

Institution: University of Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 21) Sociology		
Title of case study: Influencing policy on and public understanding of the inclusion of Muslim civil society actors in UK governance		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010-present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Therese O'Toole	Professor of Sociology	09/2008-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1/08/2013-31/12/2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

O'Toole's research on Muslim civic engagement and the impact of UK Counter Terrorism policy on Muslim civil society organisations has:

- influenced national policy debate on the impact of counter-radicalisation policy on Muslim civic inclusion, including the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism, and the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement;
- shaped public understanding of the Birmingham 'Trojan Horse' affair;
- led to improved mechanisms for inclusion of Muslims in local governance in Bristol.

2. Underpinning research

O'Toole's research addresses Muslim inclusion in governance, and the impact of Prevent (the government's counter-radicalisation policy) on Muslim civic engagement in the UK. From 2010, O'Toole led two major ESRC/AHRC projects [i, ii], and produced a co-authored book with Holmwood (University of Nottingham) on the Birmingham 'Trojan Horse' affair.

The first project (2010-13) [3.1] [i] found, contrary to perceptions that Muslims were minimally engaged in governance, increasing engagement with the state across policy domains from the mid-1990s, and a growth, pluralisation and maturation of Muslim civil society organisations. It highlighted the significance of local contexts, and activism of Muslim actors and local agencies, creating variation in the implementation and impact of policies on cohesion, integration and security. Notwithstanding the dominance of Prevent, the research challenged the view of it as a coherent, top-down disciplinary regime by drawing attention to local contestation and innovation [3.2].

The second research project (2013-18) [3.3] [ii] used collaborative and participatory methods to study Building the Bridge, a local Muslim forum established to implement Prevent in Bristol. The research analysed its development and impact, the implications of Prevent for Muslim civic engagement, and opportunities for Muslim women's civic participation. The research found that Building the Bridge created a new political opportunity structure in the city for Muslim civic engagement that had not hitherto existed [3.3]. It concluded its effectiveness would have been stronger had it not been organised under the rubric of Prevent. Through co-produced research with Muslim women, the study identified barriers to their civic engagement and mechanisms to enhance their inclusion in the governance of religious, community and statutory bodies – highlighting the innovations they contribute [3.4].

O'Toole's (2017) co-authored book with Holmwood [3.5] scrutinised claims of an extremist plot in 2014 to Islamicise state schools in Birmingham (the 'Trojan Horse affair'), that led to the replacement of the management in several schools and attempts to disbar permanently several

Impact case study (REF3)

teachers. Holmwood and O'Toole exposed errors, gaps and cover-ups in the arguments and evidence against the schools, and in relation to their alleged failures to comply with requirements of Prevent, community cohesion, religious expression and teaching of fundamental British values. They concluded the allegations constituted a major miscarriage of justice.

Drawing on the cumulative findings of this research, O'Toole contributed to local and national policy debates on the impact of Prevent on Muslim civic engagement and public understandings of the Birmingham Trojan Horse affair [3.2][3.5][3.6]. She called for an independent review of Prevent [3.6] that addresses: the definition of extremism on which it is based; its impact on equalities and civil liberties [3.6]; its remit, paying attention to overlap with other policy areas (such as integration) and Public Sector Duties [3.5][3.6]; and its implications for Muslim civic inclusion [3.2][3.5][3.6]. She argued for more locally-driven and sensitive approaches, which permit local actors to develop and give critical feedback to counter-radicalisation policy, beyond being mobilised for the purposes of implementation [3.3][3.6]. She advanced proposals for better state engagement with a wider range of Muslim groups and voices. Such engagement, she argued, should go beyond the narrow focus of Prevent [3.1][3.3][3.6].

3. References to the research

- 3.1 **O'Toole T**, Nilsson DeHanas D, Modood T, Meer N and Jones SH (2013), *Taking Part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance*, Bristol: University of Bristol, [Available on request] <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/ethnicity/migrated/documents/mpcgreport.pdf>
- 3.2 **O'Toole T**, Meer N, DeHanas D, Jones S and Modood T (2016). Governing through Prevent? Regulation and contested practice in state-Muslim engagement, *Sociology*, **50.1**, pp.160-177, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038514564437>
- 3.3 Lewicki A, **O'Toole T** and Modood T (2014), *Building the Bridge: Muslim Community Engagement in Bristol*, Bristol: University of Bristol, [Available on request] https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/253808450/Building_the_Bridge_Report_2014.pdf
- 3.4 Lewicki A and **O'Toole T** (2017). Acts and practices of citizenship: Muslim women's activism in the UK, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, **40.1**, pp.152-171, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1216142>
- 3.5 Holmwood J and **O'Toole T** (2017), *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair*, Bristol: Policy Press, ISBN: 978-1447344131 [Available on request]
- 3.6 **O'Toole T** (2019). An Assessment of Prevent and the Challenges Ahead, in *Jihadist Terror: New Threats, New Responses*, Edited by Richards A, with Margolin D and Scremin N, London: IB Taurus, pp.245-257, ISBN: 978-1-7883-1553-1 [Available on request]

Funding information

- i. **O'Toole T** (PI), [*Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance*](#), AHRC/ESRC AH/H016066/1, 2010-2013, GBP328,947
- ii. **O'Toole T** (PI), Modood T (co-PI), *Productive Margins: Muslim Community Engagement in Bristol*, AHRC/ESRC ES/K002716/1, 2013-2018, GBP149,270

4. Details of the impact

O'Toole's research has influenced national policy and debate on Muslim civic engagement in the UK. Her investigation of the Birmingham Trojan Horse affair shaped public understanding of what she and Holmwood found to be a major miscarriage of justice. In Bristol, her research has improved mechanisms for the inclusion of Muslims in local governance.

Influenced national policy and debate on Prevent and state-Muslim engagement in the UK

Between 2015 and 2017, O'Toole was invited to feed her research findings [3.1-3.3] into government departments' consultation processes on engagement, cohesion and extremism including:

- the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in December 2015 to discuss her research on local models of Prevent implementation;
- the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) in 2016 to discuss her research on the impact of Prevent [5.1];
- the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement in October 2017 to give oral evidence on the impact of Prevent on Muslim civic engagement [5.2].

O'Toole's work has raised awareness of the key challenges relating to the implementation of the UK government's counter-radicalisation policy, Prevent. OSCT's Head of CT Strategy and Performance states that O'Toole's research on '*community based approaches to counter-terrorism and the importance of participatory decision making helped us with our own thinking on the matter*' [5.1]. O'Toole's evidence to the Select Committee was cited in four of its recommendations to government in its report *The Ties that Bind* [5.2] which stated that government should:

- 1) uncouple shared British values from counter-extremism policy (paras 66-70, and recommendation 5 [5.2]),
- 2) clarify the essential purposes of Prevent (paras 390 & 392 and recommendation 62 [5.2]),
- 3) ensure greater local involvement in the implementation of Prevent (paras 394 & 397 and recommendation 63 [5.2]), and
- 4) review the definition of extremism within Prevent (paras 398 & 400 and recommendation 64 [5.2]).

The recommendation concerning the need to uncouple shared British values from counter-extremism was taken up by Lord Harries of Pentregarth (column 91) [5.3: p.35] and Lord Tyler (column 103) [5.3: p.52] in a House of Lords debate on the Ties that Bind report on 19th November 2018 [5.3].

Shaped public understanding of the Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham

O'Toole and Holmwood's Birmingham 'Trojan Horse' investigation [3.5] has influenced public understanding of the affair. Writing in 2018 for *Middle East Eye*, former distinguished Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail journalist (short-listed for the 2020 Orwell prize for journalism), Peter Osborne, stated "*I cannot recommend strongly enough ... the recently published book by sociologists John Holmwood and Therese O'Toole. It is an assiduous, impeccably researched account of the events that took place in Birmingham. It makes utterly devastating reading. And it is profoundly troubling in light of the official significance of the case*" [5.4]. The article was shared over 2,100 times. Their book informed LUNG Theatre's production of Trojan Horse, which won the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award when it premiered in 2018. This was followed by two national tours in October-November 2019 and January-February 2020 with over 60 performances at 26 different venues, attended by over 5,000 people. Reviewers praised Trojan Horse as '*Perhaps the bravest and most astutely political of shows...relevant, terrifying and beautifully told...*', What's On Stage, and '*a sober, forceful condemnation of injustice*', The Guardian [5.5]. In 2017, MEND (Muslim Engagement & Development) organised a conference in Birmingham with 300 participants on the Trojan Horse affair that included discussion of the book's findings [5.5].

Improved mechanisms for the inclusion/engagement of Muslim women in local governance

At the local level, O'Toole's research shaped Bristol City Council's (BCC) approach to Muslim civic engagement in the city. The 2014 report, *Building the Bridge: Muslim community engagement in Bristol* [3.3], influenced BCC's decision to continue to support Building the Bridge despite the withdrawal of central government funding [5.6][5.7]. The Chair of Building the Bridge states: '*Your research was valuable for informing the structure and continuation of Building the*

Bridge, enabling its continuation as an important forum for Muslim voices in the city [5.6]. The research team co-produced with Muslim women from the city: a) a policy brief with recommendations for women's effective inclusion, including that statutory and community organisations should create opportunities for women to take up leadership roles, rather than expecting them to 'fight their way in', and networking opportunities for Muslim women to share experiences and concerns [5.8]; and b) a film exploring Muslim women's visions of more effective participatory spaces (*What Do You See?*) [5.8]. The film premiered in October 2015 at the Watershed, the leading arts centre in the city, and was the focus of a 'Made in Bristol' TV programme.

The research outputs on the role and participation of women in Building the Bridge and the resulting recommendations on how local structures could be improved [3.3][3.4][5.8], led the City Council to set up a gender-balanced co-chairing arrangement for Building the Bridge [5.6][5.7][5.9], and a Women's Partnership Advisory Group (PAG) within Building the Bridge to enable the input of Muslim women on a range of issues [5.6][5.7]. As a City Council Report stated: *'in line with the report [3.3][5.8] recommendations, the Women's Partnership Advisory Group (PAG) was formed in September 2015 to give a voice to Muslim women'* [5.9]. Informed by the research findings [3.3], a specific recommendation on creating networking opportunities for Muslim women to share experiences and concerns [5.8] and the launch of the project's Bristol Big Sisters Exhibition on 29 October 2015, BCC and the Women's PAG organised a Bristol Big Sisters Conference in Autumn 2016, with input from O'Toole. The Conference was attended by 200 Muslim women to debate issues that concerned them [5.9]. The City Council also went on to take the project's Bristol Big Sister's exhibition on tour to over 100 venues including libraries, children centres, college campuses, health centres and community hubs across and beyond Bristol [5.9].

Since then, O'Toole joined (by invitation) a new Muslim civic forum, the Bristol Muslim Strategic Leadership Group in 2019, which promotes engagement between Muslims and statutory organisations in the city across a range of policy areas – extending beyond Prevent and security concerns [5.10]. She sits on its Research Task Group to identify ways in which research can support the work of the BMSLG. This includes providing her research insights into the creation of a booklet on Muslims in Britain and Bristol for use by professionals, educators, practitioners, journalists and interested readers (with a foreword by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi), and supporting a co-produced research project on Muslim perceptions and experiences of policing in Bristol, to feed into the work of Avon and Somerset Police (with funding from the University of Bristol Temple Quarter Engagement Fund).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

-
- 5.1 Office for Security and Counter Terrorism – Corroborating Letter, Head of CT Strategy and Performance (January 2017)
 - 5.2 i) House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement enquiry (6 September 2017) – [Transcript of oral evidence](#); ii) House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement; Report of Session 2017–19: [The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century](#) (April 2018)
 - 5.3 [Hansard House of Lords Debate](#) (19 November 2018) [Accessed 11 February 2020]
 - 5.4 Middle East Eye – Article (28 February 2018), [Trojan Horse affair: When government and media colluded to vilify the Muslim community](#) [Accessed 11 February 2020]
 - 5.5 i) Lung Theatre website: <https://www.lungtheatre.co.uk/copy-of-trojan-horse>; ii) MEND website: <https://www.mend.org.uk/what-we-did-at-mend-in-2017/> [Both accessed 13 January 2021]
 - 5.6 Testimonial from Chair of Building the Bridge
 - 5.7 Bristol City Council – Report for the Local Government Association (5 September 2016), [Building on Past Work](#) [Accessed 2 February 2020]
 - 5.8 i) PolicyBristol Briefing (October 2015) – [Enhancing Spaces for Muslim Women's Engagement](#), Bristol: Policy Bristol; ii) Film output (September 2016) *What Do You See?* Available at <https://vimeo.com/181541056>

Impact case study (REF3)

- 5.9 i) Bristol City Council – *Bristol Big Sisters Conference: Milestone Report 2016* (A report to inform the Women’s Partnership Advisory Group, Bristol City Council and other stakeholders about the progress of the fund raising, publicity and conference arrangements); ii) BCC article (3 August 2016), [Bristol Invites Muslim Women to Join the Debate](#) [Accessed 13 January 2021]; iii) Productive Margins article (26 July 2016), [Bristol Big Sisters on Tour in and around Bristol](#) [Accessed 13 January 2021]
- 5.10 [Bristol Muslim Strategic Leadership Group team](#) [Accessed 11 February 2020]