

‘I never did anything wrong’ – Trojan Horse: a qualitative study uncovering the impact in Birmingham

Abstract

In 2014, the city of Birmingham (UK) became embroiled in a high-profile scandal that would bring it and the wider education system under disrepute. The ‘Trojan Horse’ affair, as it became known, began with an anonymised letter that claimed hard-line ‘Islamists’ were plotting and planning to take over a number of schools in Birmingham. Amongst the allegations were that some of the schools had been promoting gender segregation and that children were not safeguarded against the risks of extremism. This article examines some of those issues in relation to the Trojan Horse scandal and uses a qualitative study focused on participants from the area of Birmingham. As the tribunal hearings against the teachers have now found no wrongdoing, the findings reported in this article suggest that Muslim communities feel unfairly categorised as extremists and that such issues have impacted upon their sense of identity and belonging.

Introduction

Birmingham is one of the most diverse and multicultural cities in the United Kingdom, and is home to a variety of different cultures, religions and nationalities. According to recent Office for National Statistics data, there is a total population of approximately 2.7 million Muslims living in Britain (4.8% of the population) with Birmingham home to almost 21.8% of that total population (Office for National Statistics 2012).

According to the Department for Education (2015), 6.7% of teachers are from an ethnic minority background and 2.4% of head teachers are from ethnic minority groups. Whilst Birmingham is one of the key areas that epitomises multiculturalism in the United Kingdom, it also has in recent times been in the media spotlight for terrorist-related incidents. For example, in 2007 Parviz Khan had planned to behead a British Muslim soldier (Gardham 2008) and in February 2013 three men were found guilty of preparing for acts of terrorism (Laville and Dodd 2013). Birmingham was also part of a wider police operation called Project Champion which involved a number of CCTV cameras (paid for by the Terrorism Allied Fund) installed in predominantly Muslim areas in Birmingham (Awan 2012). In 2014, following an anonymous letter claiming that hard-line Islamists were plotting to take over schools across the city, Birmingham City Council (UK) conducted investigations into a

number of schools in Birmingham. The four-page letter which had been sent to Birmingham City Council had identified a plot by some Muslim groups and individuals who were allegedly planning on implementing an 'Islamist' ethos into the curriculum. The letter which became the cornerstone of the investigation highlighted five key steps in implementing the 'Trojan Horse' plan. These steps were: identifying the appropriate school; selecting a group of Salafist¹ parents; putting your own governor in; identifying key staff to disrupt within the school; and, finally, using a public relations campaign. The letter, which was incomplete and had no address or signature, did provide a number of extracts in relation to how an extremist narrative had allowed vulnerable children to be at risk of radicalisation. The letter stated that:

Operation Trojan Horse has been very carefully thought through and is tried and tested within Birmingham. (Clarke 2014, 5)

The investigation into the alleged plot was entitled 'Operation Trojan Horse' and four major inquiries were published following the scandal. In March 2014, the Department for Education began formal investigations into 12 schools in Birmingham, including the Park View Educational Trust, who were responsible for at least three of the academies² under investigation in Birmingham. In April 2014, Birmingham City Council expanded its investigation to 25 schools which ranged from primary school to secondary school and academies. As this study will show, the damage done since Trojan Horse has been immense, and has had a detrimental impact and effect on children's education and the wider community cohesion in Birmingham. Indeed one of the schools named in the plot, Park View Academy, have now changed their name to Rockwood Academy (2015) because parents felt their children's career prospects would be hindered when and if employers found that out that they had studied at Park View Academy. This study is important and timely, following the National College for Teaching and Leadership panel hearings which found that there was an abuse of justice by the Department for Education's legal team who had withheld interview transcripts from key witnesses. This has meant that the senior leadership team have had their bans overturned and are now free to return to the classroom (Adams 2017).

In relation to the Trojan Horse scandal, the Chair of governors at the time, Tahir Alam was accused of malpractice and being the architect behind the Islamisation of the curriculum. Tahir Alam resigned from his position alongside his whole board of trustees and there was a mass exodus of school governors across all of the schools impacted by Trojan Horse. According to the Department for Education (2013), school governance is based upon a system that holds the head teacher of a school to account for its educational performance. It does this by ensuring financial resources are well spent and ensuring high professional standards are achieved. The board of governors plays a critical role in the vision and strategic direction of a school. Wilkins (2015) argues that the role of school governors is to act as 'experts' who must be able to do roles and skills to a high standard to ensure accountability and shape strategy and performance. Thody (1998) argues that school governance is based on effective leadership which leads to better and improved schools. She argues that all schools must ensure that they are able to upskill governors and provide the appropriate development training and skills. One of the key differences with trusts and governors is the level of control and freedom to be flexible with the organisation of the school (West and Bailey 2013). The problem with neo-liberal policies within the school education system is the lack of accountability and national control. It could be argued that this autonomy allows freedoms which should be enjoyed and not cramped.

Equally, the problem with academies does not solely relate to the Trojan Horse case. For example, the Perry Beeches Academy Trust had to remove its head teacher because of financial mismanagement (Cartledge 2016). Within this current climate of suspicion and the prism of counter-terrorism and security, this study aims to provide a snapshot on the ground of the viewpoints of those affected directly by Trojan Horse in Birmingham. The aim of this study was to examine the impact of Trojan Horse on children, parents, teachers and the wider Muslim community. This study involved 50 interviews with a diverse range of Muslims in Birmingham, using a snowball methodological approach. This included getting the views of five teachers from the schools affected by the Trojan Horse affair, 3 five Muslim community leaders, 10 female Muslim voices, five Imams, five governors and 20 Muslim children. All names of participants have been changed to preserve anonymity and to protect the participants. Overall, the study found that many of the participants felt a

sense of a lack of identity and belonging and argued that the counter-terrorism and securitisation apparatus around Trojan Horse have had a negative impact on Muslim children and would damage community cohesion and diversity within Birmingham. Furthermore, the issues that arose from the study include a perception that anti-Muslim racism was a fundamental focus for local communities in Birmingham, because they argued that political interference was promoting a far-right neo-conservative view of their religion Islam, which was being conflated with extremism.

Background and investigation

The first investigation into Trojan Horse was conducted by Ofsted (the official regulator for education in Britain) on 9 June 2014, which found that at least five of the 21 schools in Birmingham (Park View, Golden Hillock, Saltley, Oldknow and Nansen) had been judged to be inadequate and would be put into 'special measures' (Ofsted Report 2014). Park View School, which was one of the schools at the centre of all the allegations, is an innercity Birmingham school, based in the suburbs of Alum Rock where there is a high level of poverty, deprivation and unemployment (Birmingham City Council 2014). For example, 99% of pupils come from Muslim families and 72% of students are eligible for free school meals. The school has over 600 students and in 2012 was rated as 'outstanding' and had a pass rate of 75% of pupils achieving five A*–C grades (Park View School 2014). Prior to the Trojan Horse letter, Sir Michael Wilshaw, the former head of Ofsted, had stated that Park View had been doing 'fantastically' well.

However, following the revelations of the Trojan Horse letter, Ofsted conducted another inspection and, in contrast to the previous assessment, the Ofsted Report (2014, 1) indicated that 'The academy's work to raise students' awareness of the risks of extremism is inadequate' and that 'External speakers have not been vetted properly. For example, those who speak to students as part of a programme of Islamic-themed assemblies'. The latter inspection graded Park View Academy as 'inadequate' and in need of special measures. However, since 2014, Ofsted has now conducted another review following Trojan Horse and rated the school as 'good'. Apart from the Ofsted investigation, there were several other high-profile investigations into Trojan horse, which include a report by The Education Funding Agency (who are responsible for funding schools), the local authority (Birmingham

City Council) who also published a review of the current situation and a separate investigation, by the former head of counter-terrorism, conducted by Peter Clarke. The latter report had been criticised heavily by community members, the local authority and the police (Smith 2014). Another concern that has emerged from the reports had been the lack of consistency around the findings. Despite those concerns, another report by Birmingham City Council's Review Group which was conducted by the Independent Chief Advisor Ian Kershaw found contrasting results. He found: 'No evidence of a conspiracy to promote an anti-British agenda, violent extremism or radicalisation in schools' (Kershaw 2014, 4).

The most significant report conducted at the time is perhaps the most recent one completed by the Commons Select Committee 2015 report entitled: *Common Sense Needed in Tackling "Extremism" in Schools*, which had to examine the implications of how British values may be enforced within schools. They found that:

One incident apart, no evidence of extremism or radicalisation was found by any of the inquiries in any of the schools involved ... (Commons Select Committee 2015)

In relation to Trojan Horse, one of the questions that did emerge is the accountability of academies. The academies are independent from local government and were introduced by the Labour Government in 2000 and were intended to provide independence with traditional local authority school governance. They are often overseen by charitable bodies such as academy trusts or part of an academy chain such as the Park View Academy. The trusts act in a similar fashion to governing boards and are there to provide support and strategic overview. One of the key differences between trusts and governors is the level of control and freedom they enjoy. The government has argued that academies will improve school standards. However, critics of academies have argued that the lack of oversight means they are susceptible to problems with public accountability that emerged from the Trojan Horse affair.

Arthur (2015, 313) states that: academies are free to set their own curriculum – they do not have to follow the national curriculum or an agreed syllabus for religious

education. They also do not have to employ qualified teachers. They can set their own pay rates for teachers and incentivise teacher performance through bonuses ... It could be argued that the academisation system is partly to blame for cases such as Trojan Horse with respect to issues around accountability and national control. One of the key points noted in the Trojan Horse letter was around the role of extremism and schools being negligent in their role in safeguarding children from extremist ideas and radicalisation. This article now examines these issues in more detail.

British values, extremism and securitisation

The former British Prime Minister David Cameron stated that: 'Protecting our children is one of the first duties of government and that is why the issue of alleged Islamist extremism in Birmingham schools demands a robust response' (McSmith 2014). Miah (2015, 31) argues that the debate around Britishness demonstrates the political nature of education which is influenced by questions around integration and assimilation. He argues that the current discourse around Britishness provides a non-negotiable association with British values which is enshrined in principles that must show a demonstration of loyalty and citizenship. Extremism itself is a nebulous term, with many different interpretations and definitions of what the term constitutes (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010). The term extremism in this context has resulted in a polarised debate about religious conservatism and the actual threat of violent extremism in schools. Eatwell (2006) argues that the term 'cumulative extremism' should be adopted as a means to define extremist threats. Interestingly, the British government has defined extremism as the 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs...' (HM Government 2011, 107).

Choudhury (2007) argues that the radicalisation process starts with a perception of inequality within society which is often based on a lack of trust with UK politics, security and law enforcement agencies. In the United Kingdom, tackling the threat from extremism has led to a wave of counter-terrorism policies and unpopular anti-terrorism legislation. Some of these controversial measures include those under the Terrorism Act 2006 which 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. Previous studies looking at the impact of counter-terrorism measures and policies have also found that young Muslims in particular have had negative perceptions (Abbas 2011; Davies 2008; Hillyard 1993; Innes et al. 2011; Patel 2011).

Abbas (2007) notes how civil liberties have also impacted upon British Muslims whereby they are seen as the 'other'. He states that: The civil liberties of every citizen have been eroded. Already generally excluded, disadvantaged, alienated, misrepresented and vilified, in the current period Muslim minorities are further thrust into the limelight in negative terms. This is leading to four key issues of interest: changed Muslim and non-Muslim perceptions of 'the other', the problematising of multiculturalism (integration vs. diversity) ... (Abbas 2007, 288)

Taras (2012, 4) also notes that 'Islamophobia thus entails a cultural racism that sets Muslims apart. As a result, the Islamic migrant is constructed as someone burdened by alien attributes and as a carrier of antagonistic, threatening values.' Choudhury and Fenwick's (2011) report into the impact of counter-terrorism measures upon Muslim communities found that Muslim communities had negative feelings and emotions towards counter-terrorism policies in general. Indeed, following the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, the UK government has been in the process of enacting a number of counter-terrorism legislations all aimed at protecting national security. These include the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, the Terrorism Act 2000, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, the Terrorism Act 2006, the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 and Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The problem with some of these current counter-terrorism policies is that they have the potential of profiling Muslims as extremists and indeed 'suspects' (Awan 2012). Hickman et al. (2011) recommended that the UK government should have greater awareness and understanding of Muslim communities and the impact of counter-terrorism policies which have led to them being viewed as suspects. Moreover, Awan (2012), examining 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 had stigmatised and alienated Muslim communities in Birmingham. Project Champion involved the West Midlands' police use of covert and overt CCTV cameras across Birmingham, in predominantly Muslim

areas, paid for by a Terrorism Allied Fund (Awan 2012). In the case of Trojan Horse, the power and political relations in terms of being a Muslim in an inner-city school of Birmingham has created this uneasy relationship and tension with communities in Birmingham and how Westminster elites had dictated and defined the debate around extremism within schools in Birmingham, which, as this study will show, has had deleterious consequences.

The research study

This study aimed to examine the impact of the Trojan Horse affair on children, parents and teachers from within the wider Muslim community in Birmingham. This study involved 50 semi-structured interviews with community members, teachers, parents and children in Birmingham, and access was negotiated through liaising with community representatives but also through contacts suggested by community members. The group of individuals was split as follows: all of the young peoples' ages varied from between 13 and 24, and the participants came from within different areas of the locations already highlighted. The ethnic background of participants also varied, with the majority coming from a Pakistani heritage (22 individuals), followed by Somalia (12 individuals), Bangladesh (13 individuals), Egypt (two individuals) and Libya (one individual). Interviews allowed the author to obtain an overview as regards views and experiences of those who had been affected by the Trojan Horse issue and wider counter-terrorism policies. The author used a snowball methodological approach from within the community to get access, which meant visiting families, young people in the area, the teachers involved with the schools, community leaders and local mosques within the areas of Small Heath, Alum Rock, Saltley, Washwood Heath and Moseley. All data collection instruments used (e.g. interview questions and topic guides for interviewees) were framed and worded selectively. The interviews were conducted face to face and the questions were based on the topic of Trojan Horse, which were provided by the author. Questions included the following:

- To what extent had Trojan Horse had an impact upon you and the community in general?
- How has Trojan Horse impacted upon you and your studies?
- How had the media and political portrayal of Trojan Horse impacted upon communities

in Birmingham?

- Do you think community cohesion has been damaged by Trojan Horse?
- Do you believe Muslims have been involved in an extremist or Islamist plot to takeover schools?

Among those interviewed, there were a range of perspectives on Trojan Horse, but the overwhelming evidence revealed significant concerns which had been raised by those who felt the incident had undermined community relations and would damage the vision for community cohesion in Birmingham. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed. Interviewees consented to be involved in a participant process that involved reading and clarifying a summary of their interview before the process. Audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim and all names of participants have been changed to preserve anonymity and to protect the participants.

Transcripts were read and annotated to develop themes, which are defined in the following. Clearly, in a short qualitative study such as the present one, there is an issue of doing further research with a larger sample size that would demonstrate a more representative view of the community. The research was assessed through the 'good research ethics processes' Research Ethical Framework at the university. The university's Research Ethics Committee also approved the project and is part of the university's policy on good conduct in research.

Findings and discussion

Safeguarding children and notions of extremism

This section will examine some of the core themes that emerged from the research study, such as issues around safeguarding and extremism and also how these issues impacted upon Muslim communities within the project. For example, a number of participants spoke about their frustration at why they were being labelled as extremists when all they had been trying to do was meet the needs of their students. Mohammed, one of the teachers stated that:

We have tried to work so hard for these kids, who come from poor backgrounds and we helped them achieve their dreams. Now that has been snatched away from them by the elite in Westminster.

This teacher's views were not isolated. Another teacher, Safina, from a second school linked to the Trojan Horse letter, added that:

The biggest losers here are the poor children who are going to be labelled as extremists and terrorists. However, these views do not relate to the findings from Ofsted, who in their report found that that children had not been properly safeguarded from extremism. The teacher's perception of being labelled as extremists is therefore not the same as that of Ofsted, who had found that children were not properly protected from the dangers of extremism and that there was a culture of fear and intimidation which had developed in some of the schools (Ofsted Report 2014, 1). The report also criticises Birmingham City Council, which it argued had failed to support the schools and students from the potential risks of extremism (Ofsted Report 2014). However, Dave Hughes, the former vice-chair of the Park View Education Trust, stated that the school had been 'misrepresented' and that 'the problem here is not extremism or segregation or religious indoctrination.

The problem is the knee jerk reaction of some politicians' (Morris 2014).

Indeed, the children who took part in this study seemed to be most affected by the extremism label that had been used to describe them. One of the children, Ibrahim, stated that:

Hate being called a terrorist or an extremist cuz I ain't. I got lots of respect for this country because it's given me opportunities but then people keep saying you Muslims are extremists and I don't even know what it means.

In fact this student was in his third year and had been writing a diary about his experiences.

The following extract is from his diary:

Another day, and the cameras are still here outside. For once, I am famous but for all the wrong reasons. I am trying to walk through but it feels like people and them with the cameras are watching me and spying on me. I haven't don't nufin wrong but cuz I am a Muslim they think I must be a terrorist. It's not nice but I am use to it now.

His views were also expressed by senior community leaders and one of the Governors I spoke to. Yusuf stated that:

This has tarnished Muslim communities in Birmingham as being extremists and radicals. I do hope people realise the damage this has done.

When probed about what damage it had done, Yusuf further stated that:

Damage in the sense that anyone from Park View or these other schools affected by this are going to think twice about employing them. Also the teachers and their families and wider community will also feel this because they will be stereotyped as extremists.

The issue of extremism did provoke a lot of reaction from the participants, but it was also argued by some parents that there may actually have been some forms of extremism. One parent, Maryam, stated that:

Too be honest at first I wasn't sure but I do think there are some extreme ideas they try and force feed my child with.

Abbas (2017) provides an insight into the impact of Trojan Horse through the lens of Tahir Alam, who it was argued was the main protagonist of the plot. Through the use of semi-structured interviews with Tahir Alam during 2015 and 2016, Alam argues that the Trojan Horse plot was driven by political ideology within Whitehall. Abbas states that: 'As a result of this "Trojan Horse" "plot", there is further risk that educational autonomy is now perennially jeopardised because of attempts by government to expeditiously seek to identify vulnerable children or those at risk of "radicalisation" ...' (2017, 11). Abbas (2017) also argues that whilst Ofsted found issues in relation to management, parts of the media and politicians decided to use extremism as a key part of the narrative that was stigmatising the Muslim community of Birmingham. Abbas (2017, 4) states that 'No instances of extremism emerged in the schools, but the concentration on "ideology" was the dominant narrative.' One of the issues around Trojan Horse was also the concept of non-violent extremism and the use of religious conservatism. Abbas (2017, 4) states that:

'This "non-violent extremism", as it would be later put, referred to religious practices such as collective worship or taking pupils to trips to Islamic holy sites in the Middle East, all within the law.' He adds that: 'The "plot" became the precursor to a range of

wide sweeping changes that went ahead, including random spot-checks from Ofsted or the promotion of “British values” in the national curriculum.’ Bartoszewicz (2014, 98) argues that multiculturalism has also been used to accommodate the differences we have seen in the Trojan Horse case. This includes matters related to school worship, religious education and dietary requirements.

She states that: ‘The biggest progress was made with regards to the school meals, but also the school uniform policy has been relaxed to allow Muslim girls to wear scarves.’ Arthur (2015, 312) points out that the educational system overall is ideologically driven from the outset and therefore based on a single conceptualisation of neo-liberalism. He states that:

‘Neo-liberalism is often employed in the pejorative sense by progressives and used vaguely in education discussions.’ Arthur makes the point that extremism and radicalisation are not illegal within a democracy. He argues: ‘However, there is difficulty in understanding them fully because both words lack an objective or universally accepted definition ...’ (2015, 313).

Arthur (2015, 315) also states that:

The religious identity of Muslims in particular has been regarded as suspect by many in the press and wider society. It should be remembered that religious believers may appear extremist; for a religious person who gives their overriding or total commitment to truth claims concerning transcendent reality may well be viewed as suspect.

Mogra (2016) analysed 21 Ofsted reports in relation to the frequency of the word radicalisation and found an absence of a systematic and coordinated plot to take over these schools and an absence of any concerted and deliberate plot to promote radicalisation and violent extremism of Muslim children in these schools or elsewhere. In terms of British values, three of the children interviewed also spoke about the wider problem with counter-terrorism policies, British values and extremism in schools. One of the boys, Khalid, stated that ‘If you just look at the arrests of Muslims in Birmingham then you know that we are being targeted unfairly’ and another young girl, Halima, added that

'Terrorism laws have been applied only to Muslims and everyone now is suspicious that it could be me next.' Notions of safeguarding children from extremism are critical in the Trojan Horse letter and had been used to cite Muslim children as potentially vulnerable to extremism. This was something denied by a number of participants and the children involved. For example, Sobia, who attends one of the schools, stated that:

This is a joke about us becoming radicalised by our teachers. I mean come on, that is so funny because I never even knew about all this terrorism stuff until now. I mean if I was whatever you call it, radicalised then how come I ain't going around bombing people.

Similarly, Parveen, one of the young female persons, stated that:

I don't go to the school but my sister does and my brother has in the past. None of us are what I would say practicing Muslims but we know that no one in that school was brainwashing them into becoming extremists.

Another major theme that emerged from the study was in relation to religion, identity and belonging. The article will now consider some of those issues in more detail.

Religion, identity and belonging

One of the recurring themes and discussion points was about young people lacking a sense of identity and belonging following the whole Trojan Horse affair. The discussion about national identity has often focused on people's religious beliefs and national allegiance. Indeed, questions about national allegiance relate back to people's shared history, language and social status. The intersectionality between religion and ethnicity when discussing identity is also important in the case of Trojan Horse. This is because the teachers accused of Islamising the curriculum were described as a small knit community whose ideals were based on the global Muslim Ummah.⁴ Hopkins and Kahani Hopkins (2009) believe that this forms part of the new 'cultural units' that exist within social groups and which are inherent in all types of individuals and communities. They refer to the way in which the cognitive representation of a person and their self leads to group membership and identity.

This form of essentialism also lends itself to multiple identities which are used to form a British Muslim identity.

In the Trojan Horse case, a clear issue which arises is that if Muslims are deemed part of the global Ummah, then the actions of some extremists implicate all Muslims as part of the wider problem. They also risk being construed as part of a universal brotherhood that promotes political and fundamental religious beliefs. This defines Muslims as part of an Islamic political order that does not recognise national allegiance. Such views are part of the foundation claiming that Islam and the West are incompatible. Jacobson (1997) used a qualitative approach and study conducted within a Pakistani community in London. Jacobson's (1997) study included interviews with young adults of Pakistani descent. She found that young British Pakistanis are beginning to differentiate between religion and ethnicity when it comes to their sense of identity. Interestingly, Jacobson (1997) has argued that Islam was a central feature in how some of the respondents identified themselves. In contrast, ethnicity was only used to discuss their sense of belonging to a wider community.

Jacobson (1997) differentiates between religion and ethnicity and refers to this as the 'religion–ethnic culture' distinction. Indeed, Ali (1992) goes a step further and has argued that Muslims are basing their sense of identity on gendered dimensions. For Ali (1992) this involves the role of young Muslim women who are now much more important because they are deemed to be the cornerstone of Muslim families. Tinker and Smart's (2012) analysis regarding Muslims schools and identity revealed how common values and a sense of shared life experiences were key in forming collective identities. They state: 'This raises questions about the conceptualization and construction of collective Muslim identity ...' (2012, 643). As Muslims are not a homogeneous group, the issues around their identity have often stoked up tensions between the national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and political characteristics. Meer (2007) states that Muslim identity is based on an ethnic sociological formation, and Modood (2008) identifies the dimensions of identity for Muslims in Britain to be part of the family network that has community membership at the core.

Interestingly, whilst the schools involved in the Trojan Horse case are not Muslim schools, Dwyer (1993) has argued that Muslim schools in general are now subjected to much more public and political distrust than Jewish and Catholic schools because they are seen as a threat towards the culture of a society. Tinker and Smart (2012, 647) state that ‘There is a continuing perception that Muslim schools are culturally “out of place” or hazardous.’

Tinker and Smart (2012, 653) argue that the issue of identity can also have a detrimental effect on Muslim children who are often subject to prejudice and discrimination. In their study they found that children in mainstream state schools had been unfairly criticised by teachers and pupils, because of their religious views. For Muslims the problem around identity can also be traced back to the concept of dual identity and the notion of belonging to a country. For example, the expectations and cultural views at home alongside the mainstream schooling system can often raise variations and impacts. This also translates to the concept of essentialism and being able to identify with a particular group and idea (Tinker and Smart 2012).

Abdullah, a young person, stated that:

You will get a lot of young people confused about their identity and whether they feel British or not? The reason is because this Government keeps saying you don't have British values in your life and we need to teach you how to get them.

In November 2014, the Department for Education published a report into how schools should incorporate British values. Some of the guidance includes making sure children have an understanding of democracy, ensuring freedom to hold other faiths is protected by law, tolerance and mutual respect and combating discrimination. In practice, this means schools should promote and incorporate British values into the curriculum through the use of workshops, local school elections and extra-curricular activities that promote British values. Interestingly, when participants were asked to define what British values are, there were a range of responses. For example, Hasan stated that:

I like Manchester United and I eat fish and chips. Is that what you mean by British values?

Robina, who also attends one of the schools linked to the Trojan Horse affair, stated that:

I love watching EastEnders and hate football. Not sure if that makes me less British or not. I just think I am a Muslim and I am proud to be British and so don't see what the problem is.

Hasina, another young person, added that:

I wear the Hijab and sometimes it's Blue, Red and White. So does that make me British? I think British values is more about Islam than anything else.

Within the discussion of British values, a number of young persons and children did express how they felt a sense of a lack of identity and belonging. For example, Kamran stated that:

I must confess I have started to question what it means to be British. I honestly feel like I don't belong here anymore.

Similarly, Aftab, another Muslim pupil at one of the schools involved in the Trojan Horse affair, stated that:

I don't feel like I belong here anymore. Even my family and friends feel the same way. I never did anything wrong but because I am a Muslim and I went to one of those schools then I am considered an outsider.

Clearly, one of the pathways to radicalisation is where individuals are searching for an identity and belonging. This forms part of the social identity theory which is based upon an assertion that radicalisation develops as a result of, first, people being confused about their identities and, second, individuals searching for a meaning of their role within society or in a community. Tajfel and Billig (1974) argue that this sense of social isolation leads to a perception of discrimination and prejudice which in turn leads to individual's reactions being shaped from a belief that violence is a legitimate justification for what is deemed as oppressive foreign policies, counter-terrorism laws and Islamophobia (Hillyard 1993). This pervading sense of a lack of identity and belonging was also discussed by Muslim governors.

Farid, a current Muslim governor at a school in Birmingham, stated that:

I think it's not just the children who feel isolated and less integrated. I mean I feel very un-British at the moment because I just think what's the point? I work really hard with my local school but now the Governors are also being accused of being extremists.

Another governor, Navid added that:

You are going to see less and less of Muslim governors because they feel less and less integrated.

Conclusion

This study has found that issues related to Trojan Horse have had a real impact in terms of questions around racism, equality, school governance, leadership and the notion of British values and security. In this study, one of the key findings was this sense that communities in Birmingham feel that this was a wider political stunt which maligned Muslim communities because of what they believed in and how Islam was used within the schools. Furthermore, a number of participants from the wider Muslim community felt uneasy about becoming governors because they feared they would be targeted because of their faith and beliefs. This, in terms of school governance and leadership, is detrimental to Birmingham, because it will create a shortage of potential governors and also create an education system built upon fear and anxiety. One of the key parts of the investigation into Trojan Horse was the plot to radicalise school children. It does appear, from all the evidence and as noted by the Commons Select Committee, and the facts from the investigations conducted, that this allegation remains unproven. The Ofsted Report (2014), however, did reveal issues around governance and leadership which some participants did acknowledge. Whilst clearly there was a number of issues raised about governance in schools, the impact on young children, teachers, parents and the wider Muslim community in the schools is important. Indeed, a number of the parents and children also felt that the media portrayal and the use of sensationalist headlines had depicted them as would-be terrorists. This study has shown that the emphasis on extremism and radicalisation has had an impact on people in Birmingham, who are feeling angry and damaged by the allegations which has culminated in them feeling like they are under official suspicion. Furthermore, this has impacted upon people's sense of identity and belonging. Clearly, there are wider issues here which are about how we

define what extremism is. What are liberal and what are British values? Furthermore, there are wider questions about accountability within academies; however, what this study has shown is that at present Muslim communities, parents, teachers and children in Birmingham feel vilified and feel like they are being labelled unfairly as extremists by wider counter-terrorism policies and incidents such as Trojan Horse. The Trojan Horse affair has led to a new debate regarding the role of British values. The former Prime Minister David Cameron (2011) stated that these values should be about the rule of law and freedom of religion. These values are enshrined within the school education documentations. For example, the Department for Education (2013) states that schools must promote British values. The government goes a step further and has stated all schools have a duty to actively promote these fundamental British values. The Cattle Report (2001) states that the values in a school system allow for a greater sense of citizenship, cohesion and integration. Despite these attempts to create a greater sense of cohesion, the introduction of British values has in fact created more confusion and problematic associations. This is because British values are difficult to define. Since the United Kingdom has grown into a multicultural society, definitions of universal values are now defined by customs and cultures. Are these cultures defined by the football team you support or the type of food you eat (i.e. fish and chips or a curry)? This study has highlighted some of the consequences of Trojan Horse and the wider impact it is likely to have for the future of people in Birmingham and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Notes

1. Salafism is part of a more orthodox interpretation of Islam.
2. Academies are independent from local government and were intended to provide independence with traditional local authority school governance.
3. This includes an interview with a teacher who has recently had his lifetime teaching ban quashed in the High Court.
4. The global 'Ummah' is the Islamic term to describe a large community or group of people.

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