the typology becomes valuable in understanding and positioning varying perspectives.

Second, the typology demonstrates the uneasy interplay between constructs of tolerance, risk and perceived risk, and how they are enacted within a post 9/11 liberal democracy. In classrooms, these contradictions and opposing positions can be drawn out, framed as they are within Wendy Brown's critique of tolerance.

Third, the typology illustrates the complex continuum from 'potential terrorist' to 'good' Muslim, demonstrating the impossibility of being universally perceived as a 'good' Muslim. The typology captures the metonym of 'Muslimness' representing the 'suspect community', so all three types of Muslim – suspected terrorist, bad or good – cannot achieve 'good status' unless 'Muslimness' is shed to be replaced by varying degrees of assimilation into the dominant culture, or an adoption of 'least Muslim role'; an irony within a liberal democracy, which Wendy Brown's theoretical framework again illuminates. The typology opens up potential for a rich vein of classroom discussion in relation to perceptions of 'Muslimness'.

Finally the typology can be used by educationalists to inform their curriculum design and approach with young people in the spirit of freedom and equity.

Whilst this typology has evolved within a British context, the model is applicable more widely. In terms of the positioning of Muslims as a suspect community, the interplay between security services and governments, by the media and by education in any given country, whilst culturally situated, can nevertheless be read and understood through the typology.

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