

# **Engaging with the Muslim Community in Cardiff: A Study of the Impact of Counter-Terrorism Research**

## **Abstract**

Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, there have been a number of terrorist suspects arrested in the UK, but  $\frac{3}{4}$  of those people are released without charge (Choudhury & Fenwick 2011). This has led to claims from within these communities that counter-terrorism legislation is both heavy handed and counter-productive. This article presents findings from a pilot research project that examined how best to engage with Muslim communities and to examine perceptions from these communities with regards to counter-terrorism legislation. There were two aims for the pilot study. The first was to provide members of the Muslim community in Cardiff with information about the nature of the study, its objectives and the individuals who would be undertaking the research. The second, following from the first, was to assess the feasibility of different methods of undertaking the research with representatives of Cardiff's Muslim communities.

This in turn would help address issues such as how to gain access to participants; how to obtain informed consent for participation in the research; identifying appropriate methods of data collection; appropriate venues for the fieldwork; identifying ethical concerns arising from the research; and identifying any risks to participants and researchers arising from the research, as well as the strategies needed to overcome these risks. This was a qualitative case study which utilized grounded theory principles to generate a theoretical model and involved interviews with 6 people and a focus group consisting of 3 people. In short, this study offers a blue print for further research into the impact of counter terrorism legislation on Muslim communities in Cardiff and makes a unique contribution to the literature on Muslims in Britain as well as counter terrorism studies as Cardiff's Muslim communities remain under-researched.

## **Introduction**

The 2011 census shows that there are 2.7 million Muslims in the United Kingdom, or approximately 4.8% of the UK population (up from 2.7 in the 2001 census). Diversity is an important component of having a cohesive society whereby difference and equality can be celebrated. In this sense, diversity means recognising individuals as well as groups regardless of people's gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, race, disability and religion. Muslim communities in Britain are also a diverse group, due to their Islamic faith, race, ethnicity, culture and nationality, with a number of different

religious sects and entities from the Berelvia, Deoband, Maliki, Shia and Sunni factions. Indeed, Muslim communities have grown since the Industrial Revolution and a microcosm of this development is found in Cardiff, historically a multi-faith and multicultural receptor of migrants. The 2001 census showed that Cardiff was home to 11, 268 Muslims, and according to the most recent 2011 census, this number has increased by 2.7%. Whilst that diversity is acknowledged as a key strength of British society, equally the rise in Islamophobic incidents in Britain since the 9/11, 7/7 and Woolwich attacks, has led to claims that Muslim communities are unfairly being targeted by the police, far right groups, the media, politicians and counter-terrorism legislation. Indeed, the non-profit organisation Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) have seen a rise in anti-Muslim hate incidents following the Woolwich attacks in the summer of 2013 (Feldman et al. 2013).

This spike in anti-Muslim prejudice has further strengthened the narrative of official suspicion and has led to the current debate that Muslims are the 'new suspect community' (Awan 2012; Pantazis & Pemberton 2009; Ryan et al. 2011). These claims are magnified by statistics that indicate that over three quarters of people arrested for terrorism charges since 2001 have been released without charge (Choudhury & Fenwick 2011). Indeed, counter-terrorism tactics and policing initiatives such as Project Champion in Birmingham (UK) have also highlighted why Muslim communities feel under suspicion. Project Champion involved the West Midland's police use of covert and overt CCTV cameras across Birmingham, in predominately Muslim areas, paid for by a Terrorism Allied Fund (Awan 2012). The

overall conclusions drawn from an independent review conducted by Sarah Thornton (2010) from Thames Valley Police clearly point towards a lack of 'transparency' by the police and thus indicate that police actions damaged police-community relations in the suburbs of Birmingham where the cameras were installed.

The UK Government's counter-terrorism strategy is known as CONTEST and has four key strands; they are to Protect against, Prepare for, Pursue and Prevent terrorism. Whilst it is not the purpose of this paper to examine all these initiatives it is important to provide the context by which we are framing our discussion. Indeed, the Prevent strategy has come under the fiercest criticism for failing to engage in a positive manner with Muslim communities and stigmatising them (Khan 2009; Yaqoob 2008, Awan 2012). For example, Choudhury and Fenwick (2011: 15) argue that "[i]n some areas, Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) was thought to be undermined by the lack of transparency..." It is this lack of 'transparency' and mismanagement of public funds that led to the overall criticism of strategies such as Prevent. For example, Kundnani (2009) found that Prevent funding for a youth centre targeting Muslims in the North of England had been used on the pretence of a recreational facility but in actual fact was being used for intelligence gathering purposes with the inclusion of free IT facilities that were being used to monitor the online activities of young people. Indeed, this lack of transparency was also clear with interviews with managers of Prevent-funded projects. Below is a direct quote from the Kundnani (2009:17) study with a Prevent manager based in the Midlands: "With a lot of projects, young people don't know where the money's coming from. It's often difficult to know if it's Prevent." Clearly, such initiatives have led to a feeling of suspicion.

Research with Muslim communities is essential to reach the kinds of understandings necessary to develop solutions to complex social problems and also to examine the impact of counter-terrorism legislation upon Muslim communities, families and individuals in a wider context. The implications of multiculturalism and the balance between civil liberties and security are two such issues, especially in post 9/11 and 7/7 Britain. At the same time, any sociological and criminological research must be able to fully engage those whose views and experiences are sought. Indeed, for criminologists the issue and impact of doing research which can benefit wider society is at the forefront of academic literature and discourse.

As such, this study aimed to consider some of the practical and theoretical challenges of researching the impact of counter terrorism legislation upon Muslim communities in Cardiff, by directly engaging communities with the debate. We also hoped our research could be used by other practitioners, academics and policy makers when researching Muslim communities and dealing with overtly sensitive issues such as counter-terrorism. Our research poses a number of questions for researchers within this counter-terrorism context. We hope it will contribute towards a paradigm shift in terrorism research, which, we argue, should start by asking communities how they would like to see research being framed, thus focusing on the priorities of communities themselves first and only then the academic framework.

Moreover, our study sought to address a number of methodological issues by considering appropriate methods of conducting research into the impact of counter-

terrorism legislation upon Muslim families in Cardiff; exploring and identifying whether and how Muslim communities in Cardiff have reacted to tensions in relation to counter-terrorist operations and arrests; and establishing how to identify the role of local mosques and Imams and finally by examining how best to identify the relationship between the police and Muslim communities. The authors suggest that appropriate methods of conducting research with communities should consider the theoretical model of engagement which emerged from our study discussed in more detail below.

### ***Background and Context***

Cardiff is a diverse and multicultural city that is home to a variety of cultures, religions and nationalities. In particular, Cardiff is home to longstanding Yemeni and Somali communities, as well as large South Asian communities such as the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. Cardiff's plural Muslim communities remain under researched and therefore in order to engage Cardiff's Muslim communities in further research, the authors argue that five key structural factors need to be taken into account. They include; 1) Examining the diversity found within Cardiff's Muslim communities, 2) Exploring the impact of gender on the research process, 3) Discussing possible language barriers 4) Considering the timing of the research and finally 5) Taking into account media representations of Muslims.

The five key structural elements are important because regardless of what the aims a piece of research may be, these factors will always have an impact upon the

research process. The Muslim community is not a homogenous group and therefore any research designs will be more effective if they can encompass methods of how to engage with Muslim communities (plural). Indeed, we found a variety of Islamic schools of thought present in Cardiff including the Deobandi movement, the Ikhwān Al-Muslimoon, the Barelwī and the Jamā'at-I Islāmī movements. Moreover, Gilliat-Ray and Mellor (2010) argue that certain influential Islamic reform movements in Britain are closely linked to particular communities ethnic and national backgrounds. This seems to resonate with our findings that Cardiff Mosques are ethnically diverse and based on certain theological persuasions. As noted above, there is little research which is directly engaging with local communities in Cardiff and our study aimed to shed light on Cardiff's Muslim communities by providing a lens by which the community itself could discuss how and what research methods were likely to have an impact upon them. The recent study by Innes et al. (2011), focussed on the impact of Prevent policing, using a multi-method approach, including British Crime Survey (BCS) data, interviews and two case studies, one of which was in Cardiff. Although this Cardiff case study provides a starting point for further research, our research focus employed the principles of community research, exploring research methods as a key area and therefore providing an original contribution to the field of community based counter-terrorism research.

Innes et al. (2011) identified tensions between the Prevent and Pursue strands of Contest and emphasized the need to understand diversity within Muslim communities and identified that both young men and Muslim women aged 45 and above, have lower levels of trust toward the police than corresponding non-Muslims.

Overall however, it found that Muslims have more confidence in the police than non-Muslims. In contrast to this, Choudhury and Fenwick's (2011) report into counter-terrorism impact upon Muslim communities has analysed the impact at a 'grassroots' level in Birmingham, Glasgow, London and Leicester. They found that Muslim families and communities feel under official suspicion. Moreover, Awan (2012), looking at the controversial incident of Project Champion, whereby CCTV cameras were installed in predominantly Muslim areas in Birmingham, found that an increasingly military model of policing stigmatized and alienated Muslim communities. In all cases, the arguments can be framed around a central idea of the 'suspect' community.

The 'suspect' community thesis was developed by Hillyard (1993) to characterise the impact of counter-terrorism legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Acts (PTAs) upon the Irish community in Britain during the 1980s. His in-depth study included 115 interviews with participants and concluded that the PTAs had in effect "constructed" a 'suspect' community from the "Irish living in Britain, or the Irish people travelling between Ireland and Britain" (Hillyard 1993: 257-8). Hillyard contended that people were 'suspect' "primarily because they [were] Irish" (Hillyard 1993: 7). He also suggested that this was a result of institutionalised, anti-Irish racism. Pantazis and Pemberton (2009) suggested a similar parallel between the reality faced by the Irish in the 1980s and that faced by Muslims in Britain today.

Therefore the need to provide a research model of engagement with Muslim communities is crucial in helping us get a better understanding of impact on local communities. Alongside this, a developing school of critical terrorism studies calls

for major reform in terms of the epistemological and ontological assumptions, as well as the methods used by traditional terrorism scholars. *Critical* here is defined as scholarship which does not “take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing” (Cox 1981 in Gunning 2007: 370); additionally, critical scholarship “explor[es] the extent to which the status quo contributes to the ‘problem of terrorism’” (Gunning 2007: 370).

This need to revisit the assumptions underlying terrorism studies results from definitional issues and a lack of conceptual scrutiny (Ranstorp 2009). This is exacerbated by the proliferation of published work on terrorism that has blurred academic work with journalists and political commentators, as well as the so called “terrologists” (George 1991; Ranstorp 2009). Some researchers have criticised what Herman and O’Sullivan (1989) called ‘the terrorism industry’, claiming that “much of what passes for orthodox ‘terrorism studies’ is often unreliable, biased and propagandistic, and simply does not fit the grounded reality of the political violence we have studied” (Sluka 2009: 139).

As a result, we argue that some communities have been stereotyped as either being passive, ignorant, manipulated, terrorised by terrorists or as terrorist sympathizers (Sluka 2009; Breen Smyth 2009). At the same time, researchers who talk to terrorists, their families and neighbours, or seek to understand their point of view, also incur the risk of being demonized as terrorist sympathisers themselves, as if understanding terrorism was equivalent to condoning it (Mahmood 2001; Avruch 2001; Sluka 2009; Breen Smyth 2009). Consequently, the study of terrorism is



mostly ahistorical, state-centric, policy or event-driven (Sluka 2009; Breen-Smyth 2007; Ranstorp 2009).

Moreover, the “symbiotic relationship” between terrorism and Contest has also been neglected, despite indications counter-terrorism tends “to escalate rather than alleviate levels of perceived threat, actual violence and alienation of the base population” (Breen-Smyth 2007: 265; Ranstorp 2009). As such, there is a need for a contemporary, cultural and realist criminological perspective that examines systems of control and power relations; given that “to explore cultural dynamics is to explore the dynamics of power – and to build the basis for a cultural critique of power as well” (Ferrell et al. 2008: 7).

Additionally, we argue that terrorism studies, especially on militant ‘Islamist’ groups, are characterised by what Edward Said (1978) described as the Orientalist bias (Ferrell et al. 2008; Jackson 2007; Sluka 2009; Wolf 1998; Wiktorowicz 2004). This translates to the view that Arab and Muslim culture/religion is wrongly depicted as antithetical to Western and Judeo-Christian culture/religion, as a means of exerting Western dominance. This gives rise to a research climate “where comprehensive processes of ‘Othering’ and demonising the ‘terrorist’ research subject operate” (Breen Smyth 2009: 195). Mahmood (2001) follows Taussig (1987), in seeing the terrorist as the “wild man” of contemporary imagination and the idea of terrorism as a myth comparable to that of “witchcraft” in the past. Similarly, Ferrell et al. (2008) suggest that Cohen’s (1972) concept of ‘moral panic’ applies to terrorism today. This is the concept that the media have vilified the Islamic terrorist in the public’s imagination to the point that rational solutions to the problem of terrorism are inhibited (Ferrell et al. 2008).

According to the Choudhury and Fenwick (2011) study, which examined Muslim communities' responses towards counter-terrorism policy and legislation, it was found that Muslims communities, organisations and groups felt the terrorism legislation was both heavy-handed and disproportionate. The aim of this study was to establish how best to examine those perceptions. The paper below will now provide a brief snapshot of counter-terrorism legislation and provides two empirical case studies that show the level of impact counter-terrorism legislation may have upon Muslim communities.

### ***UK Terrorism Legislation and Communities***

Following the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, the UK government has been in the process of enacting a number of counter-terrorism legislation all aimed to protecting national security. This includes the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, the Terrorism Act 2000, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, the Terrorism Act 2006 and the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. The problem with the above legislation is that they have had the potential to stigmatize communities and risk alienating them as civil liberties are eroded (Gearty 2005).

The Terrorism Act 2000, for example, created a number of controversial offences that appear to have had an impact upon Muslim communities. Whilst, the police were given wider powers to stop and search under (s44) they also were given powers to detain suspects after arrest for 14 days (this was then increased to 28 days under the Terrorism Act 2006 – and has now been reduced back to 14 days by the UK Coalition Government). In particular, Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000

has been tainted by allegations that it targets Muslim and Asian communities. For example, statistics show that between April 2011 and March 2012 almost 681 of the 70,000 people detained were of Asian origin (45%) (Liberty 2012).

It is because of this intrusion of privacy and an absence of reasonable suspicion that a consultation took place between September and December of 2012 to examine the implications of Schedule 7 (Home Office 2013). It found that many respondents were concerned with its disproportionate use against Muslim communities. For example, questions such as “which Mosque do you attend?” or “how often do you pray?” were viewed as negative and Islamophobic.

Indeed, the new wider threat from global terrorism meant the UK Government brought in the Terrorism Act 2006 which also created a number of “new” offences. These included: the “encouragement” and or “glorification” of terrorism; the dissemination of terrorist publications and the preparation of terrorist acts; and finally training for terrorist purposes. The offence of “direct encouragement” requires that a person who commits the offence of publication of a specific statement shows that there is a “direct encouragement” of a terrorist act. This could mean that an individual could be reckless about the contents of their statement and still be prosecuted as a result (Walker, 2006).

This gives rise to the “terror of prevention” felt by whole communities (Hillyard 1993: 262; Pantazis & Pemberton 2009: 654). In itself, this state of affairs may lead individuals toward more violent militancy (Breen Smyth 2007: 265); although “identifying a tipping point amongst a range of potential grievances [such as disproportionate levels of poverty, segregation, poor housing conditions, educational underachievement, unemployment and solidarity with oppressed Muslims abroad] is difficult, and, moreover to identify within this process the role and impact of police

harassment or the use of 'special powers' is at present unclear [and] more detailed sociological work is necessary" (Pantazis & Pemberton 2009: 659). In any case, the term "suspect community" is often used with respect to Muslims in Britain (Pantazis and Pemberton 2009; Breen Smyth 2009, Gilliat-Ray 2010; among others). After examining the key legislation and problems associated with the legislation and Muslim communities, the paper will now examine the research project in more-depth.

### ***The Research Project***

The aim of this study was to test the feasibility of researching the impact of counter terrorism legislation on Muslim communities in Cardiff, in anticipation of challenges with regards to access and arising ethical issues in conducting further research in this area. The objectives can be categorised into four main objectives. They were firstly to try and develop a model of how to engage Cardiff's Muslim communities in further research; secondly to explore what issues regarding the implementation of counter-terrorism legislation and policing are of relevance to Muslim communities in Cardiff, thus defining the scope for further research and a main study; thirdly to identify the methodological implications of the above framework in proceeding with the main study by identifying potential challenges and strategies in gaining access to research participants and fourthly, to establish the feasibility of using interviews and focus groups as data collection methods for a main study, by considering relevant alternatives.

In order to achieve the said aims and objectives a qualitative methodology was employed within an eighteen month timeframe. In these circumstances, a qualitative

methodology allowed for in-depth exploration of the topic, as well as the development of a theoretical model from the data. Given that the aim was to develop a model of engagement from the data, we thought it appropriate to use grounded theory (GT) principles including simultaneous data collection/analysis, coding of analytical concepts from data, conducting a review mostly after the data was collected and preliminarily analysed, as well as the usage of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This emic approach was ideal for this study, as its purpose was to construct an analytical model from the data, as opposed to testing pre-established hypothesis (Glaser and Strauss 1967). A combination of snowball, theoretical & volunteer sampling were employed in this study, leading to nine participants being recruited. Alongside snowball sampling, we used the GT technique of theoretical (or purposive) sampling, by going to places or seeking to engage people who would help develop the concepts emerging from the data as it was collected. This is a strategic technique which seeks to strengthen the concepts being developed and identify any variation. The study consisted of one focus group with three participants and six semi-structured individual interviews, which were all recorded and transcribed. In addition, participants completed a demographic questionnaire and a research diary was kept by the researcher, throughout the data collection process.

### ***Data analysis***

The data analysis was, following a grounded theory (GT) rationale, conducted alongside the data collection, each informing the other. The data was coded in three phases: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990 and 1998; LaRossa 2005), a process which was aided by

the software NVivo. Open coding was the first stage in the coding process, whereby transcripts were broken into parts and compared for similarities and differences sentence-by-sentence, using a concept-indicator model to extract factors at play, in order to build tentative concepts (Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1990 and 1998; LaRossa 2005; Bryman 2008).

### ***Ethical considerations***

Ethical considerations were central to this pilot, as the Ethics board of the Institution required a pilot study before a full study into the impact of counter-terrorism would be considered for ethical approval. Indeed, this can be deemed sensitive research i.e. research which may, now or in the future, pose a considerable threat to those involved (Lee 1993). The main concerns included the potential harm to participants, issues of confidentiality and anonymity, the ability to obtain informed consent and the potential harm to the researcher.

In the context of the legal landscape surrounding terrorism and counter-terrorism, assurances of confidentiality could not be given to participants (Breen Smyth 2009). It was stated on the Participant Information Form, that any illegal activities mentioned would be reported to the relevant authorities. We recognise that this may be a real deterrent to participation in any research about terrorism and counter-terrorism as potential participants fear “damaging disclosures” (Gilliat-Ray 2005; Bolognani 2007) which may harm themselves or others around them – even if unintentionally.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

As noted above, this was a small exploratory pilot study and therefore cannot be representative of Cardiff’s overall Muslim communities. However we argue that the

low level of participation is telling because of the difficulties researchers face when dealing with sensitive topics. In addition, there is no doubt that certain gender and insider/outsider dynamics played an important role in the researcher's ability to gain access. Nonetheless, the limited access became integral to the analysis. As such, the difficulties faced allowed us to recognise the contours of a complex picture which we present here and will benefit any future researchers going into the field. It was concluded that by employing the ethnographic tool of participant observation and framing the research question in different terms, it is possible to develop relationships of trust and conduct further research in this area.

### **Research Findings**

A model of engagement is developed for the purposes of informing further research with Cardiff's Muslim communities. This model centres on the interplay between four dimensions: 1) participants' attitudes towards research, 2) whether or not researchers are able to develop relationships of trust within communities, 3) whether participants view the research project as beneficial or harmful and 4) the structural context within which research takes place.

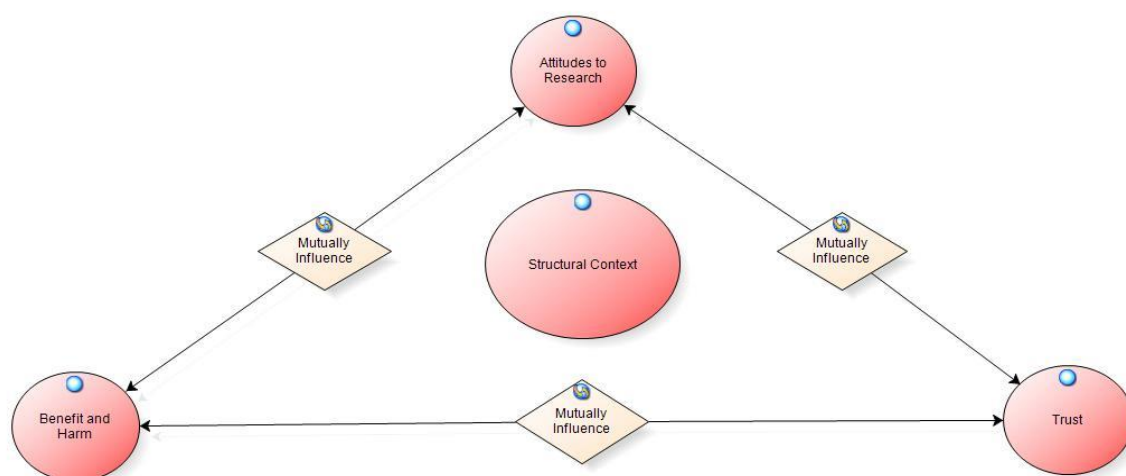
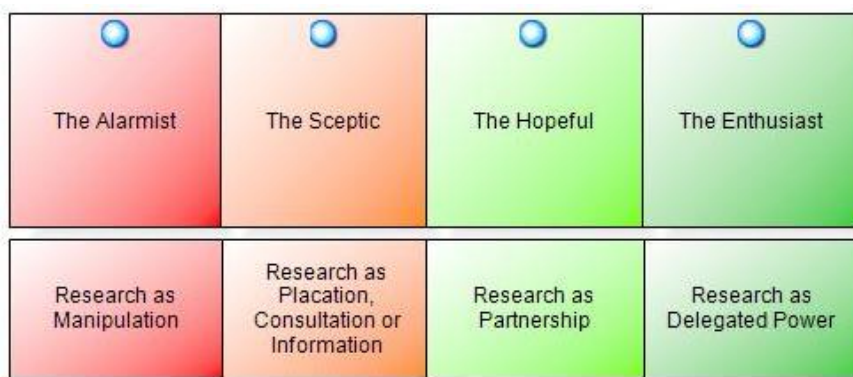


Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Engagement

These four dimensions and the relationships between them are explained below. Although it is not entirely possible to dissociate and compartmentalise these dimensions, this model enables researchers to identify key aspects to consider when researching Muslim communities in Cardiff, providing a framework for future research.

**Attitudes towards research**

This data brought forward a spectrum of different attitudes to research which were categorized into four types (Correia 2013). These were then related to Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation:



“The Alarmist”, The Sceptic”, “The Hopeful” and “The Enthusiast” are what Weber called “ideal types”, i.e. analytical

Figure 1 - The typology of attitudes to research and its relationship to degrees of participant’s power throughout the research process

constructions useful to enable a comparative analysis of concrete cases. We hope that these will be useful to other researchers conducting research with Muslim communities, in so far as they may anticipate what we found to be the spectrum of



attitudes in the field and design their methodologies in order to address the concerns of The Sceptics and the hopes of The Hopeful which are detailed below.

### ***The Alarmist Participant***

*“You know I went to X and they thought I’m Christian and I’m trying to convert their children into Christianity, so they refused to take part in my research, thinking that sometime when you know somebody, you know how to attack them. So they fear that if Muslims are more researched, then they will be attacked in that way, out of knowledge not out of ignorance” (Participant 7).*

The Alarmist regards research as dangerous and fear the distortion of their views. This attitude has been previously found when researching Muslim communities (Bolognani 2007, Gilliat-Ray 2005), and it firmly places research and researchers on the “Manipulation” rung of Arnstein’s conceptual ladder. This ladder is characterized by a “distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by the powerholders” and thus results in non-engagement (1969: 218). In fact, the Alarmist inhabits a “world fearful of cultural annihilation [and] lacks sufficient cultural knowledge to accurately discern the difference between a journalist and an academic researcher. Thus there is a blanket suspicion of all outsiders” (Gilliat-Ray 2005: 30). As a result, they will not want to play any part in academic research.

Moreover, the Alarmist views all research about sensitive issues such as ours i.e. counter-terrorism laws and policies as being detrimental to community based cohesion. By this we mean that there is a real fear that researchers are primarily

concerned with outcome based results which can in effect have an impact upon the government's social community cohesion strategy and Muslim communities' perceptions of it. We found that in the interviews and focus groups that a number of people demonstrated the Alarmist narrative.

Indeed, we argue that whilst Arnstein's typology recognises observation analysis, in actual fact a new category that personifies 'suspicion' is also recognised within our study. It is thus necessary for terrorism studies to examine cultural essentialisms and deconstruct simplistic "clash of civilisation" type narratives (Huntingdon 1993), moving towards more nuanced understandings (Ferrell et al 2008). It is also necessary to analyse the "Western culture of terror, fear, paranoia and xenophobia" and understand terrorism and CT as "a series of performances staged for enemies and other audiences" (Ferrell et al 2008: 77).

### ***The Sceptic***

*"I'm not sure how much research has been done about [the impact of CT]. And even if there has been any research done, regardless of any statistics published or unpublished, I don't think there is much of an impact... Most of the stereotypes are still the same, most of the policies are still the same; I don't think there has been any kind of change in direction to anything" (Participant 5).*

The Sceptic perceives research as a one-way process, which only benefits the researcher not the participant. As Arnstein (1969) notes they see the role of research in policy making as tokenistic; it placates, informs or even consults with citizens, but it falls short of effecting positive change and improving people's lives.

In fact, there is a perceived gap between evidence-based research that takes place and actual policy-making. Examples of this included the banning of the Indian preacher Dr Zakir Naik from entering the UK, allegedly against the advice of civil servants and the conviction of the bookseller Ahmed Faraz in Birmingham for terrorism offences including the selling of the widely available Milestones by Sayyid Qutb (Participant 4). Finally, scepticism was also attributed to disempowerment. As some will feel unable to influence power-holders or institutional change, they may not see the point in engaging in research in the first place (Participant 8).

The Sceptic narrative was recognised because of real concerns and issues about the researchers and their backgrounds, gender and ethnicity. Ultimately the Muslim male researcher was asked on numerous occasions prior to the study what his affiliation was and which religious school of thought he belonged to. In contrast, the female researcher was asked more probing questions about her involvement in the study. Clearly we were witnessing this Sceptic narrative with some participants who overall lacked trust with this type of research and indeed had a mistrust of the researcher background and affiliation with the University's Centre for Police Sciences. We believe as highlighted by previous research by (Awan et al. 2013; Holdaway 1983; Bowling and Philips 2002 and Bowling 1999) that over-policing of Black and Minority Ethnic communities might have been a contributing factor.

The attitudes towards research identified are related to variable levels of trust on research and researchers. Lack of trust is a clear hindrance to engagement and it is thus important to unpack what influences this lack of trust and how trust may be developed. The three main reasons which emerged as root causes for lack of trust

included 1) the nature of the topic, dubbed by Participant 5 as a “*boogieman topic*”; 2) the perception of the researcher as an outsider and 3) the fear that researchers have a hidden agenda, ultimately detrimental to participants and/or communities. The nature of the topic is likely to affect participants’ willingness to take part in research. In line with previous analysis (Gilliat-Ray 2005), a salient factor causing this topic to be viewed as a “*boogieman topic*” is the spread of negative experiences within “*tight knit communities*” (Participant 5).

### ***The Hopeful***

The Hopeful participant sees some research and researchers as oriented towards “partnerships” with communities, an upper rung of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder, corresponding to a low degree of “citizen power”. They see academic research as a potential source of ammunition against the negative media portrayals of Muslims in Britain, as well as against discriminatory policies and practices. Academia may have the resources to study issues in depth, considering nuances. As such academic research has the potential to escape dominant narratives and can thus be independent and more credible than non-academic research. Consequently, we argue that there is “greater openness” to academic researchers within Muslim communities than there is to journalists, think-tanks and government agencies (Participant 4).

### ***Imams and Mosques***

*“The Mosque is really the heartbeat of the community (...).[Imams] are really in tune and they are really in the know of the whole community, (...) if someone’s been*

*stopped, searched, arrested, whatever, they'll know about it so they will be able to, if not get you in touch with them, relay their experiences” (Participant 5).*

Imams are believed to have an understanding of prevalent attitudes and the ability to identify individuals who had relevant experiences of counter terrorism policing. However, Participants 8 and 9 qualified Imams' knowledge of communities by saying that this may not apply where Imams provide no pastoral care. There may also be some “first generation Imams” who “speak little English” (Participant 4) and those Imams are more likely to be out of touch with younger generations (Mogra 2012). Irrespective of language, it has been mentioned that there may also exist a broader inter-generational gap between Imams and/or Mosque committees and a large number of the grassroots. Nonetheless, it is understood that the parents of those involved in counter terrorism operations sought the support of Mosques in Cardiff and thus the support of Mosque leaders is essential to reach those families.

Additionally, it was found that Imams are easily accessible but unlikely to speak out on this topic. Despite having contacted four local Imams via existing contacts (snowballing), or after they had met the researcher at a public event, none were available to speak on the record. However, it was established that it may not be entirely up to an individual Imam to decide whether or not to take part in a piece of research, especially where sensitive topics are concerned. Mosque Committees decide whether or not Imams will speak on behalf of a congregation on a particular issue. This sharp contrast suggests that taking part in this research was considered

but not approved by Mosque Committees. However, as in previous research (Gilliat-Ray 2005; Cohen and Taylor 1977), it was impossible to establish exactly who was making the decision not to grant access and why.

### ***Beneficial Research and the Framework for Terrorism Research***

This data indicates that key to addressing the common negative attitudes towards research and establishing relationships of trust within communities, is conducting research seen by participants to be beneficial to those communities. As such, research into terrorism and counter-terrorism needs to move away from the statist priority of security and towards a framework which communities themselves see as beneficial. Considering the category of “beneficial and harmful research”, it was found that beneficial research 1) is capacity building, 2) challenges negative stereotypes and promotes positive images of Muslims, 3) informs policy and improves practice, 4) gives a voice to the grassroots of communities and 5) brings about positive change within communities. However, for each of these potential sources of benefit there are concerns that just the opposite may result from research, especially where terrorism research is concerned.

As such, the nature of the topic requires that researchers are aware of the multiple ways in which research could harm communities and consciously make an effort to avoid any harm being caused. Key to this process is re-thinking the framework of terrorism and counter-terrorism research. Researchers cannot “remain immune” to a contemporary research climate “where comprehensive processes of ‘othering’ and demonising the ‘terrorist’ research subject operate” (Smyth 2009: 195).

Researchers must avoid what Brannan et al. called ‘the hermeneutics of crisis management’, described as ‘an attitudinal predisposition and framework of analysis –prevalent within the terrorism studies community – that has the researcher approaching her or his research subject antagonistically, as a threat, with a view to facilitate its defeat’ (2001: 4 cited in Breen Smyth 2009: 196).

Departing from an understanding that media and political constructions of Muslims in Britain are perceived by Muslims as damaging, researchers also need to move away from the language of security preoccupations and radicalisation. Taking terrorism research beyond the “*glorified literature review*” (Ranstorp 2009; Silke 2004a & 2004b) the researcher must go out in the field to engage communities in framing research around community needs. This data suggests that relevant topics include the impact of policing on the social, educational, professional and family lives of those who remain in the communities after counter terrorism interventions, such as the family, friends and neighbours of those suspected, arrested and/or convicted of terrorism offences.

## **Conclusion**

Since the inaction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974 we have seen a rise in counter-terrorism legislation all aimed at tackling the threat posed by extremism and Al-Qaeda led terrorism. At the same time, a number of convictions have followed which include people being arrested for terrorism related offences and then released without charge. We found a range of attitudes towards research were identified among

Cardiff's Muslims. These include four ideal types: 1) The Alarmist, 2) The Sceptic, 3) The Hopeful and 4) The Enthusiast.

Most participants shared elements of these attitude-types and believed others in their communities felt the same way. In this context, part of building relationships of trust with participants involves demystifying the process of research and attempting to identify in advance how the research may inform policy and practice. However, attitudes were not static among participants. A number of participants oscillated between different attitude-types throughout interviews. In order to engage communities, it is thus essential for researchers to develop responses to the concerns associated with each attitude-type and be ready to communicate these effectively. This piece of research makes a case for engaging the grassroots of communities in future research on terrorism and counter terrorism, highlighting two considerable challenges facing researchers seeking to do just that. On the one hand, the timing of any piece of research, alongside the negative media discourse and the politically charged climate surrounding Muslims in Britain, may lead to scepticism towards the benefit that research can bring to communities or even fear, which may deter participation.

It must be noted that although there is no consensus as to what a "community" is, this concept is always defined within a socio-political context. Following the canons of symbolic interactionism (Scott & Marshall 2008), the meaning of "Muslim communities in Cardiff" will arise from the interactions between those who self-identify as Muslims and their everyday encounters with "outsiders". As is discussed elsewhere, the interplay between this notion of "insider" and "outsider" not only helps to define communities, but it affects the research process. Additionally, being



perceived as belonging to a particular community is often one of the individual's multiple identities. This is particularly poignant with respect to Muslims in Britain, whose identity may encompass attributes such as nationality, race, ethnicity, language or theological perspective. Consequently, "communities are not places that researchers enter but are instead a set of negotiations that inherently entail multiple and often conflicting interests" (Carr 2002: 99 quoted in Minkler 2004: 691).

On the other hand, in the context of the current legal landscape surrounding terrorism, there are considerable risks to the researcher and even greater risks for participants. Participants may fear, perhaps with good reason, the impact of damaging disclosures. Whilst ethical research much acknowledge this risk to funders and to participants, this may have a chilling effect on participation, affecting researcher's ability to secure ethical approval and funding for future research.

It is suggested that by developing responses to the concerns associated with each attitude-type mentioned above and considering how any piece of research may benefit or harm a community is essential to work around these challenges. It is necessary to demystify the process of research and attempt to identify in advance how the research may inform policy and practice. It is also necessary to work towards a research practice that is beneficial as it takes place, by building capacity within communities throughout the research process and attempting to reach the grassroots. Indeed, this could be used to invest some outputs into the wider community for example by holding meetings with community representative, leaders and the wider public. Moreover, having the use of a seminar inviting Muslims to

attend and discuss their attitudes towards the research maybe one way forward when evaluating the impact of research within communities.

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