

# Researching Counter-Terrorism Policing and Communities

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## Background Context: Community Policing and Counter Terrorism

- Efforts to counter terrorism are increasingly drawing upon community policing initiatives based upon engagement and partnership work between police officers and members of wide-ranging communities, in the United Kingdom, in some parts of Northern Europe, North America, and in other international contexts.
- Communities are being seen as key partners in countering the threat of terrorism, and community policing models are increasingly being drawn upon, and utilized, to work toward countering terrorism-related crime.



## Research Studies

- **AHRC Connected Communities Programme** (2012) 'Communities as defeating and/or endorsing extreme violence: how do communities support and/or defeat extreme violence over time?' Dr Steve Hewitt (PI)
- **West Midlands Counter-Terrorism Unit** (2011) 'Police- Community Engagement and Counter-Terrorism'
- **AHRC Connected Communities Programme** (2011) 'Conflict within and between communities – with respect to the role of communities in helping to defeat and/or endorse terrorism and the interface with policing efforts to counter terrorism'
- **ESRC Follow-on Fund** 'An international conference exploring community-based initiatives aimed at countering terrorism'
- **AHRC/ESRC** 'Community-Police Engagement and Partnerships for Preventing Terror Crime: a collaboration involving researchers in the UK, in the US and in Northern Ireland' *Connected Communities Programme*
- **AHRC/ESRC** 'A Study exploring Questions relating to Partnership between Police and Muslim Communities in the Prevention of Violent Religio-Political Extremism amongst Muslim Youth' *Religion & Society Programme* 2009-2010
- 'An Examination of Partnership Approaches to Challenging Religiously-Endorsed Violence involving Muslim Groups and Police' *Religion & Society Programme* 2008-2009
- Dr. Basia Spalek, Dr. Salwa El-Awa, Dr. Laura McDonald, Dr. Robert Lambert

## A Low Trust Environment ?

- Since 9/11, there has been an unprecedented enlargement of security policies and practices, with continuous growth in the funding of security intelligence (Bennett et al., 2007; Moran and Pythian, 2008; Youngs, 2009).
- Since 9/11, government officials and security experts worldwide have used the terminology of the "new terrorism" to convey the sense of a heightened risk from terrorist activity faced by western liberal democratic states (Mythen and Walklate 2006).
- Importantly, within the notion of the "new terrorism" is the construction of Muslim minorities as "suspect," requiring state surveillance and control, since "new terrorism" is seen as a new form of religio-political terrorism linked to AQ-influenced groups.
- "New terrorism" may be a new kind of terrorism as a result of factors associated with globalisation; importantly, Al-Qaeda (AQ) terrorism may or may not constitute a 'new' form of terrorism (Neumann, 2009).

*... no doubt there are police officers that are very trustworthy, they are you know, it would be wrong for me to say otherwise...but I think sometimes one feels that there's more of a motive, an exterior motive, for the police than meets the eye... so you know and to be honest with you on a few occasions they have been, well I personally have said to a police, to senior officers, that this officer I do not want to have any further interaction with him. Because I feel that he is gathering intelligence. So he's probably gathering intelligence behind me but now he's gathering it in front of me as well. So you know in asking questions, and getting other stuff.*

*Because you're talking about vulnerabilities and risk within their communities. And even though the community may feel they may know themselves that there is a risk within their communities, it's quite difficult for them to open up and admit to police officers. But if they ... if you've spent time building up trust with them, you get to that stage where you are able to have that difficult conversation with you. And for me that's the real crux of it is do they trust you enough to discuss those difficult issues with you ?*

**. . . the vast majority of academics and think tanks are just sitting at home or in their offices and doing it from there and getting paid vast loads of money . . . . So it's all the academic side, writing stuff, think tanks are coming together with policies and procedures and as a result of that authorities are getting their hands on that and it's authority from them, off they go. They're not coming to the grassroots. And this is my concern . . . I see we're not going to the grassroots levels and finding out what the problems be and what they would do you see . . . and it's bad because the policies and procedures and the reports that you write are affecting people on the ground. But because you don't know what they're doing and what they're really about you're writing totally untrue what was going on.**

## Inequality

- The importance of considering structural issues of social and economic deprivation and marginalisation that are of concern to Muslim minorities. Schmid (2007pp. 13–14):  
 ‘a disproportionately large number of European Muslims feel they are underprivileged. Not feeling accepted by host societies, some of the young Muslims have been radicalized by Muslim clerics who warned them against integration and offered them a Salafist or even jihadist version of Islam.’

## Inequality

- In relation to social research in this field, structural inequalities between the researcher and research participants can be particularly pronounced.
- Those running grassroots-level initiatives to prevent terror crime may be very aware of the millions of pounds of state funding that has gone into researching 'new terrorism'.
- They are also aware of the ways in which researchers based at universities are taking advantage of the new resources being made available with respect to building their own careers and research profiles, with universities often taking a significant share of any research funding that academics secure so that communities themselves rarely substantially benefit financially from research being undertaken within their own communities; yet these communities can be often located in poor and deprived urban areas.
- The dominance of state-led responses to 'new terrorism' means that communities are often distrustful of researchers, viewing researchers as part of wider state-led dynamics who do little to empower specific communities, especially those communities deemed suspect and constituting part of the problem of 'new terrorism'.

## Trust-building with communities

- Trust-building through the interpersonal characteristics of the researcher and researched.
- Building contingent trust.

## Trust-building with communities

- Within the research literature there has been a focus upon identity in relation to insider and outsider researcher positions with respect to establishing trust and rapport between the researcher and research participants.
- Increasingly within discussions of insider and outsider status there is an acknowledgment of the multiple identities that both researcher and researched occupy, so that it is argued that while some aspects of a researcher's identity might help to establish rapport and trust, and to gain access to research participants, other aspects of that identity might work against them (Garland et al., 2005; Spalek, 2008). Complex !
- According to Stanfield (1993, p. 7), the professional status of a minority ethnic researcher can cause problems, even when that researcher is studying those with whom he or she shares a common ethnic background.
- It would appear that researchers can connect and disconnect across wide-ranging identities, including those in relation to religion, 'race'/ethnicity, gender and class.

## Trust-building with communities

- When carrying out research with Muslim communities it is important to stress the important role that an acknowledgment of the multiplicity of identities can play in helping to establish rapport with participants.
- This is a powerful mechanism through which to non-essentialise individuals who are taking part in research; this can serve to create knowledge that moves beyond essentialist discourses and thereby effectively challenge the wider essentialising discourse of 'new terrorism' and its potential to homogenise all Muslims. Indeed, according to Body-Gendrot (2007), Muslims as a faith community are deemed an 'at risk' group, with little attention paid to the complexities of multiple communities, or to differentiating between a terrorist threat and Muslims in general.
- My research - as researchers we are aware that we occupy multiple identities multiple identities in relation to ethnicity, class and faith and so on. For example, the co-investigator is a woman, an Arab Muslim from a high-ranking family in Egypt, whereas the principal investigator is a woman, white British, non-Muslim, from a Polish, Catholic, refugee background.
- These various identities were drawn upon when trying to establish rapport with the research participants, and having awareness of the multiplicity of their own subject positions enabled the researchers to relate to the research participants in complex and multitudinous ways.

## Building Contingent Trust

- Contingent trust is about building trust through being engaged in trust-building activities and through actors demonstrating their trustworthiness (Goldsmith, 2005).
- This means that researchers should explore ways in which contingent trust can be built.
- Researchers often have access to various social and economic resources; for example, obtaining research money through various research councils and other funding bodies, writing academic and other publications, being invited to present papers at various conferences.
- The importance of reciprocity: for communities to work with researchers, it is important for researchers to reciprocate efforts by helping communities tackle issues of concern to them.
- This may involve helping organisations write material that helps them access resources, or it may involve including community members as co-authors of various academic, policy-oriented and other publications.

## Implicit Trust ?

- Implicit trust is a more advanced type of trust that can be found in committed, stable relationships (Goldsmith, 2005).
- Through building implicit trust between the researcher and researched it may be possible to create working partnerships for future work that has the core aims of generating new research as well as of empowering research participants.
- Developing implicit trust is particularly important if attempting to access Muslim minorities who have in particular been linked to 'new terrorism': Salafi and Islamist groupings.