Spalek, Basia. "Credibility in Counter-Terrorism Practice." *Terror Crime Prevention with Communities*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 21–46. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472545039.ch-002>>.

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Credibility in Counter-Terrorism Practice

Introduction

A key characteristic of today's information-based society is that people no longer automatically believe mainstream, dominant, accounts of events. People are increasingly cynical about information that governing elites produce, and they do not necessarily accept 'expert' opinion or advice. Counter-terrorism is just like any other social policy area – whilst ruling elites are concerned to instigate a series of programmes and initiatives aimed at what they believe reduces a society's risks of terrorism, these are often critiqued and questioned by citizens. Post-9/11 conspiracy theories have proliferated and have been circulated in online communities, focussing on questions like: why did the world's most powerful air force fail to intercept any of the four hijacked planes? why did the Twin Towers collapse so quickly, within their own footprint, after fires on a few floors that lasted only for an hour or two? how could a skyscraper, which was not hit by a plane, collapse so quickly and symmetrically, when no other steel-framed skyscraper has collapsed because of fire? (*BBC News Magazine*, 2011). A number of surveys suggest that many people are cynical about the mainstream accounts of the causes of the attacks in the US on the World Trade Center and other targets. For example, according to a BBC poll carried out for the BBC2 programme *The Conspiracy Files*, a quarter of young Britons believe that the attacks were carried out by the government of the United States (BBC2, 2006).

Clearly, there are struggles, disagreements and incompatibilities within and between individuals, groups, communities and states concerning accounts of the causes of 9/11 and, consequently, what the solutions should be. In particular, the US-led 'war on terror', 'new terrorism' discourse, the

securitisation of Muslim communities, and the ongoing debates around citizenship, Muslim identities and loyalties are examples of areas that have generated significant debate and controversy in relation to state responses to terrorism linked to Al Qaeda (AQ) post 9/11. This raises the question of how it is that individuals – whether as police officers or other practitioners or community members – build relationships and networks with each other for the purposes of ‘counter-terrorism’ within such a challenging environment. Moreover, when considering young people who might be at risk of violent radicalisation, whose voices do they listen to? If young people are accessing jihadist material available on the internet alongside other media, and if they are seeing the double standards that foreign policy often raises in terms of responses associated with the ‘war on terror’ and the violation of human rights and international law, how is it possible to deter young people from committing acts of violence themselves?

This chapter highlights the importance of the notion of credibility for counter-terrorism practice. Where there are multiple perspectives and multiple truths, credibility ensures that the credible person’s message is at least listened to if not wholly adopted. There are perhaps different degrees of credibility, influencing the extent to which a person is convincing, believable or worthy of belief. Credibility is such an important aspect of counter-terrorism because this is an arena rife with conflicting viewpoints and experiences, with rumours and obscurity. Therefore, when challenging terrorist ideologies, when working with vulnerable people, when explaining police tactics in relation to specific operations taking place within communities, it is important for the individuals involved to have built credibility with their target audiences. This chapter demonstrates that credibility often involves drawing upon and using one’s positionalities – one’s faith, gender, ethnicity, political affiliations etc. – when engaging with others in order to gain their trust and their respect. Credibility is also about maintaining a position that seeks to achieve social justice within an unjust world. This may mean challenging structures of dominance and power, and so individuals may be involved in deconstructing power relations that victimise the powerless. As a result, credible individuals run the risk of being labelled subversives by dominant power elites. They also run the risk of losing their credibility if they are seen to be engaging with actors who are perceived to be against the interests of those whose trust they have gained. For

example, youth workers may run the risk of losing credibility with the young people that they work with if they are perceived as being too closely linked with the police. Credibility also involves individuals being embedded within communities and within networks, therefore it is about ongoing engagement and relationship building. It is also about being available at short notice to defuse difficult situations. Credibility is therefore about grassroots-level engagement and relationship-building, and this may involve an understanding of 'the street', of street-based culture and linkages with vulnerabilities to terrorism alongside other forms of violence. Credibility is also about understanding the many social, cultural and political factors that shape individuals' lives and working towards supporting individuals who are vulnerable to committing, and being the targets of, acts of violence. Credibility can also involve leadership. This means having the ability to question assumptions and practices, having the ability to create new frameworks of understanding for policy and practice, and the ability to challenge target audiences so that this challenge translates into actual behavioural change.

The importance of credibility can be easily overlooked for this can raise uncomfortable issues for policy makers, particularly those who see radicalism of any kind as a threat to liberal democracy.¹ Credible individuals who oppose social injustice may be viewed as a threat by governing elites since these individuals do not fit in easily with state-led agendas that often place the security and needs of the nation-state over and above wider issues of social justice. Indeed, credible people may be classified as 'dissenters', individuals who 'cause trouble' for the authorities because they are agents of social and political change (Hewitt, Spalek and McDonald, 2012). Hence embracing the notion of credibility at the core of counter-terrorism practice is problematic and not without challenges. Although there is an increasing acknowledgement in policy-making circles that state-led approaches will not reach those audiences most susceptible to terrorists' messages, there is a lack of appreciation of the importance of credibility, what this means and how this might be used in counter-terrorism. This chapter highlights that in order to

¹ See the Prevent Review 2011 where there is a clear, and potentially contradictory, message: that government will not fund, or work with, extremist groups, where extremism is understood as meaning to be in active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

reach out to people and to provide them with non-violent alternatives it is important to have credibility with them. Post 9/11 there are deep contestations regarding 'truth', with the wide interest in conspiracy theories being just one example of contested knowledge. As with wars and other conflicts there are, post 9/11, multiple truths, and a general lack of effort to find a unique (which the world majority would agree on) common understanding. As there is such disagreement over the causes of 9/11 and the responses to it, it is important for credible members of communities to draw on their positionalities in order to provide credible responses to terrorism. Where there are multiple perspectives and multiple truths, credibility ensures that the credible person's message is at least listened to.

Counter-terrorism as conflict

The 'war on terror'

The post 9/11 era is clearly one of conflict. From the very initial inception of the US led response to AQ linked terrorism, the language of war has been used, as well as orientalist discourse regarding the threat of Muslims to western values. In the aftermath of 9/11, the USA declared a 'war on terror', which was very much shaped by President George Bush's political discourse against 'those who envy Western values and Western freedom'.² By taking this stand, not only did President Bush offend the feelings of the Muslim populations around the world, he also recalled the history of some of the worst conflicts between the Christian and Muslim worlds through reference to the Crusades.³ This notion was thus seen as an attack on Muslims whose faith is often viewed as defining freedom differently from the western world, yet who do not necessarily 'envy' the West for its 'values'. Many Muslims across the globe have not yet forgotten the history of centuries of western colonialism

² Bush's public speeches immediately following the 9/11 attacks e.g. Bush, George W. "Remarks upon arrival at the White House," 16 September 2001, White House News Releases, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html> [19/12/08] and "President Bush, Colombia President Uribe Discuss Terrorism," 25 September 2002, White House News Releases, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020925-1.html> [19/12/08]

³ Bush, George W. "Remarks upon arrival at the White House," 16 September 2001, White House News Releases, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html#> [19/12/08]

and exploitation and, as a consequence think of the Crusades as a series of wars proving the Western/Christian ambition to control Muslim lands. By framing the response to 9/11 as a 'crusade' and a 'war on terror', alongside the launch of attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, President Bush elicited strong popular and intellectual reactions across the Muslim world.⁴ Specifically, Bush's remarks provoked animosity towards what has been perceived as a new colonialist era echoing the historic exploitation of resources of the developing countries by Western/Christian civilisations.

'New terrorism'

Alongside the 'war on terror', the notion of 'new terrorism' has entered into public discourse, used by security experts and government officials, whereby 'Islamist' terrorism has been declared an unprecedented and unpredictable global danger. 'Islamists' are also viewed as a danger to liberal democracy. As an example of this, the following is a quotation taken from the British Government's Prevent strand of its main counter-terrorism policy:

Islamist extremists can specifically attack the principles of participation and cohesion, rejection of which we judge to be associated with an increased willingness to use violence. (Home Office, 2011, 20); Prevent Review:

'New terrorism' discourse has greatly contributed to the construction of Muslim minorities as 'suspect', necessitating their surveillance and control by the state (Mythen and Walklate 2006; Poynting and Mason 2008; Spalek and McDonald 2010). A number of researchers have argued that in the context of 'new terrorism', Muslim communities have become the new 'suspect communities' (Spalek, El-Awa and McDonald, 2009; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009; Hickman and Silvestri, 2011; Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011). In a recent report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in the UK, into the impact of counter-terrorism legislation on Muslim communities, it was highlighted that:

⁴ E.g. 'More than 1/3 of US Muslims see War on Islam', *Washington Times*, 19 October 2004 <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/oct/19/20041019-115241-3792r/> [19/12/08] and Evans, 'War on Terrorism Looks Too Much Like a War on Islam, Arab Scholar Warns' 27 January 2003 UCLA International Institute <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=3010>

When it comes to experiences of counter-terrorism, Muslims and non-Muslims from the same local areas who participated in this research appear to live 'parallel lives'. Counter-terrorism measures are contributing to a wider sense among Muslims that they are being treated as a 'suspect community' and targeted by authorities simply because of their religion. Many participants, while not referring to specific laws or policies, felt that counter-terrorism law and policy generally was contributing towards hostility to Muslims by treating Muslims as a 'suspect group', and creating a climate of fear and suspicion towards them (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2001: v).

The breadth and depth of wide-ranging new laws and state powers in relation to the perceived threat from 'new terrorism' have the potential to criminalise vast sections of Muslim communities, a fact which has been highlighted (McGovern, 2010). In Britain, powers and policies that have been particularly criticised include the Terrorism Act (2006), which extended the power to detain suspects without charge from 7 to 28 days because of the supposedly qualitatively different threat now posed; the use of the asylum system to detain Muslim foreign nationals and the extended powers of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) by the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act (2001) (McGovern, 2010); the recently rescinded power to designate places where people can be stopped and searched without reasonable grounds for suspicion under Section 44; stops and searches under Schedule 7; and the use of 'extraordinary rendition' with allegations of torture having taken place in detention facilities in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay. Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 allowing stop and search without suspicion was overturned by the Home Secretary in July 2010 following a refusal of an appeal by the Home Office to the European Courts of Human Rights against an earlier decision that had found Section 44 to be illegal. In 2010 the Home Secretary announced that a rapid review of key counter-terrorism and security powers was underway. The review looked at which counter-terrorism powers and measures could be rolled back in order to restore the balance between civil liberties and counter-terrorism powers. Control orders and stop and search powers were two of the key issues under review. In January 2012 control orders were replaced by Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (T-Pims), which have fewer controls but greater surveillance. Control orders have been heavily criticised by civil liberties groups for

their severe restrictions of individuals who have not been charged with any offences. Control orders came under attack from within the Coalition government, leading to the change. Wide-ranging new counter-terrorism laws have also been implemented across the European Union, the US, Australia and other countries, leading to accusations that they are trying to normalise 'the exception' by establishing an apparent permanent emergency.

Within liberal democratic systems, sovereign power derives from the people (through elections) and is exercised on their behalf by the government, which is held accountable via legal frameworks and laws. 9/11 and its aftermath has impacted upon the operation of sovereignty at the individual (citizen identity) and the collective (state identity) level. It is Muslim communities, as the source of terror threats from the 'inside' (home-grown terrorism) and the 'outside' (from international networks and patterns of identity formations that transcend nation-state boundaries), whose identities have been securitised and deemed 'a threat'. Securitisation is the instigation of emergency politics whereby a particular social issue that becomes securitised is responded to above and beyond established rules and frameworks that exist within what might be termed 'normal politics' (Jutla, 2006).

The breadth and remit of some of the counter-terrorism measures in the UK have generated considerable controversy. Whilst the dominant policy rhetoric may be that communities can be engaged and partnered in countering terrorism, in reality there is substantial journalistic and other commentary about the extensive 'use' of informants by the police and security services (Kundnani, 2009). The lack of clarity over, and considerable debate regarding, the question of who is my enemy has contributed to a situation where some Muslims, who have partnered police agencies for counter-terrorism purposes, have found themselves simultaneously monitored by security and other agencies, and viewed as potential 'dangerous others' (Silk, O'Rawe and Spalek, 2013). Thus in a recent research report by Spalek and McDonald (2011), examining police and community engagement post 9/11, it was highlighted that:

In areas deemed at 'high risk' of violent extremism – by the authorities or communities – it is likely that both overt and covert policing is taking place. This creates a tension and challenge for community members who may be engaging with overt police officers whilst also believing that they are the

subject of covert observation and other operations. (Spalek and McDonald, 2011: 6).

Muslim community members have been approached by the security services in order to act as informants. This has helped create a sense of grievance amongst many Muslims, with individuals arguing that they feel they are members of a suspect community. Individuals have spoken about the consequences of being viewed with suspicion on their life and the lives of their family, which can result in job losses, family breakdown and ostracisation from their wider communities. Individuals have also described how those people considered by the authorities as suspicious are often too frightened to report incidents of being stopped and questioned – even to supportive community groups (Spalek, El-Awa and McDonald, 2009). So whilst the notion that ‘communities can defeat terrorism’ has become a common mantra, creating some interesting engagement and partnership work between communities and the police (which will be discussed further in chapters three, four and five), there is ongoing tension between community-focussed approaches and those community-targeted approaches that have been highlighted above. The question is where should the balance lie between community-targeted and community-focussed approaches within a liberal democratic society?

Post-9/11 conflict over values has also entered the counter-terrorism arena. Since 9/11 there has been significant debate about the seeming incompatibility of Muslim populations in traditionally Judeo-Christian and also, more recently, secular populations in Europe. Muslims’ loyalties and their citizenship have been scrutinised and questions have been raised about the compatibility of Muslim communities’ values with those of liberal democracy. Numerous surveys have been undertaken nationally and internationally, comparing and contrasting the views of Muslims with those of non-Muslims, as well as trying to understand Muslim citizens’ views on Sharia law, Islamic or Muslim identities, Islamophobia, Muslims’ trust in policing and so forth. Professor Clive Field wrote an interesting article in 2011 which explored themes of incompatibility or disagreement between British Muslims and ‘Britishness’ by studying data from 25 national survey polls in Britain relating to the views of young (under-35) British Muslims. For Field (2011), a clear majority of young Muslim Britons, ranging from just over half to four-fifths according to the

topic concerned and the survey, are 'moderate' and 'mainstream'. For Field this means that they are actively committed to their faith, uphold principles of Sharia, and are generally satisfied with Britain although they feel vulnerable due to worsening Islamophobia. Field (2011) also found that between one-fifth to one-third of young Muslims show some signs of alienation from British society, meaning that they have a limited sense of patriotism and perceive there to be a conflict between loyalty to the Ummah⁵ and to Britain. These young Muslims have also often been the victims of Islamophobia and they are especially angry about Iraq and Palestine. They are also distanced from traditional party politics. For Field (2011) there is a small minority of young Muslims, typically 5 to 10 per cent, who are very alienated. This means that they do not identify at all with Britain, and are ideologically committed to the overthrow of western society, even if only an extremely small number would actually use force themselves.

The discussions above highlight the ways in which the post 9/11 context is one rich in incompatibilities. Moreover, counter-terrorism post 9/11 is an arena of policy and practice that is seemingly comprised of binary opposites: covert versus overt counter-terrorism responses; community-focussed versus community-targeted approaches to counter-terrorism; the orientalist 'war on terror' and 'new terrorism' discourse creating 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in relation to sovereignty; Britishness versus Muslim identities and loyalties; and so forth. Added to this, there are additional stresses relating to organisational cultures. Whilst there is insufficient room here to address this issue fully, it is important to highlight that both statutory and non-statutory agencies are rife with dissenting viewpoints and with power struggles over strategy and practice. For instance, in the context of the police service in Northern Ireland, O'Rawe (2005) argues that whilst training is a key way of delivering institutional transformation to policing, training alone is insufficient in instigating a human rights culture. This is because 'there are powerful socialisation dynamics and unspoken messages that operate beyond the formal level' (O'Rawe, 2005: 946). Therefore, the police service may hold onto its subcultural values rather than embracing any change that training is attempting to

⁵ The concept of 'Ummah' might be thought of as comprising a global Islamic community that supersedes national or ethnic identities.

induce. Moreover, practitioners can ignore, circumvent, or even sabotage any attempts at implementing change (Oliver and Bartgis, 1998). Within counter-terrorism, there are state and non-state actors whose strategic and practical goals are focussed more on maintaining a conflictual approach rather than one that is based on conflict transformation. A conflictual approach accepts the 'war on terror' paradigm, does not question the notion of 'new terrorism' and operates by using counter-terrorism powers to target Muslim communities predominantly. An approach that embraces counter-terrorism as conflict transformation perhaps accepts that there are differing viewpoints and accounts regarding the causes and responses to 9/11 and its aftermath, seeking to build bridges between individuals and organisations with vastly differing perspectives and experiences.

Counter-terrorism as conflict transformation raises the interesting question of how, within a complex, conflictual environment, often comprised of struggles between different state and non-state actors, of struggles within and between communities, counter-terrorism work is carried out. In particular, since the July 2005 bombings in London in Britain, the Prevent strand within the British government counter-terrorism strategy has stressed the importance of the role of communities in helping to defeat terrorism. How, then, is community-based counter-terrorism work done, given the challenging socio-political environment? Are there lessons that we can take from those youth workers, police officers, probation officers and other practitioners, community members and young people themselves who have worked within a post 9/11 counter-terrorism context? Can we learn more about the everyday negotiations that take place, which are perhaps more aligned with conflict transformation than counter-terrorism as such?

Positionality and counter-terrorism practice as conflict transformation

One important thread running through the research data that I and my team have been collecting is that of the importance of a focus on identity for counter-terrorism practice. As a result of mass migration, globalisation and shifting national and international borders, alongside the significant presence

of international ethnic and faith diasporas whose loyalties are not necessarily given to the nation-state in which individuals reside there has been some focus on identity. For example, Moisi (2009) has argued that within an increasingly globalised world, where nation-state borders are increasingly questioned and changing, struggles over identity have replaced ideological struggles. Identity has also been flagged up in relation to vulnerability to violent radicalisation, in that a lack of identity and a lack of belonging is viewed as increasing a person's vulnerability.

The notion of identity suggests sameness and difference – ‘... the notion of identity simultaneously establishes two possible relations of comparison between persons or things: *similarity*, on the one hand, and *difference*, on the other’ (Jenkins, 2004: 3–4). An appreciation of sameness and difference is key for counter-terrorism practice, for those involved are often negotiating complex allegiances and loyalties, which themselves are likely to be shifting and unstable. At the same time, the actors involved may or may not understand their differences in relation to each other. Importantly, as identity is comprised of multiple positionalities in relation to ‘race’/ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, class and other subject positions, there are multiple ways in which connection and disconnection between people can be experienced. There are therefore myriad ways in which differences between people, groups and communities can be made manifest, presenting complex challenges for trust-building and partnership work in counter-terrorism. Alongside ‘difference’, multiple positionalities also enable ‘sameness’, in that they can be drawn on by those engaged in counter-terrorism in order to connect people, groups, institutions and communities. Within a counter-terrorism context this enables us to think about the ways in which connections can be made between state and non-state actors. For too long, state and non-state actors have been viewed as opposites, as being different and incompatible, when meaningful connections can be made between state and non-state actors. Implicit within many of the interviews that I and my research team have undertaken is the way in which individuals – whether as community members, police officers, youth workers or other practitioners – are aware of, and sometimes draw upon, their own positionalities when involved in work relating to counter-terrorism. As an example of this, below is an extract from an interview with a Muslim overt counter-terrorism police

officer who uses his Muslim identity and his knowledge of Pakistan in order to raise questions about how vulnerability in relation to violent radicalisation is understood:

Respondent: There was a closely discussed case by the security service, by the police, where an individual had gone to Pakistan and come back and there were, there were concerns about him because of his father's contacts and association with terrorism previously. And there were concerns of him going to Pakistan and having photographs taken with guns. He also changed his name.

Interviewer: While in Pakistan?

Respondent: While in Pakistan. And so this was being discussed about, the concerns about him and guns and whether he was being trained in Pakistan. But I said, 'Hang on a minute. That's a normal thing when you go to Pakistan ... it's quite common. And because when I guess guns are not available and like any child you're curious and it's quite a cool thing to do and you do do it in Pakistan. But my concern is his name change. He's a Muslim kid who obviously had a Muslim name. Why does he need to change his name? I would look into the reason for that. And if his views are extreme, then we'll pick up any contributing behaviours or factors through that rather than his photographs with a gun.

In the above quotation, it is clear that the Muslim police officer is drawing on his Pakistani Muslim identity in order to articulate how it might be possible to identify risks associated with violent radicalisation. For this police officer, it is a change of name that is more significant than any photographs being taken in Pakistan with the boy holding a gun.

Whilst positionality might be thought of in relation to faith, ethnicity, gender and so on, positionality is also about credibility, and developing and maintaining this whilst engaging and partnering with wide-ranging actors and institutions. Credibility is a further important dimension to creating connections between people who are different sides of, or have different perspectives on, a conflict. Credible individuals on opposing or different sides are perhaps able to connect and work together for peace because it is their credibility that acts as the *modus operandi* through which trust and respect can be established.

The importance of credibility for counter-terrorism practice

Post 9/11 some of the counter terrorism initiatives that have been implemented might be more accurately thought of as peace-building initiatives. Such initiatives draw on the credibility of the individuals concerned, where credibility might be thought of as being independent, balanced and fair within a world that is rife with power struggles. Being credible is about one's identities in relation to faith, ethnicity, the 'street', politics and so forth. For example, one community member who was interviewed has been involved in peace-building work since before 9/11. The following is a quotation taken from an interview with him which serves to illustrate the kind of work he has been engaged in:

... one of the things that I've been doing throughout my life is to fight extremism within Islam and Muslim communities. That's been something that I've been doing way, way before George Bush announced the war on terror. I mean I've been doing this since I was you know a high school graduate. I've been going round and giving lectures and talks and seminars and the such about how we should engage and I was pelted with stones by the likes of Abu Hamza ... Because I was being accused of being sell out. Being someone who, you know, was an impostor to them and desecrated my religion and my faith which I think is absolute bull because of ... how I understood Islam to be ... up until 2001 we were winning many of the youngsters who I know harbour intentions of going abroad to some country fighting, you know, for Islam. They changed their minds because of what I used to tell them, because of the way in which I explained the Koran to them, the way in which I explained what they had to do here, how they should engage in politics, and they should engage in media. If they wanted to change things, this is how they do it. They don't go and, you know, kill themselves or whatever, that's not the way to change things. This is how you change things. You change people's minds and then things start changing. We were winning that battle.

This same community member further argues that the 'war on terror' has made his work much more difficult as a result of the focus upon Muslim identities and loyalties:

But as soon as the war on terror was declared and the way it was declared, all of a sudden those same youngsters came back to us and said 'hang on, hang on, hang on, you've been telling us that we fit in here. Do we?' And what happened

in Leeds was that many, many youngsters who were good people, really good people, became absolutely disgusted and so angry and so frustrated that it was virtually useless for me to approach them again. I just couldn't go back to them. Because what do I say? What do I tell them? Come and engage with us? We are outcasts. It doesn't matter if I live all my life here, it doesn't matter that my best friends are Brits, white working class or this or that. It doesn't matter ultimately speaking, you're a Muslim ... and you will be dealt in a way that, that makes me feel as though I am on the periphery of ... society, I do not matter. And then you do what you do to Sadiq Khan, the MP, you bug him, and it just proves the fact that whatever you become, whoever you become, however far you reach in engaging with society, in working in politics, you will be seen as a Muslim and you will be seen as a possible subversive ... And the likes of Abu Hamza, they win, without them even saying a word they win. You know, Abu Hamza is recruiting whilst he hasn't said a word over the past five years because he's been incarcerated in prison. But he's recruiting. We are recruiting on his behalf. The government is recruiting on his behalf. And that's where it becomes absolutely ludicrous, totally ridiculous.

This suggests that state responses to Muslims have challenged the credibility of those people involved in trying to reduce the potential for young Muslims to engage in violence: the message that Britain is an open and liberal society doesn't necessarily ring true when considering post 9/11 state-led security approaches. This is also an issue when thinking about state violence through warfare and other means and the mixed messages that young people receive in relation to the justified use of violence (McDonald, 2012).

The quotation below is drawn from an interview with a Muslim community member who runs a community centre for young people in a deprived part of London. He speaks about how his organisation challenges injustices, which may involve challenging the police, local authorities, community elders and young people themselves:

we're pretty much very challenging ... We challenge police, we challenge local authorities, we challenge community elders, and we challenge those who portray a very distorted version of Islam, or false so you know ... on the whole we are quite, we're quite an edgy group.

This same community member also talks about how this ability to challenge organisations and people gives him and his centre credibility:

... it gives us our credibility within that street environment and it allows our young people to feel comfortable to come and talk to us and discuss a range of issues. We're not promoting as such as a representative, we're promoting like if there's any inequalities or any injustice that's been carried out whether it's by the police or by the young people or by anybody we would be that access point and we would challenge that up or down. Depending on who's, who's been an issue and sometimes it's the police authorities have an issue with young people. So they'll come to us and we'll challenge down to the young people or the young people come to us, talk about the way they're being treated or the way they're being spoken to by authorities or by police or by their mosque imams, you know, and we challenge that, vice versa.

Furthermore, gaining credibility is about representing young powerless Muslims, the same groups of Muslims who are at risk from extremist groups:

So it's having that credibility that we are not representing ourselves but representing them basically or somebody that can stand up against a system or power basically ... It's like an alternative to some of the more extremist groups who ... are sort of portraying themselves to be the leaders of the Muslim Ummah of today and challenging the system. We do that in a different way, for a more positive outcome. (H)

Credibility is not just an issue for community members working within a counter-terrorism context. This is also an issue for police officers and other practitioners. Counter-terrorism policing traditionally has adopted covert tactics, which means that being a counter-terrorism police officer carries with it a certain stigma, not least in the light of recent revelations in the media about a number of married undercover counter-terrorism police officers who had had sexual relationships with members of organisations that they had infiltrated (Ellen in *The Observer*, 2012). More recently, overt models of counter-terrorism policing have been introduced in which counter-terrorism police officers openly tell people who they are. Overt counter-terrorism police officers aim to build trust with community members. Police officers that I and my research team have interviewed are often aware of the stigma of a counter-terrorism identity, particularly since counter-terrorism policing has increasingly introduced overt counter-terrorism police officers who are openly telling people they are counter-terrorism officers. There can be dilemmas about telling people due to the stigma attached, as one police officer demonstrates:

I came in and you know, on day one this was my new job, and I'm now a Counter Terrorism Officer, and I've never been one, it's just where that role is created. And there were people within the council saying 'don't tell anyone that you're from the Counter Terrorism Unit, that will really cause some upset, just say you're a police officer, because you're not telling lies, you're a X Police Officer', and I said 'well no, because at some point it's going to come out, and if in six month's time people realise that I am in name a Counter Terrorism Officer they'll be "well why didn't you tell us that six months ago? You must be hiding something, you must be here with a different agenda"' So from day one I've been the Counter Terrorism Officer who is seconded to the council to support and help you.

Below is a quotation from an overt counter-terrorism police officer who sees sharing personal information about aspects of his life as a way of engaging and building trust with community members:

It's not easy, it's not easy to go to people and say, you know, 'I work for the counter-terrorism unit' which is what we're supposed ... we have to do ... And you need to be able to talk about, you know, yesterday, your kids, the fact that you're having a baby. You know, all that kind of ... not just go in and go "well actually, I'm preventing violent extremism and I ...", you know, because that's not what it's about.

In the quotation below, another overt counter-terrorism police officer talks about how he negotiates wearing his police uniform with communities:

I normally do ask them, 'Would you mind if I came in uniform or would you prefer me in plain clothes?' and they're normally very open and ask you either way. If they want you in plain clothes they normally say why and the majority of the time they don't, they don't mind you being in uniform err depending on what capacity or what reason you're actually visiting them ... mostly they, they're actually very pleased that you come in plain clothes and you accommodate their wish, which is quite nice for them because we're not forcing ourselves on to them.

This same officer speaks about her Muslim identity and how this has influenced her decision to become an overt counter-terrorism police officer, and how being both a Muslim and a police officer within the counter-terrorism field can be challenging, suggesting the intersectionality between a police identity and a Muslim identity:

I put in for it (counter-terrorism) because (a) I believed I had the skills for what the job description required and secondly, I was interested in terrorism and, and the myth surrounding the Muslim community. And because I'm a Muslim officer I believe that not just as an officer, I've also got a duty as Muslim to, to actually help the community understand what it is and being a police officer you're stuck between the two lines really, because you've got procedure and your job and your duties but you've also got your beliefs you know it's not true. So you want to make a difference but in a positive way. But also make the organisation understand the community better. Hence why I applied for it.

Being a Muslim can open access to parts of the community that are inaccessible for non-Muslims, as the following Muslim lawyer suggests:

I'm conscious of the fact that doors open for me that wouldn't necessarily open for a non-Muslim prosecutor or non-Muslim officers. And if I have any influence I should use it.

Muslim counter-terrorism officers take risks in that they can become the targets of rumour and gossip from within their own communities. Below is a quotation from a Muslim overt counter-terrorism police officer who speaks about the kind of trust he had built with local Muslims:

... and the reaction from the community as well that because I'd got a certain amount of credibility within the community and including people that I haven't met and things before, it goes back to how you come across. People can very easily judge whether you are being genuine or sincere in what you say and do. And I was certainly very open about the work, what I was doing ... And people believed us. ... and people trusted us and we still maintain that trust.

This same police officer then continues to explain how one member of his local Muslim community was speaking out against him because he was a counter-terrorism police officer:

The only setback I had was that one particular very influential guy had spoken about me in very negative, I have to say, had lied about me in terms of certain conversations and things and I could prove it. So much so to the extent that he was calling me a fool and a hypocrite in certain circles that he was holding ... and it shows the extent of this guy because my sister was at that talk and she was pregnant at the time. Now he had made life very difficult for myself in particular, for my wife and children and including my mother. And I had to go through a few months of very hard times where I was being blamed by my

younger brothers and sisters who'd been married and were settling in with kids and things and they're well known in the community. And so that ... but thankfully I happen to know that's in the past and this particular person is, you know, good relationships with me at the moment. But I don't bring the issue up. But I can forgive but I can't never forget that.

Clearly, this illustrates how an overt counter-terrorism police officer and members of his family can be stigmatised by rumours that are spread by disaffected individuals from within communities.

Credibility is also about understanding, and even coming from and/or being part of, street-level urban dynamics. A significant number of the people that I and my research team have interviewed spoke about the relevance of 'the street' for the work that they do. For one youth worker, adopting or drawing upon a 'street' positionality is about your credibility in relation to the young people that you are working with, most of whom live within urban poor environments:

Well the street is your, is your credibility, is your kudos, is your ability to gain that respect in the eyes of young people initially. And I'd say the majority of our kids it probably is a prerequisite. You have to have that element of respect and kudos for them to be able to, to, to come and, you know, give you time of day ...

This same youth worker also talks about how street credibility is often about showing off items associated with material success, like nice cars:

So you could turn up in a Porsche and instantly you've got cred ... because you're in a Porsche and that's it; that's what they want to aspire to. These are their ideas of success. You've obviously made it. You're a gangster because you've got a Porsche. So in the world where all our kids want to be gangsters, and I think they are already living in a ghetto, that's your street, that's your cred, that's your kudos ... it's not a wonderful thing but it is real.

However, young people can go beyond this rather superficial kind of respect, based upon materialism, to develop a more meaningful relationship with youth workers:

What can change after a certain amount of time is that then it moves on from that and it becomes slightly more, you know, less superficial and it moves on to more of a trusting relationship and then you don't need to rely so much on the fast car, the slick clothes and you can dress like me you know. KA1

For another youth worker, 'street knowledge' is about understanding the dynamics of communities within poor urbanised areas and their links to violent radicalisation:

Street cred and some of the baddest people we've had from this area are the ones who end up in Belmarsh and come out with very Islamic, very extremist ideological views. So what we also have to understand about this is leadership and community dynamics, how communities work. Gang culture.

For this same youth worker, to run an effective 'street-based' community intervention programme, it is important to identify and influence community and gang leaders. Having the right leadership is key:

I set up this programme called the Diamond Programme and we believe, I believe that every community has diamonds, gems and pearls. Now in order to run effective programmes, you've got to influence your diamonds because your diamonds are like your leaders, yeah, and leaders make or break decisions. So it doesn't matter how much money the Home Office provide on this that, on that, if you haven't got the right leadership in communities, if you've not got the buy-in from the community, you'll never get close to this issue, you'll never get close to addressing this issue because you've got to have local intelligence, you've got to have local knowledge.

This youth worker also talks about the importance of coming from the same environment as the people with whom you are engaging and working:

People who have killed people come in and hand themselves into XXX (community project), people involved in all kinds of atrocities will come and hand themselves in to us before the authorities. Why? Because we've got that respect of the community. Why have we got that respect of the community? Not because we're any better than anyone else, because we come from the community, we're part of the community, the community trusts us ... Because the community, you're part of that community, you've not jumped down on parachutes and said we're setting this up and setting that up, it doesn't work, it doesn't work.

For this same youth worker, a 'street' positionality is about being angry with the state, and how violence can be associated with glamour:

... there's a confidence against the system and if you're in a situation where the system has let you down, believe me, it's not hard to alter that mindset at all 'cos

people are desperate, you know, people are desperate ... you have to understand it because there's something very attractive to the street guy of Handsworth, of Brixton, of Moss Side to Islam because all the kind of concept that Islamic terrorism kind of holds ... the whole glamorisation, you know, weaponry, it's all attractive.

It is important to stress that for those wanting to access and work with young people from within deprived urban 'street' areas, it is important to have 'street' credibility and to have facilities that young people are attracted to, as one community member argues:

I think it's mainly by having a bit of background within the street environment myself. But also being well recognised and well respected in the community. But I also think our key engaging point will have been the hook, which was the gym ... which it's a Muslim you know designed gym.

Therefore, police officers wishing to implement programmes of intervention with key groups have to draw upon the skills and expertise of credible community members, who may not necessarily be traditional community leaders. This presents a risk for those community members who implement programmes linked to policing initiatives, for their links with police may harm their credibility, as the following quotation from a Muslim community member demonstrates:

With this programme, some of these young people may volunteer to be involved in some preventative work, so they may facilitate some of the activities that XXX (overt counter-terrorism police officers) do for example, because that's been something that XX have brought ... brought to me.

Interviewer: Like football stuff?

Football stuff or delivering the DVD Act. Now for example 'cos obviously they see that when a police officer's delivering some of these workshops, obviously it's gonna be tainted ... so they want somebody from the community to deliver it. So young people may have a role and I think, again, it's just one of those things that they may lose the respect and the trust in the community as soon as they start delivering programmes that are normally delivered by counter-terrorism officers or by uniformed officers.

The notion of the co-production of security has gained increasing research interest, with the idea that policing is a shared responsibility between police,

communities and other stakeholders. It is important to highlight that the interviews I and my team have undertaken would seem to suggest that within the highly sensitive and conflict-ridden counter-terrorism arena there are times when programmes and initiatives have to be led by community members. This means that security is not necessarily co-produced, or shared, but rather is driven by community members, who necessarily have to take the lead as a result of their credibility. The following community member talks about the ongoing contact he and his organisation have with young people, thereby enabling a deep understanding and appreciation of the issues surrounding young people's lives:

... but also the centre that we have here it allows young people to come in at any time of the day, you know, or evening, to engage and play pool or you know get involved in some activities but also to come and discuss some of the issues that they're experiencing, or their friends are experiencing or also to sort of inform us of what's going on basically ... but we're also working within a street environment, we have a lot of connections within local schools as well, with young people. So you know we find it very easy to access young people on the street, in schools and the communities behind the walls of silence ... t's our, our specialist sort of field.

Another community member talks about the expertise he has built around vulnerability to violent radicalisation purely as a result of his lived experiences:

... I've been in the Brixton community, I converted there in 1990 and at that time quite a few of my colleagues converted as well. And what we realised as young Muslims then is that Brixton mosque attracted a lot of attention from various elements in the Muslim community. Why? We realised because it was the only or first convert-led mosque and still remains a convert-led mosque. So we saw all sorts of elements coming in to the mosque and before I became chairman we would have Nation of Islam showing a presence there. The Qadiyyanis would come there, you would have the Taqfiri jihadi, extreme jihadi methodology there. And we started learning the Salafi methodology from some of the teachers there who were not an authority but they were well respected members of the community. We then started trying to elucidate what was the correct methodology and so you can't have all of these practices in one mosque ...

This same community member also talks about how, when he became Chairman of the local mosque, he decided that the mosque had to have

a consistent and precise ideology, one that takes a stance against Jihadist extremists:

When I came to a position of chairman I said 'I think the only way that the mosque could function was to have a single ideology, we would welcome others in, it didn't matter who they were but they would see that this mosque is following one single ideology.' And that's one of the things that I started implementing in 1994. And in doing that we've had to make stances against some of the other groups so what we did, the most prolific of them were the Taqfiris, this Jihadist extreme understanding because jihad is a noble word but they had an extreme understanding of jihad and they started coming and praying amongst the community saying we'll teach you Arabic and as they won their trust started talking about the regimes and the, basically the infidel regimes in the Middle East and all sorts of concepts that I heard before I became chairman.

He also speaks about how he was able to use the pulpit to counter extremist rhetoric within the community:

I was now able to address on the pulpit, in the Khutbas, in our written work, in our study circles so we were starting to realise in where this was going, looking at some of the fatwas that they were giving outside. In Algeria for example we saw fatwas that the police and all their families were infidels, they could be killed, and we were hearing this in the mosque. And I was saying 'no, this is a false understanding of Islam' so they realised we'd been fighting this fight.

He then stresses that his mosque was open twenty-four hours a day, thereby allowing for a solid community response to vulnerability:

We saw all of this happening and they were expounding these views amongst friends of ours and we saw our friends going in that direction. So not only would it be robust rebuttal and ideological – erm – refutation, we have friends that we had to spend time with, we were having people sleep over in the mosque during those times because they needed a place of refuge. So we had to make sure that the extreme ideology wasn't being propagated amongst these individuals as well so a lot of patience, care, time and you might think Brixton mosque was one of the mosques that stayed open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We didn't close.

Time and time again, interviews point to community members showing remarkable leadership skills within counter-terrorism. This is about community members deciding what actions need to be taken, despite putting themselves at considerable risk, particularly in relation to their credibility. It is

about knowing what needs to be done and making decisions. The following is an extract from an interview with a Muslim community member who was on the ground with Muslim youth during an EDL march, persuading them not to engage in violent actions against the EDL:

I actually again on the day I managed to speak to young people and dissuaded about a group of 20 to leave you know, the area and go back, because I knew them, just happened to know them, so they left. So again, that relationship building, the police were seeing that happening ... the silver commander on the ground was about to do something and I was there at the time and I felt that if he'd done that it wouldn't have worked, so he pulled me to the side and we spoke.

As indicated above, not only did this community member dissuade Muslim youth from engaging in potentially provocative and even violent activities, but also he was keen to persuade a senior police officer into taking a different course of action. This demonstrates leadership: building peace requires leadership skills. This means drawing upon, as well as taking risks with, one's own credibility. The question this raises is what motivates people to draw upon, and risk, their credibility to undertake such work? Preventing violence is a key motivation, and preventing young people from being incarcerated and punished is another. Another significant motivating factor appears to faith, and in a post-9/11 context where counter-terrorism involves Muslim communities, this means Islam as a rich source of motivation, inspiring individuals to work within challenging contexts. For instance, one Muslim lawyer explains that:

And yes, does my faith come into it? Yeah, my faith is I believe in Islam and justice and I believe it's important that there is justice for victims and witnesses and for people who are suspected of crimes who aren't guilty. And so I, I, one of the reasons why I'm doing my job is about being able to, erm, do that, make a difference in people's lives.

A Muslim community member argues the following:

I mean it's your ethics, it's your moral compass, it's, you know, I want to be professional, I want to do a job properly and it's all because you know as a Muslim I feel I owe a duty to the, to my ... if you feel like you're accountable to something higher ... if you need that justice you have to be just too in all your

relations so you have to be just towards your family, their own certain duties, if your employers are paying you a wage you have to be, you know, you have to do your job properly, I'm accountable to my cases.

The research data reveals that, contrary to the common assumption that commitment to Islamic values and religious doctrines is the root cause of terrorism, religion in these cases provides a stronger commitment and a feeling of moral responsibility – *a duty* or *a religious obligation* – as put by many, to help solve the problem of violence committed in the name of Islam, and to build bridges and form positive relations with other British communities.

Conclusion

This chapter raises many important issues. It leads us to think about counter-terrorism in new and more challenging ways. Where there are multiple claims over 'truth', multiple experiences of, and perspectives upon, a post-9/11 world, it is important to consider counter-terrorism as conflict transformation, as this is a more accurate understanding of real-world dynamics. This chapter illustrates that within the post-9/11 environment there are numerous and ongoing struggles and contestations. At the core of counter-terrorism as conflict transformation is the notion of credibility, for this determines the extent to which a person's message, viewpoint or initiative really can influence behaviour, particularly amongst those deemed at risk of vulnerability to violent radicalisation. Credibility is about a person's positionality, about how a person draws upon their multiple identities in order to build trust and relationships with their key audiences and potential partners. Credibility can be challenging, for this is about being prepared to challenge dominant power structures in order to try to secure social justice, in a world characterised by social injustice. Credibility can be frightening for power elites, for often those in power have gained their privileges through the perpetuation, or at least ignorance, of social injustice. Credibility can play an important transformative role within conflict precisely because this is about maintaining integrity and trust despite considerable pressures to conform to dominant norms that may include repression, human rights abuses, violence or its promotion. Credibility

can be an important resource through which to build and maintain important connections with wide-ranging actors for the purposes of conflict transformation, of offering peaceful responses to social norms and practices that are unjust and even violent. State responses to terrorism can impact negatively on the credibility that state and non-state actors have worked hard to build, and a key lesson that appears to come from the data presented in this chapter is that it is important to maintain credibility through showing strong leadership skills, through robustly challenging injustice, even if that involves questioning dominant state-led counter-terrorism responses that may be supported by powerful governing elites. The next chapter takes this analysis further by focusing on the role of community policing in relation to counter-terrorism as conflict transformation.

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