

Is the machinery of local policing delivery seen as fit for purpose by practitioners and community members to anticipate and mitigate the risk of harmful radicalisation at street level?

Submitted by James Gale to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by research in Politics, February 2012

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

ABSTRACT

Is the machinery of local policing delivery seen as fit for purpose by practitioners and community members to anticipate and mitigate the risk of harmful radicalisation at street level?

This thesis achieves four objectives. Firstly, it adds to the existing knowledge of radicalisation: it discusses the concept, and contextualises it within other forms of social phenomena such as drug-related crime. Secondly, it proposes a menu of indicators which predict or forewarn of the risk of radicalisation. Thirdly, it establishes perceptions of success at street level of modern local policing methods, namely Neighbourhood Policing and the National Intelligence Model, at identifying risk. Fourthly, it establishes a 'toolkit' of options which might be used by practitioners to 'switch-off' the radicalisation process. I argue that urban unrest, radicalisation and terrorism share common roots, with a number of key social pre-conditions existing prior to their onset: a sense of injustice, a lack of political representation, declining perceptions of legitimacy in state authorities, relative deprivation, (which may include unemployment, and a gap between expectation and achievement), discrimination and high levels of drug related crime, and I thus propose a theoretical ladder of escalation. I critically analyse policy responses arising from five seminal events, and I isolate five 'critical success factors' from them, suggesting that the problem in general terms is a failure to implement these success factors, thus contributing to the crisis. I revisit 'tension indicators' first developed following urban unrest in 1960's America, and I link them to the critical success factors and the common roots theory. Using quantitative and qualitative primary data which consists largely of face-to-face interviews with community members, police officers, council workers and others involved in the interaction between the state and communities at street level in Oldham, Greater Manchester, I test these proposals and their links. I conclude that Neighbourhood Policing is largely successful; however the National Intelligence Model is flawed in its ability to deliver risk mitigation in this context.

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Sapere aude

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LIST OF CONTENTS

		Page
	Title Page	1
	Abstract	2
	Acknowledgements	3
	List of Contents	4
	List of tables and figures	9
Chapter One	INTRODUCTION	10
1.0	Introduction	10
1.1	The Research Question and the Researcher	13
1.2	Relevance, Consequence, and the Hypothesis	15
1.3	Seminal Events and Policy Responses	18
1.3.1	The Four Objectives	22
1.4	Philosophical Position, Methodology and Choice of Research Location	22
1.5	Findings, Conclusions and Further Work	25
1.6	Risks and Threats to the Research	27
1.7	Outline of the following Chapters	28
Chapter Two	BACKGROUND	31
2.0	Introduction	31
2.1	Demographic Evolution	32
2.1.1	Black and Minority Ethnic migration since 1945	32
2.1.2	‘Race’ versus Religion and other conceptual difficulties	33
2.1.3	Islamic expansion in the UK	34
2.2	Post War Policing	36
2.2.1	The Golden Age?	36
2.2.2	The Royal Commission and the Police Act 1964	39
2.2.3	Recruitment and Training	40
2.2.4	Unit Beat Policing	41
2.2.5	A Crisis of Confidence?	42
2.2.6	Legitimacy and Politicisation	43
2.2.7	Media, Press and Public Entertainment	44
2.3	Policing Plural Communities	45
2.3.1	Advanced Warnings?	46
2.3.2	Simmering Mistrust	46
2.3.3	Open Hostility	48
2.3.4	Seminal Events	49
2.3.4.1	Seminal Event 1: Brixton 1981	50
2.3.4.2	Seminal Event 2: The Murder of Stephen Lawrence 1993	53

List of Contents - cont

		Page
2.3.4.3	Seminal Event 3: The Secret Policeman 2002	54
2.3.4.4	Seminal Event 4: Urban Unrest: Bradford and Oldham 2001	55
2.3.4.5	Seminal Event 5: The London Transport Bombings 2005	59
2.4	Summary and Discussion	61
Chapter Three	REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE	66
3.0	Introduction	66
3.1	The terrorism definitional debate – is it just a crime?	68
3.1.1	Root Causes of Terrorism: social and political concomitance?	74
3.2	Radicalisation: why so <i>dirty</i> ?	83
3.2.1	The Radicalisation Journey: social conditions or ideology?	90
3.3	Urban Unrest: legitimate violence?	94
3.3.1	Partnership responses and community policing	106
3.4	Tension Indicators	107
3.5	Ladder of Escalation	110
3.6	Summary	113
Chapter Four	SELECTED POLICIES AND EDICTS SINCE 1981: A CRITICAL REVIEW	115
4.0	Introduction	115
4.1	The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981	117
4.1.1	Policing: Proposals and Recommendations	117
4.1.2	Social Reconstruction	119
4.1.3	Ethnic minorities and community participation	120
4.1.4	The Role of the Media	122
4.2	The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry	123
4.3	The Crime and Disorder Act 1998	129
4.4	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Diversity Inspections	131
4.5	Race Equality Legislation	132
4.5.1	The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000	132
4.6	Commission for Racial Equality: Formal Investigation	133
4.7	'The Cantle Report'	134
4.8	Assessing the Risk of Serious Public Disorder	138
4.9	Responses to The London Transport Bombings	138
4.10	A Developed Understanding	140

List of Contents - cont

		Page
4.11	The Legislative Framework	141
4.12	The Machinery of Local Policing Delivery	144
4.12.1	The National Intelligence Model	145
4.12.2	The Local 'Beat Officer' and Neighbourhood Policing	147
4.12.3	NIM and Neighbourhood Policing in Action	150
4.13	Summary and five 'Critical Success Factors'	151
Chapter Five	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	154
5.0	Introduction	154
5.1.1	Belief and Knowledge: Ontological and Epistemological Orientation	156
5.1.2	The Quest for 'Truth'	159
5.1.3	The Philosophical Case for Methodological Choice	160
5.2.1	Triangulation, Validity and Reliability	161
5.2.2	Bias and the 'Insider'	164
5.3.1	The Qualitative Process	165
5.3.2	Ethical Considerations	169
5.4	Rationale for the Choice of Research Site	171
5.4.1	Essential Features for the Study Area	172
5.4.2	Oldham, Greater Manchester	174
5.5	Data Analysis	176
5.6	Experiential Learning	176
5.6.1	Adversarial Process	177
5.6.2	Brokering Relationships	177
5.6.3	The Mechanics of the Interview	177
5.7	Summary	178
Chapter Six	POLICING INDICATORS and CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS	179
6.0	Introduction	179
6.1	Key Policing Indicators	180
6.1.1	Crime	180
6.1.2	Crime Levels and Statistics	182
6.1.3	Crime and Place	183
6.1.4	Crime and Social Indices	186
6.1.5	Crime, 'Race' and Racist Incidents	190
6.1.6	Assaults on Police Officers	195
6.1.7	Complaints Against the Police	197
6.2	Critical Success Factors	200
6.3	Summary	204
Chapter Seven	DATA AND ANALYSIS	205
7.0	Introduction	205
7.1	Oldham West, Oldham Division, Greater Manchester Police	206
7.1.1	Key Policing Indicators, Oldham: Crime	209

List of Contents - cont

		Page
7.1.2	Key Policing Indicators, Oldham: Race Hate Incidents	210
7.1.3	Key Policing Indicators, Oldham: Assaults on Police Officers	212
7.1.4	Key Policing Indicators, Oldham: Complaints against Police	213
7.2	Greater Manchester Police: A Commentary on Critical Success	215
7.2.1	Partnership Working and NIM Tasking	216
7.2.2	Reflecting the Community	217
7.2.3	Community Awareness Training	219
7.2.4	The Elimination of Racial Discrimination	219
7.2.5	Neighbourhood Policing	220
7.3	Policing and Social Justice	222
7.3.1	Recruitment and Deployment of Ethnic Minority Staff	222
7.3.2	Use of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)	224
7.3.3	Opportunities for Intervention	225
7.3.4	The ‘Trust Deficit’	227
7.3.5	Partnerships and Silos	229
7.3.6	The ‘Democratic Deficit’, the ‘Homeland’ and ‘Tribal Influence’	231
7.3.7	Whispers, Rumours and Tension Monitoring	232
7.3.8	Asymmetric Resourcing and Community Tension	234
7.3.9	Police and Young People	235
7.4	Local Social Conditions	237
7.4.1	Polarisation and Community Tension	237
7.4.2	Deprivation	239
7.4.3	Identity and Vulnerability	240
7.4.4	Mr Big, Mr Parent, Mr Radical	244
7.4.5	Drugs, Girls and Alcohol	246
7.4.6	‘White Flight’	248
7.4.7	Racism	251
7.4.8	The Successful Community	252
7.4.9	Crime, Radicalisation and Junaid	255
7.5	The Effect of the Media	258
7.5.1	Tolerance Levels	258
7.5.2	Perceptions	260
7.5.3	Readership and Community Access	262
7.5.4	Internet, DVDs and ‘Messages’	264
7.6	Global Events	265
7.6.1	Global versus Local	265
7.6.2	Afghanistan, Iraq and Gaza	267
7.7	The Role of Islam	269
7.7.1	Training and Knowledge of Police Personnel	269
7.7.2	The Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)	

List of Contents - cont

		Page
	Agenda	270
7.7.3	The Power and Influence of Islam	272
7.8	Summary	273
Chapter Eight	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	275
8.0	Introduction	275
8.1	Critical Success Factors	276
8.1.1	Partnership Working and NIM Tasking	277
8.1.2	Reflecting the Community	279
8.1.3	Community Awareness Training	280
8.1.4	The Elimination of Racial Discrimination	281
8.1.5	The local 'Beat Officer' and Neighbourhood Policing	281
8.1.6	Critical Success: Summary and Conclusion	282
8.2	The Four Objectives	282
8.2.1	Objective 1: The Development of Harmful Radicalisation	284
8.2.1.1	<i>Prima facie</i> Evidence of the Development of Harmful Radicalisation	284
8.2.1.2	A Sense of Isolation	285
8.2.1.3	A Lack of Social Identity	286
8.2.1.4	A Lack of Confidence in the Political System	289
8.2.1.5	A Lack of Economic Prospects	291
8.2.1.6	Perceptions of Blocked Social Mobility	292
8.2.1.7	Experiences of Discrimination and Racism	293
8.2.1.8	Objective 1: Summary and Conclusion	297
8.2.2	Objective 2: A Menu of Indicators	300
8.2.2.1	Objective 2: Summary and Conclusion	303
8.2.3	Objective 3: Perceptions of Success	304
8.2.3.1	Objective 3: Summary and Conclusion	307
8.2.4	Objective 4: A 'Toolkit' of Options	308
8.2.4.1	Objective 4: Summary and Conclusion	312
8.3	Extrapolation beyond the Material at Hand	313
8.4	Further Work	314
Appendices		
Appendix 1	Semi-structured Interview Schedule	316
Appendix 2	Information/Consent Sheet	318
Appendix 3	Freedom of Information Act request	320
Appendix 4	Redacted Schedule of Interviewees	322
Bibliography		
Part 1	Journal Articles	324
Part 2	Books and Book Chapters	328
Part 3	Conference, Seminar and Occasional Papers, and Academic Theses	334
Part 4	Official Reports and Official Documents	335
Part 5	Web-based sources (Articles)	339
Part 6	Newspapers and media sources, including	

List of Contents - cont

		Page
	web-based news articles	340
Part 7	Personal Communications	342
Part 8	Miscellaneous Supporting Websites	342
 List of Tables		
Table 1	Crime Statistics for Oldham	210
Table 2	Race Hate Incidents for Oldham, 2005/06 – 2006/07	211
Table 3	Ethnicity of complainants, complaints against police, 2001-2002, and 2007-2008, Oldham	213
Table 4	Proportion of officers from self-defined ethnic minority groups as at 31 March 2007, Oldham and Greater Manchester Police	217
Table 5	Recruitment, Promotion and Retention of BME staff, 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007, Greater Manchester Police	218
 List of Figures		
Figure 1	Ladder of Escalation	16
Figure 2	Schematic showing the relationship between the ‘Common Roots’, ‘Critical Success Factors’, ‘Policing Indicators’ and the National Intelligence Model	21
Figure 3	Heuristic model of causes of radicalisation	92
Figure 4	Heuristic model of the context of offending	185
Figure 5	Schematic showing the relationship between the ‘Common Roots’, ‘Critical Success Factors’ and ‘Policing Indicators’	203