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The subjugated knowledge of Prevent: UK terrorism pre-emption and the disruptive history of Northern Ireland

A thesis submitted to the University of Warwick for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Politics and International Studies
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Tom Pettinger

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Key for Acronyms

ERG	– Extreme Risk Guidance [<i>a list of 22 ‘risk factors’</i>]
VAF	– Vulnerability Assessment Form
TACT	– Terrorism Act

Key for Interviewees’ Anonymized Names:

Northern Ireland

L[Number]	– loyalist interviewee [<i>all are former combatants unless noted otherwise</i>]
R[Number]	– republican interviewee [<i>all are former combatants unless noted otherwise</i>]
B42	– high profile barrister

Prevent

PLead[Number]	– national Prevent lead
PC[Number]	– Prevent Coordinator
CM[Number]	– Channel ‘de-radicalization’ Mentor
PPolice[Number]	– Prevent Police Officer
PCC[Number]	– Prevent Content Creator [<i>director of company producing Prevent-related messaging</i>]

Key for Armed Groups

Republican Groups

(P)IRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army [<i>the main paramilitary group to which republicans associated themselves, often called the ‘IRA’</i>]
OIRA	Official IRA [<i>aligned with a more Marxist agenda, and declared a ceasefire in the early 1970s</i>]
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army [<i>formed by OIRA members who opposed the ceasefire</i>]

Loyalist Groups

UDA	Ulster Defence Association [<i>a legal loyalist umbrella organization for paramilitary groups to operate through, outlawed in 1992</i>]
UFF	Ulster Freedom Fighters [<i>formed from UDA</i>]
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force [<i>established to combat republican threat and maintain union</i>]
LVF	Loyalist Volunteer Force [<i>split from the UVF</i>]

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Declaration of Original Work

I declare that the research and thesis is my own original work. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university. A small number of interview quotes found in the thesis have been published in my articles in the *British Journal of Sociology* and *Critical Terrorism Studies* journals, and on a website *EuropeNow* (see bibliography).

Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between Britain's counter-radicalization programme Prevent and the testimony of those convicted of terrorism offences in Northern Ireland. The research explores the striking contradiction whereby Northern Ireland does not implement radicalization pre-emption despite its active dissident groups and notorious history of conflict, yet the rest of the UK *does*. Utilizing primary interviews with 17 Prevent officials (including Channel's hard-to-reach 'de-radicalization' mentors) and over 30 Northern Irish former combatants, the thesis performs a discourse analysis to expose the two fundamentally different ways of knowing terrorism risk in the UK. It undertakes a critical exposition of Prevent's construction and navigation of risk, asking how 'pre-crime risk' is observed and intervened upon only on one side of the border, when a fragile ceasefire best describes post-conflict reality on the other. How does the discourse of radicalization subjugate the history of political insurgency in Northern Ireland, rendering it invisible, and what reality is constructed through these silences? Through substantial empirical investigation, the thesis explores how pre-emptive security closes down space for political contestation – ultimately inventing the '(de)radicalizable subject' through a rationality infused with *insecurity*. To construct this subject, the discourse of 'risk' and 'pre-emption' has to silence the history of insurgency in Northern Ireland and the voices of its perpetrators. These militants staunchly rebut any narrative that they were 'vulnerable' to radicalization, but rather were heroes who actively chose armed rebellion. This thesis brings the disjuncture of UK terrorism knowledge to the forefront, exposing how the discourse of risk, vulnerability, and pre-emption necessarily silences militant testimonies – inventing a world without referring to its inhabitants.

Introduction

What's the motive? Is it ideology? Is it pro-ISIS? No it's nothing, it's profoundly human (CM13).

Radicalization is because of external factors on individuals... In Northern Ireland [in] 1969 the... most extenuating circumstance is blood on the streets (L27).

The British preemptive counter-terrorism programme Prevent, and its intervention arm Channel, have been consistently lauded for producing “real results in helping divert people away from terrorism and violence” (Security Minister Ben Wallace, in HM Government 2017). Looked to by other states as a paragon of preemptive risk-management (Thornton & Bouhana 2017), Prevent imposes a duty on teachers, nurses, and social workers to look for so-called ‘signs of radicalization’ in their clients. Cases presenting these signs are identified and reported to local Prevent teams so that risk-management interventions can occur – allegedly – to minimize the chance of any terrorism risk actually materializing. This attempt to ‘preempt the next terrorist’ is constructed on a number of suppositions, including the calculability of not-yet-materialized risk, the interruptible nature of the potential threat, and the notion that danger emanates from the psychological defects of certain individuals (Knudsen 2018; Younis 2020). Functioning through this rationality, Prevent is embedded within a broader turn towards possibilistic risk-thinking, a turn that was apparent during the 20th century but that rose to prominence at the turn of the millennium, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (Valverde & Mopas 2004; Amoore & de Goede 2008; Aradau & van Munster 2008a,b; Amoore 2013). Prioritizing the imagination of possibly-impending catastrophes and preempting their occurrence has become a central component of risk-governance, especially in the Global North: Brian Massumi writes, “Preemption, it is argued, is the most powerful operative logic of the present” (2015a, 209). The logic goes: threats are everywhere and are unending, and they must be managed so that life as we know it can continue. As prominent British politician and ideologue Michael Gove remarked in the context of COVID-19, “The whole point about life is that you need to manage risk in a way that keeps people as safe as possible” (Marr 2020). Risk-thinking is ultimately concerned with making the future amenable to intervention and direction (Aradau & van Munster 2008a; Bourne 2014). Yet, as we will see throughout the thesis, what becomes visibilized as ‘risk’ is the subject of a privileged gaze (Anderson 2010a; Martin 2018). In the case of Prevent, a programme that assumes a distinctly psychological explanation for the phenomenon of ‘terrorism’, individual-level flashes of violence are the disaster to be averted, and the object rendered visible is the fallible individual.

But what knowledge (and experience) does this gaze *exclude*? What assumptions constitute the preemptive lens and condition how it looks at individuals, to explain ‘why violence erupts’? What

becomes seen, and what remains hidden, through the fixation on the *risk* of terrorism? And in turn, what does this mean for the construction of subjectivities in a society dominated by risk-thinking – what are the hidden ways in which our conduct is shaped, our bodies governed (Gordon 1991)? In order to explore these questions, the thesis will utilize literature on silencing and anticipatory risk-governance to expose the operative logics of British counter-radicalization. To perform this analysis, and to understand the silences upon which ‘terrorism preemption’ is built, the research illuminates the assumptions the Prevent programme makes about why people engage in violence, before contrasting this knowledge with the stories of those convicted of terrorism offences: former combatants from ‘the Troubles’ in Northern Ireland. Importantly, although Northern Ireland has a long history of conflict (which continues today), Prevent is not applied there given the devolution of security and policing powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Instead, it is instituted only in mainland Britain, with England and Wales adopting Prevent directly from Westminster and Scotland interpreting the policy through its devolved parliament in Holyrood. As the thesis unfolds, we see chasmic disjunctures characterizing the relationship between these two worlds – of assumptions about ‘the terrorist’, and the experience of ‘terrorists’ themselves – despite the worlds being physically separated by only twelve miles of water. Why is Prevent not implemented in Northern Ireland, a region out of all the UK where it might most naturally appear at home? We find across the thesis that the Prevent assemblage relies upon, and re-produces, the silencing of the experiences of those who perpetrated the very sort of violence that Prevent supposedly counteracts.

Prevent, and the Disruptive Testimony of Northern Irish Ex-militants

Prevent was established as one of the four strands of the broader counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) in Britain in 2003, and was rolled out following the 7/7 attacks in London in 2005. Referrals to Prevent in mainland Britain are made on the basis of 22 Extreme Risk Guidance (ERG) risk factors, or ‘signs of radicalisation’ taken from studies of “extremist-related” convicts (NOMS 2014). These factors, which include a ‘*need for status*’ and ‘*them-vs-us thinking*’, apparently demonstrate that an individual may constitute a risk (see Figure 4, Thematic Chapter 1). In 2015, the Prevent Duty imposed a legal responsibility on public sector workers to identify and report these signs, and now an “overwhelming majority” of teachers (and many other public servants) accept this responsibility as just another facet of their existing safeguarding duties (Busher et al. 2017, 6). My research focuses in particular on Channel ‘de-radicalization’ interventions because, as one practitioner said, “The true workings of Prevent is Channel” (PPolice9). Channel was piloted in 2007 as the individual-intervention arm focussing on the most supposedly-risky referrals made to Prevent, was expanded over the

following few years, and was rolled out nationally in 2012. It aims to dematerialize the risk (supposedly) pose by referred individuals, through a series of one-on-one interventions with Channel mentors that take place often over the course of a few months. I interviewed 17 Prevent-related actors, including strategic Prevent officials and Channel 'de-radicalization' mentors. These officials make judgments about which risk is made 'seen', how its subsequent management should be implemented, and ultimately decide whether a case continues to pose a threat or should be deemed safe enough for the mentoring to conclude.

Being concerned with rethinking and deconstructing assemblages that prioritize mistrust, suspicion, and otherness, I was interested to problematize Prevent by exploring its potential silences and discontinuities. In order to analyse the knowledge and privileges upon which Prevent's assumptions are built, I contrasted its claims about why violence occurs with the stories of people who had been involved in the very violence that it works to interrupt. I interviewed around 30 Northern Irish former combatants from 'the Troubles' to see how they framed their involvement, and examined their testimony in light of how Prevent practitioners narrated the identification and management of 'risk'. As ex-militants represent the materialization of risk that Prevent would have wished to divert, what is the relationship between their stories and the risk factors that Prevent alleges cause, or are *associated with*, terrorism risk? Are their explanations for violence represented in Prevent's discourse? Does it 'hear' those convicted of terrorism offences, or is this testimony rendered invisible? What knowledge and experience is excluded through this novel and contemporary framework of risk (Rose 2006, 7)? What are the consequences that such an act of forgetting produces? What are the *effective* implications: in other words, how does this performance of knowledge in turn reproduce knowledge, and what is this new knowledge? And what are its *affective* implications: in other words, how does it make an impact on our lives? What forms of knowledge and practices (thought, speech, behaviour) does it restrict and repress, and what does it encourage and reward? Before delving further into the meaning of these questions, I will briefly justify the use of Northern Irish ex-militants. At the beginning of the thesis it might seem an unusual comparison, but I will make the case that retrospectively, these actors would have been ideal clients of Prevent's interventions.

In light of my inability to secure interviews with convicted contemporary Terrorism Act (TACT) offenders in Britain (see Methodology chapter), it is apposite to investigate Northern Irish ex-militant testimony in relation to the assumptions behind Channel's 'counter-terrorism' interventions, for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is appropriate given that there has not been any concerted academic attempt to compare those who engaged in the Northern Irish conflict with those who are governed by Prevent (a programme brought into existence only five years after the Good Friday Agreement). No thesis has proposed that some fundamental shift has occurred between the Troubles and the turn

of the millennium, regarding how and why people become engaged in militant violence (a discussion explored further in the following chapter). So how can the sudden transition from the armed policing and political negotiation used by the British state in Northern Ireland, to psychologically profiling ‘vulnerable’ individuals, be maintained?

Assessing Prevent in light of the stories of former combatants from the Troubles allows us to examine the claims of prominent security officials that violence should be seen as continuous across eras, and that violence has always been a psychological problem solvable through safeguarding technologies. The Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), which oversees the Prevent programme, gave evidence in 2012 to the UK House of Commons Home Affairs Committee through its Director Charles Farr. When he was asked whether *the drivers of radicalisation are different than they were before the Good Friday Agreement*, he replied, “Not fundamentally, no... There is an ideological component, which is important, but there is a lot about personal vulnerabilities that drives people into the arms of terrorist organisations” (2012, Q309). Positioning ‘ideology’ and ‘personal vulnerability’ as producing violence is characteristic of mainstream radicalization scholarship, and is the foundational assumption behind Prevent. This position, which problematizes the individual and excludes any explanatory power of structural causes, has been read backwards onto the protagonists of the Troubles: the claim is that *individual vulnerabilities explain violence, and it was always thus*, as implied by Farr. The realization of this truth is only just catching up with what was always a reality. Where successive British Governments’ renderings of the IRA as degenerate criminals, bandits, and evildoers was prominent during the Troubles (Thatcher, quoted in Apple 1981; Mulcahy 1995), Farr was making the claim that ex-militants from the Troubles were no different than those who ‘become radicalized’ and deploy violence in contemporary Britain. Indeed, this claim is replicated in the Prevent Strategy: eight times across the document, it notes that Prevent is designed to combat “all forms of terrorism”, and consistently obscures the distinction between the Irish and British contexts:

In Ireland, as elsewhere, ideology is rarely the only factor in the process of radicalisation and recruitment. Recruitment is often personality-driven or dependent on family or local allegiances. The promise of status, excitement and in some cases financial reward are all relevant (HM Government 2011b, 20).

Do these personality-driven risk factors – and the absence of structural factors – make sense in relation to how ex-militants portrayed their involvement? We find that this ‘reading back’ of the contemporary British precautionary rationale onto the Northern Irish conflict effectively silences the voices of armed protagonists, making it important that this thesis reaches out to hear them.

Occasionally during interviews, practitioners themselves would also comment on the disjuncture in British counter-terrorism, between then and now. For instance, PC6 said the reason that a preemptive approach wasn't implemented during the Troubles was because it hadn't been considered, rather than preemptive safeguarding interventions not being likely to work:

I think they had such a focus on the military aspect of the war if you like than prevention at an early stage. I think safeguarding has become more of a thing than it was back then, if you think of all forms of abuse – sexual, anything else – we're a lot better at dealing with it now than we were in the 70s and 80s than we were. So I guess there's natural learning as far as that's concerned... There probably are still comparisons to be made in terms of how people got involved in violence [in Northern Ireland], there're maybe some good connections that can be made because again if you take away the ideology, there's not too many middle class Catholics from Malone Road who joined the IRA if you know what I mean. So they probably woulda been well served to look at social and economic factors, people's vulnerabilities, people's friendship groups and grievances and all those sorts of things... That's something they don't give themselves enough credit for over here – learning from past experiences and recognizing mistakes that've been made in the past.

Rather than positing these two objects of concern – violence in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, and violence in contemporary Britain – as substantively different, PC6 claims that *it was a mistake to approach the conflict with a military response*. The way to solve the problem of violence has always been to consider its potential perpetrators as abused victims and to safeguard them. This reading of the present back into the past is evidenced continually throughout the thematic chapters. Prevent does not directly apply to Northern Ireland, officially because the areas covered by Prevent are devolved matters and are therefore the responsibility of the Northern Irish government in Stormont (HM Government 2011b, 106). However, the Prevent Strategy notes that “the issues dealt with under this Prevent strategy and the principles it sets out are relevant [and “can be applied”] to the attempts to counter the threat from Northern Ireland-related terrorism” in Britain (HM Government 2011b, 14,41). Indeed, PC6 told me that in his local area “we had... an Irish case through Channel.” We will unpack the legitimacy of this comparison further during the Methodology chapter. Again, this thesis explores the experience of fighters from the conflict in Northern Ireland so that the assumptions made about why (their) violence occurs can be more effectively scrutinized.

I do not intend to make structural claims or assert specific causes of violence in this research. In considering Prevent's counter-radicalization scheme ‘Channel’ against the testimony of ‘the terrorist’ themselves, I am most fundamentally interested in how the two worlds of ‘risk-knowledge’ co-exist, and how they disturb the claims the other makes about why violence erupts.

The Silenced Knowledge of Preemptive Governance

Prevent is a programme supposedly designed to interrupt terrorism before it materializes, and is lauded as a touchstone of preemptive risk-governance around the Global North (Thornton & Bouhana 2017; Skleparis & Knudsen 2020). Yet when we compare its rationale and operations to the testimony of those actually *convicted* of terrorism offences, we witness how Prevent excludes this alternative knowledge from its 'counter-radicalization' interventions. Prevent relies upon a labyrinth of chasmic gaps between its assumptions and the stories of those who would have been its most ideal constituents. The Prevent apparatus forecloses relations of space and time – and consequently the testimony of former militants – by situating cognitive recalibration as the way towards reduction of terrorism risk. Where ex-militants described environmental (spatial) and historical (temporal) conditions as instigating their involvement, the 'dispositif of risk' closes down this possibility by problematizing individual vulnerability (Wimelius et al. 2018; Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier 2019; Stephens & Sieckelinck 2020). The meaning behind alternative stories becomes silenced by an assemblage that provides psychological interventions rather than political reform. This theme will be expanded upon in the following chapter and unfolded across the empirical material, but it is important to note here that preemption excludes from reasonable discourse the meaning of material (spatial and temporal) relations (Massumi 2015a). It precludes the importance of the co-constitutive affect of such relations in the formation of subjectivity, fixing the ideal identity as "already, and forever, constituted," rather than rendering identities as always being (re-) negotiated (Massey 2005, 10; also see: Boukalas 2019; Peck 2013).

Preemptive terrorism governance produces an imaginary of 'potential terrorism risk' without listening to the stories of those who demonstrated a materialization of this risk. The explicitly psychological context within which the Extreme Risk Guidance 'risk factor' study was undertaken (see Thematic Chapter 1) circulates a self-perpetuating outcome: ignorant and vulnerable *but ultimately tameable* individuals are rendered as the locus of terrorism risk. All that is required is their resilience, rather than material reform they allegedly desire. When this terrorism-related risk-consciousness is held alongside the very object it is supposedly concerned with (i.e. those convicted of terrorism offences), we find that this alternative knowledge disrupts Prevent's gaze. De-historicized and de-contextualized knowledge is privileged by Prevent. A different story, one that historicizes and contextualizes, is told to us by its object of concern. One republican peace activist, R43, gave a talk "in a London mosque about Prevent from our perspective here," and continued, saying, "The whole thing's a load of fricking nonsense!" The preemptive gaze is perennially insecure: risk is everywhere, but its carriers unaware; personal resilience is the solution, yet nobody is ever totally secure; suspicion is the order of the day. The site of intervention is the cognitive realm, and, by diverting people away

from violence through resilience training, we find an assemblage concerned with perpetual spatial and temporal continuity. This approach was consistently rejected by ex-militants, who had perpetrated violence a few years prior in the same country, and whose motivations are not seen as substantively different than contemporary terrorism offenders on the mainland. The disjuncture between the preemptive intervention and its (hypothetical) subjects will be the central theme of the research.

The fixation with anticipation obscures the possibility for political change, and instead sets individuals on a course to cope more effectively with their existing surroundings. The future is already here, made present and simultaneously averted through interventions (Aradau & van Munster 2008a,b; Massumi 2015; Boukalas 2019). Alternative realities are only negotiated on a personal level: who could pose a threat to the existing order, and how could they be brought on-side and made more resilient to their environments? Such a fixation on risk, and ensuring the recurrence of the present, is upheld only by ignoring ex-militants' emphasis on political change and reform of external environments. We see throughout the thesis that Prevent would have wished to act on ex-militants from the Troubles. However, instead of listening to and including ex-militant testimony in negotiating a different future, anticipatory interventions would have wholly ignored their experiences, and would have instead cast these actors as simply needing become more resilient within a continuation of their surroundings.

The testimony of ex-militants profoundly unsettles the divergent ways of seeing and knowing 'terrorism risk' in mainland Britain and Northern Ireland: "How could we have seen it any other way, when all other avenues of protest were barred?... *It's very strange that people over in Britain don't see that*" (R30, emphasis added). Despite practitioners occasionally claiming that Prevent would have worked during the Troubles, we clearly see the particularism and separation of the Irish and British contexts in the implementation of Channel interventions. Rather than listening to those on the outside and promoting a radical inclusion of 'risky others', which was central to how ex-militants explained their movement towards peace, Prevent shuts down the space to trust or learn from those outside its risk-conscious rationality. Prevent practitioners consistently drew distinctions between *them* (risky Channel cases unaware of their potential terrorism propensity) and *us* (enlightened, safe, risk-aware activists) (Elshimi 2015). By constructing the prevention of political violence as inseparable from the preemptive safeguarding of vulnerable people's underdeveloped minds, Prevent casts any identity that is not aware of its own hypothetical risk as founded on misunderstanding, as illogical, and as inherently dangerous. Throughout the thesis we will see that the only acceptable subjectivity enabled to exist by counter-radicalization interventions is one which is acutely aware of its potential for devastation, of its need to change from vulnerable to resilient, and of its simultaneous, productive responsibility to spot risk in others. Ex-militants narrated achieving their continued disengagement

from violence through the possession of multiple (conflicting) subjectivities, allow their meaningful political contestation. But the propulsion of Prevent is towards restricting subjectivities that are open to achieving reforms to the existing neoliberal order. Those who don't assume proactive risk-consciousness as the primary lens through which to view the world – and who are identified as contravening this mentality – are rendered potentially dangerous. They are offered 'counter-radicalization' interventions until risk-thinking is acquired and success declared. However, this new identity is necessarily accompanied by a continued and active responsibility to look everywhere for risk. Citizens under this modality "must prove their [continual] innocence through either consent or complicity with the national security state" (Giroux 2004, 20). This sits awkwardly with the testimony of those who have engaged in violence. These constituents – those upon whom Prevent would have wished to intervene – don't 'see' primarily through a framework of risk, but through trust and negotiation with dangerous others. At every turn we see that the significant claims Prevent makes are only legitimized when we disregard the stories of its most ideal subjects.

This is an important avenue of exploration, because the positioning of certain subjectivities as legitimate and others as fundamentally risky – to a point of potentially producing catastrophe – has significant implications for relations of space and time. How far are we governed by the politics of decision (Aradau & van Munster 2007); is there anything else except to choose what to do with the space immediately in front of us? Is the only temporality the present moment (Boukalas 2019), or is there a past worth learning from, a (different) future worth imagining? How are we affected by the gaze of risk-awareness? Looking to silenced experiences matters in light of these questions, because such stories help to illuminate the claims made by Prevent about why humans act. In light of these stories, the claims of preemption become exposed as fundamentally circular, and making reference only to their own quite literal world of imagination, legitimized by a "passion for ignorance" (Zulaika 2012, 54; also see: Zulaika 2009; Jackson 2012). The power in bringing forth subjugated (ex-militant) stories can disrupt

the façade of a foundation for authority, [which is constructed when] politics retroactively reorganizes the past and reconstitutes its origins backwards to absorb and conceal the traumatic gaps within language, subjectivity and the relationship to the sovereign (Heath-Kelly 2016c, 151).

Like the apparent irreconcilability between the two quotes at the top of this introduction, the two worlds of knowledge from Prevent and its ideal constituents constantly unsettle each other, showing us that there exists a different way to interpret than the universal claims made by Prevent, an alternative to seeing everything through the eyes of risk, another reality than one which closes down

relations of space and time. I now turn to the literature that already exists on this topic and the original contribution my research provides, and then turn to the structure of the thesis.

Literature review

Prevent was originally designed through the framework of community cohesion; the logic was that the integration of excluded communities into mainstream British society would produce relative safety from terrorism (DCLG 2007; also see: Thomas 2014a,b; Kundnani 2009). This direction was ultimately considered to be counter-productive because it stoked racial divisions, and the cohesion agenda of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was officially divorced from Prevent's operation in 2011. The DCLG ceded its responsibility for this broader community work to the Home Office, which took Prevent *away* from cohesion and down a more overtly securitized trajectory (Thomas 2014a,b). This was around the time of the national rollout of the Channel individual-intervention programme (which occurred in 2012), and the mentoring scheme quickly became the "jewel in the crown" of Prevent (PC6). Although a central aim of Prevent is still the delivery of programmes that target 'vulnerable communities', different iterations of Prevent have enabled the de-prioritizing of overtly-racialized cohesion approaches, and the escalating prominence of individual interventions through population-wide surveillance (Heath-Kelly 2017b).

The field of radicalization studies that informs Prevent's operation foregrounds the correlation between (individual) vulnerability and the incidence of violence (Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier 2019). The broader historical development of this field, which emerged from psychological-deviancy models of criminality and presumptions that 'the terrorist' was concerned with bringing about the apocalypse, will be explored more fully in the following chapter. But for now, theories around radicalization assert an association between individual 'deficiencies' (like mental health issues and substance abuse) and national security risk (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Freilich 2013; Corner & Gill 2015,2017,2019, Corner, Gill, & Mason 2016; Lankford 2016; Bouhana et al. 2018). The individual is the prominent object of concern in this literature, a theme manifesting most evidently in research on so-called 'lone wolf' terrorist actors (Spaaij 2010,2012; Jenkins 2011; Borum, Fein, & Vossekuil 2012; Simon 2013; Gill, Horgan, & Deckert 2014; Danzell & Maisonet-Montañez 2016). As well as taking a significant lead from anticipatory risk-governance literature (see following chapter), my research builds on many critiques of this hegemonic radicalization discourse.

These critiques, which deconstruct the language and practice of 'counter-radicalization' policies like Prevent, highlight significant discrepancies and inconsistencies behind key concepts, and the circular construction of 'pre-crime' risk (Kundnani 2009; Sedgwick 2010; Jackson 2012; Heath-Kelly

2012,2013a,2017a,b; Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly, & Jarvis 2014; Thomas 2014a,b; Martin 2014,2018; Lowe, 2017; Silva 2018; Coolsaet 2019; Younis and Jadhav 2020). This critical scholarship points in particular to the subjective way in which basic definitions and aims are instrumentalized: counter-radicalization practitioners often rely on personally-defined concepts and draw from 'common-sense' logics (Dresser 2019), rather than reflect critically on the linguistic and conceptual minefield in which they work (Elshimi 2017; van de Weert & Eijkman 2018). The imprecision and lack of clarity underpinning analytical signifiers like 'radicalization', 'de-radicalization', and 'extremism' has been widely documented (Sedgwick 2010; Richards 2011; Elshimi 2017; Lowe 2017). Following this research, other scholars have interviewed health workers, educators, and other public sector officials, finding that these workers broadly accept and implement the 'Prevent Duty' – the responsibility to identify and report 'signs of radicalization' – through multiple and varied interpretations (Heath-Kelly & Strausz 2018; Dresser 2019; Younis and Jadhav 2020). This open space clearly allows for (and even encourages) racialized and gendered inscriptions of threat by decision-makers – from teachers making the initial referral to Channel officials mentoring cases (Dixit 2014; Elshimi 2017; Wilcox 2017), a theme that will be developed throughout the thesis.

Yet whilst this work has profoundly challenged the premise of radicalization theories, it often takes policy documents as its starting point, seeks conceptual clarification, or looks to determine how and why initial referrals are made by public sector workers. Research that investigates the preemptive interruption of those identified as potential terrorism offenders before they attack is notably sparse. One study of community 'counter-radicalization' intervention programmes was undertaken by Basia Spalek and Lynn Davies in 2012, but there has been no sustained empirical excavation of Prevent's prized jewel, Channel. Moreover, the few instances of research that *have* examined the implementation of Channel ultimately accept the assumptions of the radicalization discourse as legitimate. Rather than problematizing the premises or legitimacy of risk-management itself, this research points to the ineffective or opaque processes through which interventions take place, and seeks to improve individual solutions to 'the problem of extremism'. For instance, Amy Thornton and Noémie Bouhana (2019) interviewed (among others) three Channel mentors and three officials with responsibility for Channel in their local authority. They highlighted the lack of detailed information about interventions and about how success of the programme is gauged, and demonstrated that there exists a lack of consideration for the impact that Channel has on its constituents. The research pointed to some profound disjunctures through which the programme functions, such as disparities from region to region. However, being written by two behavioural criminologists this article was unsurprisingly concerned with improving the effectiveness of preemptive criminal interventions, rather than overtly pursuing questions about the legitimacy of preemption itself.

Douglas Weeks, a former counter-terrorism practitioner who “offer[s] real world perspectives and solutions to real world problems” (DouglasWeeks 2020), interviewed over 20 Channel mentors for his research. Across two articles he makes the point that big gaps exist between policy aspirations and localized practice, because of the disparate way in which officials interpret the Prevent agenda (2017,2018). One chapter explores practitioner narratives of success, highlighting a few key factors in the Channel process – like the relationship between mentor and mentee, and the centrality of emotion to Channel’s functionality (2017). However, the piece focuses on the recruitment and character profiles of mentors, rather than excavating the implications of any findings with regard to the processes of ‘counter-radicalization’. His article for *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (2018) assesses how Channel mentors describe the sorts of intervention they provide and how they establish trust with mentees. This paper also bears in mind some experience of ‘the convicted terrorist’ themselves, and their reintegration from prison into society. However, rather than attempting to disturb the circularity of preemptive logics, it focuses on how offenders respond to license conditions imposed on them after their release.

The most epistemologically penetrating investigation of the concept of ‘de-radicalization’ is Mohammed Elshimi’s book *De-Radicalisation in the UK Prevent Strategy* (2017). He interviewed over two dozen Prevent-related practitioners (including a Channel mentor) and other relevant parties to determine how they described this field of work, and found 28 different definitions to refer to ‘de-radicalization’. However, this piece primarily contributes to the development of a conceptual framework for de-radicalization, and so refrained from exploring in depth the methods of intervention imposed by Channel: its findings wrestled with the problematic nature of intervening upon others, rather than illuminate the processes by which cases are ‘made safe’.

Whilst this work has been profoundly useful in identifying some of the contradictions underpinning Channel and the premise of pre-crime interventions, significant gaps in the field remain. When a referral is moved up the Prevent structures towards the most concentrated form of support – Channel intervention – what happens to the individual concerned? How are they negotiated over by risk-managers, when and why are they seen as posing a terrorism risk, and at what point are they marked ‘safe’? Very little is known about the management of and gaze upon the supposedly most risky pre-crime cases. Being informed by the critiques mentioned above, and bearing in mind the limited work that exists on the highly-guarded Channel programme, the contribution of this research is twofold. It firstly seeks to alleviate a significant empirical void: as we have seen, minimal data on the Channel programme currently exists, and the research that does examine its risk-management processes refrains from asking epistemological questions about the nature of risk (see following chapter). In providing exposure and analysis of counter-radicalization processes, this thesis maps an

investigation of the Channel ‘counter-radicalization’ scheme onto the broader field of risk-governance. It exposes the subjective nature of Prevent’s inner workings, and the banality through which pre-crime risk-management operates. In demonstrating that children deemed to be peaceable are being provided with counter-terrorism interventions, this research develops the fields of critical security and risk-studies through a vast empirical analysis. Secondly, and more fundamentally, the research seeks to disturb the circular logics that saturate the preemptive rationality by illuminating a subjugated world of knowledge: the experience of the terrorist himself. No research has to date considered the premises of counter-radicalization interventions with those it would ultimately have sought to redirect and reformulate. This is an important inquiry, because the ascendancy of the preemptive rationality has considerable consequences for how relations of space and time are understood (Massumi 2015a). We find that just as preemptive interventions constrain and restrict possible futures, ex-militants articulate the opening up of space as emancipatory. These ex-militants, who would have found themselves on the other side of preemption, describe trusting others – despite any dangers posed – and radical inclusion as necessary premises of a functioning society. Yet Prevent excludes and silences alternative forms of knowing, rendering anything other than an intrinsically suspicious gaze as suspicious itself.

Listening to ‘the terrorist’ allows the potential disruption of fundamental and self-justifying claims of Prevent to take place. Attempting to assess the assumptions made by preemptive risk-governance, my overarching research question is therefore: *How does the subjugated knowledge of Northern Irish ex-militants disrupt the preemptive dispositif of Prevent and Channel interventions?* It is crucial to unpack the discourse of ‘counter-radicalization’ bearing in mind the stories of former combatants for a number of reasons. Having become widely integrated into society, preemptive logics have significant consequences for social and political relations, structuring the way in which we think, see, and act (Massumi 2015a). The drive towards anticipation often goes unquestioned, sustained by the management of worst-case imaginaries through *action in the present* to avoid these impending disasters (Aradau 2004). How much do these imagined worst-case stories (and their preemptive management) embody the stories of the perpetrators of violence themselves (and these actors’ disengagement)? What alternative knowledge exists to the way in which the Prevent programme ‘sees’ potentially violent Others and their possible trajectory towards criminality? The relevance of ex-militant testimony could not be more central to exposing the concealed assumptions through which terrorism-preemption operates. Moreover, as we have seen, no research has yet evaluated Channel’s ‘de-radicalization’ functionality against the stories of terrorism offenders – either about their movement into violence, or their disengagement from violence. Moreover, there exists only limited information about the programme in the public domain. The contribution made by engaging with this

research question in light of the testimony of two groups of interviewees is therefore both original and significant. Moreover, it is timely: in a moment when young people are mobilizing to agitate for a sustainable environment, for racial equality, and for other checks on the excesses of decades of neoliberal rule (Epstein 2015; Loukakis & Portos 2020), will their activism and protest be seen as a potential national security threat, or as a potentially disruptive but valid asset to learn from?

Structure of thesis

The thesis begins by discussing the theoretical work that situates my research, with a particular focus on silencing, and the privileges inherent to preemptive governance. The theory chapter explores the shift from prevention to preemption, taking into consideration how the conflict in Northern Ireland was governed through a criminal justice approach before British counter-terrorism moved towards the anticipatory monitoring and management of pre-crime risk. It finishes with a discussion of the foreclosure of spatial and temporal relations within preemptive risk-thinking, issues which will be referred to during the thematic chapters. This chapter on theory is followed by a chapter on methods. The methods chapter explores how and why a discourse analysis is deployed, why I am assessing Prevent in light of former militants' testimonies, and how I selected and recruited interviewees. It discusses ethical issues and problems I experienced during fieldwork (especially with Prevent practitioners), followed by an explanation of how I thematized and coded interview data in the post-interview stage. Some reflections on the process of data collection during fieldwork are provided. To conclude this chapter, and to tie together the theoretical and methodological sections with the empirical material, I included a succinct history of Northern Ireland. This enables the Northern Irish interviews to be more easily contextualized. After all, every republican spent time delving into the island's history (some going back hundreds of years), and some loyalists did similarly (and all referred to parades and events commemorating historical moments).

The thesis then moves into an exposition of the empirical material, over the course of four thematic chapters. The first two of these examine the claims about why people might be drawn to violence. In *Motivations and Risk Factors* (Thematic Chapter 1) we see how former combatants describe why they were motivated to become involved in violence, and how this testimony subverts the assumptions made in the implementation of Channel. *Negotiating Agency* (Thematic Chapter 2) examines how ex-militants described their sense of commitment in relation to their violence, again assessing this testimony in light of the methodology of pre-crime interventions. The second couple of thematic chapters (3 and 4) look away from narratives about the reasons violence erupts (or the attempted construction of risk profiles), and consider how interviewees explained their thoughts on

'risk', and the logical conclusions their perspectives move us towards. *How Risk-Knowledge is (Un)Known* (Thematic Chapter 3) assesses how interviewees described the extent to which risk can be 'known', and their thoughts on the legitimacy of *intending* to know, see, and categorize risk. *The Construction of Meaningful Peace / Finding Solutions to Violence* (Thematic Chapter 4) – the final substantive chapter – then moves on to exploring the logical conclusions that ex-militants and Prevent officials separately drew us towards: what do ex-militants see as desirable outcomes of their experience and knowledge, and equally what do Prevent practitioners narrate as the ideal outcome of *their* risk-knowledge?

Motivations and Risk Factors discusses the issue of *motivations*, and the causes around which ex-militants described as encouraging their involvement in political violence. We see how political and environmental grievances are central to former combatant testimony: they explicitly and consistently focused on the context within which they found themselves. For republicans, this was experiencing violence against them perpetrated by the state – such as internment, stop-and-searches, and particular moments of violence against their community – with a background of experiencing their lives as second-class citizens in Northern Ireland. For loyalists, motivations were described around reacting to republican violence exerted against their communities, along with a sense of abandonment by the British state in the face of such violence (bearing in mind historic insecurities). Ultimately they all described external contexts as primary motivators in instigating their involvement in violence.

Yet when we look at how Prevent describes the drivers for terrorism, we find an individualized, pathologized ontology that excludes from the field of enquiry the environments that ex-militants described as fundamentally important to explaining their involvement. Prevent asserts personal 'risk factors' as the object of concern which – when properly managed – can avert the incidence of political violence. This is a deeply decontextualizing and dehistoricizing gaze, and one which silences the stories of the very people Prevent wishes to make claims about. As one practitioner remarked about the detachment of space and time from human behaviour, "You're always conscious, I think something around Prevent is that *anyone can go off and commit an atrocity*" (PPolice9, emphasis added). 'Causes' and 'motivations' become 'risk factors' and 'signs of radicalization', hiding the experience and knowledge narrated by Prevent's most ideal constituents – and introducing a significant and continuing divergence between counter-terrorism policies of the nations of the United Kingdom.

Negotiating Agency then explores the sense of agency described by ex-militants. How did they narrate their commitment and determination, when the field of contemporary terrorism studies is saturated with research that assumes the passivity of individuals being radicalized (Gill 2007; Silber & Bhatt 2007; McCauley & Moskalenko 2008; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010; Kruglanski, et al. 2014; Odag, Leiser, & Boehnke 2019)? Former combatants spoke about their surroundings leading them to see

violence as appropriate. They went as far as to suggest that their involvement in violence was even a moral obligation, sometimes telling me that they became involved reluctantly. Occasionally recognizing that they had been influenced by others, any admission that they had been ‘radicalized’ into violence was articulated simultaneously as a conscious and deliberate choice. All rejected the premise that – without reference to broader changes to political environments – they might have been talked out of violence.

However, Prevent narrates a *lack* of commitment and intent as associated with terrorism risk, providing counter-radicalization interventions for people who present narrow-minded religious views and an *absence* of intent to harm others. Moreover, we find the mechanisms of Channel disregarding the capacity for agency to be possessed by ‘the potential terrorist’ – deeming them ‘vulnerable’ and in need of pastoral support. The notion of protective ‘safeguarding’, a concept that would have made no sense had it been posited to those who had engaged in violence themselves, is therefore central to Prevent’s operation. Because Prevent takes risky individuals as ultimately misinformed and vulnerable, instead of engaging with their ‘grievances’ as legitimate, Channel cases are directed away from redress (this point is addressed more fully in Thematic Chapter 4). These individuals – at odds with former militant testimony – can hypothetically *always* be spoken out of violence, because their fundamentally vulnerable position requires only additional information and support.

The third thematic chapter, *How Risk-Knowledge is (Un)Known*, utilizes Deleuze and Guattari’s dualistic notion of nomadology and the state (2010) to understand how risk is (un)known or (not) considered by the two sets of interviewees. How do those who engaged in violence during the Troubles describe their thoughts on navigating the potential to spot, the ability to see, where risk might reside? How do they narrate the potential to interrupt its materialization? Throughout the chapter, we see how ex-militants describe a contentment with their histories, framing their environments as sufficiently oppressive that there was simply no point in exploring how or why they *might not* have engaged. This approach, however, of reconstructing how alternative realities might (have) be(en) achieved, is fundamental to the ordering and striating mechanisms of preemptive governance. Prevent presents an anxious determination to know and see all potential futures, to reassess associations of risk factors, to monitor and ‘make safe’ all possibilities, in order to harness the future (Aradau & van Munster 2008; Massumi 2015). The disinterest in reconstructing alternative potential realities that ex-militants displayed, follows through to how they spoke of conflicts in their positionality. Searching for peace – in their words – required the deployment of specific instances of violence. Equally, though many now work as peace activists, they do not speak of regret of their previous violence, maintaining that violence is appropriate in certain contexts.

The determination of Prevent to fix down and categorize as 'risky' / 'not-risky' cannot handle such multiple and conflicting subjectivities. Instead it moves to responsabilize its constituents – discouraging anything other than actively creative participants in its society. Prevent silences notions that meaningful contestation and political reform could be considered productive. The conditions of knowledge-production articulated by the two sets of interviewees are so different that radically different styles of thought are produced, that have only disjuncture and disconnection between them.

The Construction of Meaningful Peace / Finding Solutions to Violence (Thematic Chapter 4) looks to the solutions ex-militants and risk practitioners pose as reasonable, bearing in mind all the data examined so far. We see how political negotiation is posited by ex-militants as the only way to bring about meaningful peace. They speak of the necessity of a radical opening of space. We see this through their insistence that fostering trusting relationships with people who might even appear 'risky' is desirable, and society should listen to and learnt from them. Instead of giving any credence to this testimony, Prevent shuts down the space for political contestation by narrating only individual solutions as emancipatory. Broader contexts become forgotten and are situated as irrelevant distractions from the real problem: irrational individuals who are only in need of a more aware and secure self. Personal resilience (installed through mentoring interventions), rather than engagement with risky others, is how society sustains itself. Excluding political considerations from the conversation hides the foundational claims and experiences of those who have committed terrorism offences – that material, environmental change produces peace. Indeed, since the political settlement of the Good Friday Agreement, reoffending rates of those released under its terms has been strikingly low. Yet where ex-militants spoke of working towards the 'putting away of violence' through negotiation and engaging with others, Prevent sees personal resilience as the only road to avoiding violence, seeking a continuation of the good-enough present (Boukalas 2019). We now turn to the theoretical framework, to understand how contemporary forms of preemption have become dominant, and upon which knowledge (and exclusions) they function.

Terrorism Knowledge and its Silences

Population is not people. Population is a statistical category (Bigo 2008, 99).

This chapter explores the theoretical literature that contextualizes my research, and investigates the literature that maps the historical shifts towards the prominence of preemptive governance (Massumi 2015a). Relying on the conceptual work of critical scholars like Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler, the thesis highlights the importance of considering subjugated knowledges – within the mainstream terrorism-preemption discourse, in this context. The chapter investigates the construction and production of contemporary counter-terrorism knowledge, and points to the relevance of considering alternative knowledges provided by those who have been convicted of ‘terrorist’ crimes themselves. It takes the following structure of three substantive sections: it firstly examines the importance of studying subjugated knowledges, and looks at how discourses are composed and constructed through privileging certain other knowledges. The second section illuminates the historical trajectory towards precautionary, anticipatory risk-governance: the discussion explicates the movement from a criminal justice (preventative) model of governing political violence, to anticipatory (preemptive) interventions in the non-crime space. Finally it turns to the silences that uphold preemptive risk-governance, arguing that the meaning behind spatial and temporal relations becomes short-circuited by anticipatory risk-management technologies. Following the work of critical risk and security scholars such as Claudia Aradau, Rens van Munster, Louise Amoore, and Marieke de Goede, this research takes “risk as a *dispositif* for governing social problems” (Aradau & van Munster 2007, 91, emphasis added), where a *dispositif* refers to a structure of hegemonic knowledge informing the conduct and relations within society. Ultimately, this chapter examines the ecosystem of power within which Prevent (as a precautionary risk-management programme) has been configured – and the silences that legitimize its maintenance.

Exploring Subjugated Knowledges

The research adopts genealogical and archaeological methods to understand the operative knowledges sustaining the British Prevent (and Channel) programme. Derived from the work of those like Nietzsche, *genealogical methodology* revolves around exposing the dark spaces and the voids within a discourse, which hegemonic knowledge does not make visible (Smithson 1996, 44). This can allow a re-historicization and re-contextualization of knowledge, and especially a “reactivat[ion of] local knowledges... against the scientific hierarchicalization of knowledge and its intrinsic power-

effects” (Foucault 2003c, 10). This research does not attempt to theorize about spatiality alone – a tendency of critical research (Harootunian 2005) – but also temporal considerations. What is being silenced spatially *and* temporally? As well as highlighting the racialized and gendered spaces managed through preemptive counter-terrorism, I seek to understand how temporality itself is (re)organized. How do contemporary logics of preemption redraw the present and its relation to the future? Emancipatory politics in this context calls for “a restoration of considerations of the crucial spatiotemporal relationship that must attend any explanatory program” (Harootunian 2005, 24).

Tightly associated with the genealogical approach is the *archaeological method*, intricately detailed and analysed by Foucault in various works, culminating in the substantive *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). This methodology is concerned with excavating the components of particular discourses, uncovering which truths a discourse is upheld by. It seeks to find those ‘monuments’ hidden under the surface, the mechanics or technologies operating within a discourse that shape thought and behaviour, in order to understand and theorize about what is *not* practised. This approach is (often) deployed to illuminate whose interests are prioritized, whose freedoms are privileged, whose voices are heard – and whose are not. Which particular discourses on terrorism risk management have emerged as “dominant and unifying” (Nicolet-Anderson 2012, 163) and are operationalized in contemporary British preemptive counter-terrorism, and which certain knowledges have been excluded from the implementation of such an assemblage? Understanding the boundaries within which thought and action are situated is characteristic of the genealogical approach, and comprehending that which holds up these boundaries is the motivation of the archaeological approach. Both approaches are central to the aims of this research.

Foucault (2003d, 20) spoke of the “governmentalization” of the State, where government is “a problematizing activity” (Rose & Miller 2010) concerned with the solving of problems: which ills can be cured, which deviances can be eradicated? ‘Government’ should be understood as the “conduct of conduct”: how is thought and action shaped (Gordon 1991, 2)? Rather than being focussed overtly on self-preservation of the sovereign, Foucault posed the concept that ‘government’ is concerned with the health of bodies (ultimately the population), where power is directed towards making bodies (the population) productive (Foucault 2003a,b,d). This positive, ‘biopolitical’ rationale operates through administrating life itself: bodies become the locus of a “power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (Foucault 1978, 137). It operates to produce security for the citizen, and ultimately the sovereign. Regarding the production of subjects, Butler (1997, 84) writes that subjectivity not only “acts on... but also *activates*” a person. Bodies contribute to their own subjectification: “individuals are made subjects through their everyday functioning as transistors (and

resistors) in the circuits” of knowledge exchange and negotiation (Springer 2015, 82). So both the imposition inwards of identity from externalities, and the outward expression of identity from the body, formulates subjectification: “both from discourse to subject, and from subject to discourse” (Ibid). Society is both the object *and* subject of its own productive power, and the quest to grow and develop supplants (at least conceals) fear of the sovereign. No longer is destructive power directed from the sovereign to its citizens as the primary mode of government: “Life is the object of the police... That people survive, live, and even do better than just that, is what the police has to ensure” (Foucault 1979, 250). This principally positive, active, and creative power, as Walters (2004) suggests, produces a new subjectivity which experiences its own productive efforts as personal, socio-economic, and political growth. We will see the mobilization of productivity and creative growth as a tool of preemptive risk-management throughout the thesis. Yet, this positive ‘bio-power’ of life-cultivation is still accompanied by more concealed modes of government of negative and oppressive exertions of power like the right to take life (Mbembé 2003), which were historically more visible.

How and by what is government operationalized? Or, how and by what is conduct established, shaped, and normalized? And what silences does it consequently produce? One of Foucault’s central claims is that every interaction involves the exercise of power and consequentially produces knowledge (1980). Examining the ordering and structuring of human existence around the problematizing rationality of government to understand what silences are in operation – with my point of application being preemptive counterterrorism – is the purpose of my genealogical and archaeological work. My research seeks to expose which knowledges sustain the dominant risk-preemption discourse, which are silenced and excluded, and which mechanisms or technologies are mobilized to uphold this hegemony. Ultimately I endeavour to expose the primary claims made about terrorism risk-preemption, and upon which knowledge the practice of terrorism preemption rests. This can be broken down into numerous questions: what behaviours and patterns of thought are inscribed with risk? How are risk-subjectivities (the imposition of ‘riskiness’ onto an otherwise ‘non-risky’ body) constructed, and what knowledge allows them to be negotiated with in that particular way? How is the capacity of those deemed risky to act framed, and what does this say, produce, and allow? How is responsibility for terrorism risk-management dispersed and activated, and how does resilience produce safety? What does this responsabilization of terrorism risk say about how risk is understood? What conduct is allowed and encouraged in the practising of terrorism preemption, and what conduct is forbidden, discouraged, suppressed? Questions like these seek to understand the hegemonic discourse and how it operates (and the silences it is underpinned by). Therefore my Prevent interviews are excavated throughout my thesis with these questions in mind, to understand what claims are being made about terrorism risk-preemption.

Being concerned with exploring the dominant terrorism preemption discourse, I also look to find what is *not* operationalized or spoken about in how society understands the preemption of terrorism risk and its respective responsibilities. These ‘silences’ are central in upholding the discourse. My research takes the position that as certain knowledge becomes more known, assumed, and practised, alternative knowledges are simultaneously subjugated, hidden, and unknown. Hegemonic discourse “covers and silences” all else (Foucault 1972, 25), everything not-said, which can be conceived as alternative, subjugated knowledge. The study of silences arose from cross-discipline scholarship, popularized by Foucault’s various works, by postcolonial research into Orientalism where Others are constructed as inherently dangerous and foreign (Said 1979), and by feminist scholarship looking at the subjugated role of women and other groups (Dingli 2015). Subjugated knowledges, excluded and hidden through the practising of *accepted* forms of knowledge, are not neutral absences but are disenfranchised through violence and suppression (Galtung 1969; Brownmiller 1975; Enloe 2004; Parpart & Zalewski 2008), producing a ‘subaltern’ (Gramsci 1971; Spivak 1988). The subaltern is excluded knowledge and experience (sometimes personified by whole people or groups), knowledge that sits on the periphery or is entirely hidden: it is not practiced, spoken about, or even considered. Subjugated knowledge is both the non-practising of objective knowledge, and the exclusion of subjective experience (Jackson 2012). Questions to help me find the silences and “reactivate local knowledges” pivot around the Northern Irish conflict, in my research. So, in understanding the testimony from Northern Irish former combatants, questions to help me look for silences include: What experiences or knowledge that ex-militants provided is (made) invisible (through Prevent’s operation)? How do ex-militants narrate their environments, personalities, and decisions, and how do these stories measure against the implementation of Prevent? What about their testimony is ignored, forgotten, subjugated?

Privilege

Within any discourse, inclusions and exclusions are present (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002; Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Derrida and Prenowitz (1995, 51) write that the construction of inside/outside signifiers is an inherently violent process, because designating identities requires the inscription of the Self as set against the Other: “As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism... The One guards against/keeps some of the other.” When a definitive claim is made – for example about who ‘we’ are, or who the ‘enemy’ is, or what constitutes (un)acceptable risk – unspoken and violent assumptions are also being made. The inscription of certain places as risky, and their subsequent inclusion or exclusion within hegemonic discourse, is not a neutral phenomenon (Aradau & van Munster 2008; Jackson et al. 2011; Martin 2018). The association of certain behaviours, and the

indirect association of people or groups demonstrating those behaviours, into more-risky and less-risky, is a process of visualization that “colonizes the future” by privileging certain outcomes as (less) desirable (Aradau & van Munster 2008). The economy of (in)visibilization in the field of preemptive counter-terrorism functions not as an impersonal, random process, but through the actions of those able to make privileged claims about what constitutes risk, or what does *not* constitute risk (Jackson 2012). These (micro)practices are productive in the outworking of hegemonic discourse, what is seen or understood as risk, and what is not. What is closed off, and what is opened up, in the making of claims about risk in contemporary preemptive counter-terrorism? Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, 186) write that “discourses, by way of hegemonic closures, fix meanings in particular ways and thus exclude all other meaning potentials.” When the economy of (in)visibilization, through interactions and exchanges of privileged power, makes claims about what constitutes riskiness, it requires that inductive reasoning is deployed to draw together otherwise disparate risk factors in order that embodied risky spaces can be identified, or ‘visibilized’ (Amoore 2009). So closures are inherent to every discourse: not everything is sayable (Purvis & Hunt 1993; Jackson 2012). But the content of these closures is privileged, and is the consequence of a process of privileged discourse-construction, which is often hidden, or disguised through claims of rationality (Ouroussoff 1993).

Uncovering or making visible these privileged claims and the concealed, privileged process of knowledge production is a primary aim of critical scholarship and activism (Parpart & Zalewski 2008, 49). My research is not only interested in which knowledge and experience is subjugated, but also the *process* by which knowledge and experience is subjugated, so that we can understand why certain forms of governance are in operation, and what interests they serve. I am interested in uncovering the unspoken, the hidden, the excluded. But in order to suggest which interests it serves to cover up certain knowledges, my research is also interested in *how* the unspoken becomes unspoken, *how* particular things in a particular context become hidden, *how* exclusion functions (Foucault 1980). Moreover, as individual subjectification co-constitutes itself, hegemonic knowledge is not only structured through privilege but also structures future inquiry as infused with privilege (Ackerly, Stern, & True 2006). This double subjugation is driven by the inclusion of insider-status, often of wealth, gender, or race – and equally through the exclusion of outsider-status, on the same principles. As Parpart and Zalewski (2008, 51) write, “White male privilege is internalized through the habitus and reinscribed through constituted practices. Privilege is taken for granted and made invisible, even though individual actions regularly reify it.” So, making visible the unseen exertions of power, in the context of this research on counter-terrorism, allows the claims themselves *and* their accompanying, reifying micropolitics to become seen. This ultimately allows an understanding of how the precautionary risk dispositif informs and constructs social interactions.

In the context of preemptive counter-terrorism, privilege is observable when we consider the transformation of terrorism scholarship through time. “Authorized ‘experts’” with insider status make claims that transform the discursive landscape, and simultaneously forbid from entering and transforming the field knowledges “which would challenge the proper objects, boundaries and authorized speakers of the field” (Jackson 2012, 16; also see: Miller & Mills 2009). Numerous scholars have explicated the history of ‘terrorism knowledge’, observing how the debate was developed as a policy-oriented approach to combat individual flashes of civilian-perpetrated violence (Reid 1993; Stampnitzky 2013), violence which was then utilized to justify reactionary movements in how ‘threat’ was narrated by those in governmental office (Tsui 2016). Any innovative academic roots were soon infiltrated by consistent exposure to policy-makers, government funding, and the media (Franks 2009), and the industry became institutionalized, a self-fulfilling echo chamber where the same academics would reproduce knowledge learnt at the previous conference, or otherwise submit to journals on terrorism only once and retreating back to their areas of expertise (Jenkins 1983; Stampnitzky 2013). Indeed, Gordon (2001) found that terrorism journals had a far greater proportion of non-academic authors than journals in other policy areas. Stampnitzky (2013, 45) quotes British Army Major-General Richard Clutterbuck as remarking, “My becoming a so-called expert on terrorism simply evolved from the fact that I spent such a lot of time talking about it.”

The field, during the 1970s, became dominated by those not studying ‘terrorism’ from a traditional political violence approach, but a far wider academic background – often from non-mainstream institutions – including psychological, criminological, and sociological approaches, and often incited by US Government funding (Stampnitzky 2013, 40-45). Rather than seeking to understand the political or economic circumstances that led to eruptions of violence (Ibid, 66-7), it became a policy- and security-oriented field, one “very much needed in the West as a cover for its own activities and crimes” (Herman & O’Sullivan 1989, 9). This was particularly the case at times “when [such investigation appeared] to challenge state power” (Franks 2009, 155). Critique of the direction of mainstream scholarship was minimal, and so the field of terrorism studies moved in the path of least resistance: Stampnitzky (2013, 46) writes that it was characterized by

Weak and permeable boundaries, a population of ‘experts’ whose backgrounds and sources of legitimation are highly heterogeneous, and a lack of agreement not just over how expertise should be evaluated but even over how to define the central topic of their concern.

So, government-centric and often circular knowledges were exchanged and promoted through the socialization of “embedded expertise” (Burnett & Whyte 2005) between government, industry, and academia, which consequently subjugated other knowledges (Jackson 2012; Stampnitzky 2013; Tsui

2016). After establishing the composition and (re-)construction of hegemonic risk discourses, the remainder of the chapter now focuses on the historical movement towards the contemporary dispositif of risk beginning with the creation of Northern Irish counter-terrorism laws and ending with theories of 'radicalization'. It then looks at the consequences this shift has had in relation to the production of anticipatory risk-knowledge.

From Disciplinary Correction to Precautionary Intervention

The shift away from a preventative approach and towards a preemptive one is not (just) a historical, technical shift to manage the problem of terrorism. I argue that such a shift is demonstrative of an inclination towards *productive rather than repressive forms* of governmentality, which, as we will see through the thesis, is a logic that excludes alternative, resistant, not-necessarily-productive imaginaries. We will now see how the criminal justice model apparatus to managing terrorism was supplanted by the deployment of possibilistic imagination and an accompanying logic of preemptive interventions.

Disciplinary Prevention

Shortly after Northern Ireland's inception in 1921, and until 1974, the country was governed by the Civil Authorities Act, an act passed by Stormont to combat the 'terrorist threat'. Through different amendments it was retained until the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was passed in 1974 as a response to the Birmingham Pub Bombings. Although the legislation changed to confront shifting dangers during the course of the 20th century, the various iterations and forms of terrorism law operated broadly on the basis of *prevention*, where the priority was to assess empirical dangers and strive – to some degree – to understand their foundations (Massumi 2015, 5). Heath-Kelly (2012, 71) writes that this legislation "governed terrorism through a criminal justice model": monitoring suspected criminals and responding to criminal behaviour was the functional methodology. The focus of the law was on present or past (chiefly physical) behaviour, and punishing that behaviour through highly regulated procedures using the courts (Finn 1990). For example, the PTA proscribed certain public and physical expressions of support for outlawed groups (HM Government 1974, c.56, Part 2(1)a-b). Sometimes this formal process was compromised: the power of exclusion also drawn up by the PTA had the material effect of removing subjects, "in the most literal sense, from a territory and cast[ing] them elsewhere" (Heath-Kelly 2012, 72) without the involvement of the courts. In fact, many of those who were subjected to this power had actually been acquitted by the courts (Walker 1997), but were expelled on the *suspicion* of a PTA official of material involvement in demonstrable

criminality (Walker 1986; Hogan & Walker 1989). But regardless of the role of suspicion, the actions of government officials in making determinations as to the imprisonment and expulsion of citizens were *still tied to the presumption of some tangible violation of law*, and the potential for proving guilt through the courts if evidence was available to prosecute. Whilst the PTA was considered to have “seriously undermined democratic freedoms” because of its attempt to deploy counter-terrorism legislation against citizens who had not been convicted of acting illegally (Scorer, Spencer, & Hewitt 1985, 18), the *potential for calculating possible criminality* was fundamental to its interpretation. Rose writes that prevention is summarized as “calculations about probable futures in the present followed by interventions into the present in order to control that potential future” (2006, 70). Prevention of probabilities, rather than preemption of hypothetical possibilities, ordered counter-terrorism thinking. Considerations of spatiality and temporality were therefore important to the functioning of counter-terrorism during the conflict in Northern Ireland: the overriding mentality was targeting people who had historically demonstrated material danger, or were suspected of having done so.

The fundamental difference between ‘prevention’ and ‘preemption’ is summarized as follows: “Threat looms [and] comes from the future. It doesn’t present itself. Danger presents itself” (Massumi 2015, 240). Whereas ‘danger’ is calculable, concerned with objective spaces and times, and able to be prevented, ‘threat’ or ‘risk’ is the never-here, that which lurks forever around the next corner, and is the object of preemption. The paradigm of government during the moment in history of the Northern Irish conflict was principally disciplinarian, focused on punishing evidenced or suspected danger (criminal behaviour) – in an effort to prevent it from (re)occurring. For example, upon the introduction of the PTA, then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins remarked the exceptional nature of the policy was in order “to meet the *clear present danger*” (HM Government 1998, 2.1, emphasis added). Although engagement in the conflict was consistently depoliticized, with South Armagh nicknamed by Northern Ireland Secretary at the time Merlyn Rees “bandit country” (quoted in Peterkin 2005), this moment was characterized by a focus on engagement in criminality. Margaret Thatcher said on a BBC Radio News Report in 1981 that “Crime is crime is crime” (BBC 2005), in a comment that typified the focus of that time on demonstrable engagement in criminal behaviour. Counter-terrorism officials at the time were concerned with material negotiations, driven by questions like “could you get a peace process?” (Sir David Omand, Interviewee 12).

However, this fixation on engaging with – and ultimately preventing – materially-realized danger was occasionally disrupted: Operation Demetrius, the internment campaign of the early 1970s in Northern Ireland where nearly 2000 young men were detained for months on end and sometimes years without trial, demonstrated that not only danger but also *threat* (or ‘risk possibility’) informed the governing of society during the conflict. Many of these internees fitted the broad socio-economic

profile of an IRA volunteer: young, Catholic, males, from particular geographical locations (Hillyard 1993). Preventative logics (no matter how racialized) did still infuse this policy to some degree: the group as a collective had demonstrated some danger, some capacity for engaging in observable violence. However, this logic was also saturated with preemption, because it was known that many within this profiled group had never engaged in criminality (Spjut 1986), yet they were being subjected to counter-terrorism measures. Broadly, therefore, considerations of spatiality and temporality (governing the incidence of crime in the past) still remained central to counter-terrorism logics, although in their mobilization against broader group profiles they became disconnected strictly from the individual.

Heath-Kelly (2012, 75) writes that during the Northern Irish conflict, “the criminal justice model was sometimes abandoned in favour of governmental measures” with regard to the emergence of a counterinsurgency ‘hearts and minds’ approach that prioritized winning over the local population through economic development. The logic went: to minimize the need for preventative interruption of crime, preemption needed to be mobilized too. Instead of being *absolutely* abandoned though, disciplinarian (criminal justice, preventative) measures and biopolitical (productive, risk-obsessed, preemptive) governance are only a breath away from each other, constantly reinforcing each other (Zedner & Ashworth 2019). If one is less effective, the other becomes operationalized, with the first following quickly behind, sometimes at the same time. Reid (2005, 248), following Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1999), writes that the de-territorialization of one mode of governance is merely complemented by the re-territorialization of another; the disciplinarian and biopolitical function together in “a permanent and agonistic tension that renders it facile to imagine an assertion of one without a re-assertion of the other.” So, for instance, to minimize the risk of terrorism offenders from reoffending, they are immediately subjected to the material and disciplinary force of living behind bars, but are also now mandated onto a ‘Desistance and Disengagement Programme’ which seeks their personal recalibration (HM Government 2018b, 129-130).

This section has set out that these two rationalities – probability-based prevention, and possibility-centric preemption – operate alongside each other, although during ‘the Troubles’, that of prevention was more dominant and observable. The emphasis was still on disciplining the event, the crime, the past, rather than constructing the future by preempting threats and attempting to forestall their development into realized dangers (Massumi 2015). Although there were elements that “prefigured the contemporary regime of preemption” of counter-terrorism (Heath-Kelly 2012, 72), little thought was given to psychological preemption and imagining and acting on the worst possibilities, during the Northern Irish conflict. Yet towards the end of the 20th and into the 21st century, a shift in emphasis from preventive to preemptive governance took place, producing the

environment within which 'Prevent' (itself a *preemptive* apparatus) was allowed to be invented. Yet the preemptive rationality was connected to, and in part a product of, how the Northern Irish conflict and other conflicts at the same time were governed.

Moving to Possibilistic Preemption

The UK Government's approach to counter-terrorism gradually transformed towards a preemptive-centric position – a movement which should be contextualized within the determined march towards neoliberalism (Hall 2005). The dominant mode of sovereign-judicial discipline in Northern Ireland had involved knowing the space and time of the body intricately through personal interrelation, resulting in a negotiation of space and time (through physically imprisoning people, for many years) for contravening *others'* space (making places unsafe) and time (taking their lives). This mode of governance, grounded in spatial and temporal negotiation, was gradually superseded during the latter part of the 20th century as the preemptive turn began to take hold (Valverde & Mopas 2004). Instead, market-informed governance of 'the subject', which revolved around judging the riskiness and uncertainty of certain investments (Amoore & de Goede 2008), was utilized to make more effective the power "to displace therapy, to cut back state budgets, and to impose new knowledges more amenable to performance assessment" (Valverde & Mopas 2004, 238). Where the older logic of discipline had required intense personal connection to the subject (physical capture of a suspect and collection of material evidence for trial) and the accompanying investments to acquire such totalizing knowledge (police work and running informants), the newer neoliberal, managerial agenda allowed the state not to seek personal knowledge of its subjects, but instead to make individuals known *only through the totality of others' behaviour* (Amoore 2013, 29-54).

Intricate knowledge of the individual's space and time – their personal histories – is displaced by this aggregation, and instead people become "a set of measurable risk factors" (Valverde & Mopas 2004, 240). Actions are judged not through personal connection to the subject but as "predictable and manageable" assets when aggregated (O'Malley, 1996, 190). The role of corrective discipline becomes secondary as impersonal management of societally-aggregated risk factors are prioritized to be intervened upon. Space and time remain important, although the individual's connection to them becomes disregarded. This is not just the case in the field of security (Haggerty & Ericson 2006); in 1993, epitomizing this "epochal" turn (Hall 2005), a research paper on data mining revolutionized the retail world (Amoore 2013, 40). The paper proposed the accumulation of statistics not on broader shopping trends from across a company's stores but on the very basket of the shopper itself (Agrawal, Imieliński, & Swami 1993). Who the actual shopper is – and even entire sales trends themselves – becomes less important, and knowledge of the items the shopper buys becomes centralized. So the

shopper's relationship with their own spatiality and temporality becomes subsumed by the contents of their basket in that single moment: "what pattern of items has to be sold with sausages in order for it to be likely that mustard will also be sold?" (Amoore 2013, 40) Associations like these that had not been made before, or 'risk factors' that were previously not considered related, were brought together and *made* related. Shoppers' habits were preempted by companies experimenting with moving items around the shop in order to maximize profit (Ericson & Haggerty 1997, 66). The spatiality of the items becomes the functional component in the shop's negotiation with its shoppers, and the present moment in time the only important temporal consideration. Previous patterns of behaviour are no longer informative, under this logic; instead, "Everyone's embodied existence is [now] implicitly productive of security data, revealing previously unknown patterns and connections" (Heath-Kelly 2017a, 32). Aggregating this type of data, and detaching it from the individual themselves, was not the previously dominant way of things. To represent this tectonic shift, Deleuze (1992, 5) wrote that "individuals have become 'dividuals', and masses [have become] samples, data, markets, or 'banks'." People are comprised as distinct risk factors that can be divided endlessly, with the behaviours and characteristics separated from the person in order for new stories about that person's potential to be imagined.

Securing society against risks that merely have the *potential* to materialize has become prioritized in a rejection of the "mystery or unknowability of things to come, and an active striving that aims to control the future" (Anderson 2010b, 229). Not only space but time faces the demand to be governed, to be ordered and striated:

We argue that the 'war on terror' is a new form of governmentality that imbricates knowledge and decision at the limit of knowledge... What is new is not so much the advent of a risk society as the emergence of a 'precautionary' element that has given birth to new configurations of risk that require that the catastrophic prospects of the future be avoided at all costs. (Aradau & van Munster 2007, 91)

Traditional risk-society scholars like Ulrich Beck posited an objective 'risk society', taking risks as originating from the pace and scale of global modernization, and suggesting that risks are "politically reflexive" of the way in which the world was changing (Beck 1992, 21; also see: Lupton 1999). Because the world is so precarious, goes the logic, not all risks are able to be managed (Rasmussen 2004), requiring an insurantal apparatus to provide at least the veneer of security (Beck 1992). Yet the political construction of risk has been theorized extensively (Ewald 1991; O'Malley 1996,2004; Ericson and Doyle 2004; Amoore & de Goede 2005; Aradau & van Munster 2007,2012; Salter 2008; Amoore 2013). For this critical scholarship, anticipatory and preemptive security means the future presents an "open set of endless possibilities" (Anderson 2010a, 792); the logic of governing the future through

limitlessly imagining the worst possible catastrophes becomes central (Amoore 2013). Emphasizing the governance of *possibilistic* risk imaginaries rather than *probabilistic* risk predictions relies on “the inductive incorporation of suspicion, imagination, and preemption” (Amoore 2013, 10) rather than attempting to comprehend calculable risks.

Borne of the potential catastrophes predicted by German environmental politics in the 1970s, the notion that cataclysmic events were on the horizon marked the next half-century of risk thinking (Aradau & van Munster 2008). Ewald (1991; also see: Lianos & Douglas 2000) remarked that the incidence of danger has not necessarily changed, but that society is now obsessed with understanding, quantifying, and attempting to manage risks. Whereas prevention acts on historical data to prevent a course of probabilistic future events, preemption is the *attempt to interrupt a course of possibilistic future events, without any reliance on past data* (Amoore 2013). This logic disrupts conventional interpretations of the limits of probability-based insurance that sought to categorize risks through projecting past events into the future. Many areas considered by traditional risk-society scholars (Beck 1999) as so catastrophic that they are “uninsurable, are [actually] insured” (Ericson & Doyle 2004, 137), precisely because the power of imagination has displaced the power of history-informed future-projections.

The power of this ‘dispositif’ or ecosystem of risk is substantiated by the performativity of risk imaginaries: society is constructed and reconstructed through the risks imagined and acted upon, which in turn shapes the functioning of society. Moreover, what constitutes risk can be altered at will. Though speaking of (objective) risks, Beck could be writing about the *responses to* and *the (re)constructions of* supposed risk, remarking that they are a:

‘Bottomless barrel of demands’, unsatisfiable, infinite... Risks can be more than just called forth (by advertising and the like), prolonged in conformity to sales needs, and in short: manipulated... With risks, one could say... the economy becomes self-referential, independent of its context of satisfying human needs (1992, 56).

This shift in emphasis from a probability-based to a possibility-based modality has been gradual: for instance, Northern Ireland was governed both by disciplining past contraventions through the regimented procedures of the courts, and also by preempting violations – such as the indiscriminate internment of whole sectors of the population with the patent innocence of many internees often being overlooked (Spjut 1986, 731).

Whilst episodes underpinned to some extent by the preemptive rationality took place throughout the 20th century (like internment), the preemptive logic became embedded in the 1990s (Amoore 2013). Hazardous but highly improbable outcomes were asserted as certainties – or at least

deemed necessary to act upon. A transformation in academic terrorism studies was taking place, around the concept of 'new terrorism', that juxtaposed the supposedly excessively destructive and often religious violence as distinct from that of more conventional, strategic political violence (Hoffman, Arquilla & Lesser 1995; Laqueur 1999; Tucker 2001; Benjamin & Simon 2002; Neumann 2009). Though this field faced sustained criticism (Duyvesteyn 2004; Crenshaw 2000,2008; Field 2009; Lynch & Ryder 2012; Stohl 2012), its premises of the catastrophic nature of 'new' terrorism filtered through to policy-makers: Sir David Omand, a key official behind the UK's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST), wrote, "We must take seriously the possibility that at some point a suicidal terrorist may come to see widespread urban fire, destruction, and killing as a cleansing power" (2010, 105). An accident or disaster occurs, whereupon it is administrated by existing emergency response procedures: evacuating, rebuilding, rehousing. Catastrophes like megalomaniacal terrorism, however, pose a disruptive threat to order itself – they are situated between "the accident (which can be insured and does not disrupt historical continuity) and apocalypse (the ultimate discontinuity)" (Aradau & van Munster 2012, 101).

Preparedness is the necessary response to the potential catastrophe, where the worst possible event is expected to occur (Lakoff 2007, 247). The state of active anticipation is therefore a requirement of the risk dispositif, a modality that sees everything through "an all-risks approach" (Omand 2010, 11). Given that 'what might happen next' holds only unpredictability (as historical trends become irrelevant), when considered through a framework of risk-management the securitization of the future is necessarily a cyclical endeavour that promises "the repetition of the game, the tantalizing wait for the promised next terrorist attack" (Heath-Kelly 2016b, 171). There will always remain another threat around the corner, there will always be something vulnerable to make more secure, some further perceived risk against valued life. The endeavour to tame the future – in every moment an entity comprised of horrifying risks – is the endeavour to govern and subjugate time itself, to govern the ungovernable (Aradau & van Munster 2007, 107). Yet attempts to stop risk materializing into danger are inherently ridden with failure (Aradau & van Munster 2007), because "insecurity [only] proves itself" (Ericson 2008, 76). Measuring counterfactuals is impossible, and there will always be violations of safety. However, rather than provoking any critical self-analysis, the very failure of the preemptive endeavour only advances the drive for more effective predictive technology, ever-more fervid grasping for any information about other possible risks (Heath-Kelly 2012). Whenever the next traumatic event occurs, there will always be a risk of a more devastating catastrophe (Anderson 2010a). Alongside the calculability of risks being unimportant to this rationality, the administration of the dispositif of risk demands more and more of those in charge of monitoring the future: there are always more 'risks' to be managed or re-calculated. The management

of risk never proves itself, and risk-managers are judged not just by their knowledge or lack of knowledge, but by what they *should have suspected* (Ewald 2002, 289). Although an unappeasable project, the process of possibilistic risk insurance – once the risk dispositif takes hold – must continue in order to “tame the infinities of risk” (Aradau & van Munster 2008, 28).

Critical risk-society scholars posit that this shift in knowledge establishes a necessary “monitoring of the future” (Aradau & van Munster 2008) to productively harness its direction, rather than merely to protect against it, as traditional risk-society scholars would theorize. The stark difference between this preemptive logic and earlier preventative logics is demonstrated through the comparison of exclusion being used in the past as a *disciplinary* action against probable threats (Heath-Kelly 2012), where similar deportation measures today are now “intended to act as a deterrent” (HM Government 2011a, 47), only as signals to produce conformity and subjection. This break in connection with the individual, and consequently with their relations with space and time, is fundamental to the theoretical work of subjugated knowledge and silences that underwrites this research. However, before the disconnection with the individual is explored further, we look to how preemption is mobilized.

Mobilizing Preemption: Disembodying the Being, Making ‘Risk’ Visible

The considerable epistemological shift from prevention to preemption is mobilized through the abstraction of risk (Rabinow 1996; Rose & Novas 2004; Lemke 2004; Rose 2006; Clarke et al. 2010; Esposito 2011), whereby, ultimately, the embodied person is fractured and deconstructed. In *Birth of the Clinic* (2003d), Foucault identified the ‘medical gaze’ as a technology that observed the person, looking at the body-as-a-complete-entity. However, the dispositif of risk – being obsessed with preempting that which never arrives – displaces and deconstructs the embodied being. The medical gaze is supplanted by an observation instead of singular, extracted risk factors which only *affect or are attached to* the body.

With the transition from probability governance to possibility governance, experts who perform interventions – “therapists, psychologists, [and] counsellors, [who constitute] the new priesthood” (Elshimi 2015, 122) – see associations of risk factors rather than a whole person. Rose asserts that,

The ‘style of thought’ of contemporary biomedicine [or ‘risk-thinking’] considers life at the molecular level as a group of intelligible vital mechanisms which can be identified, isolated, manipulated, mobilized and recombined in intervention practices which are not constrained by the apparent normativity of a natural vital order (2006, 9).

So rather than the whole entity of the molecule- or characteristic-*carrier* being liable to intervention, the individual molecule, the specific characteristic itself which could hypothetically host risk is set before the surgical tools (Braun 2007; also see: Rabinow 1996; Rose 2006). The intricate operation on these susceptibilities, on the characteristics that could carry risk, seeks to create an ever-stronger urge to produce life: through the operation, growth is rewarded and unproductiveness is brought back onto the path towards betterment. The subject of observation moves from the person to abstracted risk factors, “From a targeted [person-centric] practice to a whole-of-society [risk factor-centric] practice” (Heath-Kelly 2017a, 34) which is mobilized through “big data logics of inductive profiling” rather than probability judgments (Heath-Kelly 2017b, 314). Each specific instance of potential risk is meticulously analysed; these practices of targeted surveillance and monitoring signify a clutching for the “dream [of a] ‘smart’, specific, side-effects-free, information-driven utopia of governance” (Valverde & Mopas 2004, 239). Clarke et al. (2010, 78) argue that Western society has moved “from normalization to customization”, whereby disciplinary drives to ‘normalize’ everybody to some natural order has been superseded by an obsessive individualizing (yet also highly impersonal) rationality, so that there are as few opportunities as possible for risk to materialize. Improved, healthier, customized cells are less likely to catch the flu. The ‘actual’ level of danger posed by people becomes more immaterial – remember though, disciplinary measures are on hand if required. Indeed, Parpart and Zalewski (2008) write, “In the technologized age of bio-political war, bodies are absent.” Instead, *all cells within an organism* pose hypothetical risk, *all characteristics within a body* could contribute to the person’s radicalization. The body is a mere vessel possessing potential risk factors. Heath-Kelly (2017a) speaks of the autoimmune response triggered by this logic that requires detection of infiltrative-risk – exemplified by the discourse adopted after 7/7 around the “homegrown nature” of the threat (Mythen, Walklate, & Khan 2009; Sedgwick 2010; Heath-Kelly 2017a). Whilst cells within an organism or people within a society could be perfectly healthy, they are made the object of suspicion, because locating risk is the dominant requirement: “Counter-radicalization then targets healthy cells (parts of the national body) and attacks them, in its desperate search for the radical” (Heath-Kelly 2017a, 35). Concerned with promoting life, this modality requires that everything is understood as a potential risk.

Yet whilst everybody is a security threat, they are also a security *asset* – not only in the sense of spotting other sites of risk, but in their own reformulations and potential for growth and production (Lianos & Douglas 2000). Rose (2006, 253) writes that it has become hard, almost impossible, to differentiate between that which seeks to intervene upon a possible risk, and that which enhances life. Where each possible element of life is a potential risk factor (and also a point of possible productivity), everything legitimately becomes made amenable to intervention to minimize its riskiness from materializing, and instead its productiveness encouraged. Because totalizing knowledge

cannot be achieved by state institutions alone, the whole of society is recruited to “manage their own [innumerable] risks” (Valverde & Mopas 2004; also see Ericson 2008; Amoore & de Geode 2008). The burgeoning of ‘community policing’ is symptomatic of the all-inclusivity of the dispositif of risk (O’Malley 1999). It is a method of security which prioritizes the information flow (or ‘communication about risks’) between communities and the police. It responsabilizes communities for counter-risk efforts, encouraging them to own their participation in security measures (Ragazzi 2015). Heath-Kelly (2017a, 32) writes that “we are thus constituted through an autoimmune gaze whereby the system cannot differentiate between healthy and radical cells, and turns on those cells previously afforded protection.” Where people previously engaged in trusting social relations, now the community becomes the police. In accepting this responsibility, they must monitor their surroundings – and even themselves – which were previously safe. A neighbour is treated simultaneously as “friend and foe” (Walker 2008), as a possibly constructive social entity who looks out for risks but also one possessing the potential to unleash the latent danger within them. Stepping away from *habeas corpus*, this model is one where everything and everybody is suspicious (Ericson 2008). Therefore, whilst being ‘risky’, a person can be also deemed ‘at-risk’ (Heath-Kelly 2012). This allows people to be acted upon not just as a threat but as a citizen requiring protection and redirection through (preemptive) intervention (rather than post-event discipline) on the basis of whatever the newly produced non-risky identity requires. Importantly those deemed non-risky remain only ever mostly in the non-risky space; they – along with society at large – in each moment are liable to their subjectivity being swiftly re-narrated as risky (Walker 2008). Everything is, after all, just a signifier: it’s not personal. This constant oscillation disrupts the potential for stable configurations of identity; behaviours and their carriers are judged and re-judged on a momentary basis in the frantic effort to move them away from posing a risk to society (Ragazzi 2015).

Because risks are everywhere, the response of preparedness and resilience is an urgent priority. The risk of disease will never fully subside or disappear, so preparedness is merely a state of resilience against their development rather than a total escape (Rose 2006). Resilience is central to the immunitary logic: to be inoculated against risks, a person must assimilate some of that which threatens them (Esposito 2011; Massumi 2015). Through a considerably depersonalized illustration (and one which would sound odd if ‘the person’ or ‘the body’ was more important than her constituent characteristics), Omand explains the basis of social protection against the ubiquitous riskiness we are surrounded by:

Resilience is a term... meaning the capacity of a material to withstand an impact and bounce back again into shape quickly... [And the main aim of resilience is] increasing the self-reliance of communities (2010, 60,13; also see: Davoudi et al. 2012).

Resilience, itself a product of the obsession with risk, sustains the legitimacy of the risk dispositif, by situating social problems at the feet of the vulnerable subject who is as-yet insufficiently responsible or resilient (Chandler 2016, 123), and by simultaneously calling on them to withstand these injustices (Mavelli 2017). Performing its own response to the impending catastrophe contributes to the continuation of the logic: once they are self-reliant, as in the words of Omand, they require less intervention in the future. Cynically, this methodology could even be considered a dynamically entrepreneurial one. Julian Reid writes of the co-constitutive nature of resilience and productivity, arguing that resilience when at its most powerful can breed innovation and growth. It could be interpreted through the reasoning held within the following passage, that risk-thinking – coupled with a necessary demand for resilience – actually *thrives* on inequality and suffering:

For abused children, especially, recovery and development is said to require the work of imagination, as hurt creates the images of a better future and the pleasure of such images becomes linked with painful realities, enabling them to withstand the present. It is even possible, some psychologists of resilience maintain, that *the torment of the present heightens the need to imagine a future and thus increases the very powers and potentials of imagination itself* (2019, 29, emphasis added).

So, alongside the responsibility to spot risks in others, the second but equal duty of the risk dispositif is to develop resilience against injustices, which can produce growth and development. Whilst some elements of this contemporary paradigm are a continuation of earlier forms of governance, “a threshold has been crossed” with the shift towards risk-based resilience against oneself (Rose 2006, 8).

How are the abstracted ‘risk factors’ spotted and identified, so that customizable interventions can take place? Governmentality functions through inscription (Latour 1986); indeed, Rose and Miller (2010, 185) write that “by means of inscription, reality is made stable.” Before the inscription of certain places as sites of risk, these spaces were floating, untethered, posing danger. The alleviation of the uncontrolled nature of these spaces through inscription, and the pinpointing of their threat, enables them to be governed. It should be noted that *even the inscription of risk itself is a process of interventive governance*, by situating the risk-carrier somewhere on the overall spectrum of risk. Yet it allows for further, more active intervention and management of risk, to recalibrate it back towards productivity. When what constitutes riskiness is determined and the sites of that riskiness identified, interventions to manage that risk can then take place.

Visibilization, or the “defining and classifying” of risk factors, allows the practicable operationalization of risk possibilities, enabling intervention on ‘risky’ sites to minimize the threat (Aradau & van Munster 2008a, 198; for more on visibility studies see: Bleiker 2001; Boggs & Pollard

2006; Amoores & Hall 2009; Hansen 2011; Delmont 2013; Dixit 2014). Sorting and categorization is central to the dispositif of risk:

Preparedness exercises—whether they consider a terrorist attack or some other issue—generally start with clear delimitations of space (and time) that reframe the unknown, uncertain, and unknowable future into the ‘thinkable’ materialities of space (Aradau & van Munster 2012, 102).

The filtering and categorization of such spaces according to the imagined ‘propensity to pose risk’ (their potential to reveal some destructive capacity) is essential in order for risky subjectivities to be reconstructed and remade. As soon as something is made thinkable through its categorization, it becomes governable. The visibilization of specific subjectivities through narratives of threat, and their consequent quantification, makes actionable the previously unknown risk (Aradau & van Munster 2005; Joseph 2018; Martin 2018). Risk subjectivities are discovered, wrought from risk-management negotiations, and are a result of seeing more accurately than before (Martin 2018). Equally, *less* risky subjectivities are a result of risk-management negotiations that lead to a realization that the risk has diminished (*invisibilizing* it). These negotiations, between counter-terrorism officials in this particular research context do not take place on the basis of perfect information, and so ‘danger’ materializes in unexpected places. Yet this failure of imagination to visualize where risk had been only produces a stronger desire to see more, to improve systems or thought-processes (Aradau & van Munster 2005, 33). As much information as can be gathered on everybody and everything is therefore an essential component of governmentality in the dispositif of risk (Miller & Sabir 2012; Heath-Kelly 2017a), so that the negotiations over the visualization of risk can fail in newer, unorthodox ways.

It has been necessary to articulate the conditions within which anticipatory risk-governance is mobilized, its assumptions, and functionality, in order that alternative stories (of ex-militants) can be illuminated in contrast to it more effectively. Where risk-thinking is obsessed with abstracting and *impersonalizing* associations of potential risk factors through risk-manager negotiations, we will see through the thesis that ex-militants consistently drew their testimony to very human experiences that required the whole of their beings, speaking about having wrestled relationally, emotionally, even morally with the prospect of deploying violence. I now explore the exclusion of spatiality and temporality that results from disembodiment of the being produces, and which forms of knowledge it subjugates.

Silenced Risk-Knowledge

If risk governance works through inscription, what knowledges are rendered silent by this regime of (in)visibility? This final section looks into how spatial and temporal silences occur as a result of contemporary terrorism preemption, because of certain knowledges being included or excluded.

Making Explanatory Inquiry Taboo

In the run-up to the end of the 20th century and by the turn of the millennium, as the shift towards preemption accelerated, various streams of academic study had attempted to explain the incidence of non-state political violence. *Social movement theory* had assumed a structural approach, framing violence as a result of escalation and de-escalation between groups in society including state forces (Wiktorowicz 2004; della Porta & Diani 2006; Alimi, Demetriou & Bosi 2015). This was complemented by a similarly-minded school that looked to social, economic, and political *root causes* of violence (Crenshaw 1981). Researchers in this field frequently carried out primary interviews with the subjects, but were comfortable representing “the terrorists’” stories “in their own words” (Post, Sprinzak, & Denny 2002). Studies from the ‘root causes’ perspective occasionally delved into exploring individual-psychological explanations (Rabbie 1991; Crenshaw 2000). In occasionally problematizing the mental (in)stability of ‘the terrorist’, this school was drawing on a historic field of study that saw ‘terrorist violence’ as a result of psychological deviancy, which situated them alongside “persistent criminals [and] child abusers” and other socially problematic individuals (Forth, Cooke, & Hare 1998, 128-129). As Schmid and Jongman point out (1988, 91),

The chief assumption underlying many psychological ‘theories’... is that the terrorist is in one way or the other not normal and that the insights from psychology and psychiatry are adequate keys to understanding [their violence].

The psycho-pathologization of ‘terrorism’ became consolidated towards the end of the ‘70s (Stampnitzky 2013), leading the way for the discourse around mental illnesses at the exclusion of grievances about social or political externalities to emerge as mainstream (Rabbie 1991; Victoroff 2005; Post 2009). In the meantime, the ‘new terrorism’ debate rose to prominence: it makes the claim that violence occurs because barbaric, megalomaniacal, and irrational people are bent on apocalyptic destruction (Neumann 2009; Kilcullen 2009). In this vein Tony Blair wrote about the demonic foundations of extremism that compelled people to “kill, terrorise and torture without compunction or conscience” (2010, 362). Theories around ‘radicalization’, which appeared in the aftermath of various spectacular attacks, like 9/11 in the US or 7/7 in the UK, assumed the remnants of various individualized-psychology and risk-fixated schools of thought (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Freilich 2013;

Kruglanski et al. 2014; Corner & Gill 2015,2017,2019; Corner, Gill & Mason 2016; Lankford 2017; Bouhana et al. 2018). Social movement theory was abandoned as structural explanations (and any focus at all on state-violence) were dismissed. Instead, the individual-psychological element of 'root causes' research (itself founded on older deviancy logics) was adopted by researchers in this field, along with the potentially catastrophic dangers identified by the new terrorism thesis.

The re-narration of violence as inherently unable to be negotiated with, and its association with apocalyptic danger (Omand 2010, 105), makes violence incomprehensible by rendering inquiry taboo (Zulaika & Douglass 1996; Jackson 2012; Stampnitzky 2013). Whilst security risks have not been demonstrated to be empirically and fundamentally different than before (Crenshaw 2000,2008; Duyvesteyn 2004; Field 2009; Lynch & Ryder 2012; Stohl 2012), and whilst violence has been shown to be utilized against political oppression (Pape 2005), researchers became unwilling in the face of such hegemony to be seen attempting to understand the incomprehensible, the unjustifiable, or the evil (Stampnitzky 2013, 191). The policy-oriented approach to achieve, improve, and revise security measures became dominant at the expense of a more critical interrogation (Stampnitzky 2013). The question of *why* disappeared. Importantly, the object of study in 'new terrorism' scholarship was *entirely* non-state violence, and was completely detached from social movement theory or the root causes debates, both of which had emphasized the spatiotemporal relationality of different forms of violence (Jackson 2012). The development in the field towards the irrationality and non-understandable nature of violence made these forms of knowledge (and related academic pursuit) unknown: why should 'causes' of violence be interrogated if they are merely the product of mental health defects and irrationality, and if these people are so determined just to create chaos? Moreover, Stampnitzky argues that because risk potentially contaminates, to understand the motivations of those perpetrating violence is to spread the disease, in a quest to avoid inquiry she names 'anti-knowledge' (2013, 189). The motivations themselves, and the endeavour to understand them in relation to spatiality and temporality, become subjected to and concealed by the power of hegemonic discourse. Researchers are therefore unable to voice the stories of – or even speak to – those who have committed violence: it becomes an irrational pursuit. Their testimony, and even the premise that they might be able to contribute to political discourse, is excluded. It is crucial to listen to the stories of ex-militants in light of this pre-emptive paradigm, because Prevent makes universalized claims about the journey into violence without taking into consideration those who have actually demonstrated some 'materialized risk'. In other words, it constructs a world of imagination without listening to its inhabitants.

Preemption Forecloses Temporal Relations

Because theories of ‘radicalization’ are mobilized through imaginaries of mental health concerns being associated with impending catastrophe, the preemptive paradigm establishes intervention as necessary before risk materializes. Not looking at ‘the potential terrorist’ as evil or fanatical as we have seen, but instead as merely irrational and requiring re-direction away from their (potentially devastating) riskiness, means that the only important consideration is for risks to be spotted and recalibrated (Boukalas 2019). The temporal consequences accompanying this modality are significant.

Prioritizing suspicion and fearful imaginations more than historical trends to conceptualize the future – and where *anything* can constitute a risk (Ewald 1991; Salter 2008) – ensures the “status quo as something worth preserving, as a value in itself” (Aradau & van Munster 2008a) to stave off these imaginary disasters. In pursuing the aim of preserving the continuity of the present forwards into the future, Ewald (2002, 284; also see: Donzelot 1988) writes that the “precautionary principle is counterrevolutionary. It aims to restrict innovation to a framework of unbroken progress.” The ubiquity of risks and the exigency of intervening upon them means that the future fades into an “extended present” (Adam 2003, 73): the important variable is everything, but *now*. Market-based governance, the thrust of neoliberalism, in ushering *out* the use of broad historical trends to predict an individual’s behaviour ushers *in* the deployment of the aggregation of others’ behaviour *in this particular moment in time*. As Aradau and van Munster (2007, 95) write, “The identification and management of risk is a way of organizing reality, disciplining the future, taming chance and rationalizing individual conduct.”

Preemptive governance has a material effect on the construction of risk. Massumi (2005) speaks about ‘quasicauses’, which he says are conjectural future events that cannot be specified or known until they are no longer in the future but occur in the present. Anticipating deviant behaviour, through devices like reminding civilians to ‘remain vigilant’, for example, disturbs linear temporality by “disclos[ing] and [making] present” the future (Anderson 2010, 793). Spatiality, albeit detached from the individual, still matters, but temporal considerations revolve around the only- and ever-present (Boukalas 2019), where the present folds into itself, justifying itself. If individual, isolated spaces can just be reorganized, re-ordered, and re-arranged to manage risk more effectively, considering temporal explanations for reality becomes unimportant – even a distraction. The importance of the past and future fades, as the market strives to eliminate

the radical, the nonliberal. In preventing the formation of non-liberal subjectivities, [market-based governance] aims to cancel the potentiality of a political future and freeze society into an eternal liberal present. [It] aims to end social change. It declares that the social order is perfected, that history has ended (Boukalas 2019, 472).

Working through the translation of the qualitative judgment of officials into statistics in order to make new possible imaginations actionable (Gigerenzer 1989), the logic produces an indifference as to whether future realities come to pass or not (Massumi 2010); indeed, failure just accelerates newer, more creative reorganizations of risk profiles (Aradau & van Munster 2008). 'False positives' are mere learning opportunities for the dispositif of risk, new knowledges to be built into new understandings of risk (Heath-Kelly 2012). The principle of the connectedness of time is thus rendered obsolete (Bibler Countin 2008), undoing it to a point where the past is no longer considered the cause of the present or the future. Instead, *the future causes present and future experience and action*: what shoppers *might* buy is the operative logic in organizing aisles, how citizens *might* act violently in the future determines counter-terrorism policy today, which in turn shapes the future.

Preemption Forecloses Spatial Relations

Equally, the consideration that risk emanates from vulnerable and irrational individuals who could perpetrate mass violence (and the exclusion of any alternative forms of knowledge) means that the intervening gaze is unconcerned with understanding "space as a product of interrelations" (Massey 2005, 10). The logic of preparedness through preempting the highly improbable event takes hold, and interventions are logical because these risks can be mitigated by making the vulnerable resilient, and by enlightening the irrational. This rationality promotes the politics of decision, which, instead of asking causal questions, is concerned with "'what [now] to do?' and 'what decisions to take?'" (Aradau & van Munster 2012, 105; also see: Aradau & van Munster 2007). As temporality folds into itself, spatial concerns become the preeminent explanation and justification (Aradau & van Munster 2012), except these spatial explanations are abstracted and decontextualized, as we have seen.

An assemblage that looks to the management of abstracted risk signifiers through preemptive intervention targets a person's "desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs" (Dean 1999, 11) in order to minimize the alleged risk. The connections between people fragment where 'risk factors' exist as primary compositions of social relations, face-to-face interaction becomes less important, and exchanges of knowledge about "abstract factors deemed liable to produce risk" become centralized (Castel 2001). The behaviour of shoppers and citizens is abstracted away from the person; the important component of politics is the organization and re-organization of risk (or profit) components. Where everything is a possible risk and the person is hidden below the compulsion to spot risk factors in every abstracted space, interactions become impersonal and instead infused with mistrust and suspicion. Aradau and van Munster (2012, 105) remark poignantly that

The withdrawal of time cuts individuals from the social and political conditions in which events happen and locates them within an empty-container space. The social is excavated from

counter-terrorism as the future is rendered as an abstract container-space. Social relations are only constituted in the anticipation of, response to, and recovery from the next terrorist attack.

Personal relations stop being personal relations and become risk-knowledge, and everything signifies an indication of less- or more-risk, in what Ericson and Haggerty (2006, 63) call a “disarticulation of subjectivity”. Security official and founder of the Prevent programme Sir David Omand hints at this when he writes that

The duty is to contribute to public security, defined *as a state of mind that gives confidence that the risks ahead are being managed* to a point where everyday life – and investment in the future – can continue (2010, 11, emphasis added).

The actual management of risks is relatively unimportant, a tertiary issue; instead, the *very perception* of risk-management – the signifier – is the cornerstone of risk-governance. *A state of mind, rather than the management of physical danger, equates to security.*

Because subjects have been deconstructed into disparate risk factors, “concerns about the meaning or motives behind offending” are largely irrelevant (Smith 2006, 93). The relationship between cause and effect are being consequently dismantled, because, as Amoore (2013, 59) elucidates, “Contemporary risk calculus does not seek a causal relationship between items of data, but works instead on and through the *relation* itself... If *** and ***, in association with ***, then ***.” Correlation replaces causality: in solitude, the risks are deemed of no consequence, but their relations to each other define the alleged risk a particular space (body/ person/ group) poses. Rather than actual intentions or motives, “what can be imagined and inferred about who we might be” is more actionable (Amoore 2013, 61). For example, in sentencing a lady for terrorism offences for the possession of a prohibited magazine, the judge mentioned she posed no threat, nor had intent, nor was a terrorist (Qureshi 2015). However, under the new dispositif of risk, the criminal justice system is disinterested in a person’s intentions; the risk factors are more important than the human. Unadulterated innocence is sacrificed, replaced in every space by the presumption of guilt (Boukalas 2017, 376).

Conclusion

Where negotiations over space and time (crime and imprisonment) are substituted for innovative (re)learning and reformulations of the individual (preemption), causal relations disappear. Hegemonic narratives that deem risks as emerging from a lack of information and insufficient resilience compound

the expulsion of certain pursuits of knowledge around terrorism – knowledges which would otherwise listen to and represent ‘the terrorist’, or situate the state or external conditions as potential contributors to violence. The abstraction of risk factors from the embodied person, the treatment of *susceptibilities* to ‘radicalization’ rather than the conditions that enable it becomes the aim and purpose of interventions (Rose 2006). ‘Pastoral care’ is mobilized through the façade of genuine connection as interactions of risk profiles become devoid of spatial and temporal considerations. As we can see, the meaning of human stories becomes lost when the only spatiality is the singular risk-trait and when the only possible temporality is the present moment. The potential for stories with a cause-and-effect relationship becomes displaced by the horrifying affront that the flash of potential violence presents, whilst historical explanations are subjugated beneath the consideration of “what now to do?” (Aradau & van Munster 2007). The consequence is, as Knudsen (2018, 8) writes, a reality “narrow and frozen in time.” As will become continually clear, the purpose of this thesis is to broaden and unfreeze the preemptive-present, by deploying the disruptive testimony of ex-militants, which has been subjugated by this risk-obsessed paradigm. Prevent is sustained by the subjugated knowledge of terrorism offenders’ stories: explanations by actors from Northern Ireland for their violence, explanations that were situated within historical and spatial contexts, are roundly ignored by Prevent. Ignoring these context-laden histories enables the regime of ‘counter-radicalization’ truth to be maintained. Precisely *how* these exclusions legitimize the privileged and universalizing claims of Prevent will be unpacked, as we move through the thesis. I now turn to the methodology, where I explain how and why a discourse analysis of Prevent practice and ex-militant testimony was undertaken.

Undertaking the Research

My research explores the subjugation of decades of significant counter-terrorism knowledge acquired by the British state during the latest conflict in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Agreement drew ‘the Troubles’ to a close in 1998, and Prevent came into existence just five years later - apparently taking into account few of the political or structural lessons from the Northern Irish conflict. Instead, as we have just seen, political violence is seen as an individual-phenomenon to be preempted through anticipatory assemblages. My research is ultimately concerned with how dominant terrorism knowledge is (re-)created and (re-) constituted through the rationalities driving ‘counter-radicalization’. This can only take place when we look to its concurrent silences, what is *not* included in mainstream discourse. This thesis therefore deploys a *discourse analysis methodology* that examines two regimes of truth, in order to understand hegemonic risk-logics in light of the experiences of those whose ‘hypothetical risk’ actually materialized. This chapter explores the premise of the discourse analysis approach used here, followed by a practical explanation of my fieldwork, a discussion of issues of coding and organization of data, and some reflections. It finishes with a brief history of Northern Ireland so that interviews with ex-militants can be contextualized.

Discourse Analysis Methodology

Being interested in “following lines of fragility in the present” in order that how the present is constructed might be better understood (Foucault 1988, 37), my research looks at two realms of knowledge: the implementation of Prevent, and ex-militant experience. A discourse analysis is therefore utilized, because such an approach can help to uncover the hidden ways in which a world (that accepts ‘counter-radicalization’ as legitimate for instance) is composed and ordered (McGregor 2010, 2). Generally concerned with exploring language, discourse analysis methodology is deployed to explore relationships between different objects of knowledge and practice (Wodak & Mayer 2009, 37), and often to challenge hegemonic forms of truth (McGregor 2010; Mogashoa 2014). My research, which applies a critical assessment of terrorism preemption, takes the two discourses of the *testimonies of Prevent practitioners* and the *testimonies of ex-militants*, setting them against each other to explore their interrelation, as the dominant and subjugated components within a pair. Taking a discourse analysis approach allows me to study *the conditions that make possible* the appearance of ‘counter-radicalization’ as legitimate (Hodges, Kuper & Reeves 2008) – paying special attention to that which must be silenced, in order for the radicalization regime of truth to become, and remain, sensible. Silences, which are “the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, [are] an integral

part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (Foucault 1978, 27). The purpose of this research is to identify which knowledge and silences underpin the discourse of ‘counter-radicalization’, to illuminate how pre-criminal interventions are justified and maintained. Deconstructing the potency of self-justifying preemptive logics by highlighting these hidden spaces in the discourse ultimately allows a different future to be imagined than the one constructed by risk-management systems. Opening up space for ‘ontopower’ – the operative force of the preemptive logic – to be contested is a central aim of this research, and uncovering some of the discourse’s silences is a foundational process through which to achieve this aim.

This methodology, it must be stressed, is not one directly comparing Northern Irish with Prevent-era counter-terrorism efforts, nor is it one juxtaposing the testimony of politically-violent individuals in both periods. Importantly, my research does not theorize about structural causes of violence, either to inform or challenge risk-management assemblages. The comparison between Northern Ireland and Prevent was utilized primarily because the redrawing of terrorism risk-management techniques to recruit mainstream society (such as schools, social work, hospitals) is a fundamentally distinct approach than that which governed the Northern Irish conflict. If risk-managers don’t see a distinction between eras of ‘terrorism’, why is a fundamentally different mode of governance deployed to manage violence? I spoke with former combatants because these individuals had obviously committed the very acts that the programme supposedly seeks to stop. I was interested instead in how far their experiences and explanations for violence informed contemporary counter-terrorism.

Ideally, I would have been granted access to the very small number of people in Britain who have been convicted of terrorism offences since Prevent was conceived, but access would have been denied. Gaining research access to terrorist offenders is notoriously difficult, with interview capability generally only available to officials like the police and mental health teams (see: Al-Attar 2018). The next best approach was to look to a context within the UK where political violence has been recently utilized and access to ex-militants remains far freer. During the latest Northern Irish conflict, estimates of people imprisoned for terrorist offences are around 25,000-30,000 (Mullin 2000). With a population around 1.7 million, 1 in 60 people in Northern Ireland were therefore convicted for terrorist offences during the conflict. (R23, a prominent member of the republican former combatant community, noted that this figure probably equated to half of the number *actually* involved.) As one of the “most researched and understood” conflicts in the world, Northern Ireland presents a “benign atmosphere to research terrorism as it is a relatively open society... and the communities have experience of dealing with researchers” (Ferguson & Burgess 2009, 22). Scores of researchers have managed to conduct interviews with ex-militants (Munck, 1992; Bruce, 1992; McAuley, Tonge & Shirlow 2009;

Edwards 2009,2017; Sanders 2011; Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood 2015; Ferguson 2016a,b; Clubb 2016). Many ex-militants work as tour guides, using their previous experience of conflict to inform others about their reasons for joining groups and how to build towards peace. Organizations like the republican C6iste, and the loyalist Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Care (EPIC), encourage work between former militants and academic institutions to help secure peace in post-conflict regions, incorporating personal histories of violence into their work (McEvoy & White 2012, 47). Other former combatants engage in other forms of community outreach with organizations like Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (amongst a vast number of other local institutions). I then interviewed Prevent officials, to see how far the Prevent methodology would have suited another context within the UK just five years prior to when Prevent was imagined into existence. After all, as I have mentioned, the remit of Prevent ideally stretches across the Irish Sea to Northern Ireland, because the policy attempts to combat “all forms of terrorism”, including that relating to Northern Ireland (HM Government 2011b, 20). The reason given by practitioners and the Prevent Strategy for its non-implementation in Northern Ireland is that the policy is constrained by devolution: policing and other levers utilized by Prevent are devolved affairs (PC6; HM Government 2011b). Moreover, as explained in the introduction, there is “not fundamentally” seen to be a difference between the violence of contemporary, mainland terrorism offenders, and offenders – past and present – in Northern Ireland (Farr, quoted in House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2012, Q309). Every offender is ultimately seen as having vulnerabilities that drew them into violence (ibid.). Prevent is therefore applicable to every past and potential-future terrorism offender in the UK, rendering legitimate the comparison between Prevent’s counter-radicalization interventions and terrorism offenders from the Troubles.

A comparison purely of those convicted of terrorist offences in both eras would be less useful in identifying and highlighting the silences - and hegemonic knowledge - central to the discourse of terrorism preemption. Looking at a small sample of individuals to explore ‘why they became involved in violence’ across both timelines would show some different contributing factors that might have caused involvement, but such research would not demonstrate upon what knowledge ‘counter-radicalization’ practices were built, what alternative knowledges were subjugated, and how anticipatory risk-governance moves to construct the contemporary subject. Likewise, an examination only of counter-terrorism officials from both eras would provide an insight into the metamorphosing of risk-management strategies. Whilst this would be interesting, such an approach would not demonstrate the extent of silenced knowledge about the subjects being acted upon in preemptive governance. How do those who have engaged in violence understand their reality, and are these realities sensed or perceived by counter-terrorism officials? If these stories do not inform counter-terrorism praxis, then what other knowledge is being utilized? What does this say about how power

operates and the relationship between subjugated and hegemonic discourse? Is there only one (state-sanctioned) story about why people engage in violence, or are the stories of those who perpetrate it worth listening to as well? Exploring these crucial questions required that I speak with both counter-terrorism officials *and* those counter-terrorism would act upon.

My research ultimately looks at the direct testimony of those who have previously engaged in – or prepared for – physical acts of violence, in order to understand how they narrated their experiences and what sort of factors they describe as contributing to their involvement in activity that Prevent alleges to interrupt. These accounts of involvement are juxtaposed with how the Prevent dispositif presents the trajectory towards political violence, to expose what hegemonic knowledge says of risk, danger, and threat, and to expose what is *not* being spoken about. These disjunctures are then analysed to understand upon what rationalities counter-radicalization is constructed. After all, in developing a strategy in the same country to curtail individual-level violence, why would officials not consult those who had engaged in the very activity that the strategy was supposedly established to tackle? As will be evident throughout the thesis, we find significant disjunctures between violence-perpetrators and violence-‘preventers’. The way that former combatants recounted their histories, and how Prevent officials narrated their work, seems to have very little – to nothing – in common. The approach of comparing ex-militant testimony with that of counter-terrorism practitioners allows the thesis to explore the relationship between hegemonic and subjugated knowledge, particularly as the respective eras of terrorism knowledge were disconnected by only five years (and for the justification given in the introduction).

My PhD was not always a discourse analysis: my original PhD project proposed to test the impact of various preemptive programmes in operation in Germany, Denmark, and Canada, in order to provide a ‘best practice’ de-radicalization model for the UK. However, after immersing myself in post-structuralist literature, attending various academic conferences, and discussing my thoughts with colleagues, I altered my original project and assumed a discourse analysis methodology, looking at the knowledge produced by such regimes and the rationality that upholds them. There were a few times during interviews where I slipped back into my (rather foundationalist) mindset. My first interview with a Channel mentor for instance, which occurred before my Northern Ireland fieldwork, had me convinced that his work existed in a structural and political vacuum. Talking with my supervisor afterwards and reflecting on the broader political implications again reminded me that actually, I should consider the political consequences of intervening in the non-crime space, and that I should not take policy – and the things policy doesn’t take into account – as somehow apolitical. For this reason, and the vast chasm between Prevent practice and Northern Irish testimony, my project moved quickly from a comparative study of international radicalization prevention programmes to one

focusing on what political rationalities were operating in one nation's counter-terrorism alone. In total, I accumulated over 300,000 spoken words (around 500 pages) of testimony from Prevent and Northern Irish individuals, so the choice to focus solely on the UK has been very productive.

Method of sampling

Northern Ireland

31 of my 35 Northern Irish interviewees were formerly members of proscribed groups, and all but one had carried out acts of violence or preparation for violence during the conflict for which they had been imprisoned. I will include the single exception (a former Official IRA member imprisoned for membership rather than violent activities) in the umbrella category 'former combatants'. All were released prior to or as a result of the Belfast ("Good Friday") Agreement and had not been re-imprisoned, with the exception of one former INLA member, who was imprisoned after 1998 for various related offences I was not aware of before meeting him. Incidentally, those released through the Belfast Agreement are 'remembered' by the UK state: ex-prisoners remain on license, and any further crimes would place them back inside prison. Crimes unsolved from the previous conflict that later came to light would put them in jail for two years; many commented for this reason that they would not talk about specifics and, had they, I would have steered the conversation away.

Of the 30 former combatants, 25 semi-structured interviews were accompanied by 10 political walking – and driven – tours in Belfast and (London)Derry. 11 interviewees were from various loyalist groups (often members of several groups during the conflict), 15 were former IRA members, and 4 were former INLA members. All were male, except for one female IRA member. The vast majority of interviews were carried out in Belfast where access is particularly easy. I also carried out a loyalist interview in Lisburn and another in Portadown, a republican interview in Armagh, two republican interviews in (London)Derry, a republican interview in Drogheda (Republic of Ireland), and two interviews over the phone after returning to England (including the female former combatant). I attempted to obtain at least one loyalist tour or interview in (London)Derry, but despite exploring several avenues (such as unionist lodges and loyalist museums) this venture was not successful.

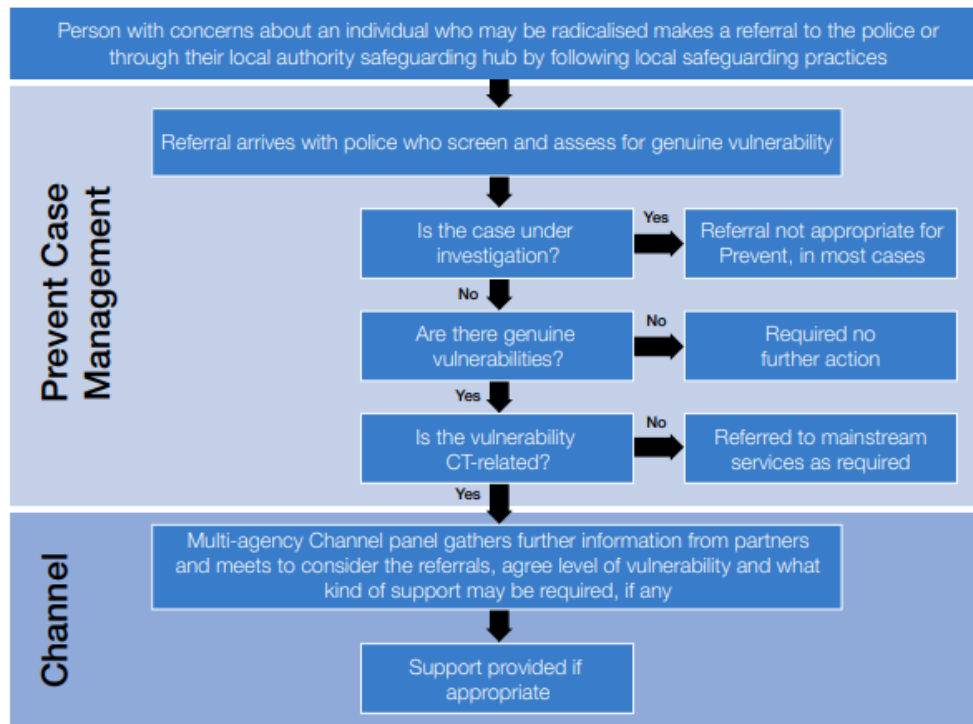
I attempted to obtain more female interviews but, according to a senior academic working in this field, there were essentially no loyalist women involved. When I asked the curator of a loyalist museum (Interviewee 41) if he could put me in touch with any formerly-active loyalists and especially females, he replied that such access would be difficult, because most loyalists have "moved on with their lives, they don't want to be associated with [the conflict, and] they... want to forget about the conflict and their actions, they don't wanna know."

The final five interviews were made up of two driven tours by a non-combatant republican in (London)Derry (R36); a semi-structured interview with a high-profile barrister during the conflict who had tried “a couple of hundred” terrorist cases in the crown court and “a lot more in the petty sessions” (B42); two semi-structured interviews with republican peace activists who were at the time of the conflict “active republican[s] with many friends and colleagues involved” (R47; also R43); and a semi-structured interview with a loyalist museum curator who was well-connected in the community and knew a large number of former combatants (L31). Whilst in Northern Ireland I spent some time walking around the main sites of conflict, and visiting related museums such as the Museum of Free Derry in (London)Derry, the Irish Republican History Museum in Belfast, and the Museum of Orange Heritage, also in Belfast. Often, those in charge of the museums (especially on the republican side) have personal connections with the history, part of the unique selling point of these places.

Prevent

I also interviewed 17 actors associated with Prevent in Britain. Given how little the ‘de-radicalization’ process – broadly understood as moving cases from ‘posing risk’ to ‘no longer posing risk’ – has been researched and how central it is to my work, I focused on acquiring interviews with Channel mentors. The Channel programme provides interventions which seek to relocate the most supposedly-risk Prevent cases from ‘risky/at-risk’ to ‘sufficiently non-risky/not-at-risk’, through one-on-one mentoring sessions. Individuals are offered Channel mentorship if they make their way up the Prevent referral chain (see Figure 1). The most serious cases are discussed at Channel panels (a board meeting comprised of local safeguarding leads), and the most serious of *these* are offered Channel mentorship. I interviewed other senior and strategic figures from within Prevent. Interviewees were otherwise selected because of their seniority within the structure, the variation of their work (to provide a holistic view), and because of access provided. I stopped collecting Prevent officials’ testimony partially because I had collected sufficient data, and partially because I believe my access was curtailed following an incident with a Prevent officer (discussed later).

Figure 1: The referral process towards Channel intervention (HM Government 2018b, 38)



These 17 interviewees included the architect of CONTEST (and therefore Prevent) Sir David Omand, six official Channel ‘de-radicalization’ mentors (comprised of one right-wing specialist, one mental health specialist formerly a Regional Prevent Coordinator within the NHS, and four Islamic theology specialists), and three national leads on Prevent. I also interviewed two local Prevent officers (both of whom deliver official WRAP training, one of whom was formerly a Prevent Police officer), one former Prevent Police officer, and one local authority official with responsibility for Prevent in the capacity of youth work. On top of these official positions, I interviewed one of the original community consultees of the earliest version of Prevent (when it was being rolled out in 2005 as ‘Preventing Extremism Together’), a director of a well-known company providing training to public and private institutions (including schools) funded in part by Prevent, one director of a company offering awareness-raising of Prevent in schools, and one individual who worked in counter-extremism/radicalization think-tanks that received Prevent funding. I also sat in on official Prevent WRAP training (performed by PC5), on Prevent/radicalization awareness training performed by the company of PCC2, and on Prevent/radicalization awareness training performed by the company of PCC14. All my interviews were carried out between September 2017 and September 2018, including a trip to Belfast for 5 weeks from November 2017, and for another week in early 2018 to interview former INLA members.

Research ethics

The ethical considerations of interviewing former combatants and 'de-radicalization' practitioners was important. There is a vast literature within the confines of ethnographical research on the role of positionality and self-representation (see for instance: Bok, 1979). This was important to my methodology; in any study the position of the researcher is fundamental, but my immersive ethnographical approach meant I spent around 60-70 hours in the company of former combatants (including being driven around Belfast for three hours, unplanned, by a former IRA fighter). I also had to represent myself in Prevent-related interviews in a way in which was honest about my research but that also provided me the best possibility for further interviews. The ethics of both elements of my research will now be explored.

Northern Ireland Interviews

My fieldwork in Northern Ireland took place in the aftermath of the Boston College Tapes (BCT) incident. The BCT project was an oral history of former militants' personal involvement in the conflict that often touched upon unsolved criminality, and which project leaders (at Boston College) had been under the potentially-misled impression would be protected from legal ramifications. The PSNI subsequently requested and obtained a number of the interviews which included damaging testimony concerning Gerry Adams, and was therefore a high profile affair (BBC 2017). I was acutely conscious of my responsibility to ensure interviewees were aware that their interviews should not touch upon unsolved crimes, as these may not be outside the interest of the PSNI, which is actively seeking to deal with these legacy cases (HM Government 2018a).

Aside from needing to protect my sources, myself, and Warwick University from legal implications, participating in fieldwork with former combatants can be ethically discomforting - are they representing their histories accurately? Does asking open questions allow significant misrepresentations of why they became involved at the time? How far should I trust their post-event memories? Did this devalue my fieldwork to any extent? Questions like these plague research of former combatants, such as that described by Jessee (2011) in the context of Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia. For her, asking open questions and letting those who had committed atrocities speak freely could lead them to whitewash their gruesome histories. Whilst my research did not cross into specifics of crimes committed, and whilst I asked a number of questions to direct conversations, there were occasions when the interviewees took the lead. This raised a fundamental question: how far did the ex-militants' representations of their involvement hold true to their decision-making and environments at the time? I could only situate the prominence of romanticized and filtered lenses by considering my findings alongside other research from within the 'terrorism' literature; the testimony

I gathered differs little from research carried out from conflicts around the world and specific research into the Northern Irish conflict (Bruce 1992; McAuley, Tonge & Shirlow 2009; Edwards 2009,2017; Sanders 2011; Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood 2015; Ferguson 2016a,b; Clubb 2016). This limitation, of processing post-event (and often very emotionally intense) memory, is further controlled by considering 'conditions of victory'. Perceived conditions of victory varied amongst my interviewees - which can contribute to varied post-event narrative recreation: Heath-Kelly writes that "hegemonic [and victorious] narratives constitute 'the' past as singular, *erasing the inconvenient details*" (2016a, 295, emphasis added). My sample contained, on both sides of the conflict, those who felt they had achieved their aims, and those who felt depressed by the undesirable and unfinished state of affairs. Yet despite these different views of relative victory and defeat, themes that arose in all my interviews (like that of the wider and aforementioned research) were largely consistent.

Another ethical concern I had to consider was that I was actively contributing to and reproducing an obsession with conflict, violence and death: revisiting 'the Troubles' through tours (and the maintenance of conflict-related public artwork and museums) is sometimes seen as perpetuating community divisions and as upholding the memory of violence (McDowell 2008). So called "dark tourism" (Lennon & Foley 2000) is claimed to perpetuate a fixation with atrocity and death. The point is a contentious one. Removal of conflict-related art has been attempted, successfully in the city centre as an element of regeneration projects (Wiedenhof-Murphy 2010, 546), but unsuccessfully elsewhere (West Belfast for example) because of some communities' desire to remember their history. My contribution was not just through my academic interest or physical presence in these areas, but it was sometimes monetary: whilst I did not pay for one-on-one interviews, I paid for tours of conflict sites. The tours and the stories they provided me are not *central* to my research, but they helped to situate me in the time and space of the conflict, enabling me to understand more fully the context in which the violence occurred. The ethics of paying research participants is worth considering, because it produces more complicated layers of relation between researcher and researched. However, this effect is considered more significant when higher sums are provided (Bentley and Thacker 2004). The charges, set mostly between £10-£20, that I was paying for tour guides' time in a way they charge tourists every Saturday, can only have contributed minimally to this effect. Moreover, Draper et al. (2009, 236) write that provided transparency is assured, "Reimbursement appears, then, to be an accepted and acceptable practice to cover the costs incurred by a practitioner or practice for taking part in a research study." The prices were set by the tour operators except on two occasions – a car tour in (London)Derry when the guide told me the price over the phone, and one tour down the Shankill when I was told by the guide prior to the tour. Head (2009, 339) writes that "potential research participants on low incomes might feel coerced to

participate if the level of ‘reward’ is too high to refuse”. Given that a number of former combatants complained of employment difficulties, this motivation should be weighed. However, the testimony from tours (of both the broader context and the guides’ personal histories) is included, but provides more flavour than meat to the thesis – and, importantly, it is corroborated by the many interviews that I secured without payment, and wider academic literature.

A further concern to consider was that walking tours have been contested for being so dynamically immersive. The requirement of physical exertion in order to engage with the topic and the ex-prisoner tour guide, writes Skinner (2016), ensures an experience distinct from more passive tourism (like bus or taxi tours). Walking several miles - often in the cold and rain - in order to gather around an ex-prisoner to hear him (all men from my experience) retelling his personal history, requires the committed engagement of one’s entire being. Furthermore, Skinner reminds us of the politics of movement: marching has been consistently utilized by the weak as a means of protest, and by armies as an integral element of war. Walking up the Falls and back down the Shankill is therefore far more than just actively listening to an individual’s history - it situates the tourist, as a “habituating spatio-temporal practice”, within the conflict (2016, 26). However, historical atrocities have long resulted in the production and reproduction of memory of loss, grief and disaster, particularly in Europe and North America. The fixation on extreme violence perpetrated by, but primarily against, both states and individuals is often commercialized through museums. For instance, the Churchill War Rooms in London and the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York situate visitors in a particular space and time by reconstructing the respective scenes (through videos and sound clips, wall art and statistics, and artefacts ‘from the moment’). Like the political walking tours, visitors to such museums buy in to the experience through their physical immersion within this reconstruction. So where ‘dark tourism’ is posited as distasteful or problematic, remembering exceptional death and tragedy is a mainstream activity.

Whilst the immersion of the Northern Irish conflict walking tours can be seen as problematic for their preservation of divisions through exclusive narratives, and for ensuring that the memory of violence and conflict remains present, the director of loyalist ex-prisoner support group EPIC remarked that one of the organization’s primary purposes was to de-glamorize conflict through outreach (Tom Roberts, in Carruthers 2018). C oiste also engages in similar work, performing youth outreach and assemblies in schools (see Thematic Chapter 4). In addition, although both sides use the tourism space to promote their own “deliberately exclusive” perspective of the conflict (McDowell 2008, 407), listening to their stories provides a window into a time and space that otherwise would be unheard. This is particularly important where such violence is represented in very binary ways through public media. Taking both sides’ narratives can be useful to identify some of the broader trends that appear

important in the establishment and continuation of a conflict. Another not unimportant element upholding the legitimacy of this form of tourism is that it has encouraged people to visit what is often felt a neglected part of the city. Patri (2009) suggests this 'area of expertise' was developed by proactive former combatants to ensure West Belfast does not become forgotten.

The ethics process at Warwick University was fairly stringent, with the funding committee requiring that I undertake an extra and complete risk assessment form in order to travel to another part of the UK, to talk with people who had passed through the judicial system, who had faced the consequences of their crimes, and who were by now generally between 50 and 80 years of age. I was instructed to meet in public places and situate myself next to an open door, presumably in case the interviewees sprung at me and attacked. Had I insisted on doing so, it would have been impractical, quite rude, and bizarre for the interviewees who often engage in public outreach on a daily basis. In a few instances I met in cafés or on the streets for walking tours, but otherwise I interviewed them at their place of work, in their homes, or in cars (mine and theirs). In reality there was no reasonable risk to my person: these former combatants were being monitored as part of the terms of their release under the GFA, and if they were suspected of re-joining a group by the Sentence Review Commissioners or the Secretary of State would be re-imprisoned. However, "Only 16 out of 449 prisoners freed between 1998 and 2007 had their licence revoked" (Democratic Progress Institute 2013, 14-15). This is a significantly lower rate of recidivism than for 'traditional' crime.

Prevent Interviews

My Prevent interviews also brought up ethical dilemmas, most notably how I framed my research to potential interviewees. Prevent is a field often divided between practice and research; practitioners cannot see the legitimacy in theoretical critique, and researchers cannot abide what the programme is said to produce (often racism and divisions). The European Commission notes that social scientists "should not normally deceive their subjects without good reason" (Iphofen 2013, 11). Ortmann and Hertwig (1998, 806) write, "Not telling participants the purpose of an experiment is not necessarily deception; telling participants things that are not true necessarily is." Entering such a contested field where access is curtailed for very critical researchers meant that, in order to secure interviews with the most central actors, I had to frame my research in ways that did not convey that I would be especially critical. (In fact, when undertaking these interviews, I was generally more interested in improving Prevent than wholeheartedly deconstructing it – the extent of my criticality came later.) This restriction extends to those who are perceived merely as *potentially* critical: a more senior academic in the field told me that his religion (Islam) meant that I'd experienced far more access to Prevent officials than he. Although interviewees were hard to locate and contact, as a white and male

PhD student, access seemed far more readily available to me than other researchers in a less privileged position. Other researchers - even those with doctoral qualifications – corroborated this, with their names or faces appearing to fit a ‘critical’ profile.

Although I did not engage in deception, there were occasions when it appeared more conducive to frame my research in certain ways. The Commission’s study points out that considering the ethics of ‘deception’ is not useful in determining appropriate data collection methods, because framing issues differently is a cornerstone of how society functions. Instead, the questions should be: “Would the form of deception proposed here harm the research participants, the researchers and/or society in general in any way?” (Iphofen 2013, 35) So, although I question it now, at the time cost-benefit calculations were more central to my approach than moral questions about the truth I was producing. An example of this calculation was when I was seeking an interview with a national government Prevent lead. In order to secure access I was required to fill out some detailed forms asking how an interview would benefit both parties. I framed my research in the following way, realizing at that point that effectiveness of preemption is inherently unmeasurable:

The research is being undertaken to understand how Prevent operates on the ground, how operatives (rather than merely legislative documents) understand the movement towards violence, as well as to understand measurements of effectiveness.

Similarly, despite being aware that one cannot measure preemption, I asked other Prevent actors for interviews on the premise that I was researching the impact and success of a preemptive programme. Yet this was necessary for them to accept the interview request. Had I framed my research as a post-structural discourse analysis between Prevent officials and Northern Irish former combatants, it would likely have resulted in all of my leads going dead because my position would not have been understood.

Once an interview was underway, I faced another conundrum. How do I portray myself (academically, personally, even physically)? For Liang (2015), this dilemma was at the heart of his research. Interviewing often patriarchal men in Hong Kong about fatherhood, he fundamentally disagreed with many of their interpretations about masculinity. He was concerned that his silence would be interpreted as ideological alignment, yet he felt he could not confront his subjects as a data-collector. My research followed his ethnography: what would result from not speaking my disagreements with the work of Prevent officials? Did I have any responsibility to present myself as critical if I later wanted to ask them to connect me to other practitioners? Was being overly personable problematic? This felt less important in earlier interviews, because I was still figuring out the workings of Prevent, and was still vacillating between post-structuralism and foundationalism!

Incidentally, it was from one of these earlier interviews - where I had been quite personable with PC6 and showing my genuine interest in his work - that a conflict arose. After developing a more critical mind, I wrote a blog piece that challenged some fundamentals of Prevent, using some provocative wording (Pettinger 2018). I was due to observe some high-level Prevent training of other Prevent practitioners that this particular practitioner was offering. Two days before the training was going to occur he called me having somehow found my blog, upset that I had published it. He asked me not to attend the training, and threatened to withdraw his participation from my research. After speaking with my supervisor about the significant empirical contribution that interview had provided my research, I replied. I used empathy to express my distress at his reaction, as it had never been my intention to deceive him, and I underlined that I had gradually become critical of Prevent as a consequence of the empirical research. To try and heal the rift, I offered to write a co-authored blog with the practitioner to 'correct' the impression that only critical opinions exist about Prevent. He declined to write a co-authored piece, for reasons of time. Thankfully, he also relented on his request to remove his interview from the research. However, as a well-connected practitioner – with access to national Prevent leads – he had discovered my critical opinions and remained displeased. This had the likely consequence of stopping any further access: Prevent practitioners are reported to speak candidly with each other. I was in the process of securing an interview with another Channel mentor, but this lead went dead after my dispute with the Prevent Coordinator. I then decided I would not seek more Prevent interviews.

Confidentiality and Protection of Interviewees

I made numerous provisions to protect my interviewees. Data collection threw up a number of issues that the pre-fieldwork paperwork had prepared me for, most notably issues around confidentiality. I had primed a consent form and participation information form for my interviewees, outlining my responsibilities and what they should expect from the experience. For Northern Irish former militants this included my commitment to anonymize their names (and any details that could be traced back to them), whereas for Prevent interviewees this anonymization was optional. I later decided to anonymize all of them despite a couple of interviewees being happy to be identified. I chose to do this because I became aware that the field is plagued with personal attacks on practitioners (occasionally provoked), often on social media. Prevent officials have written about some of the problems with being associated with Prevent (Arbuthnot 2015). One Prevent Coordinator mentioned during an interview that anonymization was important to some officials because they didn't want to have a target painted on their back and because some of the criticism was wholly distasteful and very personal. There were a few instances where individuals (both Northern Irish- and Prevent-related)

made remarks that could be traced back to them, if somebody knew them already. I made sure to take these out of the transcripts. With regard to data storage, I made sure to store the audio recordings on the secure Warwick servers, keeping them only as long as I needed to refer to them for transcription and coding, which was completed within months of the interviews. I will retain the transcripts of the interviews for the mandated 10 year period of storage.

Recruitment of Research Subjects

Whilst I sent out 'cold' correspondence to potential interviewees with success, snowballing is the main method by which I recruited research subjects, both in Northern Ireland and from within Prevent. Snowballing, which is the process by which the researcher is "passed [informally] from respondent to respondent" through interpersonal links, is standard across both fields (Dolnik 2013, 34).

Prevent

For my first interview, my supervisor put me in touch with a Channel mentor she had spoken with. After this I attended a couple of Prevent-related events organized by various local authorities, which a couple of senior Prevent officials attended. I approached them for interview, and a number of leads later came from these interactions. In the meantime I was writing handwritten letters to people I suspected to be Channel mentors. Mentors' involvement in Prevent is sufficiently obfuscated by a void of information in the public domain, so I felt like an investigative journalist piecing together passing comments in local newspapers and figuring out where they could live or work. Often a mentor will be the director of a company offering Home Office approved 'safeguarding interventions', having a website that is indistinguishable from non-terrorism-related safeguarding companies. Trying to figure out if a company *was* related to Prevent and Channel was considerably time-consuming, and I am sure I have left in my wake a number of somewhat confused social workers. This showed me to an extent how the topic of preemptive counter-terrorism has become bureaucratized; processes and positions supposedly related to national security are hidden behind everyday words, and incorporated as 'just another duty' of existing institutions.

Handwritten letters secured me three interviews with Channel mentors. In a few cases I could only find a postal address where I thought a mentor might reside, and, instead of an impersonal typed script, I thought that - as I know them to be extremely busy individuals - a letter written by hand would catch their attention because it's unusual, and conveys depth and thought. Otherwise attending events where I knew certain key figures would be, and sending cold emails to official addresses (and snowballing on the back of these contacts), secured me the remainder of my Prevent-related interviews. The more interviews I undertook, the more interviewees repeated each other, offering

little added value. As I undertook more interviews (especially those after my Northern Ireland fieldwork), I realized how far their understanding of the trajectory towards violence and of risk differed from my Northern Irish interviewees.

Northern Ireland

Ex-prisoner organizations in Northern Ireland are easily located but outside these commonly used pathways into the former combatant community, there are few obvious routes. One researcher, attempting to locate ex-militants in Northern Ireland, mentioned to me that his home institution's ethics committee did not allow snowballing, and as a result his research sample consisted of four IRA interviews. One professor who had carried out interviews with ex-militants in Northern Ireland encouraged me to adopt snowballing as the best approach. John Horgan (2018) remarked that "Snowball sampling is very often the best we can get, there's nothing wrong with that." Another academic, who carried out an oral history of female Northern Irish former combatants, told me he sought to acquire participants through:

- Ex-prisoner support groups, although the groups' political ideologies complicated the objectivity of the research
- Individual approach, which led to numerous single-contacts followed by more single-contacts
- Newspaper adverts, although this was not very successful, with little take-up

He saw approaching groups and individuals (and asking them for further contacts) as entirely necessary - whilst not methodologically ideal this is the best possible method to recruit participants.

I carried out a similar double-pronged approach. I contacted the two main ex-prisoner support groups in Belfast: C oiste (republican) and EPIC (loyalist) and secured a number of interviews through those groups. I tried to use other ex-prisoner support organizations (particularly republican as there seemed to be far more of these around), but despite being located in towns and villages outside of Belfast, and with various names, they consistently pointed me back to what I eventually realized were the parent organizations in Belfast of C oiste and EPIC. I was told this was because the parent groups had more experience dealing with researchers and could therefore offer more potential interviewee opportunities. In dealing only with these two main groups the potential sample size and range was limited, because I was exposed to 'approved' speakers. To offset some of this more restricted range of interviewees I made more sure to reach out to more ex-militants from outside of these organizations through alternative approaches. Both organizations offered me around 5-6 interviews,

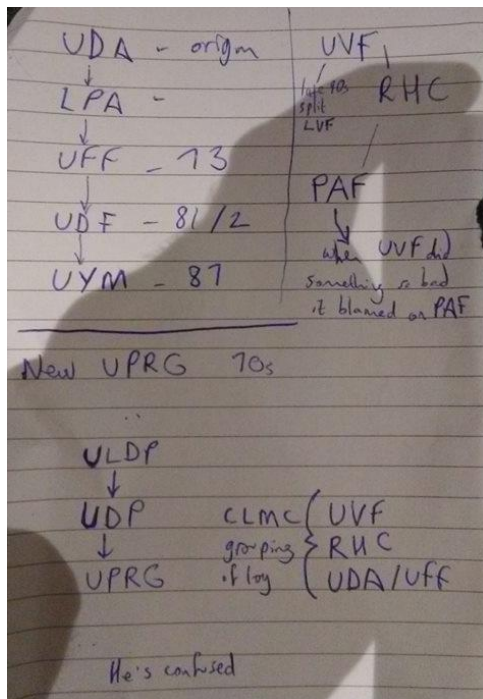
and I undertook walking tours with them both on top. On my first trip I did not manage to locate any former INLA members, and I returned to Belfast speak with four of them through an organization on the Falls Road.

I found a non-affiliated republican ex-prisoner support group in Armagh that helped me speak with one former combatant, and then a Sinn Fein activist and tour guide in (London)Derry allowed me to speak with two former combatants in the city. From the loyalist community, individuals were often a member of the UDA (when membership was permitted) *and* a proscribed group that engaged in violent activity. Although there were innumerable proscribed groups to which loyalists belonged (see Figure 1), most were members of the UFF, UVF and LVF, which was represented in my sample.

Otherwise I relied on finding individuals on Facebook, looking for names in local newspapers and trying to find contact details, and engaging in any other journalistic activity I could to locate possible participants. This was somewhat successful, like the academic mentioned above, and I found about ten individuals through this approach.

One influential figure in the loyalist community (Interviewee 41) tried to explain the establishment of and relationships between the most prominent loyalist groups whilst I wrote it down, remarking at the end that he was confused about the uncountable number of splits and factions that arose during the conflict. The picture in Figure 2 shows various loyalist organizations, with a mixture of proscribed violent groups and the political wings. There were many, many more. Whilst a few different republican groups existed, the OIRA, PIRA and INLA were the main recognized umbrella organizations through which violence occurred on the republican side.

Figure 2: Author's photograph of labyrinth of loyalist groups, Newtownards Road, Nov 2017



Snowballing is obviously a useful technique to recruit research participants, allowing access into populations who would otherwise be hard to locate (Atkinson & Flint 2001). Moreover, it can be considered an especially appropriate method when researching sensitive topics (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), when informal approaches could be received less invasively than cold contacts. Waters (2015, 377) speaks to this, suggesting that there is a critical point of sensitivity, after which “snowball sampling’s effectiveness begins to break down”. Despite their involvement being a somewhat sensitive issue (republican groups in particular get short shrift in the British media), I was able to recruit scores of former combatant participants, and would have been able to speak with hundreds more, because it is decades after they were involved in violence, they have served their time in prison for their crimes, and their communities are aware of their involvement (often having supported it). However, Prevent interviews were harder to obtain because there is such a toxic environment for practitioners – many have been abused (at least in their eyes) on social media for their work. It is a present reality for them; they face combative individuals and communities who want nothing to do with their agenda, and their work is so sensitive that trying to break into a new area for them even takes the form of undercover operations. Aside from the practical utility of snowballing, the practice, as Browne (2005) points out, reminds us that we are immersed in our research. Our involvement as researchers affects what we see: we produce knowledge whilst studying it; we are complicit in the construction of truth. She points to snowballing as a good example of this – we researchers make personal contacts as a result of our politeness and body language, we ask questions that encourage

certain responses, and we subjectively follow up avenues that seem interesting. We are situated within our research.

Organisation of Data

I transcribed Northern Irish interviews within days of the interview, and the discussions with Prevent officials within weeks. To allow the hegemonic discourse to be held alongside its corresponding silences, I then undertook a thematic analysis of the interviews. Thematic analysis is a process to find “a pattern [that] describes and organizes the possible observations [from a dataset] or at a maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis 1998, 161). These patterns, or themes, are found through ‘thematic coding’: commonly performed on qualitative data, especially transcripts like my interview data, such a procedure works whereby “several passages are identified and... linked with a name for that idea – the code. [This allows for the] indexing or categorizing [of] the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it” (Gibbs 2007, 38). The interplay between inductive (data-driven) and deductive (researcher-driven) thematic coding and analysis is inherent to all scientific enquiry. As Strauss and Corbin (1998, 136) write, research is based on observations of data but simultaneously also on “our reading of that data, along with our assumptions about the nature of life, the literature we carry in our heads, and discussions we have with colleagues.” I would not be able to see my data from a position of neutrality. A hybrid approach, that utilizes both inductive and deductive thematic coding, was therefore explicitly deployed. In other words, I was directed by the data *and* my positionality (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). In both sets of interviews, I looked for recurring and overarching themes on issues and disjunctures that seemed important to me. Five broad themes stood out as particularly relevant:

1. Motivation for involvement
2. Agency
3. Temporality
4. Banality
5. Solutions / methods of risk-management

These were selected because there seemed to be significant discrepancies between ex-militant testimony and the narratives of Prevent officials on each of these issues. For example, the theme of ‘Agency’ arose because I saw ex-militants narrating themselves as *conscious and determined actors*, whereas Prevent officials were describing its cases as *vulnerable and in need of emotional and social*

support. These broad themes emerged from moments where I felt especially surprised at the disconnection between the testimony of the two sets of interviewees. Three of them (motivations, agency, and solutions) became the main focus of an empirical chapter, whilst two (banality and temporality) were recurring themes across the whole thesis.

As I drew out these main themes, I began a comprehensive process of 'axial coding'. Axial coding is "the process of relating subcategories to a category" (Klenke 2008, 94), and again, these subcategories were drawn from a combination of inductive and deductive analyses. Staying with the overarching theme of 'Agency', I found Prevent practitioners emphasizing '*mental health*' to explain their work in managing terrorism risk. Channel cases were articulated as unable to support themselves or remain as safe citizens because of mental health considerations that made them irrational. 'Mental health' became one (important) subcategory, because practitioners deployed it to signify a lack of agency – yet this stood in contrast to how Northern Irish ex-militants described their involvement: through self-determination and conscious commitment. I therefore used '*clear thinking & logic*' as the equivalent subcategory from Northern Irish interviews, and highlighted the transcript when I came across ex-militants talking about how they weighed family life and moral concerns around violence, against becoming involved, for example. Some other subcategory pairs included '*banality*' (in Prevent interviews) against '*exceptional*' (ex-militant), and '*ignorance of environments*' (Prevent) with '*talking about environments*' (ex-militant). Again and again the subcategories reminded me of the disparity between the outlook of Prevent officials and their hypothetically-ideal constituents who had committed terrorism crimes. I was largely unable to carry over any subcategories from Prevent to ex-militant interviews. The reorganization of subcategories ('banality' to 'exceptional', for instance) was not the beginning of my understanding of how far the two groups were not speaking the same language nor had the same epistemological framework, but it epitomized how the world was understood profoundly differently by Prevent officials and those who had involved themselves in political violence.

Reflections on Data Collection

Northern Irish interviewees ranged from key strategists of proscribed groups, to local and regional commanders, renowned 'hard men', a hunger striker, those who had planned bomb attacks on economic targets, some who were caught preparing for violence, others who had killed army or police officers, others who had killed civilians for being from another community, many who had been on long-term no-wash protests whilst in prison, those who had written books about their experiences, some who were involved from the onset of the conflict in 1969, one who saw his unarmed cousin as

he lay paralysed on the floor shot dead in cold blood by a British soldier, one of the most considered people I have ever met, one who talked of his utter hatred of violence, one who spoke of himself as not being violent, and several (loyalists) who were involved in post-conflict feuds. They were often kind and conscientious, there were a few curious characters, all were fairly philosophical and reflective. Many on the republican side were disillusioned with the dominant narratives of 'terrorism' yet were hopeful about what they saw as the forthcoming inevitable reunification of the island of Ireland. Several on the loyalist side were frustrated about their lack of economic prospects: former combatants are the only people group in Northern Ireland permitted to be discriminated against in employment law, and so they rely upon support organizations. Meeting former combatants was like meeting anybody else - you would not be able to tell their history from looking at them or talking with them, except if you were to pry about their past. A few more exceptional moments from my Northern Irish fieldwork are worth noting:

1. My first experience of former combatants was a (group) tour up the Falls with a republican, and back down the Shankill with a loyalist, passed over at halfway. It was immediately apparent how totally disparate ideas of existence and reality were in operation. The republican tour was operating on a very considered, thought-provoking level that suggested language as essential to understanding the conflict, and which delved into hundreds of years of history. The loyalist tour, on the other hand, heavily featured emotive terminology like 'terrorism' that appeared to discount some level of nuance, and which focused on the conflict purely as a moment in time. We were taken to a Protestant memorial on Shankill Road, where the guide pointed out a particularly striking mural (Figure 3, below). It showed me that wholly different realities were being lived, how fundamentally misunderstood the conflict is, and how hegemonic narratives around 'terrorism' are upheld and outworked. The disparity of these two representations of the conflict was by no means universal across my interviews, but it helped to set my expectations from the beginning!

Figure 3: Author's photograph of loyalist commemoration of the conflict, Shankill Road, Nov 2017



2. In one of my first republican interviews, I tried to figure out the point at which he saw violence as becoming acceptable – and why he got involved in armed struggle at that particular moment in time. He misunderstood me, became very irritated, to the point of being angry, and asked me if I was moralizing to him. His view that his decisions, his violence, his life, were justifiable and justified, was particularly important to him – far more than I had anticipated. How did this change his posture, how did it affect his portrayal of his involvement? Regardless, it showed me that this is his reality – he was and is committed – substantiating the consistent claim that all interviewees gave: that they could not have been persuaded out of violence.

3. I interviewed a republican who had been present during what had been a relatively peaceful march that ultimately turned into Bloody Sunday. We were standing in the street where several of the deaths occurred. He talked about his experiences of that day, and he began crying as he spoke about the horrors of what he witnessed. Not knowing how else to show my empathy to a stranger recollecting his cousin being shot dead by British soldiers, I attempted to show how moved I was – and I *was* moved – by nodding, shaking my head in disbelief, and giving him time to process his emotions. I stood silently, looking upwards into the rain, and sighed. Though nearly 50 years later, the past is still very present for this elderly gentleman. I was struck by encountering this conflict at a very human level, realizing how far it involves very real and emotive human stories, and is not just based on the deployment of historical

narratives. What does justice look like, for this man, for his family, and for those that witnessed the traumatic violence day in, day out, throughout the conflict? When does this trauma, inflicted by the state, end? How could anyone conceive of a state-based programme that sought to persuade a person with this sort of experience away from seeking justice, even if it looks like retribution?

4. I was trying to ask questions *as though I was a Prevent practitioner* in one interview of an active republican (and who was one of the Hooded Men). I queried, “How could the state have stopped people from joining paramilitaries?” and then, “How could they have stopped the loyalist groups from expanding?” He responded that the British had encouraged rather than discouraged violence, and so my questions are nonsense because they're so ignorant. He was angry and visibly upset with my approach. I saw, again, how real state violence is for those it hurts, and the consequences it has for them in impassioning them against the state. I conceded my Prevent hat and offer: “It was kind of more a hypothetical” and explained that I’m looking into Prevent. He seemed happy to continue. We spoke about Prevent, and he was aghast! It reminded me how stark the disconnection is between Prevent and Northern Irish experience, and the importance to interviewees of their relationships with space and time compared to Prevent’s fixation with reorganizing associations of ‘risk factors’.

5. I was trying to find the way back to my car one evening, parked somewhere on Shankill Road, when I came across a pub with its lights on. As I walked in, everybody’s heads turned. I approached a group of men standing by the bar to ask for their help. One walked me outside and began to explain where I needed to go. He was exceptionally friendly, almost delighted, despite appearing sober. After a three-or-four-sentence exchange, he shook my hand with remarkable vigour and a beaming smile. He watched me walk off for a few seconds too long. I couldn’t help thinking his response was because of my British accent and his possible tribalistic environment, which, according to a few interviewees, is more entrenched in Northern Ireland than even during the conflict. Indeed, the peace walls (see Thematic Chapter 4) were only a few metres away. How is an environment that produces this behaviour *not* covered by the Prevent Strategy, when mainland Britain – which does not have peace walls or such explicitly divided communities – *is*? I was struck by this apparent arbitrariness, but concluded Prevent is a political construction far more than an arbitrary one.

I also had a number of remarkable moments during my Prevent interviews:

1. I asked, in my first interview with a Channel mentor (with a fairly imposing figure), whether Prevent has a possible end-date. He leant forward into the voice recorder that was sitting on my knee, and almost *shouted* “NO”. We were sitting within two feet of each other. He then elaborated, seeming to calm himself down whilst doing so (I didn’t move or show any sign that it had been weird). He appeared fervently passionate about his work, and I saw an inability in him to understand how any fundamental criticism of the programme could be legitimate. Over the course of the Prevent interviews, I became more aware that practitioners are happy to self-criticize some details of Prevent to ‘improve practice’, but are largely unable to step back and consider the validity of the scheme itself even when asked.
2. The same mentor had a few tears speaking about his work, as did another mentor. Three of my six Channel mentor interviewees had formerly been self-proclaimed ‘radicals’; these were both. The other Channel mentor who was a ‘former radical’ did not cry, although he was clearly emotionally engaged in his work. Whilst the mentors were demonstrating their emotional investment in their work, they are arguably more able to cry from a place of privilege: their reality is “visible, acknowledged, and legitimized because of [their] tears” (Accapadi 2007,2010), diminishing the space for criticism. In moments of practitioner tears, I felt the space for genuine critique closing down, and instead empathize with them: the tears are working – intentionally or otherwise!
3. I organized an interview with someone I had been led to believe was a Channel mentor, and he had agreed to this interview about his work with Channel. I was in his office, about five minutes through the interview, but he was speaking in such vague terms and so much about mental health – and not about ‘radicalization’ or even any consideration of ‘risk’ or ‘threat’ – that I began to wonder whether he was genuinely a mentor on the Channel programme. *Am I in the right place, am I speaking to the right person?* It was almost surreal – *I have to make sure, how is this possible?!* So I asked him a very specific question about what he thinks are the most common signs of radicalization. Annoyed, he jabbed back, “Do you want me just to repeat it again?” as though it should have been clear to me that he had already talked about this. The distance in this moment, between conceptions of Northern Irish ‘risk’ (considered around physical engagement and violence), and preemptive counter-radicalization (that hardly touches upon physical danger and is eminently psychological) was utterly astonishing.

Although I was generally pleased with how I conducted myself during fieldwork (and pleased with the results of the fieldwork), I wish that I had asked more effective follow-up questions. I feel like I missed opportunities to probe deeper and expose more of the ways in which preemptive governance and its 'ideal subjects' fundamentally differ. Looking back, I regret not pushing conversations on Prevent more with ex-militants: I didn't engage with the majority through an explicit discussion of Prevent's operation. It would have been interesting to see what they made of its assumptions in light of their experience and perspective (peace worker or otherwise). I drew conclusions from hundreds of thousands of words of their testimony, but it would have been fascinating to have had more explicit discussions than I did. Equally, were I to repeat the research, given my lack of exposure to the field and limited critical perspective at the time, I would have engaged more critically with Prevent officials. I would have queried the boundaries within which Prevent operates, and sought to complicate its 'British exceptionalism' by asking "What makes 'radicalization' in Britain so different from 'radicalization' in other countries?" I would have problematized the distinction between Britain and Northern Ireland especially – remembering how security officials (and Prevent documentation) retrospectively narrated the similarities between the two contexts. I might have asked officials what Prevent might have done with the suffragettes, and whether they thought the suffragettes' approach was justified by the (relative) successes of the movement. I might have asked them plainly whether they understood why people used violence in some contexts, from human to human – asking them to remove their Prevent 'hat' for a moment. This might have unsettled the circularity that Prevent relies upon, and opened up space for alternative ways of seeing. However, generally, I was pleased with the comprehensive amount and quality of the data that I collected.

Finally, how else could I have devised this project – what else could I have done with similar data, and why didn't I? This research could have easily been a 'counter-radicalization programme improvement' project, which either looked at various 'risk-management' programmes to determine somehow what constituted best-practice, or at the effectiveness of the UK model in order to refine it. This could have drawn from critical theory to some extent, but any such project would have had to accept the preemptive paradigm as worth perpetuating, and therefore "[relinquish] its claim to exercise criticism" (Horkheimer 1972b, 178). Many studies into the 'radicalization' model take its central premise of preemption as justified, and only criticise counter-radicalization programmes from this internal logic. For example the work of Thornton and Bouhana (2017) studies the 'effectiveness' of Channel interventions, and, whilst critiquing the implementation of Channel, does not critically engage with the concept of measuring preemption. However, the more I read, discussed, and wrote, the more I came to see attempts at preemption itself as propagating violence, and producing problematic forms of knowledge founded on privilege that foster suspicion rather than trust, and

parochialism rather than critical thinking. Equally I could have contributed to ‘radicalization’ scholarship in an attempt to inform preemptive counter-terrorism efforts, by investigating individuals who had completed their Channel ‘journey’. Incidentally, at time of writing, a colleague in the field has launched a project doing just this with UK Home Office support. But again, this would have rested on circular notions that those identified as potential risks posed some objective danger, and that it was able to be spotted before its materialization. A third approach I might have taken is to undertake an investigation into the ‘root causes’ of terrorism, in order to generalize about why humans become involved in violence. This approach, which often takes the line that “terrorists are not insane or irrational actors” (Bjørge 2005, 257), might have assumed a somewhat critical angle in comparison to mainstream – or at least government-promulgated – terrorism knowledge, by discussing the state as contributing to the ‘incidence of risk’. This was the approach taken by Robert Pape’s (2005) analysis of suicide terrorism that problematized foreign military intervention as the leading cause. However, utilizing these results to generalize about broader populations is also short-sighted, given that these studies only examine very few ‘terrorists’ in depth. For example, Sageman’s (2004) landmark study of just 172 ‘jihadis’, is celebrated for its comparatively large sample. I do not intend to produce a ‘root causes’ explanation for violence. I have become more interested in looking to subjugated experience, so that the privileged knowledge that anticipatory risk-governance is mobilized through can be disturbed.

Applying the methodology of discourse analysis to radically different protagonists within the world of political violence, I have been able to ask: how are the claims made within British radicalisation prevention made knowable and credible? And when we hold Prevent’s most ideal constituents in its gaze, do their voices disrupt the claims it makes? Is the logic of Prevent (as a touchstone of anticipatory terrorism-governance) universal as it claims in its coverage of “all forms of extremism”, or does it rely on the subjugation of ex-militant voices to remain ‘sensible’ and qualified as knowledge? My research finds that when anticipatory risk-governance is challenged by alternative (and subjugated) knowledges, it stands on little more than its own self-justification – yet this knowledge meets little resistance as counter-radicalisation expands into ever more spheres of public policy (Busher et al. 2017).

Northern Ireland History

Having discussed my methodology and ethical considerations, and before we move into the substantive empirical material, the history of Northern Ireland must be introduced in order that interviews with ex-militants can be contextualized. Remembering what we have already heard about

Prevent, it might feel jarring to read a section of historical prose. However, this history is fundamental to understanding the 'discourse' of former combatant testimony: in almost every single interview, there was some focus on the decades or centuries before the (latest) conflict erupted, even if they used it 'merely' to explain why the circumstances might have been the way they found them by the late 1960s. When reading through the following discussion, if it *does* feel strange in relation to thinking about the implementation of Prevent, a useful question to bear in mind might be, "Does Prevent consider anything like such a history, in order to explain why its cases might present 'signs of risk'?" Even considering 'history' as strange in relation to Prevent's operation shows us how entrenched (and concealed) its de-contextualized and de-historicized gaze is.

Issues of identity are paramount to understanding how the two sides narrated their movement towards (and ultimate involvement in) what the British state would consider 'terrorism'. So, this final sub-section of the Methodology Chapter explores the context within which the conflict took place, and how these identities were (re)negotiated and (re)conceptualized. Although republican former combatants framed their motivation for involvement through injustices they saw in Northern Irish society during the mid-20th century, they consistently referred back to centuries of Irish history to explain how this structural discrimination was able to occur. The sentiment of second-class citizenry they described as fundamental to their citizenship was only able to be understood – in their eyes – by referring back to the involvement of the British on the island of Ireland. On the other hand, loyalists involved in the conflict spoke of their fear that *their* survival – both their individual lives and their identification as part of the United Kingdom – was under threat, from physical violence and the idea of nationalism that arose from a country with a significant minority of dissatisfied citizens (Catholics). In order to conceptualize why republicans' second class citizenry was narrated as so crucial to the conflict, and to understand the loyalist perspective of feeling attacked and under siege that resulted in *their* involvement, we must look back into history.

The history of Northern Ireland is complex, and fiercely contested – even down to language used: I was reprimanded at various points for calling the conflict 'the Troubles', or even referring to 'paramilitaries'. For the sake of ease, I will deploy terminology (throughout the thesis) in a similar fashion to that which I found when in Northern Ireland. 'Unionists' are those who support a continued union with mainland Britain. 'Loyalists' are those who engaged in (often violent) activism to safeguard this relationship. 'Nationalists' are, on the other hand, those who support reunification of the island of Ireland, and 'Republicans' are those who engaged in (often violent) activism to bring this about. These terms can in practice be interchangeable, and their links with violence have broken down in the aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement.

In attempting to represent an Irish history (and later during the empirical material), I emphasize at this point that the story I construct will not embody the *fullest account of history possible*. Ankersmit writes that one cannot 'know' an experience of history by reading informed historical narratives from the belvedere (1983, 204). Instead of historic expositions re-assembling a series of tangible events, what is important is that we 'smell' or 'hear' the effects from different perspectives. Kellner makes the point that history comprises a multiplicity of perspectives and experiences, and that for this reason "there is *no* view of the past" (1987, 21). But certain moments and historical arcs are able to be 'smelled' and 'heard' through representations of narratives. This section will look at three parts of Irish history which were of central import to understanding interviews. It will explore the beginning of English invasion and colonization of the island of Ireland until its partition in 1921; the years between 1921 and the late-1960s when Northern Irish society was becoming politicized; and finally the moments that are understood to mark the beginning of the conflict.

The Normans invaded Dublin in the 12th century from England with imperialist and politico-religious motivations, wanting to subjugate the 'barbarous' indigenous population and bring the Irish church under closer papal control (Gillingham 2008). However, the invasion was contained to the south-east of the island and administrative power was retained by the Irish. Whilst there was initially antagonism between the indigenous people and the invaders from England, by the 17th century these original English imperialists had become "more Irish than the Irish themselves" (Hambro 2015), maintaining a Roman Catholic faith, having intermarried, and having learnt the native Gaelic language. But beginning in the 16th century and accelerated in the 17th century, the English crown enacted a policy of plantation, where settlers from around Britain established themselves on Irish land, often supplanting Irish chiefs (and the old English). This anglicized the island: settlers brought their own language, a new religion, and alternative political affiliations (Robinson 2000), encouraging the greater exposure of Ireland to English influence. A series of rebellions by the Irish began in the 1530s to oppose English rule and the policy of plantation, culminating in the Nine Years' War (or 'Tyrone's Rebellion') at the end of the 1500s. It was decisively won by the English. Soon thereafter, in 1607, a swathe of Gaelic lords – who had until then protected their Irish dependants from English plantation – fled abroad, marking "the end of an age" for Irish Gaelic history (Canny 1971, 380). After this defining moment, plantation from England and Scotland commenced on an industrial scale (O'Daly 1995). Meanwhile, penal laws that suppressed native Catholic expression were introduced. Although the lasting legacy of the penal laws was arguably more representational than material (Cullen 1986) – the conquest of Catholic possessions and land occurring through military defeat – Gaelic identity was

suppressed by the banning of Catholic worship and rituals, and by prohibitions on Catholics from voting, serving in the army, or holding public office.

As this was occurring, constant uprisings against the 'Protestant Ascendancy' by the native Irish (and the old English) engrained a 'siege mentality' in the new Protestant settlers. The Siege of Derry, and the penal laws in the context of the Cromwellian invasion, are two historic events that can help contextualize the respective starting points of loyalist and republican testimony. The city walls of (London)Derry were constructed in the early 1600s to offer Protestant plantees protection from angered native Irish who were often supplanted. From 1685 until 1688, Catholic King James II had ruled England, Ireland, and Scotland, but he was deposed and replaced by his son-in-law William of Orange, who was a Protestant. James fled to Ireland to plan a (re-)conquest of Britain. In 1689, he laid siege to Derry – the north-eastern-most city in Ireland – for over 100 days, but the Protestant-ruled city refused to surrender, resisting the siege until relief was brought. Though loyalist interviewees never harkened back to the Siege of Derry to situate their stories in a broader history, acknowledging or celebrating moments like these are fundamental to unionist identity in Northern Ireland. The Apprentice Boys of Derry (a Protestant fraternal order) commemorates this victory many times every year, recalling their shared history as a besieged people (see Figure 5 in Thematic Chapter 3). The concept of 'siege mentality' was prevalent in many loyalist interviews, in their tales of how republicanism posed a threat to unionist survival on the island of Ireland.

Similarly, to help understand republican interviews more comprehensively, we can look to a crushing of the Catholic population in the 17th century. A native Irish rebellion in 1641 against the terms of plantation ended with the death of thousands of Protestant settlers. Oliver Cromwell arrived in Ireland to quell the uprising, in a conquest between 1649 and 1652 that was said to have resulted in atrocities including massacres of the indigenous population (although the extent of these crimes is contested: Faul 2004). New planters played a particularly bloodthirsty role in this Cromwellian military campaign, that may have killed a fifth of the entire population of the island through "slaughter, starvation, and disease" (Canny 2003 571; also see: Morgan 2011). In the aftermath of this episode, penal laws were re-applied to Catholics more harshly to ensure another uprising would not occur. This far history of Catholic, Gaelic, or native Irish oppression and subjugation was often referred to by republicans to help them explain the conditions in which they found themselves during the time that the conflict erupted. Commemorative parades, bonfires, and ceremonies in recognition of the victories or atrocities are a common occurrence in Northern Ireland: these aren't 'just historical facts' but signify the performance of memory and identity in contemporary Northern Ireland (Kennedy 1996; 186).

Towards the end of the 19th century, the independence movement had taken hold, and various political parties in Ireland and mainland Britain began to moot the idea of 'home rule', which would bring about the transferral of governmental authority over Ireland from Westminster back to Dublin. Two attempts to legislate on this matter in the UK Parliament in 1886 and 1893 failed, and the implementation of the third (successful) attempt in 1912 was interrupted by the outbreak of war in 1914. The home rule movement was largely perceived by the Protestant population on the island of Ireland as an abandonment by Britain, and a threat to their place in Irish society – even to their survival (Collombier-Lakeman 2016). Paramilitary groups arose in the early 1910s to contest the issue, and contend for the continued relationship between Britain and Ireland. The (loyalist) Ulster Volunteers was formed to safeguard the links between London and Dublin. Whilst it was disbanded shortly after the country's partition a decade later, its name lived on later in the Troubles through the Ulster Volunteer Force. The (republican) Irish Volunteers meanwhile was created to contend *for* independence in opposition to the Ulster Volunteers, and would later inspire the formation of the original (or 'Old') Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1919, which in turn would develop into the IRA known from the Troubles.

By 1916 the independence movement had taken hold in certain quarters of Irish society, and an insurrection against British rule occurred on Easter Monday in that year. The Irish Volunteers, among others, took key strategic buildings such as communications posts around Dublin, declaring Ireland independence. This 'Easter Rising' in Dublin was fiercely put down by the British Government, and a number of key republican figures were executed. The heavy-handedness of the British served to strengthen republican sentiment across Ireland, and in 1918 the separatist Sinn Fein won a large majority of Irish seats in the UK General Election. An Irish parliament was established in January 1919 (and by definition independence from Britain declared), so the British Government declared war in Ireland, fighting against the guerrilla forces of the IRA to take back control. This War of Independence, which raged until just before the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1921, is occasionally referred to as the 'Black and Tan War', because reinforcements from Britain (wearing improvised black and tan attire) committed continual reprisal attacks against civilians during the course of the conflict. One of these incidents in 1920, 'Bloody Sunday', followed the IRA killing a number of undercover British officers working in Dublin. Later that day, police and the Black and Tans arrived at a Gaelic football match and shot and killed a number of spectators. December 1921 saw the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, granting republicans their wish by establishing the Irish Free State a year later as a separate country (repealing its commonwealth status and renaming itself the Republic of Ireland only in 1949). However, the six counties in the north east of the island – populated more densely by Protestants – were named 'Northern Ireland', and opted out of the Free State because the Protestants wanted

closer union with Britain. The splitting of Ireland effectively into two countries was known as the 'partition'.

In the decades following partition, McGladdery (2002, 88) writes, "The policies of successive Unionist governments... were characterised by 'not-an-inch' politics, designed to secure their position as a majority in the Northern Ireland state." Proportional representation was repealed in 1929, with unionists controlling the Northern Irish parliament Stormont uninterrupted in the aftermath of partition for the next half century. No Catholics held a position in cabinet during that time. There were widespread allegations of gerrymandering, and councils controlled by Irish nationalists fell from twenty-five to two by 1925 (Buckland 1981, 40-43). The civil service was dominated by Protestants, as was the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the Northern Irish police force. The Special Powers Act of 1922 enabled the Ulster Special Constabulary, or the 'B-Specials', to operate as a separate and often ruthless force in addition to the police (Buckland 1981). The B-Specials were "the rock on which any mass movement by the IRA in the North inevitably foundered" (Coogan 2000, 37), and so drew significant support from Protestants across the North (Schulze & Smith 2000). However their ferocity was a significant point of contention for Catholics, whose demands during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s included the disbanding of the unit (Hezlet 1997). The IRA, from Northern Ireland's partition until the beginning of the Troubles, prosecuted a continual series of uprisings protesting against the partition of the island. Various campaigns of violence were perpetrated in mainland Britain, in the Irish Free State, and in the six counties that comprised Northern Ireland itself. The IRA carried out the Sabotage Plan between 1939-40 (that sought to disrupt English economic and military structures), the Northern Campaign of 1942-44 (that sought to attack security forces across Northern Ireland), and the Border Campaign of 1956-62 (that sought to assault structures on the border). Though this historical context was only occasionally referred to, or mentioned in passing, the arc of these events provided the backdrop within which the turbulent 1960s took place.

Although much happened in the short-term that can situate the re-emergence of paramilitary groups from both sides, the 1960s were characterized by piecemeal reforms that were seen as insufficient to ensure equality for Catholics (O'Dochartaigh 2017), the campaign for greater civil rights, and moments of violence between groups. The civil rights movement had taken inspiration from the campaign in the United States, and in the Northern Irish context revolved around issues including equal votes, employment, and the disbanding of the B-Specials. These issues discriminated particularly against Catholics, although they affected many in society – for instance until the late 1960s those who didn't own a home couldn't vote in local elections, and local councils decided on issues like housing (Coogan 1997, 33-35). With many more Catholics not owning their own homes in the North, this was a particular bone of contention for them. However, when protests to agitate for equality occurred,

they occasionally faced police brutality and attacks by loyalist groups. In January 1969 a civil rights march from Belfast to (London)Derry came under an “extremely vicious attack” at Burntollet Bridge by loyalists and off-duty B-Specials (Beiner 2018, 498). Occasionally civil rights protests would result in violence against the RUC, and, although some Protestants (and other interested groups) were involved in protests to agitate alongside Catholics, many Protestants saw the civil rights movement as at least infiltrated by a hardcore republican contingent. Protesting was eventually banned, leaving little room to contest unequal conditions (Power 1972). This obviously affected Protestants’ ability to protest (about the violence that took place during civil rights movement protests, and later about IRA violence) too, although there had been less of a systematic movement to agitate for their sense of security than for issues that affected Catholics, and so Catholics saw it as a suppressive move.

There are numerous other significant events that situate the beginning of ‘the Troubles’, like the Battle of the Bogside in (London)Derry, the August 1969 violence between republicans, loyalists, and the RUC in Belfast, and the burning of Bombay Street. But it is sufficient to say that a turbulent society was the context when the widespread re-emergence of paramilitary groups across Northern Ireland occurred. It could not be more pertinent to remark that, as former loyalist fighter Jim McKinley (2016) says, “All can assume the status of victim – Catholics victims of four centuries of social exclusion, Protestants of thirty years of terrorism – and both claim the other as perpetrator.” Regardless, hopefully this discussion has illuminated the conditions within which the conflict emerged, and that it contextualized sentiment that was narrated in interviews – of Protestants feeling under attack and abandoned by mainland Britain, and Catholics feeling excluded as second-class citizens. Hopefully it has also been somewhat unsettling and strange that I should be expounding a Northern Irish history when thinking about Prevent. Yet this history contributes to explaining a campaign of ‘terrorist’ or political violence (which is still ongoing, on a small scale), and Prevent is supposedly a counter-terrorism duty that interrupts the trajectory towards “not fundamentally [different]” violence that was seen during the Troubles (Farr, quoted in House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2012, Q309).

So far we have established the premise of the research – exploring the shift in emphasis from preventive to preemptive logics, and the methodological approach of a discourse analysis which will enable exploration of the relationship between silenced and hegemonic knowledge about terrorism, and between Prevent practitioners and Northern Irish ex-militants. The following thematic chapters now explore the two discourses, and their relationship, at length.

Motivations and Risk Factors (Thematic Chapter 1)

Introduction

One of the most striking disparities between Prevent's implementation and the experience of Northern Irish former combatants was around the (presumed) motivations for and 'drivers' of violence. Before we move into the substantive discussion, it is worth setting out the most fundamental point of this chapter: those who had been imprisoned for a multitude of terrorism offences spoke overwhelmingly about their political, economic and social environment as the reasons behind involvement, and personality as entirely secondary. Yet Prevent flips this narrative, almost entirely excluding consideration of broader environment, instead taking individuals and the 'risk factors' they present and examining them microscopically as sites of risk. The first part of this chapter explores former combatants' framing for their involvement in activity Prevent would attempt to preempt. The second half of the chapter then examines how Prevent understands 'the trajectory towards violence' through the eyes of supposed risk factors. We see how the discourse of Prevent ignores the stories of those convicted of terrorism offences, by looking not at causes of violence but instead *associations of risk factors* that can be imagined on a whim. Through a rabid fixation on interrupting the potential for violence, we see how preemptive risk-management silences any attempt to explain *why* ex-militants became involved. One of the main tasks outlined by Edward Said to enable the present to be pulled out of its hiding place *as* the present as detached from other moments and situated again within a more meaningful context, is the "opening [of] the [present] culture to experiences of the Other which have remained 'outside'... the norms manufactured by "insiders" (1982, 25). By illuminating alternative stories and experiences to those privileged by the hegemonic 'radicalization' narrative, we remake the present as a connected moment-in-time, rather than one outside-of-it.

Northern Irish Ex-militant Motivations

General Environment and "Circumstances"

So how do interviewees narrate the motivations for engaging in violence? How do Northern Irish ex-militants tell the stories of why they became involved, and are these stories represented by the descriptions that Prevent practitioners provide of 'counter-radicalization' interventions? What silences exist between the two explanations for violence, and what implications might any gaps have?

I spent dozens of hours in the company of ex-militants, listening to them speak about their experiences of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Whilst details differed between the numerous accounts of why they engaged in violence, there were many themes that were repeated in interview

after interview. The underlying political, economic and social conditions existing in Northern Ireland (discussed in the Methodology Chapter) was one of the most central of these. External environments of violence that left them frustrated, hopeless, and wanting to enact change were articulated as a foundational motivation for engagement by both republicans and loyalists. Republican violence was often framed within the confines of the historical backdrop – especially the feeling of being second-class citizens. Sometimes the structure of society was mentioned vaguely, as in the case of republican R37, who remarked that “there was something wrong with the system”. Yet utterances like these were always made within some context of specific problems, some explicit ‘grievance’. On this occasion, the ex-militant had noted that he was struck, aged 15, by the headquarters of Northern Ireland’s second university not being established in “the natural place” of Catholic-majority (London)Derry from where he came, but instead in Coleraine, a far smaller – and largely Protestant – town. Similarly, when asked why he decided to engage in violence, another republican (R23) responded imprecisely that he was left with a *moral* sense that “this isn’t right. It’s quite ridiculous that you could not change the structure of the state.” Yet this imprecise and unquantifiable moral judgement was immediately substantiated by a condemnation of the gerrymandering that existed in the 1960s. In every interview where general structural frustrations were indicated, they were always accompanied by significant detail.

Where republicans often situated individual incidents within a general environment of oppression as essential to understanding their involvement in violence, loyalists focussed on the more *immediate* environment as central to their violence. This testimony was generally no less focussed on external circumstances. L27, who is intimately involved in the loyalist community, summarized the importance of the political environment as motivating violence quite succinctly:

Why is there no violence today? People’s attitudes haven’t changed dramatically that much, they still really dislike one another. Why has that changed? The external factors have been turned down, almost turned off.

Again, like all other accounts, this interview was submerged in detail about what the external factors were (discussed later in this chapter). One interviewee (L41) considered himself as having been ‘radicalized’ by others, and was still angry about having been ‘misled’ into violence – in particular by Iain Paisley. Yet even here, he spoke at length about negative experiences of his local environment, which led him to seek out the Protestant minister at his church: “I was going hoping to hear him make calls for the government to take on the IRA.” For this ex-militant, the IRA was acting with impunity and the state was not offering sufficient protection. And in all other interviews, the physical environment was far more central to the testimonies than the rhetoric of some radicalizing figure or introspection

about their personalities (let alone consideration of exploitation or vulnerability, which Prevent takes as foundational: see Thematic Chapter 2). Any generic comments about circumstances being important were consistently immersed within a personal story that outlined specific points of injustice or anger, and were narrated around a political process that produced specific changes in external circumstances. Oftentimes it was smaller policies or specific incidents rather than obvious oppression (such as ‘foreign occupation’ or concerns about the reunification of Ireland) that ex-militants narrated as the most important element in their movement towards violence. Small injustices being recounted as motivating movement into violence should not be underplayed: these individuals’ stories were held together by the more localized details. Yet they were always situated within a broader context of feeling insecure, feeling unprotected by the state, feeling like second-class citizenry (corroborated by work such as Ferguson & Cairns 1996).

The comments of all former combatants in this way stand in stark contrast with Prevent’s understanding of threat and risk. External circumstances are interesting if not important to Prevent, but only insofar as they provide a starting point for individual intervention. External circumstances are not the focus of the preemptive paradigm – instead, it is the individual who is the matter of concern. Practitioners occasionally spoke of the importance of the underlying environment (CM11):

Whilst I've embraced the idea [of] vulnerability, I'm coming from a health model perspective [but] there has to be a realization... from a communities perspective... of the diversity of many of our communities [and] understanding [of] the cultural factors, and understanding the influences.

Whilst this practitioner understands that considering a wider context is important, alongside his psychological interpretation he suggests a *culture of violence* explanation for ‘risk’ – incidentally, the thrust of Labour’s initial Prevent project. This situates the problem at the community or cultural level (Said 1978; Hillyard 1993; Pantazis & Pemberton 2009; Ragazzi 2016), demarcating the violence into specific Others, rather than considering that anything *outside* the Other – such as government policy, or the socio-economic-political setting within which the violence took place – could contribute to the violence (Springer 2015, 61-80). Yet these external influences were pivotal to all of the Northern Irish interviews (and traditional terrorism studies literature: Crenshaw 1981; Shirlow 2003; Bjorgo 2005), from those who regret their involvement to the many who were proud of it, to those who see violence as no longer moral to the many who still see it as legitimate, to those who support the Good Friday Agreement, and to those who consider it folly.

There exists, therefore, a significant discrepancy between practitioners trying to manage risk through a focus on the individual (or by extension their distinct and Othered ‘community’), and the

testimony of ex-militants who posited that environments were significant contributing factors to their violence – violence that Prevent alleges to interrupt. Individual practitioners would obviously not be able to change the culture of a school, or a local area, or change government policy. But the individualized and Orientalist rationale behind the implementation of Prevent does not just stop at point of implementation, but carries through and feeds back into future implementation, re-instantiating future practice as individualized, focussing on the Other, and as essentialist (positing that objective risk exists within this specific Other). Indeed, one senior official (PC6) noted that the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) form, which is the paperwork that follows a Prevent case from initial referral through to completion of their Channel journey, “can give you a good sense as to whether risk is being reduced [in the individual] over time or [if it is] increasing or staying the same.” The VAF form therefore operates as a technology which ensures the continued application of the individualized, pathologized ontology of Prevent, reifying and reasserting the individual as the locus of political violence. We will return to the technologies by which Channel cases are managed further on in the chapter, when we explore Prevent’s ‘risk-management’ strategies in more detail. But for now, the point to be made is that specific and *other* individuals (or entire communities) are problematized, rather than considering that anything intrinsic about society might have contributed to the supposed incidence of risk. Therefore the logic goes: *why shouldn’t practitioners naturally focus on those individuals (and communities), if they are the problem?* The culture of violence rationality, in seeing the problem as emanating from particular others, disregards the potential for factors other than a fallible individual to produce risk. The logic fulfils itself, ensuring that officials always have anecdotes to substantiate their work.

Violence as a Close Experience, Producing Insecurity or Sense of Injustice

Many interviewees from the Northern Irish conflict witnessed particularly tragic incidents of injustice, or exceptional flashes of violence, which they narrated as contributing to their involvement in producing violence in turn. Like a few other republicans, R37, whose account is especially moving because of his proximity to various episodes of bloodshed, spoke at length about Bloody Sunday as we walked through (London)Derry. Bringing me near to where his grandparents’ house in ‘the Bogside’ had stood, he pointed around, remembering:

There was a shot fired through their window. Now neither my grandfather nor my grandmother heard the commotion cos they were both in their bed sleeping. The bullet actually crashed through the wardrobe mirror in their bedroom. My [young and unarmed] cousin [name redacted] was shot dead outside their garden. He was obviously trying to make his way through the house. [He] was shot from across there. He fell here. He was shot in the

back, he was paralysed from the bullet, he couldn't move. The soldier walked over and fired a couple shots into his body to be killed.

Noting the injustice of his friends having been interned without charge and abused the previous year (like many others did, including R34), R37 concluded that "the brutality on [Bloody Sunday] forced me to make a decision about what I was personally gonna do about it. So I decided that I would become an active republican." All who were asked asserted the 'radicalizing' effect of infamous flashpoints like Bloody Sunday (even if they weren't there personally). L46 said that for him personally,

1972 was a particular watershed in the events around what's been classed Bloody Friday. So a lot of young men in their teens at that time woulda said and have done, that this was particularly motivational... That's almost the straw that broke the camel's back. 27 indiscriminate bombs [by republicans in Belfast] on the one day. And then young men seeking to have some sort of response to it.

Because there were so many during the conflict, often these tragic cases of suffering were witnessed first-hand. Many interviewees had been present for marches that were beaten off the streets (including R34,R37), a few had friends or were involved themselves in or felt the shock of incidents like Bloody Sunday or Bloody Friday¹ (L46,R23,R37), or felt the injustices of other flashes of violence, often around specific areas of Belfast (L21,L41,L40,R32,R20). All spoke of the intense emotional, relational, or ontological impact these events had on them.

Other more personal incidents of violence stood out as I listened to interviewees recount their stories. In particular, one loyalist's experience struck me:

There was an incident when I was about 15 on the Shankill Road, where a furniture showroom was attacked on a Saturday afternoon by the provisional IRA. They threw a bomb and killed people including two babies. I was actually playing football not far away from it. (L40)

And R34 spoke of his own horrendous experience as encouraging his involvement:

You seen all the things that were happening across the country on the TV, but then it started happening in south Armagh. Like my own home was raided first time in 1973, I was taken into the barracks [by] Special Branch men- *Before you got involved, or after?* Before. And they

¹ Bloody Sunday was an event during the Troubles in (London)Derry in 1972, where the British Army shot dead 13 unarmed civilians (including children), a 14th dying from their injuries later. It was widely reported to be a reason many people involved themselves in armed republican groups. Bloody Friday took place later that year in Belfast, and saw a series of bombs by the IRA largely targeting infrastructure. The bombs killed five civilians, two British soldiers, a police officer, and a member of the Ulster Defence Association.

started putting me in stress positions and stuff up against the wall [and beat me for not knowing information they wanted].

Closeness to flashes of violence, in a context of feeling physically insecure or threatened by violence, was the most common reason which ex-militants presented as motivating their involvement. Accounts of their areas being attacked (L41,R20), bombs going off near where they were (L21,L40,L46), or having friends or family killed or terrorized by police, army, or 'the other side' (L44,L45,R34), were almost ubiquitous amongst interviewees. And all of these accounts were accompanied by interviewees recalling feelings of insecurity or anger, or a sense of a lack of equity.

Many spoke about the violence-saturated environment as contributing to their involvement through attrition. Echoing the words of many others, R25 reflected,

Being a teenager your life's focus should be on other things. But for me my whole life seemed to be about [the] political scene around me, and the political scene around me seemed to be pretty much, it was very much militarized... My life was very much what I had witnessed what I was taking to be a norm, but looking back, that childhood wasn't a norm at all.

Similarly, recounting the motivation for his involvement, L49 – notorious in the loyalist community (and the UK establishment) for his impassioned commitment – said:

No incident was graver than the other, although sometimes a mass murder was involved [in my journey]. They all stuck out in my mind, there wasn't one incident where I said "we gotta do something," I mean this was happening on a daily basis, it wasn't like "let's wait until there's a big incident" it wasn't like that.

One of the more astonishing tales was told by (R47), who spoke about the army taking over his school playing fields, the IRA firing mortars at them, and British soldiers running, bloodied, up the English corridor during a lesson: "And [our teacher] continued to try and teach us English. I remember sitting as a kid thinking, 'Is he real?!'... It was mayhem! It was militaristic."

Violence was not always physically nearby; a number of interviewees reported being influenced towards engagement by watching reports on TV or having conversations with family, which brought geographically-distant violence (along with a distinct sense of insecurity) close to home. R25 spoke about the importance of TV in enabling a widespread awareness of the violence and injustices that were occurring in Northern Ireland at the time. Indeed, a loyalist who grew up in a quiet village, explained that when he was 13 he saw on the TV that,

[The IRA had] killed a preacher. I remember my granny, sitting there, she was in her 70s, she says, “Good Lord if they kill a minister, they’ll kill us all!” and I never forgot that... That’s what I grew up thinking (L35).

He spoke about how he then began to see the world differently, becoming involved in local politics “as an act of defiance”, ultimately to a point of joining the UDA and LVF, engaging in sectarian killings. As with all others, and despite his geographical distance from violence, his involvement was framed as dependent upon external circumstances, that had exacerbated or created some level of insecurity. These accounts of violence personally experienced or closely felt, were moving for me as a researcher, sat in the same room opposite the person who was sometimes very clearly reliving the memory.

Occasionally during interviews with Prevent practitioners, they displayed empathy for this sort of experience. During an interview with PPolice9 I was moved by his identification with others’ grievances. Talking about violence experienced by Muslims in Britain, he contended:

I think with Channel cases it was [an experience of] racism was a starting point for a lot of them. So first racism then politics after... Islamic extremism [will] be here for a while [because of] I think grievance really. There’s a lot of grievance in the communities, in individuals, if you look at Palestine, Israel, if you look at how Muslims are being treated in Myanmar. If you get young hotheads, that wanna do something that don’t take their time, they’re prone to take violent acts... Trump is adding to it. Until you alleviate the grievance you will have these young people fiery enough to wanna do something about it... Our mixed messages don’t help here in Britain. We condemn Iraq and Syria, but then we supply arms to Saudi Arabia. We condemn beheadings but then the Saudis do amputations and selling arms. The last 20 years our involvement in certain conflicts in the Middle East has caused chaos... It’ll be 30-40 years till it’s resolved at any point, but until you alleviate grievance in any community or any individual you’re gonna have individuals who decide to take it upon themselves and commit violent acts.

I considered this former Prevent police officer’s account the closest that any Prevent official came to describing motivations in a way reminiscent of the Northern Irish former combatants: he considered that violence and injustice – even in a different locale – can cause outrage and reactive violence on behalf of others. He may have been able to speak this candidly because he was no longer an active official, or he may always have spoken this candidly as a police officer. But many Channel mentors have a background in psychology, and strategic actors have a responsibility to represent the government, and so these sorts of views were rarely narrated. One relatively critical Channel mentor (CM8) spoke in a similar vein but came to different conclusions. He speaks from the point of view of his typical Channel cases:

“And here are my brothers and here is my struggle, and my struggle is with the children dying in Yemen or Syria or Iraq or elsewhere, as either directly in the case of Iraq or indirectly in the case of Yemen, cos it’s British arms and British weapons being deployed by the Saudis... The Muslim world and white Europe as it were continues to be at conflict. And if I have to pick a side it’s not gonna be this side, just cos I was born here I’m forever hated.” So that is in a sense a lot of what we have to deal with.

So here CM8 speaks in a similarly candid way to PPolice9, yet this narrative is centred on the *subjective perception* of the individual rather than any objective concerns the mentor held himself (although at different points he was critical of public discourse and the British government), concluding that “*we have to deal with*” these perceptions. This account should obviously be expected, given that the mentor is recruited to recalibrate individuals rather than solve political injustices. But the consequence of this work is clear: objective grievances, meticulously detailed by Northern Irish former combatants, are ultimately of little concern to the functionality of Prevent. And again, this is not just important in the context of how Prevent is operationalized, but it reproduces the neoliberal discourse of individualization and responsabilization, reconstructing risk as distinct and separate from ‘us’, a point that will be referred to throughout the thesis. Experiences of insecurity have no place in Prevent’s risk-calculations, despite the obvious human acknowledgement from a few practitioners that such experiences matter. The obsession with ‘seeing’ through risk-consciousness, a gaze which inspires programmes like Prevent, shuts down the space to grant structural factors as having explanatory power – a matter more deeply excavated in the final chapter. In a society that is preoccupied with neoliberal aspirations (Hall 2005), the subjugation of structural explanations is doubly-compounded: the unit of concern is the individual, and *only* the individual.

Governmental Oppression, Fear of Constitutional Revolution, and State Failure

The entire sentiment from ex-militant interviewees can be summarized in the notion that *state failure contributed significantly to people becoming involved in violence*. Republican feelings of oppression by the government, and loyalist fears of constitutional revolution threatening their very survival, played an important role in the recounting of former combatants’ stories.

For republicans, this state failure was framed as leaving them feeling like second-class citizenry, feeling unprotected by – even attacked by – the police and army, and not having a democratic voice. These factors, described over and over again, often produced “a real hatred for the state [because] of course [the responsibility for this environment] went straight to 10 Downing Street” (R34). For many republicans (especially on tours) the story began with the English invading the island of Ireland (R20,R22,R48). This was the starting point for R48: “The English invaded Ireland. You know so that’s why the violence started! The English invaded the Irish country, so why would they not [resist

through violence]? Why would there not be rebellion?" He explained the consequences of the English invasion – the loss of land to English and Scottish plantation settlers, the loss of the Irish language, and in his eyes the establishment of a Protestant state in 1921. For him this final point was evidenced by a consistently and overwhelmingly Protestant government through gerrymandering, with jobs and housing being given to Protestants rather than Catholics, and being policed by a largely Protestant police force: "Do you know there's a million things." A leading republican figure (R23) framed his motivations: "The Brits in Ireland and the Brits out of Ireland would've been the two primary factors." Others spoke of feeling monitored (R22,R32), and for R28 the fact that "there were something like 11 military installations" overlooking his area in the Short Strand left him understanding "very quickly... that the life we were living was under British military occupation." Yet I was surprised by how infrequently these sweeping statements about colonialism were made as motivators for initial involvement in violence, particularly at the beginning of my fieldwork, given that my reading prior to travelling to Northern Ireland had me believing that republicans were engaged in an overtly ideological anticolonial struggle from the start (many loyalist interviewees presumed this too). Interestingly several of the republican interviewees mentioned their gratefulness for the British army's arrival in 1969 when it seemed civil war might have been likely, and indeed, soldiers were warmly welcomed with cups of tea by the Catholic residents because they were seen to be peacemakers. For the most part, republican former combatants emphasized the smaller injustices than any broader sense of anticolonial oppression as motivating their initial engagement. Several mentioned that there were very few ideological republicans before the conflict emerged in the late 1960s. It appeared like republicanism became a useful explanatory frame for them to explain their position as second-class citizens, only once they had been politicized or educated (often whilst in prison, where classes on the history of Ireland took place).

For loyalists, there was a deep sense of fear of being dragged unwillingly into a united Ireland and becoming an unwanted and threatened minority in a Catholic-majority country. An interesting comment was made by L26:

[We] would be the minority in a majority Roman Catholic theocracy Marxist socialist ideology and [we] would not survive. Our people cannot survive in a 32 county united Ireland Republic. And [IRA violence was] the proof of it for me personally.

So the threat of becoming a minority, with republican violence substantiating these concerns, roused a fear for his and his people's survival. For another (L49),

First and foremost Ulster is British, we wanted to maintain our identity and Britishness, but more importantly what the IRA was doing to try and achieve their goal of a united Ireland, i.e. they were killing our people, killing our security forces, blowing up towns and villages to pieces on a daily basis.

For both of these men, as for other loyalists, republican violence was the manifestation of their fears around a united Ireland. Protestant, unionist survival was ultimately at stake (L40,L41). Where state-supported and -sponsored violence encouraged republicans' involvement, loyalists spoke with equal strength of feeling unprotected by the state as republican violence became a norm, and their identity became threatened by unrepentant Irish nationalism, their unionist government unable or somehow unwilling to intervene. Many loyalists mentioned the inability of the security forces to protect them or their families against the IRA (and other republican paramilitary groups). The overriding representation was that "The police and the army aren't able to [provide protection], so I had to do it myself" (L31). Similarly, L26 noted that,

[Our] philosophy was that if IRA terrorists were going to terrorize our people, the only way we were going to get it to stop was by terrorizing the terrorists by the most macabre means we could find possible... [Because the army and police] couldn't fire a shot at an IRA terrorist until he fired a shot at [them]. Which didn't really make sense... And so therefore there was a certain sort of we were selling our souls. What we would normally, morally have been revulsed by, we were rejecting that, in order to stand up for the country we loved.

L35 remarked, "Political failure creates a void that's often filled with violence, not just in this country but across the world, throughout history." When I asked one of the Hooded Men (R43) who faced British government-sanctioned torture (BBC 2014) how the state could have stopped people joining paramilitaries, he replied, "Behaved in a civilized manner. Stop murdering and torturing their citizens. Would have been a good start... How would people *not* react in a negative way?" These tales of suffering, which ultimately produced the distinct sense that "societal breakdown" (L27) had occurred, could go on and on.

As discussed, there were moments during my Prevent interviews (especially with the more critical officials) where the origin of risk was considered to emanate from society or the external environment. CM8 spent some time explaining that Muslims in the West suffer from a sense of fear, and suspicion, and Otherness, which has settled on them because of recurrent experience of being made to feel separate. He explained,

[Muslims in the Caribbean don't have] this big chip on their shoulder cos they've never been made to feel like they're outsiders. Society there's made up of people very comfortable in

their own skin. That's not the same for a lot of Muslims in the West right now: England, France, [the] USA for sure. And right-wing movements and politicians and politics of xenophobia, your Katie Hopkins – all of this adds to, "You don't belong, and you're a threat [with] these evil things you and your people keep doing." And no one else has to answer for things of people they share similar ethnic grouping with. We don't have to talk about, "Why did the guy who drove his car into people at the mosque?" The average white person isn't made to answer for that. And there are church-going Christians who feel they don't have to answer, but Muslims still do. And I think all of these things mean young people are in a place of great discomfort and conflict. So for Muslims there can be a sense that 'No the monster that you're painting is much more a reflection of you, therefore I have to resist you, and you're never gonna accept me anyway.'

This sits in contrast with the earlier account from CM11, who posited a culture of violence (with his psychological) interpretation of risk which situates the problem coming from an external and governable Other – a perspective which constructs a specific suspect community to be acted upon (also see: Spalek & Weeks 2019). CM8's comments place significant responsibility for 'risk' or dangerous divergence back with the societies (and environments) within which Muslims, in this example, live, a proposition outlined extensively in social movement theory literature (della Porta 1992; Wiktorowicz 2004; della Porta & Diani 2006; Alimi 2007; Alimi, Demetriou, & Bosi 2015). CM8's involvement in a programme that situates risk at the level of the individual could therefore appear contradictory, but he (and CM13) decided to work with Prevent to keep it from becoming worse, or less-useful, than it could otherwise be, reckoning that "Muslims being involved in the delivery can prevent Prevent being turned into the monster some people say it is. I don't think it is that monster, and Muslims being involved can hold it back."

Like CM8, other practitioners also considered the environment central: "There is less of a risk of radicalization and terrorism in societies that are more tolerant... which are welcoming of diversity and enable people to feel empowered, have a sense of belonging" (PLead16). Similarly, PPolice9, who had provided unofficial Channel-style interventions, commented on the everyday violence of children's lived experience:

I think gaming and the internet's got a lot to answer for, are young people influenced by what they see? GTA and COD kill-scenes, stabbing a woman in the face with a bottle, I think that affects someone's mindset.

On a more explicit, quantifiable level, CM13, who deals with pre-crime and post-crime cases, mentioned that government foreign policy played an important role in drawing people into 'riskiness' – be it imagined by Prevent or realized through acts of violence:

They see what's going on on a foreign policy level. This is the big theological debate, ideological debate, the refusal of the government to accept that our foreign policy and what's happening in Muslim countries is an influencing factor and a recruitment factor. It is, every single person I've worked with [through Channel or criminal terrorism offenders], *every single* one of them, yes, it's what's happening on a global level, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria now. [Me: *Every single one?*] Every single one. Yep. they have been influenced. That's where the imagery and where they see what's going on, the destruction.

In this way, some Prevent practitioners have their sights well set in relation to former combatant testimony: they understand that external grievances and environment play a role in producing violence, or, as practitioners would frame it, producing potential risk of terrorism. There were a few comments in this vein, that environments of violence (often driven by government policy) help to create 'risk', belying their contribution to an intervention regime that draws the focus *away* from environments and down to the pathologized individual (Bouhana et al. 2018; Corner & Gill 2015,2017). But these Prevent officials did not follow the logic through, to suggest Britain might follow a less aggressive course of foreign policy, or encourage politicians to reform aggravating domestic policies, or curtail the use of Call of Duty.

This brings us back to the culture of violence notion discussed earlier by CM11, because ultimately the rationale of Prevent is to make visible specific sites of risk (Martin 2014,2018). Even though Prevent's all-risks-considered "calculative rationality does not begin by imagining [brown bodies] as the location of radicalisation risk" (Heath-Kelly 2017b, 299), imagined sites of risk are not equally dispersed across the population but are instead gendered and racialized. As Moffette and Vadasaria (2016, 293) write, the integration of security logics "builds upon already established grids of intelligibility... intrinsically connected to the project of race." The public's race-infused imagination is therefore enacted by vast numbers of public officials across the country performing their own interpretation of the Prevent Duty (Elshimi 2017; Furneaux 2018; Heath-Kelly & Strausz 2018; Dresser 2019; Pettinger 2020a,b). So the culture of violence thesis, which postulates risk as existing amongst a savage and quantifiable Other (Springer 2015), is breathed back into life: where Labour's community cohesion approach to Prevent had produced an explicitly racialized policy (Thomas 2012,2014a,b), *the individualization of risk-spotting responsibility produces a similar-but-disguised outcome through the back door*. This dispersal of racially-infused responsibility across all parts of the Prevent operation matters, because it allows practitioners to exist within a structure that functions through a racialized methodology without experiencing it as operating in this way. It allows the following comment to be made by CM8, who is working with Muslims to manage their terrorism risk:

Muslim millennials have a particular set of problems which is their lived experience of their identity, religious and cultural, is one that is inextricably tied in with images of violence and concerns about extremism and terrorism.

Incidentally, corroborating this, British newspaper *The Guardian* carried statistics (Versi 2017) following the publication of Channel data in 2017, showing that whilst convictions due to so-called 'Islamist terrorism' were 5 times higher than 'extreme right-wing terrorism', Muslims are 40 times more likely to be accepted as a Prevent referral, representing an 800% differential between crimes and perceived risk. But maybe because this mentor's role is so front-facing and he does not consider his work as reproducing concerns about extremism and terrorism (indeed he pointed out later that the "vast majority of Channel cases [don't have] very entrenched and extreme views"), or maybe because the policy is so diffusely spread, that his work – and that of others with similar concerns – does not sit in contradiction with his concerns for Muslim millennials. Yet, Prevent remains a counter-terrorism policy, being situated within CONTEST (HM Government 2006), a point emphasized repeatedly (and occasionally rather vociferously) by more senior officials.

What does this discussion point us towards? It shows us that whilst many practitioners recognize that the (often political) environment is important, and even though academically the critical practitioners might disagree, Prevent discursively re-entrenches 'risk' at the point of the racialized and gendered Other. In spite of the disparate personal views narrated by different practitioners, Prevent as an individualizing policy assemblage cannot conceive of any objective danger being constructed through anything other than the savage, distinct 'Them'. It therefore shuts down space for discussions about structural reforms. It is important to remember how emphatically and intricately former combatants spoke of the political circumstances as important to their rationale for violence. Without being asked, many of them remarked that had the circumstances not been what they were, they would not have become involved. One of the most renowned and ferocious loyalist figures made a poignant comment towards the end of the interview: "I didn't want that, life was not normal in them times. So it's a pity that peace didn't come much much sooner" (L49).

Neoliberal formulations of risk-management systems ignore structural violence, in order to create a "fantasy [that] any 'local' expression of violence" is contained to a specific time and place (Springer 2015, 79). The localized spaces can then be governed, avoiding the need for self-reflection. The fantasy of the inherent violence of the Other relies on the myth that time and space are *not* connected to other times and spaces, nor are they always being (re-)negotiated and (re-)constructed (Massey 2005). As this myth is accepted, the governing of distinct populations becomes not only possible but essential, in order that the origin of violence is pacified. As the final chapter explores in greater detail, this striation, and the consequential closure of spatial and temporal relations, has

consequences for democratic participation, and resistance. The chasm between the knowledge produced by Prevent and that articulated by Northern Irish former combatants exists because practitioners are constantly refocusing their efforts on the individual at hand. Localizing and separating violence in this way is (even for critical officials) considered legitimate, because the implementation of Prevent operates so diffusely. After all, as their cases are overwhelmingly banal (as we will see throughout the thesis), practitioners have been recruited to perform “silver service social work” (PC6). They are rarely – if ever – confronted with their hypothetical position as *counter-terrorism officials making Britain safe from violence*. Due to the banality of their caseload, practitioners’ work takes place away from explicit considerations of structural violence, and therefore away from the stories of unjust environments that were consistently described by ex-militants in explaining their violence. Deconstructing Prevent’s privileged gaze, which fixates on individuals as the locus of risk and which ‘sees’ so disparately from the testimony of people who would have made perfect Channel cases, can be accomplished by un-subjugating the stories of ex-militants (Heath-Kelly 2016c). It is important to do this, in order that the universally-individualizing gaze of Prevent is disturbed and that “space [might be seen as] a product of interrelations” (Massey 2005, 10).

To summarize this section, normality for Northern Irish citizens during the conflict, especially those in certain urban districts, was narrated as filled with violence amidst a backdrop of ontological insecurity. Normality for ‘brown bodies’, as described by a couple of Channel mentors, is experiencing the consequences of the Orientalist discourse materialized through spaces like Guantanamo Bay, with a backdrop of suspicion and securitization (CM8,CM13). Similarly, disenfranchised white bodies experience political, social, or economic exclusion, meanwhile assimilating tales of ethnic or religious invasion through the media and politicians (Neil Basu, in Waterson 2019). So Prevent, in excluding this broader political knowledge from its operation despite how much a few critical practitioners empathize with their cases’ grievances, ultimately problematizes only the individual. As a result these practitioners’ empathy is excluded from the imagining of solutions to the ‘problem of violence’. In other words, negotiations with ‘risky citizens’ revolve around their personal reformulation, and any empathy from those implementing Prevent about why cases appear risky in the first place becomes subjugated, disregarded so that the individual of concern can be moved away from ‘a state of riskiness’. Ex-militants spent almost every word of their interviews relaying the centrality of their surroundings in their movement towards violence. Yet we have seen that structural environments mean little to the functionality of Prevent, which is an assemblage that is fixated with reconstructing the individual outside of spatial considerations. The subjugation of structural conditions in Prevent occurs because it privileges abstracted ‘risk factors’, rendering knowledge from behavioural science and psychology hegemonic in accounts of violence. The dominance of these accounts squeezes out

room for the empathetic tendencies of more critical practitioners, and their intuitive perception of racist and violent environments, so that they are rarely heard within Prevent.

Prevent and ‘Risk Factors’

We have seen how ex-militant testimony is disregarded by preemptive risk-governance. Ex-militants are not engaged by Prevent, with the exception of figures such as Majid Nawaz who market themselves as ex-jihadists in order to align their NGO work with Home Office priorities. The second half of the chapter will now assess the assumptions Prevent makes about the psychological drivers of violence, utilizing ex-militant narratives to disrupt the circularity of this knowledge and the anticipatory governance of terrorism (before it can ever occur and validate the knowledge claims).

Establishment of Prevent’s Psychological Risk-Assessment Praxis

This introduction to the ‘Prevent half’ of the chapter will briefly detail the historical establishment of Prevent’s risk-assessment identifiers, known as the 22+ Extreme Risk Guidance (henceforth ERG) factors seen in Figure 4. It will then move into some of the supposed ERG risk factors themselves, like ‘Mental Health’ and ‘Need to Redress Injustice and Express Grievance’. Specifically it will look at how the implementation of these factors is enacted through the Channel programme.

Evidential problems beset the entire field of predictive terrorism studies, because the field recognizes that no causal links (nor sometimes even correlative links) have been established for why violence erupts (Herzog-Evans 2018). This is typified in the science behind the 22+ ERG factors. The ERG are a number of supposed ‘signs of radicalization’, based on a study of “approximately 20” extremist-related offenders (Lloyd & Dean 2015, 8). The ‘22+’, refers to the 22 factors *plus* “any other factor that emerges from individual assessment” (NOMS 2014, 3): so even within the confines of a distinctly vague set of signifiers, subjective interpretation is foregrounded in the assessment of supposed sites of risk (Pettinger 2020b). Regardless of the ambiguity of the list, public officials – from teachers, to social workers, to health workers – are required under the Prevent Duty to report their clients (pupils or patients) if they spot these ERG signs and are worried by them. Family and friends also occasionally refer their loved ones to Prevent. Cases are accepted by Prevent and ultimately offered Channel mentorship by Channel panels (in the most worrying cases), signposted away to other services, or rejected outright, on the basis of these 22+ ERG factors. The signs are central to the *ongoing* management of Prevent cases too – every case that makes its way up to the Channel intervention programme is the subject of a Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) form. The VAF form has a checklist of these 22 ‘risk factors’, and individuals on Channel are scored bearing in mind

their progress (or regression). This form is continually updated as a case moves through their intervention journey (if intervention is sanctioned). The VAF form is a technology that reifies the locus of the problem as the *person*: a form for each individual, monitoring their personal progress through their (de)radicalization journey, through a checklist of factors about their individual vulnerabilities. There is no space in this list for the possibility of seeing structural environments as contributing to the potential incidence of violence, something that will become more apparent as we move through the interview data. The list of 22 ERG ‘risk factors’, the basis of the VAF form and referrals, is shown below:

Figure 4: 22 Extreme Risk Guidance ‘Risk Factors’ (NOMS 2014, 3-4)

Engagement Factors	Intent Factors	Capability Factors
Need to redress injustice and express grievance	Over-identification with an extremist group, cause or ideology	Individual knowledge, skills and competencies to commit extremist offences
Need to defend against threat	‘Them-and-Us’ thinking	Access to networks, funding and equipment to commit extremist offences
Need for identity, meaning and belonging	Dehumanisation of the enemy	Criminal History
Need for status	Attitudes that justify offending	
Need for excitement, comradeship or adventure	Harmful means to an End	
Need to dominate others	Harmful end objectives	
Susceptibility to indoctrination		
Political/moral motivation		
Opportunistic involvement		
Family and/or friends support extremist offending		
Transitional periods		
Group influence and control		
Presence of mental illness or personality disorder		

The presence of these indicators is meant to signify that an individual might possess some propensity for engaging in terrorism-related activity. Longstanding terrorism expert Andrew Silke, who sat on the ERG oversight committee, said that when the demand for a preemptive policy arose, the government only had a reoffending assessment tool available (quoted in Furneaux 2018, 39-40). So instead of conducting new science to establish factors which precede terrorist violence, it just used the ERG reoffenders study. A temporal fracture occurs in the decision to utilize a *post-offender* risk-management tool for those who have committed no crimes. It is clear from the documentation that this methodology was produced to manage reoffending risk (NOMS 2014, 5): “Those associated with Engagement [the left-hand column in Figure 4] describe the individual pathway into offending and offer clues as to how the individual may disengage [from crime].” In explicitly assuming an offence has been committed, the study is plainly not attempting an investigation of pre-crime ‘risk’, nor is a transparent methodology presented for drawing these post-crime explanations back to non-criminal management (Knudsen 2018). Indeed, a Ministry of Justice report (HM Government 2019, 5) notes that

The ERG22+ is intended for use with people who have been convicted of any extremist or extremist-related offence and is completed by qualified forensic professionals, who have received training in its administration.

As well as admissions like these that establish the ERG as post-crime reoffending indicators, the metrics are even described in the NOMS document as “essentially working hypotheses” (2014, 5). The science behind these signs has been contested by practitioners (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2016) and over 140 academics including Noam Chomsky (Guardian 2016; also see: Knudsen 2018; Scarcella, Page, & Furtado 2016), not least for encouraging the reporting of a wide range of banal behaviours by those who are *not* qualified forensic professionals. Prioritizing suspicion and the imagination of catastrophic futures (Salter 2008; Amoore 2013), this modality encourages active interpretation where “anything can be a risk; it all depends on how one analyses the danger” (Ewald 1991). In some sense, the half of this thesis that explores ex-militant testimony could be considered an alternative ERG study, except that it also offers open access to its research data. The data from the study of ‘extremist offenders’ that informed the ERG risk factors was not made publicly accessible, and results were reproduced through an explicitly individualized, psychological framework because the study was “developed by psychologists” (Knudsen 2018, 39; also see: Younis 2020). This thesis aims in part to deconstruct that research. What *other* ways can we hear the ERG study that produced Prevent? If the lens of individual-psychology is disturbed, what else can we see? It is unsurprising and in fact necessary by definition for Channel, an *individual*-intervention scheme, to assume the personal psychology

explanation rather than geopolitics as pivotal, despite an explicit admission by the architect of Prevent Sir David Omand during my interview with him that the debate around motivations is not settled: he said that whilst the debate between structural-geopolitical and individual-psychological perspectives in academia continued, Prevent needed to press forward and act. As Massumi and Bordeleau detail in their study of Canadian police tactics preempting street protests from occurring, political engagement is short-circuited when anticipation takes prominence (2012). Preemption actively produces what it fears in order that its fears might be averted before they materialize: “It is positively productive of the particular form a life will take next. It conditions life's nextness. It is a force *of* life” (Massumi 2015a, 71). Where preemption reigns, so too does the power of imagination. As imagination draws connections between psychological deficiencies and terroristic proclivity, preemption brings this vision to life through interventive programmes like the Prevent programme. Acting largely as a psychological intervention – as we will see – Prevent instantiates terrorism as a psychological problem, solvable through psychological means. Geopolitics, and other alternative ways to ‘see’ the cause of local flashes of violence, become lost as explanatory factors.

So what sorts of cases do Prevent officials come across, and how are the 22 ERG risk factors interpreted by officials and related to the people who end up receiving Channel interventions? Despite the ERG being “working hypotheses” developed for offenders rather than Prevent subjects, and despite their vagueness and the requirement for expressly subjective interpretation (Pettinger 2020b), practitioners were often definitive about the sorts of factors concerning the individual that constituted risk (although upon reflection this was often disrupted, discussed in Thematic Chapter 3). The following discussion illuminates the most-emphasized ERG factors, demonstrating how the experience-based Northern Irish testimony bears little to no relation to them. The consistent fold of broader grievance back onto the individual was eminently consistent, as we will now see.

‘Mental Health’

One of the most central ERG risk factors to Prevent praxis is *the presence of mental health concerns*. The identification of mental health issues (given the presence of other factors, explored below) was consistently narrated as relating to terrorism risk, both by Channel mentors and strategic Prevent officials. Mentors have various specialisms, from religious expertise, to right-wing racism, to “nurturing interventions” (CM3). Mental health is one of these. Two Channel mentors I interviewed had specific experience in this field; one has an academic background in psychology (CM1), and another was an experienced clinical psychologist (CM11). Both spoke extensively about the terrorism risk associated with mental health. CM11, the director of a company delivering Channel mentorship who also personally delivers interventions himself, found it difficult to differentiate between

“vulnerability to extremism” and the presence of mental health conditions, a rather worrying turn given the sensitivities of stigmatizing mental health. However, his viewpoint is situated within a strand of academic literature that attempts to instantiate the relationship between mental health and supposed risk of terrorism (Corner & Gill 2015,2017,2019; Corner, Gill & Mason 2016; Lankford 2017; Bouhana et al. 2018). When asked ‘what the most common signs of radicalization’ he had come across were, he remarked rather concerningly that those with mental health conditions inherently have/pose a greater risk:

Of key factors in the presentation, one is the mental health, two is those people with learning difficulties... A large proportion of people who may have learning difficulties or a neurodevelopmental disorder such as ASD, Asperger’s, [or] autism, have an increasing risk because of the way they can be radicalized.

This inherent relation between mental health and terrorism risk was not an isolated assessment. CM1 elaborated on this interpretation somewhat, mentioning that,

Extremist ideologies and ASD [Autism Spectrum Disorder] go hand-in-hand. ASD encourages a literal interpretation, a definitive, and that’s the way extremism works, hate/love, them/us, black/white, and very definitive answers. You are better because you are white, you are better because you are Muslim, that definitive on or off, binary thinking is a real challenge, so 45-50% of my cases have got ASD.

Prevent practitioners positioning ASD and other mental health difficulties as terrorism risk signifiers, because of the divergent perceptions they foster, was common.

Yet aggression because of mental health issues as a terrorism risk is a considerable distance from anything I heard in Northern Ireland. The positioning of political violence as fundamentally irrational is seen more explicitly through this ‘risk factor’ than any other. We have seen how mental health is interpreted from the ERG list by practitioners, and how it rescinds the potential for rationality from Channel cases. These accounts sit awkwardly with the clinical accounts from Northern Ireland that I heard and the clinical threat that they ultimately posed for the British state. Many (including R29) mentioned that if somebody appeared irrational they became a liability, because they would not be as effective or threatened the integrity of operations. Had I posed the question explicitly to former combatants if mental health difficulties had contributed to their involvement, I am sure some of the interviews would have been terminated – at the minimum, I would have faced a significant confrontation. Showing the list of ERG ‘risk factors’ to R23 for his thoughts, the risk factors were so disassociated from his experience that he did not even understand that he was being asked about his relation to them. Instead, such is the strength of the disjuncture within which Prevent works, and the

distance between his experience and that of the ‘signs of radicalization’ on the page in front of him, that he considered them only being applied to so-called Islamist violence. Upon seeing ‘mental health’ on the sheet, he remarked, “Mental health, think they’re nuts, cos they take part in it, is that what it is?” He proceeded to rant ironically about Donald Trump’s comments that the recent Texas shooting in 2017 had been a cause of mental illness rather than lax gun control: “It’s not there’s nothing wrong with their gun control, it’s this guy was a nut!”

The centrality of mental health concerns to Channel’s preemptive interventions, and its contestation by ex-militants (seen in the irony of R23), shows us that a distorted mind *must* be a sign of terrorism proclivity – or, terrorism proclivity must only come from those with distorted minds – in the eyes of the preemptors *regardless of alternative knowledges* that might suggest otherwise. Risk could not emanate from those with full mental capacity, goes the logic, yet this logic only holds when the stories of ex-militants are silenced. Preemptive intervention is enacted to close down the potential space for devastating futures to occur. By directing life towards particular trajectories, knowledge is circumscribed around that which the preemptors imagine as real (Massumi & Bordeleau 2012; Massumi 2015a). Alternative knowledges, like the suggestion that full cognitive ability would have precluded a potential recruit’s involvement in armed groups, are subjugated by this preemptive discourse, sustaining the picture of ‘the terrorist’ as mentally impaired. Rather than being political actors, those exerting violence are to be pitied and supported away from their irrational behaviour (a theme developed in the following chapter) – a framework made possible only by discarding the stories of ex-militants.

‘Need for Identity, Meaning and Belonging’

Another ERG risk factor trait recurrently described in Prevent interviews as signifying risk was individuals searching for an identity and a sense of belonging. Social isolation was reported as concerning time and again, both by strategic and front-facing practitioners. It was occasionally quite difficult during interviews to remember that these officials were implementing a counter-terrorism programme, given the distinct vagueness and overt lack of causality connecting these ERG principles with terrorism risk. There were a number of particularly bizarre moments during my fieldwork in this regard. Practitioners occasionally brought up post-conviction cases they had overseen, attempting to explain why they engaged in criminality, extending these characteristics out to their Channel (non-crime) cases. CM13 spoke of two Terrorism Act (TACT) offenders he had been counselling:

So you can see what the issue is there, he’s an individual who’s emotionally had trauma in his life. Massive social isolation, a 32 year old guy, has no interest in women. Not married, no interest at all, this is not normal behaviour. [...And the second:] This is a British born kid, never

seen a river in his life! What does that say about his mindset? He's profoundly unworldly, profoundly socially isolated, his whole existence was on the online space.

Similarly, another Channel mentor (CM11) considered isolation the third most significant sign of risk after mental health and 'complex needs': "So the [third] one is people who are very isolated, within communities, and unable to get access to necessary support." The conclusion drawn by CM13 follows this logic through:

I don't believe those who are being convicted of terrorism are terrorists. They're not, they're mostly damaged, vulnerable, confused, idealistic, isolated, disenfranchised... It comes back to what I call human factors, it's trauma. Notional dysfunction, family breakup, domestic violence, social exclusion, isolation, fantasy, escapism. All those kinda things. And of course it is politically driven as well.

This mentor, listing numerous personal traits and states, only mentions the role politics might play in motivating involvement in violence afterwards. This focus – narrating personal vulnerabilities over structural conditions as causing violence – was not atypical; in fact, politics being described as a secondary consideration was the common position of all practitioners if they considered the role external conditions play in producing violence at all. But before delving into some of the implications of this testimony, it is worth pointing out that like the ERG study, CM13 pulled these traits observed in TACT offenders across to his non-criminal Channel work. I asked him how different these TACT cases were from his Channel cases, and despite them not having committed crimes he replied, somewhat staggeringly,

They're not, they're not. Go back to the [post-crime] case I worked on. Prevent did intervene there [as a referral, yet] they were never given a [Channel] intervention. They should have been! It's all so crystal clear, they should have had a robust intervention, it wasn't provided! And so guess what they then moved on further down the continuum and ended up offending. And it's in my report, Prevent failed them.

In connecting risk factors from his post-crime work to his Channel interventions, comments like these render visible the rationality upholding the preemptive assemblage: unqualified and retrospectively-fitted spatial explanations of sheer banality ("not normal behaviour") are judged as infused with risk – in this case, *terrorism* risk. As Massey writes, not everything is connected, nor needs to be connected (2005, 11-12), so connections like these are established by privileging certain forms of knowledge. Preemptive interventions only make sense when considering non-criminal subjectivities intrinsically related to post-crime subjectivities. The "all-risks" approach of Prevent (Omand 2010, 11) ensures the

boundary between pre-crime and post-crime remains fluid, almost becoming unimportant: all people are potential allies but also potential dangers in the big-data search for divergence (Heath-Kelly 2013a). This in turn fulfils and reproduces its own story, that *anybody and everybody is a potential danger*: the potential for the emergence of disruptive subjectivities is short-circuited by the preemptive paradigm (Massumi & Bordeleau 2012).

When I asked CM13 how risk factors like these could be spotted effectively given their normality, he simply said, “I think we just have to be more vigilant.” The obsession with chasing down potential sites of risk disembeds spatial relations from the environment, and entirely silences temporal explanations for human behaviour as the present becomes the only relevant moment. This allows the Channel mentor to consider it *shocking and ludicrous* that somebody who had not committed a crime had *not* been given an intervention designed to prevent criminality, on the grounds that it was “crystal clear” that she would become involved in criminality because of vague signifiers like social isolation that also apply to much of the population. The implications of this logic will be explored further in Thematic Chapter 3, but these extracts highlight the distinction between the former combatant worldview that sees environmental conditions (space) and historical experiences (time) as important, and the risk preemption dispositif displayed by these Channel mentors, which individualizes space and disregards the past.

When I undertook my Northern Irish fieldwork, any discussion of a ‘search’ for identity or social inclusion was consistently *held away from* motivations for violence. It was never central to any explanation about why former combatants became involved in violence in the first instance, merely arriving as a by-product of involvement. Occasionally such a topic was mentioned explicitly, or alluded to implicitly. As many did, L45 mentioned the feeling of belonging as important: “There was a group of a certain number of people, you relied on them, if you did your job right, they lived and you lived, so they become family.” Another (R30) spoke about identity being important in his (and others’) journey:

The Irish language flourished in prisons only partially for [secret] communication, but more for Irishness, as the people became more aware of their culture [and] history: a land without a language is like a land without a name. We were determined to get our identity back!

Involvement brought some sense of meaning and belonging – which was a ‘risk factor’ central to all discussions with Prevent practitioners – for ex-militants. However these were not once implied as *driving* involvement in violence: these traits were merely articulated as by-products *of* involvement. Often for former combatants, when an explicit ‘search’ for identity – like the learning of Irish – was discussed, it materialized only upon imprisonment. No matter how distanced ex-militants were from

sites of conflict, not once did the idea arise even implicitly that social isolation encouraged them to look around for purpose. And importantly, *testimonies about these factors were always rationalized by the presence of external motivators*, like the destruction of a native language by a colonial power. So Prevent constructs motivations for involvement as being comprised of individual searches for belonging and social inclusion. This logic turns on its head the testimony from Northern Irish ex-militants, which consistently prioritizes circumstances above anything else, situating them as foundational. Had circumstances differed, the former combatants emphasized over and over again, they would not have become involved in the sort of activity Prevent alleges to combat. Contrasting this testimony of ex-militants with the descriptions by Prevent practitioners of their work illuminates the disjunctures between the realms of terrorism preemption and its most ideal subjects. The ERG principles and their enactment 'on-the-ground' bear no relation to how those who have actually been convicted for numerous terrorism crimes narrated their experiences. Discourses of preemption obtained from the mainland's Prevent practitioners, and the stories told by those who 'should-have-been-preempted' across the water, do not sit together because the preemptive paradigm cannot hear any other narrative than one that situates the problem at the feet of a disturbed individual (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Freilich 2013; Kruglanski et al. 2014; Corner & Gill 2015,2017,2019; Corner, Gill & Mason 2016; Lankford 2017; Bouhana et al. 2018).

'Need to Redress Injustice and Express Grievance'

Arguably the factor most related to the external oppression underlined by Northern Irish ex-militants as fundamental to their involvement, would be a "need to redress injustice and express grievance." Yet in the original documentation this ERG 'risk factor' is followed by a short description that clarifies it as a subjective personal desire than having any objective relation to external realities: "Engagement with an extremist group, cause or ideology *meets needs to express or act on feelings* of anger, grievance or injustice" (NOMS 2014, 3, emphasis added). We can see this enacted through Prevent practice: PLead15 made the case that politics is relevant to counter-extremism, but only insofar as it provides talking points for Channel mentors, a possible point of risk-management leverage during interventions:

In the 2011 strategy there's a whole paragraph I think it's paragraph 5.27 either on the Iraq war or Israel-Palestine and how that's used by radicalizers and how that's an issue of contention. So we definitely do understand that that plays a role. We can argue about the role it plays, but *it definitely plays a role in leading some people to believe that terrorism is an answer to their problem* (emphasis added).

Such narratives recurrently deprioritized politics as a motivator, short-circuiting any discussion about broader environments by folding and refolding any issue back onto the individual as “their problem”. This is in itself a “taboo-enforcing practice” (Jackson 2012, 18), where everything outside the individual is excluded from negotiation. Whilst possessing a ‘sense of injustice because of external environments’ (with an initially unsophisticated political ideology) was how all Northern Irish former combatants portrayed their involvement, this is inverted by Prevent, as the interview extract indicates. Even in the earnest efforts to empathize, this empathy falls flat by individualizing anger over geopolitical problems as an “answer to their problem”. Had I asked former combatants if their involvement was a consequence of “their problem”, I would have been laughed (or kicked) out of the interview. There are no objective, historical facts, just subjective experiences in the moment. Relations of space and time outside of the intervention encounter become disembedded, geopolitics becomes a possible point of negotiation but only as a means to individual enlightenment, and the essence of state-citizen relationship is reduced down to private arbitration. Comaroff and Comaroff (2000, 305) write that:

The personal is the only politics there is, the only politics with a tangible referent or emotional valence. It is in these privatized terms that action is organized, that the experience of inequity and antagonism takes meaningful shape.

Such a mode of governance short-circuits the potential for political contestation (a discussion expounded further in Thematic Chapter 4). It is inconceivable that individuals on Channel would be encouraged to join street protests to voice their frustrations. Indeed, one potential protestor was referred to Prevent and visited by police having declared his intention to be arrested whilst protesting with Extinction Rebellion (Evans 2019). Instead, Channel cases are routinely placed onto leadership training courses with organizations like Princes Trust, or football coaching courses with Premier League football clubs (PC6). Whilst shaping people’s personal lives in this way might benefit them individually, the consequences for political engagement and the space for resistance must be considered. Siloing divergent knowledge and experience into individual encounters with the Channel programme, a programme shrouded in national security discourse, allows the conditions that Giroux (2004, 77) describes in *Terror of Neoliberalism*:

The state removes itself from either addressing or correcting the effects of racial [and other] discrimination, reducing [such] matters... to individual concerns to be largely solved through private negotiations between individuals, and adopting an entirely uncritical role in the way in which the racial state shapes racial policies and their effects throughout the economic, social, and cultural landscape.

Whilst Prevent practitioners spoke of individual disequilibrium as motivating violence, former combatants spoke of love, of a last-resort, as inevitability, of morality, and of empathy as inciting their involvement. When I asked R38, *From the people who you've spoken to and who you know, what would the overriding message of their motivations be?*, his reply was "A desire to right a wrong. A desire to right a wrong. That would be the dominating theme. In all the narratives that people that I've spoken to for countless years – a desire to right a wrong." For another (R37), his personal rationale was: "I want a totally new Ireland, that's based on equality, and cherishing all the children equally... an Ireland of equals." I followed up, asking if anybody else he knew thought similarly, and he immediately responded, "I would say [it was the same for] every single one of us."

Similarly to these comments, a Channel mentor (CM13) mentioned intense empathy, and love for children, as motivators for a TACT offender's crimes:

He saw all these kids [in the Middle East] being blown up, maimed, smashed to piece, he said that he'd look on the BBC and they weren't reporting it. He said that someone had sent him a video, and it's this kid who said he had a beautiful face and the camera pans down and obviously he's been disembowelled, choking every time he coughs, he sees him die there and then. And that's it, he just lost it. Then he saw in the media that Prince George is going to school, that's it, boom. He just did it [calls for Prince George to be attacked]. So what's the motive? It's deep empathy and compassion... He said "they haven't put it in the media, these kids are dying! What do we have to do to get people to wake up to the kids there?!" That's his motive!

Before unpacking this extract, it must be noted that the mentor here is expressing some comprehension of why this offender engaged in criminality, a contradictory stance to the praxis of Prevent: we will shortly see how preemptive politics suppresses (certain forms of) empathy. In this excerpt the mentor describes the injustice and pain of wars, much like the extracts from earlier in the chapter where CM8 and CM13 described the conditions Muslims face (in Britain and abroad). The overarching thrust of Prevent has been demonstrated to fold problems back onto individuals, and to disregard structural environments of violence and discrimination. We will continue to see this theme develop throughout the thesis. Yet very human moments like the extract just shown where critical mentors 'see' these environments – moments which appear to contrast with the individualizing tenets of Prevent – are possible because mentors exist as beings situated inside *and* outside the programme. They largely replicate and reproduce its universalizing claims, but also see limitations through their own lived experience. CM8 and CM13 might have been more critical because unlike CM1 and CM11 they do not have a clinical or academic background in psychology (a background which privileges the focus on individuals). Moreover, they are people of colour, which presents its own life experience often including discrimination or rejection that they detailed on a number of occasions (see for

instance CM8's extract about the 'outsider status' of Muslims in Britain earlier in this chapter), which Prevent is occasionally criticized for reproducing. CM13 had actually been officially stopped from providing Channel mentorship because his organization was deemed 'extremist' by the UK Government. However, he was re-recruited "through the back door [because] they haven't got [alternative mentors] who can deal with what I can deal with... So I'm still on the radar." Perhaps experiences like these, and the other factors mentioned, allows Prevent practitioners (in certain moments and contexts) to 'see' in ways that might contravene its totalizing logic. Other mentors also appeared to contradict the totality of the preemptive logic at certain moments to certain degrees, although CM8 and CM13 were the two who diverged the most.

Moving back to the purpose of presenting the extract above, we see the mentor raising empathy and compassion as the *reason that the terrorist crime occurred*. In line with this assumption, studying the Channel programme Douglas Weeks found that mentors prioritized "emotion" as the principle fulcrum around which intervention revolves (2017). This finding is corroborated by another researcher in the field: one official showed Asim Qureshi (2018) a VAF form, revealing the reasons a Prevent case was accepted for intervention. The document showed (and the official remarked) that there was *so much empathy present* that it was understood as a potential terrorism risk, because the person concerned might identify too intensely with others' plights. Empathy and love (in the wrong contexts, by the wrong personality profiles) are rendered as risk-factors in the enactment of Prevent, signifying a potential violent reaction to come.

The politics of affect is important to consider in relation to these silences produced by Prevent's praxis. Where fear is mobilized through the force of preemption (Massumi 2015a), empathy is suppressed. It must be noted again that we are speaking here about *certain forms* of empathy: after all, the gaze of Prevent sees only certain, racialized risks (Younis & Jadhav 2020; also see: Wilcox 2017). For approved mentors, who buy into the premise that risk is potentially everywhere and who are working towards 'risk-minimization', empathy might be more legitimate. We will see over the course of the thesis (particularly in Thematic Chapter 4) that agency and approval is granted to those who have accepted the principal premises of the preemptive paradigm: that risk is everywhere including within ourselves and that, as CM13 himself said, "We just have to be more vigilant." However, for those outside this knowledge structure, the preemptive paradigm excludes the possibility for tragedy (stories of painful spatial and temporal experiences) to have any meaning except that associated emotional responses to these stories might signify risk and need to be directed towards safety. Explanatory stories of ex-militants, people who we will continually see reject the principles of preemptive risk-management, are silenced by Prevent. The implications behind tragic stories, *any wider than in relation to reforming the individual*, are dispersed when risk-thinking is applied (Goldson

& Muncie 2006, 93). This disappearance of any broader meaning of spatial and temporal experiences produces a necessary foreclosure of empathy: the would-be empathic listener can only hear a tragic story and make risk-related observations. The ubiquitous presence of (irrational and apocalyptic) risk requires a different response from its listener than drawing out implications for society. As Aradau shows, the 'politics of pity' is combined with notions of risk-to-come (2004). Empathy – or displays of an *internal assimilation* of the emotional importance of negative spatial and temporal experiences (McCaffree 2019) – therefore becomes a potential signifier of risk. This rationality flips the dozens of hours I spent talking with interviewees, who often appeared emotionally invested in their histories and who encouraged me to understand (or empathize with) their position. The dispositif of risk neither grants the bearer-of-tragedy the possibility to dwell on external lessons from their hardship, nor allows the would-be empathizer to share the tragic burden themselves by listening. Instead it mandates the observance of risk from this pain. Closing down the possibility for external environments to have meaning and impact upon social relations furthermore short-circuits processes of change; empathy is a trait through which ex-militants described both their engagement *and disengagement* from violence (see Thematic Chapters 3 & 4).

'Over-identification with an Extremist Group, Cause or Ideology'

The final ERG risk factor we will assess in light of ex-militant testimony is an 'Over-identification with an Extremist Group, Cause or Ideology'. The Prevent Strategy deems 'extremist ideology' a key factor in the identification of risk (HM Government 2011b). Former Prevent police officer PPolice9 explained that "you can't get a Channel mentor without an ideology." The category for inclusion on Channel changed as of 2018 (HM Government 2018c, 8): "This year, the new category 'Mixed, Unstable, or Unclear Ideology' has been added to describe type of concern". The document makes explicit however that even 'Unclear Ideology' is one of the many "kinds of ideology." It is therefore unequivocal that identifying the presence of 'ideology' whether practitioners can determine its boundaries or not, is central to Prevent's identification of risk: for someone to pose a potential threat, they must by definition be ideological. For some practitioners, differentiating between ideology and seeing violence as legitimate was impossible. Indeed, ideology was a central risk factor in the eyes of every Prevent official, CM11 remarking that Channel mentors are people "who work in terms of people from a radical viewpoint." Practitioners often spoke about the two main types of ideology identified by the process as Islamist and right-wing extremism. Yet mental health-related (CM1) and nurturing (CM3) intervention specialisms also exist, and Channel panels are interested in those who are angry about animal rights and infrastructure projects (PC5). Similarly, CM1 supports "people who come from very angry and resentful and racist point of views, to the more ideologically driven in terms of having very

strong Nazi views, pagan views, or pseudo-pagan views.” Some of these, presumably, would be classified under the new Unclear Ideology category. CM1 continued, saying that success could be measured by “who’s disengaged from [their] violent ideology.”

Most Northern Irish former combatants, especially republicans, narrated that circumstances and ideology were linked, but that circumstances triggered their initial involvement and any (sophisticated) ideology often followed only afterwards. There were few self-professed republicans amongst my sample before the mid-1960s. Although some had family ties to earlier republican movements, most republicans stated their involvement resulted from violence enacted on them or their communities. For Protestants, their involvement was similarly explained by attacks on them and their communities, and also a threat of being taken into a united Ireland. I asked a republican peace activist (R43), who did not become involved in the conflict himself, about Prevent’s idea of ‘extremism’ being related to involvement in violence:

[Me: *Would you say that many people you knew who were involved - and also I’ll include dissidents - how many of those would you have said have ‘radical’ views?*] Radical views. Very few. Very very few. I think that there are most of the ones I would talk to, some of them have good political heads.

Another republican central to the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s, and a member of the OIRA (R30), speaking in the context of a discussion on terminology, said,

A lot of young people would have joined in 1969 the IRA because their houses were burnt. And they thought they were joining the IRA just to shoot back. They didn’t join it because of the liberating ideals which exercised me, which went back to the 18th century, you know you had the principles of the French Revolution being endorsed by radicals here in Belfast. That’s why I get angry now when I see ‘radicalization’ – I’d be proud to be a radical!... For most people certainly that I knew, all believed they were doing it for the greater good.

Many republicans considered their time in prison as a time of being politically ‘awakened’ and becoming fervently anti-British-state, seeing reunification as the only option to end the injustices they saw. R34 spoke about his movement from ‘ignorance’ to ‘politicization’:

[With everything going on] you couldn’t see any other way of getting justice apart from within a united Ireland. [Me: *So was that idea for you of a united Ireland a big motivating factor?*] It woulda been yeah. As well [as the external chaos]. But never it would never have come about probably if the civil rights movement hadn’t have been gone, if the Troubles hadn’t been started, or a war hadn’t have started, whatever you want to call it. Like I was sorta ignorant of the state I was living in up to that point, but I soon became politicized very very quickly. I

learnt more. And then going in to the H Blocks as well, we called it the H Blocks University, you were politicized even more.

Another (R29) said, “There was a honeymoon period where we thought the Brits were there to help us, and then gradually they did the same things the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] had done to us before. You’ve got to understand me, I didn’t *want* to do it, I felt compelled.” A leading figure in the republican former combatant community (R23) spoke about being educated into realizing that getting the British out of Ireland was the only solution: “Imprisonment is also a major educator because of the classes because of the highly educated, politically motivated people who are also captured. [Education was a] great driver [of becoming anti-British-state].” Yet a number of republicans spoke about their impassioned politicization and adoption of a ‘sophisticated ideology’ during imprisonment simultaneously helping them to realize that violence was not going to produce the results they wanted, especially given British de-escalation (R23).

Encounters between social movements and the state are covered extensively in social movement literature on political violence (della Porta 1992; Ellison & Martin 2000; Wiktorowicz 2004; della Porta & Diani 2006; Alimi 2007; Alimi, Demetriou & Bosi 2015). This literature observes the engagement between state forces and non-state forces as encounters of escalation and de-escalation, and was developed by the contributions of ‘framing theory’ which “[brought] ideas back in” (Oliver & Johnston 2000, 37). This field suggests that the framing of narratives is important, but that these narratives are associated with relations between groups in society rather than dehistoricized and decontextualized ‘individual perspectives’. Traditional conflict and terrorism literature describes the relative unimportance of ideology as related to incidence of violence and preventing conflict (O’Connell & Berard 2005; Horgan & Bjorgo 2009; Clubb 2016a,b; Ferguson 2016a). The testimony of these former combatants lends weight to the findings of these literatures: developing an ‘ideology’ was not foundational to republican violence, nor was it correlative to their disengagement.

Equally, several loyalists framed their involvement through the ‘ideology’ of patriotism. L26, as a loyalist fighting to maintain union with mainland Britain, became agitated when he recalled that he was imprisoned despite his involvement being motivated for what he considered the British State:

Many many hundreds of thousands of people joined [through violence or support]. Basically through patriotism as we seen it... Many of us lay for years and years, blanket protests and everything else, in British prisons as ultra-British subjects, patriots.

However, this framing of involvement through the lens of patriotism, like republicanism for those who engaged on the nationalist side, was only articulated in the context of material conditions. L49,

notorious in the loyalist community, claimed that he epitomized the actual cause of loyalism, mentioning that journalists had told him the same. He remarked about his involvement that,

It was done to keep our country free from threat of republicans... Me and L27 and L26 were the real driving force in loyalism, there was a real cause in people like us. Nine out of ten of loyalists were fools.

For L26, L49, and other loyalists, their involvement in violence was framed in relation to attachments to Britain and associations of Britishness. But such patriotic sentiments were always described in the context of a desire to rebuff republican violence and wanting to ensure their security and identity was protected, alongside fears of being governed unjustly as a minority in a united Ireland. Simple notions of romantic or idealistic ties to another place purely for historical or 'ideological' reasons were entirely absent. The conditions in which their violence occurred was much more fundamental to their stories than any deeply-held ideological inspiration.

Conclusion

Throughout this first thematic chapter we have seen that ex-militant stories – and the structural causes of violence which are prioritised in their narratives – go unheard by the preemptive paradigm. Articulating material environments as irrelevant to the incidence of 'terrorism risk' means that Prevent silences the stories of those who have committed terrorism offences. Having no history to them, risk-identities are able to be constituted and reconstituted on a whim (Walker 2008) – as we have seen in the hasty repurposing of the ERG22+ guidance from a post-offence to a pre-emptive risk assessment tool. Ideology, empathy, and other supposed risk factors become reconstituted as drivers of risk, while ex-militants deemed them unimportant.

Ex-militants described their environments as foundational to understanding their involvement in violence. They were submerged in violence, the stories went: they told tales of their friends, family, and neighbours being killed, feeling like their country and identity might be taken from them, and spoke of the injustice of their surroundings. Every interview was consistently framed in these terms, and there was no lack of passion or detail in the retelling of their histories. Broader political environments as well as specific experiences of violence and trauma were crucial to how all ex-militant narratives pivoted around the reasons for committing terrorism offences. Yet when we look at how Prevent 'sees' the motivations for engaging in violence, it is clear that there is fundamentally different knowledge at work. We see that preemption does not seek to understand relations of space and time (current environments or histories). Instead, the risk dispositif looks only to the future, to secure it

through interventions in the present (Aradau & van Munster 2008a). The impetus to anticipate the next terrorist attack is only upheld by the ignorance of stories that frame external conditions as important: frustration at grievous environments is recast as psychological frailty (Younis 2020). Subjects are considered only in terms of disparate risk factors, and so “concerns about the *meaning or motives* behind offending” are largely irrelevant (Goldson & Muncie 2006, 93: emphasis added). Because of the disregard for spatial and temporal considerations, the line between non-criminal and criminal subjectivities becomes blurred and constantly moves (Amoore & de Goede 2008), and everything becomes infused with both productive- *and* risk-potential. The dispositif of risk, compounded by the development of neoliberal politics in Britain, organizes reality entirely differently than that of the subjects it governs. This is because to comprehend their stories as legitimate and to give explanatory power to anything other than *disturbed, Othered individuals* would disrupt its very foundations that say danger and violence is always irrational. Qualities otherwise considered normal human traits (excitement, social inclusion, strong affiliation with causes) can therefore be redrawn as potential signifiers of terrorism risk, in spite of the testimony of those who have “been there, done that, got the t-shirt” (L26). The 22 ERG risk factors, and the praxis of Prevent, is focused not on conditions like those narrated by ex-militants, but on the internal experiences and personality profiles of children. Rather than a ‘sense of adventure’ or ‘transitional periods’ having no other implications than signs of youthfulness, factors in the ERG list become problematized through Prevent’s gaze as being associated with national security risk. Of course, these factors are ‘seen’ through racialized, gendered eyes, informed by mainstream and State narratives about what constitutes threat (Wilcox 2017; Pettinger 2020a). Prevent was founded on psychological assumptions, by psychologists, for the purposes of detecting which individuals should be intervened upon. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the focus of ex-militant stories on external environments is concealed by the Prevent programme.

Negotiating Agency (Thematic Chapter 2)

Introduction

The preceding discussion about motivations demonstrated how the political environment – so important to ex-militants – is silenced by the preemptive paradigm. Building upon this, how does the *commitment* with which Northern Irish former combatants spoke about their engagement in violence compare with Prevent's understanding of risk? This chapter traces the fault lines between former combatant testimony that speaks of an active and conscious involvement in violence, and the Channel programme's interventions upon subjects who are articulated as passive and not demonstrating any commitment. This second thematic chapter takes three distinct parts: it looks firstly at the sense of obligation and moral duty that ex-militants articulated, assessing this testimony in light of how Prevent excludes the importance of commitment to violent subjectivities. The discussion then moves on to explore how ex-militants described *consciously* involving themselves in violence – even where they considered themselves 'radicalized' by ideologues and other influencing factors, or where they described themselves as having only reluctantly engaged. Agency and choice were always foregrounded. The chapter contrasts this narrative with counter-radicalization interventions upon vulnerable subjects, which discards the potential that violence could be associated with deliberation and choice. Finally, it examines how ex-militants rejected any notion of being persuaded away from violence – suggesting that external factors had to change in order for them to disengage. This testimony is juxtaposed with Prevent's preoccupation with redirecting 'risky' cases from redress of their grievance, presupposing that those constituting security risks can be coaxed out of violence. We find some significant implications for how agency is (de-) mobilized by contemporary preemptive governance.

Commitment, Obligation, and Intent

The motivations described in the previous chapter, which preceded from an environmental context and personal experiences of injustice, oppression, and violence, were coupled with testimonies that detailed a *strong desire* to effect change. This first section looks at the emphasis ex-militants placed on communicating their seriousness and even some *compulsion* to effect this change, and contrasts this with Prevent's disregard for issues around agency that silences any relevance of commitment and intent.

Northern Ireland: Commitment and Obligation

Given that methods of effecting change through legal political means were limited – many interviewees pointing to protests being beaten off the streets, and the police and army being ineffective at providing security – violence was described in many interviews as a last resort, and sometimes as a reluctant choice. My findings are generally substantiated by existing literature on this subject. Whilst fighters in Cyprus who struggled to explore changes in their identity from pre- to post-involvement narrated their commitment “without qualification” (Heath-Kelly 2016c, 154), generally accounts of involvement in violence are situated within a process of gradual change. When delving into their histories, the movement towards self-articulating as “*I as a committed militant*” was represented in interviews with Portuguese ex-militants as the consequence of a series of negotiations and interrelationships with their external environments (da Silva 2019, 37-54). Social movement theorist Donatella della Porta frames the movement towards more-intransigent involvement as emerging from relations of escalation, often in the context of close networks and other localized factors (2013, 235-262; also see: Heath-Kelly 2013b, 119-149). What remains clear is that frames of commitment play a significant role in explanations for violence, as we will see.

Many ex-militants from both sides of ‘the Troubles’ emphasized that they would have made essentially the same choices given the same set of circumstances, diverging only on different tactics they might have employed (L26,L35,L49,R23,R37). They narrated overwhelmingly that their experiences had such an affective impact on them that they could do *nothing but engage in reactionary or responsive action*. They spoke consistently as seeing violence as a last resort, and sometimes a necessary evil (L27,L44,R23,R28). R34 remarked, “I was very reluctant you know to go the military way. And held back a long time. But eventually there was no way out for me. It was one or the other. Either you take a stand or you go away.” L41 spoke about seeing no other option in order to quell violence against his community:

We knew that the police and army weren’t being allowed to take [republicans] on [and] were being handcuffed... So that's why a lot of young men became frustrated, they felt the IRA were acting with impunity, and there was nothing being done against them to hit back. And we believed the way to hit back was a loyalist paramilitary group. And the one we joined was the UVF.

One republican, a former Hooded Man (R43), remarked that he had become engaged as an active republican because of his experience of being picked off the streets along with a dozen other young boys and men, and tortured for days. During the interview he became impassioned speaking about his experience of the British government’s brutality against him, remarking at one point:

I think in too many cases, certainly in my experience, there is no alternative but to engage in violence, because people feel that it is the only possible solution to what they see as a grievous wrong.

Corroborating these claims – that their commitment was unqualified – is the fact that despite having made comments like these across the board, many interviewees are now engaged in peace activism and community conflict resolution projects (including this interviewee). Seeing violence in one era as a reasonable response – and considering it irresponsible in different circumstances – was a theme narrated again and again. All spoke of the sense of being forced into a corner out of which they wished to get.

However, rather than *solely* as a “last resort”, some framed their involvement more actively as an *obligation*. Because the wrongs in society that needed correcting were so fundamental and profound, their stories went, it was necessary to become involved to bring about change for the good of society as a whole. The sense of feeling an imperative to act was narrated consistently. R25 mentioned,

To me it seemed like an obligation in a sense, for me it was if you seen something wrong within society you should do something about it to make it right, to rectify it. And to me the thing that was wrong was that we’re under British occupation.

R29 spent almost a month on hunger strike whilst in prison, and described facing “stress positions, dogs, I ended up in hospital loads of times with dog bites.” When asked, knowing what he knew now, if he would have made the same choices, he replied,

Would I do it again? Absolutely. Would I let my kids do it? Not a chance. I’m glad the conflict’s over, and we need peace, we live in different circumstances now so violence isn’t appropriate, but I would definitely have done it again, no question. *We did it for peace, we had to.* (emphasis added)

This sense of an active obligation that drew them into involvement was spread consistently across both loyalists and republicans. Some went even further, claiming explicitly that the morality behind their actions was “right”. Noting that he thought Northern Ireland would probably be in the same position had violence not occurred, R48 said:

But was it a waste of time as far I was concerned? No. I don’t think so. Because I don’t regret anything I done... Did I think it was morally right? At the time I probably did think, actually I didn’t *probably* think, I *do* think – any action I carried out I think I did it for the right reasons.

Equally, R34 answered the question *Did you ever have a problem with the morality or justification behind getting involved?* by remarking,

No. No. [Me: *How come, why?*] Well for a start, what was happening to your people, to us, to the nationalist people, you felt justified in joining an armed conflict against them you know. You just felt justified, if that meant killing British soldiers then so be it. If it meant killing RUC [police] men then so be it. Cos as far as I was concerned it didn't need to happen. It didn't need to happen in 1968, there was only one simple demand, one man one vote. But the [unionist] Orange State wouldn't give it.

Time after time, the debate was moved away from the potentially problematic use of violence, and placed back onto the circumstances in which they found themselves. Overwhelmingly, because violence was being exerted onto them, they were justified in their mobilization of violence: there was no moral case to answer.

Where moral quandaries *were* relayed (in a few interviews), former combatants made the point that these dilemmas were superseded by the realization that circumstances would not change unless violence was deployed. L44, speaking of his upbringing that was situated in a regimented culture of law and order – even being a “wee bit obsessed with [it]”, with family members being police officers – said that seeing so much violence being exerted against his community “perhaps ameliorates the sense of morality that you have.” Similarly, speaking of the abhorrence he felt over his own involvement, L26 said,

Rationally, it was the only thing to do. So there was no choice involved. The choice would've been not to be involved at all, in anything radical or violent. And yet radical and violent in that case was what we were facing with the IRA, and therefore that had to be faced with a loyalist radical and violent reaction.

This was corroborated during an interview with B42, the former chief prosecuting counsel of Northern Ireland who prosecuted hundreds of terrorism cases during the conflict. When asked *How could the state have stopped people joining the paramilitaries*, he replied:

I think you'd need to have a very very clever programme to have stopped- I can't imagine what it coulda been. The problem if you're a British minister when you're trying to deal with republicans is they [republicans] woulda said, “Your soldiers have killed umpteen of us in the last year, what's that about? You're just a colonial power, we want to be treated the same way as our brethren in the 26 counties.” So I don't think any programme would've neutralized that, I think it was inevitable.

Even the chief prosecutor understood the republican uprising as inevitable, given the circumstances, so its perhaps unsurprising that where ex-militants wrestled with moral questions, the environmental conditions were widely seen (and articulated by ex-militants) to produce and justify violence.

Illustrating further a professed commitment to their respective causes, all interviewees spoke of being aware of the costs of involvement, and the potential hazards for them and their loved ones. They realized they were inciting raids on their homes, or searches of their families by the police or army (L26,L45,R28,R47). Moreover, interviewees would consistently remind me that they had known two possible outcomes of engagement: prison or death. Some mentioned that they were protected by a sense of youthful 'invincibility' and didn't consider the risks as much as they might have (L44, R48), but the dominant tone was one that emphasized the potential graveness of their decisions. It must be noted again here that considering positionality is and remains fundamental to (this) social research. Interviewees speaking to a researcher – and an eager listener – telling him their life story and relaying their passion and commitment to their causes, is not a neutral interaction. With nearly all those involved in violence (and as a result all but one of my interviewees) males, I could not help being aware of the gendered nature of the conflict, and consequently the tone of interviews. These were men whose lives were defined by their involvement in the conflict, and cynically, whose jobs can rely upon an intrigue, a morbid fascination, and even an awe of their histories. Indeed, R33 remarked that I should be careful listening to possibly tall tales from prison, as these are sometimes exaggerated by tour guides to enhance the romanticism and nostalgia of a defining time in their lives. Performance is central to the construction of identity: turning Simone de Beauvoir (1949, 295) around, "One is not born, but rather, becomes a [man]." So as interviewees relayed to me how they were endangered, risk-taking beings, they *became* endangered, risk-taking (masculinized) beings (also see: da Silva 2017). Through "the stylized repetition of acts through time" (Butler 1988, 520), their identity becomes a new phenomenon. For instance, in a double interview, I asked L40 why he engaged but certain others didn't. L41 interjected, "He had balls... I'm only joking there but I think that's part of it." This was an environment dominated by the adventures of males, supported by females (who often carried guns as they were less likely to be searched). But, regardless of the performance of bravery in producing the fascinating tour guide or the memorable interviewee, the prevalence of historic violence is very apparent. Northern Irish citizens were imprisoned cumulatively for over 100,000 years, and a series of tenacious prison protests (from refusing prison garb and wearing only a blanket, to smearing faeces over their cells, and engaging in hunger strikes) occurred. So the testimony of former combatants that emphasizes their commitment is substantiated by decisions they made in the aftermath of involvement ,even while the masculinist performativity must be noted.

Moreover, they demonstrated numerous times a surprising depth of humility and acceptance of their own failures, indicating that their testimony was not merely a performance of unproblematized and unadulterated commitment. They lamented their inability to think more strategically during the conflict (R34); appeared profoundly sad, frustrated, even distressed, that they had not achieved more social and political progress within Northern Ireland (L26); and noted their inability to make more sacrificial decisions, like joining the hunger strike (R29). As noted earlier, R37 began crying as we were speaking in the rain, standing outside the Museum of Free Derry. Though demonstrating this moment of vulnerability, he later responded to the question: *Were there times when you doubted your commitment or decided to commit less to being an active republican*, by saying,

Never ever. Never ever. And there are times obviously when you look at your life and you get married and you start getting children and you wonder “can I continue?” but for me... if there was ever any doubts creeping in I woulda went to the city cemetery, where our volunteers are buried. And I woulda went to Aemon Lafferty who was the first volunteer to be killed in the struggle. Went to Aemon’s grave, who I knew and went to school with. I woulda stood and talked to him. And then I woulda moved on to... all the volunteers and spoke to them. I never once was able to get to the last volunteer to say “I was thinking of leaving [the IRA]” – I’ve never got to that.

Prevent: Presumed Intentions and Commitment to Act

Bearing in mind this testimony from former combatants, we can see that the list of Extreme Risk Guidance (ERG) ‘risk factors’ operationalizes a far lower level of commitment for somebody to be considered a potential terrorism risk. As can be seen in the ‘Intent Factors’ in Figure 1 (see Thematic Chapter 1), the categories “‘Them and Us’ thinking” and “Attitudes that justify offending” indicate that Prevent operates on the cognitive rather than behavioural condition of its constituents (Heath-Kelly 2017b). The Channel programme functions, in the words of security officials, to minimize terrorism risk, and considering *intent* plays a significant role in how risk assessments are made (CM1).

A lack of demonstrable intent played a significant role in conversations with Prevent practitioners. Children posting disturbing content on social media or making outrageously racist remarks was represented as justification for Channel intervention. Occasionally, a mentor would say something like, “I’ve been to referrals where I’ve been very glad that this structure exists, for someone... who actually has been posting and tweeting and sharing some very extreme and concerning stuff” (CM8). But more often, the threshold for intervention was narrated as being lower even than this. People who are considered ‘low-risk’ and just in need of a bit of support were described as typical cases. CM3 said, “With some of the cases I’ve had the person’s been quite young and he’s

just said a few things.” This was a sentiment roundly corroborated by other mentors. One mentor respected in the Prevent community remarked,

So most Channel cases have been very low-level... It’s great to have the opportunity to help the young people, have these discussions and explore alternatives to a viewpoint which may not of itself be supportive of a violent organization like ISIS, but it’s built on a very narrow-minded understanding of the scriptures (CM8).

The possible intent of Channel cases to engage in violence, or their capability to act on their remarks, was occasionally narrated very candidly as entirely absent. CM3 told me,

Really when the police interview the person, they look at capability, ideology, what’s been said... Sometimes we don’t think he’s got any capability at all, however [the Channel panel] say, “We’d still like you to meet them because you know [how] to put them on the right path.”

In an even more explicit example, CM10, speaking about a young boy he was supporting through a Channel intervention, said,

He is not trying to be a terrorist. He's being influenced by Anwar al-Alaki's lectures [on YouTube], and his mind is shaping in such a way, along with he's listening to other things, but other things are mostly boring and not as interesting. *So he's not set out to be a terrorist, he doesn't want to harm people*, but he's coming across material which is attractive because [of] the way it's presented or the issues they're talking about (emphasis added).

The patronising description of this boy renders his agency incapacitated; he becomes entirely passive, not comprehending the consequences of his actions, whereas the mentor sees through enlightened eyes (a point returned to later). This assumed vulnerability sits awkwardly with how the trajectory towards violence was narrated by ex-militants – as purposive, deliberate, intentional. We can see here that preemption shifts the threshold for involvement in violence downwards; every moment is a counter-terrorism moment. Preemptive logics do not require the demonstration of capability – only the possibility that capability and intent may at some point arise (Massumi 2015). In associating what is clearly articulated as a *lack of intention to cause harm* with national security concerns through involvement with a counter-terrorism architecture, youthful innocence and naivety no longer represent mere vulnerability. The dispositif of risk, a central mechanism of neoliberal governance, offers us an alternative vision: the vulnerable, the bearers-of-tragic-stories, the insecure, no longer only need to be consoled or supported for the sake of consolation or assistance. The “politics of pity” becomes accompanied by a “politics of risk” (Aradau 2004, 251). Through the lens of risk, vulnerability

occupies a dual position, exemplified through the Channel programme: young, uneducated children are in need of support, and they also pose a potential national security risk (Heath-Kelly 2013a). Similarly, in the international domain, 'humanitarian intervention' is inscribed with security logics through the assemblage of risk-management (Aradau 2004; Sabsay 2016; Chandler 2016).

Where former combatants explained their actions as a reluctant last resort or as a moral imperative, Channel cases were never described as demonstrating anything like genuine intent. Instead they were spoken of by their mentors as not being expected to cause – even being *averse* to causing – harm. The significance of this omission, and the irrelevance of intent to interventions that supposedly manage terrorism-risk, is that the *meaning* behind involvement in (potential) violence disappears from the field of view. Where ex-militants *could not tell their stories* without recounting the intensity of their feelings, of *why* they became so driven to despair or revenge and arriving at a point where they considered causing harm an obligation, big-data calculative rationalities like contemporary 'counter-radicalization' regimes are ultimately disinterested in why behaviour occurs (Heath-Kelly 2017a). Like we saw in the previous chapter, attributes the person displays become detached, disconnected, separated off the person for a surgical operation, to be remade and recast, improved, made productive. The display of behaviours (and *imagined future* behaviours), rather than the person, becomes the functional component of social relations (Massey 2005, 10).

It was relayed to me a number of times that interventions can be provided *for the sake of the individuals concerned* rather than as any overt security measure, and are discursively detached from considerations of risk. CM8 remarked that,

There have been a number [of] quite young [Channel cases]. And one of those I then discontinued cos I felt it was completely inappropriate. And in a couple of cases – it's literally six sessions spread out once every 2-3-4 weeks, over maybe a three month period – I've kept them going cos I felt the young person I've been working with appreciates and values this opportunity and it's really an opportunity to give them some mentorship. So I thought, "ok well if that's useful to you I'll be very happy to come and see you once every few weeks and we can talk about XYZ or talk about how you're getting on in school or family or whatever" ... It's more like "great I've got a mentor for a while!"

Removing any emphasis on security provision from a counter-terrorism programme dismantles the historic terrorism narrative that sought to delineate 'us' from the barbaric 'them' (Mgbeoji 2018): 'mentorship' and therefore ultimately *friendship itself* (as CM3 described his role) plays a concealed but fundamental role in 'risk-management' (see: Weeks 2017). Infusing friendship with security-consciousness is emblematic of the dispositif of risk, which takes everything as producing security information (Aradau & van Munster 2012). Indeed – and bearing in mind the programme has counter-

terrorism as its official remit – various Prevent interviewees mentioned they felt more like social workers than anything else. Prevent is unconcerned that there appears to be minimal or sometimes *no* indication of commitment or intent to perpetrate violence. Young children without any destructive intent can be reconceptualized and reconstituted as a potentially terrorizing Other. This subverts ‘terrorism convict’ testimony: the passion, the intense anger, and the moral outrage against injustice and oppression narrated in every interview with ex-militants is silenced from conversation. The lack of apparent drive to act in violent ways becomes irrelevant to the preemptive rationality. Instead, the matter of concern is the (imagined) possibility alone (Amoore 2013). Where children are described as not intentionally engaging with ‘risky’ behaviours, and consciously not *wanting* to produce harm, demonstrate how human agency is an excluded equation from the production of risk knowledge (Amoore & Raley 2017).

Prevent's relative disinterest in considering intent was most apparent when Channel mentors, who function “at the coalface” and are most exposed to the individuals receiving Channel support, testified overwhelmingly that thoughts of violence are often entirely absent from their cases, and instead that monitoring and amending ideas is far more central to their work. Situating this finding were comments made by Channel mentors like,

If the person refuses [an intervention] and the reasons for the referral aren't that strong, they'll just drop it and they'll leave it because you don't need to be devoting man hours to something's which isn't serious (CM3).

CM1 told me explicitly that they occasionally consider risk as *declining*, before intervention even takes place, even declaring that in these cases violence “isn't going to happen”, yet mentoring is still provided:

So I might come into a certain person's life where they're already disengaging... So they might still hold views that are quite racist, you know *they're not going out and they're not gonna cause harm to someone they perceive as different*. So their risk of like acting violently is declining. But in terms of their attitudes, they might still hold strongly radical attitudes compared to you and I [sic] (emphasis added).

Here we see that these individuals are not going to harm anybody, *yet their risk is somehow still declining*. This ‘double-think’ is explored more in the following chapter, and again, I must emphasize that this research does not attempt to make claims about whether Channel cases ‘might pose risk’ – but rather how contemporary British counter-terrorism conceptualises, constitutes and employs risk. This model must be contrasted with *former combatant narratives*, narratives which detailed external

conditions so serious that they could do nothing but respond. It is hard to relate these stories of ‘seeing no other option’ to the accounts from Channel mentors that continuously referred to any lack of demonstrable intent from their ‘vulnerable cases’. By rejecting and subjugating the emphasis that ex-militants placed on their sense of grievance and consequent commitment to act, the risk dispositif excludes from its calculations any consideration of the affective impact of environmental conditions. Moreover, with this turn towards governing ‘lack-of-intent’ as signifying potential risk, the space for empathizing even with those who demonstrate no intent towards violence diminishes further. The seeing-everywhere of risk – in sites where the constituent presents a disinterest in enacting the risk-identity imagined about them – produces a circular and incessant drive for ever more security (Ewald 2002; Aradau & van Munster 2008; Heath-Kelly 2018). Intervening upon spaces that do “*not want to harm people*” creates the conditions for the future association of non-intent with risk-management, and its exclusion from ‘reasonable discourse’ (Zulaika & Douglass 1996; Jackson 2012; Stampnitzky 2013).

‘Radicalization’

This second section explores the concept of ‘radicalization’, contrasting how ex-militants described a conscious movement towards violence (even when accepting that they were ‘influenced’ towards engagement), and how Prevent assumes the passivity of those on the trajectory towards terrorism. Contestations over agency were among the most fascinating moments during my fieldwork, and the discussion around radicalization was an illustrative example of how the two knowledges interrelate and contrast.

Ex-militants as Normal, ‘Conscious(ly Radicalized)’ Everymen

Many former combatants explained their involvement in dangerous, risky behaviour through narrating themselves as being drawn willingly into violence, and as ‘otherwise normal’, non-other, regular people caught up in exceptional circumstances. Former combatants told me they are often portrayed as outsiders, in line with historic discourses (Said 1987). L41 said,

Some people who’ve written books about it have called us monsters, this and that. We weren’t anything other than ordinary people... We weren’t parachuted in! We weren’t dropped in here from Mars, nor were we any different than young men growing up in towns and cities across the rest of Britain. We found ourselves in completely extraordinary political circumstances.

Contestations over language to reiterate that the environment produced violence was a particular feature of interviews with republicans, although loyalists also engaged in these discussions (as seen with L41). At the beginning of an interview, R22 even went as far as to note that,

I would never acknowledge that I was involved in 'violence', because coming from the perspective I'm coming from, the whole sense of how the conflict in the North has been portrayed you know has been set in the context of 'people involved in violence', 'men of violence'.

I was reprimanded for deploying the terms 'political violence' and 'paramilitary' by former combatants, especially by republicans, who framed their involvement through the discourse of war and an army. They were not terrorists – they were normal, indistinct, everyday people who found themselves deploying exceptional force as a response to exceptional circumstances. Sometimes the emphasis of their normality took on a subtle tone. A number of former combatants made the point that they had been straight-laced, remarking in a couple of instances that they “didn't even drink or smoke” (R23, also R29). As we were walking up the Falls Road, R33 mentioned to me his revulsion for pornography and the detriment it is to society. He continued, “I was near to being a pacifist, I didn't like violence, I hated violent films and TV, I'm not a violent man, but the circumstances meant I had to become involved. I don't like guns, at all.” These moments, where pornography, alcohol, and other 'social ills' were positioned as antithetical to their nature, situated them around their distaste for the extreme and the abnormal, the possibly degenerate. In these moments, as they narrated themselves away from the barbaric Other who smoked and drank, they were (re-)humanizing themselves, establishing their violence implicitly as exceptional and in relation only to extraordinary circumstances, behaviour they would never otherwise have considered.

After articulating themselves as normal and reasonable, ex-militants framed their involvement as a result of (pro)active decisions, even where they regarded themselves as having been influenced, radicalized, or drawn into engagement. Discussions around the concept of 'being influenced' were some of the most fascinating moments of my research, particularly bearing in mind that the logic of Prevent functions through assumption that dangerous radicalizers are responsible for pulling vulnerable people who ultimately can't control themselves into becoming risky and engaging in criminality (CM13,Plead15). In conversation with L46, an ex-militant who had completed his doctoral thesis on 'loyalist motivations for engaging in violence', he described a series of events that had been particularly devastating, including the Bloody Friday republican bombs around Belfast. He then remarked, “It's almost like a sorta subliminal indoctrination if I could use that term [towards seeing violence as a] legitimate response to violent republicanism.” The discussion moved onto the

concept of 'radicalization', and he described Protestant firebrand preacher and politician Iain Paisley's influence in drawing scores of young men into engagement in the conflict:

[Me: Do you think that people like Iain Paisley and others who were quite vocal-] Radicalized people? [Me: Yeah] Well I can see your point and yes it's hard to argue against it, particularly when you look at the discourse in the rhetoric and language of him and others at the time... [They were] particularly influential in recruiting young people like me into paramilitarism... Every single one of the 14 former life sentence prisoners that I interviewed for my own research all named Iain Paisley as being influential to them politically growing up. And to them joining the paramilitary group. Every single one.

Testimonies like these, of some abdication of actorness, were occasional but not frequent. However, they were *in every instance* rationalized and explained through an emphasis on the environmental setting within which violence had taken place. L46 had spent a significant amount of time articulating the circumstances he had grown up in, and the violence he experienced (as in the data from Thematic Chapter 1).

This framing of some passivity *and/with* agency (the implications of which will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapter) was narrated consistently. For instance, L40 observed, "You had... young boys like ourselves... growing up being recruited – willingly recruited by the way, not forcibly." He mentioned that for him,

There was family influence, I don't mean being pushed, but my family were already involved in the UVF. And when I seen what was happening in this road, when I was 16 I'd made the decision that I wanted to become involved in this.

Similarly, L41 told me that prominent figures in Northern Irish society had provoked his involvement, and so I asked him if he had considered himself "fully rational". His answer was intriguing: he immediately answered in the negative, but then explained that he had actively subscribed to his own 'radicalization':

I was quite taken, besotted, completely and utterly radicalized by Iain Paisley. I went to Paisley's church with my uncle, *I wasn't going to hear the gospel... I was going hoping to hear him make calls for the government to take on the IRA... And I believed that every word Iain Paisley said was true (emphasis added).*

He maintained that one of the proudest moments of his life was taking the oath with the UVF, and spoke passionately and with satisfaction about loyalist violence having prevented Northern Ireland from being reunited with the Republic of Ireland. We will soon see how Prevent invariably silences

this testimony from ex-militants, by excluding the possibility for any active or 'logical' participation in violence (or, ultimately, any meaningful political contestation: see Thematic Chapter 4).

Republicans often contested the term 'radicalization', seeing it as a term that compromised the notion of determined and purposeful involvement. R30, a former member of the Official IRA, vociferously argued that the terms 'radicalization' and 'de-radicalization' are mobilized to demonize those who pose a threat to the existing order. He then remarked,

People go about their business, they're just like sort of robots. And whatever comes on TV is right. And they would regard somebody like me as totally off-his-head, revolutionary, 'radicalized', you know, and all I wanted was one-man-one-vote, fair employment, fair housing and all.

Occasionally I felt unable to bring the term radicalization up in interviews, and I would never have asked many if they considered themselves 'radicalized'. The common refrain from all interviews was that if the (political) environment had changed, then "the conflict mightn't've ever happened; we could have had an entirely different history – because there would have been no need to use violent means" (R33). Had I deployed the framing of 'radicalization' in this context, they would have universally accepted that the circumstances around them had instigated their involvement. In conversations with those who were talking about family and friends being shot and killed, or having protests for equal votes beaten off the streets, it would have felt particularly inappropriate to ask this question. This inability to ask questions that are central assumptions of Prevent itself displays a fundamental disjuncture between the two worlds of knowledge.

If I had asked them literally, all republicans and loyalists alike would have accepted that they were 'influenced' towards violence by their material environments, as we saw in the previous chapter, and by 'radicalizing others' (like politicians of the day, especially for loyalists). The idea of being influenced, however, was always qualified by deployments of active language to help them explain their involvement. Regardless of how much regret they carried, regardless of how frustrated they were at being discriminated against in society, and regardless of how dismayed they were with the Good Friday Agreement settlement, these stories were the same. Heath-Kelly writes that the conditions of victory or defeat can contribute to the telling of different stories by ex-militants (2015). My sample was limited in the sense that former combatants from 'the Troubles' who might be ashamed of their violence tend to avoid talking about it, and it is difficult to interview these people as a result (L31). Maybe my research is made up of (self-identifying) victors, and their stories are shaped accordingly (Sermijn, Devlieger, & Loots 2008; Allen 2017). I might not have interviewed the thousands of ex-militants who saw themselves as 'radicalized' and who wished they had been spoken out of violence

preemptively. However, I spoke to several ex-militants who were religious converts (including L26 and L41) and who saw a distinction between their youthful, violent selves and their forgiven, adult identities, and every ex-militant who commented spoke of regret that violence had taken place (the complication of singular subjectivities is explored in the following chapter).

Despite the complexity and nuance of ex-militant testimonies and their deployment of agency, the claims made by Prevent about terrorist violence stand in contrast; they are universalized, and resolutely leave no room for agency, as we will now see.

Prevent's Assumptions of Risk-Infused Vulnerability

Where ex-militants spoke of external influencing factors and some passivity accompanied by conscious involvement in violence, Prevent constructs an absolute disconnection between meaningful intent and 'terroristic subjectivities' by mobilizing discourses of vulnerability. There can be no considered or deliberate act of harm: genuine commitment is necessarily absent from cases that might pose risk (as we saw earlier), precisely because those who might perpetrate violence are inherently vulnerable, misguided, and solely in need of pastoral guidance (Elshimi 2015; Lindekilde 2015).

The assumption of the vulnerability of Channel cases was consistently relayed to me during interviews with Prevent practitioners. My second interview was with the director of a company that produces theatre productions to disseminate Prevent messaging for young people (PCC2). At one point during our conversation in his living room, he mentioned that children are vulnerable by definition: "The more we looked into [researching for productions], the more we don't specifically target vulnerable young people, I think it's that young people are vulnerable." This was a sentiment carried over into all of my interviews. Sir David Omand made the point to me that young people and children are impressionable, and therefore more amenable to intervention. Yet although children are particularly vulnerable through the eyes of neoliberal risk-thinking, prominent Prevent practitioner William Baldet argues that *everybody* is ultimately vulnerable, a site of possible risk (2018). Assumptions of vulnerability (and consequent risk) that Prevent makes about its subjects carry through into Channel interventions; the emphasis on pastoral care and support was narrated consistently by mentors. CM10, continuing to speak about the boy he had described as "not trying to be a terrorist", said,

So that boy now needs Prevent support, and he's given that support, and he's talking to me and he understands "oh OK", so ideas need refining, and there are other sources to turn to. But I'm not going hard on him and saying, "Ah! How can you listen to a terrorist?!" you know. So it's almost like mothering him.

Time and time again feminized articulations of vulnerability were mobilized to justify the protection of society through Prevent (Gray & Franck 2019). This often gendered, supposedly nurturing mechanism described by CM10 was consistent with the testimony of other mentors. Regardless of the boy's lack of intent that we saw earlier, he has been visibilized as presenting ERG risk factors (as a site of risk on a racialized basis; see: Kundnani 2009; Wilcox 2017; Pettinger 2020a,b; Younis & Jadhav 2020). Being a child means that he is vulnerable and impressionable. Riskiness, the ability to pose a danger to the status quo, necessarily emanates from a place of irrationality. The assemblage of risk preemption cannot accept that those that might pose a danger could be credible actors, because danger is antithetical to its logic. The imposition of risky subjectivities onto 'the vulnerable' suppresses the possibility that the potentially-violent may possess agency; after all, they are fundamentally illogical and irrational (Chandler 2016). Ex-militant testimony however disturbs these claims made by preemptive governance: their stories revolved around their involvement in violence emerging from a place of conscious choice *as well as* being influenced by external circumstances.

Various interviewees said that Prevent could be 'spoken of' as a safeguarding technology (Plead15,PC5,CM11), a framing that has emerged as Prevent has transformed through time (Heath-Kelly & Strausz 2018). The apparent makeover of Prevent, where its prized jewel Channel now operates "to *safeguard* those at risk of being drawn into terrorism" (HM Government 2015, 2, emphasis added), has been driven politically. CM11, who had held significant regional responsibility for Prevent in a previous post, told me that officials had realized (especially Muslim) communities were resistant to the implementation of Prevent in their area. He continued, "So we said 'OK we'll get rid of the term *Prevent*... in the community and talk about "how do we *safeguard* these people?"' It's amazing how people change." When asked how successful he thought Prevent might have been during the latest Northern Irish conflict, PC6 both justified the methodology of this thesis (looking at ex-militants from the Troubles against Prevent's assumptions) and deployed safeguarding logics to explain why violence occurs (demonstrating the ignorance of risk-thinking to ex-militant testimony):

I think they had such a focus on the military aspect of the war if you like, that prevention at an early stage- I think safeguarding has become more of a thing than it was back then. If you think of all forms of abuse – sexual, anything else – we're a lot better at dealing with it now than we were in the 70s and 80s. So I guess there's natural learning as far as that's concerned."

Framing the political environment within former combatants detailed as "abuse" that requires "safeguarding" de-spatializes and de-temporalizes the structures and systemic oppression they spoke of, bringing everything back to the specific time and place within which the abuse occurs: it is perpetrated by individuals rather than a result of environments, and should be dealt with on a case-

by-case basis. Had I suggested to ex-militants that their involvement was a result of ‘abuse’ and a problem solvable through safeguarding them, I imagine they might have laughed or been offended, but certainly they would have left me in no doubt they felt it ridiculous. CM11 situated Channel as *inseparable* from its pastoral functionality, saying that “for every Channel referral [that] is made, a safeguarding referral is now [also] made.” In this account there is no space for structural considerations, or awareness that patterns of behaviour might have been produced by something other than the individual, that a broader political environment could have contributed to the incidence of violence. Whilst this thesis does not make structuralist claims as to the causes of violence, the circularity of Prevent’s narrative is disrupted by listening to stories from ex-militants, who spoke of an active engagement with their surroundings, of their own response to their environments. Prevent, conversely, through its practitioners’ testimony and its own practice, circumscribes the problem at the space of the individual, and at the specific moment of abuse that occurs against the individual. It seeks to intervene in order (largely) to protect them, rather than assume the individual might want to effect change, or respond to that abuse (Stephens, Sieckelink, & Boutellier 2019) – a point explored more in the final chapter. Elshimi (2017, 169) writes that these rationalities of intervention on ‘vulnerable’ people suppresses the ability of individuals “to freely and rationally negotiate and contextualise their wider political, social and religious terrain.” This conception of the universality of potential vulnerability, and the consequent “rob[bing of] the subject of its belief in the possibility for autonomy, [is central] neoliberal thinking and practice” (Reid 2016b, 71). So as Prevent and the preemptive rationality are embedded ever-more into communities, as risk-consciousness becomes rhizomatic and embedded in contemporary societies, the space for political contestation shrinks.

These framings of vulnerability were especially patent when officials noted that Prevent focuses on protecting the individual *from themselves*, often deploying mental health concerns as the justification for intervention. CM10 framed his typical case, and his role, in the following way:

Maybe you have an emotional problem, maybe you have mild Asperger’s or something. Some mental health problem... For me it’s a very caring way to safeguard a person from succumbing to his vulnerability, or her vulnerability. And stopping that person from becoming groomed or recruited.

Another mentor (CM1), after revealing that “45-50% of my cases have got ASD [Autistic Spectrum Disorder]”, also told me that,

There’s always an element of wanting to prevent risk of harm, and what I do is to try and be part of that safeguarding process. So safeguarding that person from harm, and safeguarding them from further risk of putting themselves in jeopardy. So them and others. So my

responsibility is to safeguard that individual as well as others that might become at risk from their behaviour.

The 'politics of pity' is consistently emphasized over the 'politics of risk' by Prevent officials (although the constant re-visibility of risk-potential is central: see Thematic Chapter 3). Shown by the discursive positioning of 'risky behaviour' being passively "succumbed" to (as in the quote from CM10 above), and mentors emphasizing the prevalence of mental health conditions as central to their work (CM1,CM10,CM11), this rationality sits at odds with the testimony of former combatants: their narratives told of impassioned and moral conviction being central to their involvement. Indeed, many spoke about how those who were *not* fully committed would compromise operations, and were an unwanted liability. In comparison with the testimony provided by former combatants from Northern Ireland, the assumption of vulnerability and the imposition of identities devoid of agency was central to discussions of Prevent interventions. The subjugation of agential responses to environments through the deployment of vulnerability and safeguarding discourses means that it becomes logical to simply direct people away from engagement in violence, a point which will now be explored.

Being Persuaded from Violence

It is clear how central frames of commitment were to ex-militants' accounts of their involvement. We have seen throughout the thesis so far, and will see below, how Prevent functions through the premise that potentially-risky individuals can be coaxed from engaging or 'moving down the path' towards criminality. I put this central assumption of Prevent to ex-militants: how did they describe the possibility of being 'preempted' or coaxed from engagement in the first place? Did they frame their commitment as stronger than the possibility of being persuaded away from violence?

Ex-militants on 'Preemptive De-radicalization'

All former combatants balked at the idea that somebody could hypothetically have spoken or directed them away from involvement prior to their engagement. In every instance the answer to my question was, other things being equal, the most emphatic "no". Towards the mid-point of my fieldwork in Northern Ireland, I recognized that I knew how the interaction would go when I made this query. I would ask, "Do you think you could have been talked out of engagement, by anybody?" and they would emphatically respond, "No." I would wait a couple of seconds for them to elaborate (they rarely did), repeated back to them, "No?" and they would then reiterate, "No" and only then elaborate. After this by-now-expected exchange with one interviewee (L40) towards the end of my fieldwork, he continued: "Definitely not in those days. I wouldn't listen to anybody." *Even before you*

joined? “Again you’re back into dealing with a 15-16 year old. The decision was made.” L35 replied in a similar vein, “My mind was made up. My mind was made up when I was 13. I didn’t know what I was and do, but I knew I was gonna do something.”

Considering social relations as exchanges of force was a theme that extended from discussion around the structural or environmental violence that former combatants were exposed to. Answering the question “Before the circumstances changed and you felt that violence was no longer necessary, do you think you could have been talked out of violence?”, R28 replied,

No. No. I understood that I could not be intimidated, they couldn’t intimidate me, they couldn’t scare me, that if they wanted to stop me, they would have to kill me. But there was no other way. Nothing they could say to me was going to change my view that we would have to get the British to negotiate at the table.

In a response that touched on similar themes L26 spoke at length about his view of reproducing violence. After a discussion where he established himself as coming from a troubled home, and as having been bullied constantly by peers and beaten by teachers, he spoke about how violence could have been prevented through a political solution. I asked him, *Do you think that in that place of... wanting a political solution, do you think that a family member or a friend or someone you respected in the community, do you think they could have talked you out of that journey towards violence?* He replied,

Me personally, no, it wouldn’t have happened, cos by that stage I believe I was too far ingrained in the culture of might is right, and the weak go to the wall... The IRA were bullying our people, bombing, slaughtering, someone had to stand up and do something. Otherwise we could walk with our heads down as cards. There was no choice involved. You had to go in, you had to do it, and then you had to go and do it again, proactively, to make sure they understood that if you created violence, this is what’s and happen to you and your people. If you support those who’re creating violence you’re a legitimate target. Now people understood that, and suddenly things started cooling down. So you take yourself into the situation of being persuaded out of that as your question said. You can’t be persuaded out of full commitment like that, by someone that’s gonna say “come on let’s get yourself home.”

The logic that *violence produces rewards* – which this particular former combatant had consistently been exposed to – was narrated as incentivizing his engagement in the conflict. Responding to (perceived unjustified) force with force of their own was a particularly dominant theme in interviews. The extract from L26’s interview was the most explicitly Hobbesian any discussion on this topic became, but the sentiment of deploying force outwardly to combat inbound violence – to protect themselves and their communities – was the implicit sentiment from all interviews on both sides. For

many, their framing of being unable to be drawn away from engaging in violence was situated around the logic that violence can produce 'good', committing them to enacting their own violence.

In several cases where family members suspected or guessed that they had become involved in violence, these relatives had tried to dissuade them from continued involvement. L27 mentioned that a very good friend, who was closely involved with the founders of the UVF (and who therefore had significant credibility within the loyalist community), had spoken with him about L27's involvement. During the conversation, this individual had tried to dissuade L27 from engaging in violence. I asked L27 whether this conversation had made a difference to his thought processes or behaviour, and he replied, "No I just laughed. I seen it as the waffle, while I respected him, I just saw it as the foolish waffle of an old man." Speaking to R22, I probed whether people in his life had discouraged him away from involvement:

Of course! [Me: *Were they family of friends or both?*] Both. Mostly family, but friends as well but mostly family. [Me: *Did that have an impact on you?*] No! [laughs] [Me: (Laughs) *Why?*] Well, again it comes down to what I've been saying to you, the more politically aware and conscious I become of what's going on about me, the more I suppose become committed to republicanism, more committed to the notion that we need a united Ireland. And being engaged in struggle was the way to achieve that.

Laughter indicates an incongruity of some sort within the same assemblage (Beattie 1779, 318). This interviewee had just spent ten minutes explaining how he had faced significant oppression from the state, discussing his involvement with regard to anti-colonial struggle. It was apparent to me in this moment that I had produced a rupture by reducing his years of frustrations and exposure to environmental violence to a few conversations. R38 said that his mother had pressed him not to continue, asking about the legitimacy of violence, but he described not being able to see past the context within which he was living:

I can't see what argument [would have persuaded me not to have engaged in violence]... No, I couldn't have been talked out of it, no matter who came to me. Enough people tried... The facts on the ground didn't allow for benign interpretation of what the British were doing. And any arguments that would've been put forward to us, that somehow the British were benign, and [those arguments given as] a reason for not engaging in violence [would not have worked]. Cos we were always seeing these people were all around beating us, torturing and killing us, what the fuck were we supposed to do? Just take it from them?

Many former combatants explicitly re-interpreted the question 'could anybody have talked you out of engagement' as relating to the external circumstances within which they lived. Asked the same

question, *Do you think you could've been talked out of violence at any point, and if so by whom?*, L26 replied,

Yes I could've been talked out of violence very easily, by British ministers in the British government, or the government of my country here... coming along and saying "right we're going to be proactive and we're going to take on the IRA."

Many interviewees engaged with the question this way, framing their 'counter-radicalization' (where 'radicalization' is associated with a trajectory towards engagement in criminality) as linked inextricably with some material change in circumstances. L49 echoed this sentiment, responding to the same question with, "Well at the end of the day I supported the Good Friday Agreement, so if the ingredients were there to bring about peace, then surely."

Prevent: Persuading Cases Away from the Edge

Set against the deliberate engagement with which ex-militant stories revolved around, Prevent establishes a subject able to be persuaded away from 'risky' activities. The mobilization of vulnerability discourses opens up space for the premise that "people who are identified as being vulnerable [can be stopped from] being drawn into terrorism" (HM Government 2015, 5).

Practitioners narrated an expectation that they are able to navigate 'vulnerable people' out of the journey towards potential criminality through discussions and social support, precisely because of the vulnerability and openness of those receiving support from the programme. Mentors told me on a couple of occasions that their mentees had shown an explicit desire to be mentored: "A lot of the time people are like accessible and are like, 'Look I don't know why I feel like this, but I'm open to finding out and I'm open to new experiences'" (CM1). This sentiment was corroborated by a Prevent coordinator (PC5), who described this particular mentor as being effective because he is "approachable for young people." Some mentees' eagerness to be involved in the scheme was also relayed to me through their desperation upon the near-conclusion of their mentoring (CM3): "You can see the ones who've genuinely connected, they start to get anxious and say, 'We've only got three sessions left, can you not extend them please?'" Rather than being enthusiastic about the prospect of personal mentorship, or being unsure of themselves and needing help to work out how to deal with problems, Northern Irish former combatants coherently produced very specific stories that they recollected as generating very intense feelings, which in turn they used to explain their involvement. Rather than expressing the desire to receive the pastoral support of Prevent (Elshimi 2015), they narrated themselves as willing and able to navigate their environments through what they considered reasonable responses (such as keeping out of the way, joining street protests, or ultimately engaging

in violence). PC6, a prominent Prevent official, mentioned the begrudging acceptance that some people showed before entering the process of receiving Channel mentorship:

You have to sell it sometimes, you know, it's not every time where people go, "Brilliant, when do we start?!" Do you know what I mean? More often than not, it's, "Tsch ahh do I have to?" "Well I think it's and be good for you" type of thing. So you do have to sell it a wee bit, you do have to maybe not coerce people but I suppose sell the benefits of it... They might get additional support with mental health assessments and housing and things like that.

The concept that people in (historic or contemporary) Northern Ireland might display an openness to state-provided, individual-level support without any political reforms, was so far from former combatant testimony that R43 labelled such a premise "nonsense" (more on this in Thematic Chapter 4). All former combatants spoke of having family members and friends shot dead by the British army, seeing republican bombs terrorize their neighbourhoods (and fearing for their survival), or being attacked indiscriminately by loyalists (in a context of structural disenfranchisement), as producing their own anger and fierce sense of injustice, which in turn encouraged them to engage in violence. Needless to say, I did not suggest to my Northern Irish interviewees that the deliverance of social and mental health support might have enticed them from becoming involved.

Obviously aware that Prevent officials are not experts on the Northern Irish conflict, I expected, as they operate ultimately as counter-terrorism officials, that they must have considered what might have been able to draw 'vulnerable people' like the former combatants I interviewed away from engagement in violence in the past. So I posed the question, *Do you think Prevent would have worked during the Northern Irish conflict?* Occasionally in their responses, officials remarked that Britain would have done well to approach the Northern Irish conflict through the framework of Prevent. They accepted that the way we approach counter-terrorism has changed significantly but suggested a pre-emptive, mentorship based approach would have been useful to dissuade Northern Irish youth from joining paramilitaries. One of these, PC6, was very familiar with the history of the conflict (and actually told me that he had experienced one Northern Irish Prevent case). He made the case that during the conflict,

They probably woulda been well served to look at social and economic factors, people's vulnerabilities, people's friendship groups and grievances and all those sorts of things to try and not necessarily tell them "you're wrong, you should never aspire to have a united Ireland" but "here's why you shouldn't progress it through violent means".

The notion held that former combatants were ultimately always vulnerable and could have been preemptively spoken out of violence. (It should be noted that many of these responses assumed a

racialized predisposition, focusing solely on *republican*, Catholic-perpetrated violence). Had PC6 spoken to those who *had* engaged in violence during ‘the Troubles’, I expected that he might reconsider his cases, and the broader terrorism-related framing within which his work is situated, very differently.

Where the two worlds of knowledge seemed especially divergent was when both sets of interviewees spoke about responding to grievance. Former combatant stories were held together by extensive descriptions of engaging with their environments, narrating frustrations and their own attempts to shield themselves from or confront injustices. After expressing exasperation with the status quo and the sense of having no other choice, they redressed the imbalance through illegal means. Prevent functions through limiting the space within which reactions can occur. The recasting of grievances as subjective and as ultimately unimportant is fundamental to how agency is understood and de-mobilized by the preemptive rationality. PC6 said, “Sometimes it hasn’t even been a real grievance, in my eyes anyway, but that doesn’t matter cos if it feels real to them you kinda have to deal with it.” The logic upholding this practitioner’s statement is that some grievances are real, and others are imagined. We will deal with the latter more in the following chapter, but for now it is worth exploring how the imposition of Prevent’s privileged knowledge and practice delegitimizes both of these. For the ‘imagined’ problems which aren’t real grievances, because those receiving Channel interventions have misinterpreted their grievance as objective, their ability to negotiate with their environments (and their very agency) is necessarily compromised. In this and, all that is needed is cognitive enlightenment (Rose 1991,1992). The power of discussion was consistently posited by practitioners as a potential solution to pacify those who might otherwise turn to violence. One Channel mentor (CM1) even discussed this in relation to the Northern Irish conflict – without my prompt:

Had we drawn out people’s suspicions and fears and like senses of grievance and stuff like that, perhaps we’d be in a different situation. It goes for the same with issues around Irish Republican terrorism, and stuff like that, if people had listened to each other on both sides, maybe we wouldn’t have seen decades of atrocities happening, maybe we wouldn’t have seen children and you know elderly people getting blown up in churches and stuff like that... I use the IRA as an example of supporting my point of view that ultimately people need to sit down and discuss the issues.

Remembering how Northern Irish interviewees framed their involvement as a duty, an inevitability, and a fight for survival, the persistence of this view amongst Prevent officials was startling. It points to the particularization and localization of affective issues, and to the perception that grievances are

only ever personal problems to be negotiated on a private, individual basis (see Thematic Chapter 4; also see: Giroux 2004; Roberts 2004; Mountz & Hyndman 2006; Aradau & van Munster 2012).

In a couple of cases, a slightly more critical lens was adopted. One Channel mentor (CM3) answered the question whether Prevent would have worked in the following way:

It depends on what the grievances were. What were the grievances of the Irish? You've got to look at the grievances of the individual. And can you address those grievances by trying to convince them otherwise? Or was it a political grievance? I mean if it was political then you have to deal with it politically. I mean they wanted independence didn't they. So it's not something you can do with Prevent.

So whilst the pacification-through-private-negotiation perspective is pervasive, not all practitioners bought into totalized individualization. Yet even this slightly more critical account – which concedes that political environments may affect human behaviour – shows the prominence of vulnerability-thinking: the quote was infused with *individual grievance* rather than considering structural oppression. Prevent assumes an explicitly psychological approach, which doesn't – cannot – look to external circumstances. It examines only vulnerable individuals, who have been wrongly convinced that the status quo is bad enough that a response is necessary, and at the same time any structural considerations are necessarily not considered. A closed loop has therefore been formed around this methodology, enabling its self-fulfilment (Ericson 2008). If grievances are real, goes this logic, then Prevent cannot act. Therefore, and despite contradictions examined in the following chapter, its practitioners understand Channel cases' grievances as subjective perceptions – which have been pathologically twisted into potentially physical materializations of risk – rather than objective realities.

Conclusion

The dominant narrative from all former combatant testimony, with regard to how they made the decision to engage in violence, was that both external influences – which changed how they perceived their choices – and their own choices in *relation* to those external influences, mattered. They accepted some abdication of a hypothetical totalized agency, by describing extenuating circumstances as inciting their involvement in conflict (occasionally referring to themselves as having been “traumatized”; see Thematic Chapter 4). Yet these accounts were never separated from an equally-emphatic admission – sometimes pride – of their own proactive engagement, even when they had regrets concerning their involvement or the peace process. We then see Prevent constructing a ‘de-radicalizable’ subject that necessarily possesses intrinsic vulnerability, and a subject *able to be enticed* out of relative riskiness – because the very presence of riskiness is merely a result of non-agency.

The first two Thematic Chapters have examined how ex-militants explained their own positionality – their motivations and sense of agency – and how this testimony subverts the logic of counter-radicalization interventions. We have seen some of the consequences of the substantial disjuncture between these two discourses. Most particularly this is seen in the form of the suppression of spatial and temporal relations that preemptive governance generates (the meaning behind stories disappears), and the problematization of vulnerability as inherently associated with riskiness (rendering potentially disruptive agents as possessing no autonomy). Thematic Chapters 3 and 4 move away from assessing assumptions of individual profiles in relation to stories that drew ex-militants into violence. We move into an exploration of the premises and consequences of the two worlds of knowledge. Uncovering further hidden forms of knowledge and contrast between the two discourses, we investigate risk-thinking itself and how it silences the ability to imagine potentially conflicting realities. Later, in Thematic Chapter 4, we will finally see how both sets of interviewees imagine the emancipated future given their respective conceptions of ‘risk’.

How Risk-Knowledge is (un)Known (Thematic Chapter 3)

Introduction

The previous chapter explored how agency was narrated by ex-militants and Prevent practitioners, showing that where Prevent assumed the vulnerability and irrationality of subjects who might pose risk, those whose risk actually materialized articulated their agency through more nuanced frames that allowed for them being influenced alongside conscious deliberation. In this third thematic chapter, I build upon the conclusion that the risky subject Prevent imagines bears little-to-no relation to its retrospectively most ideal constituents, by investigating how both sets of interviewees considered the concepts of preemption and risk. I continue in this chapter to investigate the relationship between silenced and hegemonic knowledge across eras of British counterterrorism, by utilizing the frame provided by Deleuze and Guattari (2010) in their seminal work on the dualistic modes of being, between nomadology and the State. If the State's counter-radicalization assemblage is concerned with striation and ordering (as we will shortly see), how do ex-militants describe the notion of being striated and ordered? Deleuze and Guattari's work on nomadology is useful here, to allow us to unpack two fundamentally different ways of knowing. Their central discussion revolves around the State's concern with organizing and categorizing (crops, buildings, people) being antithetical to the logic of nomads, which is concerned with flowing and negotiation (through movement across open spaces, rather than being fixed down).

Prevent practitioners spoke of an ability to know and manage objective spaces of risk in their constituents, and I was struck by how ex-militants were unconcerned with investigating or considering 'their own risk'. Ultimately this chapter seeks to assess how risk is a) known; b) categorized; and c) seen by the State (Amoore & Raley 2017), and the relationship between this ordering knowledge and the testimony of ex-militants. Did ex-militants consider themselves knowable, categorizable, or seeable? To compare these knowledges and determine where silences between discourses might exist, the chapter firstly looks at the preoccupation of preemptive governance to *know*. We find the endeavour to categorize and fix down contrasts sharply with the contented *non-knowing* (Deleuze & Guattari 2010) central to ex-militant interviews. It then explores the disjunctures between how interviewees narrated simple/ complicated, (non-)ordered subjectivities. We find that Prevent subjects are categorized into binary groups, in-or-out, and are described as existing along straight lines between fixed points (extremist/ safe). When this discourse is contrasted with the stories of those whom Prevent would have wished to categorize and order, we find a resistance to these binary logics: ex-militants articulated having multiple and conflicting motivations and subjectivities. Finally the chapter looks at how risks are made visible by Prevent, and how ex-militants narrated the potential

for (their) 'riskiness' to be spotted. How is seeing through the eyes of preemption navigated; are all spaces seen, or are only certain moments and spaces looked at? Does the gaze of the preemptor make sense to ex-militants, or do they reject the idea of 'seeing risk' entirely?

The primary question driving this chapter is *how is knowledge about risk known, between the two discourses?* Where does knowing end, and unknowing begin? How do – and can – these disparate ways of being relate to each other? The following discussion helps us see how the universalizing logics underpinning the dispositif of risk (of suspicion and anxiety) might be subverted, through the subjugated experience of those about whom Prevent makes the most foundational claims.

(not) Knowing 'Risk'

In *Nomadology: The War Machine*, Deleuze and Guattari explore two disparate forms of knowledge. Explicating the clashing objectives and ways of being of the State and nomads, they describe how the State aspires towards territorializing and reterritorializing space, whereas nomads *deterritorialize* space. They write,

With the legal [Statist] model, one is constantly reterritorializing around a point of view, on a domain, according to a set of constant relations; but with the ambulant [nomadic] model, the process of deterritorialization constitutes and extends the territory itself (2010, 45).

These two contrasting modes of being are foundational to understanding how interviewees from my research articulated their (lack of) intentions with regard to 'knowing risk'. The logic of the State is concerned with territorializing and reterritorializing so that categorization and ordering can take place. The logic of nomads, alternatively, is concerned with deterritorializing, so that movement continues. Throughout this chapter, we can see how the assemblage of Prevent territorializes and reterritorializes space, and the logic of Prevent can be considered here as 'the State' using the framing of Deleuze and Guattari, because it locates and intervenes upon certain fixed points. Equally, ex-militants demonstrated a disinterest in territorializing space, and can be considered demonstrating a 'nomadic' form of being in this context given their rejection of hypothetical discussions about where risk might have resided. Instead of territorializing space (engaging with hypothetical questions to 'find out') they demonstrate a contentment with *not* knowing the answers, not having to reassemble how their past might have been altered in order to *know*. This first section of the chapter explores how Prevent engages in war-gaming hypothetical futures, whereas former combatants appeared overwhelmingly disinterested in reconfiguring their stories or futures. Prevent engages consistently with counterfactual knowledge and reimagining states of being, but ex-militants saw their actions (outside of structural, political reform) in terms of inevitabilities, rarely considering whether they might have

made fundamentally different choices. Their disinterest in reassembling and hypothesizing – especially when we bear in mind their accompanying interest in moving towards meaningful peace – renders noticeable the anxious narrative told by Prevent about *continually searching for signs of risk*.

Former Combatants: Content Unknowing

Where ambiguity and a lack of knowledge around the subject's risk profile produces anxiety for Prevent (explored below), former combatants generally disregarded any discussion of hypotheticals surrounding their histories. We earlier discussed how, whilst occasionally mentioning that they might have taken a different path involving merely more effective and directed violence, they overwhelmingly articulated their action in terms of inevitabilities. Throughout my interviews I consistently attempted to pose questions to them as though I was a Prevent official, trying to understand 'how to improve Prevent' or 'how preemption could learn from their experiences' (in effect, colliding the two worlds of knowledge). I asked questions like, "*What would have made you not become involved in paramilitarism?*", and, "*Why did you get involved, but your friends and family didn't?*"

One loyalist interviewee (L44) struck me as the most remarkably straightforward person I had ever encountered, seeming the type who might have been a good detective. I attempted to tease out some possibly more concrete risk factors than those given in the ERG list (Figure 4). Wearing my Prevent practitioner hat, I asked, *Looking back would you have made the same choices again as you did back then?* He responded,

That's a very hard thing to say, because as I say I've forgotten the context really, I was a reasonably – in my opinion – rational person, I took that decision at that time and the likelihood is I would probably arrive at the same conclusion again [if] the same set of circumstances presented themselves. Obviously if they presented themselves now I'd be too old, I wouldn't be fit to run away! But if I was a young man in a similar set of circumstances with the same mindset... it took me a long time to become involved, a relatively long time, you know there was violence going on for a few years before it became too much for me, and considering other things in relation to it.

Although other responses were less couched, the sense of inevitability relayed here was typical of all responses. R33, who estimated that 50 friends of his had been killed during the conflict, told me on a tour that he couldn't "dwell on making different choices, given the circumstances." Another republican (R22) answered the question, *Do you think you could have been talked out of engagement whilst you were still engaged, and if so by whom and how?* with the simple remark that:

Well the short answer is it didn't happen... Particularly members of my family, parents and that, they didn't want me to be involved, and they tried to stop me [but that] didn't happen. You know it's as straightforward as that.

They pushed back against or didn't engage with these questions, because their imaginations were being stretched: their account, consistently, was that their circumstances were so extreme that their reactions were a natural (and desirable) consequence, and were inevitable.

Many often refused to engage with the conversation on the basis that they couldn't answer, and that the question itself was unfair. I asked R48 *Would you go back... and change anything about your involvement?* He replied,

No I don't think it's a fair question, I don't think you can ask a question as to what I would have done differently. You might think you mighta done something different, but I don't think you can answer it... I think you can give reasons for what you did at the time. I think the things that you did do were right in your opinion, they were right at the time.

Another (L40) spoke even more explicitly. To the question *So what would have made yourselves not [become] involved in paramilitarism?* he retorted, "I actually just hate talking hypothetically, [about] 'what if'." I asked R34 to speculate about the future, saying, *Do you think there'd ever be conditions that would ever justify the use of violence again?* His response:

A person asked me one time about the hunger strike, "If the situation arose again would you go on the hunger strike again?" I says, "It's a hypothetical question, you can't insist-" "No no no but I'm talking about if it did." And so I says, "Right, I would." "You're a fucking lunatic!" he says! [*laughs*] But it was an impossible question, you can't answer a question like that... The political situation [from back] then is never gonna come round again.

Generally these conversations were centred around trying to encourage them to reformulate their histories, looking back to deduce whether some form of (Prevent-style) intervention might have produced a different result. But they resisted to 'territorialize' this space of knowledge on a consistent basis, suggesting the premise of the question was unfair. Additionally, they would complain about being asked hypothetical questions, and often refused to answer why they became involved but others didn't, suggesting they only could speak for themselves – including L46 who had written his PhD on loyalist motivations. Occasionally I problematized their potential future risk-profiles (*how likely would you engage again?*). They consistently responded by redirecting the conversation back towards the environment and other groups (including the State) as producing conditions where violence

appeared logical, deterritorializing the space in which perfect information upon their riskiness might have come about.

Prevent: Anxiety to Know, and to Fix

In the same moment as questioning former combatants like a Prevent practitioner might have done, I was interested in how Prevent officials narrated their *intent* to know risk. Where many former combatants described an aversion to engaging with hypotheticals, the logic of preemption functions through an acquisition of information and the playing out of possibilities, to know where risk resides (Ericson & Haggerty 1997; Aradau & van Munster 2008; Amoore 2013; Martin 2014,2018; Heath-Kelly 2017a).

Navigating the unknown through hypothesizing about what has not happened is fundamental to Prevent, and preemptive rationalities (Massumi 2015a; McCulloch & Wilson 2016). The architect of Prevent, Sir David Omand, mentioned that some of Prevent's work might be evaluated, but that ultimately this field relies upon counter-factual knowledge. As a result of this inbuilt reliance upon negotiating hypothetical knowledge, discussing the 'what ifs' of citizens' terrorism-propensity was consistently referred to by officials as standard practice. Despite this approach being comprehensively rejected by former combatants as a worthwhile exercise because of their lack of alternative choices and even discussing the *morality* behind their violence, Prevent practitioners adopted the rationale of testing and re-testing possible causes or inducements to violence. I was particularly struck by the entrenchment of this methodology when I observed official Prevent training. During the course, the video material and the host pointed to an ominous reflection: "It might be nothing – but it could be something" (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent training, provided by PC5). PC6 also made the comment that,

I think that's always one of the things in the back of my mind working in Prevent, managing risk... [The borderline cases that we reject] give me sleepless nights because you just never quite [know], it's human nature, you can't predict, you know!

These examples illustrate effectively that the 'promotion of security' through Prevent requires a condition of inherent *insecurity*, never knowing, and perpetual fear, always working to stave off the next attack (Aradau & van Munster 2007; Heath-Kelly 2016b). Rather than concede that they would never ultimately know the success of their work, this state of insecurity was described as *advancing* rather than interrupting the movement towards territorializing and reterritorializing space: there was never a moment in all my interviews with Prevent interviewees that they considered *not* looking, *not* searching for the "needle in the haystack" (Aradau & Blanke 2017, 373).

Because risk can't be objectively perceived, it requires alertness to signals that might be imagined to be corroborated with incidence of violence (Massumi 2015a, 10). As a result, the potential signifiers of terrorism risk are banal (see Thematic Chapter 1. Also see: Pettinger 2020a,b). CM3 said that “people might use vocabulary which is very offensive, and very dehumanizing, so you never know they might move on and do other things.” The constant state of alertness – to everything that might be associated with risk – which this modality requires is a fundamental feature of the endeavour to preempt and direct the future (Massumi 2015b). Practitioners told me that they won't be able to stop every attack, *but they will try* (Pettinger 2020b). This endeavour produces not peace and security but a cyclical fear and insecurity, because there is always more work to be done, more risk to unearth, more banal behaviours which could point to the presence of risk (Ericson 2008). In essence, it becomes a never-ending, self-perpetuating, and futile enterprise that reproduces only more anxiety and fear (Massumi 2015).

Deleuze and Guattari's seminal dialogue on nomadology, taken from *A Thousand Plateaus*, speaks about the inverse logics of the *intent to know* and the *intent not to know* (2010). Writing about how the State orders and striates, and how that which is *not* the State (in their writing, 'nomads', and in this context, the non-State former combatant) flows without fixed boundaries, they write,

It is the difference between a smooth (vectorial, projective, or topological) space and a striated (metric) space: in the first case 'space is occupied without being counted', and in the second case 'space is counted in order to be occupied' (2010, 18).

Where the purpose of the State is motivated to impose itself on the subject, to (re)order and provide its own meaning to and constrains upon the subject, former combatants expressed little urge to fix down or quantify risk. The difference in approaches to 'knowing risk' was especially evident when questioning R22 about the difference between those who did and those who didn't engage in violence (asking, again, from 'my position as a Prevent official'). He simply replied, “I never made the comparison.” Where the precautionary logic of Prevent displays symptoms of anxiety from a profoundly unsettled (and *unsettling*) position, testimony from Northern Irish ex-militants consistently demonstrated profoundly settled and un-reopenable reflections.

Prevent's methodology revolves around testing and re-testing hypothetical risk factors, to determine which possible combinations of behaviours might produce risk in which possible scenarios. PPolice9 spoke about some associations of 'risk factors' that might draw the attention of Prevent:

If you've got a 15 year-old lad who's saying “all Muslims should be killed” and the school's reported it to you, you go and speak to the teacher and his parents. That 15 year-old kid's comment could be [saying] “sorry mum I was being silly.” It goes on your records, and it's filed,

it's never looked at again or maybe reviewed at some point. Shelved and [we] go onto the next one. But if that child said that and had [also] been researching bomb-making online it's a different kettle of fish.

Prevent practitioners are concerned with knowing all possible risk-combinations, in order that those deemed potentially dangerous can be set before the surgical tools. We will see throughout the chapter that openly accepting contradictions was central to ex-militant testimony, whereas the preemptive modality is obsessed with comparing, reformulating, and fixing identities down into graspable and governable subjectivities. Prevent demands to imagine and direct the future, in order to construct the most productive trajectory for its constituents (Aradau & van Munster 2008). This requires knowing what the future could entail, and, as a result, its very *modus operandi* functions through deploying imaginative possibilities to know what these potential pathways are.

Why are we talking about the *intent to (not) know*? What is being silenced, excluded from the contemporary counter-terrorism discourse, when considering the two ways of seeing? The consequences will become clearer as we move through the chapter, but for now these fundamentally different forms of knowing – Prevent's anxious searching for the missing piece, former combatant disinterest in hypotheticals – highlight a profound disparity in how risk is understood. Prevent assumes a future-obsessed disregard for the past but former combatants generally looked backwards; as we saw when I pressed ex-militants (including those now actively working to promote peace) to speculate about their potential future risk, they consistently refused to engage in these conversations, suggesting that the question didn't make sense. The hypothetical questions didn't make sense because they framed their actions as an inevitability and even desirable given the circumstances. Prevent's knowledge-acquiring, risk-reformulating obsession shuts down the space for frustrated reactions to be considered a natural and inevitable consequence of a persistently insecure environment. This is important because it constructs the world merely in terms of risk factor recalibrations: rather than stopping for a moment to consider alternative explanations or solutions, everything becomes a possible point of individual (re)learning and (re)improvement – there simply is no other way to see. *Everything is negotiable* under this paradigm and political reform becomes unimportant: if we just negotiate more effectively with those whose trajectories may have led to violence, then violence won't occur. This is a never-ending game (Heath-Kelly 2016b). If violence is occurring, it isn't because an environment inevitably produces this reaction, it's merely because we haven't hypothesized about risk-profiles well enough. The war-gaming of hypotheticals with this aspiration in mind leads us down the route to more safety. Such a modality sets the gaze firmly on the specific context and specific moment, dehistoricizing and despatializing the discussion about why

people act, and automatically forbidding any conversation about broader political contexts (Jackson 2012).

Categorization

With such different starting points regarding the intention to know risk, how do these logics manifest in the speech and actions of interviewees? How does former combatants' disinterest in exploring hypotheticals relate to how they explained their subjectivity? And how does Prevent practitioners' obsession with wargaming the possible relations of risk factors influence how they categorize others? We will see that former combatants are content to territorialize and deterritorialize their subjectivities without having to *reterritorialize* them (Deleuze & Guattari 2010). In other words, they were content with imagining some articulations of their identity, but also to sit with apparent contradictions – and not look for resolutions to these conflicts in the next moment. They narrated *multiple simultaneous subjectivities*, using different and clashing characteristics to explain themselves and their involvement. Conversely, Prevent fixates upon manoeuvring the potential futures of its constituents, ascribing certain risk profiles to certain people, who are directed away from the possession of multiple motivations and instead ushered towards singular productiveness. 'Productivity' here is taken as the ability to surpass resilience and arrive at a point of thriving in the face of a turbulent environment (Reid 2019).

Former Combatants: Multiple Subjectivities

Continuity was central to former combatants' self-representation (see: Heath-Kelly 2016c; Joyce & Lynch 2017; da Silva 2019). They narrated their subjectivities (characters, ways of thinking, motivations) often as similar or even the same today as during the conflict. One question that I consistently asked them was *When did violence change as a legitimate strategy for you?* R37 provided a very typical response:

Well it has never changed as a legitimate strategy! I believe Irish people have the right to take up arms against the oppressor. I do believe at the time the armed struggle began back in 1968 and 1969 that it was the only form that was gonna bring about change. We had no democratic way of achieving change.

Their violence was not narrated retrospectively as wrong, nor their capacity for violence problematic, even in times of peace. This was narrated almost unvaryingly on both sides of the conflict, including with those who now work as peace activists. As has been repeated throughout this thesis, ex-militants

framed their actions as being contingent upon the circumstances in which they found themselves (Cash 1998; McAuley, Tonge, & Shirlow 2009). Although they no longer engage in violence and have ‘deterritorialized’ that space, they could openly consider reterritorializing it again (though, such space might always be deterritorialized in the next moment). Incidentally, Deleuze and Guattari (2010, 84) write that “this [constant movement] has obvious consequences: namely, this matter now can only be followed.” Although the philosophers refer to the ‘ideal type’ of nomadism – the perfect iteration of ambulence being only a hypothetical construction – it has implications for the governance of the potential terrorist. The State must follow those who might oppose it, always catching up with *their* movement. This is the form of knowledge we see in Prevent. We will later see how one practitioner describes its anxious search for risk as “an ever-changing treadmill” (PC5). One moment is defined by chasing down, another by slowing down and supporting, the next by chasing again. But its purpose is always to territorialize and reterritorialize; it does not deterritorialize space to leave it deterritorialized, and entirely give up the chase.

Former combatants recurrently spoke of themselves in unproblematic terms as having both peaceful and violent potential, with disparate, conflicting identities. Interviewees would often encourage me to consider for myself their position of possessing multiple and contradictory subjectivities – or multiple and contradictory ways of thinking and being. They knew me only as a peaceful and relatively friendly researcher, who had demonstrated no signs of any desire to engage in intentional harm. After telling me he had no regrets about his involvement, R38 began:

Where do you live? [Me: *Leicester.*] If France came into Leicester tomorrow morning because [the] British wanted Brexit, and the French and Germans didn’t and they shot 14 people in Leicester, before they crushed your head you’d want to shoot them! You might have reservations about Brexit and everything else but if they came in and shot people dead – your people on your streets – you’d say, ‘Fuck them, they deserve to be hit back!’ And if [people disagreed] you’d say, ‘Why do you not [think this way]?’

So here, and at various points during my two months of interviewing ex-militants, I was offered the opportunity to assume multiple subjectivities and hold potentially contradictory positions at the same time: a peaceful researcher, who might engage in violence. Comparing the movement and essence of nomads with the board game Go, Deleuze and Guattari write that the pieces

make the outside a territory in space; consolidate that territory by the construction of a second, adjacent territory; deterritorialize the enemy by shattering his territory from within; deterritorialize oneself by renouncing, by going elsewhere (2010, 5-6).

Importantly – evidenced by the final hypothetical question in the interview extract just above – the potential to harbour more than one, linear motivation was narrated to me as a reasonable, natural, even desirable state.

Occasionally former combatants would speak about their desire to engage in peaceful protest in order to bring about reform, and the trajectory towards violence as a negotiable continuum opened up by the distinct lack of peaceful alternatives. R30 remarked that boycotting Protestant shops

was a very powerful tool that people [used]. It's non-violent, and it's totally legitimized, [they were] quite right to do that... And that led on to moving from survival to a place where people thought that they could create utopia. Where they would be free and safe to do whatever they wanted, and allow other people to be in a similar position. So you move from survival to a place where you were more proactive in terms of the violence to create a bigger change, but all within that – for most people certainly that I knew – all believe they were doing it for the greater good.

Violence was described by this interviewee as existing within a fluid relationship with other, non-violent forms of protest, and in relation to constructing a utopia for the greater good. Physical violence was portrayed not as an exception, but as situated alongside non-criminal forms of action; not as a disconnected and momentary flash but as interconnected and related intimately to 'peaceful' resistance. Similarly, the move from physical violence back to non-violence was also relayed as a continuum, a negotiation with their environments: many supported ceasefires at various points during the conflict, and most encouraged a wholesale demobilization in the 1980s and early 1990s. R37 said that "by 1992-93 we realized that compromise would have to be on all sides, and the peace process was born."

In one particular moment during an interview with L26, I was struck by how he articulated his explanation around disparate and multiple motivations. He remarked that he had explored legal options, like joining the police and army, and then spoke about his recourse to illegal means. His Ulster Freedom Fighter (UFF) activities saw him involved bomb-making, transporting weapons and explosives, and shooting people in the head. He then described this role in a way that took me by surprise, declaring that he was "*having to be a counter-terrorist*. And counter-terrorism was a very reluctant thing at all times." Deploying gruesome violence was a security measure, one that combated violence in society. He continued, "You're morally reprehensible for your own actions, and yet [your actions] were seen to be absolutely necessary... it was a terrible schizophrenia." Non-linear, conflicting positions like these were common: after explaining that he felt "morally justified" for his involvement, R23 said,

The only regrets I have is that we took life. Really, I don't wanna be contradic- it doesn't keep me awake at night but I feel a bit that all those people [are] dead, it's a pity the British government didn't bring about reform in a meaningful manner.

Even though this interviewee did not want to sound contradictory, these conflicting remarks typified the sentiment that was narrated over and over again by ex-militants: active and necessary involvement in violence without regret, *alongside remorse* that this behaviour caused the damage that it did. In one moment we have the ex-militant territorializing the space of remorse, and in the next this space has been deterritorialized and abandoned (not that it won't be reterritorialized again!). During one interview, sitting in his car in (London)Derry town centre, R48 told me that whilst in prison another inmate tried to stab a prison guard. R48 leapt onto his friend's back, stopping the attack. As well as his friend thanking him for interrupting his moment of senselessness, the guard later came to him, and simply said:

"I could never understand you, I can't work you out, I can't even work you out now, but thank you for saving my life," and he turned on his heel and walked away, and that was it! [Me: *Why did you stop the attack?*] I think it was natural reaction.

Never once did it cross my mind that these interviewees had wanted to cause as much damage as possible: moments like these demonstrated to me their comfort with conflicting positions, and their contentment with deploying and abandoning a violent-or-peaceful subjectivity from one moment to the next.

The possession of multiple, potentially contradictory identities was narrated in similar ways when former combatants discussed how they regretted not being more directed with their violence. *Working as a conflict-resolution peace activist*, R47 said,

What the IRA really needed to do was stop the armed struggle or the armed campaign within the 6 counties [of Northern Ireland], needed to stop completely, because all it was doing was just terrorizing their own people. But they needed to propagate it more and wage it in England, because whenever the IRA carried out bombings in England the British people and British press and politicians woke up to it.

Various (republican) interviewees made similar remarks; that they had misunderstood British intentions and strategic interests, and wished they'd killed fewer working-class citizens and British soldiers in Northern Ireland. But they lamented that they hadn't deployed more violence against mainland Britain:

[We ended up thinking,] “What if the Brits don’t really care about the body bags going home?” Well [then] we’ll try a coupla big bombs in the financial headquarters in the Canary Wharf. And low and behold, the Brits came back to the negotiating table. So what we learnt was it doesn’t matter how many upper-working-class tom-tits-Brits you kill. Didn’t matter. That’s just collateral damage to the British government. We had misread what was important to the British people. Or to the powerful. It was important to the families of those poor buggers we killed, but it didn’t matter a toss to [the British government], that’s our view. My view. But it took a long time for me to get that appreciation (R23).

This interviewee, who a moment ago regretted their taking of life and “all those people [now being] dead”, wished that republicans had directed violence in a more effective manner. He was holding together both the regret that people had died *and* his own involvement in their killing – maybe a desire for *other* people to have died. These sorts of accounts were relayed to me consistently.

Highlighting the possession of conflicting considerations more explicitly, on a few occasions even *love and violence* were discussed together as being intricately connected. I asked R28, known locally as a ‘hard man of the IRA’, whether he’d have changed anything about his involvement. Speaking of his pride that he had been involved, and saying that his involvement is even “how I define myself... [It] sort of shapes my world view”, he then made the following remarks:

Could we have done anything differently? Absolutely, all sorts of things differently. Do I regret my involvement with the IRA? No. Do I regret all sorts of things the IRA were involved in? Absolutely, every day of the week. But I don’t regret having become involved with the IRA... Hatred doesn’t play a part in my make-up. And *it’s always been about the love of an idea, and the love and the aspiration of a future, sort of a whole new dispensation in the future where we can move beyond a lot of the sort of ancient tensions and hatred*, that sounds a wee bit cliché and stuff but it’s very real, I feel very strongly about that (emphasis added).

Similar comments were made by L41, who spoke in equally passionate terms about his homeland, and the importance to him of appreciating his Irish *and* British identity. Though he didn’t use the word ‘love’ explicitly as a motivation for his engagement, he spoke in a similarly impassioned way about protecting and nurturing his national identity, and that of other unionists and Protestants. He said at one point, “I love Irish ballads, songs by great Irish singers, ballads about Irish rivers,” and later showed me a 7-minute clip of him singing Irish opera. These conversations – in particular the moment from R28 above – occasionally reminded me of the dichotomies explored by Judith Butler in *Vulnerability in Resistance* where vulnerability is reconsidered as a means of resistance (2016). As ex-militants played with concepts often understood to signify weakness (like their love and vulnerability, appreciating ballads about Irish rivers) to explain their own struggle, I was struck by how consistently

their accounts cut against the simple, linear subjectivities expected by Prevent of its constituents, a discussion to which we now turn.

Prevent: Singular, Productive Subjectivities Only

Prevent's constituents are articulated as having mobile, varied, and (un)known motivations and character traits by its practitioners: "feeling aggressive towards their neighbours" (CM1), "no longer poses a threat to national security" (CM3), "there are concerns" (CM8). Yet, in a way never discussed by former combatants (including peace activists), *visualized attributes which fall outside of the realm of productivity* are located, unpicked, and recalibrated through Prevent's operation. As Deleuze and Guattari (2010, 20) write, the State's knowledge is "held by space in a local movement from one specified point to another [rather than] being distributed by turbulence across a smooth space." In other words, the potential for these multiple subjectivities being openly negotiated is restricted by the need for striated, ordered state-knowledge: they (are) move(d) from one location to another, without allowing a process of autonomous exploration (Massey 2005). The categorization and fixing down of behaviours into governable entities – and therefore the carriers of those behaviours – is a fundamental component of State-knowing (Deleuze & Guattari 2010, 33).

Prevent navigates subjectivity by attempting to reconstitute the possession of multiple motivations towards being unitarily productive. Reminding ourselves that 'productivity' here is taken as the ability to transcend the survival of devastating environments and arrive at a point of prospering in their midst (Reid 2019). The drive towards productivization (the process of moving towards thriving in terrible conditions) was most patent in moments of banality, where practitioners discussed supporting Channel cases to better themselves: "Whether or not [Channel has] stopped them from committing a terrorist attack, it's improved their life chances full stop." Their terrorist intentionality aside, an intervention will make them grow more than they otherwise would. This relentless ushering towards generative productivity was also narrated when practitioners spoke about the possibility of harm as objectively outside the realm of productivity. They spoke with no consideration for any emancipatory potential behind other motivations: "Everybody's got grievances [but] it's not fine for us to go off and be violent" (PC6). There is no negotiation here: violence is destructive, never productive.

The point being made is that *certain behaviours are categorized explicitly in relation to risk-consciousness which are necessarily, by definition, not related to safety*. Order and striation is the only way in which Prevent can operate, see, know. The 'carriers' of risk, citizens who demonstrate these risk-related behaviours, become intervention sites. They are identified so the body of that which is currently unproductive or which *might pose a threat* to (the concept of) productivity, is reconfigured

towards resilience, positive intent, single-minded peaceability. We are not playing Go here; this game is Draughts: diagonal moves only, forwards not backwards (at least, no 'backwards' movement is permitted until enlightenment occurs and you are 'kinged' with the revelation that risk is everywhere and will always need managing).

When this process of reconfiguring is completed (see Thematic Chapter 4 on resilience-training), subjects are moved further down the binary line away from 'risk' and towards 'risk-conscious' or 'safer'. They are made (in)visible as sites of potential risk-vulnerability/safety through an 'intersubjective' negotiation involving the imagining of and acting against risks and vulnerability (Karyotis 2012, 391; Gray & Franck 2019). PC6 eloquently made exactly this point himself during the interview, that

The partners round the [Channel panel] table I don't think would agree to somebody exiting the process if they didn't feel certain that that person was no longer at risk of any harm, or there's no longer any threat.

Whilst the dispositif of risk assumes that risk is potentially everywhere (so nobody can be entirely ruled out as potentially threatening), *this Channel panel discussion is merely determining the (in)visibilization of the always-hypothetical risk*. Cases – humans – always pose a hypothetical risk; nobody is averse to the gaze of risk-management technologies (Heath-Kelly 2017b). This process of Channel panels sanctioning or concluding intervention sessions is merely concerned with the raising or hiding of potential risk sites. Indeed, Channel cases are revisited after 6 and 12 months of completion, and it can be years before data is taken out of the system even if referrals are rejected by Prevent (Paget 2020). The system of continued 'overhang' reveals that risk is always envisioned, just in more latent form. The negotiation, through this process of (in)visibilization, is situating Channel cases as either inside or outside risk-consciousness, either positioning them (along racialized/gendered lines) as productive-enough, or primed for more productivity-generating interventions. The categories between which Channel cases are moved are specific points, identifiable dots on a map. Rather than moving openly through smooth space (like ex-militant descriptions of their multiple identities), specific categories are imagined and defined between which individuals of concern are moved by risk-managers. This makes little sense to ex-militants, who are aware of the disjunctures inherent in the State's inside/outside categories:

We're trying to in the British sense de-radicalize everybody else, but when a young man joins the British Army, that young man is being trained to be a trained killer, in a very radical manner. And so it comes down to the point that there are legitimate radicals and illegitimate radicals, and really the only thing that comes between the two is whether or not you're part

of the British State forces. And if you're not part of the British State forces you're a terrorist, you're a bad radical... It became very very confusing.

A fundamental component of the State's science is to "isolate all operations from the conditions of intuition, making them true intrinsic concepts, or 'categories'" (Deleuze & Guattari 2010, 33), which as L26 pointed out, can be fundamentally contradictory. Regardless, any deterritorialization, any letting go of certain spaces like the deprioritizing of ISIS-related concerns, is accompanied by reterritorialization of *other* concerns, like the new focus on the threat from Al Qa'eda (Heath-Kelly 2018). The strategies of the State are constantly aimed at (re)claiming and (re)capturing spaces (De Landa 1992).

The drive towards (re)constructing individuals into linearly-intentioned, productive beings, was often articulated through the problematization of Channel cases as having 'potentially concerning futures' which needed pruning away. One Channel mentor (CM10) commented that a boy receiving mentorship "doesn't want to harm people, but he's coming across material which is attractive", revealing a particular temporal discontinuity: the original and explicit lack of intent (*doesn't want to harm people*) is complemented by a condition – "but!" Whilst the boy's actualized thoughts are harmless – in the eyes of the mentor – the potential for his derailment is still worth making visible. He can't watch videos on Syria because they might encourage him to think in ways we can't understand or negotiate with. The videos are harmless. The boy is harmless. *BUT!* together, they could be highly destructive. CM8 mentioned that Channel deals with "people who haven't broken the law yet, but there are concerns." This constant oscillation, the raising/hiding between safe and risk (Younis & Jadhav 2020), does more than highlight the danger of multiple subjectivities: it functions specifically to categorize Channel cases as *not-yet-productive-enough*. There is still work to do! Despite practitioners (including PC6) rejecting the 'conveyor belt theory' – a theory assuming those designated 'extremists' are on a trajectory towards violence unless intervened upon (McCauley & Moskalenko 2017) – it was consistently raised (and subsequently hidden) that such individuals possessed criminal capability, despite the admission that they had never demonstrated criminal intent. *So the potential for non-compliance with the making of life* is narrated as problematic. Northern Irish testimony, which was situated through open negotiation, relative contentment with contradiction, and often an empathy with why somebody might turn to violence, sits in sharp contrast to the logic of preemption for its lack of intent to impose its will upon the object of concern (Deleuze & Guattari 2010).

Moreover, when Prevent practitioners discussed the moving of Channel cases between definitive points (from unsafe to safe, from unproductive to productive), the mobilization of imagination was most potently visible – and it illuminated some startling discursive ruptures intrinsic to categorizing non-criminals alongside possible counter-terrorism concerns. Many times,

practitioners spoke of the national security implications of interventions, and the role of Channel in diverting violence. Several practitioners for instance deployed the term 'disengaged' to describe an individual's movement from necessary inclusion to their completion of the Channel process (Pettinger 2020a,b). PLead15 mentioned that Channel mentoring would be offered "if there is an individual who needs to be disengaged from terrorism or de-radicalized so to speak." Another well-regarded official, PC6, made the observation that

I'd like to see more of a focus in the literature maybe centrally on disengagement. Because see for me, if you're not being violent, happy days. And I think that's more realistic and probably easier to achieve than de-radicalizing somebody. I think it's easier to stop somebody doing something violent, than it is not only to stop that but also to persuade them of the why they shouldn't be doing the violent thing in the first place.

This is a phenomenally intriguing extract. Here, a senior official is making the case that Channel is a behavioural modification programme, *disinterested in changing people's minds*. Indeed, he later confirmed, "We're not the thought police... I would draw the distinction of violence or the threat of violence, or the promotion of violence" (also see: Weeks 2017, 175). However, individuals on Channel had never engaged with terrorist movements or demonstrated behavioural criminality, otherwise they would have fallen under the criminalizing Pursue stream of the UK CONTEST strategy. As this was only my second Prevent interview, I did not understand the disconnection this moment, and the talk of behavioural disengagement, would have with much of the other testimony I heard from practitioners. As I would later find out, Channel mentees were often discussed by mentors away from considerations of violence and actively not showing interest in causing harm, as we have seen. I asked CM8 whether *the legitimacy of violence [is] something you'd talk about with your Channel cases*. He replied, "Only if it's relevant. One of the important things in doing Channel, because it is pre-crime space, you don't want to exacerbate introduce or create a problem which wasn't there when you started." One extract from CM3 brings this total disjuncture together. He said that Channel panels are "prepared to sanction the case... as long as [they] think the person poses a threat." I then wondered, as a mentor since the national rollout of Channel in 2012, whether he had *come across anyone you thought was actually likely to pose a risk*. He replied, "Erm possibly one person, one person... One person I thought, 'Well yes he looks like he's capable of doing it' but then again you never know."

The categorization of Channel cases (and anticipatory risk-governance itself) is enacted through the "illusion and childish prepossession" of impartial and absolute knowledge (Burckhardt 1951, 81; also see: Haraway 1988), which situates those making risk-judgments as separate from subjects being 'seen from above'. CM3 said,

The [Prevent police] officer might have come across a referral. And then they might ring [me] and say, “Look I’ve got this case, the individual’s said this this this this, what do you think, should I convene a Channel panel, should I take a look further?” And I advise them further and say [in some cases], “Look, it’s not what it looks like... it’s not as serious as what it looks like.” So what you then do is explain [to the police officer], “This is what he means” and you provide them reassurance.

An official who has never met the individual concerned, receiving information from a third-party over the phone, can make determinations about terrorism propensity. Although this is a particularly candid example, this filtering process – the deployments of neutral knowledge to position somebody as inside or outside the gaze of intervention, in order to reduce anxiety – is fundamental to the preemptive rationality (Heath-Kelly 2017a). Another practitioner spoke of the risk-judging process as being able to be objectively formulated: “*We don’t know what level of that risk [is] till we sit down [in a Channel panel] and talk about it*” (PC5, emphasis added). We will see soon how significant ruptures arise between these claims and other accounts from Prevent practitioners who said that risk can never be known. But the excerpts shown here situate risk-knowers (which are those officials imposing knowledge upon Channel’s constituents by defining their potential for terrorism intent) as invulnerable. They are uniquely enlightened to prescribe risk-infused identities upon others, functioning, in the words of CM8, to provoke “the securitization of a kid”, and position them as potentially outside the realm of productivity.

Similar moments, where practitioners spoke of making objective decisions about the risk profiles of Channel cases, were observed when they represented what constituted counter-radicalization success:

[After the intervention,] if the intervention provider has done his job well and correctly then definitely the intervention provider should be able to make an informed judgment about if the person no longer poses a threat... Many of my cases I’ve been able to clearly say, “Look I believe the person no longer poses a threat, he’s been successfully de-radicalized” so to speak (CM3).

After a cognitive shift takes place in a Channel case – after all, they were never described to me as presenting any aggressive physical behaviour – they are designated as safe, no longer in need of oversight or redirection. (It must be noted that this was the mentor who said that he’d only come across “possibly one” case likely to pose a risk.) Furthermore, the propensity of officials to stratify objectively was expressly demonstrated in the quantification of risk-subjectivities. Prominent Prevent practitioner Will Baldet remarked that,

The success rate of those that take up the option of an intervention through Channel is somewhere in the region of 78-82% of all cases exit the process with no issues around extremism, radicalization, or terrorism, still there. So as a success rate it's pretty remarkable (quoted in Talking Terror 2019).

The circumscription of extremists as distinct from non-extremists is recurrently relayed definitive, and knowable through an objective gaze. Yet the boundaries drawn between these two identities, the categorisation of certain people into certain spaces of risk-visibility, is not a neutral but highly political process (Aradau & van Munster 2008; Jackson et al. 2011). As has been described by numerous works on Prevent, subjective judgments are central to its operativity (Coppock & McGovern 2014; Elshimi 2017; Heath-Kelly & Strausz 2018; Martin 2018; van de Weert & Eijkman 2019; Dresser 2019; Pettinger 2020a,b). The marking of some as safe and others as potentially unsafe is outworked through personal judgements about what constitutes safety and danger (Pettinger 2020a,b). These judgements are necessarily fluid and negotiable, various interviewees even mentioning that they don't know whether a greater number of referrals is problematic or a sign of success (PLead16, PC5: also see Thornton & Bouhana 2019; Pettinger 2020b). Moreover, decisions made by practitioners throughout the process are contested by other practitioners – some deeming a case 'safe' and 'concluded' whilst others say a terrorism risk is still posed (Pettinger 2020a). Importantly, this way of knowing is substantially different from the form of knowing described by former combatants, seen earlier. I showed the list of ERG categories to R43, who is a peace activist in Belfast. He had been exposed to Prevent in the past, but spent a few moments taking in the list, remembering its contents. A minute later he scoffed,

It's fucking nonsense! Jesus Christ. I- I just laugh. Honestly, that doesn't mean anything to me at all in terms of a strategy that will influence people who are outside mainstream society because they believe that what's happening to them is wrong. That's a nonsense. You'll excuse me but that's an academic saying "I know best."

Deleuze and Guattari (2010, 15) write that "the law of the State is... that of interior and exterior," plainly seen in the accounts from Prevent practitioners. Prevent – and preemptive risk-governance – is fixated with productivization (driving cases towards thriving in the face of devastating circumstances, see Thematic Chapter 4), an impetus which made little sense to former combatants. Former combatants instead described themselves as holding multiple, contrasting identities simultaneously, rejecting the binary insider-outsider identifiers. Multiple and disparate inconsistent subjectivities make no sense to a programme which is attempting to move its constituents from "unsafe" to "safe", from one specific and subjectively imagined point of possible unproductivity to another specific point: life-generators. Ex-militants describing their movement through open space –

in one moment territorializing and in the next uprooting and moving on – is antithetical to the premise of a logic that always moves to fix, quantify, and organize. The discrepancy between the descriptions of varied, conflicting identities (like those described by ex-militants) and the strategies of striation that underlie Prevent show us that only particular forms of citizenry are appropriate. Identities which are recognized by fixed points and able to be moved along a straight line are privileged, where the potential to harbour potentially disruptive motivations is suppressed. We will explore the consequences of this move further in the following chapter, but for now it must be noted that the disjunctures between Prevent and ex-militant testimony exemplify the logics articulated by Deleuze and Guattari (2010), and that the space to explore and to be without conforming to State-sanctioned categories is restricted. The implications of this can be seen in contestations over whether protest groups campaigning for environmental sustainability in the face of climate disaster are “extremist” (Dodd & Grierson 2020).

Hide and Seek: Making Spaces of Risk (in)Visible

We now examine how Prevent looks for possible risk and in its attempts to order and direct (more on *direction* in the following chapter). The process of risk-visibility is a foundational technology in the knowing of risk (Martin 2014,2018; Amoore & Raley 2017); how do former combatants explain their ‘ability’ to be seen and known? I seek throughout this final section to interrogate how ex-militants and Prevent officials narrated their ability to (be) see(n as) risk, to (be) categorize(d) into safe/ unsafe. We see how former combatants disrupt the ordering intent of Prevent through constant oscillation and movement through non-striated (hidden) zones. Ultimately, and complementing the emphasis which they placed on the possession of multiple conflicting subjectivities, we find that they declared themselves unwilling and unable to be ordered and governed through the striating state apparatus. Moreover, they found the intent to ‘see risk’ facile, because ‘risk factors’ – even in a context as explicitly divided as Northern Ireland – are not associated with the presence of risk.

Former Combatants: Invisible, Unseen

I framed questions as though a Prevent practitioner to deduce how former combatants discussed the potential to be spotted: would looking out for them have been a worthwhile venture? How did they narrate their involvement against why people close to them *didn’t* get involved? Might they have been preemptively spotted before becoming involved in violence? With many ex-militants now enacting peace initiatives to prevent the same sort of violence they were culpable for, and all seeing violence as inappropriate or irresponsible now, I thought this would be a fruitful line of inquiry.

When I asked former combatants about whether they would have been able to be spotted or identified as 'risk' prior to involvement in relation to their peers, they nearly unanimously answered in the negative, saying that "I'd never tell anybody I was involved, so nobody knew" (L35), and that "it's not something you'd be openly talking about... You'd be secretive about it" (R25). They knew that any vocalized intent to commit crimes (which included membership of proscribed organizations) would have resulted in them or their families facing significant consequences, like being monitored by the police or security services, their houses raided, or being pulled in for questioning. During one of my very first interviews, I asked R23 *Did you have friends and people around you that you were talking to at the time you moved into the IRA and discussed that with them?* He stopped, looking shocked. "Oh god no. Oh no!" On another occasion I asked L45 *Do you think that before you got involved someone you respected, maybe your parents, could've said 'don't get involved' would that have made a difference?* He responded:

I played it very 'scheme-and' cos I knew they woulda- my father's [very old now] and he's never forgiven me, he never will cos I was the black sheep, I brought disgrace to my family. [Me: *If he'd have said to you then "what're you doing, don't get involved"-*] To be honest Tom, he wouldn't have really knew. So yes your house is getting searched but you're always bluffing it off "oh I was just knocking about with such and such."

The message from ex-militants was consistently that they remained silent in order to protect the integrity and effectiveness of their operations and themselves from being 'seen' by the state. Correlating these accounts, CM13 demonstrated how the preemptive rationality of Prevent is mobilized through unknowing (Jackson 2012). He made the case that those who genuinely pose serious risk don't publicize themselves, intentionally making themselves 'unseeable' (much like the former combatant stories): "The dangerous people are the ones who don't have these [vulnerabilities], the dangerous ones are really clever ones, they never get caught by the way." The essence of the nomad, as explicated in *Nomadology: The War Machine*, is of a constant oscillation – once there, then gone, territorializing, reterritorializing, and deterritorializing moment after moment. We must remember that the State follows nomadic ways, trying to colonize the science of nomads in the wake of their movement (De Landa 1992; Deleuze and Guattari 2010). Indeed, ex-militants described always being cautious about whom they socialized with, because people they had known for a long time might have been recruited by the State to pursue them (R30).

Trying to tease out some form of control group to understand the potential variables that might have indicated some inclination towards involvement – thinking as a Prevent official – I queried ex-militants what they thought the differences in behaviour might have been between those who engaged and those who didn't. However, not unlike their refusal to answer when I probed how their

characters might have provoked involvement (or pointing me only to ‘courage’), they could not tell me what behaviours to look out for because of the importance of secrecy to the effectiveness of their violence. Moreover, they consistently remarked that the reasons people became involved were too banal that it was impossible to determine what to look out for. R25 mentioned that “I found from talking to people that the line between taking that step and becoming involved and not becoming involved it was a pretty thin line”, saying that it could have been “something as simple as you know my father had died recently and I was looking after my mother in a home.” R43 said it could have been seeing “news bulletins [and] how they were presented”. When asked what differentiated those who involved themselves and those who didn’t, R23 replied, “Good question. I don’t know.” Not that it would have been desirable for former combatants who articulated involvement as a moral choice to contribute to a ‘risk-spotting apparatus’ – discussions around observing behaviour was an illogical avenue of exploration for them.

L27 spoke more candidly about the difficulty and even inanity in attempting to ‘spot risk’: he said that such an approach

wouldn’t work [in contemporary Northern Ireland] because everyone would need to be de-radicalized, including the teachers who often try and radicalize the kids! There’s not enough people to do the de-radicalization jobs!

Many interviewees pointed to their sectarian upbringing, where their elders and teachers warned them against fraternizing with the ‘other side’ (Catholics and Protestants): L27 said,

[At] the school that I went to, the textbooks would’ve been covered in machine guns, Red Hands [inciteful symbolism], “Taigs” [an offensive name for Catholics], “Up the [I]RA, kill all papery”. *That would never be seen as something to show they’ve been radicalized* (emphasis added).

Comments like these were adorned on street signs across Northern Ireland. There was a moment when I drove from Belfast to (London)Derry, and saw “IRA” graffitied onto a road sign. Being familiar with how the IRA is considered in Britain, I wondered what the equivalent ‘offence’ might be considered back on the mainland, and settled on “ISIS”. I was then struck that spraying “ISIS” on a wall in Britain might be investigated as a terror offence – at the very least would likely have sparked a Prevent intervention. Loyalist-related militaristic language and pictures were similarly painted on walls across the country (see Figures 5 & 6). The way this language is governed differently, especially given the account of L27, is antithetical to the rationality of Prevent. As we will see, these sorts of racist and violence-infused comments would be visibilized as cases of potential risk in mainland Britain. L27

continued, making the point that little has shifted in the political culture in Northern Ireland, explicitly saying that people's perspectives hadn't changed at all, but the reason violence has stopped is because the external political circumstances *had* (see Thematic Chapter 1). So even now in Northern Ireland, these sorts of sectarian and offensive utterances ('Taigs', 'up the IRA') alluding to violence or proscribed terrorist organisations would firstly not be out of the ordinary, secondly are even encouraged by teachers (several others said that politicians propagate similar narratives), and thirdly *would never be considered as a signifier of violent potentiality*. Yet, 12 miles away in another part of the UK, the very same type of comments are associated with incidence of potential future terrorism. *But even still*, as we have seen in previous chapters, the threshold that provokes an offer of Channel intervention is far lower than the racist and violence-related comments outlined by this interviewee.

Figure 5: Author's photograph of Mural on Wall in (London)Derry, Nov 2017



Figure 6: Author's Photograph of Mural on Wall in Belfast, Nov 2017



L27, who was extremely well-connected with the loyalist community, with high-profile academic researchers, and with other influential figures, introduced me to B42 – one of Northern Ireland's most senior barristers – for an interview. B42 had prosecuted hundreds of terrorism cases during the conflict. L27 and in on the discussion, which took place in a café in central Belfast. The conversation turned to Prevent, which B42, as a long-serving lawyer, was "astonish[and]" by. After discussing the programme, L27 spoke to the stark difference existing in Northern Ireland (as one region of the UK), and that operating on the hyper-security-sensitive British mainland:

Like in the old Frankenstein movies, if a teacher did that [made a Prevent referral] here, everyone would be hunting the teacher down!... What I would say people need to understand about Northern Ireland is what you call radicalization in England has a culture here. People need to understand that. When you're sitting in the Falls Road you're being told about the righteous fight to get the British out of Ireland. They won't see that in the modern context as

radicalization. They will see that as part of our culture. If you're sitting [in] the Shankill you're being told about how our people armed themselves [or] smuggled guns to secure the state for Protestants. If you said that in England, you'd be sent to the police. That's engrained in our culture here. That's the difference.

B42 concurred, making the point that "it [Prevent] would never work here" because of this culture. Yet this political culture is not 'visibilized' through a preemptive assemblage as infused with terrorism risk. The political construction of Prevent is so alien to one region in the UK that considering divisive language as potentially terrorism-related risk factors would have those that operated on this basis chased away like in the story of Frankenstein: in this account Prevent's is a monstrous, ghastly, and terrifying logic. The categorizing logics of the State, often accepted in mainland Britain (Busher et al. 2017), appear largely nonsensical to actors central to the conflict in Northern Ireland – on both sides, including B42 who represented the State as a well-known prosecutor during the conflict. Ex-militants in Northern Ireland articulated their violence and peaceability as an alternating, fluctuating entity, and their visibility equally so, in order that they outmanoeuvred the State.

Prevent: Locating Risk

Since Prevent is a preemptive assemblage concerned with harbouring the "capacities of peering into the future and revealing the unknowns to be tamed and governed" (Aradau & Blanke 2017, 374), I was equally interested in how Prevent officials narrated their expectation that they would be able to locate spaces of 'potential risk' – such as those who ultimately became involved like the Northern Irish ex-militants had. How do State officials on the Prevent programme describe their appropriation of nomadic science and their pursuit of the potentially disruptive nomad; how do they articulate identifying which ones to realign with the State's categories?

One mentor (CM13) spoke about the need for an awareness of the "critical junctures" in people's lives, to see the individual's pivotal moments so that they could be stopped before they perpetrate violence. An extract from this particular interview is fascinating in two respects: one because it shows how the practitioner retrospectively frames this missed counter-terrorism opportunity through astonishing banality, and two because he insists that the potential to connect these banal moments with the trajectory to terrorism can not just be explained retrospectively but *seen before they occur*. In this excerpt, CM13 discusses an individual he was mentoring (in a way not unlike the Channel programme, before Channel existed, and before he was recruited to Channel). This particular 'mentee' later went on commit terrorist attacks in London on 7/7:

I always say ['counter-radicalization'] is about connecting [people in the critical junctures in their life. For me I realize this was a critical juncture for him – he's met a girl he finally wanted

to be with, and he's come to me as an elder and he says, "Help me help me [to get married]" and I didn't realize his need to be in that relationship. I said, "No you're too young, she's too young." So at the critical juncture he goes elsewhere, then that creates a series of further events- [Me: *That you could never have predicted-*] But we *can* predict it, I would say at that critical juncture don't dismiss human factors. All of them have these critical experiences and junctures in their life where they are crying out for someone to intervene.

Fulfilling somebody's need to be in a relationship is associated with preempting terrorism, and according to this practitioner, this desire was a counter-terrorism moment able to be spotted before the attack occurs: "we *can* predict it". Later the same interviewee explained that a convicted Terrorism Act offender he provides counselling for hadn't been interested in women or getting married before he committed a terrorism offence, observing that "this isn't normal behaviour... You can see what the issue is there." What becomes 'visibilized' and therefore known as risk (Martin 2018) only makes sense in the aftermath; it is inconceivable that in the moment one man's desire to get married, and another man's *lack* of interest in getting married, are pivotal moments for risk-based intervention. This retroactive logic follows the 'logic' of Tony Blair's comments about 9/11:

Gradually the connection was being made. [Attacks took place in] Kashmir, Chechnya, Algeria, Yemen, Palestine, Lebanon... the ideological link with an extreme element that professed belief in Islam was ever more frequently expressed. Until September 11, the splashes of colour on different parts of the canvas did not appear to the eye as a single picture. After it, the clarity was plain, vivid and defining (Blair 2010, 343).

Before non-State violence materializes, before the nomad emerges, it is unseeable, untraceable, unknowable – after all, its essence is fluid movement through open space, always oscillating and ceding its territory for another space (Deleuze & Guattari 2010). But when violence erupts, it is apparently supremely obvious why, and we should learn for next time. *Only after the event* can the 'whole picture' show us what to look for, and what is privileged as visible (re-)produces the future gaze. Yet practitioners like CM13 somehow made the case that this completed picture – the whole future – is seeable before its materialization. This retroactively-fitted 'logic' produces a rationality whereby "one is judged not by what one should have known but also by what one should have or might have suspected" (Ewald 2002, 287). Consider this testimony from CM3:

Some people might use vocabulary which is very offensive, and very dehumanizing. So you never know they might move on and do other things, you know if they've started with words of the mouth vocabulary it then leads to action.

Any moments that *have the potential to* bring about unproductivity (or an inability to thrive despite their circumstances) need an intervention; the intention is to see so that order and productivity can arise, as we saw earlier in the chapter. No wonder the big-data framings of preemptive governance if moments like these are illuminated as counter-terrorism moments (Amoore & Raley 2017; Heath-Kelly 2017a; Wilcox 2017).

Anyone slipping through the net only produces a stronger desire to see (Aradau & van Munster 2005) to a hypothetical point where “we can predict it” (CM13). The claim therefore follows that “experience [must] grow, [alongside] better education” (CM10) so that which *should* be seen can be more easily found: as CM13 quipped, “We just have to be more vigilant.” Yet this rationality held no ground in the eyes of former combatants; they were universally unconcerned with finding more spaces of risk, rejecting the logic that (their own) risk could be spotted in any sense that is mobilized through Prevent. I am arguing that the constant (in)visibilization of riskiness is enacted through a lack of knowledge disguised as objective, knowable calculations, where frames that disregard risk-consciousness demonstrate a calm, determined contentedness. The gaze of Prevent can be subverted by speaking to those whose ‘risk’ actually materialized: on the underside of the unknown we find an absence of freneticism, a calm sense of inevitability and response in the face of grave danger and violent surroundings. Ex-militants do not ‘see’ the lines and points as defined by the State – describing them in particular, but also every other citizen – as legitimate. Their stories exposed a rejection of these risk-laden narratives, prioritizing a different way of seeing and knowing. Despite its history of ‘terrorist’ violence, despite the many dissident groups operating in contemporary Northern Ireland, and despite many peace walls being erected *after* the Good Friday Agreement (R43), the making of outrageously racist and offensive remarks would “never” have been seen in the context of terrorism-related risk-thinking in that province of the UK (L27), because of the ubiquity of social and political divisions.

The way in which risk is seen by Prevent made no sense to interviewees from my Northern Irish fieldwork. The barrister who had prosecuted hundreds of terrorism cases during the conflict (B42) remarked, “I think [Prevent] would be litigated to destruction here. Aside from that I don’t think any teacher from a north Belfast or west Belfast school would turn anybody in.” The ‘working against risk’ is operationalized differently in Northern Ireland (through peace outreach, explored in the following chapter), but more fundamentally the *concept of looking for risk itself* is deconstructed by Northern Irish testimony. This mode of risk-thinking was absent from my interviews in Northern Ireland. Observing the picture in Figure 7, which was taken in a loyalist museum concerning conflicts throughout Irish history, the discrepancy is very apparent: in a culture where dissident groups still operate today, weapons are set amongst children’s crayons to play with whilst they colour in.

Moreover, remembering how those involved in ‘the Troubles’ said that Prevent would never work in Northern Ireland because “everyone [including the teachers] would need to be de-radicalized” and that the culture was (and is) of profound and entrenched sectarianism (L21,L26,L27,L39,R20,R28,R43), it is apparent that Prevent’s praxis is constructed upon an *obsession with seeing constructions of risk*. Driving in Belfast between Falls Road (Catholic) and Shankill Road (Protestant) you are confronted with 25-foot-high ‘peace’ walls and a thick metal gate that still, in 2020, shuts every evening at 7pm to prevent skirmishes between communities. Even in this context, comments like ‘up the IRA’ “would never be seen as something to show they’ve been radicalized” (L27). Yet in another part of the UK – mainland Britain – counter-terrorism interventions are justified for children displaying racist outbursts, watching videos about Syria, and with mental health difficulties, and violent conduct retrospectively explained because of ‘marriage/no-marriage’ dichotomies. A fundamentally different way of seeing risk is mobilized in one part of the UK than another: everything in mainland Britain – including the most human drive of romantic relations – must be seen as connected with risk potentiality, but in Northern Ireland – where iron gates separate communities – outrageously violent remarks would “never” be associated with radicalization risk concerns.

Figure 7: Author’s Photograph of Loyalist Museum in Belfast, Nov 2017



This obsession with observing risks in every possible space highlights disparities in how risk is ‘seen’, an issue that speaks to the constructedness of risk (and again, situating it as distinct from ex-militant testimony which abandoned risk-thinking). I asked CM10 the question *How is it determined that someone’s potentially moved from ‘posing a risk to themselves or other people’, to ‘no longer*

posing that kind of risk? He replied saying that “it depends on our individual capability or judgement, subjective or otherwise. There’s nothing hard and fast.” This much was clear: who becomes ‘seen’ as risky/ not-risky was outworked through significant disjunctures and disparate conceptions of risk. During my interviews, for instance, one Prevent Coordinator (PC6) said that schoolchildren watching beheading videos should *not* be a matter of referral, whilst another (PC5) said children watching these videos “should be” referred (see Thematic Chapter 1). Internal discrepancies like these were common (Pettinger 2020a,b), precisely because it is necessary that ambiguity and different interpretations play a central part in neoliberal ‘risk-managing’ assemblages (Peck & Tickell 2002; Brenner & Theodore 2002; Aradau & van Munster 2011; Jackson 2012). In Northern Ireland, conversely, all discussion pivoted around assessing the circumstances. After speculating that his “jack-the-lad” character and confidence might have made him more likely to engage, R48 concluded as did all other former combatants (more, or less, as explicitly) that “I don’t know... I think for most of it, it’s circumstances.” The very premise of ‘spotting of risky behaviour’ made little sense, even in the accounts of peace activists: when destabilizing circumstances occur, it is seen that there is little utility in examining behaviour, because it is *inevitable* (and desirable) that people will respond. The State attempts to define life, behaviour, intentions, through fixed points and make objects seen in relation to these points (Deleuze & Guattari 2010). Under this logic citizens exist somewhere on the line between the fixed points of ‘extremist’ and ‘non-extremist’. The point being made is that the line is the measuring point. All citizens can be found along this line in the gaze of Prevent. Yet this gaze is disrupted when we consider the testimony of those whose ‘risk’ actually materialized – their narratives don’t ‘see’ in relation to the line or the definitions provided by the State. Instead they articulate a constant movement away and towards numerous points *simultaneously*: safety, danger, trust, aggression, peace.

Conclusion

The conditions of knowledge-production in each era are so different, that radically different styles of thought are evident. Preemptive governance is obsessed with finding the “needle in the haystack” (Aradau & Blanke 2017, 373), and mobilizes its gaze by striating unknown spaces into knowable, governable, directable entities. Ex-militants simply don’t contend with this way of seeing or knowing, but spoke instead of inevitabilities and *desirably-disruptive* responses. Thinking in terms of risk and its preemption doesn’t make sense to them. The styles of thought in each discourse are so profoundly opposed that there can be nothing but silence and disregard between them.

Imposing striated forms of imagination minimizes the space for citizens to exist with multiple conflicting motivations: pointing 'risk cases' towards single-minded productivity short-circuits alternative ways of knowing, seeing, and being. The State categorizes and 'sees' by territorializing specific points and assessing objects in relation to these points, and the lines between them. There are not infinite subjectivities, but only ones sanctioned by the State's territorialization and reterritorialization. The disposition of nomads towards *deterritorializing* space, detailed through ex-militants' focus on hiding and not fixing down their identities, is absent from State discourse (De Landa 1992; Deleuze & Guattari 2010). Had the State imposed a counter-extremism assemblage upon Northern Ireland during the conflict, its binary and moralizing gaze very well may have prevented the movement of various paramilitary groups towards peace – a theme unpacked further in the following chapter. The imposition of preemption through the State's fixed points around 'extremism' and 'non-extremist', as Massumi (2015a,b) explains, is significant anxiety and a closing down of the future. The final chapter will now analyse precisely what the future might entail for these two disparate forms of knowing, and how it is foreclosed by the drive to anticipate 'the next terrorist'.

The Construction of Meaningful Peace / Solutions to Violence (Thematic Chapter 4)

Introduction

In the previous chapters we saw ex-militants narrate their realities through rationalities of space and time, whereas Prevent officials were fixated upon locating and managing (the moment of) risk. What is produced by these disparate logics; what solutions do they point us towards? We will see throughout this final chapter that the testimonies of ex-militants are situated around the frame of establishing meaningful peace, and its attainment as occurring through political engagement and negotiation with others and external environments. The aspiration of Prevent practitioners, conversely, revolves around minimizing flashes of violence; personal resilience is described as the vehicle necessary for moving towards this end. The chapter has three parts: firstly it juxtaposes the desire for political activism and mutuality of ex-militants, assessing this against Prevent's focus on reforming individuals. It then considers how these goals are achieved: political activism through negotiation (for ex-militants), and individual recalibration through training in resilient behaviours and cognition (for Prevent). The chapter concludes by examining what results from these two approaches: ex-militants articulate political and environmental *change* as desirable aspirations, whereas Prevent practitioners in mainland Britain focus on political and environmental *continuity*. We see two fundamentally different logics resulting in disparate conclusions about the role of political activism. Ex-militants emphasize the importance of political change, trust, and mutuality – ultimately in a move to open up space for a process of political contestation, and to open up time by imagining a different future. Prevent, alternatively, sets suspicion of the inherently vulnerable human as necessary in its establishing of the present as the 'concluded future'. Seeing only political continuity, it offers no room for change and closes down space for political contestation, instead offering personal resilience as emancipatory in the face of constant, never-ending attacks in a world of threat and danger. We find, as in all other places across the thesis, that the preemptive logic only makes sense when ignoring the stories of those subjects it makes claims about.

Political and Individual Solutions

As we saw in the previous chapter, former combatants narrated a continuum between their violence during the conflict and their (ongoing) political activism. They described fostering political engagement as desirable, speaking of the *potential for peace* in relation to a material change in their environments.

Prevent, conversely, seeks to *manage violence* (rather than achieve 'peace' through engagement with others in society) by problematizing the individual, seeing their localized 'risk factors' as the point of recalibration. During the first section of this chapter we will see how this disconnect manifests in both interviewees' testimonies, showing that the preemptive rationality hides activism as a desirable mode of social existence, whereas ex-militants see it as the only pathway to meaningful peace.

Northern Ireland: Political Solutions

The potential legitimacy of violence took a prominent role in discussions when interviewees spoke about outreach with young people. All interviewees supported non-violent approaches to rebuilding society in contemporary Northern Ireland. As L26 said, even the "many of us [who] still don't... want anything to do with [the] Good Friday Agreement" often work for peace initiatives. Mentioning his involvement in youth work, R24 (Youth Outreach Director for a prominent ex-prisoner organization) said that armed resistance from previous eras *should be celebrated*, but emphasized that non-violent political reform should now take precedence because the circumstances had changed. Remembering that "1916" refers to the Easter Rising, the armed rebellion against British rule on the island of Ireland, he said,

[We would tell them] let's celebrate 1916, let's celebrate whatever happened in the past, but [now] let's sit down and map out a new island of Ireland... so that everybody benefits from the economic system, social system, judiciary, whatever else it might be. That's what we're all about, that's what we're trying to get people to understand and do, that's why we do interviews with people like you, we go into schools and talk to young people, give people the opportunity to be part of a living history [like I was]... We changed the nature of the state that we had here... We broke that, we destroyed that, [and whilst] I'm sorry that people died... I'm [still] proud of [my part] and I have no ifs or buts looking back on that (R24).

L45 remarked that he instructs his own children in this way: "[I] say to my kids, [violence] would be a very very last resort" if they were being discriminated against, and would tell them that his own violence during the conflict "had to be done." Many interviewees – including peace activists – relayed the sentiment that whilst "it'd be easy for me to sit here and say 'violence is wrong'" (L27), at the end of the day if their security was under threat or they faced intractable political exclusion, then violence may again be necessary. This stance was fundamental to how former combatants saw bringing peace to their society: material, environmental changes needed to occur, and in their absence, violence may be legitimate if no other option was available.

Encouraging people to become "part of a living history", as we saw in the extract from R24, and opening up space for radical political engagement was a common theme of how many other ex-

militants framed desirable citizenry – within the bounds of both violent and non-violent political contestation. Their relative disinterest in persuading people of the absolute rights and wrongs of violence occurs because, as we saw earlier, the desired end-state that former combatants articulated as leading to a peaceable society is not individual enlightenment and a mere absence of conflict, but practicable political reform. As we have seen, loyalists focused in interviews on the importance of ensuring safety, security, and nationhood, and republicans on more equitable economic and political relations. They narrated that changes to their physical security, political exclusion, or the “economic system, social system, judiciary, whatever else it might be” as fundamental to putting violence away. Political contestation is widely regarded as having brought the conflict to a close (Ellison & Martin 2000), with the Good Friday Agreement a particularly transparent culmination of these contestations (Bigo & Guittet 2011). As we move through the chapter it will become clear that political manoeuvrings are deprioritized by Prevent, even to a point of making no sense in the face of its individualizing impetus.

Where political agreement and conciliation was framed as conducive to a *lack* of violence, a failure of politics was articulated as equally conducive to seeing violence as necessary. Ex-militants repeated over and over again that where space for being heard or making difference in the face of injustice was closed down to a point of feeling powerless and seeing no other solution, that violence became appropriate:

Bloody Sunday should have strengthened the civil rights movement [but the leadership left, and it] collapsed... Then people like me were high and dry, with no vehicle to protest, whatsoever... If you wanted to keep going on to do something, you had to go the military way (R34).

This sentiment was narrated by many other republicans, because at that moment in time, “when I was growing up, I had no right to a vote” (R37) and protests on both sides were beaten off the streets by the state. L26 spoke similarly of seeing no other choice given the political circumstances: “we had to take up [arms because] the British army was failing to deal with the situation.” Long-serving peace activist from Belfast, R43, said about dissident groups that

If politics fails, then there’s absolutely no doubt that some of them would go back to violence. This isn’t “oh we’ve all given up, group hug, and we’ll get on with things in a political sense”, it’s only because they think that they can achieve their aims through politics. And it’s what I said previously, and rightly so, violence is a last option, it shouldn’t be a first option. But the dissident groups haven’t learnt that yet.

We have discussed ex-militants' focus on external politics and environmental frustrations at length in previous chapters. But here, it is incumbent to mention this focus again in relation to how they framed violence as no longer needed (or, in Prevent-speak, as 'managed'), because of how it sits in comparison to Prevent officials' comments on the role of politics. As we will soon see when we examine Prevent – and discourses of the War on Terror (Bigo & Guittet) – the need for political engagement vanishes. At least, in Prevent's implementation, politics plays no important role. Occasionally practitioners lifted the veil to reveal a disparate view – one that mirrors the perspectives shared by former combatants. Senior Prevent figure Will Baldet made the point (corroborated by PLead16) on a podcast that:

If activism fails to achieve its aims – positive activism, protest, demonstration – [then] my concern is that [it] can spill over into violence. If the political processes don't seem to be working, if protest isn't working but you desperately want to bring about change, what recourse are you left with? That's my great concern. I do think a fractured society is making the [radicalization] problem worse (DryCleanerCast 2018).

This account was not unfamiliar territory to the dozens of testimonies I heard from ex-militants, nor indeed from other government officials and policy-makers thinking about 'radicalization' from a contemporary perspective, including the Communities and Local Government Committee (2010, 4) who suggested that the Government has been preoccupied "with the theological basis of radicalization, when the evidence seems to indicate that politics, policy, and socio-economics may be more important factors in the process." These views fit with the established field of literature which links policy with violence (Kalyvas 2001; Collier 2007; Balcells 2010), and with ex-militant testimony, which consistently brought the rationale for engagement back to the distinct lack of other options and wanting to change society when protest wasn't working, allowing violence to be seen as momentarily legitimate, even desirable and necessary.

Prevent: Individual Solutions

Former combatants' imaginaries of 'putting violence away' revolved around political reform and emancipation, and the reconstitution of external materialities in order that meaningful peace could be established. However, as we will now see, Prevent largely disregards considerations of these factors, instead focusing on the individual as the relevant unit of concern. Prevent assumes a subjugated, restricted, and suppressed individual unable to resist the structures of society or the environments within which they live, and frames 'peace' in terms of their economic and social stability, alongside personal enlightenment (for a broader discussion on this issue see: McFee 2016). The preemptive rationality consistently folds everything back onto the individual, and onto the person's individual vulnerabilities, imperfections, and inadequacies (Chandler 2016, 142). As a fundamentally

psychologically-informed technology, it cannot look at structural factors or look outside of the individual risk factors at all. Its purpose is to recalibrate individuals, to improve their standing in relation to their environments – a theme returned to throughout this chapter.

Whenever questions were posed to practitioners regarding the importance of (foreign or domestic) government policy on the incidence of risk, conversations were always drawn back to thinking about how an individual could be remade without reference to those external realities. A typical response would follow this quote from PC6: “Everybody’s got grievances, everybody’s got vulnerabilities, everybody’s got issues, that’s fine, we should all deal with them in an appropriate way. It’s not fine for us to go off and be violent.” Aside from this practitioner’s apparent concern with violence being contradicted by Channel mentors explaining that their cases seldomly think about violence (Pettinger 2020a), the account from PC6 excludes any externalities from the equation. Everybody’s grievances, their own vulnerabilities and issues, rather than broader environments are situated as the problem – an act of responsabilization which implicitly curtails the space for political contestation (Rose 1992). I asked another senior official (PLead15) the question of whether foreign policy contributes to ‘radicalization’ – and he explicated this topic through an example:

If we’re saying ‘is foreign policy an issue which is discussed by people and causes resentment and anger from a lot of people?’, then yes. But the idea that just because [7/7 bomber] Mohammed Siddique Khan said, “Well I did this because you the West invaded Iraq” and that somehow we then say that “well he then did it because of Iraq, and if we weren’t in Iraq then this wouldn’t have happened” – I think it’s far too simplistic. Because he will naturally... want to heroize himself. So he’s not gonna say “I’m a person who’s not integrated in my local community by the way, got huge issues with the political establishment, and I’ve got some broader issues that I’m dealing with” etc. etc. etc. He’s not gonna look at it like that. So we’ve gotta look at- we’ve gotta break down what’s actually happened in his life, and look at the uncomfortable reality in his life that he might not wanna shine a light on. So it’s all very well that he says “well I did this for Iraq” and heroize[s] himself in that way, but it doesn’t mean we take that at face value.

No matter how much practitioners are concerned “if the political processes don’t seem to be working” (Baldet, in DryCleanerCast 2018), the assumption of individuals as inherently vulnerable means that the functionality of Prevent cannot take into account anything outside the individual in its explanation of the world. Chandler (2016, 124) writes that rather than vulnerable subjects being produced by social or economic marginalization, the logic has become inverted through neoliberal discourse, whereby

social and economic problems [are] symptoms or consequences of poor informational choices by vulnerable subjects. The problematic of vulnerability thereby becomes a problem of subjectivization rather than an external problem of the world.

So it becomes impossible that Mohammed Siddique Khan was motivated by government policy and the war in Iraq – despite his own proclamations. Within terrorism scholarship, violence has always been framed as a method of communication (Jenkins 2008), but as these extracts imply, the ability to pinpoint an issue of genuine contention outside of the individual is short-circuited. PLead15 said that foreign policy

definitely plays a role in leading some people to believe that terrorism is an answer to their problem. [People say,] “We don’t need a Prevent strategy, just don’t invade other countries and we’ll be fine” – it’s a gross distortion of reality.

I would never have suggested this to them, for fear that I would lose access and destroy any trust, but ex-militants would have balked at the concept that they *believed* their engagement was an answer to *their problem*. Officials occasionally disrupt the claims made by Prevent, such as when former head of MI5 Lord Evans suggested that austerity increases the prevalence of risk (quoted in Dearden 2020). Yet, whilst they also make observations that no fundamental difference occurs between those who engaged in the Northern Irish conflict and those who commit terrorism offences in contemporary Britain (Charles Farr, quoted in House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2012, Q309), and whilst practitioners like Will Baldet make the claim that a lack of political alternatives produces violence, the psychological roots of Prevent’s risk-thinking underpin its operation, according to these numerous interview extracts. We are seeing how the claims made by Prevent about how and why ‘terrorism’ occurs differs significantly from the accounts of those who have engaged in it – and occasionally from those of government officials and Prevent practitioners themselves.

This individual-centric, psychology-informed solution makes militant and ex-militant testimony invisible; it creates a world without consulting its inhabitants. With this in mind, an exchange with PC6 is worth recounting. Our discussion saw us exploring how the Troubles in Northern Ireland – with which he was familiar – might have been dealt with differently. He mentioned that the conflict might have been resolved more effectively through the eyes of Prevent, saying,

They probably woulda been well-served to look at social and economic factors, people’s vulnerabilities, people’s friendship groups and grievances and all those sorts of things to try and not necessarily tell them “you’re wrong, you should never aspire to have a united Ireland” but “here’s why you shouldn’t progress it through violent means.”

This practitioner foregrounded one type of (republican) violence, failing to make visible the significant amount of violence that was perpetrated by loyalists. Had he done so, this extract might be reframed,

They probably woulda been well-served to... not necessarily tell them “you’re wrong, you should never aspire to have a united Ireland nor to stop republican attacks on your person or property” but “here’s why you shouldn’t progress it through violent means.”

This rephrasing is necessary in order to more fully see the unknown, subjugated knowledge that exists between Prevent and former ‘terrorist’ narratives: interviewees from both sides of the conflict spoke in similarly vigorous terms about having no other, peaceable options. Remembering the importance of changing external circumstances to former combatants – and their exasperation that other routes had been closed down – it does not need explaining that I would never have been able to make this practitioner’s claim to them. Had I suggested in interviews with ex-militants that counter-terrorism policy should have investigated their individual vulnerabilities, or suggested their desperation at their political surroundings were ‘personal grievances’, not only would this have made little sense to them, but they would most likely have been highly offended. Equally, much of the testimony from ex-militant interviews would not have been repeatable to Prevent practitioners (as we have continued to see throughout the thesis). These moments, when I stumbled across *wholly unrepeatable* knowledge and experience, were the pressure points, where the gap between knowledges became most evident.

Ultimately, I am making the point here that the functional assumption Prevent is grounded upon is that if the ‘potential terrorist’ is sufficiently examined and excavated, then the cause of the problem will be found *within them, in spite of their environmental conditions*. CM1 said that “a lot of the time I do come across people that have had negative experiences, and once you start unpacking those negative experiences, they go ‘oh shit *that’s* why I feel like I do!’” The awakening of Channel cases to the fact that they are ill-informed, irrational, or otherwise ignorant produces safety for society. Aside from the deafening silence of every ex-militant who was able to articulate precisely why they involved themselves in violence – where Prevent requires deep excavation of subconscious biases – moments like these showed me on a more foundational level how far the problematization of the person, rather than the space and time within which the person exists, is present within the preemptive rationality. Divesting terrorism risk of considerations of space and time (somebody’s environment and history) is only allowable when ex-militant testimony – which constantly refers back to the contexts in which they lived – is made absent. Situating terrorism potentiality as a site of non-space and non-time allows for counter-terrorism interventions in moments unrelated to space or time (Massumi 2015; Aradau & van Munster 2008). Spatial relations and contexts don’t matter in this modality, only the potential for growth and productivity (as we saw in the previous chapter).

This logic enables the state to eschew any responsibility for considering – let alone rearranging – the structural composition of society, seeking “only to make up for the shortcomings of society, to compensate for the effects of poverty and reduce the effects of oppression. It aims to mitigate society, not reorganise it” (Donzelot 1988, 397). Valverde and Mopas (2004, 238) argue that contemporary risk-management should be seen within the broader neoliberal framework, and therefore as a venture to minimize financial implications for the state, streamlining only the methods of risk-visibility and categorization to allow in turn more effective visibility and categorization. Policy decisions become subsumed in how to organize and reorganize the moment in relation to itself, with social inequality and systemic oppression becoming hidden. Conflict resolution organizations in Northern Ireland bring in “academics from Queens [University Belfast], Jordanstown, wherever, outside the island of Ireland as well. We look at conflict resolution and other examples of conflict and how they’ve been resolved” (R47). Yet this traditional conflict and peace studies approach to resolving violence has become marginalized (Jackson 2012) by discourse that Prevent constructs and contributes to – that the ‘terrorism problem’ is one fundamentally fixed by putting individuals under the microscope. There is no admission that violence – or anything that constitutes a potential threat to the neoliberal order – could possibly be a product of wider social issues. Instead, everything can be explained by psychological dysfunction, and fixed through psychological remaking (Reid 2019). By holding subjugated experiences alongside this hegemonic knowledge that closes down the space for wider inquiry, we find that the preemptive rationality is coherent only on an internal basis. As soon as alternative knowledges are presented – which problematizes not just individuals but structural conditions too – we see that its universalizing claims might not be universally experienced or accepted. The divergence of subjective experience from claims of objectivity (Jackson 2012) points to the ruptures inherent to – and the illusory nature at the heart of – (neo)liberal governance (Ouroussoff 1993).

Working towards Peace / Safety, through Negotiation / Resilience

How these respective – political and individual – solutions are achieved is worth exploring, so that we can more fully understand the assemblages of knowledge supporting each perspective, and how these knowledges relate to each other (or how they don’t). This second part of the chapter examines how ex-militant narratives, which focus on negotiation and trust, are silenced by the discourse assumed by Prevent, which takes individuals as inherently problematic and in need solely of resilience in the face of their surroundings. Equally we can use ex-militant testimony to disturb the privileged gaze of individual-risk preemption.

Northern Ireland: Negotiation and Relations of Trust

As we have seen throughout the thesis, former combatants focused consistently on attempting to affect their immediate surroundings and aspiring to achieve political changes. This required, in the interviewees' words, a process of discussion and interaction: R28 said that "nothing... was going to change my view that we would have to get the British to negotiate at the table." Negotiations are essentially relational exchanges that allow for (re)configurations of space and time (Massey 2005). They were paramount to how former combatants expressed how the conflict could be resolved, and were ultimately materialized through the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Former combatants framed the three decades of violence as being concluded through this political settlement that involved bargains with their paramilitary organizations themselves (also see: O'Brien, B. 1995; McDonagh 2004; De Breadun 2008).

Considering *micro*-practices of negotiation, many ex-militants (and a couple of interviewees who didn't engage in violence) who now act as peace workers in contemporary Northern Ireland articulated a process of dialogue – founded upon trust, with mutual listening and learning – as fundamental to contributing to a lack of violence. Outreach and education performed by interviewees in Northern Ireland did not manifest through moralizing claims about the absolute illegitimacy of violence (claims which *are* seen in Prevent's operation). On the contrary, peace activist discussions with young people about violence were framed merely around its *strategic shortcomings* in today's context, and also its necessity in certain contexts. R23 mentioned that when speaking to young people during work with youths or when giving talks in schools, former combatants would not make absolute claims about violence being wrong: "We would explain how the circumstances [during the conflict] warranted [violence]." L45, and all others who brought up their role in discouraging young people away from a life of criminality and violence, spoke in the same way about not trying to persuade others of the moral reasons for not using violence, but instead they highlighted the futility and personal consequences of doing so: "If a young person gets up and says, 'I wanna go out and kill somebody', I say, 'OK, you're gonna do that but do you know the consequences? Somebody's gonna kill one of your family.'" R43 and R47 spent much of the conversation explaining how the process of engaging with armed dissident groups manifests. R47, who didn't become engaged in the conflict, explicated the process of negotiation his conflict resolution organization utilizes with such groups:

And you say, "Ok, making no judgment about the validity of you saying 'it's about continuing the armed struggle', do you think you have the capacity to continue the armed struggle to the

extent it's gonna need to be continued to secure your aims and objectives?" So you get feedback about "well it's about keeping the frame of resistance alive and it's about making sure the state never feels accepted within the six counties." And you have dialogue about "well is there other ways to do that than putting unnecessarily putting your volunteers in Maghaberry prison for a long time, or maiming or killing the police officer or prison officer, do you think that threatens the British state? Do you think British ministers sit in London and go 'Jesus the dissidents have blown up a prison officer from Maghaberry prison', do you think they even talk about it?"

Both R43 and R47 said (in separate interviews), like other peace workers did, that the role of violence was not necessarily illegitimate, and could be legitimate in some circumstances. This extract points to an open, genuine conversation, a dialogue of finding mutual ground together. If negotiation was a functional component of Prevent's operation – which is not the case – it would not be grounded in such disregard for the moral high-ground: as the previous chapter demonstrated, it is embedded in moralizing to citizens. As we have seen in previous chapters, a functional component of Prevent's operation is moralizing from a point of detachment: this (illusion of) positional distance (Haraway 1988) stands in stark contrast with the extracts from ex-militants here, for whom negotiation is a requirement of moving towards peace.

Former combatants also spoke of not wanting to discourage others from continued involvement in criminality from a position of "we know best", but instead as bearing some costs themselves and showing vulnerability, in order to "create relationships and trust with... armed groups" (R43) or those who might be(come) involved in criminality. The peace initiative described by L26 demonstrates this point well. He mentioned that he had co-founded an organization in the 1990s which took 16-25 year-olds from both sides of the conflict away from their localities, to foster their disengagement. He said that many were "involved up to their neck in paramilitaries. UVF, UFF, UDA, Red Hand Commando... [and] IRA [and] INLA," or involved in other criminality. They would do activities like assault courses together:

So it was practical action but the fact that you were doing these things with them, you weren't telling them to do it, you were doing it with them. You were giving them a sense of belonging to something that was positive. You were giving them confidence in you, they could see you slipping and getting the mud around *you*. In my case I broke my leg in three places doing the last parachute jump... Unless you were actually doing the things with these people and then sitting down they're not gonna listen to you.

Articulating the breaking of his leg as associated with confidence in his authenticity, an association that for him established bonds of trust and ultimately produced demobilization. He later mentioned that, as a former combatant-turned peace worker, he would have credence when supporting

individuals who were facing prosecution, offering character references and standing up for them in court. He said that speaking on their behalf or defending them – and getting stuck into the activities designed to foster their demobilization – succeeded in helping them move away from the peripheries of or involvement in militant organisations (and other criminality). But he explained that exercising vulnerability was essential to gaining their trust and respect, and to demonstrating authenticity, which often led to their disengagement. When speaking on their behalf in court,

I [would say to them], “I’m putting my neck on the line for you young man!” “I know [L26] I’ll not let you down.” And they didn’t let me down, just because someone had someone had the guts to stand up on their behalf and speak for them where nobody else wanted to know them.

In a similar vein, R24, who manages the youth outreach of a major republican former combatant organization, equated “the most realistic and genuine projects [that are impactful]” with transparency. He said that when going into schools, “We put ourselves up in the firing line, and say, ‘Listen, go ahead, what’re you gonna tell me, what’re you gonna say to me, what do you want to ask me?’” He described a *mutual process* of learning from each other and being vulnerable, saying that “I’ve got a pair of balls to face up to... my own weaknesses and [failures].” Peace worker R43 said that his conflict resolution organization had fostered the demobilization of an entire dissident group. He remarked that his organization “doesn’t condone or condemn attacks, which makes it unpopular with government but effective at demobilizing groups.” Paying the price of popularity with the government was represented as building trust with those “who are outside mainstream society because they believe that what’s happening to them is wrong” (R43). Like the many instances seen in the previous chapter, authentic knowledge exchange was not articulated as unidirectional and coming from a position of invulnerability, but as constituted through flowing displays of vulnerability and coming alongside those who considered violence as appropriate. We will see how differently this logic of knowledge-exchange is enacted through Prevent, and how its operatives do not overtly presume a position of humility. Instead, rather than engaging in mutual relations of trust, potentially divergent individuals are situated as problematic and taught personal resilience in order that *they* change.

Before we examine Prevent, however, the logic seen in ex-militant testimony – assuming the legitimacy of political aspirations of those who ‘pose risk’, coming alongside dangerous ‘others’, and engaging in relations of trust – precludes space opening up for those who present a material danger to be seen as separate, or in need of correction. I asked R43 *What do you think of the role of rehabilitation for people who were involved in political violence?* His reply, as a peace activist and as somebody who never involved himself in violence, exemplifies this point well:

Well I certainly wouldn't use that word. Because rehabilitation in those terms implies that they did something wrong and they need fixing. And I don't see it that way at all. Somebody who took up arms believed that what they were doing was right. It was a political decision that made them do it, I don't have any difficulty with that at all.

Considering this rejection of the framing of rehabilitation, and remembering how ex-militants consistently subverted any position of moralizing, shows that 'potentially-risky' people are not seen as a suspicious or part of a suspect community (something which infuses Prevent's operation). Potentially dangerous individuals – even those who have caused harm – are not made other, separate objects of study or recalibration, but are called “volunteers” (R47) and are humans to be loved: L26 said about those he works with through his peace initiative, “I do care, in fact I love you, as a father loves a child I love you.” He continued, making the case that this position of genuine friendship, trust, and humility disrupts the logic that “because they were excluded, they could exclude everybody else.” It should be eminently clear that this perspective outlaid by ex-militants does not impel a desperate search for ‘the potential divergent’, which is a foundational component of the preemptive rationality. Displays of humility, camaraderie, and vulnerability being framed by ex-militants as important to the minimization of potential danger goes some way to unsettling the way in which Prevent would see and manage ‘risks’. As we will now see, assumptions of suspicion and the construction of some form of suspect community are fundamental to its rationality.

Prevent: Resilience as Solution

So how does Prevent respond to this knowledge and experience, that situates politics and negotiation as foundationally important to mitigating the production of violence, or encouraging the prominence of peace? Through the testimony of practitioners, we will see that any consideration of political negotiation is subsumed by an obsession with making those with grievances resilient enough to withstand their environments. Channel interventions are premised on the inherently risky and vulnerable subject being able to be moulded, reshaped, and remade through directed self-efforts, towards a point of self-governance (see discussions in: Omand 2010; Elshimi 2015; Reid & Chandler 2016). Concerns about how to fix broader environments become hidden, in a significant disjuncture between the two worlds of understanding. Where ex-militant testimony focuses on negotiation, the primacy of politics, and trust, this section on Prevent looks at how discussions of space and time are closed down, at how resilience is posited as the solution to injustice, and at the universality of suspicion in anticipatory risk-governance. Because the vulnerability of ill-educated citizens is problematized in the occurrence of any social or political disequilibrium (Giroux 2004; Reid & Chandler 2016), the solution is posited as fostering their ability to “bounce back [in order to increase] the[ir] self-reliance” (Omand 2010, 60,13). Where Northern Irish testimony pivoted around negotiation and

mutuality, one of the bedrocks upon which Prevent is built is the technology of resilience: vulnerable subjects are the cause of social problems – fixing them becomes paramount. CM1 made the case that “to reduce vulnerability is a successful case” of counter-radicalization. The drawing of vulnerability explicitly into risk-consciousness and its reduction into the mitigation of terrorism risk were consistent themes of Prevent interviews.

Discussing trauma with Prevent practitioners revealed how resilience is posited as the solution to the risk problem. I asked PLead16 *What do you see as the most hazardous vulnerabilities and signs of radicalization?* Rather than contest as problematic the idea that ‘vulnerabilities’ might be considered hazardous, she responded, “I mean there are things that spring to mind, you know mental health issues, isolation, people who’ve experienced trauma.” I asked a Channel mentor (CM13) about the motivations behind violence, and he replied that in both his post-crime cases and non-criminal Channel cases, “It comes back to what I call human factors, it’s trauma. Notional dysfunction, family breakup, domestic violence, social exclusion, isolation, fantasy, escapism. All those kinda things.” Intervention itself is a technology that makes its subjects invisible (Bachmann, Bell, and Holmqvist 2015, 9), re-instantiating the locus of the problem as the individual vulnerability and lack of resilience. Another mentor (CM8) spent a significant amount of time explaining the “lived experience” of many Muslims in England, and how it is infused with discrimination and exclusion from society:

All of this adds to, “You don’t belong, and you’re a threat these evil things you and your people keep doing.” And no one else has to answer for things of people they share similar ethnic grouping with! We don’t... talk about “why did the guy who drove his car into people at the mosque” – the average white person isn’t made to answer for that.

Descriptions of trauma similarly saturated ex-militant testimony, some mentioning it explicitly: R37 said, “I witnessed the eviction of a family from [the] High Street. That again traumatized me I suppose, seeing a young family being evicted from their home.” Yet rather than look to the externalities which caused the trauma and the conditions that allowed for it (as ex-militants did invariably), the fulcrum of the Prevent operation is the trauma itself. Instead of addressing this social or political environment, Prevent scans the horizon to spot the individual who might act on the basis of this exclusion and gives them “wrap-around care to put them on a safer path before they go down a route towards violence” (PC6). Any sense of meaningful environmental concerns disappear behind considerations of how to discourage the *response to trauma* from presenting itself as danger. PC5 said that “we... do our best to try and make people not as vulnerable and not engage with groomers.” The variable in the risk-equation is the citizen – or more accurately their (oblivious) openness to the risk factors that attach themselves onto the individuals (explored later). The individual must become sturdier, more rugged,

braver: a masculinized and resilient subject in the face of anything outside (Butler 2016). Because Prevent cannot look outside the individual, the entire focus is fixated upon encouraging the person to be able to withstand any external pressure (Mavelli 2017).

Risk-management solutions are articulated around *education coupled with an ability then to self-educate* (see: Davies 2009; Already, Taylor, & Karnovsky 2014; Ghosh et al. 2017). The acquisition of information, along with the ability to think critically for themselves, was a point of total unity in how Channel mentors framed counter-radicalization success. CM3 said that “the only way to get to that point [of “minimizing the risk”] is through critical thinking.” CM10 said, “It’s about opening minds... [And then] you make up your own mind, it’s your own choice, you are responsible.” After being asked what signs he would identify as showing progression away from posing a risk, CM1 remarked that “if they’ve got an accessibility to like learning – obviously education and awareness are often the enemy of prejudice and discrimination... [then] I guess those are markers.” However, (self-) education was occasionally described by ex-militants as a distinct *provocation towards violence*. After discussing how his parents’ and his own circumstances had been similar, R37 suggested that the difference in why his parents didn’t become involved but he *did* was simply down to

education. [Me: *Really?*] Yep. Education. One of the things was the enabling of young nationalists to get their own education, free education. And young nationalists began to go to university, started to get really well educated, and were able to articulate the needs of the nationalist population. That was the big change... I did do a lot of studying about Irish history and I decided that the only way we would have any sort of decent life was to end British rule in Ireland, and that’s what I set out to achieve.

This chasm between the worlds of ex-militants and Prevent can be explained through how the Prevent programme relays the (un)importance of political relations. For the purposes of preemptive intervention, the only space is individual vulnerability, and the only time is the present moment. We should not educate ourselves about our external environments, but simply about how we can become more resilient in spite of them. The terrifying material catastrophe (space) of the future (time) becomes concealed underneath concerns about what to do with the individual in front of us, right now (Aradau 2004). We can see this more clearly by taking the generative logic of intervention. Butler (2009, 47) writes that the state attempts “to define itself as protected permanently against incursion and as radically invulnerable to attack.” Yet the state is, like its constituents, inherently vulnerable, always seeking to make itself more secure in a never-ending venture, always obsessing with its weaknesses (Heath-Kelly 2016b,2018; Reid 2016b). The imposition of knowledge through Prevent – of, for instance, the importance of resilience training – *is not from those in a position of invulnerability down to those who are vulnerable*. Discourses of resilience (through education and critical thinking)

do work only one way – but it is from those with *revelation* of their vulnerability and need for resilience, to those without this crucial awareness. For those already ‘in the know’ of their vulnerability and their need to self-secure, they are impervious to learning from those unaware of their own endangered state. The “Gospel of Prevent” (CM8) is that everyone can and should become more resilient, because they are ultimately fragile. The Great Commission of Prevent is therefore to inform others there is infinite learning to achieve, more resilience and security to move-towards-but-never-reach. Because those who don’t possess this crucial knowledge are unaware of their condition, and might pose a risk, it becomes irrational – and even dangerous – to learn from those questioning the premise of this rationality. This became evident when practitioners implied to me that opposing Prevent equated to potential support of terrorism (Pettinger 2020b). Indeed, Giroux (2004, xx) observes that “politics becomes empty as it reduces citizens to obedient recipients of power... while shaming those who make power accountable.” Where former combatants sought to move through space (by trusting others) and time (learning from them how to move forward), Prevent must focus on the otherized individual in the present moment in order that the horrifying future it imagines does not materialize.

This closure of spatial and temporal relations by preemptive intervention presents a particular schizophrenia, and an unquestioning passivity. Had I suggested to practitioners that the state should respond to external shocks (like an invasion or imposition of sanctions) through resilience so that it could manage itself more effectively, without reverting to spatial and temporal relations (brokering peace or trade agreements) they would have been confused, if not flabbergasted (on the political deployment of ‘resilience’ in counter-radicalization discourses, see: Stephens & Sieckelinck 2020). The disjuncture was picked up in many interviews with ex-militants, who spoke of the hypocrisy of the (British) state engaging in violent relations – interning, killing, torturing – whilst moralizing about resilience and behaving as a responsible individual. I showed R43, who was familiar with Prevent and was one of the Hooded Men (13 men whisked off the streets during the conflict and tortured by British special forces for a week), the ‘signs of radicalization’ list of ERG risk factors that undergirds Prevent (NOMS 2014). He became visibly frustrated, and remarked:

Everything they [the British state] do[es] is the opposite: “don’t do as I do, do as I say.” It’s just silly... They’re talking there about dehumanization, for fuck’s sake! [*Laughs*] They’ve got- how many black sites have they got for taking people away? How many people have they tortured? In England. How many people have they handed over to in America, to Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, all those places where they treat people appallingly, and then they say “go on run home, you’re ok now.” It’s fucking nonsense... And then they say “but don’t be radical.” Fucking madness!

Had I drawn Prevent's logic out further in this interview by suggesting that the solution for people like him not to pose any risk to society or the state was to become educated through critical thinking, ultimately to a point of resilience, I can only imagine that he would have become further enraged and possibly terminated the interview. Reid makes the point that,

The resilient subject is a subject that must permanently struggle to accommodate itself to the world, not a subject that can conceive of changing the world, its structure and conditions of possibility, but a subject that accepts the disastrousness of the world it lives in as a condition for partaking of that world and which accepts the necessity of the injunction to change itself in correspondence with the threats and dangers now presupposed as endemic. Building resilient subjects involves the deliberate disabling of the political habits, tendencies, and capacities of peoples and replacing them with adaptive ones (2016b, 57; also see: Joseph 2013).

Because this is a logic acquired by the state *and* its ever-evangelized citizens (through technologies like Prevent), individual vulnerabilities and spaces for more resilience become the only spaces that count. 'Responsibilization' is not responsibility for their relations with their environments, but is a duty for self-care and productivity *in spite of them* (Bracke 2016). Coping with circumstances rather than campaigning for their reformulation becomes the ideal. And the only time that counts is the present - the present is reconstructed as good-enough and worth preserving forever (Boukalas 2019; Adam 2003). This is a counter-revolutionary rationality (Aradau & van Munster 2012) that excludes the possibility for protest: regardless of the experiences of injustice, an ideal is constructed of responses devoid of genuine responsibility or negotiation (Pendenza and Lamattina 2019). Where arrangements like the Good Friday Agreement can be made – are even desirable – through the eyes of ex-militants (despite occasional distaste with its terms), the preemptive lens disconnects the relationship between human action and material conditions (Luthar & Cicchetti 2000; Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier 2019). Anything that is unproductive is ultimately founded upon misunderstandings and insufficient information, and so eruptions of violence are a result of uncritical and ill-informed reactions, which can be managed if their fragile state becomes properly understood and controlled through enhanced resilience. Despite all ex-militants recounting the material suffering they experienced, when asked whether Prevent's safeguarding approach – an approach which excludes the potential for environmental changes – might have worked to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland, PLead15 replied, staggeringly, "[It's] hard to say." The world in which Prevent's would-be ideal constituents exist, where lived experience and environments were narrated as directly impacting their choices, is subjugated below the obsession with the narrative of risk.

We can see how space disappears when we think of the centrality of suspicion to Prevent's operation. The construction of suspect communities, which are profiles of people positioned as posing some threat, is a widely-established product of risk-governance that centres race and space (Hillyard 1993; Pantazis & Pemberton 2009; Sabir 2017; Wilcox 2017). In the context of *preemption*, abstracted risk factors are visibilized, and so the argument is put forward that Prevent has become “threat agnostic” rather than infused with racialized bias (Baldet 2020). Objective risk analysis detached from racial profiling is responsible for such targeting; lives deemed unproductive are picked out from an objective list for resilience-training. This claim, whilst superficial, is allowable because totalizing knowledge of the person is no longer required; observation and big-data analysis of a population's behaviour is operationalized instead (Lyon 2014; McCulloch & Wilson 2016; Heath-Kelly 2017b). As we have seen in previous chapters, risk profiles are not (articulated as) intrinsic to the person but are detached, abstracted features of a population. PLead15 said that determining risk was achieved by asking “what are the risk factors present in those individuals?” The original documentation explaining the ERG factors says that “a balanced [assessment] needs to consider how the absence of protective influences has allowed risk factors *to manifest for each individual*” (NOMS 2014, 5, emphasis added). This perspective – the apparent detachment of risk factors from the person – means that even those having committed offences are “not monsters, they're not wicked” (CM13). They were simply not resilient enough.

So does the suspect community thesis – a thesis founded in suspicion and wholly absent in how ex-militants described their outreach that sought to trust dangerous others – hold when the embodied person has disappeared? Rather than looking first to colour or creed, detached and abstracted susceptibilities are targeted for intervention (Butler 2009, 31). Those who are otherwise considered unproductive or insufficiently resilient are drawn in and set before the surgical tools of critical thinking sessions and leadership training courses. Yet this gaze still falls on particular groups, certain profiles: people who demonstrate they may not conform with this productive norm, those unable to wrench their emotional response from their environment. So those who become incorporated into the risk-obsessed assemblage include those with mental health issues who might not be deemed able to cope with very real injustices (“45-50% of my cases have got [autism spectrum disorder]” CM1), those showing anger about social or political issues (“people get cross and that's why people have extreme ideas” PC5), and those who might not feel ‘onside’ because they are excluded (“if I [as a Muslim] have to pick a side it's not gonna be this side, just cos I was born here I'm forever hated” CM8). In these examples, and through the focus on abstracted risk factors, we can see that the silencing of space and time occurs: the reason people become angry and the lack of intent become unimportant knowledge. People's stories – like those of ex-militants – fade away in light of their

emotional response and lack of personal resilience. Certain risks are visibilized which are associated with subjugated people groups, and so racialized (suspect community) logics remain (Wilcox 2017): they momentarily disappear but return through the back door, dressed in “risk agnosticism”.

Seeing Alternatives: Conditional Disengagement, and De-radicalization

The final part of the chapter looks at how ‘success’ is framed, with regard to the disparate objectives of negotiation and resilience – and how alternatives to violence were narrated. In particular it explores the two concepts of conditional disengagement from violence (in ex-militant testimony) and largely cognitive ‘de-radicalization’ (in Prevent interviews). It sets them as distinct from each other, in that the former stresses the importance of political change, where the latter allows only political continuity. The silencing of ontologies concerned with change allows the conditions of the present to be sustained as legitimate.

Northern Ireland: Disengagement, Political Activism, and Political Change

Former combatants spent some time discussing the conditionality of “armed disengagement” to their post-conflict life during discussions of how they performed peace outreach and explored alternatives to violence with young people. As we have seen in numerous moments during this thesis, ex-militants largely took no moral position on the use of violence, but instead spoke of adapting to current political relations. R23 said, “Back to the moral argument, [reform is] gonna happen, so why the hell are you gonna kill somebody?” This was a stance followed through into how those engaged in peace activism performed their work. Many initiatives have sprung up in Northern Ireland seeking to demobilize armed groups, to foster ‘greater integration’, or otherwise to contribute to a continuation of the peace. Many ex-militants now work as peace activists or conflict resolution mediators, by giving assemblies in schools together with those from ‘the other side’ to “deglamourize paramilitarism” for young people (L45), settling disputes between youth communities where violence occurs regularly in certain areas (especially around Belfast), or helping armed dissident groups to disengage. For instance, there are a number of former combatants involved with a scheme that utilizes mobile phone networks, for when skirmishes are taking place between young people at particular hotspots. Here, respected figures who live nearby – including former combatants themselves (like L39) – are called by locals to resolve tensions between groups, before violence escalates too far. Many spoke of their role as central to de-escalating tension and low-level conflict, noting that their influence pivoted around having “been there, done it, got the t-shirt” (L26), in order that those involved in criminality (or those on the peripheries of violence or criminality) might listen. Yet, as we have seen, ex-militants framed their aversion to violence in relation to the conditions in which they lived – even those promoting

youth outreach like R23, who said, “I’m not a pacifist. I just will not use weapons cos I’m gonna get what I want.”

This conditionality – of the utility of violence depending on the circumstances – was no more patently clear than during an interview with peace activist R43. During this interview I had consciously adopted the approach of a Prevent practitioner, with my questions constructed as though I was attempting to determine how to minimize the risk of violence erupting. I had probed him on how the conflict could have been prevented through localized means, by stopping the formation of armed groups. He had already complained at this point that my line was “nonsense” and that “it implies that you know nothing about the subject.” He became quite irate, stressing,

[But] if you don’t change the conditions then why wouldn’t we go back to the beginning? [Me: *What do you think those conditions are?*] The sectarianism of the state! [Me: *And how could that be dismantled?*] It can’t be! The state was set up as a sectarian entity! [Me: *“A Protestant state”?*] Yeah. [Me: *So it’s inevitable?*] Yeah. It really is. It may take another five years, it may take another ten years. If you look back in Irish history, every ten years or so, there’s an attempt at armed conflict. I just see it as inevitable. Sorry about this!

It was clear from the tone in this moment that he was apologizing because he realized these were not responses the Prevent-style framework of the interview had been ‘reaching for’. His world – of conditionality and cause and effect, of negotiation and manoeuvring, of the primacy of politics – is so distinct from my (Prevent) world of localized preemption that he apologizes for the momentary awkwardness. The overriding narrative (from ex-militants and those like R43 working for peace in Northern Ireland) was that violence is strictly correlated to political conditions, and that its occurrence is “inevitable” given certain environments. This informed how his organization approached armed dissident groups, from a point of exploring alternatives to violence. He situated the cessation of violence alongside political reform. This is clear in the following extract, as we discussed his frustration at Prevent for its hypocrisy and for ignoring material environments. I asked him *What would your [violence-reduction] programme look like?* He replied,

Instead of telling people what they should think, they need to give people information and allow them to think for themselves. And society needs to treat people with dignity and equality. And there’s none of that in there [in the Prevent documentation]. You treat people as a human being then they’re more likely to act as a human being. You treat them like a statistic, then they’ll balk against it... [We tell dissident groups that] violence should be the last option as opposed to the first option... [and that] there are alternatives to engaging in violence. And the way society needs to run, needs to be run on a human rights basis. And the first part of that from the state is to treat people with human rights and human respect.

Suggesting that allowing people to think for themselves in this way – genuinely opening up the use of violent contestation in certain conditions as potentially legitimate – whilst emphasizing the equity of broader political environments, is very different from the desired outcome of Prevent’s resilience (cognitive ‘de-radicalization’ and political continuity), as we will soon see.

During these conversations about the prevention of armed conflict, the continuation of political engagement played a primary role. R47 made the case that “part of it is about yes preventing conflict, but... it’s not about getting people to give up conflict and then just give up altogether.” Putting down the use of violence – in inappropriate moments – whilst emphasizing continued political contestation to bring about meaningful social existence, was a common theme of interviews that discussed peace outreach (L26,L35,L39,R23,R24,R43). R47 continued, saying that his role in fostering armed disengagement is

also about empowering those people to say “look there are things wrong with British politics in Ireland” like... Brexit and how it’s gonna affect your way of life. You have a duty to inform yourself about how that’s gonna affect you and your family and those around you. Austerity measures, welfare reform, all those things are things you should have a voice in and you’re right to be angry about, but it’s about how you direct that anger and what you do with it.

So ex-militants consistently pointed the subjects of their peace outreach (be it schoolchildren, or those involved with or on the peripheries of dissident groups) back towards engagement with political issues they were frustrated about, discouraging violence where other peaceful means of achieving material change were available.

Prevent: Cognitive ‘De-radicalization’, and Environmental Continuity

We now turn to the desired response that resilience induces, the ideal direction in which Channel cases are ‘mothered’ and shepherded towards (Elshimi 2015). The consequence of diverting citizens towards being able to manage their experience of their own relations of space and time more effectively is that their environment evades problematization, allowing the continuity of unjust and oppressive politics. As Knudsen (2018, 8) writes, this ultimately produces a world “frozen in time”.

The successful outcome of Channel-induced resilience was represented as cognitive reshaping of individuals, and bringing about a change in how they *experience* their environment. Continuity of the existing order played a prominent role, whereas assessment and treatment of grievances as genuine – outside of the individual’s personal experience of them – was foreclosed:

Getting someone to a point where they can critically think enough to understand that they’re being manipulated by another group, that’s a successful case – getting them back in school,

making sure all the protective factors around them, so that he's no longer deemed a concern (PPolice9).

Any discussion about reforming any broader political circumstances was notably absent; the emphasis was entirely person-centric. Prevent practitioner Will Baldet said that Prevent has worked when somebody "has turned their life around, disengaged from violent extremist group or disengaged from legitimizing violence, [to] putting a positive spin on how they're going to change the world" (Talking Terror 2019). This was an altogether epitomic view that Prevent practitioners presented: the "spin" or perception of Channel cases "changing the world" mattered – but genuine engagement to bring about meaningful external reform did not. PLead16 made a similar point after I asked what constituted success. She responded, "[It's] have you done an intervention, have you addressed the alcohol or drug misuse, have you sought greater support for mental health issues?" In none of my interviews with Prevent officials was it ever implied that directing cases towards effecting material changes to broader environments (environments which might have seemed important to the referred individual) should be a focus of its interventions. Instead, Prevent's constituents are situated as able to bear the burden themselves, and frustrations with systemic abuses can be directed away from engagement with democratic processes. Indeed, a would-be Extinction Rebellion activist was visited by Prevent police when he informed an NHS trust he wanted to join a protest (Evans 2019), and as we saw earlier, Mohammed Siddique Khan's grievances were 'actually his own problems'. Precluding any discussion around the primacy of politics, this modality not only stands at odds with the testimony of those whose 'risk' actually becomes materialized, it contravenes the call of the Communities and Local Government Committee for Prevent to foster "greater empowerment and civic engagement with democratic institutions, to strengthen the interaction and engagement with society not only of Muslims, but of other excluded groups" (2010, 3-4).

Environments *do* form part of the conversation around Prevent, but they constitute an afterthought as the dispositif maintains a focus on the individual's relationship with herself. Whenever the concept of intervening upon environments was discussed, it was in the context of moving an individual from one location to another, in order to enhance their personal economic or social stability. When reading the following extract, consider how the original problem is navigated:

If you've got someone who's living in an area that doesn't get on with their neighbours that are predominantly black, or predominantly Asian or white or Christian... and that person's having a sense of disconnection or they're feeling aggressive towards their neighbours in that area, the housing representative can [...say], "Actually we've got a like-for-like property but in a different area." And while that sounds like quite an unusual – you can't just do that for every case – if there's a situation where there's someone who has mental health issues, and he's

agitated, anxious, aggressive, or neurotic towards groups of people because of like a factor around race or whatever, and they can find somewhere that's alternative and that's gonna mitigate that problem, it's gonna stop that problem, then like that can be done at a Channel panel. [Snaps fingers.] There you go, the risk has been removed (CM1).

The snapped fingers, followed by the mentor's revelation that the problem has been instantaneously 'fixed', reminded me of a conjurer performing a trick: the movement of the hand, away from the top hat, the sound of the fingers, the instant production of an unexpected and magical solution through misdirection (Kuhn et al. 2007). The problem no longer exists, the aggression incited by racial tension has disappeared because a house has been provided. Channel interventions attempt to re-direct the grievances or the *affective impact* of grievances: by talking and offering alternative solutions they steer vulnerable individuals gradually towards the liberal dream of rationality and economic freedom (Coppock & McGovern 2014, 248). It was common to hear the sentiment that "it is not just about 'have you bought into some radical ideologies' but 'you need a job'" (CM10).

Prevent practitioners occasionally remarked that they encouraged cases to become involved in social projects, leadership training, and so on. Douglas Weeks (2019) similarly found that 'preventing extremism' was interpreted as care for the elderly, sports programmes, and supporting the homeless. Stephens, Sieckelinck, and Boutellier (2019) note that these 'counter-radicalization' projects do not address the reasons referrals occur, and that people's agency to protest against the offence is deferred and replaced by agency to engage in alternative activities. Yet Prevent could never functionally understand these grievances as legitimate, at least when we consider the divergent solutions proffered. A final example to demonstrate how the sleight of hand works:

The person went from holding extreme Islamic beliefs and attacking Christians and their religion and being very negative toward non-Muslims he went from that to an apprenticeship with the council, college, passing his driving test, University degree (AAha).

Whilst I presumed that the individual being described here had also become less racist and bigoted, *this is not what the mentor points to*. The case was aggressive, and now they have passed their driving test. They were narrow-minded, and now they have got work with the local authority. The original object of concern becomes hidden, displaced beneath their new normality, their inclusion within the mainstream – resilient and productive – strata of society. The grievance doesn't matter any more, but their normalcy *does* (Elshimi 2015). The examples demonstrate overtly the association of the everyday with terrorism risk: citizens' employment is now relevant to national security. But they also show how the banality through which contemporary risk-thinking is operationalized could not be more starkly contrasted with former combatants testimony. Set against the determined purpose narrated by

former combatants in the telling of *their* stories, the extracts from Prevent interviews show how agency is rescinded in the preemptive rationality. The ability to respond and negotiate with an environment becomes delegitimized by the dispositif of risk, because of the repositioning of *potentially everything* – but definitely anything that is potentially unproductive and non-resilient – as inherently illogical, irrational, and dangerous. In other words, everything can become, in the moment of referral to Prevent, saturated with vulnerability, and devoid of meaningful agency. The natural and only response is to rescind the ability of those deemed unable to deal with their environments to meaningfully impact those environments. As everybody else is judged to be on this trajectory already, environments remain as they were: unaffected by productive citizens content with their environments, and unaffected by potentially dangerous citizens whose subjectivities are inscribed with irrational risky and threatening imaginaries, citizens who are consistently directed towards a passively-complacent – and ultimately an actively-reproductive – inclusion of themselves within their circumstances.

Channel mentoring exposes its cases to new communities they might never have met, or helps them acquire jobs, in environments that encourage conformity. It would not, for example, encourage somebody referred for ‘animal rights extremism’ to apply for a job organizing Extinction Rebellion protests (Evans 2019). Rather than moving its constituents towards attempting to effect changes in material circumstances, Prevent produces conformity in the individual by situating them in already-conformed environments. They are encouraged to apply to university, for instance, or provided with housing in an area with fewer problems. The claim made by Prevent, in its obsession with individual recalibration, is that structural oppression and injustices no longer need attention; they are an inevitable feature of social existence. Resilience, or moving the individual into a safe space until they are resilient, is the only reasonable response. As we have seen, the closure of politics produced by anticipatory risk-governance occurs by redirecting individuals away from the apparent reason for their referral – racist outbursts are stopped by finding the individual a job, concluding the case as ‘safe’. Even the original reason *behind* the initial referral as understood by practitioners is excluded: one mentor (CM13) spent time speaking about the culture of ‘might is right’, which for him fostered an environment where violence was more likely:

People have unfortunately been programmed to believe that violence is the only way to change the world, might is right. That’s it. You know we don’t give people alternatives, in terms of how to change the world and how to bring about change. They’ve just been totally absorbed in this militaristic methodology for changing the world.

He had spent some time describing the fact that government (foreign) policy contributed to why people engaged in violence – also echoed by CM8. Both mentors complained about the challenges faced by Muslims in Britain, most particularly of their relative exclusion within society. Comments from ex-militants reminded me of these moments: they overwhelmingly emphasized that living in an environment saturated in violence contributed to their involvement in violence (see Thematic Chapter 1). For example L45 said that “violence breeds violence as far as I’m concerned,” and L26 noted that “I was too far ingrained in the culture of might is right, and the weak go to the wall.” Yet, in all interviews with Prevent practitioners, no consideration was given to thinking about how Channel cases could direct their anger and frustration towards engaging in political activism to redressing environmental concerns – like this culture of ‘might is right’, or of racism, or of exclusion. This produces the scenario whereby “every single” convicted terrorism offender and every Channel case CM13 had dealt with named foreign policy as central to their concerns, but these grievances are roundly silenced as irrelevant. As PLead15 said, the claim that policy causes violence is “far too simplistic... [and people saying it] doesn’t mean we take that at face value.” So the environments that produce ‘might is right’ or frustration with foreign policy are left alone through the operation of Prevent – no matter how much critical mentors raise these issues as relevant to why their Channel cases are presenting risk factors.

This final chapter will close by exploring extracts from two interviewees who spoke of the problems with the continuity produced by the precautionary logic that only explores individuals as the problem. The first is with a Channel mentor, who was speaking about mentoring cases with Autism Spectrum Disorder:

So when I go and speak to someone and they say, “What you’re saying makes sense to me, your line of analysis and thought blah blah blah,” [then] I feel like I’m making progress. Then I go back two weeks later to see this person and they’re like “apples are apples, oranges are oranges” and they’re back with the on-off on-off, and it’s like “let’s start again” [*laughs*]. That’s the way it is, in reality, let’s start again, “Why are you feeling like that?” There’s NHS doctors as well that’ve said to me like you did, “What are your expectations of what’s successful, what looks like success in terms of a case who’s got Autism Spectrum Disorder?... What do you hope to achieve with them? We’ve been sending them for treatment for seven years, what do you expect to achieve with this individual when we have effected no attitudinal or behavioural change whatsoever, in seven years of intensive, weekly appointments? But you come along from the Channel project and you want to do what exactly?”

He was communicating his surprise that his cases, who process information differently because of their ASD, aren’t personally transformed after a few sessions with him, following years of therapy with mental health professionals. He left the questions unanswered, moving on to discuss the links

between mental health and extremism. I didn't probe – I was conducting my first interview, was under-confident, and was trying to filter the vast amount of information as I learnt how Channel functioned. But the implication, from his seemingly rhetorical questions, from the rest of this interview, and from all other interviews I subsequently conducted, was that this is an intractable problem, and that 'de-radicalization' interventions are an unfortunate but necessary part of life in a society that wants to be safe from people who aren't resilient, where mentors just "ha[ve] to de-programme them" (CM13). This view, of the inevitability of insecurity, was contested by an account from B42, a high-profile barrister in Northern Ireland who prosecuted hundreds of terrorism cases during the conflict:

There's a big tranche of [people who] dislike the West, because of [historic injustices and hypocrisy like Sykes-Picot]... [So to] 'de-radicalize' someone, I think it's a middle-class myth really... When a lot of these atrocities occur like Manchester and so forth, you can't say what I've just said, you can't [talk about] the number of people the West has killed in the Middle East, in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and so on, tens of thousands of people, children. In Western newspapers that doesn't exist. So you can't say [that] when there's a terrible atrocity in Manchester... But we should! We should be saying that! Because maybe that would get through to people... It's rather like in a way in the Republic [of Ireland] people would generally be either pro-Treaty [for partition] or anti-Treaty [against partition], and that still exists. The two main parties are entirely different mindsets, they are the parties borne of the treaty. And I'm sure if you scratched the surface of either of them, they'd tell you about all the atrocities the other committed during the civil war. And that was almost 100 years ago. So I'm not sure about "de-radicalization".

B42 spent a significant amount of time exploring why violence had erupted in Northern Ireland, and in mainland Britain, ultimately making the case that environments produce violence borne of his exposure to those he prosecuted during 'the Troubles'. The intent of this thesis is not necessarily to align itself with this claim, but is simply to highlight how different the words of understanding of terrorism between Northern Ireland and Prevent are: post-conflict knowledge is founded upon relationships of space and time that allow for political change, whereas Prevent knowledge disappears this understanding and sees the present as 'good-enough' or inevitable, where individual resilience is the only reasonable response.

Conclusion

Whilst Northern Irish ex-militants spoke about the primacy of political engagement alongside a military demobilization if alternative routes to peace are available, the preemptive modality focuses on cognitive conformity with little recourse to external realities. This is a deeply pessimistic

engagement with the world, which situates social existence in an eternal present and with citizens powerless to effect political change (Boukalas 2019). The first section explored how interviewees respectively described the problematization of environments or individual vulnerabilities. Ex-militants emphasized the primacy of politics but Prevent officials spoke only of psychological solutions in the construction of an emancipated society. We then saw how these units were engaged with through negotiation or resilience, and the consequences of these disparate approaches in the opening up or closing down of space for contestation. The final section examined what this opening/closing produces with regard to change and continuity, with ex-militants suggesting the inevitability of violence given the presence of sufficient environmental factors, and Prevent practitioners noting a continuity of the present is good-enough, with its state of ineradicable insecurity. Preemptive logics say that society is no longer a process nor always (re-)emerging (Massumi 2015b, 87): it is here, it has emerged. The desirability of authentic, non-judgemental interactions is subjugated through Prevent's operation by connections that are devoid of genuine meaning. With a façade of caring pastoral relationships, the constituent element of Prevent interventions is distance from the subject, in order to impartially recalibrate the underlying vulnerabilities of referrals (Elshimi 2017, 122). These judgments necessitate a separation between subject and object, in order that all 'risky' spaces can be rationally observed and recalibrated as resilient and productive. Where ex-militants described trust and mutuality as necessary to produce meaningful exchanges, by definition the preemptive rationality does not listen to those unaware of their own dangerously vulnerable state – it would not only be illogical but potentially catastrophic. The thesis now moves into its conclusion, where I will provide a brief overview of the research, present some reflections from the research, and finally draw the empirical material together. Issues of banality and temporality are discussed in the context of the chasmic disjunctions between the two discourses. I emphasize the potential for subjugated knowledges to assist in deconstructing apparently inevitable realities.

Conclusion

This final section draws together the story told throughout the thesis – that Prevent ignores the very stories of those people it attempts to make claims about. Throughout the thesis I have been attempting to make more intelligible the “nature of the present”, a work of illumination which seeks to open up space for “possible transformation” to take place (Foucault 1988, 36). This is an important venture; as Massumi (2015b viii) writes, “The task of philosophy [i]s understanding the world as an ongoing process in continual transformation.” Seeing politics as a moving, disruptive process, enables new imaginaries to be drawn (Massey 2005, 11). It is imperative, in the words of Giroux, for (concealed) spaces to be investigated so that the administration of power can be examined, to see how modes of “social control [are] organized” (2004, 18).

Two discourses have been explored across the research: preemptive governance (or the testimony of risk-managers), and the subjugated knowledge of its most ideal constituents (ex-militants, or the ‘materialized risks themselves’). Although the British state recognises Northern Irish ex-militant violence as comparable to contemporary terrorism in Britain (Charles Farr, quoted in House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2012, Q309), Prevent makes the testimony of ex-militants invisible through its operation and refuses to learn from their journeys in and out of militancy. I have exposed Prevent’s reliance on a particularist epistemology that separates ‘risk’ on mainland Britain from another part of the UK, whereby research participants argued that “extremism in Britain is quite unique” (PPolice9). The apparent clash between the opinions of Charles Farr and PPolice9 reveals that the British state has not made a studied comparison of Irish and British militants, but rather has arrogantly assumed that its contemporary model of radicalization can be retrospectively applied to the conflict in Northern Ireland. The regime of truth allows for no exceptions, and thus silences or invisibilizes the voices of militants from the most profound local conflict of our time.

This thesis has explored this relationship of invisibilization over four thematically organised chapters, comprised of extensive testimony from both eras of British counterterrorism. The first two of these explored the way in which ex-militants and Prevent practitioners articulated the journey towards engaging in ‘terrorism’; why does violence take place, where does the ‘risk’ lie? We saw how motivations were described by those who engaged in violence during the Troubles, and then the difference between this testimony and some of the 22+ ERG risk factors. The following chapter investigated how the issue of agency was negotiated differently in both sets of interviews: how does Prevent’s premise that vulnerable people are drawn without conscious awareness towards violence sit with how ex-militants framed their decisions? The next two thematic chapters moved onto

discussing the way in which interviewees spoke of the premise of preemption itself through the contrasting modes of movement and fixing, nomadology and the State, unknowing and striating (Deleuze & Guattari 2010). The final chapter explored the logical conclusions each discourse drives towards.

Again and again throughout the thesis, Northern Irish interviewees framed their involvement as intricately related to their relationships with environments, history, and politics. Yet Prevent excludes the possibility for historical and spatial explanations from informing its risk-obsessive rationality. We have seen how the dispositif of risk produces its worst fears in a distilled form in order to direct society in a manageable fashion (Peck 2013, 147; Massumi 2015a), and how it precludes the potential for negotiation with systems and structures through its focus on the individual on the basis of a psychological framework. Equally, we have seen how former combatants narrated political contestation and environmental reformulation as fundamental to their movements toward and away from violence. At every turn, these stories have clashed with one another, occasionally appearing so foreign that interviewees laughed, became angry, and swore. But the silences were also presented through the inability of questions to be posed: I could not ask ex-militants if mental health difficulties had incited their involvement or suggested they should have become more resilient to their environments. Moreover, I could not have suggested to Prevent practitioners that in order to minimize violence, Britain might reconsider its foreign policy agenda, and redeploy public funds towards social ends which encourage political activism and protest. Showing a sheet of the official ERG 'risk factors' to Northern Irish interviewees was about the furthest I felt able to try and push these two worlds together, and it was telling that each time I did, responses were that "it's absolutely astonishing" (B42), "it's fucking nonsense" (R43), and "like in the old Frankenstein movies [if a teacher referred somebody then] everyone would be hunting the teacher down" (L27). And when I put the former combatant framework to Prevent practitioners, which centred around government (foreign and domestic) policy, their responses followed the line that "it's all very well that [somebody] says 'well I did this for Iraq'... but it doesn't mean we take that at face value." The solutions posed by Prevent – discussions with mentors, finding somebody a house, and leadership training courses – compounded the focus away from anything considered by ex-militants. The two worlds of terrorism knowledge were often incommensurable.

Before we move on to a substantive discussion of the themes of the thesis and what implications can be drawn from this research, I will provide some personal reflections on the process of researching and writing this thesis.

Reflections

Undertaking research for and writing this PhD has encouraged me to think and see in a way I have never thought or seen before. I appreciate the connectedness of things to a much greater extent than before, and think far more deeply about what I see – and my position in relation to it. Reading post-structuralist, feminist, and post-colonial critique has encouraged this, but just sitting with my interview data has also forced me to consider how the chasmic disjunctures between the worlds of Prevent and ex-militants might be explained. Seeing such contradictions required that I step back and let go of my liberal, probably quite conservative, political-science perspective. This lens, which encourages separation and categorization, would have struggled to make sense of the fundamental problems explored throughout the thesis. I was motivated by my reading and data to adopt an alternative way of seeing, a lens grounded in the critical tradition that encourages the questioning of language, assumptions, and my own position (Mies 1983; Acker, Barry, & Gseveld 1991; Denzin 1994). I have since spent a lot of time wrestling with this process. It has occasionally been painful deciding what to hold onto and what to uproot, and I still feel very much in the middle of working through this. But it has helped me empathize with others, and be able to articulate the connectedness of social existence, and how deeply embedded our lives are with each other. Being relatively new to critical theory, I have struggled with some pitfalls that critical research can be prone to: “guardedness rather than openness; aggression rather than submission; superiority rather than reverence; distraction rather than attentiveness; exposure rather than tact” (Felski 2012). There are inevitably some moments where all of these may be appropriate, but in being newly exposed to some of the power and responsibility of the critical approach, I have struggled to maintain humility, grace, and forgiveness, which are some of the most important things to me.

I have also been disillusioned and saddened at points at how entrenched fear-infused logics are within the functioning of the world, and the minimal impact I can make to bring about any redress or alternative thinking. This has been on occasion particularly depressing – although it has also inspired me to agitate for change in this and other areas, like protesting with Extinction Rebellion to help move the planet away from global heating, and engaging with politicians on the British tax haven empire that fosters corruption around the world. But I see the micro-practices of power relations as much more fundamentally important – educating myself on the history of empire, challenging friends (and myself) to listen to and empathize with others, and disturbing prejudiced perspectives. I cannot now imagine a life where I do not pursue social justice as the primary motivation through which to live.

The research has been emotional for me in other ways. At points I was utterly staggered by what I saw as the inability of some Prevent practitioners to see some of the contradictions in their testimony (also see: Pettinger 2020a), and I had to take time away from my work so that I could

process my anger and frustration in order to continue sustainably. Questions I would ask myself in these moments would be: how can practitioners ignore the perspective that people's environments are crucial and shape and constrain how people act, and how do they dissociate this from their own lives? Wouldn't there be instances when they saw the use of material force as necessary, if not desirable, to protect themselves and their loved ones, and agitate for what they thought to be right? At various points during my research I have had to remind myself that practitioners (and I) exist as situated beings – practitioners have lived within a system that encourages divisions and separation rather than genuinely critical and deconstructive thought, and their approach (shapes and) is shaped by how they have experienced their *own* environments. This helped me depersonalize my anger away from single, specific practitioners and onto broader and historical logics, which I see as more fundamentally important to the implementation of preemptive risk-governance – especially as I might have seen the world very similarly to these individuals only a couple of years ago. Speaking with ex-militants in particular has helped me to become more graceful and understanding of others' experiences: these former IRA or UFF members were people who are regularly demonized by the media and politicians (especially republicans). But by meeting them face-to-face and listening to their stories, I was able to empathize with their position and see why they acted the way they did given their circumstances.

At points I have felt extremely conflicted about my own positionality, and aware of my complicity in issues I'm critiquing. I have spent 80,000 words deconstructing a programme whose operatives I spent many hours speaking with, whose personability I often appreciated, whose work I was genuinely intrigued by. During interviews they were universally kind and helpful – yet my position at the time as a non-critical researcher, and being white and male, may have contributed to my relatively unobstructed access and personable encounters (see methodology chapter). I did not approach most (Prevent) interviewees from an especially critical position; it was only through engaging with critical literature afterwards that the significance of what interviewees told me started to become clear. So the contents and perspective of this thesis (and associated publications) very easily might upset and frustrate my Prevent interviewees, especially as they (and I) were not aware that I would be assuming such a critical perspective. I have found this dichotomy difficult to contend with. After one of my articles was published (Pettinger 2020b), a prominent practitioner called me to convey his emotions, and subsequently withdrew his participation from my research. Although I was somewhat sceptical of his intent, this was not easy to hear! How am I qualified to speak about emancipation when my research produces anger and frustration from another's perspective (let alone my complicity in walking with ex-militants back through their trauma)? I have processed some of these

thoughts and feelings more than others, but they remain regardless. To draw the thesis to a conclusion, I now turn to a substantive discussion of the empirical material.

Chronology of Thematic Material

Interviewee testimonies have been unpacked over the course of four substantive chapters. The first two chapters were concerned with how ‘the terrorist’ narrated themselves and their socio-political environments, and how these stories contrasted with the knowledge of the risk-management assemblage of Prevent. In the terminology of Prevent, where is the locus of risk understood to be, and how does this inform interventions? These discussions took the form of considering their *motivations* (Thematic Chapter 1) and *agency* (Thematic Chapter 2). The next two chapters looked at the *different starting points* of the respective logics in order to situate the discussion on why the framings around motivations and agency were so different (Thematic Chapter 3), and finally at *the logical conclusions* of these framings (Thematic Chapter 4). After unpacking the progress chronologically, we will look to the causes and consequences of the chasmic silences we have identified.

In *Motivations and Risk Factors*, we saw that former combatant testimony was saturated with accounts of injustices, environmental violence, and oppression. They spoke in no uncertain terms about their experiences as inciting their involvement: R30 drew comparisons between his involvement because of environments, and violence in contemporary Britain, remarking, “There were a million people destroyed in Iraq by Tony Blair. Is it unreasonable to think there’ll be at least one madman who’s gonna put a bomb in England! Who would be surprised?” Prevent practitioners, conversely, presented a perspective that presences only abstracted risk factors, silencing the explanatory power of these personal experiences (of injustices, environmental violence, and oppression). The logic of Prevent is eminently disinterested in deducing motivations. The aims spoken about by ex-militants become de-materialized in favour of a frenetic pursuit of the potential divergent from within a pool of risk-data: as Bigo and Guittet put it: “individuality is reduced to a stock of information” (2011, 488). Calculations about associations of potential risk factors are mobilized in place of seeking to understand. The testimony of ex-militants – those upon whom Prevent would have wished to intervene – which focused on historical and environmental causes, falls away as irrelevant. The ‘risk-problem’ is instead located only in the present moment, and at the feet of individuals. Prevent situates violence as a localized phenomenon, problematizing and making visible the *responses to environments* rather than the environments themselves. Any consideration of structural causes is excluded by the assumption of the psychological origins of risk, because preemption is so concerned with “own[ing]” the future that it causes space and time to become folded into themselves (Massumi 2015a, 73).

The second thematic chapter (*Negotiating Agency*) explored the disparate narratives around agency and commitment. Prevent makes the claim that those who might pose risk possess an inherent inability to control themselves, and act as passive (and ill-informed) instruments coerced by others to do their bidding. Those who are visibilized for terrorism risk-related intervention are therefore children with mental health difficulties and those who demonstrate an explicit lack of intent. Examples of those categorized as suitable for intervention included those whose sessions were sanctioned because “I felt the young person I've been working with appreciates and values this opportunity” (PC6). But as much as this lack of demonstrable intent grounded Prevent interventions, ex-militants were equally vehement in their framing of involvement being a considered and purposeful response to their surroundings. Even where they accepted they had been influenced (even to a point of being ‘radicalized’) by others and their environments, they universally narrated their involvement as conscious and deliberate, and almost without exception said they would have made similar choices again. Moreover, the conversation always moved back to considering the conditions within which they lived. Prevent ignores these accounts, making silent the association between serious grievance and terrorism potentiality, instead casting vulnerability as inherently problematic and as related to terrorism propensity. These two chapters – the first half of the empirical material – were characterized by accounts of how banality operates as a fundamental component of anticipatory risk-governance, and how this sits in opposition to the serious intent described by ex-militants. Where the intensity of circumstances that drew involvement was articulated constantly, Prevent redraws *every moment* as a counter-terrorism moment.

The second half of the empirical discussion – the final two chapters – then moved to identify how disconnected the two accounts are with regard to their epistemological foundations, how the respective rationalities are operationalized, and what these logics ultimately produce. The third thematic chapter took a Deleuzean approach to reveal how interviewees spoke of the ability to ‘know’, ‘categorize’, and ‘see’ risk. It showed how Prevent practitioners narrated a fervid obsession with striating, ordering, and identifying potential risk sites, yet ex-militants spoke of a contentedness with not detecting locations of risk, and a disinterest in hypothesizing about *what might have happened if* ‘X’. Building on the intensity of ex-militant testimony from previous chapters, this third chapter explored how inevitability was narrated in interviews. These stories were infused with a disdain for reconstructions of the past, or speculating about future possibilities, because of the circumstances that engulfed them. Ex-militants suggested that to hypothesize in such a way was an “impossible” task (R34); they were uninterested in territorializing the space of risk-knowledge. Yet engaging hypotheticals and thinking about ‘what if’ is the functional methodology of Prevent, according to the accounts of its operatives. This endeavour attempts to visibilize and categorize individuals who may

exist on the fringes of (un)productivity, those who may pose a potential threat to the neoliberal norm by not being resilient and productive enough. Its primary purpose is to remake such divergents into singularly constructive beings, shutting down the potential to imagine in non-binary ways. Where ex-militants spoke of moving from dangerous to peaceability in a moment (territorializing ground and immediately ceding their position), Prevent practitioners spoke only in terms of unidirectionality (deterritorializing only to reterritorialize another space). Arbitrary, subjective, and confusing fault lines were seen in the drawing of the boundary between *unitary productivity* and *potential threat*: as PC6 said, “It doesn’t help that radical sounds so similar to radicalization”. Ex-militants, conversely, avoided such disjunctures in stories situated around multiple motivations. They told of a strong desire for peace alongside convictions that violence was necessary – occasionally even considering their violence as desirable, pronouncing themselves “counter-terrorists” (L26). The potential to hold varied, potentially conflicting subjectivities is suppressed through the operation of Prevent, which instead imposes a non-negotiable and state-centric vision of society onto its constituents – and positions those who don’t (yet) conform as separate and dangerous.

The final thematic chapter saw how both sets of interviewees articulated the logical conclusions of their respective focus and intentions. Ex-militants narrated continual negotiation and contestation, and the opening up of political space for trusting relationships with (even dangerous) others, as the only option to producing meaningful peace. But Prevent imagines the inverse: its practitioners spoke of ensuring the road to relative risk-minimization (in its privileged gaze that ignores structural violence) through bolstering individual resilience. The concept of perpetual continuity was explored by Prevent’s universalized preemptive logic, which was disturbed by ex-militant focus on change. The emphasis on individual resilience pursued by Prevent curtails discussion around environments, and overwhelmingly presumes the sufficiency of the status quo. It imagines into existence on behalf of the ‘terrorist other’ a subjectivity always able to be reformed and reimagined, ever-reconstituted towards non-contestation. Alternatives to violence, in the eyes of Prevent’s practitioners, are immersed not in considerations of how to manoeuvre structures or enter into political negotiations with those who might think differently (or even be demonstrating material threat), but rather through a problematization of individual psychology and a subsequent strengthening of cognitive capacities to deal with their environments. People’s relationship to their environment – rather than the environment itself – requires reconstruction: “the more we recognize that behaviour is a reaction then you have the ability to deconstruct and reconstruct [it]” (CM13). The dispositif of risk sees only abstracted risk factors attached to aggrieved individuals, where behaviour is merely a symptom of an inability to cope. This entire framework ignores the testimony of former

combatants, whose aspirations were explicitly and consistently contextualized within an agenda of transforming external realities:

You'll come up with a preventative strategy if you think what needs to be prevented is the waywardness of the individual who you want to get back onto the straight and narrow. But if his or her involvement in whatever they're involved in is a direct result of repressive policies, then prevention would need to apply to you not them... but you're not gonna get the Tories to admit that (R38)!

Discussion

The thesis has painted a picture of two contrasting structures of knowledge, and showed how the assemblage of Prevent operationalizes claims about its hypothetical constituents that bear no relation to the testimony of these very constituents, who live in the same country, separated from Prevent's reach by 12 miles of water. Derived from a study of 'extremist-related offenders', Prevent supposedly makes the most informed claims about convicted terrorist offenders like the Northern Irish interviewees from this research. Yet they overwhelmingly do not recognize categories or processes it mobilizes in its desperate bid to 'minimize risk'. What does all of this mean, and what can we learn about the chasmic conflict between the two logics? What is produced by the exclusion of ex-militant experience from anticipatory risk-governance – what does it do to subjugate such knowledge?

One of the most significant conclusions to draw from the thesis is that the implications of experiences become silenced by the logic of preemption. Prevent assumes an incapacitated, irrational, imperfect individual as the location and cause of the risk. Under this rationality, externalities become hidden as a cause of violence. As the *individual* is imperfect, reforming extenuating circumstances makes no sense – it cannot bring about emancipation from the constant struggle to produce resilience. This is an intractable state, because it starts with the premise that external problems are merely “products of problematic vulnerable subjects, unable or unwilling to communicate and process information enabling efficient adaptive choice-making” (Chandler 2016, 142). Prevent practitioners realize that

kids wanna change the world man, I think that's a beautiful thing! Where is the outlets for them to engage in legitimate activity somehow? There isn't, so therefore you almost push them... If you haven't got any recourse to [bring about change], violence is your only communication tool (CM13).

If we take what we have learnt about Prevent – that it forecloses the ability to contend for meaningful external reform – we see this practitioner implying that *Prevent* (and preemptive governance more

broadly) *itself makes violence inevitable*. Relations of space, time and politics, which former combatants narrated as so intricately related to their violence, become dematerialized attributes related to a person's risk profile, of interest only for the purposes of identifying vulnerabilities so that an individual's *experiential response* can be appropriately managed. Though legitimized by claims that it enhances the material provision of national security, preemptive risk-management is characterized by a total disregard for whether its functionality produces a reduction in violence: "hopefully we do!" (PLead16). Negative experiences of external realities are cast as a psychological frailty, and instead of celebrating displays of empathy and vulnerability, these traits become problematized as dangerous attributes potentially demonstrative of terrorism risk.

Projecting vulnerability onto another subject produces the appearance of one's own *invulnerability* (Butler 2016, 4), but this is a façade which must remain hidden to uphold the continuation of such logics. We have seen that the fundamental conception undergirding the preemptive apparatus is that everything, everyone, everywhere, is exposed and at-risk. A 'national security' operation like Prevent is submerged in secrecy not only because its contents might expose material vulnerabilities, but also because *the very façade of its invulnerability must be protected*. Vulnerabilities are problematic and must be hidden (goes the logic), but the pretence of invulnerability – through which the act of inscribing others with vulnerable identities operates – must also be hidden. After all, risk-thinking is a circular logic, and were it to be disrupted or challenged – by suggesting that the state itself (or its officials, like Prevent practitioners) could be 'vulnerable to extremism' – the assemblage would unravel. The 'invulnerable sovereign' would suddenly be exposed as potentially vulnerable. The façade of invulnerability must therefore be protected to uphold the circularity. If experiences could make meaningful claims about material realities, opening up space to negotiate over them would disrupt the carefully-constructed doctrine that the state is *not amenable to change*, and is *not vulnerable*. Yet ex-militants spoke of disengaging from their own violence as a result of political negotiations, mutual shows of vulnerability, and openness to reform and de-escalation. Rather than being forced out of the use of violence, they articulated through hundreds of thousands of words the process of being persuaded that the state might negotiate, putting away their violence in response. In building a structure of knowledge that bears no relation to the experience of its most ideal subjects (former terrorism offenders), preemptive governance precludes the potential for an encounter with an(y) other, foreclosing the possibility for their "infinite subjectivities" to be drawn together and learn from one another's experiences (Badiou 2012, 27). Instead, it sets the lack of awareness of the ubiquity of risk as a potential signifier of terrorism propensity, closing down any space to learn from anything outside itself.

The banality with which Prevent operates, especially in relation to the considerable intensity we saw ex-militants narrate throughout the research, functions to compound the hidden pretence of the state's invulnerability, by dispersing responsibility and critical engagement up the bureaucratic hierarchy. Because "what might be a very justifiable lifestyle choice [could be] a sign of radicalization" (PLead17), teachers and social workers must divest decision-making capacity to those who have eyes to see. This visibilizing responsibility is borne by a combination of the "[state] expert and the imaginative, [a combination which] is able to negate its violence through its administrative appearance" (de Goede 2008, 110; also see: Simon 1988; Aradau & van Munster 2008). The acquisition of this power to inscribe by state 'experts' ensures the circularity continues and invulnerability remains hidden; it would be impossible for ordinary citizens to categorize other citizens as 'dangerously vulnerable' accurately because the signifiers are so banal. Rather than concede that these signifiers might just be banal, everyday, and justifiable, enlightened officials well-versed in risk-thinking are recruited to filter these into terrorist risk strata. Mobilizing security-consciousness through meagre tasks and ordinary observations like associating "us and them thinking" with terrorism potentiality ensures the continuation and extension of risk-awareness. Rather than fostering engagement within society – something ex-militants prioritized as central to bringing about meaningful peace – Prevent positions everyday encounters as potentially infused with terrorism risk. This banalizing of counter-terrorism responsibility short-circuits the possibility for empathy; instead of a laudable goal it becomes a signifier of potential terrorism risk. Divesting oneself from judgments about whether everyday behaviour should be seen as risky, the endeavour to understand others' relations of space and time is excluded from reasonable discourse and practice.

These issues, of a closure of space and contestation (by associating banality with potential terrorism risk), brings us to the heart of the preemptive rationality: that temporality is mobilized as a tool of governance through which to direct social and political engagement. Where Northern Irish interviewees described the desirability of alternative modes of interaction through armed demobilization and peace agreements, Prevent relies on an inability to consider different forms of social relations. As the meaning behind material conditions fades, the relationship between cause and effect, between political disaffection and political consequence, breaks down. The only reasonable outcome is the continued occurrence of the present moment, again, and again, and again. What we have now is situated as the culmination of the future: the present is sufficient, and material inequalities and injustices are insignificant to the structuring of social reality (Peck 2013; Boukalas 2019). The future exists merely as an "extended present" (Nowotny quoted in Adam 2003, 73), and, without the incentive to agitate for material transformation, "the only way to... actively mobilize people, is through fear" (Zizek 2009, 34; also see: Massumi 2015). It is not a norm divested of agency

or responsibility; on the contrary, Prevent cases are sent out into the world to spread the “Gospel of Prevent” (CM8) with their improved capacity to withstand exogenous shocks and their enlightened position of realization that risk can be found everywhere (Reid 2016b). A necessary restlessness is accepted by these new recruits: “it’s an ever-changing treadmill that we have to keep up on. It’s very difficult” (PC5; also see: Heath-Kelly and Strausz 2018). The continuous future of the present is inscribed on targets of Prevent’s operation by practitioners seeking to produce replicates of themselves. As Boukalas (2019, 474, emphasis added) writes, “The citizen is both the target *and the agent* of Prevent.” Successful cases are more resilient and now always suspicious (Pettinger 2020b) – they have accepted the paradigm that risk is everywhere, and have assumed a responsibility for identifying and counteracting it wherever found.

What does resistance of anticipatory risk-governance look like? Massumi writes that “preemption is an *effective operative logic*”, constructing (a diluted version of) its worst fears as it moves so that it can observe and manage the future before the catastrophe emerges in full force (2015, 15). Because “we create it’ [then] ‘we’ the preemptors will always be right” (2015, 14). How is a self-justifying assemblage that forgets the very people it makes claims about and which needs no external validation able to be contested? Resisting a logic that makes the material world disappear could not be more important. Prevent closes down space for political relations and in so doing suppresses imagination: unless its constituents adopt the risk-obsessed perspective as legitimate and necessary (and act accordingly), they will remain ‘seen’ as potentially threatening. Without the ability to think critically, democratic debate is impossible (Giroux 2004, xix), and without “material struggle, ‘another world’ would not be meaningfully thinkable” (Chandler 2016, 169). Opening up space for alternative futures, as was so central to ex-militant stories, allows the ideal democratic force to be manifested. Some have argued that anticipatory governance should be subject to more stringent checks, its worst impulses controlled through democratic means (Steiker 1998; Zedner & Ashworth 2019). But this dominant ‘ontopower’ (Massumi 2015a) can be seen as a fundamentally anti-democratic force, especially if we consider democracy to be

not an institution, but essentially an anti-institutional force [that disrupts power structures. It is an] anarchic, disruptive element inside the political system. [It is] essentially, a force for *dissent* and change. One can best recognize a democratic society by its constant complaints that it is *not* democratic enough (Bauman 2000, 54-55).

Listening to and learning from all citizens – demonstrated by peace activists in Northern Ireland even where it became uncomfortable and bore a cost – is illogical and hazardous under the dispositif of risk. But the testimony of ex-militants, which focused on including dangerous others to find a way

forward (opening up spatial and temporal relations), provides a substantial challenge to the circular claims of the dispositif of risk. Listening to the stories from ex-militants reveals that another way of considering 'risk' is possible. Another way for social relations to be conducted than an ever-expanding (self-)surveillance exists.

Considering affective politics might move us towards a more sustainable position, especially since the anxiety-inducing assemblage of risk-consciousness produces affect by triggering the impulse to *do something* (Aradau & van Munster 2007). Since preemption constitutes its own self-propelling force, it does not need alternative causes or virtues or purposes to advance its aims of making ideal citizens. The rationalities behind risk-thinking are therefore driven only by "nonconscious affective means rather than through persuasive discourse" (Sabsay 2016, 282). As Prevent practitioner William Baldet remarked, "It doesn't *feel right* to do nothing" (DryCleanerCast 2018, emphasis added). Because understanding affect is pivotal to understanding the operation of power (Massumi 2015b, 32), Hardt and Negri argue that resistance should be drawn from engagement of affective politics (2005; also see: Sabsay 2016). What resistance looks like with regard to the dispositif of risk should be further considered, but I was struck at its circularity and self-serving logic when I showed the list of ERG risk factors to R43. He laughed aloud, commenting that the premise made no sense, and swore multiple times. I was drawn to smile, and maybe even laughed along with him in the moment, remembering the circularity of Prevent, and how strangely it characterized 'risky ones' to a point of absurdity in relation to their own stories. Un-subjugating knowledge and experience in this way, by talking to (and re-humanizing) those about whom claims of evilness or sheer irrationality are made – or those whom repressive measures affect – might produce an affective fulcrum of resistance through irony or laughter or sadness, when we realize they have stories too.

However, the preemptive methodology advances on the premise that action is necessary. In the words of many Prevent officials facing criticism, "People should just get on with it, get on board with it" (CM3). In order to cope with the incessant and unending demands that the management of risk poses, and the associated fear of doing nothing, "You must simply act" (Massumi 2015, 13). The call for specific, material solutions is loud. The restlessness to find a solution in the face of inexhaustible risks is contrasted with the accounts of ex-militants, who frame violence as simply inevitable given certain environmental conditions. Yet practitioners consistently probed *well what's the alternative to Prevent?* It is tempting to engage on this premise, and indeed many academics *do*, often from a point of traditional theory, offering improvements to existing structures without "identify[ing] the conditions of possibility under which a domain of objects appears" (Butler 2009, 109). Such an approach "relinquishes its claim to exercise criticism" (Horkheimer 1972, 178). The logic of 'doing something' is not exceptional or restricted to risk-thinking. It pervades even this research –

I feel pressure to provide a 'solution' to the 'problem of risk'. But this plays into the neoliberal solution-obsessed paradigm, the politics of decision, fixating on the *what* rather than the *why* (Aradau 2004). Critical theory, in its ideal state, is performed through a methodology that intentionally slows down, reflects, and raises more questions than solutions (Ruitenberg 2004). Having provided an exposition of two fundamentally different worlds of understanding, and spoken of some of the foundational consequences of preemptive governance, it is tempting to suggest a step-by-step method of dismantling such a system, to offer solutions, to *act*. Instead, I will pose a few questions that might open up more space:

- What does emancipation and resistance look like in the context of circular risk-governance, performed as a civic duty?
- Can anything from the dispositif of risk produce democratic engagement? Does risk-thinking encourage anything that can produce emancipation; how can resilience be co-opted from its de-spatialized, de-temporalized contemporary deployment?
- Are mutual relations of humility and vulnerability foundational to enabling a radically inclusive politics?
- How can we further investigate the affective politics of preemptive risk-logics? How do we mobilize affective politics to move towards a more desirable future?
- What language can critical theorists use to expose problematic logics more effectively, without as much complicity in their agendas? Should hegemonic identifiers (like 'radicalization', 'terrorism', 'risk') always be reimagined and deconstructed?

The thesis has demonstrated two worlds of testimony which consistently undermine the other, and probed the neoliberal context of the disjuncture which separates them. Prevent mobilizes imagination without reference to some of its most obvious constituents. As a result, the preemptive rationality is introduced into every crevice: once the purview of soldiers and intelligence operatives, counter-terrorism is now a universal human duty. It "is no longer punctual, like a battle. It's on low boil all the time, it is no longer localized, like an occupation. The heat is everywhere" (Massumi 2015a, 69). Separating risk in England, Scotland, and Wales, from the part of the UK that has such a history of violence (and maintains a similarly divided culture today), exemplifies the silencing of history in operation through Prevent. Prevent explicitly ignores three decades of violent conflict in 'the Troubles', and the peace agreement which brought this latest episode in Irish history to a conclusion. Attempting to produce peace – or a lack of individual-violence – Prevent situates the contemporary moment in (British) history as sufficient, foreclosing the possibility of material reform, and negotiation

with those who don't see in the same way. Hopefully throughout the thesis it has become clear why peace activist R43 might have made the comment about Prevent that,

I think that the whole Prevent Strategy is a nonsense from start to finish. I don't know who thought the thing up- if you'd have got a bunch of lunatics and said 'put something together' that's what they'd have come up with. The people that developed the Prevent programme knew nothing about real life, in particular in working class areas. Honestly!

As they are teased out and exposed as undesirable and illogical, practices undergirded by the risk dispositif may become displaced (Springer 2012, 102). This is my hope: that new ways of seeing, knowing, and being – founded upon radical inclusion, trusting self-scepticism of our own precious assumptions, and humble learning from those on the outside – arise.

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