

**Radicalisation as a Moral Career:**  
A qualitative study of how people become terrorists in the United Kingdom

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This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## Declarations

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a study of radicalisation within the context of the UK. The research focuses on how people become radicalised, why some are rendered susceptible to radicalisation, and why some go on to commit acts of violence and terrorism. This thesis also critically assesses how radicalisation affects relevant counter-terrorism policy and how this policy affects radicalisation.

The research has been informed through the analysis of empirical data in the form of 61 qualitative semi-structured interviews. A number of these interviews were completed with respondents across government and academia. However, there was a specific focus on conducting interviews with the data set termed as the 'informed informants'. This group consisted of grassroots workers conducting organic de-radicalisation strategies, religious leaders and imams, and former non-violent and violent extremists. The interviews were supported by fieldwork based observations.

This account of radicalisation is presented within a framework borrowed from sociologist Erving Goffman's (1961) theory of 'moral career', in order to bring together the factors of radicalisation and understand them in a more complex and fluid setting. This research found that although some of the more commonly stated components – at the micro and macro levels – hold much importance when studying the phenomenon, radicalisation is essentially about a change in people's perceptions of 'self' and 'social identity'. Within this thesis there is a particular focus on the role of social, cultural and subcultural factors; many of which are largely neglected in other accounts.

## Acknowledgements

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## Table of Contents

Declarations .....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Diagrams and Tables.....	vii
List of Common Abbreviations.....	viii
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1 The Evolving Nature of the Threat .....	3
1.2 Research Aims and Methodology .....	7
1.3 Radicalisation as a Broader Social Phenomenon .....	8
1.4 Theoretical Framework for Studying Radicalisation .....	11
1.5 Radicalisation as a Moral Career .....	13
1.6 Thesis Overview .....	20
1.7 Personal Reflections.....	23
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b> .....	25
2.1 Definitions.....	27
2.1.1 Terrorism .....	27
2.1.2 Radicalisation .....	29
2.1.3 Extremism.....	31
2.2 Assessing the ‘Why’: A Root Cause Approach .....	33
2.3 Who and What Enables the Process of Radicalisation.....	37
2.3.1 Re-Socialising Identity .....	41
2.4 How Do People Become Radicalised?: A Critical Assessment of Literature .....	43
2.4.1 General Stage Process Models .....	44
2.4.2 Non-Stage Process Models .....	46
2.4.3 Radicalisation: A Rational Choice? .....	50
2.4.4 Ensuring Flexibility: A Progressive SMT Approach .....	54
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b> .....	58
3.1 Research Questions .....	60
3.2 Selection of Methods .....	60
3.2.1 Qualitative Interviews.....	61
3.2.2 Fieldwork Based Observations .....	62
3.3 Ethics and Risk Management .....	63
3.3.1 Risks to Researcher .....	64
3.3.2 Risks to Respondents.....	65
3.4 Accessing the Data: Qualitative Interviews .....	67
3.4.1 Interviews with Officials.....	67
3.4.2 Interviews with Informed Informants.....	68
3.4.3 Interviews with Community Members.....	75
3.5 Accessing the Data: Fieldwork Based Observations.....	80

3.6 Data Analysis .....	81
3.7 Respondent References .....	86
3.8 Reflections.....	87
3.8.1 Insider/Outsider Status .....	87
3.8.2 The Challenges of Conducting Empirical Research .....	90
<b>Chapter Four: Susceptibility .....</b>	<b>96</b>
4.1 Prologue: Five Muslim Friends .....	96
4.2 Introduction.....	98
4.3 The Personal Level.....	102
4.3.1 Identity and Belonging .....	102
4.3.2 Muslims and the Media .....	106
4.3.3 Islamophobia and the Far-Right.....	108
4.3.4 Consequences.....	112
4.4 The Local Level .....	113
4.5 The Global Level .....	117
4.5.1 Direct Foreign Policy.....	118
4.5.2 Critical Relationships .....	119
4.5.3 Lack of Foreign Policy.....	121
4.5.4 War against Islam .....	123
4.5.5 The Ummah.....	127
4.6 Concluding Remarks .....	129
<b>Chapter Five: Contingencies .....</b>	<b>131</b>
5.1 Prologue: Adam's Account .....	131
5.2 Introduction.....	135
5.3 Extremism as a Subcultural Trend.....	138
5.4 Friendships and Group Pressures .....	144
5.5 Generational Gap .....	147
5.6 Imams and Mosques .....	150
5.6.1 Lack of Islamic Knowledge .....	157
5.7 Concluding Remarks .....	160
<b>Chapter Six: Conversion.....</b>	<b>162</b>
6.1 Prologue: Omar's Story .....	162
6.2 Introduction.....	166
6.3 Mortification and Reconstruction of the Self.....	168
6.3.1 Mortification of the Self .....	168
6.3.2 'Culturing' and Reconstructing the Self .....	170
6.4 The Radicalisee's Career .....	178
6.4.1 Gravitation to Violence.....	182
6.5 Personal and Psychological Preparations for Violence .....	185
6.5.1 Morality and Religion .....	185
6.5.2 Personal Gains .....	188
6.5.3 Trusted Sources and Personality .....	191
6.6 Violent Extremism.....	193
6.6.1 Subculture, Social Identity and Masculinity .....	195
6.7 Terrorism in the West .....	197
6.7.1 Jihadi Cell Formation and Active Support .....	200
6.7.2 Organisational Headhunting .....	205
6.8 Concluding Remarks .....	208

<b>Chapter Seven: Theory, Practice and Policy</b> .....	211
7.1 Extremist Careers.....	214
7.2 Policy Considerations: The Prevent Strategy 2007 .....	224
7.3 Policy Considerations: Prevent Strategy 2011 .....	232
7.4 Concluding Remarks .....	237
<b>Chapter Eight: Conclusions</b> .....	239
8.1 A Summary of the Research.....	239
8.2 Theoretical Contributions to the Field .....	241
8.3 Research Implications .....	245
8.4 Practitioners' Implications .....	248
8.5 Concluding Remarks .....	251
<b>References</b> .....	253
<b>Appendix 1: Research Information for Respondents</b> .....	287
<b>Appendix 2: Consent Form for Respondents</b> .....	289

## List of Diagrams and Tables

<b>Diagram 1: Radicalisation Flowchart</b> .....	19
<b>Diagram 2: Competing Forces</b> .....	209
<b>Table 1: Metropolitan Police Islamophobic and Anti-Semitic Crime Figures</b> .....	100



## **List of Common Abbreviations**

<b>7/7</b>	The terrorist attacks in London, United Kingdom, on 7 July 2005
<b>9/11</b>	The terrorist attacks in New York, United States, on 11 September 2001
<b>AM</b>	al-Muhajiroun
<b>AQ</b>	al-Qaeda
<b>AQI</b>	al-Qaeda inspired
<b>CONTEST</b>	Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy; The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism; The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism
<b>CT</b>	Counter-terrorism
<b>EDL</b>	English Defence League
<b>GT</b>	Grounded Theory
<b>HT</b>	Hizb ut-Tahrir
<b>INLA</b>	Irish National Liberation Army
<b>IRA</b>	Irish Republican Army
<b>MDL</b>	Muslim Defence League
<b>PREVENT</b>	The Prevent Strategy
<b>RCT</b>	Rational Choice Theory
<b>SMT</b>	Social Movement Theory
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>US</b>	United States of America

“I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary;  
the evil it does is permanent.”

**Mahatma Gandhi**

## Chapter One: Introduction

The terrorist attacks conducted in New York City on 11 September 2001 (9/11) marked a fateful day in the way terrorism was viewed in the West. Although the nature of the threat was already shifting many years before this incident, 9/11 remains in the minds of many as the day the landscape changed dramatically; an incident which still affects how many people go about their lives (de Londras, 2013). The UK had been familiar with the threat of terrorism for a number of years, predominantly arising from the ongoing conflicts with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), and their various splinter groups. Despite entering a new era of reduced risk from terrorism – due mainly to the successes of ongoing peace talks in Northern Ireland – the UK was under increased and immediate threat once again<sup>1</sup>; this time from a seemingly new and global enemy. This threat, commonly referred to as ‘al-Qaeda inspired’ (AQI)<sup>2</sup>, was brought into sharp focus in the UK on 7 July 2005 (7/7) when four men detonated suicide bombs on London’s transport network. It is widely accepted that these individuals had been ‘radicalised’<sup>3</sup> before committing these acts. It is the intent of this research to further our academic knowledge of radicalisation within the UK, which can lead to the committing of an act of terrorism.

One hard hitting point of the 7/7 attacks was that the perpetrators were all ‘home-grown’ British citizens. Not only did this increase the risk of terrorism in the UK, this time from a new and relatively unknown threat, it also raised questions of citizenship, integration and

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<sup>1</sup> The threat raised from Northern Ireland-related terrorism has steadily been on the increase over the past few years, and has, as a result, been incorporated into the recently reviewed Prevent Strategy (HM Government, 2011). It has also been afforded its own threat level status from the UK government. It must be noted that the threat from Far-Right extremism is also an increasing concern within the UK.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘AQI’ does not assume that these groups do or do not have affiliations with al-Qaeda Central, or any of its global franchises. There are continuing debates to whether this type of terrorist threat is top-down or bottom-up. See for example the debate between Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman in ‘Foreign Affairs’ (Hoffman, 2008; Sageman, 2008b; Hoffman 2011), published by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). There are also those who argue that it is a combination of the two (Silber, 2011). Further, Silber importantly asserts that there are those groups who do not agree with the core ideals or strategies of al-Qaeda, or its hierarchy. Thus, the use of this term does not assume that the individuals and groups discussed within this thesis subscribe to these core ideals or strategies of al-Qaeda. It is merely used to make a distinction, in lay terms, of this particular type of threat.

<sup>3</sup> See the Literature Review chapter for the definitions of certain key terms used in this thesis, including: ‘radicalisation’; ‘radicaliser’; ‘radicalisee’; ‘terrorism’; ‘extremism’; and ‘extremist’.

identity. Within this particular account of radicalisation, the term ‘home-grown’ refers to those individuals who are born or raised from a very young age within a specific country and become involved in supporting or participating in acts of terrorism against that country or her interests. This is a very critical issue, as it is estimated that home-grown terrorists have been responsible for 78% of AQ and AQI terrorist plots in the West from 2003-2008 (Sageman, 2009).

In recent years, the study of radicalisation has tended to focus upon AQI extremism, but it could pertain to any psychological process whereby people’s beliefs become extreme. It may then be plausible to refer to this as a broader process in which individuals’ social norms are reconfigured through forces of social change where the outcome may be a divergence from majority norms. It is important to briefly touch upon the use of the term ‘individual’ as there is an ongoing debate about whether radicalisation is an individual or group process. A more balanced approach, which has been adopted by this research, is to consider it as individual behaviour in a collective environment (COT Institute, 2008).

Although the most common understanding of radicalisation has a predetermined set of negative connotations attached to it, it can in essence be thought of as either ‘pro-social radicalisation’ or ‘anti-social radicalisation’<sup>4</sup>. Pro-social radicalisation is the acquisition of beliefs that are generally deemed as positive, conducted by movements which are, for example, attempting to instil environmental awareness, abolish slavery, or campaign for equal human or animal rights (Jackson, 2011). Anti-social radicalisation can be attached, as mentioned, to the process which leads to violence and terrorism, or even with issues that are not connected to violence.

Many accounts have endeavoured to de-mystify and unravel the complex threads of radicalisation in an effort to understand the phenomenon further and illuminate how to counter this threat. There are, however, ongoing discussions regarding what this process entails, how it is conducted, and why individuals engage within it. This thesis endeavours to bring together the components of radicalisation in some sort of overarching framework – by employing sociologist Erving Goffman’s (1961) theory of ‘moral career’. Further, as well as focussing on how individuals acquire a set of extreme beliefs and attitudes, this research analyses the conversion towards being willing to support and conduct violence.

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<sup>4</sup> The author would like to thank Professor Martin Innes at Cardiff University for this distinction.

## 1.1 The Evolving Nature of the Threat

Some commentators argue that pre-9/11, recruitment into AQ and affiliated groups was occurring in full awareness of the British government (Briggs et al., 2006; Laqueur, 2004; Phillips, 2007). Much of this was the enrolment of fighters to travel abroad to join up with Muslim 'armies' in places like Afghanistan against the Soviets – where many countries in the West had some interest. Therefore, it has been argued that as long as the UK or her interests were not a target, this type of activity was able to flourish (ibid).

However, after the attack on 9/11 the situation changed significantly. This prompted the then Labour government to respond, and they did so through the inception of an overarching counter-terrorism (CT) strategy named 'CONTEST'<sup>5</sup>, which was made publically available in 2006 (HM Government, 2006). This strategy contained four pillars, including: Prevent; Pursue; Protect; and Prepare<sup>6</sup>. The British government realised that pursuing terrorists alone was not going to be sufficient to combat the threat of terrorism. Thus, rather than focussing upon international threats, the UK was forced into turning its attentions to those coming from inside its borders (House of Commons, 2012). It seemed as though the government fully understood that its previous focus on saving lives had to adapt to understand why people become involved in the first instance and the 'factors driving radicalisation' (ibid). Therefore, 'Prevent'<sup>7</sup> grew in stature relative to the other strands (Briggs, 2010).

In recent times, it has been argued that radicalisation has been facilitated by the internet and the emergence and popularity of digital social networking (ISD, 2011; Stevens and Neumann, 2009). However, countering the threat of online radicalisation has proven to be a difficult task, with government agencies sometimes blurring the boundaries between ensuring security and personal privacy; as was understood with the details that recently emerged in regards to the US's National Security Agency run programme, PRISM (The

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<sup>5</sup> The official name strategy was 'Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy', which was changed in 2009 to, 'The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism' (HM Government, 2009). The Coalition Government changed the name in 2011 to, 'The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism' (HM Government, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks; Protect: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack (HM Government, 2011a).

<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that Prevent has been part of CONTEST for the previous Labour government (HM Government, 2006, 2009) and the current Coalition Government (HM Government, 2011a).

Economist, 2013, 2013a). Although this thesis does not discuss the role of the internet within radicalisation, this should not be taken as the topic having little value when looking at the issue. This research focuses more on the social interactions of individuals and groups. These two issues need to be considered in conjunction with one another. As della Porta and Diani (2006: 133) argue, 'virtual networks operate at their best when they are backed by real social linkages in specifically localized communities'. Similarly, in a leaked MI5 Behavioural Science Operational Briefing Note, it was argued that 'Exposure to extremist ideology, whether in the form of online communities, books, or DVDs, although crucial, is never enough on its own. Personal interaction is essential, in most cases, to draw individuals into violent networks' (Travis, 2008a).

However, this of course does not apply to all cases of radicalisation. As well as acting as an enabler of group radicalisation and a readily available source of information which provides guidance to conducting various types of terrorist attacks, many feel the internet has helped to foster the emergence of the 'lone wolf' scenario. The case of the lone wolf encapsulates a range of different opinions. Whilst some believe the threat is moving in this direction, others argue that a recent global resurgence in AQ suggests the threat may in fact revert back to its original transnational position (The Economist, 2013b). It can also be argued that the knowledge and capabilities of these lone wolves may be limited. They may not pose the same level of threat as those who are part of more organised cells who have received tangible training. However, as Clarke (2012) points out, many of these lone wolves have travelled abroad recently to participate in 'jihad' in Muslim states and will start to return home. Thus, they may well have gained relevant knowledge, or more worryingly formed friendships with likeminded individuals abroad, and will start to foster relationships with likeminded individuals and groups in the UK. The lone wolf scenario is always a difficult one to judge, where people are quick to conclude that the perpetrator was working alone. However, there should not be the assumption that they have not had any influence from others. There only needs to be the consideration of David Copeland, Nicky Reilly, and Andrew 'Isa' Ibrahim, all of whom were thought to have been 'lone wolves' by some, though others argued that they were part of, or at least had links to, wider networks (see for example, BBC News, 2000; Gardham et al., 2008; Pantucci, 2009).

As well as the internet having an influence on how the landscape has changed, there are various other dynamics that need to be considered. For one, religion acting as a driver of radicalisation has, according to some like Sageman (2008a), become less important, with social and structural issues becoming more prominent. Sageman argued, during a presentation for the New America Foundation, that many individuals involved in terrorism only appear to 'discover' religion merely weeks before becoming involved in an act (ibid). He explains that we are currently in the 'third wave' of AQI terrorism, with the first two waves being much more religious than the third. However, this will not be the same with all cases, with different people embracing religion at various different junctures of their radicalisation. Generally, this thesis agrees with Sageman's sentiment that religion is not a causal factor of radicalisation.

Many issues that affected people becoming radicalised over the last two decades, or so, are still pertinent today. As will be discussed at relevant points, these issues include, for example, foreign policy, discrimination, social bonds, group influences, and integration. A further theme that has been present over time concerns British Muslims, as briefly mentioned before, participating in fighting 'jihad' abroad. Over the years the destinations of choice for the foreign fighters have included Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Chechnya and Algeria, to name a few. Many of these individuals returned back to the UK looking for the 'next fight'. One of these 'fights' came, somewhat unexpectedly (at least in the opinion of Western societies), against the West. Similar concerns have been raised with those travelling, albeit in smaller numbers, to participate in more recent conflicts in regions such as North Africa and Syria, which, according to the Director General of MI5, is a great concern to British intelligence (Parker, 2013). There are arguments to suggest that part of the reasoning behind this shift is down to the difficulty of accessing training camps in previous popular locations due to an increase in surveillance (Soria, 2012). British, and Western, intelligence capabilities are limited in the new regions due to a lack of support from the relevant governments, or because these governments' power is in serious threat due to civil uprisings. There also needs to be the consideration that the 'fight' has moved on to different regions due to the shifting of priorities for these foreign fighters, such as a perceived more immediate threat to the wellbeing and security of Muslims elsewhere.

In fact, some point out that the homecoming of these fighters is even more of a concern when considering the fact that their return coincides with the 'steady release' of those in British prisons serving sentences for terrorism related offences (Clarke, 2012). This problem not only exists with those individuals who were radicalised before going into prison, but also those who are radicalised whilst in prison (Neumann, 2010). As Clarke (2012: 3) argues, prison probation officers believe that 'around a tenth of Muslim prison inmates are subject to effective radicalisation while serving their sentences'.

The pressing question here relates to how widespread the threat is to the UK. Significant figures in the field such as Jonathan Evans, former Director General of MI5, stated in 2007 that there were around 2000 people who posed a 'direct threat to national security and public safety' (Evans, 2007). This was a 25% rise from the figure provided by Evans' predecessor, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller (2006), almost exactly a year earlier. In recent times, statistics have shown arrests of this type to be in decline (Soria, 2012). However, this should by no means lead to complacency with the matter, especially as some of this may relate to these groups' increasing sophistication when trying to avoid detection. The current<sup>8</sup> Director General, Andrew Parker, has been more cautious than his predecessors about giving exact figures of people who are a risk to national security. It was clear from his recent speech, however, that this threat is still very real and thriving, where 'It remains the case that there are several thousand Islamist extremists here who see the British people as a legitimate target'. He added, 'Since 2000, we have seen serious attempts at major acts of terrorism in this country typically once or twice a year. That feels to me, for the moment, unlikely to change.' (Parker, 2013)

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Parker is the Director General of MI5 at the time of writing.



## 1.2 Research Aims and Methodology

At its core, this thesis aims to understand how and why radicalisation occurs in the UK, and how this can, in certain cases, lead to some people committing acts of violence and terrorism. The research takes a multi-disciplinary approach to gain further insights into the phenomenon, including sociology, criminology and social psychology. The thesis has been guided by the following questions:

1. How do people become radicalised?
2. Why are some people rendered susceptible to radicalisation and why do some go on to commit forms of violence but others do not?
3. What is the perception and reception 'on the ground' of counter-terrorism policies and strategies amongst those who are, in many ways, the focus of such attentions?
4. What are the wider implications of the findings of this research for policymakers, practitioners and academics?

In order to fully appreciate and understand the components of radicalisation which are relevant to a UK perspective, this research is informed by empirical data in the shape of 61 semi-structured qualitative interviews. They were conducted with a range of different participants including central and local government staff, academics, counter-terrorism police and intelligence officers, and Muslim community members. There was, however, a particular focus upon interviewing grassroots workers, youth workers, religious leaders and former non-violent and violent extremists. This group has been labelled as the 'informed informants'. Many of them have first-hand experience of the situation and in many cases are involved within 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation'<sup>9</sup> work at the grassroots level. In addition, fieldwork based observations were also conducted and inform the thesis at relevant points. The method used to collect and analyse the data was grounded theory. However, this is not the traditional approach of grounded theory,

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<sup>9</sup> For a distinction between the terms 'de-radicalisation', 'counter-radicalisation' and also 'disengagement', see: ISD (2012).

as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), but more in line with newer developments, such as the version outlined by Charmaz (2006).

### 1.3 Radicalisation as a Broader Social Phenomenon

Within many studies of radicalisation, and terrorism work more generally<sup>10</sup>, there seems to be a tendency towards chronocentrism. Rock (2005) examined this concept within British criminological studies and concluded that there is a propensity to ignore writings over fifteen years old. This, he argues, results in 'evident consequences for the public presentation and validation of expert knowledge' (ibid: 473). Though the most commonly accepted understanding of radicalisation may be somewhat new and relatively unknown, this should not assume that the principles differ substantially from those within a wide range of historical contexts. The study of radicalisation should incorporate a number of different academic disciplines including, amongst others, sociology, criminology, social psychology, and political science. In this regard, Neumann (2008) asserts that humans do not exist in a vacuum, but are affected and shaped by the social, economic, cultural and political environment in which they exist and operate. The study of terrorism has also benefited greatly from adopting this multi-disciplinary approach (ibid).

The academic literature on cults and sects<sup>11</sup> includes a number of underlying principles which are similar, if not the same, to those found in processes of terrorist radicalisation. There are considered to be, according to Stark and Bainbridge (1980), two main theories of involvement. The first theory argues there to be a link between a person's deprivation (i.e. social, economic or cultural) and the deviant group's ideologies (Wilson, 1959; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980; Linton and Hallowell, 1943). However, this theory does not explain how there are potentially many in society that feel these deprivations though do not join a cult or sect. It is therefore considered that this idea of recruitment offers only 'very general contributory conditions in any satisfactory theory...' (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980: 1376). Though, saying that, this theory should not be completely dismissed as

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see: Duyvesteyn (2004).

<sup>11</sup> It must be noted that there are sharp distinctions between the definitions of 'cult' and 'sect' (Stark and Bainbridge, 1979). However, there are those, such as Stark and Bainbridge (1980), who argue that although these differences need to be understood, 'conversion' to either type of group still largely remains the same.

those that did join usually had some deprivation in their lives. Those that did not were considered to be unlikely to become involved (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980; Bainbridge, 1978; Lofland and Stark, 1965). This suggests that there needs to be the existence of additional factors for recruitment to occur.

The second, and more recent, perspective emphasises the importance of 'interpersonal bonds' (Lofland and Stark 1965; Lofland, 1966; Bainbridge, 1978). For example, Stark and Bainbridge's (1980) research on three 'unusual' religious groups found interpersonal bonds between the group's members and potential members to be essential when trying to recruit them into the group. Similarly, Bainbridge (1978) found, during his research on satanic cults, that social bonds not only played a critical role in recruitment but also in the initial formation of the group. Interestingly, social bonds played such an integral role within recruitment that certain members of the group actually became affiliated, and even moved into the sect's commune, before internalising the group's ideologies (Lofland and Stark, 1965). In fact, there were instances where people disagreed with the overarching ideologies of the group but joined due to strong social ties with other members. There was even a distinct lack of recruitment where social bonds did not exist even though the individuals that did not join had similar predisposing conditions to others that did join. Stark and Bainbridge (1980) argue that humans will go to great lengths to protect the interpersonal bonds they so desire, even if this means accepting a new 'religious faith'.

Sageman (2004) maintains that rather than devotion to ideology, social networks played a crucial role in initial recruitment and commitment to the Unification Church; and draws similarities with modern day terrorism. As recruitment predominantly relied on members bringing others in, one reason the growth of the group was limited is due to cults and sects only encountering a small number of people (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980). Those who are socially isolated bring in very few, if any, new recruits. There is 'overwhelming support for the crucial role played by social networks in the formation and growth of such groups', and also in the development of social bonds with existing members (ibid: 1376).

Lofland and Stark (1965) conducted a participant observation of the Unification Church and discovered that although the research was based on a single group, the model they developed may be applicable to many situations involving an individual's conversion into

a deviant organisation<sup>12</sup>. They found seven necessary steps for conversion which can be considered as a 'funnel' in order to further identify increasingly susceptible individuals. For conversion to occur a person must: (1) experience enduring, acutely felt tensions; (2) within a religious problem-solving perspective; (3) which leads him to define himself as a religious seeker; (4) encountering the [Divine Precepts] at a turning point in his life; (5) wherein an affective bond is formed (or pre-exists) with one or more converts; (6) where extra-cult attachments are absent or neutralized; (7) and, where, if he is to become a deployable agent, he is exposed to intensive interaction' (Lofland and Stark, 1965: 874).

The seven steps are divided into two sections; 'predisposing conditions' and 'situational factors'. The former comprises the attributes of individuals prior to affiliation with a group and forms a pool of potential converts. Lofland and Stark (1965: 864) explain that these predisposing conditions<sup>13</sup>, like demographic characteristics and structural or personal frustrations, have unfortunately, in sociological terms, become conventional in detailing why individuals become 'dedicated to protest against the prevailing social order'. They importantly argue that 'these factors are not unimportant, but a model composed entirely of them is woefully incomplete' (ibid). They should be considered in conjunction with the 'situational factors', which concern both social networks and social interactions, in order to achieve a more balanced theory. Thus, these two approaches, according to Stark and Bainbridge (1980), should be seen as complimentary rather than competing.

Lofland and Stark (1965: 862) argue that 'conversion' entails an individual giving 'up one such perspective or ordered view of the world for another'. It can be said that at the heart of this is an altered view of the 'self'. This has strong links with wider bodies of work. One of these is Erving Goffman's (1961) seminal ethnographic research on 'total institutions', more specifically asylums, where his concept of moral career has striking resemblance to the conversion process discussed above. There are also many similarities between the theoretical framework underpinning Goffman's moral career and radicalisation. It is, thus, beneficial to employ Goffman's moral career framework to inform the overarching narrative of this thesis.

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion on the term 'deviance', see: Becker (1963: 8-14).

<sup>13</sup> These have also been described as 'facilitating factors', see: Bainbridge (1978).

## 1.4 Theoretical Framework for Studying Radicalisation

Traditionally the term career has been reserved for those who expect to enjoy the rises laid out within a respectable profession. The term is coming to be used, however, in a broadened sense to refer to any social strand of any person's course through life. The perspective of natural history is taken: unique outcomes are neglected in favour of such changes over time as are basic and common to the members of the social category, although occurring independently to each of them.' (Goffman, 1961: 119)

Goffman does not argue that the trajectories of moral careers occur in the same order for all people located in differing social situations. He essentially sets out the 'ingredients' for a 'recipe' where they can be applied in different ways and orders, but the outcome is generally the same. Goffman asserts that when discussing the case of 'mental patients' in asylums, it is not important to consider how 'mentally ill' the individual is. Rather, it is more beneficial to look at the processes and influences which confront all those who are hospitalised as they may respond to these in some similar ways. In this way, the power of social forces can overcome people, regardless of their backgrounds and upbringing.

At the crux of moral career as a concept is the study of the 'self' and 'social identity'. Goffman argues, at an institutional level, that if you put people into isolation, cut them off from previous influences, and instil a form of 'wrap around social control', the individual will come to a point of an altered perception of self and social identity. As a result, they may be willing to act differently. The particular significance of Goffman's formulation of 'career' is its 'two-sidedness'. One side concerns internal matters such as 'image of self and felt identity'. The other pertains to the publicly available positions. The concept of career allows the individual to move back and forth between personal (i.e. self) and public (i.e. society) positions, without having to rely solely upon what they understand or imagine themselves to be.

Goffman's position is strongly linked to the perspective of 'symbolic interactionism'. In its most fundamental understanding, people's interpretations of self and social identity are constructed on the basis of the assumptions made about how they are viewed by others. Therefore, perceptions of self can be dependent on the different interactions individuals

have with others and the world around them. Johnson (1995: 144) states symbolic interactionism addresses 'how we use and interpret symbols not merely to communicate with one another but to create and maintain impressions of ourselves, to forge a sense of self, and to create and sustain what we experience as the reality of a particular social situation.'

In his account of 'mental patients', Goffman (1961) describes a number of interlinked and inter-dependent processes and influences individuals can be exposed to when admitted into a 'total institution' which act upon their conceptions of self and social identity. It is a central contention of this research that although radicalisation does not appear to occur in the highly controlled physical environment of a total institutional setting, there are a number of similar social and psychological processes at work. These can be useful when trying to make sense of why, how and when radicalisation happens. Although there are cases of radicalisation occurring in total institutions, such as prisons, this thesis focuses upon radicalisation in a more open environment. However, that is not to assume there is not an overlap between the two.

Goffman's moral career predominantly occurs via two stages; the 'prepatient phase' and the 'inpatient phase'. The prepatient phase concerns an analysis of the individual's past events and relationships. These take on a new meaning once admitted to 'asylums'. Patients are told that their previous lives were false, and how they need to adapt and correct their issues. During the inpatient phase, the total institution – represented by the radicaliser in the context of this thesis – through the imposition of a process of 'social death' or 'mortification of the self' strips away the individual's previous perceptions of self, social identity, and society. This can occur in many ways including cutting existing social ties, removing physical personal items which define the individual and as with total institutions, like the army, providing an 'identity kit', like a uniform or generic haircut. The exertion of various influences through this wrap around system of social control enables the reconstruction of a new perception of self and social identity for the individual.

Goffman asserts that there are just as many, if not more, individuals considered to be 'mentally ill' who have not been admitted to 'mental hospitals'. Therefore, patients do not suffer distinctly from 'mental illness', but more from 'contingencies'. These contingencies either facilitate in admitting an individual to a total institution, or assist in them bypassing

this fate. This is a critical concept to consider, as it acts as a link between the prepatient and inpatient phases.

Applied to the process of radicalisation, the key analogy is that radicalisers provide the same function as the total institution; though importantly do not appear to represent the total institution from the perception of the radicalisee. The radicaliser is able to shift, or polarise, this representation through various influences and pressures during deeper radicalisation to those in direct conflict and competition to their particular extreme group.

### 1.5 Radicalisation as a Moral Career

Accounts of radicalisation normally adopt either a 'dispositional' or 'situational' approach. Within dispositional accounts there is a belief that those involved in terrorism have some sort of psychological deficiency as compared to those who are not involved. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the vast majority of terrorists hold any disturbed psychological symptoms, or that there exists an identifiable 'terrorist personality' (Silke, 1998; Horgan, 2005; Crenshaw, 1990; Hoffman, 2006; Laqueur, 1997). A more fruitful approach, as argued by Innes et al. (2007), is to understand the experiences of these individuals' 'particular settings and circumstances' by adopting the 'situational model' approach. Variations of which are favoured by many across the board when studying radicalisation processes (see Silber, 2011; Wiktorowicz, 2004, 2005; Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Sageman, 2008; Borum, 2003, for example).

A further problem with dispositional accounts is that they lack awareness of social forces and cultural considerations. Similarly, some situational accounts consider these factors though are unable to represent them within some overarching framework. This leads to not fully understanding or appreciating the value of these factors and their relevance to other components of radicalisation. Through the utilisation of Goffman's (1961) moral career theory, this thesis endeavours to bring together these factors and understand them in a more complex and fluid framework which is yet to be explored in radicalisation studies.

Prior to discussing the context of this particular account of radicalisation, it is important to make a number of overarching statements. First, the term 'process' must be elucidated. Authors like PISOIU (2012: 24-30), for example, outline in detail the pitfalls with using the term and the contradictions that exist within certain accounts of radicalisation as a result. Herein, the term 'process' does not imply a predefined set of procedures that occur in a sequential order to one another. The term 'process' in the context of this particular thesis will refer to, in line with Goffman's (1961) view, a number of different factors, strains and influences that are common to a large number of individuals who become radicalised. They can occur – similar to the arguments made by Sageman (2008) within his account of radicalisation – at their own pace and often in parallel with one another.

Further, one criticism toward studies of radicalisation is a propensity to provide a 'one size fits all' approach when researching the phenomenon. It must be understood that there will be a number of different types of process towards becoming radicalised which will differ with each individual and be dependent on specific social, cultural and political environments. This thesis merely represents one of these accounts; one that appeared to be most prominent from the empirical data gathered for this research.

Second, radicalisation should not be considered as a 'conveyor belt system' where once an individual steps onto the 'conveyor belt of radicalisation' they will naturally become a terrorist. It will be argued that there are a number of outcomes of radicalisation; with violence being just one of these. It is also naïve to assume that all terrorists at one point passed through non-violent extremism (Gilligan, 2010). Though, as will be discussed, there may be a relatively large number that actually do. However, this should not be seen as a prerequisite for terrorism.

Finally, it is important to consider the relevance of 'youth' at this point. There is a general consensus that individuals susceptible to extremist ideologies are likely to be young (HM Government, 2011), with the average age being in the region of early twenties (Travis, 2008a; 2008b). Although many of the concepts discussed in this thesis are applicable in a wider context, there is a specific focus upon the radicalisation of Muslim youth within the UK. In this regard, although the research was not intended to be gender specific, it transpired that respondents interviewed as part of the empirical data did in fact primarily have experience with young male Muslims.



This particular account of radicalisation is grouped into three overarching sections. This holds similarities to Goffman's (1961) 'moral career of the mental patient'. Although Goffman only outlines two phases (i.e. the prepatient and inpatient phases) his theory of contingencies has been considered as an additional phase. As mentioned above, much of the content in these phases can occur at different times, in conjunction, and in parallel to one another. For the purposes of providing a framework for analysis, however, they have been represented as three empirical findings chapters in order to discuss them in a coherent fashion.

The first chapter, 'Susceptibility', reflects Goffman's prepatient phase where individuals' past events and relationships, including those with the state and society, take on a new meaning once they are in contact with radicalisers. This concerns certain strains and grievances felt by radicalisees that have the potential of pushing them away from mainstream society and pulling them towards extreme ideologies. These strains and grievances can be experienced throughout the radicalisee's life, potentially from a relatively young age, and are mainly acquired through personal experience. They occur at three different levels: '**personal level**' (i.e. identity and belonging); '**local level**' (i.e. within their local and national geographical area concerning relationships with the state and authorities – including the implementation of counter-terrorism strategies); and '**global level**' (concerning political decisions which directly affect Muslims in terms of their wellbeing and safety in the form of military conflicts or civil unrest, specifically as a result of foreign policy).

However, simply because they are described as an important aspect does not indicate that the whole Muslim community is at risk of radicalisation. We merely have to look at the vast majority of Muslims who are in fact not radicalised, and importantly the other communities that face similar strains, to understand that this does not necessarily lead to any type of deviant behaviour. Lofland and Stark's (1965) argument emphasising the importance of viewing these strains as 'predisposing factors' becomes especially pertinent. Thus, these strains and grievances cannot be considered as being causative. This indicates the requirement of additional factors occurring in conjunction with these if radicalisation is to take place. Though this should not, at the same time, underestimate the value of these strains and grievances increasing the susceptibility of radicalisees or those potential radicalisees.

The second chapter is in line with Goffman's notion of contingencies. In a similar way, individuals who become radicalised are also exposed to a number of contingencies (or lack of) which helps to facilitate them towards extremism or bypass this fate. Within the context of this research, these contingencies refer to strong cultural and subcultural<sup>14</sup> influences and social bonds. This account takes a more subtle analysis of this phenomenon and considers it within a broader framework which is not just about being Muslim, but also about other social, cultural and human aspects. The Muslim and religious elements are indeed important, though they are not the only characteristics shaping these individual's identity. The radicalisees may have started off as ordinary individuals who were simply looking for some sort of social and cultural identity, like many others living in the UK, and in fact globally. This is not to detract from the other elements of radicalisation, downplay them, or deny their importance. It simply highlights that there may be certain subtle underlying factors which also need to be considered within the bigger picture if the process of radicalisation is to be fully understood. Although this notion of culture, subculture and social identity by no means lead to terrorism or even the internalisation of extreme ideologies, these positions may provide important foundations for the radicalisation process when in contact with radicalisers.

The third empirical chapter represents Goffman's inpatient phase of the moral career. It outlines the 'conversion' element of radicalisation where it can be assumed that the radicalisee is in direct contact with a radicaliser. This occurs predominantly through their mutual 'social networks'<sup>15</sup> (Sageman, 2004; Rodriquez, 2005; Pedahzur and Perlinger, 2006, 2009). They are described by Goffman (1961: 126) as the 'circuit of agents' and he outlines how they occur in conjunction with 'career contingencies'. In the context of this thesis, the radicalisee can become 'connected' to the radicaliser or extreme group at any given point. This is not to assume that these social networks will specifically form in line with some extremist agenda, but may transpire through different social, economic, cultural or employment commonalities.

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<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed discussion on 'subculture', see: Becker (1963); Hebdige (1979).

<sup>15</sup> There is also the possibility of other forms of radicalisation such as self-radicalisation, which may not require the existence of social networks. There are also other ways people can become initially affiliated to extremism and extremists, such as 'extremism outreach', as outlined by Wiktorowicz (2005). This does not assume that the role of social networks does not become important thereafter. The role of social networks is of critical value within this particular account of radicalisation.

Once in contact, the radicaliser's goal is to convert the radicalisee towards internalising their extreme ideologies. As with many organisations in traditional careers, 'training' is provided to ensure the new 'employee' adopts the 'company's' norms. In the context of radicalisation, the radicaliser also aims to change the radicalisee's beliefs, attitudes and actions. This is not 'brainwashing'<sup>16</sup>, but more in a gradual and 'positive' manner – in the perception of both radicaliser and radicalisee.

The radicaliser must first mortify the radicalisee's self and social identity. In essence, the radicaliser tries to make the radicalisee feel distant from their existing lives, relationships and immediate social environments, i.e. exerting a 'push' from mainstream society and their previous social relationships, and goes towards instilling an environment of social isolation. In this regard, Goffman (1961: 23-24) explains that 'a particular kind of tension between the home world and the institutional world' is created and this is used as a 'persistent tension as a strategic leverage in the management of men'.

Radicalisers must then reconstruct the radicalisee's perception of self and social identity. This is achieved through first satisfying their needs, e.g. providing them with a dominant sense of identity and belonging which acts as a 'pull' towards both the radicaliser and extreme group. As with traditional careers, the 'employee' will consider, consciously or otherwise, the benefits available to them from the organisation they are a part of, or are considering joining.

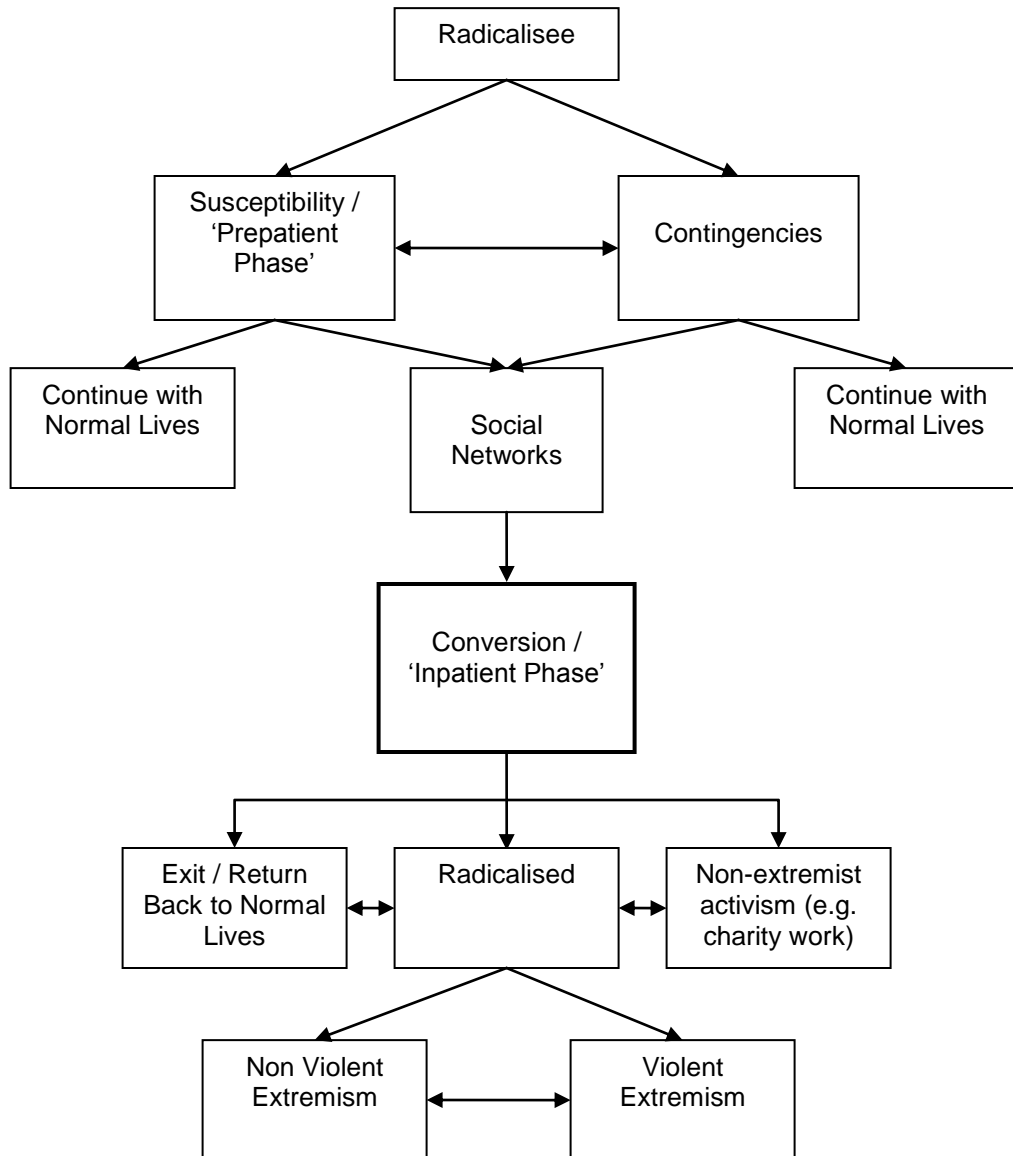
In addition to this, they must also change the radicalisee's mentality. This is first about creating 'frame-alignment' between the issues discussed in the 'Susceptibility' chapter. In essence, these felt strains and grievances act as 'qualifications' for the radicalisee's extremist career. As with most careers, without these 'qualifications' the career would not progress. This creates an 'us vs. them' paradigm, where the 'us' is the extreme group, and the 'them' are all who do not subscribe to their ideologies. The radicaliser must also create and maintain an emotional reaction to the grievances discussed at the global level, which has been termed in wider accounts as 'moral outrage' (Sageman, 2008), or 'moral shock' (Wiktorowicz, 2005).

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion on the term 'brainwashing' within this particular context, see: Sageman (2008: 50).

In such an environment of heightened awareness, it can be hypothesised that the role of the radicaliser might have become increasingly more difficult due to the general societal rejection and stigma of extremism. Further, possibly more efficacious CT strategies may go towards increasing these group's operational difficulties. Also, airing this topic may remove the oxygen from the arguments posed by these radicalisers. On the other hand, this indicates that the role of the radicaliser may have become somewhat easier. These strains and grievances are being discussed more broadly within society. Thus, rather than having to introduce and explain the context of these strains and grievances to the potential radicalisee(s), there is a strong possibility that they may be more au fait with them, and the radicalisers may be able to concentrate their efforts on increasing their impact.

The process of radicalisation is, until this point, relatively generic for most AQI extreme groups in the UK. This is due to the similarities in their strains, grievances and goals. It is also due to parallels with the process of mortification and reconstruction of the self implemented by radicalisers (Goffman, 1961). What is different is the type of extremist ideology they could potentially internalise; which is, at least initially, largely dependent on the type of ideology the radicaliser has adopted. With this in mind, there are a number of outcomes for the radicalisation process. These outcomes, and the radicalisation process discussed within this section, have been represented in the diagram below:



**Diagram 1: Radicalisation Flowchart**

At the top of the flowchart, the radicalisee moves through and is affected by susceptibility and contingency factors. From this, they can either continue with their normal lives, or through their social networks become connected with a radicaliser. If the latter occurs, it is at this point that the conversion process starts to take place. Depending on whether the arguments presented by the radicaliser are ‘frame-aligned’ within the mind of the radicalisee, there are three general outcomes. They can exit the process and go back to their former lives, they can engage in various other types of non-extreme activism, such as charity work, or, finally, they can be radicalised towards the internalisation of a set of

extremist ideologies. The arrows between these boxes depict the potential to move between the different stances.

Those that do become radicalised may adopt a non-violent or violent stance. This can include them being part of a non-violent extreme group and remaining so. Within these situations, they may undertake a number of positions within the organisation, such as, for example, becoming a radicaliser or active enabler for group activity. There can also be those who go through the radicalisation process and remain 'soft' supporters of violence, though do not engage in it themselves. The last group, and the primary focus of this thesis, are those who will personally participate in acts of violence and terrorism. There is always the possibility that the radicalisee can move between these positions as time goes on. Finally, it is critical to mention that having either a non-violent or violent stance depicts this as being an extremely simple scenario. In reality, as will be discussed in the thesis, there are many complexities with either standpoint, such as, for example, condoning the use of violence in Muslim countries, but not in the UK. The radicalisee may well adopt elements of a combination of stances, with there being many shades of grey in between.

## 1.6 Thesis Overview

The next chapter of the thesis, 'Literature Review', presents a review of the key literature for this research. In order to provide a foundation for the chapter, and also the thesis, it begins by critically analysing important definitions for this research, such as 'terrorism', 'radicalisation', and 'extremism'. Within this, the section outlines a definition for each of these terms which have been constructed on what they mean to, and how they should be depicted within, this thesis. The chapter moves on to discuss how different accounts attempt to answer the 'why', 'who' and 'what' questions of radicalisation. Many authors have represented radicalisation in some sort of model, and the next section, through focussing on the 'how' element, critically analyses some of the more prominent ones. The final parts of the chapter outline the value of using a progressive social movement theory approach which has considerations for elements of rational choice theory components.

The following chapter, 'Methodology', outlines the strategy used to conduct the research. As mentioned earlier, this thesis is informed by empirical data in the form of in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews. These are supplemented with fieldwork based observations. The chapter discusses how the data were collected and which sampling techniques and strategies were used. This includes a discussion of the ethics and risk management considerations. A conversation about how the data were analysed then follows. The approach taken by this thesis is one of the newer adaptations of grounded theory (GT). The chapter then concludes with a reflection of the research. This section outlines the insider/outsider considerations which were important with gaining access to the samples, and finally a conversation about the challenges faced with collecting the data.

The first empirical chapter, 'Susceptibility', outlines the strains and grievances felt by an individual usually prior to the point of affiliation with a radicaliser. The first set of strains is located at the personal level. Post defining events such as 9/11 and 7/7, it can be argued that Muslims within the UK are questioning their sense of identity and belonging. Consequently, they may perceive themselves to be outsiders or the 'other', due to media representation and discrimination from elements of wider society. At the local level, there are grievances held towards elements of general policing and the implementation of certain counter-terrorism tactics and strategies; which have been introduced and on occasion re-introduced<sup>17</sup> in an attempt to counter this threat. In terms of the global level, there are grievances held towards the political decisions which directly and negatively affect Muslims and Muslim states; usually based around Western foreign policy decisions. Finally, the chapter aims to understand why Muslims identify and have strong 'imagined' bonds with other Muslims across the world that they have never met and will most probably never meet.

The second empirical chapter, 'Contingencies', addresses the value of social bonds, culture, and subcultural trends amongst certain sections of Muslim youth, not only within their immediate peer groups but also more widely across their generation. It explores the subculture of extremism being viewed as 'cool'. This notion is heightened when part of a likeminded friendship group. Within these friendship circles come a number of associated social psychological pressures which are found in almost all groups, extreme

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<sup>17</sup> This is particularly in reference to the UK's Irish communities (see Hillyard, 1993, for example).

or otherwise. In addition to this, culture is also analysed in terms of differences, i.e. the cultural gap, or 'generational gap', between Muslim youth and their 'elders'<sup>18</sup>. This brings with it a number of potential consequences, such as Muslim youth subsequently neglecting their religion. This can lead to what was described in the data as a 'lack of Islamic knowledge'; a concept that becomes especially pertinent if the individual comes to a point of considering violence as a tactic to achieve some set of goals.

The third empirical chapter, 'Conversion', outlines how radicalisees come to internalise extreme ideologies when in contact with a radicaliser. This concerns the 'wrap around' social control or influence as discussed previously in connection with Goffman's (1961) framework of moral career. The radicaliser aims to bring about a mortification of the self or social death, through a number of techniques. From this, the self and social identity of the radicalisee can be reconstructed. One possible outcome of the radicalisation process is, as outlined, where individuals are prepared to commit an act of violence or terrorism. In order for this to occur they need to be affiliated with a group that espouses these types of violent ideologies. If they are part of a non-violent extreme group, there is then the possibility that they will become frustrated with their non-violent ideologies, form their own group or move to another, and gravitate towards the acceptance of violence as a legitimate tactic. In this regard, there is the possibility that violent groups may look to 'headhunt' new 'employees'. Once radicalisees become affiliated to this type of ideology they have to be promised eternal rewards for their actions, and be religiously and morally satisfied with the concept of committing an act of violence. With this violence, or the potential of it, comes a level of excitement and enhanced masculinity, further influencing them to engage in deviant acts.

The fourth and final empirical chapter of the thesis, 'Theory, Practice and Policy', brings together the arguments outlined in the previous empirical chapters into an overarching theory and considers it in the context of CT policy. The chapter asserts that there are three different careers the radicalisee can engage in. The first is the group referred to as the 'seekers', who actively search for an extreme group and/or some type of extreme ideologies. The second career relates to the 'pretenders'. These individuals can be

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<sup>18</sup> The term 'elders', refers to 'first-generation' migrants to the UK. There are various interpretations of the term 'first-generation'. Within this context it refers to those who were born outside of the UK and moved there as adults. Thus, their children, if born in the UK, will be 'second-generation'.



considered as being 'extremist by association', where they are affiliated to extremism to satisfy certain social and subcultural desires. The final career concerns the 'drifters', who are lulled and pulled into extremism. The section ends by analysing the role of violence, how the threat of violence and terrorism in the UK has evolved, and where risks in the future may lie. Through the use of empirical data<sup>19</sup>, the chapter then considers these career paths in the context of counter-terrorism policy; namely the two versions of the Prevent Strategy (HM Government, 2007, 2011). This discussion focuses on how radicalisation affects policy, and how policy affects radicalisation.

A conclusion chapter then follows.

### 1.7 Personal Reflections

When I am asked where my interest in counter-terrorism started, it is an easy question to answer. At the age of seven, my father's friend, who worked with my father for our local government office, came to our home to visit the family. At this time, there was a large recruitment drive by MI5, the United Kingdom's domestic intelligence service. Part of this recruitment initiative was targeted at finding suitable candidates in other central and local government capacities. My father's friend brought with him the blank application form for MI5, as he thought I may be interested in seeing it. I still remember the one thing that caught my attention in the form which asked something along the lines of, 'have you ever tried to overthrow a government?'

I found this fascinating. It made me widen my thought process further than before. The world was no longer simply black and white, or good and evil, as had been depicted in the many films I had watched in my youth. There was now some depth to my thinking. From that point, I have always had an interest in terrorism and counter-terrorism. This may have diminished at times, and I may have taken alternative pathways in my life and opted for different career moves. However, the attacks on New York City in 2001 changed that. I still vividly remember watching on television the planes hitting the towers. Much has changed in the way I see the world since that day, though what has remained

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<sup>19</sup> The results from this analysis were also published as an academic journal article, see: Lakhani (2012).

the same is the way I feel when I hear about terrorist attacks killing innocent civilians, and the fascination I have with understanding the perpetrators motives. It is these factors that have led to the completion of this thesis.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature concerning radicalisation in the West is ever increasing in size and depth. However, many of these works are beset by limitations due to them not being empirically informed or having strong methodological underpinnings (Schmid, 2013; Borum, 2011a; Silke, 2008). This has distinct continuities with the literature on terrorism studies analysed almost 25 years ago by Schmid and Jongman (1988). Consequently, much of the research on radicalisation is dominated by 'conventional wisdom' (Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2010).

Innes et al. (2007) contend that there are two main approaches to understanding radicalisation: 'situational' and 'dispositional' accounts. Dispositional accounts, although prominent a number of years ago, are mostly now discounted<sup>20</sup>. Further, it is generally accepted that rather than being an event, radicalisation is a process (Taylor and Horgan, 2006; Borum, 2011). It can therefore be argued that 'no one is born a terrorist', rather, an individual grows and develops in that direction (Akerboom, 2012). Wiktorowicz (2005: 85) confirms, during his ethnographic study of al-Muhajiroun (AM<sup>21</sup>) in the UK, that people 'rarely awake with a sudden taste for radicalism or an epiphany that drives them to support violence'. Situational accounts are therefore considered to offer much more substance and validity (Innes et al., 2007). This will be the focus of the chapter.

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<sup>20</sup> Much of this is due to there being a distinct lack of evidence linking terrorism with psychological dispositions or psychopathologies (Horgan, 2008; Taylor and Horgan, 2006; Crenshaw, 1992; Kruglanski and Fishman, 2006; Silke 1998; Gupta, 2005; ECEGVR, 2008; Atran, 2003). There is also a lack of proof suggesting the existence of a 'terrorist personality' (Horgan, 2005, 2008; Sageman, 2004, 2008; Laqueur, 1997; Al-Lami, 2009; Hudson, 1999; Crenshaw, 1992, 2000; ECEGVR, 2008). One of the most commonly agreed factors within radicalisation studies is that the individual appears to be 'normal' when compared to the rest of general society (Crenshaw, 2012; Al-Lami, 2009; Brighton, 2007; Innes et al., 2007; Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2010; Victoroff, 2005; COT Institute, 2008; Helmus, 2009). This is also confirmed in wider studies of deviance (Erikson, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> Al-Muhajiroun disbanded in 2004 under the 'spiritual leadership' of Omar Bakri Muhammad. His second in command, Anjem Choudary, has since led a number of similar groups widely considered to hold the same core membership of AM, such as the now proscribed Islam4UK and Muslims Against Crusades. Choudary was also thought to be heavily linked with now banned group al Ghurabaa. For the purposes of this thesis, the name al-Muhajiroun, or its acronym AM, will be used. For a more detailed discussion, see: Raymond (2010); Home Office (2012: 6). For further information, see Footnote 102.

Assessing the wide-ranging literature on radicalisation is a complex task which highlights the often contradicting approaches and theories taken by those researching the issue. In order to make sense of this, it is best to loosely address the most commonly asked questions. Those working in the field generally attempt to answer: why people become radicalised; what enables this process; and how do people become radicalised?

This chapter contains four sections. The first outlines a number of key definitions, such as 'terrorism', 'radicalisation', 'extremism' and 'extremist'. These not only provide the foundations for the rest of this chapter, but for the thesis as a whole. The second section moves on to assess the literature on radicalisation and begins by looking at the reasons provided behind 'why' people become radicalised. Much of this is through an analysis of the 'root cause approach', which aims to determine how certain strains and grievances affect peoples' actions and behaviour. This approach has also been present in wider disciplines, such as sociology and criminology, for many years. The third section understands 'who' and 'what' enable radicalisation. In order to become radicalised, people need to have internalised extreme ideologies. This is predominantly achieved through the process of (re-)socialisation. However, it can be argued that the concepts discussed in the previous two sections hold little value on their own. The fourth section, therefore, puts them into context through understanding 'how' people become radicalised. This will be done through a critical analysis of the various 'process models' developed by academics, researchers, and policymakers. This includes wider theories pertaining to rational choice theory (RCT) and social movement theory (SMT). The section and chapter will conclude by outlining the benefits of using a progressive SMT approach within radicalisation studies. These theories are of course not standalone entities. They are encapsulated within the wider overarching moral career framework used within this thesis (Goffman, 1961). As will be discussed within this chapter, and throughout the thesis, a critical benefit of using the moral career framework is its flexibility to be able to consider the findings presented within the empirical data collected for this study, whilst still being able to incorporate and utilise wider theories, such as elements of RCT and SMT. This enables this thesis to be able provide a higher level of abstraction for understanding radicalisation than many of the current accounts.

## 2.1 Definitions

It is important to outline a number of definitions for the most commonly used terms in this thesis and to clarify those which are most open to debate and differing interpretations. It may be better to do this in terms relevant to this particular study, rather than to engage in a deep semantic discussion, as this has already been done by various authors in the field (see Pisiu, 2012, for example). Engaging in a brief historical analysis of the terms will be provided when it is deemed necessary.

### 2.1.1 Terrorism

The definition of 'terrorism', and who is deemed to be a 'terrorist', continues to be subject to much debate and controversy. Many have put forward their own understandings, only to be refuted by others. Thus, 'there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. It remains the subject of continuing debate in international bodies' (Lord Carlile of Berriew Q.C., 2007: 6). In fact, research has found the existence of over 100 definitions of the term 'terrorism' (see Schmid and Jongman, 1988; Laqueur, 1999).

Many argue that it is virtually impossible to reach a mutually accepted definition of the term (Kruglanski and Fishman, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Weinberg et al., 2004; Schmid, 1984), especially across disciplines and in different situations (i.e. within policy use or in an academic context). This has led Laqueur (1999: 6) to conclude that the 'only general characteristic generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence'. In a similar way, Richardson (2000) explains that the most commonly accepted characteristic of the term is the negative connotation it incorporates.

Referring to Ludwig Wittgenstein's aphorism, Horgan (2005) explains that one way of addressing the issue is to 'let the use of a word teach you its meaning'. In essence, the act or threat of terrorism intends to cause fear and terror to its target audience; as its Latin translation suggests (Lewis and Short, 1879). Though what distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence such as hooliganism, murder and war? Horgan (2005) states that much of this relates to the political dimension of a 'terrorist's behaviour'. This

is of course open to debate and in fact raises further questions regarding the definition of 'political' as a standalone concept, and specifically in relation to the term 'terrorism'.

A contentious topic within this debate is about who can be categorised as a terrorist. The most commonly held consensus, especially in the West, is that terrorism appears to be primarily attached to individuals or clandestine groups. These groups may have affiliations with larger organisations globally, but generally terrorism is seen as bottom-up. However, a number of commentators, such as Chomsky and Herman (1979), claim this restricts the scope of the term. It should be, and in many cases is, argued that terrorism should not only be seen as a bottom-up process, but also one that can be top-down and conducted by certain states (Horgan, 2005), including those in the West (see Chomsky, 2002, 2003, for example). This is by no means a new concern and has been raised by many prominent authors throughout history such as George Orwell (1945), for example.

There needs to be a real appreciation of the ambiguity and complexity involved with the term 'terrorism', and a transparent examination of what constitutes 'terrorism' on the one hand and 'defence' on the other. This ambiguity and complexity stems back to the well-known saying 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'. Whittaker (2007) argues that terrorism has different meanings for all of those involved, from those in authority, those countering it, those victim to it, to those witnessing it.

However, for the purposes of this thesis there needs to be some sort of definition used. Thus, the following definition, which is by no means conclusive, constructed by the author, best describes what the term means in relation to this research<sup>22</sup>:

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<sup>22</sup> It must be noted that this definition of 'terrorism' does not reflect the author's overarching perception of the term, but provides a meaning which is in line with this particular research. It is felt, for example, that acts conducted by state actors and governments should also be considered in wider definitions of 'terrorism'.

*'Terrorism* is the act or threat of violence employed to instil fear into a state, society, or sections of the population to bring about some sort of change. These targets include people, iconic figures, landmarks and parts of the critical national infrastructure, in order to cause death, destruction and destabilisation. The perceived targets are not necessarily the immediate ones as terrorism can also be used as a communication tool in order to relay messages. The motivation behind using terrorism as a strategy is to achieve some sort of end goal which may relate to a combination of political, religious and social dimensions.'

### 2.1.2 Radicalisation

The term 'radicalisation' also has no universally accepted definition (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009; Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins, 2009). It can even be seen as more undefined and unexplored than the term 'terrorism' (Githens-Mazer et al., 2010). Due to the distinct lack of definition, 'some critics have voiced their concern that the idea of radicalisation could be used to criminalise protest, discredit any form of "radical thinking" and label political dissent as potentially dangerous' (Neumann, 2008: 3).

In this regard, Veldhuis and Staun (2009) point out that, more broadly, the definitions of radicalisation generally focus around two different approaches. One concerns the violent pursuit of certain goals, and the other is about attaining far-reaching changes in society which does not necessarily have to include any type of violence. Thus, various authors make the distinction between the terms 'radicalisation' and 'radical', and argue that the latter does not necessarily invoke any negative connotations.

In recent times the term 'radicalisation' has acquired this negative implication, especially given 'how it is employed within the current context' (Innes et al., 2007: 38). In terms of general societal understandings, radicalisation is considered to be a relatively new phenomenon and appears to be distinctly attached to Muslims and Islam. In fact, the term 'violent radicalisation' is also, as argued by Githens-Mazer et al. (2010), regularly used in the same manner, with it only coming into existence from European Union policy circles directly after the Madrid bombings in 2004 (ECEGVR, 2008). Thus, Woodhead (2012) explains how some people are positive towards this term as it defines a specific

and new problem. However, there are those who feel it to be unhelpful as it obscures continuity with other phenomenon (see Borum, 2011), and contributes towards lessons from other examples of terrorism and religious movements being missed.

The close association between violence, terrorism and radicalisation is frequently used, such as in the definitions outlined by the UK government (HM Government, 2011) and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET, 2009). Generally they describe radicalisation as 'a move from a peaceful perspective to one which encourages and thrives on the use of violence' (Githens-Mazer 2010: 10). Silber and Bhatt (2007:16), for example, assert 'terrorism' to be the 'ultimate consequence of the radicalization process'. Though, they also importantly argue an individual who has been radicalised does not necessarily have to become involved in an act of terrorism. In fact, Githens-Mazer et al. (2010: 17) argue that "radicalisation" has no inherent relationship to terrorism', which is agreed upon by others in the field (see Mandel, 2009 for example).

In terms of the working definitions of radicalisation, one particular approach is to define it as some form of change with an individual's behaviour, ideology and action (The COT Institute, 2008; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). Other authors, like Kaloianov (2007), are more specific in regards to its attachment to social identity. Thus, defining 'radicalisation' within the context of the term 'conversion', as discussed by authors such as Lofland and Stark (1965), may be more beneficial. Lofland and Stark argue, 'All men and human groups have ultimate values, a world view, or a perspective furnishing them a more or less orderly and comprehensible picture of the world...When a person gives up one such perspective or ordered view of the world for another we refer to this process as *conversion*' (ibid: 862, italics in original). Also, in line with Goffman's (1961) theory of moral career, the term should incorporate a change in people's perception of self and social identity.

Taking all of the arguments on defining and conceptualising 'radicalisation' into account, it is important to outline a working definition which is consistent with this particular thesis. There also needs to be the consideration that radicalisation differs from radicalism and other terms afforded to more positive methods of conversion, both within a political sphere and otherwise. In this regard, attaching radicalisation to just a process that occurs with Muslims or 'Islamic extremism' is also not correct, as it is, as mentioned in



the Introductory chapter, a process which can convey a number of different, both positive and negative, situations in society. However, as the term within this account does refer to a process by which people come to adopt some extreme (violent or otherwise) viewpoint, there should be some reference to the negative connotations it has within this particular context. On this basis, the term within this account refers to:

*'Radicalisation* is a process by which individuals change their values, beliefs, attitudes and actions; and give up one worldview for another. This involves them going through some sort of change in their perceptions of self and social identity. Some people within this process will be converted to internalise an extremist viewpoint, whilst others may come to internalise a violent extremist viewpoint.'

In order to understand how people are guided through this process there are two key elements that need to be defined. For the purposes of this particular research the term 'radicaliser' will refer to those individuals and groups who seek to persuade others to adopt their beliefs. The persuasions exerted by groups and individuals may of course differ and distinctions between these will be made when and where necessary. The term 'radicalisee' will be used to describe those who are exposed to the persuasion and influence exerted by radicalisers and may or may not come to adopt the beliefs.

### 2.1.3 Extremism

The definition of radicalisation outlined above has little value on its own without defining key terms within it, mainly 'extremist', and also 'extremism'. Defining 'extremism' is, as with 'terrorism', a complex procedure and one which is open to debate. In this regard, Coleman and Bartoli ([n.d.]: 2) assert that its complexity is hard to see, and that in its most simplest understanding, 'it can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary'. Psoiu (2012: 14) states it is common for authors to discuss the 'etymological meaning of "extreme" as opposed to "moderate"'. Though this is not without complexity as it implies a common agreement of the term 'moderate', and can be dependent on who is defining it. There are those, such as Borum (2011), who argue that it is not sufficient to define a security threat from the meaning of extreme which is said to be a deviation from the norm. Though

Pisoiu (2012) counters this by claiming that this 'is beside the point, since the intrinsic meaning of the term "extremism" implies a relation to something, while the variation of the political, cultural and social context needs to be assumed as such' (ibid: 15).

Many definitions of extremism focus upon a specific type of movement with an appreciation of the differing factors applicable in each context (Pisoiu, 2012). It would of course be best to be able to provide a generic definition of extremism which is applicable to all groups within a particular state, and even globally. However, whilst radicalisation can be defined as a cognitive and behavioural change in state, extremism is considered to be something which is farthest away from the middle or moderate. In this regard, the 'moderate' in the context of British society may well be considered in line with the UK Government's analysis of extremism (HM Government, 2011). Though, what is deemed to be considered as 'extreme' in one state may not be in another. In fact, the term 'extreme' may even vary across different governments in the same state. One example is of how the current Coalition Government in the UK has controversially defined the term 'extremist' (see HM Government, 2011), as compared to the previous Labour government. This has, as will be discussed later on in the thesis, changed the way CT policy is delivered within the UK.

It may then be better to outline a definition of extremism which is in line with the definition of terrorism. This is the approach taken by Innes et al. (2007: 38) who explain, 'Through processes of radicalisation some people will come to assume an extreme viewpoint, wherein they are willing to countenance or enact violence in pursuit of their goals'. Most importantly they explain that 'whilst the concept of radicalisation captures the process of conversion, extremism is the position that some people come to assume through exposure to this process' (ibid). With this in mind, the term can be defined, for the purposes of this thesis, as:

*'Extremism is the position some people and groups come to assume after going through the process of radicalisation. Those who support violence and terrorism tacitly, do not condemn other's use of it, or have links to local or global violent or terrorist organisations are defined as "extremists". Whilst those who explicitly support, incite and/or engage in the use of violence and terrorism as a tactic to achieve some sort of end goal are defined as "violent extremists".'*

## 2.2 Assessing the 'Why': A Root Cause Approach

A relatively large proportion of radicalisation research analyses whether the existence of 'root causes'<sup>23</sup> can illuminate 'why' people become radicalised. This approach has gained much traction over the last decade (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009; COT Institute, 2008). The theory stresses that those who are susceptible to radicalisation, are in the process, or have become radicalised, believe they are socially, politically or economically deprived of something they are entitled to, as compared to those around them (Muller, 1985; Walker and Smith, 2002; Gurr, 1970). This disadvantage (perceived or otherwise) is turned into frustration – a development of the 'frustration-aggression' theory – and this subsequent anger can potentially be channelled into terrorism (Sageman, 2008).

Crenshaw (1981) argues the need for a distinction, although one with blurred boundaries (Noricks, 2009), between root causes considered as 'permissive' and 'precipitant'; where 'precipitant' factors are also referred to as 'triggers' (see, COT Institute, 2008; ECEGVR, 2008; Noricks, 2009, for example). The former 'set the stage, whereas the latter are the miscellaneous sparks that trigger such developments as...the use of terrorism' (Davis and Cragin, 2009: xviii). There should, however, be caution with using the term 'trigger' as it implies some sort of causation and can be misinterpreted to refer to a 'mechanical' event which is deterministic. This would assume that everyone affected by these strains and grievances become radicalised, when in reality only a very small percentage actually do.

The permissive root causes cited within various accounts of radicalisation are numerous and wide-ranging and concern the socio-economic, social, and historical spheres, whilst precipitant factors generally allude to macro-level political grievances<sup>24</sup>. One commonly cited permissive factor suggests that socio-economic disadvantage and a lack of social mobility have prominent effects on radicalisation<sup>25</sup> (see, Smith, 2008; HM Government,

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<sup>23</sup> The manner in which 'root causes' of radicalisation are grouped can vary greatly. See: COT Institute (2008); Francis (2012); Veldhuis and Staun (2009); McCauley and Moskalenko (2008).

<sup>24</sup> For detailed examples of 'permissive' and 'precipitant' root causes, see: COT Institute (2008); Noricks (2009); Kirby (2007).

<sup>25</sup> In the UK, much of this is fuelled by studies showing certain Muslim communities to have the highest rates of unemployment, fewest educational qualifications and the poorest health (see Modood et al., 1997; Carvel, 2004; Ansari, 2002; Peach, 2005; Abbas, 2009; Anwar, 2005; Graham, 2004, for example).

2011; Gurr, 1970, for example). On the other hand, alternative research has shown there to be no apparent link between socio-economic deprivations and radicalisation (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003; Roy, 2008; Laqueur, 2004; Lieven, 2008). Therefore, those such as Ballin (2007) and Nasser-Eddine et al. (2011) argue that it should not be considered as a 'causal relationship'. Thus, Sageman's (2008) argument that social, economic and structural strains shift over long periods of time, whereas terrorism occurs in a much shorter time span is useful to consider.

Another permissive factor regularly cited concerns the lack of integration (perceived and actual) of immigrant settlers into their host country (Rotella, 2002; Kaloianov, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2007). However, once again, not all subscribe to this theory (Pisoiu, 2007; Ali, 2008; Schindler, 2007). In fact, some refer to the various surveys that show the vast majority of Muslims to personally feel well integrated into the UK and proud to be British (Wind-Cowie and Gregory, 2011).

This then may not be about integration per se, but more about identity. Many argue that Muslim youth in the West are frequently torn between the often conflicting identities of their parents' homelands and the secular West (Neumann, 2008; Franz, 2007; STREET, [n.d.]). As a result, they cannot attach an identity to either one, or may rebel against both (Choudhury, 2007; Malik, 2004; Mirza et al., 2007; Roy, 2004). They may also have to balance the identity of religion, which is often a complex task (Ismail, 2004). Identities are not singular or fixed, and can be subject to ever increasing change (Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002; Castells, 1997). However, some even argue that the identities young Muslims are trying to balance are starting to become obsolete (Kepel, 2004).

Further, after events like the Bradford and Oldham riots in 2001, some studies have suggested that Muslim men are seen as the new 'folk devils' and 'enemy within' (Bowling et al., 2008; Hudson, 2007). Giddens (1991) argues, under these strains and in an era of flux, people are more likely to retreat to traditional ideas and identities as a way of coping with this change. This challenges their own perceptions of identity, where belonging in their own communities deepens as hostility (perceived or otherwise) from wider society increases (Roy, 2004; Choudhury, 2007).

Moving on to precipitant factors, although there are many outlined in various accounts of radicalisation, one is most commonly mentioned in a Western context. This concerns the social, economic, and political wellbeing of Muslims globally; normally in Muslim states. Much of this is to do with the deaths of Muslim civilians through the direct and indirect consequences of Western foreign policy. This is not exclusive to conflicts involving the West, as it also relates to issues concerning states and regions such as Kashmir, Bosnia and Palestine (Bloom, 2007; STREET, [n.d.]).

There are those that discount the importance of foreign policy within radicalisation. One of their arguments relates to the existence of AQI extremism in the UK before the attacks on 9/11 (and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan), albeit in considerably smaller size. However, it may be plausible to argue that considering foreign policy in a direct context, i.e. in terms of the UK's military operations, is far too simplistic. There must be some reflection of Britain's foreign policy decisions (or lack of) pre-9/11, like the genocide of Bosnian Muslim civilians in the 1990s (Brighton, 2007). This issue was pre-warned by prominent figures like former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who predicted the rise of 'Islamic extremism' if the West did not intervene in the crisis (Thatcher, 1992). This is not a standalone issue, with some arguing that conflicts in Algeria, Chechnya, Albania, and Kosovo, for example, led to the awakening of Muslims who felt that this was not in fact a 'coincidence', but due to the West perceiving Islam to be a threat after the demise of Soviet communism (Taseer, 2005).

It is only when foreign policy is discussed in relation to an imagined community that it has any relevance to Muslims in the West who normally have no direct affiliation, except religion, to the people in question. This hurt and humiliation is not 'personally' felt by radicalisees in the West but in the context of the 'Ummah'; a concept which relates to the global kinship of Muslims (Baker, 2011; AIVD, 2006). As a consequence, witnessing the humiliation of others who are perceived to be closely affiliated to them can 'evoke strong anger' (Sageman, 2008: 73). However, the concept of the Ummah is adopted by a vast number of Muslims which indicates the existence of additional factors for radicalisation to occur.

Taking a broad perspective on the root cause analysis, similarities can be drawn between this approach and wider studies in sociology and criminology. Although a large

number of accounts of radicalisation and terrorism may not mention the term, they are essentially 'anomie' based accounts where parallels can be seen with studies in crime and deviance (Downes and Rock, 2003). Erikson (1966), for example, found that exerting some type of macro-level pressure or stress onto a community meant that the tension filtered down to the individual potentially causes them to engage in deviancy. This concept has been labelled as 'strain theory', with much of its inception being attributed to sociologist Robert Merton (1938)<sup>26</sup>.

There is also some relation between 'root cause' based accounts of radicalisation and concepts such as 'social disorganization theory'. Emanating from research conducted by Shaw and McKay (1942) of the Chicago School, the theory is generally applied to understanding deviancy and crime. Faris (1955) evolved this theory in an attempt to make connections between social pathologies and social issues. Thus, under conditions of social disorganisation there is the possibility of an increase of social issues such as crime, rates of alcoholism, mental health, and suicide, for example.

However, there is no evidence to suggest that these large-scale structural forces are causal factors within radicalisation, especially when considering that there are many who experience similar, if not the same, strains and are not radicalised (Horgan, 2005, 2008; Innes et al., 2007). Therefore, although this approach has been embraced by certain academics like Gurr<sup>27</sup> (1970) and organisations like the United Nations (Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2004), assuming that root causes alone directly leads to terrorism is vehemently discounted by many authors (see Horgan, 2005, 2008; Noricks, 2009, for example).

The current trend is to argue that they are not causative factors per se, but facilitate an enabling environment where terrorism is more likely to occur (Noricks, 2009; ECEGVR, 2008). They should thus be considered as 'background contributing factors' (Korteweg et al., 2010: 29). Innes et al. (2007: 49) add that these types of factors 'are suggestive of why some individuals are "radicalisable", but not how they are radicalised.' Thus, a better method is to 'identify predisposing risk factors for involvement in terrorism...as a prelude

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<sup>26</sup> However, it must be noted that there is much ambiguity between Merton's strain theory and his adaptation of anomie, and it has been subject to much praise and criticism alike (Featherstone and Deflam, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> It must be noted that Gurr and other advocates have since abandoned or developed their approach. However, some still remain dedicated to this stance (Brush, 1996).

to some form of risk assessment for prediction of involvement.’ (Horgan, 2008: 84). With this there needs to be the existence of additional factors for radicalisation to occur (Innes et al., 2007).

### 2.3 Who and What Enables the Process of Radicalisation

As mentioned in the Introductory chapter, there is a fierce and public debate concerning whether AQ terrorism is established as a top-down or bottom up process<sup>28</sup>. Within his book, Silber (2011) analysed important secondary data sources of sixteen terrorism plots against the West. As well as determining that all plots started off in the West, i.e. where initial radicalisation occurred, he argued there to be three different types of situation. The first is labelled as ‘command and control’ where recruitment, objectives, resources and knowledge are all filtered top-down from AQ. Second are the ‘suggested plots’, where radicalisees travel to certain Muslim areas of the world, such as the Af-Pak region, for example, in order to provide supplies to or join and fight with the Mujahedeen. Once they arrive, they may potentially be informed that there are enough supplies or fighters and the best way to help the ‘cause’ is to return back to their home country in the West and carry out some sort of attack. He asserts that the details of this plot are, more often than not, left to the perpetrator. Third, relates to those plots that are AQI which do not assume that there is any type of contact, let alone direction, from AQ hierarchy. These individuals and groups will conduct acts of terrorism, such as the atrocities on Madrid’s underground system in 2004, as they simply agree with the core ideals of AQ and unofficially attach its name to the attack. Silber importantly points out that most of the plots he analysed were ‘bottom-up’ initiatives. What is common across Silber’s analysis is the interaction that people have with one another.

In many cases of radicalisation it can be argued that there is the need for contact with an extreme ideologue and/or group. There are many who assert that this mostly occurs<sup>29</sup> through the existence of social networks. This can be seen in wide-ranging contexts like, for example, cults (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980), total institutions (Goffman, 1961), and terrorism (Sageman, 2004; Rodriguez, 2005; Pedahzur and Perlinger, 2006, 2009).

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<sup>28</sup> For further information, see Footnote 2.

<sup>29</sup> For further information, see Footnote 15.

The need for contact with an extreme ideologue or group is essential for the radicalisee to internalise extreme ideologies. Even those considered to be lone wolves have some sort of interaction – even if this is one directional and digitally, with a radicaliser. Gupta (2005: 7) argues that certain theory, especially ‘root cause’, ‘shed important lights on the motivations of rebellious behavior’, however ‘none of them make any effort at modelling the mind; they do not make any fundamental assumption about what motivates a human being.’ He argues the need for ‘political entrepreneurs’ to be able to ‘frame’ the problem (ibid: 14-15). Although Gupta’s reference to ‘political’ has some relevance, the situation is more complex than this. The important point to consider from Gupta’s analysis is the human element needed to drive radicalisation; something reflected in wider studies (see Choudhury, 2007, for example). For example, the European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation (ECEGVR) argue that ‘Concrete personal experiences, kinship and friendship, group dynamics...are needed to trigger the actual process.’ (ECEGVR, 2008: 9)

The study of ‘social influence’ endeavours to identify how this occurs, and aims to better understand how factors such as societal norms, group influence, and social behaviours become integral in facilitating this shift in behaviour. Within both disciplines of sociology and social psychology there exists a great deal of literature that addresses this. Although these theories do not feature regularly in accounts of radicalisation, certain studies have identified the importance of some of these concepts<sup>30</sup>. This has led some academics like Innes et al. (2007: 40) to argue that radicalisation seems ‘to involve several phases that are based upon fairly well understood techniques of influence’.

Social influence impacts radicalisation in two ways. First is from the influence exerted at the individual level, i.e. on a one-to-one basis. This occurs, more often than not, between the radicalisee and the radicaliser. In literature, much of the conversation focuses on the personality of the radicaliser. This is imperative when using techniques of ‘persuasion’ to influence others to participate in acts they normally would not, or with beginning to start accepting ideologies they previously potentially had little or no interest in (Cialdini, 2001; Cialdini and Goldstein 2004).

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<sup>30</sup> For examples of this, see: Horgan (2005); Atran (2010); Helmus (2009); Sageman (2008); McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008); Wiktorowicz (2005).



There are many personality traits outlined by different authors in reference to coercing a change of attitude in the radicalisee, with one of the most cited being 'charisma'<sup>31</sup>. There are various theories, often conflicting, that define what constitutes a charismatic person. These range from believing it to be a God given trait (Weber, 1947), to those who feel it to be more of a 'theatrical' stance (Howell and Frost, 1989). What is clear, though, is that charisma can lead, amongst other traits, to creating perceptions of authority (Robbins, 2003; Hovland et al., 1953; Kelman, 1958). Authority is seen as critical by some authors when understanding why people internalise extreme ideologies (Wiktorowicz, 2004, 2005).

The second approach relates to the pressure exerted within group situations. Here, the importance of concepts like peer pressure, conformity, cohesiveness, and unanimity are pushed to the fore (Horgan, 2005; Bartlett et al., 2010). For example, if the majority of an extreme group (especially influential members within it), or a group of friends for that matter, have extremist agendas then the rest of the group, or outlying individuals, could feel under pressure to conform to this stance.

Crenshaw (2011) argues that cohesion and uniformity are 'likely to be intensified under the circumstances of underground life'. In terms of radicalisation, 'underground life' does not have to necessarily relate to committing or supporting a terrorist act per se, or even affiliation to an extreme group. It may simply concern the acknowledgement of what is considered to be against social norms and constituted as being deviant behaviour. It can also be argued that being affiliated to a group whose opinions start to converge means that the shift in opinion can also become more extreme (Sunstein, 2002; McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2008).

The various accounts of radicalisation highlight further influences exerted by the extreme group. One of these relates to the pressure for individual group members to loosen, or in many cases completely cut off, their existing relationships with family and friends who do not subscribe to the extremist group's ideologies (Husain, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2005;

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<sup>31</sup> The importance of charisma has been shown in a wide range of both recent and more historical examples pertaining to radicalisation and terrorism (Ibrahim, 1980; Rotella, 2002; Bloom, 2007; Precht, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2007; AIVD, 2006; Crenshaw, 2000, 2011; HM Government, 2009, 2011; COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management, 2008), and in wider sociological, criminological, anthropological, and social psychological studies (Weber, 1947; Howell and Frost, 1989; Robbins, 2003; Cialdini, 2001; Lindholm, 1990; Stewart et al., 2007).

Hudson, 1999). This ensures there is a reduced chance of affiliates being influenced by people outside of the group. During their study of cults, Lofland and Stark (1965) described this as a 'countervailing force'. They argue that if recruits did maintain any previous social ties then they were 'pulled about by competing emotional loyalties and discordant versions of reality', with these 'persons [being] subject to intense emotional strain' (ibid: 873). This ensures that the extreme group is the individual's only source of information (Post, 1987; Crenshaw, 1987; Singer and Lalich, 1995).

There is also importance given to the group minimising dissent (Crenshaw, 1987, 2011; Coleman, 1990). Crisp and Turner (2007: 139), for example, attribute individual's lack of rebellion in groups as a bid to avoid punishment, exclusion and 'social sanctions' from others. Wider research corroborates this, such as the studies relating to certain Catholic communities of Northern Ireland during the IRA and INLA conflict (Sluka, 1989; Darby and Morris, 1974). This works to ensure group members discard personal opinions and viewpoints, and in turn strengthens 'deindividuation' (Zimbardo, 2007; Horgan, 2005).

Much of this may be attributed to the individual experiencing a sense of belonging in the group and doing all they can to maintain this (Crenshaw 1987; della Porta, 1995; Post et al., 2003). This may also relate to a desire to be liked by others (Aronson et al., 2005). In addition, being part of a group also provides the individual with a strong sense of identity (Taseer, 2005; Shaw, 1986; Pickering et al., 2007). As Wiktorowicz (2004: 14) explains within his research on AM, 'most of those who eventually became members experienced a severe identity crisis prior to their initial stages of participation'. The extreme group, thus, 'offers a new sense of self' (ibid: 16).

However, certain accounts of radicalisation assert that when social bonds are strong, this social identification is with the group rather than in terms of 'self' (see COT Institute, 2008). Another argument is that when people are in a deeper form of radicalisation and identify strongly with the group, perceptions of self are in line with the group rather than at the individual level. This has similarities with wider work such as self-categorisation theory (Smith, 1993). The simple nature of many extremist groups and their ideologies attracts people who feel overwhelmed by having to define themselves in a 'complex world'; thus they may choose to define themselves through that group (Borum, 2011b; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982). As cohesion in the group starts to strengthen, so

does the collective group identity (Sprinzak, 1990; Post, 1987; Crenshaw, 2011). This in turn increases the level of conformity of other members (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Forsyth, 1999).

There needs to be one final consideration regarding groups. Although many studies of radicalisation agree on the importance of group pressure and influence, there is a difference in opinion with how these groups are actually formed. For example, authors like Sageman (2004) stress the importance of long-term friends becoming radicalised together, whilst others argue that this is not necessarily the case in all accounts. A report by the ECEGVR (2008: 12) explained, 'The search for community and group solidarity plays an important role in attracting them to these groups.' This implies that due to a current lack of community and group solidarity in their lives, they search elsewhere.

These arguments may well overlap, though the subtle difference is whether groups of friends radicalise together, or those affected by strains and grievances go searching for an answer to their issues. Therefore, some believe that individuals almost become self-primed, sometimes in the context of justifying terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005), which leads to anger and frustration. They then become deeply radicalised through the influence of radicalisers. Others stress the importance of social bonds and believe that radicalisation occurs after the individual or group of friends are affiliated with an extreme radicaliser and/or group.

### 2.3.1 Re-Socialising Identity

This section has thus far discussed the importance of 'who' enables the process of radicalisation, and there must now be a consideration of the 'what'. At the heart of radicalisation an individual changes their attitude, beliefs, opinions and actions. This may be accomplished through a change in perception of self and social identity (Goffman, 1961). For someone to have become 'radicalised' they will have internalised certain ideologies that are deemed to be extreme. It is therefore imperative for this ideology to resonate with its target audience (Robson, 2004). There are many accounts attempting to outline how ideology is used to change the opinions and world-view of the radicalisee. The explanation provided by the ECEGVR (2008: 14) succinctly captures its role:

‘Central to the development of any movement or group is the construction of an ideological framework which provides a logically coherent belief system... Ideologies link the beliefs, narratives and cognitive and evaluative perceptions of one’s social condition – particularly prospects for the future – to a programme of collective action for the maintenance, alteration or transformation of society, whilst also providing the justification for a particular action. Ideologies in particular are a means of understanding the world and events, whilst mediating them to align with the aims and methods of a particular group.’

As stated at the fore of this chapter, radicalisation is a process and not an event; and the same applies to the internalisation of ideology. Wiktorowicz (2004, 2005) explains that people do not typically have a sudden compelling desire to join extreme groups. At the heart of this is the process of persuasion which can be ‘characterized by debate and discussion, an exchange of ideas in which movement activists try to convince seekers that movement ideology represents the “truth” and provides logical solutions to pressing concerns.’ (Wiktorowicz, 2005: 24-25)

In order for individuals to internalise an extreme ideology, many argue that the process of socialisation needs to take place (Crenshaw, 2000). According to White (1977), there are two separate categories to consider within socialisation, i.e. ‘primary’ (childhood) and ‘secondary’ (adulthood). The principal tenet of secondary socialisation assumes the individual learns experiences through interactions with others and will result in new ‘assessments and definitions of self’ (ibid: 81). It can be argued, however, that the focus should lie with the concept of ‘resocialisation’ as it occurs when an individual is subject to radical change where there is a substitution of ‘one set of value orientations for another’ (McHugh, 1966: 356). In addition, socialisation simply builds upon the existing whilst resocialisation requires the old values to first be removed, i.e. desocialisation (McHugh, 1966). Desocialisation effectively relies upon the discontinuation of prior relationships, as discussed previously, which have the potential to continue influencing, or re-influencing the individual back to their former values. There are distinct similarities between this and Goffman’s (1961) theory of moral career where perceptions of self and social identity are ‘mortified’ and reconstructed.

It is also important to consider theories pertaining to 'organisational socialisation'. This is where the individual learns the culture and norms of a particular organisation and the maintaining of a specific role within it. Here, they acquire the social knowledge and skills to assume this position (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Shibutani, 1962). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) explain that this process occurs with the individual mobilising upward (promotion), downward (demotion) or maintaining lateral movement (i.e. the changing of roles). They have influence within the organisation when furthest from these boundaries and the organisation having the most influence upon the individual when closest to these boundaries. This can result in the individual opening themselves up to accept different methods of practice. In the case of extremist organisations, they may accept alternative viewpoints, ideologies and norms.

Organisational socialisation may generally be associated with the commonly understood definition of employment. However, it can also have strong resonance in the analysis of extreme or deviant groups. For example, some accounts of radicalisation and terrorism argue that individuals leave their jobs on certain occasions in order to concentrate their full efforts on the advancement of the group and its ideologies, or at least a considerable amount of time (Husain, 2007). Sageman (2008, 2008a) similarly argues that Britain's state benefits system allows these individuals to dedicate all of their time to the 'cause' without having to work in other employment. As well as being affected by root causes and ideology, those within extreme groups may also be driven by a sense of advancing their extremist 'career' (Pisoiu, 2012), which is substituted for the traditional application of the term.

#### 2.4 How Do People Become Radicalised?: A Critical Assessment of Literature

This chapter has so far outlined some of the most commonly cited macro-level theories which attempt to explain 'why' some people become radicalised. There has also been a discussion about 'who' and 'what' enables this process. Sageman (2008: 23) argues that there are 'severe limitations' with either of the approaches as standalone entities. One method of overcoming these limitations is to bring together all of these theories so there is a specific set of circumstances within which the individuals are located. The validity of these factors increases when they are part of frameworks which attempt to elucidate the

process by combining two or more of them. Academics, policy makers and researchers within this particular field have taken these building blocks and arranged them in the various ways they feel most suitably depict the radicalisation process. However, relatively few of them have gained much traction as plausible explanations for furthering our knowledge on the topic<sup>32</sup>.

There are generally four types of process frameworks within literature on radicalisation: stage process models; non-stage process models; RCT models; and SMT models (these may also include stage/non-stage models). Essentially, these models argue there to be either a cognitive and/or motivational change in the individual or group which can lead them to conducting acts of terrorism (Mandel, 2009). Rather than outlining all of these models in detail, as has been conducted in numerous studies<sup>33</sup>, it is better to critically analyse their key factors, discussing the gaps and beginning to understand how this particular thesis will attempt to address them.

#### 2.4.1 General Stage Process Models

Although general stage process models may have subtle differences, they tell a similar story which can be represented in a relatively small number of stages (see for example Borum, 2003; Lousberg et al., [n.d.]). One of the better-known examples in this category was developed by Silber and Bhatt (2007) for the New York Police Department. Their approach holds similarities with other accounts, such as Precht's (2007), and is depicted in four stages. They fundamentally argue that those becoming radicalised are affected by a number of macro-level strains and are 'frustrated with their lives or with the politics of their home governments' (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 16). This results in a 'crisis of identity' and eventually leads them to search for a new one which is, more often than not, based upon a religious context; a notion which can be witnessed in wider studies such as Wiktorowicz's (2005). They disassociate themselves from their previous lives

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<sup>32</sup> It must be mentioned that the models and frameworks discussed within this section are by no means exhaustive, but are those they are regularly outlined. Some of these models have wide-ranging global implications, whilst others might be representative of the 'challenges faced by many Western countries.' (King and Taylor, 2011: 604)

<sup>33</sup> There are numerous studies that outline these models and their stages in extensive detail (see Lousberg et al., [n.d.]; King and Taylor, 2011; Helmus, 2009; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008, 2008a; Borum, 2011a; Berrebi, 2009; Nasser-Eddine, 2011; Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman, 2009; Knott et al., 2006, for example).

and socialise with those whom they feel are likeminded. The radicalisee then begins to internalise the extreme group's ideologies and becomes, as Silber and Bhatt (2007) term it, 'indoctrinated'. This has the potential to lead to violence or terrorism, i.e. 'jihadisation'.

Although Silber and Bhatt's model was considered to be groundbreaking at the time of release, research since then has shown this approach to contain some limitations. Most importantly – even though the authors argue that not everyone follows a perfectly linear progression – it represents a general frustration-aggression model which can be deemed as somewhat sequential in nature and as a result seen as too rigid. There is no proof to suggest this approach has any substance (Lygre et al., 2011). This can be determined by looking at wider studies on deviance. During Lofland's (1966) ethnographic study of proselytization and indoctrination, he uses the term 'involvement sequences' rather than 'involvement sequence'. Innes et al. (2007) argue this to be significant as it represents the differing reasons and methods for joining. Thus, 'different individuals will have been radicalised as a result of exposure to different combinations of factors' (ibid: 29), and whilst there are commonly found elements to the 'individual involvement sequences', they were arranged differently for different recruits (ibid: 40). Further, in a similar way to Moghaddam's (2005) 'Staircase to Terrorism' framework, although the different stages of Silber and Bhatt's (2007) model may be supported by wider empirical data, the transition between the different steps is not. This means the validity cannot be fully assessed and 'render them [the steps] fairly meaningless analytically' (Innes et al., 2007: 41).

What these types of models do correctly show is that radicalisation is based upon certain social and psychological considerations (King and Taylor, 2011), rather than ideological alone (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011). Similarly, Borum's (2003) model of radicalisation also goes some way to address this issue by incorporating the consideration of behaviour. However, as with Silber and Bhatt (2007) and Precht's (2007) analysis, Borum (2003) provides an overview of radicalisation without outlining out how people move from one cognitive state to the next.

## 2.4.2 Non-Stage Process Models

One approach taken by non-stage process models is to consider the cognitive element of radicalisation through employing various social psychology and psychology theories and frameworks. For example, McCauley and Moskalenko's (2008) account stresses the importance of considering factors at the individual, group and global levels. One glaring assumption within their research – through their analysis of radicalisation as a pyramid – is that the base consists of 'all who sympathize with the goals the terrorists say they are fighting for' (ibid: 417). As mentioned, this assumes that the radicalisee is first aggrieved and then searches for relevant groups, rather than being part of a group and then feeling certain strains. Thus, this approach fails to understand the value of social bonds. They merely make a brief reference to this in the conclusion of the paper. Further, as will be discussed, this leaves no room for incorporating those who are affiliated to extreme groups to simply satisfy their social and subcultural desires, and start to become radicalised thereafter.

Of most concern within this account is the increasing perception that radicalisation is a deterministic process where individual agency has little or no merit. Although this may not have been the authors' intent, the analysis could overcome this notion by discussing not only why some people radicalised, but also why others do not. Their use of terms like 'path[way] to radicalization' only goes to underline this.

Many of the confusions attached to this paper stem from the attempt to provide a 'one size fits all' approach. For example, whereas some of their arguments may hold true for certain female suicide bombers in Palestine, the same cannot be said for 'home-grown' youth in the UK or US, and vice-versa. Although the paper draws upon a rich variety of historical examples and relevant Social Psychology theories, none of their conclusions are based upon any hard empirical data.

What is of importance with this approach is the attempt to understand how people's behaviours and attitudes change rather than, as with the models discussed in the last section, letting the reader make their own assumptions. The authors importantly highlight the need for radicalisation to refocus upon individual actors as well as the dynamics of groups; rather than just the former which so many accounts of radicalisation are guilty of.



They also highlight the importance of cognitive factors, but unfortunately do not take the analysis to a deeper level whereby they outline how these theories actually take effect. Further, they do not provide any type of framework to conceptualise how these factors fit together or drive each other through. Rather, they argue that their outlined 'mechanisms' can be found in combinations for different people's radicalisation. Critically, they explain that their list is not exhaustive and there will be other considerations that they have not included. However, taking this approach has the potential to be misguided in a number of ways, such as listing all possible factors of radicalisation without any real thought or evidence of their importance.

This type of 'exhaustive' approach has been adopted by certain authors and institutions (see Kirby, 2007; COT Institute, 2008; Veldhuis and Staun, 2009, for example). As Psoiu (2012: 46) correctly observes, they merely resort to "piling" various factors in various constellations...[which] is based on the reasoning that since no unique or unitary set of factors or causes have been found applicable to all radicalisation cases.' However, one positive element in these models is their consideration of factors at the individual, group and global levels. This approach is difficult to contend and is reflected in other accounts of radicalisation (see Sageman, 2008; Innes et al., 2007, for example).

There are other types of non-stage process models to consider which take a more direct approach. These accounts, although not classed as SMT, draw relevant theories and incorporate them into their own framework. Sageman's (2008) account of radicalisation is one of these, and combines both cognitive and situational factors and adopts a non-linear and emergent framework (King and Taylor, 2011). Rather than outlining a number of predetermined stages, Sageman (2008) asserts that there are four 'dimensions' which can occur at their own pace and often in parallel with one another. As with SMT theories, he explains how radicalisation should be determined by the radicalisee's strains being 'framed' and aligned with the extremist's ideologies. For example, the strains of foreign policy resonate with young Western Muslims through their own personal experiences of discrimination. This leads to a belief that there is a Western 'war against Islam'. This approach can be seen in wider accounts of radicalisation, such as Innes et al.'s (2007).

Milgram (1974, 162) argues that if you 'control the manner in which a man interprets his world, [then] you have gone a long way toward controlling his behavior'. Through the

mobilisation of networks and the validation and confirmation of ideas and ideologies there can be a move away, according to Sageman (2008), from angry young men to those who can potentially carry out acts of terrorism. Revisiting the theories of Goffman (1975: 21) enables a sociological understanding of this argument where frames such as this offer individuals with a schemata of interpretation to 'locate, identify and label' events within their immediate and global levels (Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2011).

Although it is difficult to argue with Sageman's (2008) overarching tenor, his framework for understanding radicalisation is let down by certain shortcomings. First, is the bottom-up recruitment paradigm he so fervently sticks by, which has been shown by authors such as Silber (2011) to be more complex. Further, and more importantly, Sageman (2008) fails to provide an in-depth understanding of how people actually move towards committing an act of violence. He attributes it to a mix between choices made rationally, cognitive factors such as emotional ties to the 'in-group', hatred towards the 'out-group', and a replacement of short-term goals with longer-term ones which include saving the world. Sageman's analysis would benefit from the consideration of a number of wider theories across different disciplines.

In this regard, the account provided by Innes et al. (2007) borrows ideas from the field of criminology and sociology and applies them to radicalisation studies. For example, by employing established theories such as Matza's 'drift', Innes et al. are able to confidently explain how those becoming radicalised are in fact no different to the rest of society. The framework for radicalisation by Innes et al. is, like Sageman's (2008), one that is not sequential in nature, and also draws elements from SMT. They outline various push/pull factors and 'background factors' which effectively 'prime' individuals for radicalisation. There are also 'foreground factors', described by others as 'triggers', which are the most immediate occurrences and those most visible which 'directly stimulate the process of conversion' (Innes et al., 2007: 57). Through the construction of their 'radicalisation diamond', they explain that when these factors are aligned, similar to 'framing', it creates an opportunity to radicalise, which they term as 'the radicalisation window'. An important element of their framework, as with McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) and Sageman's (2008), is acknowledging the importance of social interaction and group bonds. Further, and most critically, Innes et al. (2007) realise the value of considering the individual within a group setting.

There do, however, appear to be certain limitations with Innes et al.'s (2007) model of radicalisation. For example, they argue that if one or more of the outlined factors in their research is missing, it may go some way to explain why some people may acquire more political radical beliefs but do not support the use of violence. Although they refer to Louise Richardson's (2006) theory of a 'conducive surround' for terrorism, there is an important underestimation for the role of differing ideologies within radicalisation<sup>34</sup>. Innes et al. (2007) correctly observe that ideology is not a causal factor of radicalisation up to the point of accepting violence as a legitimate tactic. However, it may be considered more as a causal factor for violence once an individual moves towards becoming more deeply radicalised. Therefore, the role of ideology in their account may fare better, when it comes to understanding motivations behind the use of violence, as a 'foreground' factor rather than a 'background' one as it is currently depicted. Ideology entwined with misconstrued and religious doctrine may have the potential to provide the individual with the moral and religious requirement to conduct acts of terrorism. In this way, once again, Innes et al.'s use of wider theories compliments their analysis. For example, they are able to confidently explain and identify, through the inclusion of Sykes and Matza's (1957) 'techniques of neutralization', how 'These techniques equate to a repertoire of moral positions via which engagement in criminal activity can be sympathetically explained and justified.' (Innes et al., 2007: 42).

Sykes and Matza (1957) outline five techniques of neutralization; four of these have significance in understanding how moral concerns can be neutralised in violent extremist behaviour. First, through 'denial of responsibility' the individual believes they are coerced into the action; something they feel is beyond their control. Second, 'denial of victim' states that the victims deserve the consequences of their actions (Lerner and Simmons, 1966). Milgram (1974) describes this as psychologically shifting the responsibility; in the case of terrorism this responsibility is moved to the target. This is evident in various martyrdom videos such as Mohammed Sidique Khan's where he outlined that, 'Your democratically elected government continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support for them makes you directly responsible...' (BBC News, 2005). Third, and somewhat related to the second technique, 'condemnation of

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<sup>34</sup> This is not just reserved for Innes et al.'s (2007) analysis, but is applicable to many other accounts of radicalisation (see Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Kirby, 2007; Precht, 2007; COT Institute, 2008; Borum, 2003; Moghaddam, 2005, for example).

the condemners' allows the individual to believe they are retaliating against the actions of the British government in respect to certain foreign policy actions such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Fourth, 'appeal to higher loyalties' argues that the individuals are following the decree of God, and the violent action is in effort for a greater good rather than focussing on the micro-level action and consequence of the crime<sup>35</sup>.

Finally, within radicalisation studies generally, participation in terrorism is either depicted as emotionally driven or to do with rational choice. Committing an act of violence which is not impulsive and is well thought out and planned may still be emotionally driven. It is more of a complex problem which will consider issues around persuasion (Wiktorowicz, 2005), or the changing of self and social identity (Innes et al., 2007). When it comes to choosing terrorism as a tactic, it may then be beneficial to consider elements of RCT.

#### 2.4.3 Radicalisation: A Rational Choice?

A number of prominent authors in the field have used RCT as a vehicle to explain violent extremism; the most notable and widely cited being Martha Crenshaw. The use of RCT in radicalisation studies varies somewhat, though one common factor is the disregard of the grievance based approach (Pisoiu, 2012). These authors argue that the use of RCT helps to explain why many people may be affected by the same strains though only a very few mobilise into some sort of action (McAdam et al., 2011).

However, RCT is not embraced by all and there are those who seriously question its use and relevance. For example, Victoroff (2005), using a similar argument, outlines that RCT does not explain why such a small number of people become terrorists when the potential pool is far larger. Schbley (2000) takes this further by stating that only very few individuals that rationally believe in terrorism actually become terrorists.

RCT is used to describe involvement and commitment with an extreme group as one entire process (Pisoiu, 2012), and also to understand why terrorism is chosen as a tactic from a range of other options (see for example, Crenshaw, 1981, 1992, 1987; Victoroff, 2005; Wilson, 2000; Berman, 2009; Lake, 2002). Influential experts in the field such as

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<sup>35</sup> Similarities can be drawn with the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli (2003).

Robert Pape (2006: 7) argue that 'terrorists are simply the members of their societies who are the most optimistic about the usefulness of violence for achieving goals that many, and often most, support'. Suicide terrorism is considered to fall within this, and is one of the most, if not the most, commonly referred to modes of attack when discussing AQ and AQI terrorism by general society<sup>36</sup>. As Atran (2003: 1534) rightly quips, 'Suicide attack is an ancient practice with a modern history'.

Atran (2003) questions the value of RCT for suicide bombers due to a lack of perceived tangible rewards, though explains there is benefit for those orchestrating the attacks in terms of increased social support and economic funds. In this regard, academics like Post (2005: 8) state that, 'as with terrorism in general, suicide terrorism is very much a function of group and collective psychology'. This can be witnessed through research conducted on the Japanese Kamikaze pilots during the Second World War, where 'communities of practice' were considered to be of great importance (Taylor, 2010; Taylor and Horgan, 2006; Hundeide, 2003; Sasaki, 1999). The argument here is that the ability of human beings to conduct violent acts against one another depends on the 'social pressure and support in the background that pushes them into this situation', with those with strong social support being the most likely to conduct acts of violence (Collins, 2008: 77). Atran (2003: 1535) similarly explains that regardless of the type of suicide attack, i.e. 'subnational' or 'state-sponsored', 'Choice is often voluntary, but typically under conditions of group pressure and charismatic leadership'.

Similarly, McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008: 417) explain that the 'classic answer' to mobilise people towards social action is through the group instilling a sense of personal morality through a consciousness of letting the group down or by introducing some types of sanctions. In smaller groups, as well as 'social punishments', 'social rewards' may well be used to ensure participation (ibid). However, a balanced approach would argue that the group and individual analysis are not mutually exclusive, with authors like Gupta (2005: 5) stressing that RCT should evolve and expand to 'include the primordial human urge of belonging to a group' where individual and collective action cannot be separated.

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<sup>36</sup> In reality, suicide terrorism is considered to be a tactic that may account for the least amount of attacks, though ensures the most amount of accumulative casualties (Merari, 2005; Sheehy-Skeffington, 2009; Atran, 2006).

When considering RCT in the context of Olson's (1971) 'free-rider', where the benefits are simply defined by some political achievement and they are subject to little or no cost as compared to those who are participants (Gupta, 2005), then there may be a case against this. However, when spiritual rewards are introduced, then RCT seems like it has more value. Wiktorowicz (2004a, 2005) argues that a terrorist sacrificing their life for the allure of spiritual rewards is a rational choice.

There are numerous examples of terrorism and suicide attacks that are based upon spiritual rewards, such as the Kamikaze pilots of the Japanese Imperial Navy (Sasaki, 1999; Bloom, 2007), and Palestinian 'martyrdom operations' (Hegghammer, 2006). As a result, some authors, like Wiktorowicz (2005), argue that RCT should be considered for individual choices rather than the group unit of analysis; though this is something which is rarely done. However, there are instances of these arguments not necessarily being mutually exclusive. This can be seen with the examples stated above which relate to the Japanese Kamikaze pilots, where authors like Sasaki (1999) found the importance of both personal rewards and communities of practice in her research.

Literature on radicalisation and terrorism studies is laden with research discussing both the pros and cons of RCT (see Berrebi, 2009, as an example). However, it may be more useful to consider the arguments from a different angle. It is plausible, according to the COT Institute (2008), to break radicalisation down into two different phases. First is the process that leads up to the point of terrorism and the second is selecting and participating in terrorism as a tactic.

If the first part of radicalisation is considered, i.e. up to the point of terrorism, then it may be possible to argue that it is based upon the actions of someone who is not completely rational, yet at the same time does not assume they are acting irrationally either. Recent developments with economic models go some way to further explain this. Traditional economic models generally assume that individual actors navigate their way through the world and social situations on the basis of a series of rational choices, or rational calculations (Gupta, 2005). However, assumptions like this have been questioned by the emergent paradigm of behavioural economics. As Ariely (2009) argues, when attempting to answer the questions society cares about, the broader picture should be considered, including what is understood about human nature. The point here is that radicalisees are

relatively normal members of society who act in both rational and irrational manners depending upon the specific influences they are exposed to.

This may then relate to how people make decisions. One theory presented argues that people essentially have two types of decision making systems (Kahneman, 2011). The first is used for deliberation, consideration and assessing 'cost vs. benefit'. This system takes a much longer time for the brain to process and is therefore not used as much as the other. The second system is the more 'intuitive' element and occurs at a much faster pace with, according to Kahneman, many decisions being made using this process. This is not to say people do not occasionally make rational and thought out choices based on rigorous cost vs. benefit, but most of the time these decisions are primed by emotions and are not as well thought out.

This leads onto a broader argument where choice architectures can be used for attaining positive social outcomes. This holds similarities with the notion of 'nudge', developed by Thaler and Sunstein (2008), where people can be 'nudged' into making better decisions regarding a multitude of issues, ranging from eating healthier food and paying their taxes (Parker, 2010), to reducing gang crime (Dolan et al., 2010). The question is, however, do radicalisers adopt similar methods by utilising an ominous element of nudge through social interactions?

Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) explain that ideology or specific attachments to political ideology is not enough to explain why people commit acts of terrorism. This has led certain academics and policy makers to fall back on grievance based theories in an attempt to explain the 'initial determinant of the radicalisation process or as some type of "lacks" to be compensated by positive incentives' (Pisoiu, 2012: 38). Thus, some argue that RCT has limited value in understanding radicalisation up until the point of violence, or the 'motivation' of terrorists (Gupta, 2005: 8). However, in terms of selecting violence as a tool, especially suicide terrorism when considering spiritual rewards, there may be a caveat. This leads those like Lake (2002: 26), for example, to advocate the use of RCT when looking at terrorists' strategies, but something that 'fails to explain why terrorists have such extreme ambitions in the first place'.

#### 2.4.4 Ensuring Flexibility: A Progressive SMT Approach

Traditionally, SMT has been used to understand the motivations of larger movements where growth is one of the core traits of the theory (Klandermans and Oegema, 1987). There are, however, certain benefits from drawing upon components within it when trying to understand radicalisation further. The flexibility offered by SMT, as opposed to stage models, can enable a deeper analysis of the issue at hand.

Within his psychological assessment of terrorism, Horgan (2005) argues that it is better to focus upon the 'how' rather than the 'why' when developing process models. It can, however, be argued that a balance of both will provide a better approach. Here the 'why' can inform the 'how', something SMT allows to incorporate. Further, rather than simply focussing upon the macro or micro level analysis, it is possible, similar to the work of Giddens (1985), to bridge the gap between the two levels; which SMT's flexibility also accommodates.

The use of SMT in terrorism studies has become increasingly popular since prominent academics like Donatella della Porta (1995) connected some of its components within her studies of Italian and German violent extremists. However, using SMT to understand AQ and AQI terrorism, or the 'Islamist movement' as defined by Meleagrou-Hitchens (2011), remains an underdeveloped field (Wiktorowicz, 2004a). One account considered to have successfully utilised SMT is Wiktorowicz's (2004, 2005) ethnographic study of AM. There are some who refer to his work as a phase model simply because it outlines a number of phases, or arguably stages (see Veldhuis and Staun, 2009). This may well be a flaw in Wiktorowicz's (2004, 2005) account, compared to the approach taken by others like Innes et al. (2007) and Sageman (2008), for example. On the surface, Wiktorowicz's (2005) account seems no different than that offered by other general stage process models. However, there are various important differences, both subtle and otherwise.

SMT emphasises the critical importance of social ties in joining, social interactions in maintaining commitment, and the value of persuasion through the influence of those deemed to hold authority (Stewart et al., 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2005). Further, as Bartlett et al. (2010: 20) explain, SMT '...attempts to integrate social and historical conditions, dynamics of groups and organisations, and their relation to society and personal



leadership, membership, ideology into one framework.' Thus, rather than simply offering explanations of radicalisation where readers are left to second-guess how people move from one stage to another and how they internalise extreme ideologies, wider theories can be employed. For example, as discussed, this may concern (re)socialisation where radicalisers and extreme groups are able to change people's attitudes, actions, beliefs (Crenshaw, 1994), and as Wiktorowicz (2005: 27) explains, 'perceptions of self-interest'. In addition, SMT offers an explanation of how extreme ideologies are aligned in the mind of the individual, i.e. how they resonate with their own beliefs or replace their existing beliefs. As with research on cults and sects, as outlined in the Introductory chapter, SMT discusses the 'conversion process' where individuals change their perceptions of society and reassess their place within it, and in fact change their world view (Lousberg et al., [n.d.]).

As mentioned earlier, this can be explained through the concept of 'frame analysis', as outlined by Goffman (1975). This is referred to as 'framing processes' in the context of SMT (Benford and Snow, 2000) and 'framing theory' with radicalisation. Through the use of a 'master-frame' (Benford and Snow, 2000), 'Islamist movements' portray that Islam and the secular West are 'fundamentally conflicting' (Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2011: 14). The radicaliser aims to achieve 'frame alignment' between the individual and the group's ideologies (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Here, framing relies upon notions of values and beliefs, and helps the radicalisee to make sense of, and organise, their experiences and guide their actions (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008). This forms one of the schools of thought in this arena and is seen as the 'most promising' when looking at the issue of radicalisation (Borum, 2011: 16).

However, the current form of SMT attracts certain criticisms. One of these argues that it places too much emphasis on RCT, as the focus is more in favour of self-interest as opposed to persuasion (Meijer, 2005). However, as mentioned, there are some authors that have successfully provided a more nuanced account of SMT, with the inclusion of RCT, when considering radicalisation (Pisoiu, 2012). A further criticism regards those SMT accounts that, although outlining how extreme ideologies are internalised through socialisation and frame-alignment, do not discuss why and more importantly how these concepts are able to occur. That is, how do the motivations, attitudes, actions and beliefs of people change? This goes to highlight the benefit of using an overarching framework

such as Goffman's (1961) moral career, though still viewing radicalisation through a SMT lens.

This use of Goffman's theory also allows the flexibility to be able to move away from the more commonly stated 'norms' of radicalisation research. One particular criticism in this respect is certain authors' propensity to give religion too much value at an early stage (see Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Precht, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2005, for example). A more accurate analysis would argue that religion is the factor that brings individuals together and gives them with a new identity (Taseer, 2005; Kraft et al., 2007; Choudhury, 2007), or provides some sort of misconstrued justification for committing violence and terrorism (Githens-Mazer, 2010; Toft, 2007; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Sageman, 2008a). Similar arguments can be made about the perception that ideology alone drives radicalisation. There is no evidence to suggest that either religion or ideology are drivers, catalysts or 'triggers' of radicalisation and, although certain authors do not explicitly claim it to be so, this rigid approach does not allow for the consideration of alternative factors.

The general perception in society is that radicalisation is something which is 'induced' by the radicaliser when there is contact with the radicalisee. Most accounts of radicalisation discussed in this chapter may well argue that the strains felt at the macro-level will cause some form of susceptibility and lead people to search for a new identity, a new meaning in life and a different view of society and the world around them. However, should there not be an exploration of the hypothesis that people may actually want to be affiliated with extremist groups and extremism in general, in their own 'positive' perception of the term? Radicalisation may not always be due to just macro-level pressures and strains, but also to do with generational and popular trends amongst peer groups.

This holds particular importance when considering the radicalisation of young Muslim males in the West. Thus, issues around excitement and masculinity should be at least considered which authors such as Choudhury (2007) have started to investigate. The implications of these aspects, and generally how extremism is perceived as a subcultural trend amongst young Muslims in the West, especially the UK, are very rarely discussed, and if so is only mentioned in passing (see Sloatman and Tillie, 2006; Innes et al., 2007; Husain, 2007; Sageman, 2008; Pisiou, 2012; Bartlett et al., 2010, for example).

The value of its inclusion can be discovered in wider research on topics such as cultural criminology (Ferrell, 1999). Katz (1988), for example, explores the notion of 'foreground' within criminology, and assesses this in various situations. One of these includes street gangs and, as Katz terms it, the 'ways of the badass'. This is particularly strengthened when these groups are part of subcultures which are deemed to be, as Howard Becker (1973) describes, 'outsiders'.

Radicalisation is unfortunately not a simple concept and is laden with many complexities. It should be understood, as Schmid (2013) correctly points out, from a combination of looking at the micro, meso, and macro levels. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, there of course needs to be consideration of the current theories and core foundations in the field. However, the employment of certain SMT attributes set within a wider conceptual framework like Goffman's (1961) moral career also allows for the construction of an analysis that can consider emerging (or neglected) aspects, such as subculture, masculinity and social identity.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

The conduct of the research is based upon a qualitative methodology on the premise that it affords an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and more importantly the reasons that govern that behaviour. A qualitative approach has also been selected on the basis that radicalisation is not, as far as is known, a widely distributed social issue, but occurs only in relation to a relatively small proportion of the population. Whilst quantitative methods have obvious and critical uses within research, it was felt that an in-depth account based upon data from the individuals who have the most relevant insight can potentially provide a more valid and reliable examination. As summarised by Gillham (2000: 11), one benefit of qualitative analysis is that it enables the researcher to 'explore complexities that are beyond the scope of more "controlled" approaches.' Accordingly, in the context of the present research, this strategy will facilitate an in-depth study of the complexities involved in a select number of cases where radicalisation has occurred. In particular, the meanings that are assigned to different factors by people in terms of accounting for how and why it occurs under particular conditions. This emphasis upon detail and depth is offset by the fact that the adopted approach is less suitable for assessing how widespread the distribution of these factors might be.

It can be said that the framework for planning, implementing and evaluating qualitative research should include three important considerations: epistemology; methodology; and method (Carter and Little, 2007). However, there can be an argument for considering the ontological element within this also. Rather than adopting a positivist approach based on external objectivism, usually reserved for quantitative approaches, the use of qualitative research can be considered more of an interpretivist stance. Thus, there is not simply a single reality, but multiples realities which have been constructed in each individual and group's particular context.

This is not only a consideration for the research participants, but also for the researcher themselves. The reality is normally socially constructed within each context by the most commonly accepted interpretations by those involved. It is therefore acknowledged that my own perceptions of reality will have affected the way I constructed an opinion of the topic prior to engaging in the research. An element of this will have been based on the

factors that could not be changed, such as being male, having a South Asian heritage and being born into a certain class and living in a certain society. There will also be the existence of those influences that could have been changed. This is about the decisions I could have taken throughout my life which has affected the way in which I interpret the world, which in turn influences the way in which I constructed this problem. This includes the friendships I have entered and maintained to the newspapers I have decided to read. There will be countless influences in my life which have affected both my perception and understanding of this problem, and how I see it connect to and interact with wider issues. Some of these decisions will naturally provide a bias to the research. Though, as will be discussed, this is something I have been conscious of throughout the research and have attempted to mitigate, as much as possible, by consulting relevant academic works on being a researcher, maintaining a neutral perspective, and reducing bias when analysing and reporting data. Though, some of these factors have acted as positives throughout the research, such as insider/outsider statuses, and will be outlined in relevant places.

These are considerations that all qualitative researchers in the field need to be aware of. The ontological and epistemological influences will naturally shape people, and we will all have our own particular perceptions of reality which have been socially constructed. The researcher must ensure that the way they have constructed their reality does not act as a barrier to remaining open to new ideas and beliefs. That said, qualitative research has the strong potential to provide the insights which can help us to understand and solve many of the social issues facing society; with radicalisation being just one of these. This includes the causes and consequences that convey the complex nature of the process with greater depth and texture than might result from employing the kinds of structured survey questions often utilised in quantitative methods.

This chapter begins by setting out the research questions central to the theme of this thesis. The following section highlights the selection of methods. In order to effectively answer the research questions one principal method of data collection was implemented, i.e. qualitative semi-structured interviews. This was supplemented with fieldwork based observations. The third section outlines the ethics and risk management considerations, prior to the collection of data. The fourth and fifth sections will discuss the data sources used in the research in more detail, including how respondents were sampled and recruited, and the challenges faced. The sixth section outlines how the data were

analysed. The final section of the chapter provides a reflection of the research, including the challenges faced when collecting data of this nature.

### 3.1 Research Questions

There were various aspects of radicalisation that needed to be examined by this study. These not only considered how and why radicalisation occurs, but also what implications these findings would have for policy, practice, and wider academic theories. There are four research questions central to this thesis and are represented below:

1. How do people become radicalised?
2. Why are some people rendered susceptible to radicalisation and why do some go on to commit forms of violence but others do not?
3. What is the perception and reception 'on the ground' of counter-terrorism policies and strategies amongst those who are, in many ways, the focus of such attentions?
4. What are the wider implications of the findings of this research for policymakers, practitioners and academics?

### 3.2 Selection of Methods

In addressing the research questions above, two research methods were used. The first was the completion of in-depth semi-structured interviews with a range of different participants. Second, was to conduct discreet fieldwork based observations when it was deemed to be necessary and appropriate to do so. The semi-structured interviews were used to answer all of the research questions outlined above, and the fieldwork based observations were specifically targeted at answering the first three research questions.

### 3.2.1 Qualitative Interviews

Through the employment of the semi-structured qualitative interviewing method, I have collected accounts of radicalisation. Many academics, including seminal figures such as Malinowski, stress the importance of attaining points of views through conversation (Burgess, 1982), especially when attempting to reach a deeper understanding of an under-researched phenomenon. In addition, the use of semi-structured interviewing allowed for an effective two-way conversation, enabling the respondent to ask questions of the researcher. The interviewee also had the flexibility to discuss other relevant topics which may or may not have been previously considered. Finally, and critically, semi-structured interviewing facilitated the potential of not only providing the answers to questions but also illuminating the reasoning behind them.

Within such a strategy, consideration must be given to the validity of the responses provided by the individuals being questioned. Wright Mills (1940: 904) outlines this very point and states that 'human actors do vocalize and impute motives to themselves and others', attributing this to their perceptions based on past experience. Similar to these 'vocabularies of motives' are what Lyman and Scott (1970) describe as 'accounts'. They state that an account has a resemblance to the verbal component of a 'motive', and is 'a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry' (ibid: 112). An account is a 'statement' made by an actor to explain 'untoward' behaviour, whether it be for themselves or for others. Lyman and Scott further argue that there are different forms of accounts an individual may relay depending on different motivations. Of particular consequence to this study were those accounts based upon the invocation of excuses and justifications, where both are 'socially approved vocabularies that neutralize an act or its consequences when one or both are called into question' (ibid: 120). There needed to be a specific focus on the internal consistency, credibility and reliability of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. It was important to consider these respondents were offering their perspective which may not have been a value neutral objective, and was mostly always, if not always, a motivated account.

Another major concern with semi-structured interviewing was to ensure the interview stayed on course and the conversation did not divert to unnecessary issues. Overlooking this had the potential to not only waste time, but also miss the more pertinent topics for

discussion. Thus, the outlining questions were carefully formulated so as not to be prescriptive or leading. Gray (2004: 224-5) reiterates this point, stating that maintaining control is essential and can be achieved by 'minimizing long-winded responses and digressions'. He goes on to argue that the researcher should not feel concerned to interrupt the respondent if this enables the interview to stay focussed. Arksey and Knight (1999) add to this by writing that improvisation throughout the interview is fundamental to maintaining control.

Given the specific considerations associated with this study, the interviews were aimed to be conducted on a one-to-one basis, as opposed to a focus group setting, as it was felt this approach would provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Within this situation, respondents may also feel more comfortable and be able to express their thoughts rather than agreeing with others in line with group conformity theories (see Asch, 1955; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Aronson et al., 2005, for example). Within a group setting there is the possibility for some individuals to feel overshadowed by others which may cause certain respondents to keep potentially key thoughts undisclosed (see Crisp & Turner, 2007). Also, within communities that have a high level of social capital, such as those located within certain areas of the UK (see for example Innes et al., 2007), it may prove difficult for some respondents to disclose sensitive information for fear of reprisals from the rest of the community. However, due to unforeseen difficulties in accessing potential samples, focus-group interviewing was implemented if and when required. Nevertheless, these considerations were taken into account when conducting these focus-groups and every effort was made to avoid the outlined pitfalls. In fact, on many occasions within the focus-group setting the participants were able to 'prompt', both consciously and otherwise, one another's memory on the topics at hand.

### 3.2.2 Fieldwork Based Observations

The in-depth interviews are supplemented and augmented through limited observational fieldwork. The fieldwork based observations' main purpose was to provide a better understanding of the processes of rhetoric, group dynamics and emotions that could arise in certain settings that may be pertinent in terms of understanding how and why



radicalisation occurs. This is critical as, to date, the affective component regarding how individuals' ideas, beliefs and ideologies are radicalised remains neglected.

This observational method acts as a support mechanism to provide the reader with a more detailed understanding of the research and the process involved behind it. Ritchie (2003: 35) makes this very point when stating the importance of transferring this information to the reader as it allows them to see the events, actions and experiences 'through the eyes of the researcher'. Though, as argued by Bailey (1996), this analysis will not just focus on visuals but will make use of all available senses. This data aimed to comprise of what Lofland (1971) describes as 'raw' (i.e. without initial analysis) material, such as seating arrangements, surroundings, behaviours (of respondent and all other present during the interviews) and sounds. The data collected through this method aims to provide an insight which is not available from any other.

### 3.3 Ethics and Risk Management

There were a multitude of risks and ethical issues that needed to be vigorously analysed, especially as the research lay within an extremely sensitive area. This task needed much planning as although I aimed to adhere fully to ethical standards and maintain the utmost safety considerations for all concerned, I did not, at the same time, want to destroy my rapport and access with the respondents. I was aware that there were a number of requirements and stipulations that applied to conducting this research. These were given due and careful consideration.

The respondents were all provided with an information sheet<sup>37</sup> explaining what the content of the research was, confidentiality issues and data protection considerations. They were all required to sign a consent form<sup>38</sup> prior to participating in the interviews. The information sheet also explained to respondents that the police could seek an order requiring production of the interview recordings and/or transcripts. This is if the police had reason to believe that they would be of assistance in an investigation into terrorism matters, including whether – under SS 19, 38b and 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000 – a

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<sup>37</sup> See, 'Appendix 1: Research Information for Respondents'.

<sup>38</sup> See, 'Appendix 2: Consent Form for Respondents'.

journalist has in their possession or has not disclosed to police information relating to a terrorism offence.

It was highly unlikely such information would have been provided to me in the interviews, and even more unlikely that a police request would have been made. Nevertheless, the legislation has not yet been thoroughly tested before the courts. To date, no request has been made by any authorities.

There were also linguistic complexities to factor in. Prior to the interview the respondents were all given a chance to indicate whether they would be more comfortable undertaking the interview in English or in another language. If another language was preferred, arrangements for a suitable translation service would have been provided. However, this was not requested.

### 3.3.1 Risks to Researcher

Given that the research was conducted in a sensitive area, there was the possibility that there could have been risks to my personal physical and psychological wellbeing. In order to counter this and ensure personal wellbeing, the following considerations were implemented:

- If I felt any psychological distress throughout the interviews or at any time during the research, all activities would have been immediately terminated and this would have been discussed in full honesty with my supervisors, both of whom have extensive experience of conducting research on sensitive issues and in 'closed' social settings. I was also aware of the assistance and support available from a variety of relevant external associations.
- To minimise the risks involved, all interviews were conducted during the daytime and in a safe environment. If for any of the interviews the risk of physical harm was deemed to be higher, they were conducted within a public arena which was suitable and safe to both me and the respondent. I also ensured that either one of my supervisors knew where, when and who I was meeting for each interview.

If this was not possible, then a close and trusted family member, i.e. my spouse, was given all of the information, except the personal details of the respondent.

- I did not discuss any personal details with any of the respondents except what was absolutely necessary. The respondents knew my first name and where I was conducting the PhD, though any other identifying factors like telephone numbers or home address were not disclosed.

### 3.3.2 Risks to Respondents

The potential risks to the respondents needed to be considered in a wider context than just the potential of physical or psychological harm and discomfort or stress that this research may have generated. These included risks to an individual's personal standing within the communities they are a part of, privacy, personal values and beliefs, their relationships with their family, and their position within their occupational settings. There was also the consideration of adverse effects generated from discussing information that relates to illegal or deviant behaviour. Therefore, the following considerations were integrated into the design of the research in order that the study could be conducted in an ethical manner.

The respondents were initially informed about what the research entails. Alongside this, they were provided, as mentioned, with an information sheet and given the chance to raise any concerns they may have. They were also given an appropriate amount of time to decide whether they wanted to participate or not; which was usually seven days. The potential risks and issues were discussed with the respondents prior to their acceptance. They were informed that participation would be on a voluntary basis and they were fully able to refuse answering any questions throughout the interview. Further, that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point for whatever reason they saw necessary. The information recorded to this point would not have been used unless full authorisation had been given by the respondent. All data provided by the respondents, whether this was prior to or during the interviews, and their anonymity have been and will continue to be kept strictly confidential in line with the Data Protection Act.

The risk of physical harm to individuals was substantially reduced by adopting certain considerations when setting up and conducting interviews. The knowledge of the interviews taking place was kept to an absolute minimum and discussed only where necessary. The interviews were conducted, when requested by the respondent or when it was felt necessary, outside of that geographic community and away from areas they could potentially be identified. With some of the respondents, especially those who were once part of extreme movements or espoused extreme ideologies, there was the risk of some psychological distress and this was constantly reviewed throughout the interview. If it was felt that the respondent was in any anguish the interview would have been immediately terminated. If the respondent was caused distress after the interview had been completed, they would have been directed to the relevant local health services that could provide them with further support and assistance. The physical and psychological safety of the respondents was reviewed both before and throughout the interviews, and the interviews would have immediately been terminated if the respondent's safety was in jeopardy. There was also a concerted effort to avoid harm not only to the immediate interviewees, but also to their family, friends and the communities and organisations they were affiliated to (both religious and otherwise). This was once again completed through strict confidentiality of participation and full anonymity of respondents when discussing this information within the thesis. Locations, meeting details and any other identifying factors also remain anonymous. Fortunately no issues occurred before, during or after the research<sup>39</sup>.

The recordings from the interviews are stored on an external hard drive and this, with the hard copies of the transcriptions, is locked in a safe and secure place in accordance with the Data Protection Act. This is solely accessible to just myself and my two supervisors (on request). As well as being provided the documentation, this information was also discussed with respondents prior to the commencement of each interview.

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<sup>39</sup> This is correct at the time of writing.

### 3.4 Accessing the Data: Qualitative Interviews

In total, 61 interviews were conducted across various locations within the UK<sup>40</sup>, where certain respondents were interviewed on multiple occasions. They were collected by the author over a nine-month period between October 2009 and June 2010<sup>41</sup>. There were a small number of preliminary interviews conducted in mid-2008. Of these 61 interviews, 14 were conducted with 'officials', 31 were with 'informed informants' and the remaining 12 with 'community members'. These three sets of interviews alongside the sampling and data collection techniques are outlined below.

#### 3.4.1 Interviews with Officials

The respondents within this data set comprised of: one government minister; two high-level civil servants; three local government employees; one former high-ranking police officer; one former high-ranking American intelligence official; two academics; and four researchers. These individuals were selected on the basis that they could all provide an alternative understanding of the issues at hand. This was imperative when gaining a balanced approach to the research which not only considered the arguments bottom-up, but also from a top-down perspective.

The majority of these individuals were contacts I had gained from my previous role as 'Researcher' for the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, a think-tank based in Whitehall, London. The other respondents were directly approached due to their prominent work within this arena. It was expected, and somewhat accounted for, that those working in official capacities, i.e. for the government, would be restricted in what they were able to discuss. Access to this group was relatively simple and almost all of the respondents approached for participation agreed to take part in the study.

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<sup>40</sup> It must be noted that of these 61 interviews, 60 were conducted in person in the UK. The remaining one was conducted over the telephone with a former high-ranking intelligence official in the US.

<sup>41</sup> Though, as will be discussed within the section outlining the challenges of the research, the groundwork for securing these interviews started long before the initial interview was undertaken.

### 3.4.2 Interviews with Informed Informants

The informed informants comprised individuals and groups working at the 'grassroots' level within particular local Muslim communities, and were all Muslim themselves. These respondents were purposively sampled on the basis of having first-hand experience and regular contact with those who are susceptible to extremist ideologies, those who hold extreme viewpoints/subscribe to extremist ideologies, or have been implicated as part of one of the various Terrorism Acts (TACT). Many of the informed informants conduct 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation' work at the grassroots level. This group also included those who were once part of violent and/or non-violent extreme groups. It should be mentioned that there was also a concerted effort to interview a small number of youth workers who primarily deal with Muslim youth. Although it was envisaged that these individuals may have some sort of vested interest in counter-extremism, it was not set out as a pre-determined requirement for them.

The recruitment of suitable respondents within any research project is vital in ensuring the results are considered to be both credible and useful. Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommend that during selection, the interviewer should ensure that the interviewee is experienced, knowledgeable and has a variety of perspectives. This is in contrast to random sampling, which in turn relates to the desirability of generalisability; a concept introduced by Campbell (1957). Although there may be much relevance in ensuring the 'external validity' within certain experimental designs (Campbell, 1957: 297), there also needs to be a recognition that research projects do not necessarily have to conform to generalisability norms. Gray (2004) argues that 'just because a study does not find results that are capable of generalization does not mean they have no relevance'. The findings from the interviews within this research will not be applicable across the wider Muslim population, but will target a small specific group of individuals. Accordingly, the intent underpinning this study was not to conduct a large scale survey across the population, but to 'drill down' and gain a deeper understanding of what radicalisation is and how it occurs by analysing the information provided by those with the most relevant experience, expertise and exposure. This point is emphasised by Wiktorowicz (2004: 2) who, during his ethnographic study of AM, argued that research with small groups of respondents may limit generalisability, though 'provides unique insights...that are virtually impossible to generate through other methods'.

Rubin and Rubin (2005: 65) state that 'finding interviewees with the relevant first-hand experience is critical', and further maintain that enlisting individuals who are, or have been, directly involved is better than interviewing those who are not. For example, interviewing an individual who was kidnapped is better than talking to their parents or close friends. Although this point has much validity, Rubin and Rubin fail to point out that this is not necessarily the case within every research project as it can also be beneficial to interview those who have had close contact and interaction with the research subject. This is especially relevant when considering that within a research project such as this, it is difficult to locate individuals who openly claim to have 'extreme' viewpoints and ideologies. Radicalisation is not a phenomenon that is evenly distributed across the population. Becker (1970: 31) makes a similar argument, when studying deviants, that there is no 'such officially complete list of participants'. This research was fortunate to be able to gain perspectives from those who were once personally involved in extremist activity and were willing to participate due to their denouncement of extremism, and those working in close proximity to people who currently espouse extreme ideologies.

Thus, the particular individuals participating in this aspect of the research were selected on the basis of being 'informed informants', rather than 'uninformed informants'. During his study of morale on ten naval ships, Campbell (1955) found that the responses from a small well informed group were more accurate than the responses given by a larger less informed group. Although Campbell's research was based upon a quantitative nature, he argues that this is representative across much of social science. Rubin and Rubin (2005: 68) similarly argue that an interviewer does not need a large amount of respondents to increase the reliability or credibility of their findings. This is described by Burgess (1984) and Honigmann (1982) as 'judgement sampling' and also by Ritchie et al. (2003) as 'purposive sampling'. Here, respondents have been selected as 'they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles.' (ibid: 78)

As a final point, it must be mentioned that some of these respondents were Salafi; which is part of the Sunni sect. There have been differing opinions to whether Salafis are really at the core of the issues discussed within this thesis. Briggs et al. (2006: 62), for example, assert that the UK 'government must greatly enhance its partnership with the Salafi community' in order to work towards resolving these issues. This includes a move

away from those they term as the 'usual suspects', who they argue have little or no real influence or core understanding in this arena. Partnerships with Salafis is also promoted by Dr Robert Lambert, former head of the Muslim Contact Unit within the Metropolitan Police, who explains that, from his experience, these groups are at the 'forefront of groundbreaking community work that successfully counters the adverse influence of al-Qaeda propaganda among susceptible youth' (Lambert, 2008: 33). Lambert goes on to state that these groups, through various misconceptions, face alienation from both the government and their own communities who consider them as working with the 'enemy' (ibid).

There are also those who distance themselves from these groups due to the alleged links between Salafism and Wahhabism. Wiktorowicz (2006) argues that the term Wahhabi is affiliated to Salafis by their enemies and that it is difficult to find anyone who refers to themselves as Wahhabis. He goes on to explain that the Salafi faith has been broken down into three major factions: purists; politicos; and jihadis. This is due to their differences over the 'assessment of contemporary problems and thus how this creed should be applied', including 'issues related to politics and violence' (ibid: 207)<sup>42</sup>.

This apprehension can be seen through the UK Government's stance on the issue of non-violent extremism (HM Government, 2011). Salafi groups in the UK have not been officially labelled as 'non-violent extremists' or simply as 'extremists', though many have had their funding – provided by the government to tackle radicalisation – unexpectedly cut. Considering this and other factors it is believed this is due to them falling under this definition (House of Commons, 2011). The informed informants within this study comprised of a number of different Islamic sects in the UK, and the responses collected from Salafis were deemed to hold just as much importance as the others. In fact, on certain occasions, the data provided by Salafis gave alternative insights on the issues which were not previously considered. At the same time there is an appreciation of the complexity within the non-violent extremism arguments. This is discussed in further detail within both the 'Theory, Practice and Policy' and 'Conclusions' chapters of the thesis.

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<sup>42</sup> There are also other papers which provide further insight on the topic (see Change Institute, 2008, for example), and others that discuss the topic more widely (see Lynch, 2012, for example).



### Snowball and Opportunistic Sampling: Informed Informants

Snowball sampling methods are usually applied when respondents are difficult to access for researchers. For example, this includes the homeless (Salganik and Heckathorn, 2004), drug users, and small and dispersed populations (Ritchie et al., 2003). This was also the case within this particular research as the number of potential respondents available was significantly limited with many being dispersed across much of the UK. Thus, there was difficulty in identifying, locating and accessing those who met the specified criteria. The snowball sampling strategy proved to be successful in overcoming this issue.

Also, given the sensitive nature of the research, and with the obvious associations with government, security services and police forces, it was somewhat difficult to build up enough trust with individuals to ensure they agreed to participate. As trust was built up gradually within respondents' networks, it proved to be of huge importance as trusted recommendations from current contacts to potential contacts held much more weight. Finally, the use of recommended individuals helped to ensure the new respondents were of a certain standard as their personal reputations were considered.

There were also the negative implications of the strategy to consider. First, although this strategy went some way to ensure respondents were of a certain standard, the collected data may not represent a balanced perspective as current respondents could have put me in contact with individuals who hold similar viewpoints (Ritchie et al., 2003). Also, interviewing within the same extended network of respondents could have subjected the research to bias or erroneous data with little way of identification. Finally, there was also the risk that if one respondent within the network became unsure towards the validity of the research or towards me personally, then this could have disrupted access to the rest of the network. As far as I am aware, these issues did not cause a great concern when collecting the data; though, as will be discussed, this was not without its own complexity. The concerns regarding the validity of the data were overcome when data collected from one network was analysed against that collected from other networks.

In addition to employing the snowballing sampling strategy, I frequented relevant talks, conferences and events around the subject of this thesis. I also accepted the invitations I

had received from contacts to attend various 'local community' mosque social events. These were usually on the topic of extremism, all of which had the potential to expose me to further respondents; described by Burgess (1984: 55) as 'opportunistic sampling'. Becker (1970: 35) also identifies this as one of six strategies set out for aiding researchers to identify their sample group and 'gather information in a more direct and purposive way.'

There was one final method used to recruit respondents. This involved becoming part of internet forums which discussed certain issues pertaining to Muslims. Some of the threads on the forums concerned extremism. They were not promoting extremism, but discussed and debated the links (or lack of) with Islam and extremism, and the meaning of 'jihad', for example. This method provided access to a number of contacts and from this one particular person proved to be an important respondent for the thesis. This was not only because he had once been involved in an extremist network personally, but also as he acted as a 'gatekeeper' for some of the interviews conducted with community members (as will be discussed later).

#### Data Collection: Informed Informants

As mentioned, there were 31 semi-structured interviews conducted within the data set labelled as 'informed informants'. Although these were primarily on a one-to-one basis, there was one occasion where two respondents from the same organisation personally requested to be interviewed together. Before the recruitment for interviews took place it was thought that the respondents would fall into one or more of four distinct categories.

Grassroots Workers: The first group consisted of individuals engaged in de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation work at the grassroots level. They hold an informal (as viewed by central and local government) yet powerful role within their local communities and usually integral positions within their local mosques. They are at the centre of organising certain youth activities and providing social support in a range of topics, not just specific to extremism. This is extremely important as it ensures transparency and builds up trust with youth across a range of different topics.

The interviews also facilitated a wider appreciation of some of the issues facing youth, which may not have previously been considered, and determine why they become more susceptible to extremism (Rayment, 2008). As many of these respondents were of second and third generation immigrants they appeared to be in touch with certain youth issues; as many of them had faced the very same problems themselves. The Home Affairs Select Committee hearings on understanding the 'Roots of violent radicalisation', similarly argued, 'there is a wealth of knowledge held by people working with individuals judged to be vulnerable to violent radicalisation at the local level that could better inform our understanding...' (House of Commons, 2012: 43). The roles they hold within their communities appear to have many similarities to the 'moral entrepreneurs' outlined by Howard Becker (1973: 148).

Almost all of these individuals and organisations were not, at the time of interviewing, government funded. This is due to them wanting to maintain a distance as a direct result of negative Muslim youth perceptions of the UK Government in regards to its CT policies (as will be discussed later in the thesis). There were three main aims for interviewing these individuals. The first was to understand from a 'bottom-up' approach why and how radicalisation occurs from those who have real experience within this area. The second was to understand the de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation techniques some of these individuals were applying within their own local communities. Finally, interviewing these respondents helped to gain a deeper understanding of the links between radicalisation and terrorism.

When interviewing this particular set of respondents it was imagined that there may have been the possibility of certain limitations; with four in particular. First, the responses could have contained a certain element of bias as the individuals may have attempted to protect the reputations of both the organisation they represent and the youth that attend. Second, some of the respondents may have been unwilling to talk about sensitive issues or disclose sensitive data. Third, the respondents could have provided bias responses so not to incur social exclusion from their friends, family, or the wider community (Crisp & Turner, 2007). Finally, the respondents may have refused to participate due to the potential issues this could have caused between themselves and the youth they work with. After the interviews were conducted and the data were analysed it appeared that these limitations fortunately did not seem to occur.

Youth Workers: The second group contained those working with Muslim youth as 'youth workers'. They were considered to be 'unofficial' in the sense that they had not been employed by the state. They had, however, in certain instances received some form of government funding or grant. It was envisaged that this group would be predominantly involved with general youth work, rather than focussing upon, as with the grassroots workers, 'de-radicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation' strategies. However, it was also understood that some of the respondents would have fluidity in their work. Interviewing this group fundamentally aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the wider strains and grievances affecting Muslim youth, which do not necessarily have to relate to extremism. The limitations envisaged with this group mirrored that of the grassroots workers' stated above.

Religious Leaders: The third group comprised of various imams and religious leaders across the UK. This included those who were affiliated with one specific mosque and those who were not part of any in particular (at least not in an official capacity). The aim of interviewing these respondents was to understand the mosques' viewpoint of what constitutes extremism, and also to further ascertain the role of theology, ideology and religion within radicalisation.

Much of the devout Muslim communities' activities have some sort of direct or indirect connection with the mosque. Religious leaders are not only seen as spiritual guides but also as those who can be approached for a multitude of reasons, including economical, social and cultural. They are also approached to resolve certain issues within and across communities and specific families.

There were three main limitations, in addition to those discussed within the context of grassroots workers, envisaged when interviewing this group. First, was the possibility of obtaining data that was either distorted or uninformed. As will be discussed within the relevant empirical chapters, although these religious leaders may be able to provide Muslim elders with the support they need, a relatively large number of them fail to culturally, socially and politically meet the needs of Muslim youth (see HM Government, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2005; Naqshbandi, 2006; Malik, 2007). Though this was initially seen as a limitation, it was also clear that if the responses from this group was analysed correctly then it may allow a deeper exploration of the relationship (or lack of) between

Muslim youth and religious leaders, and in turn how this can affect certain Muslim youths' susceptibility towards becoming radicalised. Second, they could have claimed to have known extremist individuals and groups when in fact they did not. Once again, it was felt that if this was the case then it would prove to yield interesting research data. The final limitation was that the religious leaders could have fabricated their answers in order to maintain, in their own opinion, credibility for themselves and their mosque.

Ex-Extremists: The final group of informed informants comprised individuals who were once part of either non-violent and/or violent extreme groups in the UK or abroad, or espoused extreme ideologies. These individuals have now reverted away from this stance. Although it was originally thought that this group would be hard to reach, there were opportunities during the research, predominantly through 'snowballing', to speak to a small number of them. There was initially a concern with interviewing those who had been radicalised as they may not be the best to judge how their opinions, beliefs and actions had changed over a period of time. Though, it became clear after the interviews took place that this set of respondents have had the time to reflect on the causes of their radicalisation. Although the limitations to this group mirror what has previously been discussed, the richness and depth of data gained from their responses were extremely important to shaping this research.

Finally, it should be noted that the interviews with informed informants were conducted exclusively with male respondents. This was due to a number of reasons. Most notably, this tends to reflect the apparent limited numbers of female informed informants working within this particular area.

### 3.4.3 Interviews with Community Members

The community members were initially selected to answer the third research question outlined above. The data collection for this particular phase planned to be conducted across two different locations as part of a multiple, or comparative case-study approach. Yin (1984) argues that the multiple case-study design has distinct advantages over single case design. The evidence from a multiple approach 'is often considered more compelling...[and] regarded as being more robust' (ibid: 48). Yin goes on to point out

that the results of case studies are not generalisable to populations and that the main purpose is to 'expand and generalize theories' (ibid: 10). Although this holds some resonance within this research, it was felt that the core issues that could surface have the potential to act not only as strong foundations for future research within other Muslim communities in the UK, but also have wider implications within topics which do not necessarily have to be linked to the subject of radicalisation.

The semi-structured interviews within this phase aimed to be conducted with individuals who, unlike the informed informants, were not, to my knowledge, directly exposed to those with extreme viewpoints or ideologies. However, their knowledge was far wider than initially expected. It is important to mention at this point that a critical issue arose during the data collection. This severely affected the research methodology and the approach taken within this phase. As a result, the strategy for data collection had to be rethought. Before this is discussed, the original sampling and data collection strategy will be outlined as a reference.

#### Sampling: Community Members

The term 'community' can incorporate a variety of meanings. These include geographic, employment related, social, religious, and political, amongst others. The research sought to recruit respondents which would be part of three distinct communities: religious (i.e. all of the respondents would be Muslim); geographic (i.e. all respondents would live within the same specified geographic boundaries); and institution (i.e. all would attend the same mosque).

Ideally, all of the respondents' demographic attributes would have been in line with a representation taken for the general attendance at the particular mosque chosen for the research. However, as most religious institutions have an 'open door' policy it was almost impossible to gauge this. Therefore, the next best alternative was adhering to the demographic breakdown of the local geographic area. Thus, respondents' sampling criteria was to be in accordance to gender, age and socio-economic distributions in relation to the 2001 census; specifically focussing on the Muslim population's statistics within these areas.

The proposed sampling strategy for this phase was intended to be a 'single-stage probability' technique with the specific implementation of a 'stratified random sampling' approach. Blaikie (2000) states there are two main purposes of this technique. The first is when the researcher aims to make sure particular categories within a sample are represented. The second is to ensure there are sufficient numbers within all the outlined categories that are to be selected. The attempted recruitment took place after Jum'ah – Friday prayer – as this is deemed to be one of the more emphasised requirements for Muslims to attend. In addition, recruitment was also attempted during another day of the week to ensure a wide selection of potential respondents, rather than the risk of simply attaining interviews with those who attend mosque only for Friday prayers. The selection of potential respondents aimed to be conducted over a minimum of four weeks per location to ensure a fair representation of worshippers.

#### Data Collection: Community Members

Originally, it was planned that data would be collected from two different geographic areas, with a target of ten interviews per site. The locations were the London Borough of Lambeth and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. However, a number of unforeseen problems arose; one of which was critical to the research. After attempting to recruit respondents outside of the selected mosque within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, it became evidently clear the worshippers had little, if not any, interest in participating in the research. When approaching potential respondents I was initially welcomed warmly with people willing to talk to me. However, when the nature of the research was outlined and certain key phrases were used, such as 'radicalisation', 'extremism', and 'terrorism', for example, the potential respondents immediately declined participation and effectively terminated the conversation. This indicated a lack of trust towards the research. Further to this, after lengthy applications, numerous emails and telephone calls, the proposed mosque in the London Borough of Lambeth refused direct involvement in the research also<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> It must be noted that a number of prominent figures at the mosque, and within its affiliated community groups, were extremely helpful throughout other elements of the empirical data collection.

Consequently, two further locations were selected. One was in the London Borough of Hounslow and the other was a location in the West of England. These were chosen as I had existing networks which could act as 'gatekeepers' to potential respondents at these sites, with the possibility of 'snowballing' further contacts. The respondents in the London Borough of Hounslow were snowballed through a mutual friend, and participation was agreed by two respondents. After interviews were conducted with these individuals, I asked if they could put me in contact with further respondents; though this was bluntly refused. The participants explained that due to the sensitive nature of the topic, and from the 'horror-stories' they had heard through the media of issues such as the misuse of 'detention without charge' legislation (Yezza, 2008; Curtis and Hodgson, 2008), they would not risk their credibility or their families' safety and wellbeing by recommending others to participate.

I also contacted the mosque directly to request assistance with recruitment, though was advised that they wanted nothing to do with the research and emphasised that I would not be welcome recruiting for the research anywhere on the mosque's grounds. They also strongly requested that I maintain the wishes of the mosque, representative of its congregation, and did not attempt to recruit respondents whatsoever, including standing on public ground outside of the mosque. I of course had to abide by these requests. Thus, it became virtually impossible to recruit further respondents within this particular location.

However, the selected mosque in the West of England was more receptive to the research. This was mainly due to two people. First was the individual, mentioned above, who contacted me through the Islamic forum. The second was a religious leader at the mosque I had maintained contact, and built up trust, with over many months. Though, it must be mentioned that gaining access to this mosque was not without its own issues. When these 'gatekeepers' proposed the research to the mosque's congregation and management it was immediately met with hostility. However, after lengthy negotiations on my behalf, the 'gatekeepers' were able to grant access. These two individuals risked much to facilitate these interviews<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> I would like to extend much gratitude to the two individuals from the West of England for their tireless work in facilitating these interviews; especially as they risked their own credibility. Their faith in me and my research is duly appreciated. Without them, this element of the research would not have been possible. They cannot be named due to confidentiality reasons.



The limitations envisaged when collecting data from this group comprised four main points. First, the respondents may not have wished to discuss certain sensitive subjects and issues. It was thought this reluctance may occur during the interview, rather than, as discussed, during the recruitment period. This was not an issue during the interviews for those who did participate within the study. Second, certain respondents may have withheld information or have provided elements of false data as I may have been considered as an outsider. Third, the respondents could have provided bias responses in order to protect the (perceived) reputation of their particular mosque, community, and Islam as a faith more generally. The fourth limitation is the respondents may have given biased responses so not to encounter any social exclusion within their communities, even though they were fully assured of confidentiality.

It must also be noted that the interviews conducted with the community members from the West of England were in a focus group setting. This was due to restrictions on time and resources; as much of this had been spent attempting to recruit the community members from the first three failed locations. As the location in the West of England is a long journey from my home in London, there were only a limited number of trips I could make on the budget I had for the interviews.

As a final point, the interviews with the community members were exclusively conducted with men. This was expected from the outset and was mainly due to the respect of cultural and religious beliefs I had to maintain, i.e. as a male not approaching Muslim woman outside of mosques. Also, there was a consideration of the difficulties involved in certain Muslim women talking in private to an unfamiliar male. However, it was hoped that through employing a snowball strategy some women may have been recruited during the interviews. Though, as discussed, as there were enormous difficulties in recruiting men themselves, recruiting women was not an option at any point during the interviews.

### 3.5 Accessing the Data: Fieldwork Based Observations

The fieldwork based observations for this research are different from the contemporary ethnographic data collection method frequently implemented by social scientists. Thus, rather than immersing myself within the sample I aimed to research I assumed the role of both a non-participant observer and participant observer when necessary. It was hoped that this would not only prove useful when conveying findings to the reader, but to also help understand how social interactions take place within certain settings.

The recording of the observational data was through personal field notes. Bailey (1996: 80) describes field notes as being the 'backbone of collecting and analyzing field data', and that they form part of the analytic process. Lofland et al. (1984: 72) take this further by writing that if the researcher does not take field notes, they 'might as well not be in the setting'. Gray (2004: 244, italics in original) recommends that the researcher should make 'mental notes' of the settings, people and experiences, which can later be recalled to help 'the production of *jotted notes*'. These 'jotted notes' were captured within a blank fieldwork book which was carried around at all times. The initial notes, especially during interviews, were quick comments as an elaboration can be 'disconcerting' to the respondents (Bailey, 1996: 81). Lofland et al. (1984) recommend the researcher waits for an opportunity, such as the journey home from an interview, to elaborate on these initial notes. This advice was strongly considered and much of the elaborated notes were written on the usually long journeys home, which included an analysis of my personal interpretation of the settings and actions noted.

It was decided to not inform the respondents that fieldwork based observations were to take place. Douglas (1976) considers this to be an ethical approach in collecting data as there is a possibility individuals may attempt to portray an artificial representation of themselves; thus defying the purpose. As well as acting in a manner not natural to them, informing the respondents of this may have affected their interview responses.

There were two limitations envisaged with using fieldwork based observations. The first concerns the researcher. As there is potentially copious amounts of data available with this method it is difficult to 'prove conclusively that the data gathered are sufficiently objective to represent a true reflection of events' (Gray, 2004: 256). The second

limitation lies with the respondent. As some of the fieldwork based observations were conducted through interviews, there was the potential to gather erroneous data as the interviewees may have acted in a manner not normally natural to them. Further, although some of this data were collected in social settings, those being observed may have acted differently as they were conscious of the presence of an outsider.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The method of data analysis one chooses is not only important with the analysis of data, but also determines, to some extent, how that data is collected in the first place. One of the more popular approaches currently is 'grounded theory' (GT). If GT is considered in its most original understanding, as derived by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the researcher does not start with some hypothesis, but remains open minded and allows the data to fully guide the categories, concepts and themes. From this, there will be the construction of some theory which goes to understand and explain the particular phenomenon they are researching.

However, expecting the researcher to enter the field with no preconceived thoughts on the topic is extremely difficult and arguably impossible, especially in the modern era of easily accessible information. These opinions are not always necessarily formed in the conscious mind of the researcher, but can also be influenced throughout their lives from various factors, including those, as mentioned at the fore of this chapter, epistemological and ontological considerations. Those conducting qualitative interviews will, at least, be influenced with the types of questions they ask. Even when the data has been collected by the researcher, it will be difficult to code it with complete objectivity.

This version of GT was considered to be too rigid and implausible for this thesis. This is not a standalone verdict, with others such as Charmaz (2012: 3) arguing:

'Glaser...differentiates his version of grounded theory from qualitative inquiry and rejects common practices within it, such as beginning research with a literature review, making accuracy a central concern, transcribing interviews, and sample size. Glaser and

his followers do not explicitly attend to epistemological questions about data collection and quality, research relationships, and researchers' roles and standpoints...'

This did not mean that alternative approaches to GT were not suitable. Developments in the field over the last decade or so, such as the adaptation presented by Charmaz (2006), considers it valid for the researcher to have some predetermined notion of the topic they are studying and, importantly, that GT and qualitative inquiry can actually complement each other. Charmaz (2012) states that, at its core, a researcher using GT should remain open to all possible theoretical understandings, develop tentative interpretations about these data through codes and nascent changes, and return to the field to gather more data to check and refine major categories. Thus, a neo-GT approach was selected.

My awareness and understanding of the concept of radicalisation began, as with most of society, through the media post-9/11. After becoming employed for a think-tank based in London I started to further understand not just the media's interpretation but also the views held by policy makers and academics. However, a secondary analysis of material is not always a necessary indication of the issue; at least one that may not be entirely accurate. This was especially apparent when I started my doctorate and I was able to read more materials in depth, which often contradicted one another. It was clear that the only way to enable a better understanding of the phenomenon was to personally conduct preliminary empirical interviews with those who had some form of expertise in the area. I wanted to gather a range of perspectives on the issue, so I interviewed people working for central and local government, the police and academics.

I also interviewed an informed informant from London. At this point, I wasn't aware that he was a grassroots worker, and in fact did not even fully understand the role that these individuals played within de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation work. I interviewed him as I had known the mosque he worked with had some serious problems in the past with violent extremists<sup>45</sup> and because he had been recommended by one of my contacts. The questions I had asked him reflected this, for example:

'What is, in your opinion, the current state of extremism within your area?'

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<sup>45</sup> This was determined from reading various newspaper articles.

It became quickly evident, however, that the respondent wanted to discuss their opinions of how and why radicalisation occurs, from the outset. It was from this point that I started to give this layer of individuals and groups (i.e. the informed informants) much more prominence within the research, and they started to form an integral role within the data collection. This was one of the aims of the preliminary interviews, i.e. to not only gain a better understanding of what the current issues were in order to shape the research, but also to determine who could provide valuable insights. As with the principles of modern GT, I transcribed and coded this respondent's interview instantly. I altered the semi-structured questions to reflect these developments for future interviews. These new questions focussed on how and why radicalisation occurs and what could be done to counter it.

Around a year later, the main data collection for the research started. After a great deal of difficulty – as will be discussed later – I started to conduct interviews with the informed informants. My preliminary hypothesis, that there would be slight nuances in their roles and knowledge, proved to be true; even though there were overlaps and many of the interviewees held knowledge of topics beyond their primary function. Thus, the imams and religious leaders were not only asked about what they thought radicalisation entailed, but there was also a focus on the role religion plays within the phenomenon. The ex-extremists were asked about their own personal experiences; where there was an effort to get them to outline their account from start to finish in some coherent and chronological way. The grassroots workers were questioned about their involvement and experience with those who are susceptible to radicalisation or have been radicalised.

Once an interview was conducted it was transcribed verbatim. These were all personally done as it enabled a further familiarisation and understanding of the responses (Fielding, 1996). Personally transcribing the interviews allowed me to make additional connections between the responses and relevant theories, and also helped to refresh anything that was overlooked when conducting the fieldwork based observations.

The data were coded line by line as this enabled a much deeper understanding of the issue and provided the ability to focus the questions for future interviews (Charmaz, 2012). From this, there was the recognition of emerging topics that I had not previously been aware of. For example, certain micro and macro level factors, such as identity and

discrimination, for example, went from being considered as causal factors to those that make the individual more susceptible to radicalisation. This was a key development as it resonates with the paradigm that many people in society may be affected by these strains and grievances, though only a very few become extreme.

Another important issue that was not originally considered within the research was the subcultural element of radicalisation and terrorism. After this consideration was raised by the initial respondents interviewed it started to increasingly feature more prominently in most of the interviews with the informed informants. It became clear that this concept needed to become one of the central themes of the thesis, not only because it formed a core part of radicalisation, but also as it was a topic that was under-researched and not generally considered within other accounts.

The community members, as mentioned previously, were initially recruited to answer the third research question of the thesis. It was, at first, intended to question this data set about whether they, or others they knew of, had experienced any of the effects of CT policy and strategy in general. However, many Muslim respondents within this study (both informed informants and community members) knew about the Prevent Strategy (HM Government, 2007), and were able to comment about it in depth. Much of this was due to exchange of information within communities, the upsurge of media coverage at the time from both 'Western' and 'Muslim' news outlets, and a number of the informed informants having some affiliations with the strategy due to the nature of their work. The questions were, therefore, altered to also ask about the strategy specifically.

In addition, due to the extensive knowledge of some of the community members, their responses were useful when answering research questions across the board. Further, as the average age of the community members was relatively young, i.e. between the ages of 20-25 years old, this also afforded insights into some of the problems that face Muslim young people, and youth in general, in the UK. Some of this focussed upon their opinions on the role culture and subculture plays within radicalisation.

The interviews conducted with the officials also evolved as the research went on. Much of this was influenced by what was being understood from the responses given by the informed informants. For example, those respondents that worked in central and local

government were questioned on their opinions of the Prevent Strategy from the outset. They were initially asked about their own particular issues with its implementation and this evolved to also trying to gauge their opinions on the grievances felt by the informed informants and community members in regards to the strategy; such as the blurring of boundaries between CT work and community cohesion, for example.

It is also important to discuss how this data were analysed. In terms of the fieldwork based observations, these were coded into general categories, such as, for example, 'group influences', 'peer pressure', 'personality', 'the Ummah', and used when and where necessary when writing up the thesis. With the qualitative interviews, as discussed, the data were coded line by line, which then made up certain concepts and categories and sub-categories. An example of this is with the topic of 'foreign policy'.

Most of the informed informants mentioned 'foreign policy' as one of the main reasons they felt radicalisation occurs in the UK. Thus, every time the phrase was used it was coded under the heading of 'foreign policy'. If there were other concepts within this, then the data were also cross-coded as appropriate. The use of qualitative software NVivo 8 allowed this to be undertaken in a simple and logical manner. From this, the concept was considered within the wider category of 'macro-level strains'. Once all of the data for this category was coded, I went back to it and organised the all of the concepts into finer sub-categories, where 'foreign policy' was placed under the title of 'global grievances' (which was later renamed to be the 'global level'). As with most other research, it is difficult to be able to perfectly code everything in the first instance. I therefore had to re-visit the concepts and finer-code within them. So with 'foreign policy', there became sub-concepts like 'direct foreign policy', 'indirect foreign policy', for example. Again, the use of qualitative software allowed me to do this with relative ease.

Finally, it must be considered that although the coding was completed on a case by case basis as the interviews went on, I decided to re-code all of the interviews again once all the data had been collected. My understanding of radicalisation had considerably changed by the end of the data collection and it was felt this was the simplest way to reflect this. Further, as I had collected many interviews, I wanted a chance to look at all of my data again to see if there were any important aspects that had been overlooked and any further connections that could be made between the data.

This was an important decision for the thesis as it led to the data evolving from being organised in the original categories, i.e. 'personal and local-level strains', 'macro-level strains', 'transition', 'facilitations', and 'radicalisation', to become connected, under the guidance of my supervisor Professor Martin Innes, with Goffman's (1961) moral career framework. Thus, the data was now grouped under three main categories to compliment Goffman's three pronged approach. They were renamed 'Susceptibility', 'Contingencies' and 'Conversion'. This was a critical step as it allowed this account of radicalisation to be presented in a coherent and clear way, and for it to form part of a theoretical framework.

### 3.7 Respondent References

The method used to assign each respondent with their own specific reference needs to be briefly outlined. Each conducted interview was considered as standalone and within that interview each participant was allocated their own reference. This considered two elements.

The first part of the reference consisted of three letters which were determined by the category the respondent was attached to. This referred – as close as possible – to their specific role and experience. It was felt that this method was most suitable, rather than only assigning the interviewee with a generic number or code, as it gives the reader a little more information of the origin of that particular respondent quote. The categories used, with their three letter associated code (as shown in brackets), were:

- High-ranking government minister (hrm);
- High-ranking police officer (hrp);
- High-ranking intelligence official (hri);
- High-ranking central government civil servant (hrc);
- Local government civil-servant (lgc);
- Academic (acd);
- Researcher (res);
- Grassroots worker (grw);
- Grassroots worker and ex-extremist (gee);
- Ex-extremist (exe);
- Imam and/or religious leader (irl);



- Prominent representative of a Muslim community (rmc);
- Community member (cms)

In terms of the second part of the reference, each respondent was assigned their own specific three digit numerical identification code. This was essential to keep consistency across the entire thesis when using different quotes from the same interviewee. These numerical codes were generated at random using the “=RANDBETWEEN” function in Microsoft Excel 2007. When these two elements were combined, a specific reference was produced for each respondent, such as ‘grw 768’ or ‘res 492’, for example.

### 3.8 Reflections

Collecting empirical data for this thesis was a difficult task. There were many challenges I faced when attempting to recruit respondents for the study and during the interviews themselves. However, before discussing this in further depth it is important to outline the benefits of considering wider theories that can have an impact when in the field.

#### 3.8.1 Insider/Outsider Status

Studies in anthropology and sociology traditionally assumed that researchers were either fundamentally ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ in regards to accessing their research sample; with each status having its own advantages and disadvantages (Merriam, et al., 2001). More recent discussions have highlighted the complexities inherent in either status and have acknowledged that the ‘boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated’ (ibid: 405). Further, Kleinman (1980) argues the importance of using our identities to build a rapport with respondents, whatever the common ground may be. There were three main points of consideration in regards to my personal circumstances which were of importance when recruiting for and conducting interviews.

The first consideration pertained to gender. As many of the interviews were conducted with male Muslim respondents, it is possible that they opened up to me more speedily and I was able to gain their trust with less difficulty. Through centuries of ‘historical

circumstances', certain Muslims, of course not all, view females as being subordinate to men even though Islam, through the interpretation of the Quran, 'provides women a position of honour and respect' (Smith, 1979: 517). In addition, researchers such as Klatch (1988: 79), who conducted interviews with women of the American New Right, declares that her gender enabled her to build a stronger rapport with her female respondents as the 'fact remained that [they] were two women talking together'.

Second, issues of ethnicity and heritage were considered. The majority of respondents within the study were, as am I, of South Asian descent which had the possibility of being favourable. A Caucasian counterpart unfortunately may have found it more difficult with gaining access and trust. During her study of West Yorkshire Pakistanis, Bolognani (2005) attributed much of this to the 'climate of Islamophobia' experienced by a number of her respondents. This 'clearly created a general sense of mistrust towards people investigating issues concerning Muslims in Britain', especially white researchers due to the loss of trust in 'white officialdom' and 'white authority' (ibid: 282). Interestingly, this is something that may be reserved for white British individuals, as once her ethnicity of white Italian was discovered it appeared to reaffirm her increasing new status as an 'insider' within the community she was researching.

Although the South Asian connection had the potential to work in my favour, coming from an Indian and Hindu heritage certainly did not and had the possibility to destabilise access into these communities. For many years, predominantly since the partition of India in 1947, there have been long running conflicts between Hindus and Muslims within the region, with tensions finding their way into many Diasporas. Over the years this has been accentuated through issues such as Kashmir. Although tensions have somewhat subsided of late with India and Pakistan having ever increasing collaboration on a number of different fronts, the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008 and subsequent attacks, for example, highlight how potentially unstable the region can be. Fortunately, this tension was not apparent during recruitment or conducting the interviews. In fact, on certain occasions I felt I had been viewed as an 'outsider' who had made the personal choice to research Muslim issues. This, I believe, was viewed as somewhat admirable. Further, during the interviews it became apparent that certain interviewees preferred non-Muslim academics to research Muslim issues. There are two reasons behind this. First, many felt that Muslim academics are sometimes unrelenting towards the cause of

fellow Muslims. Secondly, some respondents felt, although this is of course not accurate, that there is an enhanced level of credibility when arguments concerning Muslims are delivered by a non-Muslim.

Third, personal experiences and demographics were also invaluable. As a brief personal background, I have grown up in a fairly affluent area of London, but attended an all boys comprehensive secondary school which was very rough and intimidating at times. Whilst conducting my undergraduate degree, I lived in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets located in East London which was ranked the third most deprived borough out of 354 local authorities in England (Government Office for London, 2007), and the London Borough of Waltham Forest which has an 'above average' crime rate in relation to the rest of London (Metropolitan Police, 2008). In addition, I have family and friends living in many areas across the UK. I strongly feel that this contrast has enabled me to develop into a person who is confident enough to build up rapport with individuals from a variety of different backgrounds, ages, genders, and socio-economic statuses. I believe this was key during the recruitment of respondents and when undertaking the interviews.

From all of these experiences I fully understood the different approaches needed when recruiting and interviewing different respondents. For example, a connection needed to be made culturally and socially with young adults which enabled them to consider me as one of them. On the other hand, when recruiting and interviewing Muslim elders<sup>46</sup> I had to converse in a balanced fashion that not only asked the pertinent questions, but also maintained the respect that was expected within a South Asian community such as this.

At this point, it is important to mention that negotiating a specific role within a community is a complex and dynamic issue. A researcher does not, and indeed cannot, simply assume the role of an insider or outsider (see for example the debate between Duneier and Wacquant in the *American Journal of Sociology*<sup>47</sup>). Rather, how someone engages within a particular social setting depends upon that person's qualities and individual characteristics. Whilst insights from secondary material can provide a good foundation,

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<sup>46</sup> For a definition of the term 'elders', see Footnote 18.

<sup>47</sup> This debate started from the publication of Wacquant's (2002) paper in the *American Journal of Sociology* which strongly criticised theories and approaches taken by Duneier's (1999) in his book, 'Sidewalk'. In fact, this criticism was aimed at wider works conducted by others such as Anderson (1999) and Newman (1999). Duneier (2002) responded to Wacquant's criticisms with his own paper in the *American Journal of Sociology*.

in reality the world is a far more complex place. When dealing with people and groups who inherently hold individual traits and personalities, the 'textbook' ease of conducting research ceases to exist. Although this research did not implement an ethnographic strategy per se, I sought to maintain a standpoint which encompassed both insider and outsider statuses. I aimed to involve myself enough to gain trust and collect, to the best of my knowledge, reliable data, whilst at the same time not becoming too involved to cloud my own judgement or perceptual acuity. For example, Hall (2000) recommends researchers should aim to maintain a balanced status where they are considered as accepted within their sample, though at the same time not completely immersed. Similarly, Davis (1973: 342) writes that the researcher should adopt a 'middle ground' position of both 'Martian', whom he describes as an individual who would prefer minimal interactions with their sample, and the 'Convert', who immerses themselves within the sample with an aim of becoming an insider in order to produce 'a valid *objective* account of their subjective world' (ibid: 337, italics in original). Therefore, I was informed by certain literature, specifically of Mitchell Duneier, Howard Becker and Robert Burgess, though fully understood that the approach adopted was subject to change depending on the varying conditions. It was clear that a successful researcher in the field needs to be flexible and adaptable to any changing circumstances in order to best maintain this balanced role.

### 3.8.2 The Challenges of Conducting Empirical Research

Collecting the empirical data was a very challenging task and took a lengthy amount of time. This was a difficult period where I had to always remain resilient and motivated. I was constantly working on building relationships with people over a long period of time, sometimes many months, before they agreed to meet me for an interview. I travelled a great deal and covered many miles during the data collection. Although the experience was very rewarding, there were many difficulties that I had to overcome.

One of these was not knowing if the respondents would actually turn up to the interview; something that happened on many occasions. For example, after a long three hour drive to meet a grassroots worker, I waited for over two hours for him without any message or reply to my phone calls. After another hour had passed, he sent me a text message that

simply said he couldn't meet me, without any explanation. Not only did examples like this severely affect my resources, but also threatened my access into a network of potential respondents, as I was not sure if they genuinely could not meet me, or had second thoughts about the research. When this happened I had to curb my frustration as I didn't want to burn bridges with any contacts or networks.

There were also times when an agreed interview was close to cancellation and I had to do whatever I could to ensure it took place. One particular example of this was when I had arranged to meet a former extremist from the Midlands who I had been put in touch with by a mutual contact. I spent many weeks exchanging text messages and telephone calls with this respondent to alleviate his concerns towards the research. He eventually agreed to meet me. I remember being extremely nervous before this interview as this respondent had the potential to provide real insights into radicalisation from a first-hand account. I wanted to ensure the interview went smoothly.

On the morning of the interview, as I was filling up petrol and about to join the motorway, I received a text from our mutual contact saying the respondent wanted to cancel as he suspected I was either an undercover reporter for the BBC or part of the security service. I felt dejected, let down and like I had just lost one of the most insightful interviews I could have achieved. I sat in my car and called the respondent in a bid to convince him otherwise; though it was no surprise that he did not answer. I left him a long voicemail which again explained my intentions. I got a call back from him a little while later and spent much time alleviating the concerns he had. He ended the phone call by simply saying something along the lines of, 'I will think about it and get back to you in a little while'. I received a text message from him about half an hour later stating that he would give me a chance. The joy I felt when his message came was incredible. I made the long journey to the meeting point, which seemed like an eternity as I was forever expecting a call from the respondent to cancel. This did not, thankfully, happen and I conducted one of the most interesting interviews of the research which yielded some very insightful data.

I sometimes had to be forthright when attempting to secure an interview. This was the case when I was trying to arrange an interview with a prominent grassroots worker in London. I tried to get in touch with his organisation without any reply. They did not

answer the telephone either. I decided that the only way I was going to get in touch with him directly was to go to his office on the off chance he was there and free to chat for a few minutes. This was a risky strategy as I had to travel for over two hours to get there; especially at a time when money was running low for me. There was the possibility that he may have been elsewhere or could have refused to talk to me. I arrived at the office and he was there but was talking to someone else at the time, so I waited. He eventually came over and asked if I had an arranged appointment with him. I told him I hadn't and apologised for turning up without one. I explained how I had tried on many unsuccessful attempts to get in touch with him. I told him that I only needed a few minutes of his time, which he was happy to give me. I briefly explained who I was and gave him an overview of what I was researching. I requested a formal interview. I stated that he could get back to me at a later date once he had a chance to think about it; as I wanted to ensure he did not feel pressured at the time to agree. After a few days, I received an email from him informing me that he would be happy to be interviewed.

There were other instances when meeting the respondent was daunting. As discussed, some of the interviews conducted for the research were with former violent extremists. At first, this was somewhat intimidating and I found myself to be quite anxious before the initial meeting of this type. However, after this first interview was completed, I quickly realised that these respondents were, in essence, no different from other interviewees.

In order to collect the data, I sometimes found myself in situations which could have posed a direct threat to my personal wellbeing. Although I followed all of the guidelines outlined within my submission to the ethics committee at Cardiff University, real life can often be quite unpredictable. Sometimes the respondent I had arranged to meet arrived so late it had become dark and I found myself in unfamiliar territory. On occasion the location we had prearranged was changed by them at the last moment, and this was somewhere remote. I had to assess the risk as I went, and always made sure someone was aware of where I was going. However, when you are unfamiliar with a certain locale and simply following a map on your smartphone, you sometimes do not know until the last moment that you will be walking through a threatening area.

The recruitment of the officials was much easier than the informed informants as they were more used to being approached by people to discuss their work. However, not all

of these interviews were without their own challenges. One issue which occurred during an interview with a high-level civil servant highlights this. Around the time of the meeting, (in early 2010), there was much criticism being aimed at the then version of the Prevent Strategy. When attempting to explore some of the concerns which had been raised, this caused an issue. The respondent became somewhat angered by the questions posed, refused to answer them, and questioned not only my approach but also my intentions. I was accused of not taking enough of an academic rigour towards my research and that I had adopted a journalistic approach to my thesis. This was of course very insulting, but I had to remain calm. As a result, the interview was in jeopardy of collapse and the topic had to be changed to something which was less 'taxing' and 'sensitive'. As a researcher this is not a simple task as the primary objective, and natural instinct, is to gain truthful, transparent and insightful data on the issue. If the topic is sensitive in the sense that it is causing emotional strain to the individual, then the interview of course must immediately be terminated. Though, on this occasion the questions appeared to be 'hitting a nerve' at a politically sensitive time. However, it is strongly felt that this is simply not good enough. In order for society to progress forward, these important questions need to be explored. Representatives of government need to remain transparent at all times and expect some form of criticism with the work they do. Only then will the pertinent issues be addressed which will lead to the refining of key policies and strategies.

There are many positives which came from the research. Throughout the journey I met some wonderful people. One such person was a grassroots worker and religious leader who lived in the Midlands. We agreed to meet at his friend's flat in London as he was giving a lecture nearby in the evening. The flat was quite small and was filled with about ten men, so seemed quite congested. There were a few people inside the immediate hallway and one of them greeted me and led me into a small living room area where my respondent was having dinner. The men in the flat were extremely friendly and offered me food and drink. The man I was interviewing also showed a great deal of warmth and kindness and made me instantly feel part of the group. Even when the interview ran over the allotted time he insisted we finish it, regardless of the consequences he faced for being late for his lecture.

The main thing about this man was that he was extremely captivating when he spoke. He was charming and funny and this drew me closer towards him. Although this man is

completely against extremism in any form whatsoever, I couldn't help feeling that if he were to propagate extreme messages it would be hard for people to not listen purely based on the strength of his personality and character – something discussed in more depth in the thesis.

Thus, on some occasions it was difficult to maintain the middle ground of insider and outsider (as discussed in the previous section). This was evident during the meeting with the grassroots worker outlined above, where as well as discussing radicalisation we talked about football, movies, and other cultural topics. This was not a standalone issue. For example, when conducting the interviews with the young community members from the West of England, I spent the entire day with them which just felt like I was hanging out with my friends. I was, though, always conscious of the requirements of a researcher and tried to maintain a middle point as best I could.

As has been outlined through various examples in this section, collecting the empirical data was a very difficult task. At the start of the data collection<sup>48</sup>, after a few months, I had only secured a very small number of interviews – most of which were conducted with government employees and academics – and this was a concern for the research. There was a contingency set between my supervisors and me that if no breakthroughs were to occur within informed informant networks, I would use the one interview I had with a former extremist as a case-study; though it was clear that this was not the ideal scenario. However, after much time spent relationship building through countless phone calls, text messages, and emails, I started, albeit slowly at first, to gain initial access into these networks. This happened to occur at the time I was due to travel abroad for a friend's wedding. However, not being around for three weeks could have put this access into jeopardy, especially as there was already a concern I could have been an intelligence officer or undercover reporter. I decided that the best course of action would be to cancel the flights.

Admittedly, the initial interviews were not as smooth as I had wished, and it was a steep learning curve. The task became somewhat easier as time went on. The more interviews I conducted the more confident and informed I became. In addition, the more time and effort I invested with the respondents, the relationships between us strengthened. They

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<sup>48</sup> This refers to the main period of data collection, rather than the preliminary interviews.



started to trust me more and began to open up their networks. They importantly acted as gatekeepers. Without the support of many of the respondents, collecting the empirical data would not have been successful.

Finally, from a personal viewpoint, the topic of terrorism is very emotive and this naturally affected me. As well as discussing these topics during the day with the respondents, or reading about them if I was not conducting interviews, I would turn on the news in the evening and would hear about terrorist attacks around the world, or other related items. I had to ensure that I spent some time away from this so not to become too emotionally attached; something that was essential in keeping a balanced perspective when both collecting the data and analysing it. Researching the topic of terrorism was emotionally straining at times. I regularly engaged in other activities, such as sport, to ensure that I maintained my emotional wellbeing.

## Chapter Four: Susceptibility

### 4.1 Prologue: Five Muslim Friends

The following three empirical chapters will explore the three principal phases outlined in Goffman's (1961) theory of moral career. To provide a reference to how each of these phases plays out in relation to radicalisation, they will be depicted through the accounts of respondents interviewed as part of the study, and will be set out at the start of each chapter. Whilst the final two accounts focus upon two specific individuals, this particular one tells the story of five young Muslim males from the West of England who were interviewed as part of a focus group.

There is nothing extreme about these individuals, or anything that sets them apart from many other young people in the UK. They are simply a group of young males who have been friends for many years and are trying to make their own way in the world. They always try to be good citizens and adhere to their social duties and the law of the land. They are attempting to establish a place for themselves within British society. This is not, however, as straightforward as it may be for various other non-Muslim youth in the UK, as establishing an identity that balances their religious beliefs, parent's traditions and culture (as maintained from their homeland), and that of a secular and liberal country is proving to be difficult.

Whilst certain people their age may be out drinking, fornicating and possibly partaking in recreational drug use on a Friday night, these five friends are usually found at their local mosque. For them, there is a distinct chasm between the Muslim youth who lead their lives according to the principles and requirements of the Quran, and those who do not. There is nothing to make them feel part of this society, and importantly also feel like this society is not welcoming of them and their traditions<sup>49</sup>. There is a distinct feeling in the group that integrating into British culture is never going to be enough for Muslims to be

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<sup>49</sup> As well as conducting the interview, the researcher spent the day with these five Muslim friends. This involved shadowing them whilst they completed various errands for the mosque in their local area. Much of the conversation on integration and belonging was outlined during this time. These were informal discussions held whilst 'on the move' and were not recorded. The official interview focussed upon the strains they had felt at the 'local' and 'global' levels.

accepted, and the only way this will happen is through assimilation, as one of them explained, 'I don't think there would be any problem if we were all called Jonny Smith and we were all Christians' (cms 326).

Much of what they read in newspapers and see on TV is how they feel British society perceives them. Most of them avoid Western media outlets as they feel Muslims are always portrayed in a negative manner. The racism and discrimination they have been subject to has increased considerably since the attacks on 9/11 and 7/7. They have all noticed it, been victim to it, and know many other Muslims in the same situation. Many of them are eager to tell stories of when they have been called 'paki' or 'terrorist' by local residents (cms 944); which occurs on a regular basis. They are quick to recount the story of the time a man came into the mosque with a dog and threatened worshippers, or when a local trader changed the name of his business to something which was overtly and directly offensive to Muslims (cms 326).

This does not end with the way society perceives them. They hold concerns with how the government and the police treat them and their fellow Muslims in their local area. They explain how they have been approached on numerous occasions by Special Branch officers and asked questions about terrorism or if they know of anyone who is extreme in their mosque or local area. They can't understand how they are singled out as they have never had any affiliation with extremism, and, as one of them explained, 'they talk to you as if you are a criminal' (cms 385). They have come to the conclusion that it is simply due to them being Muslim.

These five young adults are very politically aware of events occurring around the globe. They all see how the world around them has changed drastically in the past decade or so. When the invasion of Afghanistan happened, they were in their early teens and were most likely concerned about school, homework, or how they intended to spend their summer holidays. Though, as the years have gone by they have all been concerned with the political developments between Western and Muslim states. They talk about the 'War on Terror', the deaths of innocent Muslims around the world, and the instability this has caused in many Muslim countries. Although none of them have ever visited Afghanistan, they all seem to have a deep affinity for her citizens, as one of them explained, 'I have

watched videos of them [Western troops] killing little boys and the boys come out and they shoot them' (cms 385)

As a result, they are confused about who they are, where they belong, and whether they can ever really be a part of Western society. They are also concerned about whether the Western world despises Muslims. They are starting to see themselves, they explain, as the 'enemy within' (cms 326). Although they realise not everyone is the same and treats them in this manner, they still hold strong animosity towards sections of British and Western society. This is making them more insular towards those they consider as their own:

'...like the instinctive reaction when you're under attack, that's gonna make you become offensive and that's gonna make you have incredibly hostile emotions towards the non-Muslims. You feel like the Muslims are the people on your side and the people not on your side are the non-Muslims. You've got this hostile defence of emotional state and that's the current state of the Muslim youth already.' (cms 722)

#### 4.2 Introduction

This first empirical chapter alludes to Erving Goffman's (1961) prepatient phase of his moral career framework. Individual's past events and relationships, including those with the state and society, take on a new meaning once they are in contact with radicalisers. This chapter discusses the strains and grievances which affect Muslim young people in the UK. These issues affect Muslim and non-Muslim communities more widely, and are therefore not causative factors of radicalisation. Their importance lies with how they work to push Muslim young people away from mainstream society, and how they increase the susceptibility of these youth being pulled towards internalising extreme narratives when they are in contact with a radicaliser and go through the process of conversion.

As many careers require specific qualifications for employment, the same can be said about the radicalisee's career in order for them to become radicalised. The strains and grievances discussed within this chapter act as these qualifications and without them the career would not progress. This is not a job requirement per se, but the building blocks

needed to convert the radicalisee. That said, it should not be assumed that everyone with these 'qualifications' will inevitably become radicalised. There is, as will be outlined in the following two empirical chapters, the need for further factors and influences.

At the point of conversion, these strains and grievances become important for three main reasons. First, is to solidify the bonds between the radicaliser and radicalisee. Second, is to achieve 'frame-alignment' between the radicalisee's personal experiences and the radicaliser's extremist ideologies. The data showed that this occurs on three interlinked levels: 'personal'; 'local'; and 'global'. This manifests in an 'us vs. them' scenario where the 'us' represents the radicaliser and/or extreme group, and 'them' depicts all of those who do not agree with their particular extreme ideologies. Third, the radicaliser uses the grievances at the global level to create moral outrage within the mind of the radicalisee which works towards convincing them to participate in some sort of activism. In essence, these strains determine the individual's perception of who they are, what they mean in society and the world, and what society and the world means to them.

The first section of this chapter discusses the strains at the personal level. This forms the first part of the 'us vs. them' argument where 'them' represents the British people. This concerns how young Muslims construct their identity and belonging within British society. There is currently a mixed feeling whether Muslim communities feel both British and integrated. An important consideration is that non-Muslims generally do not consider Muslims to be integrated into the UK (Greer, 2011). How people see their identity and belonging in a particular society is largely determined by how they perceive that society views and treats them. This will affect the way these communities construct both their perceptions of self and social identity.

One way this can be determined is by considering how these communities are depicted within the media. It can be argued that the media makes a dominant contribution to how people think by affecting what they think about (Entman, 1989). Over the past decade, Muslims have featured regularly in the news. A study conducted by Cardiff University found that the frequency of national print media stories mentioning Muslims increased from 352 in the year 2000 to 3466 in 2008 (Moore et al., 2008). As well as the reporting of extremism and terrorism, these stories regularly feature aspects of anti-Islamic sentiment (Ali, 2008; ISD, 2012a, for example), and highlight the apparent social and

cultural differences between Muslims and the West. What is concerning is that the same Cardiff University report discovered that, ‘By contrast only 2% of stories contained the proposition that Muslims supported dominant moral values’ (Moore et al., 2008: 15).

This anti-Islamic rhetoric has found its way into Western societies, where there has been a stark upsurge in Islamophobia<sup>50</sup> in recent years. As there is a specific lack of statistical information on this type of crime it is difficult to judge the extent of this rise. However, the data gathered from a Freedom of Information (2012) request from the Metropolitan Police demonstrates a rise in reported crime since the financial period of 2006/07. They are listed alongside anti-Semitic crime statistics as a comparison in the table below. It is recognised that these statistics need to be considered in the wider context of reporting and recording behaviours. That is, these figures may not represent the actual amounts of people due to some not actually reporting these crimes<sup>51</sup> (on occasion due to a lack of confidence with the police). Further, the police themselves may decide not to record it for whatever reason and could have their own internal management problems, for example. Therefore, it needs to be considered that official data will have flaws where it is difficult to identify how it relates to prevalence, and it may be a better reflection on public reporting and police recording practices<sup>52</sup>. However, this is not to say that the data shown below does not provide a compelling account which highlights the growing Islamophobic crime in the UK.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Islamophobic Crime</b>	<b>Anti-Semitic Crime</b>
2006/07	188	200
2007/08	89	147
2008/09	179	237
2009/10	372	204
2010/11	333	195
2011/12	294	176

**Table 1: Metropolitan Police Islamophobic and Anti-Semitic Crime Figures**

<sup>50</sup> The term ‘Islamophobia’, within this context, refers to the hatred, racism, discrimination and irrational fear of Muslims and Islam.

<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that there are other ways in which both anti-Semitic and Islamophobic crime can be reported in the UK, like through third party organisations such as the Community Security Trust (for Jewish communities) and Tell Mama (for Muslims), for example.

<sup>52</sup> For a more detailed discussion on crime data and statistics reporting and recording, see: Maguire (2007).

This can further be seen within the analysis conducted across Europe by the European Network Against Racism. They found, although statistical data is uneven, that 'prejudice towards Muslims is often greater than that experienced by other religious or ethnic minority groups' (ENAR, 2013: 2). In addition, this rise in anti-Muslim sentiment within the UK can be witnessed from the conception and increased popularity of those far-right organisations such as the English Defence League (EDL).

The second section determines the strains and grievances felt at the local level. This is the next part of the 'us vs. them' argument where the radicalisee believes the state is trying to suppress Muslim communities. Academics like Laqueur (2004) argue that it is imperative to not underestimate the importance factors at the local level have within radicalisation and terrorism. Within the context of this research, this concerns the issues Muslim communities have with local policing and the implementation of CT strategies. The UK Government has sought to address some of these issues, however, statistics published prior to this found that under 'stop and search' powers certain ethnic minorities had a much higher likelihood of being stopped than their White counterparts (EHRC, 2010). There are similar concerns raised with the disproportional implementation of other CT strategies such as 'profiling', for example (EHRC, 2013; Bennetto, 2009).

The final section outlines the issues held at the global level and is the last component in the 'us vs. them' paradigm presented by the radicalisers. This alludes to a belief that the West is at war with Islam as a faith. These grievances are primarily based on the foreign policy decisions of the West which affect Muslims globally. The term 'the West' generally refers, within the context of this thesis, to the UK and US. However, it is also used by radicalisers to further the 'us vs. them' argument where the 'them' becomes non-Muslims and includes countries which are deemed to be the enemies of Islam, such as India for example.

It can be argued that Muslims make up one of the most politically-aware faith groups in the UK (Sardar, 2006). This assumes that it is common for many Muslims to have some awareness of the political developments within various Muslims states. Also, it may be plausible to argue that this topic is not only discussed as concerns amongst sections of Muslim youth, but also as part of a growing cultural trend. Although many authors argue for (and against) the value of foreign policy in radicalisation, very few offer empirical

evidence to substantiate these claims; which this section addresses. In this account, the grievances, and the strains felt as a consequence, predominantly involve three topics.

First, and in many respects most crucial, concerns 'direct foreign policy'. This is about the involvement of Western militaries within Muslim lands. Second, concerns the 'critical relationships' between the UK and US and other states; primarily Israel. Although these relationships are deemed to be loosening (Morris, 2010; Bagehot, 2011), if we consider the perceptions held by Muslims in the UK, then these countries all appear to be strongly interlinked. Third, relates to the 'lack of foreign policy' action (perceived or otherwise) by the West within certain conflicts where it is believed that delayed involvement increased the numbers of civilian casualties; the most commonly cited being Bosnia. Though, why do British, and for that matter global, Muslims feel so much kinship with other Muslims they have never met and most likely will never meet? This concerns the Islamic principle of the 'Ummah', and forms the final part of this section.

#### 4.3 The Personal Level

This first section outlines how Muslim youth construct their perceptions of self and social identity within British society and culture. As mentioned, this forms the first part of the 'us vs. them' argument at the point of conversion where 'them' represents British society in general. These strains are also important for radicalisers to be able to cause a divide between the radicalisees and their former lives and beliefs, which in turn provides them with a dominant sense of identity and belonging in the extreme group; and this solidifies bonds between the two.

##### 4.3.1 Identity and Belonging

Almost twenty percent of respondents within the empirical data agreed that an increasing number of young Muslims are questioning their sense of identity and belonging within British society. A part of this stems from feeling caught between two cultures which are in many ways diametrically opposed. Young Muslims are finding it increasingly difficult to



balance the secular and liberal culture epitomising British society against the traditional, cultural and religious requirements in their home, as described by a former extremist:

'...you're caught between two very different worlds. One is a very devout Muslim religious viewpoint, and the other is a very Godless, secular, materialistic culture...these public spaces are very different and you grew up with that [and question] where do you belong? Who are you?' (gee 459)

This has been compounded since the attacks on 9/11 and 7/7, where Muslim youth have felt even more at odds with British society. The assumption would be that they feel more 'at home' in their parent's motherlands. However, the data showed that they didn't really show any affinity or feel accepted there either; leading to a perception of normlessness:

'I don't really have an affinity to Pakistan at all, but then [with] this society I really don't feel [British]...I'm still an outsider so that's the reality of what I have to deal with. I will never be seen as an insider...I don't fully feel part here, but I don't feel I belong anywhere else...' (gee 796)

As alluded to in the previous quotation, sometimes this feeling of not belonging is to do with the perception of not being accepted by the indigenous population. Some may feel caught between these two different and often conflicting worlds, but feel like there is nothing indicating to them that they are British. As one researcher from London claimed, 'in this country feeling stuck between a parent culture that's out of touch and out of time and a British population that they don't find welcoming and accepting and, you know, that kind of identity crisis.' (res 464) This crisis of identity was mentioned as a dominant characteristic found in radicalisation by around a third of the informed informants.

People usually have many different types of ever shifting and changing identities. But there are certain ones which stay stable, do not change, and remain as a foundation for people to create their perception of self. More often than not, these include nationality and religion. When individuals believe that their religion and heritage are diametrically opposed to the identity based on their nationality, this will lead to much disaffection and confusion:

'...a lot of them don't understand what their identity is. It's a real culture clash, religious clash on what their identity is. Are they British? Are they Pakistani? Are they Muslim? You know, they've got to deal with that and it's a massive thing for an individual to deal with...' (grw 179)

If Muslim youth feel at odds with British society and have very little in common with non-Muslims, then there will be very little attempt at integrating with wider society. They may not have many non-Muslim friends and, similar to the five Muslim youth discussed in the prologue, be prone to being very insular within their own Muslim circles. This may serve to cause further estrangement between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Discussions around the integration of Muslims have been at the fore within the UK for a number of years. They have dominated certain CT conversations and have been blamed for blurring the boundaries between community cohesion work and CT policies (Lakhani, 2012; House of Commons, 2010). Within the empirical data, there was a mixed response towards whether Muslims are or can be integrated.

Certain respondents argued these identities, i.e. being British and being Muslim, are not completely diametrically opposed to one another – although certain elements are – and Muslim youth are capable of being both. There were those respondents who asserted that Muslims were trying to integrate, and in fact have integrated, into British culture and society. Further, some explained that Muslims, especially Muslim youth, are proud to be British and identified themselves in this manner, '...I think a large majority of those who are born in this country they prefer to be British...' (irl 186).

However, around six respondents reported how Muslims felt like they were not welcome to fully integrate into society by the indigenous population when they actually tried to do so. One prominent community leader from the Midlands explained how many within his local area felt like they were integrated and British, but at the same time felt like they did not really belong and their Britishness was constantly being questioned:

'...what happens in the bigger debate is we are asked other ridiculous questions like, "are you Muslim first [or] are you British first?" These are nonsensical questions as one has to do with citizenship and one has to do with faith. I find it rather offensive, a question of that nature.' (rnc 737)

This was in direct contrast to the view of the Muslim friends discussed in the prologue. They explained how integrating into the host society was not a concern for them and their identity was attached to being Muslim, rather than English or British:

'I think there would be very few Muslims who would say "I'm proud to be English". The thing is, nationalism is something that is completely foreign to Islam but just saying the fact that I live here, you're under protection here we should be respectful citizens then that's ok.' (cms 722)

This merely goes towards highlighting the complexity of the situation. Whilst they outline how they are caught between two conflicting worlds, they believe their duty is to attach their identity to Islam, rather than a nation. This may be due to the particular sect of their religion they follow, or as a consequence of the arguments presented in this chapter.

Certain respondents explained that Muslims felt very detached from British society, as many liberal Western values were mostly against the core principles of Islam. They claimed that Muslim parents did not want their children to be 'corrupted' by British culture and therefore discouraged any form of integration with non-Muslims. The empirical data also suggested that certain Muslim youth themselves did not agree with some elements of Western culture. Whilst growing up, they have learnt that some of the activities people participate in such as drinking, fornication, and drug use are completely forbidden in Islam. They strongly feel like they are living in a decadent society. As a former extremist from the West of England outlined:

'I grew up in a society...with drinking, women with no self-respect, STD's [sexually transmitted diseases], into drugs...and this is what they call freedoms...the society is really badly damaged.' (exe 999)

With consideration for all of the arguments within this section, it is very simple to blame Western society alone for not accepting Muslims or letting them believe they are not able to integrate. Some effort has to be placed on Muslim communities themselves. This is a two way situation where Muslim religious leaders and prominent community members need to bring this message home to their local communities. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied that there are many deficiencies and discriminations in the way Muslims are treated within UK, and this will contribute to how they construct their identity and perceptions of self within British society.

#### 4.3.2 Muslims and the Media

‘...the media can portray you as a villain and then portray you as a good doer, or vice-versa. They can ruin people’s reputations, they can restore them, they can do what they like, and that’s why the media is so powerful’ (grw 309)

The vast majority of Muslim respondents within the study largely blamed Western media outlets for the way they were being treated within society. As remarked in the quotation above, many believe the media to be an extremely powerful institution which has the ability to change people’s attitudes and actions. Almost all of the respondents felt the media plays an integral role within radicalisation. This was set within the broader context of Muslim communities being alienated from mainstream society due to certain adverse reporting of Muslims, and Islam in general.

This apprehension towards the media was down to a number of reasons. One particular gripe was a feeling that Muslims and Islam are constantly being reported in the news. As with the findings of the Cardiff University report outlined earlier, the issue is that Muslims are more often than not reported in a negative manner.

Further, respondents questioned why terms such as ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islam’ were used in certain media reports when the story had very little, if anything, to do with the religion. There is a distinct difference in the way Muslims are reported as compared to those from other faiths. If terms like Christian, Hindu, and Jewish are rarely stated in media stories, why is this not the case for Muslims? In fact, similar arguments were made in reference

to Northern Ireland during the height of IRA conflicts (Hillyard, 1993). The respondents believed this tactic was employed in a bid to imply controversy, which in turn helps to sell newspapers:

‘...[if] you saw the newspaper that said “Muslim man mugs an old lady”, [or] “man mugs and old lady”, you’re more likely to pick up the story about [the Muslim]...“what else is inside it when it says Muslim man? Is it just a mugging [or] has he mugged her because he wants to fund violent extremism?”...that automatically triggers in your mind all those things about Muslims...’ (grw 840)

There was a feeling that Muslims were being treated differently since 9/11 and 7/7, and were being viewed by society as terrorists. The five friends discussed in the prologue held similar sentiments, as one explained:

‘I think because of the media...the first thing that they think is the stereotype which is widely accepted...So if you are a practising Muslim they think “oh, terrorism, terrorist”...’ (cms 326)

Further, respondents felt Islam is viewed negatively amongst the rest of society with people believing that it condones violence, murder and terrorism at the core of its ideals:

‘...one of the things that I believe strongly is that the media has not been fulfilling its responsibility of being balanced, unbiased, giving the facts as they should be. They’ve taken a bit of truth but they’ve distorted it beyond even comprehension sometimes to the extent where people start buying into believing that Islam is a terrorist religion, Islam is about violent extremism, Islam condones it, [and] Muslims are all crazed fanatics’ (grw 831)

When this is considered alongside the fact that infamous figures like Anjem Choudary and groups like AM are given so much airtime, the respondents feared society believed that these groups are ‘representative of all Muslims in the UK’ (grw 358). However, once again, it is very simplistic to argue that most of wider society holds anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic sentiments, when this is probably far from the truth. Though at the same time

there must also not be complacency with this matter. There is still noticeable animosity, as will be discussed in the next section, towards Muslims in the UK.

Finally, there is one further consequence of this type of media reporting. As discussed within the Methodology chapter, there was reluctance by community members to be interviewed for this particular research. One of the gatekeepers who facilitated access to community members outlined this:

‘...we’re very scared of the media, that’s why we’re very scared when you came to us. A lot of people in the mosque, when you was there, they came up to me while they [the community respondents] were talking to you and said, “what’s going on here, what’s going on?” And I said “no, don’t worry, he’s a neutral person, he’s not this and that”. So we simply shut off the media from our mosque...a lot of people are scared ‘cos they think, you know, [as] soon as you tell someone they will edit it out, what you mean, they will say something else, and we’ve seen that done a million times...’ (grw 156)

This was particularly evident within this study, as seen in the quotation above. Many that did agree to participate were fearful of their words being presented in a way which would be what the researcher wanted, rather than ‘the truth’. They had strong concerns that if misquoted, this could damage society’s view of Muslims further. This concern not only affected access to certain interviewees within this study, but may also be felt by other researchers in the field.

#### 4.3.3 Islamophobia and the Far-Right

Another consequence of this type of media reporting is the contribution it makes towards an increase in Islamophobic based crime. These are the physical and verbal assaults against Muslims, which one grassroots worker described as a ‘backlash’ (grw 179). By having a specific term, i.e. ‘Islamophobia’, to describe racism and discrimination against a particular faith indicates the severity of the issue. Islamophobia was mentioned by just over a third of respondents as a key issue facing Muslims in the UK. As well as affecting Muslim communities more generally, this problem also works towards compounding the radicaliser’s ‘us vs. them’ argument.

This was an issue mentioned by former extremists who had been radicalised both pre and post-9/11; indicating that this problem is ongoing and has been part of radicalisation for many years. This resonates with the argument of Muslim youth not being allowed to feel like they are integrated or can integrate into British society. A grassroots worker from London who was once a prominent member of a violent extreme group recalled the effect it had on himself and his friends at the time:

‘...you used to have the skinheads, and we used to get a lot of racism...We remember it had a profound impact, a very negative impact. I think we were emotionally scarred for many years thinking we will never be accepted into this society...’ (gee 459)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, society as a whole cannot be responsible for the actions of a minority. There have been many positive strides towards curbing racism and discrimination and moving toward a more integrated society in the UK in recent decades. This importantly must not be forgotten. However, as demonstrated in the statistics on Islamophobia provided at the fore of this chapter, there has been a general increase in hate crimes directed towards Muslims since 7/7 and most probably since 9/11 if the data were to cover this period. One example of this was outlined by a community member:

‘One time I was on the bus coming back from [location name deleted] and there was a drunken guy on there and I went to get my bag and he said “whoa, whoa, whoa what are you doing!” And he actually took it to the level where he thought I was going to [blow up the bus]. I thought he was joking...but then I took my coat off and he said “whoa” and he was trying to make a point and he said “look, I am the only one saying it but everyone else on this bus is thinking it”’ (cms 944)

This was not a standalone example. Many of the respondents were keen to regale their own tales of racism; however there was one conversation that epitomises this concern. This was partly discussed in the prologue to this chapter where the story of five young male Muslims was outlined. They described a number of different experiences of racism which affected them personally and their local mosque. This ranged from verbal abuse, by being told ‘racist jokes’ against Muslims by an individual ‘dressed like some sort of NF [National Front]’ (cms 987), to physical threats where one respondent recalled, ‘the

amount of times I've walked past English men and they've said to me "you f'ing [fucking] Muslim, I'll bloody stab you up!...we'll cut your head off, bloody Muslim" (cms 326).

This highlights several interesting points. First, as another young Muslim explained, 'the youth are backed into a corner, everybody hates Muslims, so these youths, it's kind of like they feel like they're angry' (cms 338). Second, is the change in perception of self and social identity when considering the opinions of others towards them. This is similar to Charles Horton Cooley's (1902) theory of the 'looking-glass self', where we construct our sense of self-identity on the basis of others' reactions, or what we perceive others' reactions to be.

Once again, this can contribute to Muslim youth becoming more insular and believing the problem of Islamophobia to be much wider than it actually is. This is not to underplay the issue, but to emphasise that these youth may believe that society as a whole is racist. This was raised as a concern during an interview with a grassroots worker from the North East of England:

'One of the issues that we have got with the Muslim youth is they do get hurled a lot of racist abuse and what they tend to do is then tar everyone with that same brush. So every White person you see is now a racist, every White person you now see is a target...They see them as being the enemy...' (grw 179)

When probed about the term 'every White person you now see is a target', he explained how the Muslim youth he worked with were becoming increasingly hostile towards White communities in their local area. In some cases this was manifesting in certain Muslim youth being verbally and physically racist themselves:

'...unfortunately we've had various youth in the past who have picked fights just because the individual was White...maybe I'm assuming too much, but I'm putting two and two together by [saying] that's why they go to do various things extreme. [Like them saying] "Kill all the Jews. Kill all the Americans", all that kind of stuff...Personally I think they come to that because they see everyone as the same...' (grw 179)



It could not be determined if this was a standalone issue within this particular area, or if it was more representative across the country. However, the interviewee makes an interesting assumption about radicalisation. Although it has been stated numerous times that there are additional factors that contribute towards radicalisation, his argument may have some substance. That is, radicalisees seeing 'everyone as the same' links back to the 'us vs. them' argument.

This concern also stems from the resurgence of the far-right in the UK, specifically in the form of the EDL, and in Europe more widely. Some respondents felt this rise in support for the far-right was in direct relation to the growing anti-Islamic rhetoric within a number of European countries. Although the growth of the far-right will also be due to wider factors, the respondents' concerns cannot be ignored. This is clear when considering groups such as the EDL, whose officially stated focus is to 'curb Islamic extremism'. However, there are strong suggestions that EDL rhetoric has evolved more towards an anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic view, with numerous instances of racist attacks committed by members of the group (Taylor, 2010).

There was much concern over the tension and anger exhibited by certain young Muslims when they were aware of demonstrations being held by the EDL in their local areas. Local community leaders expressed their fears over the potential for physical conflict between the two groups. Through various resources from 'word of mouth', to utilising social media and technology like BlackBerry Messenger (BBM)<sup>53</sup>, Muslim youth were able to mobilise themselves in large numbers and on very short notice. As a result, grassroots workers, youth workers, and religious leaders had to act fast and implement diversionary tactics, such as organising barbeques and sports days<sup>54</sup>:

'They held a demonstration in the month of Ramadan two or three weeks ago, and the Asians of this community, because of lack of knowledge, they want to repel the attempts of this radical White extremist group by going out and confronting them. So we knew that the EDL were going to march. So now we have to do something about it.' (grw 971)

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<sup>53</sup> BlackBerry Messenger was considered to play a key role in mobilising youth during the UK riots in 2011 (Ball and Brown, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Similar findings have also been reported in wider studies, see: Innes et al. (2011).

There are many reported incidents of clashes between the EDL and Muslim youth. This has led to the creation of counter-organisations such as the Muslim Defence League (MDL), which has over 40,000 'likes'<sup>55</sup> on Facebook alone. When speaking off the record to certain respondents, it was claimed that some members of the MDL actually glorified terrorism and had links to wider extremist networks. These counter-demonstrations and physical clashes with the EDL provide ample fertile recruiting ground for these extreme groups. The respondents felt that this rise in the far-right was having a direct influence on young Muslims in the UK becoming radicalised.

#### 4.3.4 Consequences

Extreme groups aim to capitalise on people's grievances of racism and discrimination. They also focus upon their lack of identity and belonging and attempt to replace this with a dominant identity in the form of Islam and provide a strong sense of belonging within their particular extreme group. However, as will be discussed in the following empirical chapters, this does not necessarily amount to these young Muslims becoming religious, or more religious. It is about them asserting a dominant masculine identity in the context of being Muslim<sup>56</sup>.

A pertinent example of this new sense of identity and belonging was outlined by a former extremist from London. He explained that whilst at secondary school, which was pre-9/11, there were three different special midweek assemblies<sup>57</sup>. One assembly was for Christians, one for Muslims, and a secular one. Pupils were given the choice of which

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<sup>55</sup> Each member of Facebook has the option of clicking a 'like' button for a fan page. These pages can be constructed by anyone using Facebook, such as individuals, special interest groups or companies, for example. When an individual 'likes' a certain fan page, they receive regular updates from that fan page on their own timeline.

<sup>56</sup> As well as becoming more insular, Choudhury (2007: 5) argues that 'Muslim identity' can be an important factor with determining and defining a strong sense of masculinity amongst young Muslim men in a way to resist stereotypes of 'weakness and passivity' attached to Asian men (Archer, 2003). Hopkins (2006: 349) argues that 'Whilst the majority of young Muslim men might aim to conform to hegemonic stereotypes of Muslim masculinity, a range of complex intertwining markers of social difference – gender, social class, sexuality, disability – disrupt this pattern'. In fact, Hopkins further explains the young men within his study often 'adopt[ed] a range of contradictory masculine subject positions' (ibid: 350).

<sup>57</sup> A school assembly is a period of time, usually in the morning, where all of the students gather together in order for the teachers, usually the headmaster or headmistress, to disseminate certain pieces of information, or in some instances to conduct religious prayer.

one they wanted to attend. For the Muslim assembly guest speakers were regularly invited and unfortunately some of these were part of extreme groups in the UK. As these individuals would be sent from local colleges and universities, their credibility would not be questioned. Also, as these talks took place pre-9/11, this type of extremism was not generally a widely held concern in the UK at this point. The speakers would discuss topics they felt would capture the imagination of the Muslim students:

‘...they would talk about issues of belief, issues of identity, things that would capture the attention of young people...where if you question their identity [and] you pose some essential questions...you will be able to spark off a discussion and flicker a debate in their mind...“you’re an Asian, you’re not part of mainstream society, but what makes you different is your belief as a Muslim”, so that sparks off that discussion...’ (gee 709)

This particular discussion motivated this respondent to approach the speaker after the assembly; which led him to eventually join the group. He claimed a number of other students also made similar contact and joined. These individuals may come to believe that this new group will provide them with the identity and belonging they so desire, as outlined within Maslow’s (1954) ‘hierarchy of needs’, or are led to believe they desire. In addition, if people in the extreme group have experienced similar episodes of racism and discrimination to the potential radicalisee, then this also goes towards solidifying bonds.

These individuals may have felt belonging in their previous friendship circles, but if they become part of an extreme group they will be involved in a global cause. This is about something much larger than their normal and possibly predictable and mundane lives. This in turn brings a level of excitement and adventure, as will be discussed in following chapters.

#### 4.4 The Local Level

This chapter has so far discussed the strains and grievances felt by radicalisees at the personal level and forms the first part of the ‘us vs. them’ argument. The implementation of various policing and CT legislation and strategy within the UK gives radicalisers the

impetus to take this to the next level. This makes the radicalisee further susceptible to the radicaliser's message by giving the belief that the state is trying to suppress Muslim communities.

There are certain issues Muslim communities have within their local areas. One of these relates to the actions, or lack of involvement, of the police. Although wider research has indicated that Muslim communities' attitudes towards the police are more positive than expected (Lakhani, 2012; Innes et al. 2011), this should not, however, lead to the assumption that these strains and grievances are not real. One issue that was raised within the data was the way the police are perceived to be dealing with racist incidents. It was felt that the police were not taking the appropriate actions, or doing everything they could in their power, against offenders. This can lead certain communities, as outlined by a community member from the West of England, to believe it is not worth their time to report these incidents:

'I think the community, when they call up the police they don't usually get the reaction that they want from them. So it is kind of a lost hope in them at times...when the situation occurs, a serious situation, [they] think of calling the police, but they hesitate because they think to themselves, "oh maybe they won't do anything so it's not worth our time calling the police."' (cms 326)

Although there was considerable respect and praise for the police<sup>58</sup> within the empirical data, there were concerns raised about some of their practices. A former extremist from the Midlands provided an interesting example. This occurred a number of years ago and had a direct impact on his, and his associates', radicalisation. At the time, his local area faced a number of criminal issues such as robbery, prostitution, and drug dealing. When the police were approached by community members – who were mostly Muslim – they were assured that there was an awareness of the issue and something would be done about it. However, as time went on it appeared as if the police were doing very little to solve the problems. The respondent believed that this was to 'destroy the community from within' (exe 283). As a result, his friends formed their own 'resistance' to rid their

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<sup>58</sup> This respect and praise is dependent, though, on the type of police officer or department (Lakhani, 2012).

local area of these problems<sup>59</sup>. The interviewee claimed that his group were successful in 'clean[ing] the streets', and were thus approached by local residents to help solve their personal issues (ibid). This gave his group a heightened sense of power which he felt started to spiral out of control:

'...it got to a point where it was getting too much, so we thought, "there [is] a few of us yeah, we can do something about it, so we don't need anyone..." They [the local Muslim community] used to call us "the vigilantes", because we used to do things for other people...If the police did their job in the Muslim communities then there would be no extremism...this is what radicalisation did. We became more militant and we thought "yeah, yeah look what we've done, we can do other things as well now"' (exe 283)

The group had fifty members at their peak. Once the numbers started to dwindle, they approached a local extreme group, certain members had affiliations with, in a bid to get the extremists to join their cause and strengthen their 'muscle'. However, the extremists' primary concern was with issues around foreign policy and the plight of Muslims abroad, so the two groups parted company. There were two consequences attached to this particular type of behaviour. First, the respondent conceded that members of his group became affiliated and eventually formally joined the local extreme group. Second, as his original group were conducting a form of positive social control in their local area, community members may have turned a blind eye to the group's increasing extremist orientations or affiliations<sup>60</sup>.

As well as grievances around policing at the local level, the empirical data also showed a strong sense of disdain towards the implementation of certain CT strategies, like 'stop and search'. This was happening within local geographic areas and also at other high security venues, such as the airport. This became apparent during the interview of the five young Muslim friends from the West of England. As much as they understood, and for the most part agreed, that these strategies needed to be in place to reduce the risk from terrorism and protect our national security (which people sometimes forget also affects Muslims), they did not agree with how they were being implemented:

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<sup>59</sup> There are similarities between this and the account of Mohammed Sidiq Khan's group, the 'Mullah Boys' (Malik, 2007; Leiken, 2011).

<sup>60</sup> Similarities can be drawn with the IRA and INLA during the height of the conflict in Northern Ireland (see Sluka, 1989, for example).

'I have been stopped at the airport about two or three times...They asked me about extremism and what is going on here and have you been involved in any kind of extreme stuff...I don't think it was random because they picked me out every time and ask. And I think to myself what is going on, what have I done to deserve it?' (cms 385)

Although these laws are starting to be addressed, or 'scaled back' (Home Office, 2011), they have still had a lasting effect and were described in the empirical data as 'very, very problematic' (rmc 321). Many believed 'stop and search' is not a useful CT tool and was primarily set up by the government to gather information and intelligence on Muslim communities in an Orwellian type environment:

'...the fact that they can terrify the population into believing that these things are necessary is again a ploy by the government...This whole notion that we need security is a complete smokescreen' (cms 338)

There were also grievances with the contentious topic of 'profiling'. There will naturally be contrasting opinions on this particular issue. On the one hand, there needs to be a consideration that according to certain statistics such as CT arrests, people that are from certain ethnic backgrounds and age brackets are more likely to be involved in AQI extremism in the UK. It can be argued that the relevant authorities do not have the time and resources to check every single person entering the UK's borders, so this is a way of mitigating that risk. On the other hand, it can also be argued that this is a dangerous tactic as it gives those who wish to target the UK an increased chance of avoiding detection by employing those who do not fit a certain profile<sup>61</sup>. This is exemplified by the case of convicted terrorists such as Nicky Reilly<sup>62</sup> and Richard Reid, both of whom were very close to killing scores of innocent civilians.

There is no clear evidence to show that authorities within airports are even implementing this type of strategy. Though, once again, the perception of them doing so can be just as detrimental. This is about individuals feeling singled out and victimised, which in turn has

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<sup>61</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see: Hasan (2011).

<sup>62</sup> Nicky Reilly is widely deemed to have been a 'lone wolf'. However, as mentioned in the Introductory chapter, this is far from conclusive as some believe that Reilly was actually radicalised by a group who even sent him a text message containing words of 'encouragement' before the incident (Gardham et al., 2008).

the strong potential to make them feel further alienated and detached from society. Their perceptions of self will be affected by these incidents and they will question their sense of identity and belonging. When this is capitalised on by extremists, as will be discussed in the latter part of the thesis, it becomes especially dangerous.

#### 4.5 The Global Level

This final section of the chapter focuses upon the grievances felt at the global level and concerns the various foreign policy decisions of the West<sup>63</sup>. Although this affects Muslim and non-Muslim communities more widely, it is discussed in the context of radicalisation. A resounding three quarters of informed informants mentioned 'foreign policy' at least once as a factor they believed contributed towards radicalisation. This forms the final part of the 'us vs. them' paradigm, where radicalisees come to believe that the West is at war with Islam as a faith.

These factors are also important in creating a sense of moral outrage in the mind of the radicalisee which lead, as will be discussed within the 'Conversion' chapter, towards a feeling of moral and divine duty towards some sort of activism. The aim of the radicaliser is to capitalise on the emotions of the individual. These include distress, fear, hurt, and most importantly anger. However, this is not to say the radicalisers do not genuinely feel the same strains themselves. Although the emotional factor of radicalisation is discussed in later chapters, it is important to mention it as a backdrop, or a context within which to place the grievances of foreign policy.

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<sup>63</sup> There is a wider argument here where past actions may cause lingering resentment. Githens-Mazer (2008: 550), during his study of the radicalisation of North Africans in the UK, argues that 'symbols of Islamic repression' and 'perceptions' of western oppression is not the sole factor, but nonetheless a 'cause in the larger process of "radicalisation"'. This is mainly attributed to how 'myths, memories and symbols of the colonial and recent past inform contemporary resonant repertoires of myths, memories and symbols, which in turn serve as bases for radicalisation among some Islamists from North Africa' (ibid: 565).

#### 4.5.1 Direct Foreign Policy

The issue with direct foreign policy concerns the occupation of Muslim states, such as Iraq, by Western militaries. It is the consequences of these occupations that cause the primary grievance, with the most common argument pertaining to the killing of innocent Muslims by coalition forces<sup>64</sup>. The examples cited by radicalisers usually involve the term 'woman and children' to further heighten the sense of grievance.

Alongside concerns about British involvement, there were specific resentments toward the actions of the US, as outlined by around a quarter of the informed informants. The UK and US are strongly interlinked in the minds of many, especially after the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. This is an allegiance which has spanned many decades and has been highlighted by prominent figures, like former US President George W. Bush. This 'special relationship', a term coined by former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was only recently urged a rethink by certain British Members of Parliament (Tran, 2010). Thus, seven of the informed informants, including two former extremists explained how, in the UK, extremist recruiters' jobs become easier when certain actions are taken by the US:

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<sup>64</sup> Many of the respondents who discussed the innocent deaths of Muslims in these countries alluded to the cause coming from allied forces. However, this is not to say they did not understand that the Taliban could also be responsible, if Afghanistan is taken as an example. This may simply be due to the specific topic not arising during the conversation. However, with some, it may also be due to ignorance or denial. During the recent Home Affairs Select Committee hearings, Alyas Karmani, part of the STREET project in South London, argued that Muslim on Muslim killings within these countries were 'conveniently overlooked' (House of Commons, 2011).

Fergusson (2010) points out that according to the UN, 1250 civilians were killed in the first half of 2010 in Afghanistan, which amounts to a year-on-year increase of 30 percent. Interestingly, three quarters of the deaths in 2010 were caused by the Taliban, mainly through the use of improvised explosive devices. Fergusson, through his ethnographic research, argues that although the Taliban may be responsible for these bombings, they were not necessarily blamed for them; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was. 'Nato, in other words, is increasingly seen as part of the problem rather than the solution.'

Another element to note is that many respondents considered the most recent war in Iraq, for example, to be illegal. Thus, it was felt by these respondents that those civilians that died as a result were casualties of a war that should not have been started in the first place.



‘...if I am a recruiter...my job becomes very easy when an American Drone has bombed a village in Afghanistan and killed 70, 80 innocent people at a wedding party...’  
(rnc 321)

Further indications about the importance of direct foreign policy emanate from the fact that all the former extremists within the study argued it to play an integral role within their own radicalisation. Examples of this can also be seen from those serving time in prison for terrorism related offences. Due to the complexities and difficulties with gaining access to prisons for conducting this type of research, speaking to those who do have regular contact with these individuals becomes imperative. A former extremist, who now works as a grassroots worker, from the North West of England held this position. When discussing one particular prisoner he was helping to ‘resocialise’ back into society, the respondent explained how this individual was deeply affected by Western foreign policy throughout his radicalisation. Alongside other factors and influences, as discussed within this thesis, this contributed to the individual travelling abroad to attend a ‘jihadi’ training camp:

‘[name deleted] here that I worked with, he did two years for anti-terror offences, eighteen months in Belmarsh [Prison]...foreign policy was a big issue for him’ (gee 796)

#### 4.5.2 Critical Relationships

The UK and US’s relationship with other countries, specifically Israel in this account, are regularly questioned by extremists. In fact, there are many wider communities, groups and commentators who raise similar concerns. The main grievance lies with the UK and US’s lack of criticism towards Israeli foreign policy decisions, as they do when other countries conduct similar acts. This primarily concerns the Israel-Palestine conflict. Many of the Muslim respondents argued there to be contradictions and differences in approach to the situation. Whilst certain acts are deemed permissible, or as ‘self-defence’, by non-Muslim states, similar actions from Muslim countries are seen as illegal:

‘...When they [Israel] are committing these war crimes nobody seems to bother about it, nobody seems to be bothered taking any resolution in the United Nations...But when it comes to a Muslim country...why is it that we have to use this multi-power?’ (grw 218)

As with the foreign policy of Western states, the consequence of Israel’s foreign policy, i.e. the killing of civilians, is potent within radicalisation. The same grassroots worker quoted above from the North East of England provided the example of another young Muslim he worked with who had served time in prison for CT offences. The respondent explained how certain crucial moments and images had been permanently etched into this individual’s mind:

‘...what was interesting was that [name deleted] would say to me that the killing of Mohammed al-Durrah<sup>65</sup>, that image of that boy at the age of twelve being killed in Palestine, it was a defining image for him.’ (gee 796)

This by no means insinuates that Palestinian violations are not as culpable as Israel’s. However, this situation is extremely complex as can be seen in the more recent stance taken by the UK and US towards Israel and her actions. Whilst the US joined Israel to vote against Palestine’s upgrade to a non-member observer state at the UN General Assembly in 2012, the UK abstained from voting (BBC News, 2012). In addition, the Obama Administration’s reiteration of Israel’s right to ‘self-defence’ during the most recent escalation of the conflict was criticised by many as being unbalanced (see Zunes, 2012). On the other hand, both the UK and the US made clear their condemnation of Israel’s Jewish settlement plan extension (McDevitt, 2012).

Although this complexity with relationships runs deep, the perceptions of those who are susceptible to extremist ideologies are of greatest importance. Radicalisers may provide the simplest answers to these intricate issues. If the radicalisee lacks the historical knowledge to counter these claims, they may just accept the version provided to them. This was highlighted by a grassroots worker giving evidence at the Home Affairs Select

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<sup>65</sup> It must be noted that the case of Mohammed al-Durrah is vehemently debated in regards to whether or not he was (a) killed by Israeli forces and (b) whether he was actually killed at all. Israel claimed the incident to be ‘a fake’, which caused ‘an angry reaction’ from al-Durrah’s father (Dawber, 2013).

Committee hearings on understanding the 'Roots of violent radicalisation' in 2012. He explained how most youth he dealt with in his capacity did not have knowledge on the Israel-Palestine situation 'beyond 10 years' (House of Commons, 2012). If radicalisees are told that the Palestinians are being suppressed by the Israelis, who are in turn being supported by the West, then they may take this at face value.

#### 4.5.3 Lack of Foreign Policy

The final grievance at the global level was with the West's failure to intervene, or have delayed involvement, during certain conflicts involving the massacre of Muslims. The main cited example within the empirical data was Srebrenica<sup>66</sup>, Bosnia during the 1990s. It was felt that many innocent Muslim casualties could have been prevented if action had been taken sooner. Prior to the incidents on 9/11, Bosnia, as well as other conflicts such as the Chechen Wars, have been utilised by radicalisers as strong radicalising tools. A grassroots worker from London even argued that the situation 'had one of the most enterprising effects on radicalising Muslims in this country' (grw 927), not just within the UK, but also across Europe. This remains a prominent talking point within extremist circles to the present day, with a fifth of the informed informants arguing that the Bosnian War is still a strong radicalising factor. Bosnia represents the unifying point between pre- and post-9/11 extremists, as explained by a former extremist from London:

'...[by] word of mouth it was passed down...they say "look what happened in Bosnia". No one [has] forgotten it' (exe 283)

The conflict in Srebrenica caused a global outcry from Muslims with the strong sentiment that fellow Muslims were being massacred with little thought or resentment. Importantly, no one seemed to be doing anything to prevent it. Some believed it was their personal duty to protect their Muslim kin and travelled to the region in a bid to do so<sup>67</sup>, all unified,

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<sup>66</sup> Although Bosnia was the most commonly cited example within the empirical data, this does not insinuate that there are not other similar grievances held towards the UK.

<sup>67</sup> As briefly mentioned in the Introductory chapter, there are concerns, similar to Bosnia, with Syria. There is a fear of the growing numbers of both British and European fighters involved (Zelin, 2013; Pantucci, 2013). As with Bosnia, there is the possibility that there will be grievances aimed towards the UK and the West for not intervening, or early enough, to prevent the massacre of civilians.

against a common enemy. Many British Muslims who had fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion were still returning home after remaining to help with reconstructing the country. Bosnia provided them with another cause, another fight. This was also critical as Afghanistan was descending into a civil war where Muslims were killing one another (Change Institute, 2008: 72; Kohlmann, 2004). Bosnia provided a fight with clear battle lines, i.e. Muslims against non-Muslims. These veterans who served under the Taliban had little difficulty finding new recruits to travel to Bosnia to conduct 'jihad'. This was outlined by a grassroots worker from London who had recently converted, or 'reverted'<sup>68</sup>, to Islam during this period:

'...[there] was something which was like a common enemy to fight against. The United Nations were not doing much; you didn't see many people doing much to help the Muslims over there. So it was like a clear case of these people being oppressed with people thinking they should go and help them...a lot of people participated and were going over there [and] started volunteering...' (grw 759)

As with the other global grievances, Bosnia affected wider Muslim communities and related to issues that ran deeper than the direct consequences of war itself. This was not a conflict in a different continent but occurred in Europe, right 'on our doorstep', as one former extremist explained (ex 283). This confirmed the intent of the massacre, which to them related to their faith:

'...they've seen for the first time in Europe that blonde, blue eyed individuals were then being persecuted on European mainland. The only difference was the religion was different to that of the vast majority Christian West, and I think it brought it into sharp focus...' (rmc 737)

This raised some important questions around the acceptance and integration of Muslims in the West. They considered, if the blonde haired, blue eyed Muslims of Bosnia were persecuted, then what hope was there for them? They questioned what the future held for them as Muslims living in Europe:

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<sup>68</sup> The term 'reverted' alludes to a belief that all people are born Muslims, thus by a non-Muslim embracing Islam it is a reversion back to the original state. Alternatively, some believe that their ancestors were Muslim, though were forced to convert to Christianity through various church, state or wider political initiatives. Thus, they are reverting back to their ancestors' original religion.

'...watching videos at the age of fifteen, sixteen, of some of the massacres that had taken place...Muslims who were, for all intensive purposes, well integrated into Yugoslavia, even culturally integrated into Yugoslavia...that presented this whole kind of question of how well integrated can we be?' (gee 709)

This was a real concern with many Muslims in the UK during this period, with some even fearing for their own safety. This was brought into sharp focus during the interview of a former extremist from the Midlands. He explained how the incidents in Bosnia implanted a level of fear within his social circle which was capitalised upon by a local extreme group. The extremists' argument was simple yet tremendously effective. That being, if this happened to Muslims who physically resembled indigenous Europeans more than other Muslims, it could happen anywhere, including Britain. The respondent explained how this strongly motivated his friendship circle to start training to improve their strength and fighting abilities in preparation for the possibility of similar attacks on Muslims occurring in the UK:

'That's when extremism started spreading, because of that, because everyone started worrying, "what's going to happen to us?"...what if it happened to this country, France, Belgium, Germany? And everybody starts panicking...because of the Bosnian war people became more militant, became more extreme I suppose...started training, started running, started doing martial arts, we all started doing stuff like that and became more militant...'

(exe 283)

#### 4.5.4 War against Islam

We are told that certain Western foreign policies, such as the invasion of Afghanistan, are in a bid to protect Western interests against terrorism; something that is clear from the speech given by former United States President George W. Bush following the initial strikes against targets in Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (The Washington Post, 2001). However, there are those who believe that the attack on 9/11, along with others such as 7/7, was not actually conducted by those who were blamed for them, i.e. AQ or AQI groups. Around a quarter of the informed informants stated how either they or

their local communities felt these terrorist attacks were ‘inside jobs’, i.e. orchestrated by the US and British Governments respectively<sup>69</sup>.

There are those who are not convinced that the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan have anything to do with protecting national security or a measure to reduce terrorism. For example, the war in Iraq has been deemed, both by respondents and more widely with anti-war campaigners, as a desire for financial gain by the UK and US; as Iraq has large oil reserves<sup>70</sup>. There was another perceived motivation highlighted within the empirical data. That being, these attacks were orchestrated by the relevant governments to justify the ‘War on Terror’, which would enable a strengthening of ‘Western imperialism’<sup>71</sup>. This leads to the belief that this is not a war against Iraq or even Afghanistan directly. Due to the perception that Western imperialism is threatened by the continued ‘awakening’ of the Muslim world, it is actually a war against Islam:

‘What was our national interest for going into war in Afghanistan? We [the UK] didn’t get attacked in 9/11, and I know damn well we wouldn’t have got attacked in 7/7 had we not gone into Iraq, which further, kind of, reinforces in the perception of Muslims that this is a crusade against the Muslim world.’ (cms 338)

This enables the radicaliser’s ‘us vs. them’ theory to move onto the global aspect. This was raised as a concern by a number of respondents, with one former violent extremist from London arguing that the ‘War on Terror’ itself was a direct attack on Islam. This was one of the dominant reasons behind his own radicalisation which resulted in him going to Afghanistan in search of ‘jihad’:

‘...that’s one of the reasons why we got drawn in...and that was predominantly due to the “War on Terror” and the way it was conducted. It was the language, the attitude...’ (gee 997)

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<sup>69</sup> This sentiment is reflected within wider polls conducted with British Muslims. For example, a Gfk NOP (2007) survey for Channel 4 News found that 24% of people polled agreed that ‘The British government was involved in some way in the July 7<sup>th</sup> bombings’.

<sup>70</sup> This has also been discussed by a number of prominent academics, commentators and notable figures such as Nelson Mandela (BBC News, 2002), Noam Chomsky (McNeill, 2005), and Alan Greenspan, former Chairman of the Board of Governors of the US Federal Reserve (Adams, 2007). Those who disrepute these arguments claim that we only have to look at the lack of US success of being awarded contracts during the ‘oil auction’ in 2009 (Walt, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> For a discussion on ‘Western imperialism’, see: Change Institute (2008a).

It is important to pick up on the terms 'language' and 'crusade' used in the previous two quotations. There has been much criticism of the use of contentious language by certain people during these conflicts. For example, comments made by George W. Bush, where he stated 'you are either with us or against us' caused further divide and animosity. This simplistic view of the situation ignored all the complexities involved. This in turn solidified the recruitment drive of radicalisers by giving substance to the 'us vs. them' argument. The use of the term 'crusade' also drew much negativity as it had implications to the Crusades orchestrated by Pope Urban II in 1095<sup>72</sup>. This provides radicalisers with the opportunity to press home the argument by using both current and historical examples. A former extremist remarked, "cos we're Muslim they hate us, [and] they've always hated us from day one' (exe 283).

If this notion of a war against Islam is taken at face value, then events over the past few decades indicate otherwise. For example, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the latter was considered to be an ally of much of the West<sup>73</sup>. In this case, the old ally became the new enemy. However, it was argued in the empirical data that this change of opinion only occurred when it suited those countries in the West. Therefore, the ongoing conflict with the former Soviet Union and political implications of their occupation of Afghanistan was thought to be the main concern of the West, rather than the security of the people of Afghanistan. A number of respondents argued that the West engages in whatever action it sees suitable at the particular time as long as it is in their best interests, without any regard for moral standards. They believe the West has 'double-standards', especially when it comes to killing in the name of democracy.

The respondents explained how this was not just a feeling held by susceptible youth, but also by their local communities more widely. They felt moral standards change and are contingent on who is being killed. As a community worker from London explained, 'this is where the disenfranchisement comes in "that when it suits you it doesn't matter, we can

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<sup>72</sup> George W. Bush, once again, was criticised for the use of this term by many, including former British International Development Secretary State Clare Short (McSmith, 2001).

<sup>73</sup> It is widely reported that during the Afghan-Russian war, the Mujahedeen were funded, armed and trained by the CIA and American military (Burke, 1999; Zernike and Kaufman, 2011), with Osama bin Laden considered to be somewhat of a freedom fighter, supporting the oppressed against the 'tyrannical' Russian regime. In fact, Ronald Reagan, the then US President, described the resistance fighters as "the moral equivalents of America's founding fathers" (Chellaney, 2011).

take Soviet life but when we start taking American lives or British lives that is the problem” (grw 218). In fact, over half of the informed informants held similar sentiments:

‘I mean for the most part I would say that the whole double standards argument, you know, where “we’re being accused of being terrorists when we do such and such and such, but you can pillage and bomb and kill in the name of democracy and liberation and so on.” That is really their qualm, that’s the bulk of their argument.’ (grw 320)

The respondents were by no means justifying the use of violence or terrorism. It was made categorically clear that they did not agree with the AQ and AQI acts of terrorism or Western military action in Muslim countries. As one religious leader from the Midlands explained, ‘The suicide bombers are not heroes, in Islam they are not heroes at all. But if person X kills innocent people and Y does, then what is the difference between the two?’ (grw 680). This led to a small number of respondents to question what the difference is between the death of Western soldiers and innocent indigenous Muslims who have been killed due to crossfire. They argued that, due to unbalanced media reporting and general societal culture, Muslim blood is not considered to be as valuable as Western blood:

‘...people just think, “Well no, it’s almost as though those people are subhuman. When we kill them and we rape them they’re subhuman so their blood is not worth as much as your blood or my blood.”’ (gee 441)

Once again, within a complex situation radicalisers are able to provide simple and clear answers. This was outlined by a grassroots worker who discussed the sentiments held by a radicalisee he worked with, “well look how much innocent Muslim blood has been spilt, [then] is it not fair that British or American blood should be spilt?” (gee 897) This was not a standalone comment, as another grassroots worker from the Midlands told of the common arguments presented by radicalisees, “if they start spilling blood, just as our blood is being spilt”, they say “the blood of others needs to be spilt” (grw 320).



#### 4.5.5 The Ummah

The question that needs to be asked at this point is why are British Muslims concerned with the problems of Muslims globally who they have never met and will probably never meet? Respondents within the study explained how Muslims in the UK feel a bond with other global Muslims, and vice-versa. Theoretically<sup>74</sup>, all Muslim men and women are brothers and sisters. This was a strong sentiment that was reiterated throughout the research, ‘they’re your brothers, these kids are your sons and your children, these women are your sisters, they are your mothers’ (exe 283).

This refers to the concept of the Ummah, which in Arabic means ‘community’ or ‘nation’. In the Quran it is presented in the context of ‘Ummah wahida’, or ‘one nation/community’. The importance this belief has amongst Muslims was outlined by a community leader from the Midlands:

‘...there is something that is taught to Muslims that you can never take out of the psyche of Muslims. It’s that a Muslim thinks of the world as the world wide Ummah, the one brotherhood.’ (rnc 737)

The concept of the Ummah is introduced to Muslims from a very young age. It is a core foundation of many Muslims’ religious, cultural and traditional beliefs. It literally is like accepting and treating another Muslim as an immediate family member and having love for them ‘as you would have love for one of your blood brothers...’ (grw 502).

This is something I personally noticed whilst collecting the empirical data. During the research – and regardless of their size, location, or following of sect – the camaraderie within all mosques I visited was immediately apparent. On many occasions when waiting for the respondent I was interviewing, I would remain quietly somewhere in the mosque. This was usually a place where I could sit without being in other people’s way. On almost all, if not all, occasions at least one worshipper would approach me, shake my hand, and in a friendly manner ask me who I was and how I was doing. Even if I was not physically

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<sup>74</sup> The term ‘theoretically’ is not used here to highlight the difference between actual blood relations as compared to ‘imagined’ relations, but more to represent Muslim infighting between different sects. Subsequently, certain denominations of Muslims may not consider others as part of the Ummah.

approached, many worshippers would at least look across and smile. At first I found this to be alien to what I was used to. I suspected it occurred because worshippers somehow knew that I was not a Muslim, and thought I may have looked out of place in the mosque (although all are welcome in mosques). However, as this continued it became apparent that there was something deeper at play. I asked a number of my contacts what the reasons were behind this and they explained the concept of the Ummah. They also told of how it is considered to be a requirement for Muslims to approach other Muslims they don't know, especially in religious places, and make contact. It is not assumed here that this is widespread in all mosques across the UK; however the frequency of occurrence in my own experience cannot be ignored.

The concept of protecting other Muslims within this imagined kinship is a very strong underlying argument within extremist recruitment and radicalisation. When considering the mobilisation that occurred as a result of incidents such as Bosnia, for example, this becomes especially apparent. These individuals strongly feel like their own blood family members are being attacked. This was explained by a former extremist from the West of England, who at one point claimed to have been very close to participating in 'jihad'. He, however, did not disclose whether this was to be conducted within the UK or abroad. It was only through very late interventions from a grassroots worker in the Midlands that this individual was diverted away from this ideology. He explained how he felt his own family were being attacked when he heard of Muslims being killed, 'If you knew someone was coming to attack your family would you go and violently stop them? That's how I felt...you literally feel it's your brothers dying.' (ex 999).

The arguments in this section should by no means implicate wider Muslim communities as potential extremists due to a belief in the Ummah, as it is not a deviant concept whatsoever. In fact, this camaraderie promotes a sense of selflessness. The Ummah is used as a powerful tool by radicalisers to instil a strong bond with fellow Muslims globally who they argue are suffering as a result of certain foreign policy decisions taken by Western states. It is also used to emphasise a sense of moral outrage and guilt within the minds of radicalisees which can be utilised to move certain individuals towards some form of non-violent or violent activism. Once again, for radicalisation to effectively occur, this needs to be in combination with the other concepts discussed within this thesis.

#### 4.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed strains and grievances felt by Muslim youth in the UK at the personal, local and global levels, that render them more susceptible to becoming radicalised. These strains may affect the decisions individuals take at future junctures in their lives, though does not imply that these will be connected to extremism. As Taylor and Horgan (2006: 592) appositely argue, 'In a sense these factors are the precursors of immediate causal influences, but tend to be so general as to have little predictive value. They clearly contribute to the behavioural choices of an individual, and may provide important direction and motivation, but they cannot be said in any meaningful way to "cause" or result in choices of a particular set of actions.'

As stated at the start of this chapter, this is about whom the radicalisees are and what they mean in society and the world, and what society and the world means to them. These conditions affect a wider selection of the population rather than just Muslims, but it is about how radicalisers harness them for their own benefit. As with the prepatient phase of Goffman's (1961) moral career, radicalisers aim to make susceptible individuals believe that their previous lives were false. Thus, the radicaliser explains that whilst the susceptible individual may have felt part, however small, of society, they were in fact in a state of normlessness, and although they may have felt accepted by society, this has never been the case. This enables the radicaliser, usually through the extreme group, to provide radicalisees with a new sense of identity and belonging, and this strengthens the bonds between the two.

The three levels of strains and grievances (i.e. personal, local and global) are also used by radicalisers to instil a dominant sense of 'us vs. them' in the minds of the susceptible individuals. Those at the personal level work towards persuading them that society is against them and other Muslims. At the local level, they believe Muslim communities in the UK are specifically being targeted and suppressed by the state. Finally, at the global level they believe that the West is at war with Islam. These factors contribute to changing their perception of their immediate environment and the society and world they live in.

Further, the strains and grievances at the global level are also used to create a sense of moral outrage, which work towards the susceptible individual believing that it is their

moral and divine duty to engage in some sort of activism. Roy (2008: 10) argues that individuals engaged in terrorism, in the context of 'de-territorialized violence', 'are often torn between three countries: the country where their family comes from; the country of residence and radicalisation; and the country of action (though the last two may coincide, as was the case with the London bombings in 2005)'. When considering the term 'de-territorialized' in the context of this chapter, the individual does not necessarily have to focus on one specific political agenda, or they do not have to be attached, geographically or through heritage, to a particular state. This now also includes Muslim states where civilians are being killed, specifically through the consequences of Western foreign policy.

The radicalisees are able to harness the strains and grievances discussed within this chapter to challenge the susceptible individual's perceptions of self and social identity. The aim of the radicaliser is to create frame-alignment between the experiences of the radicalisee and their extreme ideologies. This will be discussed in greater depth within the 'Conversion' chapter of the thesis.

## Chapter Five: Contingencies

### 5.1 Prologue: Adam's Account

This is the story of 'Adam' who was interviewed as part of the empirical research in late 2009. His account starts when he was at school, many years back, where he explains that being one of the only Asian children he was subject to much racism. This led him to 'hate the person he was'. He desperately felt like he wanted to belong and longed for an identity which was different to being Muslim and Asian. When he finally found this within a local group he was overjoyed.

I expected Adam to reveal this was within an AQI extreme group, but surprisingly he first found solace in his local football firm<sup>75</sup>. Although this part of his life may appear to be irrelevant to the tenor of this thesis, Adam's journey into football's violent subculture has remarkable parallels with his social and subcultural account of AQI extremism. This group offered Adam what he was searching for as they accepted him for who he was. It was about being close friends, socialising together, and looking out for one another; their ethnic origins did not matter. Adam first became interested in this group by the way they dressed, and even mimicked their fashion styles before he had any type of contact with them. He viewed them with admiration as they appeared to be brave and found them to be what he deemed as 'cool'. He finally joined the firm through a mutual contact within his social networks, and the group not only provided him with an identity and belonging, but also allowed him to exercise his masculinity and explore an exciting and dangerous environment.

Interestingly, although he played football as a child, Adam wasn't at first a fan of football and did not support a specific team. He became interested after joining the firm and regularly started to attend matches. Similarly, he wasn't attracted to the firm on the basis of their violent culture. He was drawn in by the allure of what he perceived as 'cool' and

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<sup>75</sup> A 'firm' is an unofficial collection of predominantly young men who have the shared interest of supporting a league football team. They form a cohesive gang and partake in violence, normally with other likeminded groups of supporters of other teams.

'trendy', and the violence came after. Similarities can be drawn to Lofland and Stark's (1965) account of cults, discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

Adam eventually left the firm for reasons which were not discussed in depth during the interview, as they were deemed at that point to hold little value. With hindsight, they may have helped to understand and enlighten elements of the primary tenor of this thesis – radicalisation, and some of the decisions Adam took in later life. Nevertheless, Adam proceeded to explain his fascinating journey to the periphery of AQI extremism.

The term 'periphery' is used here as Adam did not become 'converted' in the sense of internalising extreme ideologies. In many respects, Adam's story is blurred as he held beliefs that would be deemed to be extreme. This may be representative of many Muslim males in his particular position as they may be satisfying their social and subcultural desires through being 'extremist by association', though not necessarily internalising any extreme ideologies.

Although Adam may well have experienced some of the issues discussed within the next chapter, he by no means was affected by all, or even most, of them. This will provide an indication of where Adam differed in his process as compared to those who are 'fully' converted. His account highlights the presence of a number of key findings which had the potential to make him more susceptible towards conversion, as compared to the five young Muslim friends discussed in the prologue to the last chapter. As well as the strains experienced at the personal level, Adam also felt them at the local and global levels. This is where the similarities between Adam and the five Muslim friends generally stop. As stressed in the Introduction, this account of radicalisation needs to be seen as fluid with all factors potentially running in parallel to one another. Thus, people may feel different strains from the three phases outlined in these three empirical chapters. Those who identify with core elements and have a combined ideological and micro-structural affinity will progress further than those who either do not, or have distinct gaps in either one.

Adam's journey into his local football firm showed his desire for identity and belonging. It was a space for him to exercise his masculinity and be part of the 'cool' crowd, which brought him excitement in his normally mundane and predictable life. His flirtation with

AQI extremism holds little difference. For example, fashion for him and his friends was a pivotal point of cohesion. They copied the attire of the jihadi soldiers they saw in the various DVDs that were being circulated:

‘...the videos showed that the Chechen rebels used to wear army clothes, long hair, big boots, [and] similar stuff. [We] actually started dressing like them...walking round, acting militant ...’

As time went on, his group increasingly satisfied their social and subcultural desires through remaining ‘extremist by association’. Some of the influential figures in Adam’s group adopted this stance more rigorously than others. This influenced most of the group to move in the same direction. If any of the group’s members challenged this outlook, there would be pressure for them to conform to the majority norms:

‘...if I said “no, this is wrong”, they’d say “no, what you talking about, what about this, what about this”...You get convinced eventually. I don’t know how, you just get sucked into it all, and you just forget about everything else and you just like have tunnel vision...’

Adam’s group were not influenced by or committed to any particular extremist ideology. He explained that the group were generally not religious either. As outlined in the Introductory chapter, the role of religion in radicalisation becomes important during the conversion part of the process and forms the basis of the particular ideology the extreme group adopts; i.e. a non-violent or violent stance. However, it can also play a crucial role prior to this point in terms of a being a contingency. Those who are religious and hold a deeper knowledge of Islam are able to distance themselves from extremism being a subcultural trend as they believe that any type of affiliation is against the principles of their religion. This is another stark difference between Adam’s story and the account of the five young Muslim friends. As much of their social life revolved around the mosque, they appeared to be very pious and well schooled in Islamic doctrine.

Further, from the considerable time spent with the five friends and their religious leaders and imams, it was clear that they all held a close and mutually respected relationship. Much of this was due to the relatively young ages of their religious leaders, and the fact

that they were 'home-grown' so understood the social and cultural issues facing Muslim young people living in the UK. Adam explained how he had neglected his religion from a young age, as he had no connection with his imam who taught what Adam perceived to be an outdated version of Islam. His teaching tactics were also representative of the traditional methods still found in South Asia, which this imam continued when working in the UK:

'I was force fed the religion, showed down my throat. When I used to go to mosque I used to get the cane, that's probably why I rebelled...we had no love for the religion, we didn't love it, we just thought it to be really cruel, harsh religion, 'cos that's how we was taught.'

Although Adam and his group were 'extremist by association', they had various contacts within local extremist groups through their social networks. This included groups based in the UK such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and AM, and those residing in the UK from other countries, such as the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria. Through certain social bonds with the groups they maintained a loose relationship with them. Though, the Algerians seemed to have more influence with Adam and his group than HT or AM did, and started to propagate their extremist ideologies onto them.

However, before Adam began to deeply internalise these ideologies, he and other members of his group had an intervention. This came from a group of Libyans who taught them, through verses of the Quran, that the mode of thinking they were starting to adopt was wrong. As mentioned, none of his group was overtly religious, though this example shows that they still maintained some affection and affiliation with their faith:

'...they'd been studying the religion for quite a few years. They started telling us that what we believe in and what we follow is wrong...through teaching and teaching and teaching and telling us from this saying and from this Ayat from the Quran...'

Finally, the reasons that stopped Adam, and similar others in his position, becoming converted should be discussed. In his case, the intervention from grassroots groups, religious leaders, and others appears to be crucial. However, whether this intervention was the reason for Adam not becoming an extremist is not completely certain. It is



merely assumed so as some of his friends who left the group before this intervention occurred did end up joining 'established' extreme groups. Adam is defined as 'extremist by association' as he was initially involved within this subculture due to certain trends amongst his peer group. Whether there would have been frame-alignment between an extremist group's ideologies and his personal experiences is, and will remain, unknown. The existence of social networks is also critical within radicalisation. Although Adam did have contact with extremist groups through social networks, others will not and this acts as an important barrier to them becoming converted. Further, having deficiency to some of the contingencies that will be discussed in the chapter is also immensely important with the facilitation (or lack of) towards a point of conversion.

## 5.2 Introduction

Goffman (1961) describes 'contingencies' as either facilitating an individual into a total institution or assisting them in bypassing this outcome. Radicalisation works in the same way. The contingencies discussed in this chapter have common underlying factors which concern culture and subcultural trends. The value of social bonds and interactions are also critical within this argument. This chapter is comprised of four sections.

The first section of the chapter addresses the emergence of extremism as a subcultural trend. For some Muslim youth, portraying oneself as being extreme is linked to the perception of being popular. The term 'popular' here is used both in the sense of a favourable standing amongst one's peer group and also in regards to 'popular culture'. This is due to AQ and AQL extremism and extremists being viewed as 'cool' by some Muslim young people (Bartlett, et al., 2010; Slooman and Tillie, 2006; Pisiou, 2012). Certain authors have termed this as 'jihadi cool' (Sageman, 2008; Temple-Raston, 2010), and others attribute it to being part of a trend which focuses upon the importance of 'street credibility' (Innes et al., 2007; Husain, 2007). These youth may be under great strain within their particular social groups to conform to the culture of their peers more widely.

This relates to the first of Kelman's (1958) three stages of 'internalization'; 'compliance'. Compliance takes place when individuals 'accept influence [as they hope] to achieve a

favourable reaction from another person or group', rather than genuinely believing in the message or cause (ibid: 53). Also of importance to this is Maslow's (1954) 'hierarchy of needs'<sup>76</sup>; specifically the third stage, i.e. 'belonging'. Conceptually, this is similar to the arguments discussed in the previous empirical chapter. The difference is that rather than attaining a sense of belonging within a society or nation, this concerns the individual feeling part of a subgroup within society which has its own identity. Although this topic is outlined in wider research, it is only mentioned in passing in relation to radicalisation and the importance of the concept is regularly neglected. This section aims to alleviate these deficiencies.

The second section outlines the importance of social bonds and interactions within the context of both longstanding friendships and influential groups. This is related to the previous section on extremism being a subcultural trend. Social bonds have been highlighted in the Introduction and Literature Review chapters as being imperative when studying the similar processes found in cults and sects. Within this, 'social interactions' have a distinct importance for the process of radicalisation, though are frequently overlooked when studying this phenomenon. The analysis of social interactions, specifically the study of social influence, can highlight the changes an individual goes through 'when in the presence of others' (Crisp and Turner, 2007: 132). Hogg and Abrams (1995: 158) argue that given the breadth of the phenomenon of social influence, there is no generally accepted theory or framework; rather there are a 'large number of specific short-range propositions or empirical relationships which are wedded to clearly circumscribed sub-areas of the discipline'. When trying to understand why some individuals move towards internalising extreme ideologies, within the context of group settings, there may be a number of concepts that can be drawn upon.

There have been many social psychological experiments conducted that aim to further our understanding of people's reactions within certain situations and under certain conditions. Arena and Arrigo (2005: 487) outline that this approach 'does not portray human behaviour as necessarily flawed or abnormal but as a manifestation of social interaction'. The individual may feel some sort of influence and pressure to conform to

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<sup>76</sup> Maslow's theory is not without criticism, with many questioning the ranking structure or the need for a hierarchy (see Wahba and Bridwell, 1974 for example). However, within this section, it is the components that are focussed upon as a collective, rather than the hierarchical structure itself.

their peer group. With this kinship come a number of associated social psychological pressures which are found in almost all groups, extreme or otherwise.

The third part of this chapter analyses the cultural differences between Muslim youth in the UK and their elders<sup>77</sup>. The previous empirical chapter outlined the individual's relationship with the state and wider society in the context of their parent's heritage. The arguments about identity and belonging provide an important foundation for this section, which aims to dig deeper to understand the tensions that exist between the two groups. The social interactions (more so the lack of) between Muslim youth and their elders are of critical importance, and lead to a 'generational gap' between the two. The term 'generational gap' refers to differences in culture, beliefs, traditions, aspirations, society and self. This issue becomes a contingency if Muslim youth are not able to approach their elders with questions they have which concern 'sensitive' topics. The contingency (i.e. their elders) is removed if youth go looking elsewhere for answers and are in contact – if their social networks allow them to – with those espousing extreme ideologies.

According to the data collected, this generational gap appeared to be especially visible with those from the Indian subcontinent. Although there may be similarities with other immigrant groups, the respondents specifically spoke of those from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Since the Second World War, Muslims have migrated to Britain in relatively large numbers; with the majority coming from South Asia<sup>78</sup>. There are those, such as Ballard (1994), who argue there to be conflict between Muslim youth and their parents, when parents have strong expectations of their children. This conflict is especially compounded when the social expectations (i.e. socialising and adopting British culture) of these elders are diametrically opposed to the social needs, desires and expectations of their children. This is predominantly due to the 'British-born generation...[being] much more involved in transactions across the ethnic boundary than their parents ever were' (ibid: 30). Further, Ali (2008: 5) argues, 'Young Muslims in Britain are the nexus of what are being portrayed as antithetical systems – between their homes and communities and wider British society; with "competing" values, expectations and social mores.' This is by no means exclusive to Muslim migrants, with other studies, for example concerning Hindus (Vadher and Barrett, 2009), yielding similar results.

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<sup>77</sup> For a definition of the term 'elders', see Footnote 18.

<sup>78</sup> For a detailed discussion on South Asian Diasporas in the UK, see: Werbner (2005).

This also extends to their relationships with their religious leaders and places of worship, and forms the basis of the argument for the fourth and final section of the chapter. If the relationship between Muslim youth and their imams has broken down, they will be more reluctant to learn their religion in depth. This leads to what was termed in the empirical data as having a 'lack of Islamic knowledge'. This contingency even prevents them from understanding how being 'extremist by association' is against Islamic principles, and increases their susceptibility to accept extreme ideologies at face value without the tools to be able to refute them (Precht, 2007).

### 5.3 Extremism as a Subcultural Trend

The empirical data strongly indicated that AQ and AQI extremists are considered to be 'cool' by some Muslim youth in the UK. This subcultural trend was even described by respondents as the 'new gangsta rap', which so many young people around the world identify with. Subsequently, some Muslim youth consider extremism the trend they want to be associated with. If their friends have adopted similar tastes, they want to be affiliated with what they perceive to be the 'in crowd':

'...militancy at the moment is the new Black gangsta hip-hop, yeah. It's the new "gangsta", you know, for a lot of young Muslims' (grw 358)

Although the use of technology as a tool for radicalisation does not feature in this thesis, it is important to outline how, according to a number of respondents, it is deemed to be 'cool' to possess certain digital materials. Importantly, this was not confined to those youth considered to be extreme, but in fact was prevalent across the board with increasing numbers of individuals. This insinuates that many of them are 'extremist by association' in a bid to adhere to the subcultural trends set by elements of their peer group, or generation more widely. One example which was frequently provided by the respondents concerned the 'jihadi' propaganda found on many young Muslims' mobile smartphones. This was in the form of various videos, some of which had been 'remixed' with a 'gangsta rap baseline'<sup>79</sup>:

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<sup>79</sup> Examples of this type of material can even be found on popular mainstream video sharing websites such as YouTube. See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0toIYsaqkpg>, for example.

'They didn't know what was said. They just saw pictures of a couple of militants, this radical hate preacher just saying stuff in Arabic with a baseline in the background and they thought it was very cool to have that on their phone.' (grw 831)

Further, one informed informant from the Midlands outlined how certain rap artists were incorporating extremist ideology into their music. He stressed this was one of his biggest concerns in his work at the grassroots level. This, he argued, was a vital subcultural consideration when understanding radicalisation further:

'...the impact that hip-hop culture has on people becoming Muslims and radical, because in the hip-hop culture the hip-hop artists are now using Islamic terms, many of them are Muslims, and in their raps they are making references to coming into the club and high-jacking people...and they're making these kinds of statements about Palestine, and Iraq and things like this.' (grw 971)

Although there have been a number of trends young people around the world have been influenced by, one of the most prolific is the hip-hop music genre. Time Magazine (2000) even defined this as 'the most important youth culture on the planet'. Interestingly, one of the core tenets of various extreme groups is the ban of music, except on occasion music or singing which is based around a religious nature<sup>80</sup>. This highlights the contradictions that exist between certain extremists and their ideologies, and that the acquirement and distribution of this material is motivated by social merit, rather than the message itself.

The influence of popular culture within radicalisation can also be seen with the affection shown towards certain extreme ideologues. For instance, an informed informant from London who claimed to have personally known [sheikh] Abdullah el-Faisal outlined how the preacher was able to 'resonate with young disaffected Muslims because of how he spoke' (grw 840). The respondent explained how this was due to el-Faisal having a charming and charismatic personality (as will be outlined in further detail in the next empirical chapter), and on account of his Jamaican nationality which enabled him to connect with youth culture. These arguments were confirmed by a second informed informant from the Midlands:

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<sup>80</sup> Certain sects in Islam hold similar beliefs. This does not, however, necessarily align with them adopting any type of extremist ideology.

'As for charisma, no doubt, Abdullah [el-]Faisal is charismatic...he's got a Jamaican accent which influences many people who are into that type of culture, because Jamaican culture is very powerful amongst youth' (grw 249)

Consequently, the interviews suggested that increasing numbers of predominantly male Muslim youth are starting to adopt a 'militant' presentation of self. The use of the term 'militant' does not assume militancy in its traditional understanding. It is a phrase used by youth, both Muslim and otherwise, to describe people who depict themselves as being fearless of anyone or anything. They are usually 'over the top' in their actions and are not risk averse. They are viewed as 'hard-men', similar to Katz's (1988: 80) description of the 'badass', and have built up respect amongst their peers as a result of this:

'I think this "hard man" image is very attractive to young people, sometimes people just talk hard to look cool in front of their peers...' (rmc 321)

This subcultural trend was discussed in the prologue to this chapter with the story of Adam. He told of how some of his associates were impressed with the jihadi videos they were watching at the time. These videos showed Muslim 'soldiers' in army attire, brandishing weapons, and fighting, '...there was a lot of DVDs going around' (Adam). The use of the term 'a lot of DVDs' by Adam indicates that many youth were interested in this type of material and were readily distributing it to others within their networks. Due to personal reputations, it is normally uncommon for people to distribute something they themselves did not find interesting or appealing. This substantiates the argument that extremism is viewed as cool and is a subcultural trend amongst sections of Muslim youth. According to Adam, this drew more youth into this subculture and as a result further associations were made between themselves and the soldiers on the DVDs.

They were doing this by mimicking the soldier's clothes. Whilst there are those who will actively want to dress in this manner, there will also be the outliers. There are similarities that can be drawn between this and Goffman's (1961) notion of 'identity kits', where total institutions like the army ensure all soldiers start to lose their sense of individualism and gain more cohesion with the group as they are all dressed the same. Goffman's analysis on 'identity kits' infers a process which is forced upon the individual. Whilst there is no one physically forcing these Muslim youth to adopt a certain style of dress, they may be

under pressure both socially and culturally to adopt this fashion. Also, by not adhering to this trend will make them feel like outsiders within their peer groups. Thus, they will forego elements of their old identity and begin to adopt this new one.

As will be discussed in the next empirical chapter, 'Conversion', an element of this macho and masculine behaviour comes from youth watching DVDs where militarily 'inferior' Muslim soldiers are taking on the 'might of the West' and other superpowers such as Russia. Being involved or affiliated with extremism, or even perceiving oneself to be extreme, has little to do with the religion and ideology itself and is about maintaining a perception of identity and masculinity. This was a disposition highlighted by the majority of respondents for this study:

'They're not even observing, practising Muslims most of the time, yet they will latch onto the idea of Islamic violent extremism for all manner of reasons...one of the reasons is that Islam can be very macho and strong, and if you're in an alpha-male environment then sometimes it's as simple as that...It's nothing to do with ideology at all its just to do with the fact that Islam is really strong and Muslims are tough...' (see 796)

These arguments of perceiving extremism to be 'cool' and macho and wanting to be affiliated with the 'in crowd' may have intensified after 9/11, however they were present before this. As a sixth-form college student at the age of seventeen, pre-9/11, there was the emergence of something similar in my own personal experience. A small group of Muslims at the college started distributing material that denounced the existence of the Holocaust. They rallied support from other Muslim students and generally 'flexed their muscles' through overtly bullying other non-Muslims. This appealed to a certain section of the students and the gang expanded. In fact, a couple of non-Muslim students even became affiliated and converted to Islam in a bid to hang-out with their friends. As they were all converging and bonding as a group, they were also being fuelled by their difference to the majority of the other students<sup>81</sup> (i.e. their Islamic faith). They were rebelling from mainstream society (represented by both the college and wider society), whilst asserting their strong and collective identity. This was also captured within the empirical data, and explained by a grassroots worker from the Midlands:

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<sup>81</sup> There are similarities between this and 'subcultural capital', see: Thornton (1995).

‘...by embracing Islam they are basically telling their friends who are non-Muslims that “I am not going to do what you are doing because you are doing it...”. So on one hand they are influenced, but on the other hand there is something chic and cutting edge to be different, and being a Muslim and being different’ (grw 971)

There was nothing overtly political or revolutionary about the aforementioned sixth-form students. They were amateur in their knowledge and experience. Importantly, none of them really displayed a depth of Islamic knowledge and they appeared to take a relaxed stance about praying or practising their religion. Many of them had girlfriends, consumed alcohol, and frequented nightclubs. However, it was claimed by associates years later that at least one member of this group joined a violent extreme network and travelled abroad to participate in ‘jihad’. Even currently, his whereabouts are still unknown.

The difference between those who are ‘extremist by association’ and those who appear to be committed to an extreme cause can be seen in the contradictions that exist with the former; as was alluded to above. Within the empirical data, a grassroots worker told how the youth he worked with claimed they were extremists, but legitimised going to nightclubs, drinking and watching pornography:

‘...what we find a tad hypocritical with them is that you’ll find them denouncing the West or Western values...but their lives for the most part are very Western...and they continue to love everything that typifies general western youth...clubbing, drinking, porn. Because with a lot of them their issue is “until we have the establishment of the Islamic State, then a lot things that are impermissible are not impermissible”’ (grw 320)

As another example, certain respondents claimed that some youth they worked with did not even adhere to their Islamic duties of attending prayer. Once again, they argued that this was not a requirement until there was the establishment of a global Caliphate:

‘...but when it comes to time to pray in the mosque they’re walking away, you say “where are you going?” [and they say] “oh well the khilafah is not established...when the Islamic state is there then we’ll start praying”’ (grw 831)



This does not mean these individuals are not at risk of becoming radicalised. If there is the presence of the other factors discussed in this thesis then these individuals may well move towards becoming converted. In fact, it can be argued that they may appear to be more at risk as they have already started to adopt a type of personality that entertains extremism.

Finally, the consideration of 'youth' within this argument, and in fact the chapter more widely, is extremely important. Extreme groups are aware of this subcultural trend and try to capitalise on it. As one respondent stated, 'there was a lot of wrangling...in terms of control of Muslim youth in particular, trying to build followings, trying to get followers...' (grw 662). As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the average ages of those involved in extremism is relatively young. The British Security Service, MI5, in a leaked document given to the Guardian, state the majority are in their early to mid-20s when they become radicalised (Travis, 2008b). The empirical data indicated that the age certain youth become interested in this trend could even be pre-teen to early-teen. This was attributed to a number of reasons including an increased awareness due to media reporting, ease of access to extremist propaganda on the internet, and through social networks:

'...post-9/11, you've got the idea of being a jihadi is now a popular concept, as in everyone knows about it post-9/11, pre-9/11 it's not a known thing...so you can start young, eleven, twelve, thirteen, everyone knows who bin Laden is, no one knew who bin Laden was before 2001.' (exe 283)

This section has discussed 'extremism' as a subcultural trend inhabited by certain Muslim youth. This has also included the pressures and influences that are felt by the individual in order to 'fit into' their immediate social expectations. At this juncture it is important to understand, with this section acting as a backdrop, what pressures and influences individuals can be exposed to in their immediate friendship groups.

#### 5.4 Friendships and Group Pressures

There are various pressures that are exerted onto individuals by different types of groups – both extreme and otherwise – and can take two forms. The first is self-imposed where the individual attempts to satisfy both their conscious and subconscious needs, including issues around belonging and esteem (Maslow, 1954). The second pressure is applied, either intentionally or otherwise, by certain members to ‘encourage’ or ‘persuade’ others to conform to the group’s norms. Although the arguments here relate to groups that are ‘extremist by association’, the pressures outlined will also be applicable to established extreme groups.

The discipline of social psychology is abundant with theories that strongly resonate with the findings presented within this thesis. This is especially pertinent when considering a peer group’s members who have been in contact, or have been friends, for a relatively lengthy period of time. One particular method of influence displayed by groups is ‘peer pressure’. This concern was raised by an informed informant from London, who argued that ‘...if the person is being brought up around a group who are already on that methodology of extremism then there is that peer pressure there...it’s common’ (grw 927). In fact, another informed informant, who works with violent street gangs as well as extreme groups, argued that peer pressure is present ‘nine times out of ten...’ (grw 320).

This influence is exerted to align an individual’s behaviour, ideologies and attitude with the group’s norms, i.e. ‘conformity’. Conformity occurs when a group member has all of the information to make judgement on an issue and is certain of their opinion, only to change their mind due to various group pressures (Sherif, 1936). Further, it is present when an individual does not want to appear to diverge from the group’s norms and become isolated in their views, in some cases to avoid the risk of social rejection, or to simply not be the ‘odd one out’:

‘...[they] are greatly influenced by their peer group...even if they’re not pleased within their gang or within that peer group that they’re in, then they’ll stay quiet because they don’t want to be seen as the odd one out.’ (grw 249)

Conformity may also be present when individuals question their minority view against the differing majority. Being part of a group where most, if not all, members hold the same beliefs will have the potential to influence the individual. If all members are 'reading from the same page', this could act as a confirmation of what the individual is being told to believe. The individual may progress from simply being 'extremist by association' in order to satisfy social and subcultural needs, to actually starting to give the message more consideration.

The theoretical underpinnings of this can be seen in wider research conducted within the discipline of social psychology, such as that of Solomon Asch (1952, 1955). Asch found that people can generally be influenced to conform to the positive expectations of others; termed as 'normative social influence'. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) conducted similar experiments to Asch and employed additional hypotheses which analysed the capacity of not only normative influence, but also of 'informational social influence'; 'an influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality'. They found that individuals are likely to reduce their own levels of judgement and conform to other's thoughts when they are lacking information or a belief in one's own judgement. Further, they argue that 'from birth on, we learn that the perceptions and judgements of others are frequently reliable sources of evidence and reality' (ibid: 635). Similarly, Cialdini (2001: 111) argues that 'in general, when we are unsure of ourselves, when the situation is unclear or ambiguous, when uncertainty reigns, we are most likely to look to and accept the actions of others as correct.'

The role of influential personalities within groups is also critical. Most groups, if not all, have individuals who hold more power and influence than others. If these individuals are moving towards adopting an extreme outlook, this has the potential of influencing those who currently are not:

'...pretend there are five people who have been friends for five years, six years. If one of them were to become radical...if he does have a lot influence and he becomes radical then definitely that will wash off on to other people, no doubt with it' (grw 502)

This will particularly be the case with younger members who are still finding direction in their lives and are pre-family, pre-career, and whose social lives predominantly gravitate

around their friendship circle. If an influential person within that group was to get hold of some extremist propaganda material, this would influence other members of the group:

‘One person brings in a jihad DVD of what’s happening in Afghanistan, or Iraq or something, and then the rest of them will all partake in it and share it and they’ll start having discussions...as long as the individual is influential enough amongst their peers...then the rest of them do fall in line and buy into that, so that’s the scary thing...’  
(grw 358)

If certain members of friendship circles do join extreme groups, then others may be keen to maintain friendships. Similar to the arguments made on cults and sects within the Introduction chapter, these youth have not identified with the extreme group’s ideologies but attend events and study groups simply to ‘hang out’ with their friends. A grassroots worker, and former extremist, from London outlined his experience with now banned group AM:

‘...they go to all different towns around the UK giving da’wah<sup>82</sup>, giving study circles, and for the sake of simply wanting to be with their former friends’ (gee 897)

Interestingly, this was also the personal experience of a former AQI extremist from the West of England, who before his conversion to Islam was part of a British far-right group. When asked how he became involved and attended far-right meetings, he replied, ‘I just kind of went along because my mates were into it’ (exe 999).

As a final note, when considering all of the arguments presented within this chapter thus far, there needs to be the mention of an extremely important point. A relatively large amount of traditional research on radicalisation assumes that the radicalisee is innocent during this process and is subject to different influences which in turn ‘brainwash’ them into conforming to these extreme ideologies. Although there is little sympathy for those who are radicalised, there is generally a societal assumption that these radicalisees are being ‘tricked’ into submission. It is true that they are subject to these influences, though

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<sup>82</sup> The term ‘da’wah’ refers to the preaching of Islam, or the invitation to practise Islam. It also refers to an invitation to discuss and debate, with the intention to further understand, Islamic beliefs.

it is not correct to assume they are 'brainwashed' or unaware of what is going on in all cases. Certain radicalisees will know what they are getting into and will actually want to be affiliated with extremism, due to subcultural trends. There are those who are 'seekers' of extremism and actually go looking for groups and networks. There are as well those who 'drift' into extremism, though are fully aware of what they are involved with. This was the case with one respondent who works as a grassroots worker in London, and had once travelled to Afghanistan to participate in 'jihad':

'I was introduced to a number of people who were linked to al-Qaeda, many people who were linked to the Taliban, who first came on the scene as aid workers, but then we quickly realised that they weren't actually aid workers...they were closely linked to [the] Taliban, and I quite frankly had no problem with that. It wasn't a shock to me, it wasn't a surprise to me...and it was like something that I could do, I could get involved with...' (gee 997)

The arguments presented in the previous two sections of this chapter have discussed the roles of subculture and social interactions. There also needs to be consideration of the role a lack of social interaction and difference in culture has on radicalisation. This will be the focus of the next section of the chapter.

### 5.5 Generational Gap

There were strong concerns expressed within the data about the divide between Muslim youth and their elders. The respondents explained how elders' culture, values and mindset have remained firmly in their motherland. Thus, they are 'physically in the Western world, but their minds are very much in the Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Indian village' (gee 441). As a consequence, Muslim youth are finding it increasingly difficult to relate to their parents and vice-versa:

'...they've still got a dichotomy between the elder Muslims and the Muslim youth. The life that the elder Muslims lead and the youth lead are still [different], the chasm is really big. So, younger Muslims find it really difficult to relate to their parents...' (grw 840)

The use of the term 'dichotomy' in the above quotation is interesting as it represents a polar view of role expectations and the perception of self in British society. The empirical data found that young Muslims find it difficult approaching their parents on a range of personal issues including puberty, alcohol, drugs, and sexual intercourse, for example. Further, there are tensions on how these issues relate to Islamic teachings. This was explained by a grassroots worker from the Midlands:

'...[with] the older men in the community, how in the world is the boy going to tell [them], "hey, I want to know about oral sex, I want to know is it permissible?"' (grw 971)

This issue is not specific to Muslim youth, or just within Islam. Speaking from a personal perspective, having a South Indian and Hindu heritage, I understand the difficulties with approaching parents on a range of sensitive topics. Many friends and colleagues from similar backgrounds have commented on the same problems.

As discussed in the previous empirical chapter, 'Susceptibility', some Muslim youth feel like they are caught between two different and often competing worlds. With contentious issues within Islam such as drinking and pre-marital sexual relations, these Muslim youth are confused between what they are being told by their parents, or what they perceive their parents will think of the issues, and what they experience in their immediate social environments outside of their homes. They feel trapped by their parents' culture and lack the foundations to navigate through the culture of the society they are living in:

'...they are very vulnerable. In a way they are living in society which is completely different from what they have been told they have to be..."it's forbidden for you to drink alcohol", but when you go out you see everyone drinking alcohol. So you yourself think "am I normal?"...There are lots of things that are completely different from your own house and when you go out...they are completely confused' (gee 234)

There are two important terms used by the respondent quoted above which need further discussion. First is the term 'vulnerable', which is critical to the broader argument of this chapter, and in many respects the thesis. This vulnerability, coherent with Goffman's (1961) argument, is the direct result from the contingencies discussed within this section. This enables a window for extremist recruiters to exploit and use to develop and

construct a new perception of self – as will be outlined in the next empirical chapter. Second, the term ‘am I normal?’ also holds much importance. If these youth question their core traits, this can be detrimental when in the company of a radicaliser who makes them feel that not only are they normal, but in fact others who do not subscribe to extreme ideals may be abnormal. This in turn will also help to solidify the ‘us vs. them’ argument when the radicalisee’s self is being reconstructed.

This generational gap has some important consequences which act as a contingency (or lack of) towards radicalisation. The most critical for this study is that youth may be limited in whom they can approach to answer their pressing questions. A grassroots worker, for instance, explained how he was regularly approached by Muslim youth for answers to a range of problems; even though he is relatively young himself. He argued that youth feel like they cannot turn to their parents for advice and outlined a particular recent example:

‘...this Saturday someone came to me with a marriage issue, [a] 23 year old, I’m not old myself...he wants to marry some English girl...but the reason why he came to me is because that’s the conversation he cannot have with his father...’ (gee 897)

This was not an isolated comment, as another grassroots worker explained, ‘I have that kind of relationship with many of these young people, where they see me as someone they can talk to about real issues’ (grw 971). These grassroots workers are normally much younger than the youths’ parents and have been brought up in the UK themselves. As a result, they can identify with many issues the youth are struggling with. Further, the grassroots workers are treating these youth as young adults and are also providing them with religious explanations to their issues.

However, these youth looking elsewhere for advice can also have dire consequences. Through their social networks, or by chance meetings, these youth may encounter those who espouse extreme ideologies. The data showed that many of these extremists are willing to discuss a range of sensitive topics youth are not comfortable approaching their families about. As the grassroots worker quoted above argued, ‘Asian culture doesn’t allow him to address the issue of that young man, whereas some of these other people who are radical...they understand it.’ (ibid)

Many parents will be out of touch with the social concerns of youth, but some of these extremists have, similar to the grassroots workers, experienced these very same issues, as they have on many occasions been born and brought up around the same culture:

‘He can’t talk [to his parents] about some of the things that he is involved in. Whereas...these tough people, they come from the dirt these people come from, they went through what they went through.’ (grw 971)

These extremists attempt to replace the role of the individual’s father, as explained by a grassroots worker from the North East of England:

‘Some of these kids that we work with or some of the adults as well even, many of them don’t have father figures or they don’t have good communication with their own fathers. Hence when a radical extremist comes along and starts trying to feed them this sort of information, they look at them as a father figure...’ (grw 831)

There is nothing wrong with an individual providing advice about social issues to Muslim youth as long as the advice is legal and socially positive. However, the problem lies with extremists drawing the youth in with open and frank discussions about their social and cultural identity issues, and then propagating their extremist agenda as trust builds up between the two. As a grassroots worker from London quipped, this is ‘the tactic that they have, [as] they already have an affinity with the youth’ (grw 840).

## 5.6 Imams and Mosques

It was mentioned in the Methodology chapter how imams are considered to be more than just spiritual leaders and can be approached to discuss a multitude of topics. The empirical data strongly indicated that imams struggle to meet the needs of Muslim youth whether this is spiritually, politically, or as with their parents, culturally and socially<sup>83</sup>. The

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<sup>83</sup> For wider discussions on these issues, see: Choudhury (2007); Dyke (2009); Geaves (2008); Rahman et al. (2010); Mirza et al. (2007); Horgan (2008); Malik (2007); Barnes (2006); Werbner (2004); Kraft et al. (2007); Gest and Norfolk (2008); Oakeshott (2007); Asim (2011); Charity Commission (2009).



lack of this contingency can have detrimental costs, as will be discussed at relevant places. This primarily concerns three main points.

The first is due to their poor, or in some cases non-existent, ability to speak English. This is a major issue in numerous mosques around the UK. These youth are excluded from understanding sermons and lectures at their mosques, which in turn may de-motivate them from attending. As a result, these youth find it difficult to establish any connection to the mosque as, ‘...the imam doesn’t even speak English, he’s ineffective...’ (grw 971)

Consequently, Muslim youth are more at more risk of becoming radicalised. This is due to extremist groups capitalising on this problem by using English in their recruitment and propaganda drives. This was reported to be one of the dominant reasons Mohammed Sidique Khan found alternative sources in the form of an extreme group for answers to the questions he had (Malik, 2007). This concept was confirmed by a researcher from London:

‘...the people who clocked onto that were the Islamists who said “ok, we’ll we better translate all of our works”. People like HT had all their works in English long before anyone else because they knew that [was] what they needed if they wanted to win people over. They had to give them information in their own language. It’s really simple.’ (res 985)

This should not be mistaken for religion being a driver of radicalisation. Muslim youth, especially since 9/11, have numerous pertinent questions they want answers for. If these imams cannot provide them with answers, or cannot effectively communicate with them due to language barriers, then the individual may look elsewhere.

This forms the basis of the second problem where certain imams appear to be averse to discussing a number of topics which are considered to be contentious. Due to media coverage and increased societal awareness of AQ and AQI groups, Muslim youth want to understand what stance Islam takes on topics such as extremism, jihad and terrorism. This should not be taken to mean that these youths are necessarily looking to adopt, or are even attracted by, these types of activity. There is a desire to understand how these topics fit into wider international contexts that concern Muslims, such as the ‘War on

Terror', for example. On the other hand, if they are attracted by extreme ideologies, it would provide an opportunity to intervene at an early point; though only if they felt comfortable approaching their moderate imams about the issue.

The empirical data found that imams and mosques, generally, are not au fait with these types of discussions and ignore the issues rather than providing a space for debate and understanding. Some even argued that certain mosques take hard-line action with the threat of expulsion for generating conversation on them. A grassroots worker from London, who was once part of an extreme network, explained how they:

'...don't talk about these issues...they'll brush it under the carpet, hoping these issues will go away...if you start to speak about these things in mosques, more often than not, you will be kicked out' (gee 897)

This was brought into sharp focus by another grassroots worker from London who told of how he had recently been approached by a Muslim youth who had asked, "If a British soldier kills an Iraqi, when he comes back to this country can you kill him?" (gee 441). It was only down to existing relationships between the grassroots worker and local youth – based on a social and cultural understanding of youth issues – that this individual was comfortable approaching him. The outcome could have been sinister if the youth had approached someone espousing extreme ideologies.

There are also occasions where imams are willing to discuss these issues but are restricted by the mosque's management or committee<sup>84</sup>. These are the groups that hold the most amount of power in mosques (Dyke, 2009). Imams can find themselves in the difficult position of engaging within topics the management are opposed to discussing, even though they may be aware of people gravitating towards extreme ideologies in their congregations. Disobeying the management can have detrimental consequences on the imam, which in turn could affect their livelihood:

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<sup>84</sup> For more information on how mosque management and committees are generally structured, see: Dyke (2009: 27).

‘...the imams are in a very difficult situation when it comes to dealing with this. They know what is right because they’re more qualified than anybody else. They know what needs to be done, they know what needs to be said and then even have a very good idea of who in their congregation is up to something. But their problem is that if they speak out, you know, there’s a chance that they can lose their job, there’s a chance that they could get kicked out by the committee’ (grw 894)

There are various reasons behind this reluctance, which will differ mosque to mosque, though the respondent quoted above raised an interesting point. Although most mosque managements are against extremism, there have been occasions, in his experience, where a small number of individuals in the committee are not. He explained, ‘usually committees are quite passive and they’ll have one or two dominant personalities on that committee who may be, you know, supporting these kinds of people...’ (ibid). Within the empirical data this was the only respondent to raise this issue, though a small number of others did highlight similar concerns during informal chats with the author. The extent of the problem did not, however, become clear.

The data suggested there to be other underlying reasons for this reluctance by imams to discuss these issues. When considering counter-extremism and counter-terrorism, the natural assumption is to believe that it is a concern to almost all people. However, this is not necessarily the case in every situation with religious leaders. This is not about them being ‘pro-extremism’, but more about them being less concerned as their priorities are elsewhere. Certain respondents in the study indicated that the majority of imams in the UK are underpaid<sup>85</sup>, and so their priority will be with survival and wellbeing rather than countering extremism. Similarities can be drawn with Catholic communities in Northern Ireland during the height of the IRA and INLA conflict, where they were more concerned about day to day survival rather than the political campaign around them (Sluka, 1989). This may also affect their positive motivation towards the role<sup>86</sup>. This is especially critical if, as outlined, elements of the mosque’s management are against discussions of this nature. The imams will naturally not want to cause problems with those who are paying their wages and in many cases ensuring the survival of their families.

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<sup>85</sup> For a wider discussion on these issues, see: Choudhury (2007); Pigott (2007); Naqshbandi (2006).

<sup>86</sup> For a discussion on ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ motivation, see: Mullins (1999); Huczynski and Buchanan (2001); Robbins (2003).

It can be argued that offering low economic incentives will primarily attract people from countries whose GDP is significantly lower than the UK, such as Pakistan, rather than home-grown imams:

‘...imagine you’re not paying someone a decent wage and you’re constraining them to a mosque, making them do something day in day out and you are giving them no fair reparation. These people are more downtrodden than the people that are coming to them for advice...you can't attract anyone from this country so you have to bring someone from a village in Pakistan...’ (gee 897)

This is important as it links back to the argument made in the previous section which discussed how Muslim parents are socially and culturally out of touch with Muslim youth. As mentioned, these issues are also applicable to the relationships with imams. If imams are predominantly coming from abroad, rather than being ‘home-grown’, they will be less likely to understand the problems facing young people in the UK.

This leads onto the third issue which concerns imams’ lack of ability, or want, to provide Muslim youth with what they desire. This primarily concerns them not being able to give interesting and relevant talks, lectures and sermons. It can be argued that many imams are not modern enough for British culture and society (Pigott, 2007). Much of this is due to Muslim young people seeing their elders’ version of Islam as simply spiritual, and thus outdated (Husain, 2007). Islam is considered, by a growing number of Muslim youth, to be an all-encompassing way of life which involves political, economic, social and judicial elements, amongst others:

‘The imam is simply there just to lead the prayer for you, but when it comes to the issue of politics, theology, education, health, you know, all these sorts of matters, the mosque is not that place for those sorts of issues.’ (gee 897)

The most pressing concern for Muslim young people from this list is how politics and Islam coexist. On many occasions this relates to the issues discussed in the previous chapter regarding the global level. This lack of political understanding and involvement from imams was outlined by a respondent working at a senior level within a well-known Muslim organisation in the UK. He explained how imams coming from abroad, especially

the Asian subcontinent, were not trained to understand areas of Islam which are outside of the spiritual realm:

‘...they [imams] are mainly taught about the spiritual values of Islam and how to observe it and how to practice it...the reality [is] that they were not trained to serve as imams in a country like Britain...So they are not interested in political dimensions of Islam, or social, cultural or even educational, and economic dimensions of Islam. They just have a very limited focussed vision of Islam and they concentrate on that’ (rmc 616)

During the interview with an imam in England<sup>87</sup>, it became clear that he also subscribed to these spiritual based ideals. He discussed how he strictly enforced a requirement in the mosque which forbade worshippers to discuss any political matters:

“It is only [a] spiritual place, you pray, you study, you read, you mix with each other, socialise, enjoy, but no sectarian views, no political views...[discuss it] outside the mosque, not in the mosque.” (irl 620)

The reason for this was due to the varied countries of origin, cultures and backgrounds of the worshippers at the mosque. He explained how some of them came from regions that had once had, or currently have, political tensions, or were in direct conflict with others’ homelands. This tension and animosity was being displayed within the mosque and he noticed a distinct segregation between these groups. Therefore, as a method of overcoming this, ensuring there was no trouble, and in a bid to bridge the gap between the groups, he insisted the mosque was viewed as a spiritual sanctuary.

However, one particular situation experienced by this respondent highlights the concern raised by the other interviewees. At an early stage in his terrorist career, a well-known extremist regularly frequented this respondent’s mosque. The interviewee explained how he did not agree with some of the material the worshipper was reading and instead recommended other works. However, the worshipper stressed how he wanted to read literature which he deemed to be current and included all the dimensions of Islam, rather than just the spiritual:

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<sup>87</sup> The specific region has been restricted to ensure his identity remains confidential.

“I don’t need those classical readings. I need the current affairs and the current issues” (ibid)

This particular respondent can of course in no way be blamed or held responsible for the future actions and radicalisation of this extremist<sup>88</sup>. However, this religious leader could have acted as a contingency. There is the possibility that the extremist’s life course may have potentially been altered if this individual had taken an active role in discussing this literature in an open and frank manner, without simply recommending classical readings which have no connection and interest to him. This is especially critical as this particular extremist has been linked to a number of terrorist attacks within the UK and globally.

This was not a standalone example and a similar argument was presented by a former extremist from London who claimed to have personally known Germaine Lindsay, one of the 7/7 bombers. He argued that the lack of political understanding his local imams held was one of the main reasons Lindsay preferred not to attend ‘mainstream’ mosques:

‘...the imams of the mosques, these are the people that are most removed from political understanding and from what’s happening on the streets. Germaine Lindsay for example, he didn’t go to the local mosque...he had no interest or no attraction, because [these] guys have been talking about the same thing for 60 years’ (gee 441)

The data suggested that Muslim youth are frequently shunning this spiritual message, which they find boring, and may come across more relevant and exciting lectures and sermons. These youth are already questioning their identity and belonging within the UK and Islam may have been the obvious answer to this. When they do not find this within their existing networks (i.e. their parents and imams) they may feel even more isolated within British society. However, being given a different perspective on their religion which offers them a dominant identity and belonging will of course be appealing:

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<sup>88</sup> It must be noted that this respondent assured the researcher that he had immediately contacted the relevant authorities after learning of the ‘worshipper’s’ extremist outlook.

'Another reason I think these kids become radical has a lot to do with a type of boring cultural, dull Islam of the elders, especially the Asian community...there's nothing to make the young people feel connected, so as a result of that...when these young people hear someone who's radical and aggressive in the way that they speak...they tend to listen to those people as opposed to these uninformed, uneducated imams' (grw 971)

#### 5.6.1 Lack of Islamic Knowledge

As well as the other contingencies discussed in this section that can facilitate individuals moving towards an extremist ideology or help them bypass this fate, there is another that holds critical importance. If Muslim youth are becoming distant from their mosques and imams, then this could affect their learning of the faith. This could lead to what many respondents within the data termed as a 'lack of Islamic knowledge', or having 'incorrect Islamic knowledge'.

However, it is important to consider that someone having 'correct Islamic knowledge' is subjective and open to discussion. It is difficult for a layperson to enter debate about Islamic ideology and jurisprudence; though there may be certain distinctions drawn. If these ideologies relate to our definitions of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, and therefore affect national security, then there may be leeway to make judgement. For example, if an individual's particular ideology, based upon religious context, allowed the commitment or support of terrorist acts, or any illegal activity, then this could be deemed as an incorrect understanding of that religion. However, some may draw distinction to further arguments regarding the definition of terrorism and extremism, and the processes behind deciding what is legal and illegal.

A lack of Islamic knowledge, or the religion itself, is not necessarily of great importance during initial radicalisation. There is more of an emphasis on strains, grievances, sub-cultural trends and social bonds. It can play a role, however, as with the case of the five Muslim friends, as a contingency towards even entertaining the idea of becoming 'extremist by association' due to subcultural trends; as this is deemed to be against Islamic principles. It becomes especially important when becoming prepared to support

(both tacitly and otherwise) or commit an act of violence or terrorism. When this occurs within an extreme group is of course never set, and this topic should not be underestimated or neglected. As it is one direct consequence of the generational gap and exists partly due to the cultural differences between Muslim youth and their elders, it is best to discuss this issue at this point as a precursor for the next empirical chapter of the thesis. Further, there are many Muslim youth in the UK who also have this lack of Islamic knowledge though do not become involved in any form of extremism. Therefore, it would be naïve to assume that this contingency alone constitutes an individual's radicalisation.

As the UK becomes an increasingly secular state, it is difficult to fully understand the impact and influence a religion such as Islam has on its followers. As discussed, much of the Muslim communities' religious, social and cultural outlay is in some way related to the mosque. Learning about the doctrines, pillars and foundations of one's religion is an important requirement within Islam. Mosque and madrassa based teaching of the Quran and Sunnah<sup>89</sup> is one of the most common ways for young Muslims to accomplish this.

A large number of informed informants, over two-thirds, argued that Muslim youth having this lack of Islamic knowledge was an extremely important component of radicalisation. As one grassroots worker from the North East of England stated, '...the biggest problem we've got is that people don't understand a lot of the main principles of Islam...(grw 179). It was agreed by almost all of the informed informants that many of the youth they worked with had little understanding of the foundations of Islam or wider knowledge of the teachings from the Quran and the Sunnah:

'You'll be surprised actually most young Muslims don't know anything about Islam...[a] children's encyclopaedia is the level of the Islamic understanding of most of the individuals that I have come across.' (gee 796)

The respondents argued that if someone has a deeper understanding of Islam which is direct from the source, i.e. the Quran and Sunnah, then they are much less susceptible to this extremist version of Islamic doctrine. An imam from the Midlands expressed these very sentiments:

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<sup>89</sup> The Sunnah is, generally, the words, actions and example of the Prophet Muhammad.



'if you have deep knowledge of Islam for example they cannot make you satisfied because they don't have any solid reasons, but when they are going to sit with youth or those who [do not have] deep knowledge they can influence them ...' (irl 186)

Many respondents believed that these extremist recruiters and ideologues themselves do not have a deep understanding of Islam, though as compared to the radicalisee this appears to be heightened. As one respondent quipped, 'in the land of the blind the one eyed man is king' (gee 796). This was also outlined by the imam quoted above who explained how he had debated in the past with members of AM, successfully as he described, as 'they don't have any proper knowledge to convince some person who has deep knowledge of Islam' (irl 186). Although it can be agreed that extremists have a misconstrued understanding of certain elements of Islam, it should not be assumed that their knowledge on other aspects is minimal.

This notion of having an in-depth knowledge of Islamic teachings and principles as a tool against becoming radicalised was agreed upon not just by the informed informants who commented on this topic, but also by those who have had direct first-hand experiences themselves. For example, one former extremist from the West of England explained how he had become radicalised through a number of different methods which gradually resulted in him 'thinking killing civilians is alright' (exe 999). Further, he claimed that being cut off from legitimate sources of knowledge only fuelled his radicalisation. It was only after an intervention from a grassroots worker that he was given, as he described it, 'a positive source of knowledge [which] was authentic and had credibility to me' (ibid).

A further indication of the importance of this contingency was provided by a community member in London. Although this individual was affected by the strains and grievances discussed within this thesis, and was exposed to extremists through social networks and maintained relatively deep social bonds with them, his deeper knowledge of Islam acted as a contingency towards becoming radicalised. At university he attended a study circle which he found to hold distinct extreme views. His depth of Islamic knowledge, he felt, ensured he did not internalise the extreme ideologies they were espousing. However, it is important to note that as a result of these social bonds he continued to attend these groups for some time; something akin to Lofland and Stark's (1965) account of cults. He explained how these individuals were:

‘...people who have grievances but not a great deal of knowledge about Islam. So I sit there and it was like these guys don’t have a great deal of knowledge. In fact I felt like I knew more than them... (cms 338)

## 5.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has focussed upon the contingencies of radicalisation which have a strong cultural undertone. It has been discussed that some Muslim youth identify themselves with a subcultural trend, and thus may initially be ‘extremist by association’ rather than being interested in extremist ideologies or a particular cause. Within this, there are other cultural, social and religious contingencies which were demonstrated to hold importance. Goffman’s (1961) notion of contingencies argues that it is the decision and choices of other people which help determine the career direction of the mental patient. Similarly, the career advancement of the radicalisee works in the same way. Much of this concerns how it affects an individual’s perception of self and social identity. In order to maintain this ‘satisfying self-defining’ relationship, they may alter and develop their self depending on what they perceive others viewpoints or expectations to be.

At this point, although not discussed within this chapter, there needs to be a mention of the importance of social networks. The data strongly indicated that individuals appear to become committed to the group first, whether this is the extreme group or a group of friends that have adopted an extreme outlook, and their ideology solidifies thereafter. This is in direct contrast to the commonly held belief that individuals acquire extreme ideologies and then go in search for a likeminded group. That is not to say the latter does not occur, and therefore should not be dismissed. However, the data suggested the former is more of a frequent occurrence, and has also been seen in wider studies of terrorism (Crenshaw, 2011), cults and sects (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980; Lofland and Stark, 1965; Bainbridge, 1978), and social movements (Stewart et al., 2007). How much so was unfortunately not answered by the empirical data.

Thus, it can be said that there are now three different distinctions of groups. The first is those who are ‘extremist by association’ and are ‘pretenders’ to the cause. Then there are those who are the ‘seekers’ and actively search an extreme group or network and

research what they require. Finally, there are the 'drifters' who are lulled and pulled into extremism. Though, it must be mentioned that there should not be an assumption that there is no individual agency involved. It is also important to consider that these drifters could have progressed from being pretenders.

Many will be content with adopting a subcultural trend which is perceived to increase their social standing with amongst their peers. This may even be the case if they become connected to an extreme group through social networks. This group of individuals may maintain contact with an extreme group, usually non-violent, for a number of years though never really internalise the group's ideologies. A small number of others, however, will strongly be affected by the strains and grievances discussed within the last empirical chapter and will, as a result, turn out to be committed potential employees. The social and subcultural element of AQI extremism is what initially draws them in. In order to join certain extreme groups and networks, especially those that are violent, it is about who you know and how committed you are. As with the age old saying, 'separating the men from the boys', the committed are distinct from those who are merely 'extremist by association'. Thus, for the committed, this is where their career starts.

It is at this point that those who are attempting to fit into a subcultural trend or identify with their immediate social group are separated from those who are genuinely affected by the strains and contingencies discussed within these first two chapters. This is discussed in the next empirical chapter of this thesis. Through social networks, it must be assumed that at this point the individual is in contact with a radicaliser and/or an extreme group.

## Chapter Six: Conversion

### 6.1 Prologue: Omar's Story

'Omar' is a male Muslim in his forties and lives in London. He is very active in his local community and works in a number of capacities to improve the wellbeing of Muslims. In his youth, Omar considered himself to have a happy and stable upbringing. He studied hard at school and was rewarded with a place at one of the most prestigious universities in the world. However, he was also once part of a violent extreme group which led him to the Af-Pak region to receive military training and fight alongside the Mujahedeen on the frontline in Afghanistan. Although Omar's journey did not lead him to plan or execute an act of terrorism on Western soil, his radicalisation mirrors the process of those who have.

Omar's career into violent extremism began long before he went to university. He felt the same strains and grievances experienced by both Adam and the five friends discussed in the previous prologues. Omar had personally experienced prejudice from others in society and believed that the British government were discriminatory against Muslims. Consequently, he and his friends 'were emotionally scarred for many years thinking we will never be accepted into this society'. Omar believes this problem still exists for young Muslims today where they are 'withdrawn into their own circles'. He found similarities with this and his own experience, 'I know what that's all about because I went through that phase'. In his own words, he had 'a crisis of identity'. Omar had also taken a deep interest in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during the eighties and the war in Bosnia in the nineties. Therefore, he had experienced strains and grievances on the personal, local and global levels. However, as mentioned, these strains are not causative and alone did not amount to his radicalisation.

Whilst this was all occurring, Omar, through his social networks, joined a group of young Muslims who were not necessarily violent in their ideologies, but held strong politicised views of Islam which were mostly opposed to the spiritual beliefs of their parents. Omar's conversion into violent extremism occurred during his degree course. He was part of the Islamic society where certain members held some very extreme and violent views. They

were not all part of the same group and represented a number of different networks all in competition for new recruits:

‘...in the campuses of university you had [different] groups who were actually vying for competition, they really competed, but they were all fundamentalist groups.’

Predominantly through the influences from his social networks, Omar joined one of these extreme groups. In order to convert him towards internalising their particular ideologies, the radicalisers had to first mortify his former self and did this through encouraging new members to ‘disown [their] parents’ and cut ties with people who did not agree with the group’s ideologies. This ensured they were mostly prone to the extremists’ messages and reduced the likelihood of there being what Lofland and Stark (1965) describe as a ‘countervailing force’.

From this, they were able to resocialise, or reconstruct, Omar’s perception of self and social identity. This was accomplished using two very distinct methods. First, the group alleviated some of the strains he had experienced in his youth by giving him a dominant sense of identity and belonging. This also strengthened the bond between Omar and the extreme group. Second, the radicalisers compounded the ‘us vs. them’ argument. It was not difficult for Omar to internalise this ideology as he had personally experienced it on three levels, i.e. personal, local and global. This was a common approach used by all of the extreme groups Omar had contact with, both violent and non-violent, where ‘all of their literature was about [how] the West is at war with Islam’. Further, he was especially aggrieved and displayed a deep level of moral outrage towards the death of innocent Muslims around the world as the result of Western military occupation.

An important point here to consider is that all extreme groups Omar was in contact with had also internalised this belief, but the vast majority of them did not become involved with violent extremism. This was due to the particular ideologies the various groups had adopted which differed in their strategies to overcome their issues and achieve their end goals; even though many of the issues and goals were shared across the groups. Omar was part of an organically grown group which believed that the only way they could save Muslims around the world, and Islam as a faith from the hegemony of the West, was to engage in violent ‘jihad’.

Omar's group felt extremely guilty for leading relatively comfortable lives in the West and not adhering to the 'cry for help' from their Muslim kin, and the religion itself. The West's 'war against Islam' meant it was religiously and morally justified to participate in violence for Omar and his group. This was compounded through their contact with an influential individual who they 'revered as a religious teacher [and] spiritual figure'. This was critical in Omar's radicalisation as he explained how they were:

'...very prone to those voices to the extremist's voice who said "[We] need to deal with this, this is aggression by the West or by the non-Muslim West against Muslims" and therefore it's a classic case of jihad...'

As well as having a purpose and mission in life, the episode was exciting, adventurous and Omar was able to explore his masculinity. He was part of a global movement and it transcended his normal and predictable life:

'I was effectively a book worm...and I got some military action...I can remember the sense of adventure and you're gonna take part in global war...so young Muslim men like many other men have that sense of adventure.'

In fact, the whole episode, including pre-military training, was attractive to Omar. He saw himself as similar to those he had heard about on the news and seen on TV; people who had reached a cult status amongst certain sections of Muslim young people. His group was a splinter cell and were regularly evading police and intelligence services in the UK and abroad. He found it to be cool, which in turn made him cool:

'...[it's] very exciting the fact that nobody else knows...and that kind of ego thing where "look I'm doing something really cool", and also the fact that [you] know sometimes that the police or authorities are on the trail and trying to evade all that...'

It is important to briefly highlight the differences between Omar and Adam, as it helps to understand why some people go further than others. Whilst Omar had become part of an extreme group and gone through a proper process of conversion, Adam had merely skirted along the boundaries of these types of extreme ideologies. Adam was content in being 'extremist by association' and exercising his subcultural desires and masculinity

through his local group. Omar wanted something more in the sense of going on what he perceived to be a real adventure. In addition, although Adam started to internalise the 'us vs. them' argument, the intervention that occurred in his life prevented this reaching a deeper state. As a result, he had not felt the moral outrage which had strongly motivated Omar to travel abroad, nor internalised the moral and religious justifications behind the use of violence.

Further, Omar strongly believed that dying in battle as a 'martyr' brought with it personal benefits, i.e. securing a place in heaven for himself and his loved ones, and the promise of eternal rewards in the afterlife; and this was extremely important for him:

'...you have supposed people in authority, figures telling you that "this is the path, you know, this is the path to salvation and you'll go to heaven". Because ultimately if you're a believer it is the afterlife which is more important...'

Thus, rather than being scared of death he fully embraced it:

'...it is every young devout Muslims dream to take part in jihad...yeah, we nearly got killed actually from shelling, the shell landed really close to us, but we went there for that purpose. We were quite happy if we'd be taken down, we'd have died as martyrs...'

The main reason why Omar did not move towards committing an act of terrorism in the West was to do with the specific ideologies he had internalised. Further, his first-hand experience of war, death and destruction also made him seriously rethink his ideologies on violence. Omar's interpretation of jihad<sup>90</sup> has now changed significantly from involving a violent struggle to something more peaceful and spiritual, and is, '...really like a moral struggle, jihad can include any moral struggle against injustice or wrongdoing...'. There will, however, be those that do continue with their violent 'jihad', which could culminate in a terrorist attack on Western soil. This is the focus of the following empirical chapter.

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<sup>90</sup> For a discussion on the term 'jihad', see: Pisiu (2012).

## 6.2 Introduction

Radicalisation at this point occurs in an analogous way to Goffman's (1961) inpatient phase where individuals begin some 'radical shifts' in their moral career. This involves changes in both their personal beliefs and those of 'significant' others and society. This chapter outlines the process of 'conversion', where the effects of the strains, grievances and contingencies experienced until this point are harnessed by the radicalisers to move the radicalisee towards some sort of activism. A small proportion of these individuals will become involved in some type of violent or terrorist activity.

This chapter is set out in five sections. The first section discusses how radicalisees come to internalise extreme ideologies. This is achieved through the radicaliser mortifying and reconstructing the radicalisee's perceptions of 'self' and 'social identity' (Goffman, 1961). In order to mortify the self, the radicaliser aims to place a barrier between the radicalisee and any countervailing influence in their life. They also construct an environment which demands conformity and non-dissent. This begins a shift in the radicalisee's personality and works to remove their individual identity. The radicaliser is then able to reconstruct the radicalisee's perception of self and social identity. This is achieved, at first, through satisfying their social and cultural needs. The radicaliser is then able to focus on altering the radicalisee's mentality through achieving 'frame-alignment' between their extreme ideologies and the experiences of the radicalisee. Those grievances at the global level become particularly critical as they are used to create a sense of moral outrage, which can lead to some type of activism. The conversion process up until this point is generic for most, if not all, extreme groups in the UK.

The second section outlines the extremist's career. It begins by discussing the distinction between the different types of non-violent and violent extreme groups in the UK and how the radicalisee may navigate through them. Although the organisation they join may well have similar goals to others, the strategies adopted to achieve them will differ between groups and will be dependent on their particular ideologies. This does not assume that the radicalisee will settle with one group as mobilisation can occur between them. Some affiliates of non-violent groups will become frustrated with these types of ideologies and gravitate towards their own organically formed clusters, and move towards accepting the use of violence as a strategy to achieve their goals.



The third section focuses upon this breakaway cluster and discusses the personal and psychological preparations needed for its members to fully internalise the use of violence personally<sup>91</sup>. The cluster, with their own specific ideologue, explores the moral and divine duties they perceive to be bestowed upon them, and the justifications behind the use of violence. These messages will only be pertinent if the ideologue holds what the cluster believes to be 'religious authority'<sup>92</sup>. They also explore the perceived personal benefits available to those sacrificing their freedoms or life by using violence. It is at this point that religion becomes imperative within radicalisation.

The fourth section starts by outlining the different courses of action available to members of the cluster. They may decide, social networks permitting, to travel abroad and receive military schooling in an AQ, or similar, training camp with the intention to join a 'Muslim army' in combat. Alternatively, a smaller number of clusters will decide that attacking the West is a better strategy either initially or after attending a training camp abroad. With a consideration of the components discussed in the previous section, there is also great importance here with subculture and social identity, where elements such as excitement and masculinity play a key role.

The final section examines the phenomenon of terrorism in the West. Those that return from military camps abroad with the intention of attacking the West, or those that decide this from the outset, will form their own smaller 'cells' with others who have a similar type of intent, or are deemed to have the potential to do so. In order to progress to committing this act of terrorism against Western civilians, there needs to be additional religious and moral legitimacy to that already discussed in this chapter.

Members of these cells, as with most companies, have distinct organisational roles. This includes those on the periphery providing tangible support. As these cells are organically formed, there may naturally be deficiencies in their knowledge and skill set. The cell will, through social networks, look to 'headhunt' new employees to fill these 'job vacancies'. If

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<sup>91</sup> The use of the term 'personal' or 'personally' in the context of this thesis is not intended to imply that this is an individual decision to conduct an act of violence or terrorism. More so, it represents the distinction between condoning the use of violence, i.e. support, and personally partaking in the use of violence.

<sup>92</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see: Wiktorowicz (2004, 2005).

this does not yield any results, they may then headhunt recruits from other cells, groups or networks.

### 6.3 Mortification and Reconstruction of the Self

The aim of the radicaliser is to ensure the radicalisee internalises their particular extreme ideologies. The term 'internalisation' can be defined as making 'a feeling, attitude, or a belief part of the way you think'<sup>93</sup>. Kelman (1958: 54) argues that internalisation occurs when the individual believes that the outcome will be 'intrinsically rewarding...[and] is congruent with his value system. He may consider it useful for the solution of a problem or find it congenial to his needs', and therefore continues with this mindset and relevant actions 'regardless of surveillance or salience'. This is achieved through the process of resocialisation which holds distinct similarities to, as mentioned, Goffman's (1961) moral career, where radicalisee's perceptions of self and social identity are mortified and then reconstructed.

#### 6.3.1 Mortification of the Self

In order to maintain a self-defining relationship with the extreme group, the radicalisee is required to make certain sacrifices. They are encouraged to cut previous social ties with those that do not share the same ideologies of the group. The enactment of this process of withdrawal and replacement with a new set of social relationships forms the principal part of the mortification process. Goffman (1961: 24) describes this as a form of 'social death', where 'the privileges of having visitors or of visiting away from the establishment is completely withheld at first, ensuring a deep initial break with past roles and an appreciation of role disposition'. Therefore, the barrier between the potential recruit and the 'outside world' ensures that they discard their previous role and adopt one which is attached to the extreme group.

The social distance that is created between the radicalisee and their former life enables the radicaliser to propagate their ideologies with the reduced risk of any countervailing

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<sup>93</sup> As defined by the Oxford Dictionary.

influences. As one former extremist from London explained, 'if you're in your own circles only, you're very prone to those voices, to the extremist voices...the only place for right and wrong is what this person tells you; then you're at [their] mercy' (gee 459). This ensures a much greater propensity to accept what is being preached to them with a restriction to other sources of information; as was outlined in the previous chapter where 'normative influence' and 'informational social influence' have a distinct power in the way people construct their perception of reality (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955).

Another method of mortification embedded within the radicalisation process is described by Goffman (1961) as 'looping'. This ensures that the individual 'finds that his protective response to an assault upon self is collapsed into the situation; he cannot defend himself in the usual way by establishing distance between the mortifying situation and himself' (ibid: 41). This refers to the 'dictatorial' nature of extreme groups where dissent and non-conformity are viewed as extremely deviant acts.

The data suggested that those who question the norms and ideologies of the group are at risk of receiving social sanctions from other members. The main consequence would see them being excluded from the group. If the individual becomes an outsider, then according to the group they are no better than those they are in conflict with. They will be viewed as a 'kuffar' as '...criticism of the group is criticism of Islam, and being against the group is being on the side of the West' (gee 709). This would also see them losing their existing social ties and friendship networks within the group. Threatening exclusion from the group is a very potent method for stopping dispute.

This pressure is exerted by the extreme group as it allows them to avoid awkward topics which question its core ideals. They may not hold the capacity to refute or counter these claims effectively. This can lead to other members of the group becoming unsettled and instigate an uprising. Further, this may be disconcerting to those members who have internalised the group's ideologies, especially as they may have invested vast amounts of time, effort and sometimes capital into the organisation. A former extremist explained these points:

'You do not discuss it with other members. You'd be suspended if you discuss it with other members...[as] it will create a rebellion...Because the integrity of the group is based upon the adoption of the ideas. This is old school Marxism. But if you believe in the ideas, you're part of the group, [and] if you disagree with the ideas then you disagree with the group'. (gee 709)

This respondent proceeded to explain how his former extreme group tried to promote an environment of intellectual debate. However, there were parameters and restrictions to this. Members may be entitled to question certain aspects, even to disagree, though they should not actively promote their disagreement. If they seriously oppose the core ideals of the group, then they should leave.

This contributes towards affecting the radicalisee's perception of self and social identity. This will suppress their natural instinct to be critical and inquisitive, and begin to accept, with less resistance, what they are being told is right. It should not be assumed that the radicalisee is forced into this, at least not in a manner perceived to be negative. The environment created by the extreme group appears to the radicalisee to be extremely positive where they can thrive in being in such a cohesive group.

### 6.3.2 'Culturing' and Reconstructing the Self

'It's run like an organisation. The process is called "culturing" and they're taught to do two things; you change the [radicalisee's] mentality and disposition. They define the mentality as the way a person senses reality...and the disposition is how do they satisfy their needs...If you change those two things you change the psychology of the person, because the person thinks and feels and behaves differently. That's the process of indoctrination we used to use in Hizb ut-Tahrir and it is elaborately discussed and debated out to what's the best way.' (gee 709)

The respondent quoted above explained how a deliberate and thought out process was designed by his group, HT, to reconstruct the self of radicalisees. Central to this is the term 'culturing' which was derived by HT's core leadership:

‘...it’s a refined science. ‘Cos basically what they’ve done is taken some points of view from behavioural psychology and cognitive psychology and embraced them and said this is the way to do it...’ (ibid)

In fact, this strategy has been published as a 225 page paper and discusses the human personality, which consists of the ‘Aqliyyah’ (mentality) and ‘Nafsiyyah’ (disposition) (an-Nabhani, [n.d.]). It advises that every member of HT ‘should endeavour to achieve in the process of teaching and culturing individuals’; i.e. a command to continue recruiting for the group (ibid: 7). Although this technique was only outlined in its complete entirety by this respondent, its elements were distinctly present in the accounts provided by a multitude of the informed informants.

This generic process is used across the board by many extreme groups in the UK, including larger organisations with distinct hierarchical structures like HT to those smaller organic clusters of groups, both non-violent and violent. Adopting the idea of ‘culturing’ to explain conversion is beneficial to this account, where radicalisers aim to both satisfy the radicalisee’s ‘disposition’ (needs) and alter their ‘mentality’ (their perceptions of self, social identity and worldview).

#### Disposition: Satisfying Needs

At the heart of reconstructing the radicalisee’s perception of self and social identity is the use of the strains and grievances discussed in the previous empirical chapters. The role of the radicaliser in relation to this has been outlined in the relevant chapters, though it is important to provide a brief reminder. Although some of these strains do not necessarily have to be a burning concern with the individual prior to their conversion, there will at least be some awareness. The radicalisers need to emphasise these strains (i.e. identity, belonging and generational gap) and then provide a replacement for them.

Further, extreme groups also provide a substitute for all that is forcibly lost in their lives; that being the previous social ties they have cut. The new group not only becomes one of their only social outputs and immediate social environment, but are also considered to

be their 'new family' or 'substitute family'<sup>94</sup>. They will endeavour to provide the emotional, social and economic needs of the radicalisee. The group are extremely aware of the individual's requirements, and 'they develop such a support network around you [that] if they see any weaknesses...they will mould themselves around you' (see 997). This strengthens the bond between the radicaliser and the radicalisee.

Finally, and as a brief side issue, another way for certain, though not all, extreme groups to begin to solidify commitment is by providing the potential to satisfy the radicalisee's career advancement and achievement needs. Some extreme groups in the UK are run in a similar way to traditional organisations. They may have a centralised structure with the potential for promotion for the recruit. This can act as a substitution for the traditional understanding of 'career'. A former member of HT outlined this:

'Hizb ut-Tahrir is a centralised structure, it has recruitment policies, it has an official ideology... they know how to recruit people and they know then how to educate them and move them up and they have a career system if you want as well...' (res 985)

### Mentality: A Collective Grievance

In order to move the radicalisee towards internalising the extreme group's ideologies, the radicaliser has two principal aims. They must first create a 'collective grievance' by once again revisiting the strains and grievances outlined in the 'Susceptibility' chapter. This is a key element of the conversion process. In order to accentuate this collective grievance the radicaliser emphasises the 'us vs. them' paradigm, where 'them' refers to those at all levels in the radicalisee's life; i.e. personal, local and global. Thus, it can be said that the radicaliser aims to achieve frame-alignment between their ideologies and the personal experiences of the radicalisee.

At the personal level there is reference to radicalisee's lack of integration and belonging within society (perceived or otherwise), and the racism and discrimination they have felt from wider society. Next, local level strains are stressed with the radicalisee believing that certain CT legislation is specifically designed and implemented by the government in

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<sup>94</sup> For a wider discussion on groups becoming 'substitute families', see: Hudson (1999: 37).

a bid to suppress Muslim communities. Finally, arguments at the global level allude to a perception that the West is 'at war with Islam':

'...they say to him "no, the reason why you can't get a job is because you're a Muslim, you know, you're the wrong colour, you're the wrong religion. If you were White and you were a Christian or atheist, you would have no problem getting a job"...and look at our Muslim brothers and sisters, you know, who are up against it...so they're against Muslims"' (grw 894)

The second strategic aim involves instilling a sense of moral outrage in the mind of the radicalisee, where the strains outlined at the global level become especially critical. The radicaliser will attempt to alter the radicalisee's perception of self through changing their worldview. This moral outrage causes resentment towards the UK, and the West more widely, due mainly to the consequences of their foreign policy actions. This emphasises the argument that the non-Muslim world is at war with Muslims and Islam.

At the heart of this conversion tool is a 'play on emotions'; which includes distress, fear, hurt, and most importantly anger. This inflammation of emotions is one of the strongest weapons in the radicaliser's armoury, not only during the recruitment process<sup>95</sup> and the internalisation of extremist ideologies, but also to enable a deeper state of radicalisation. This is not generally linked to religious principles, but something that invokes their moral and human concerns. Though, saying that, there is a caveat where the radicaliser will emphasise the concept of Ummah, as discussed in the first empirical chapter. Speaking from personal experience, a former extremist explained:

'...these guys will come and play on their emotions, just like they play on the guitar. So they'll say "look our brothers, our sisters they're being killed, they're being humiliated, they're being raped and so on". They'll say all these emotional things...they won't give any knowledge of Islam, they will just bring emotions' (grw 309)

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<sup>95</sup> Although this account of radicalisation focuses upon social networks as the key driving force for recruitment into extreme groups, that is not to say that there is no recruitment through 'extremism outreach' (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Within both types of accounts, the grievances described within the 'Susceptibility' chapter are utilised to cause moral outrage within the minds of potential recruits. This has the strong possibility of causing a further interest in the activities and ideologies of the extreme group, which can lead to recruitment.

Reflecting on his own radicalisation, another former extremist asserted that his emotions were taken advantage of and, as he termed it, 'abused'. It is important to consider that he and his friends were fully aware of what they were becoming involved in, i.e. relating to the previous argument made about drifters knowing what is going on, as opposed to the traditional notion in radicalisation of 'brainwashing'<sup>96</sup>. However, he felt that the trust they had built up with the extremists was based on lies. This allowed the 'abuse' of emotions to continue until he found himself on the battlefields of Afghanistan:

'Our emotions were abused...we call it an abuse of emotions, an abuse of faith, an abuse of sincerity, you know, an abuse of relationships, an abuse of lie, everything. And this all falls under abuse, and sometimes people don't really, you know, understand and can't relate to that abuse until its actually happened, or until it's too late.' (gee 997)

The radicalisees are shown very graphic images and videos of Muslims being killed and tortured. Different material is presented repeatedly to maximise moral outrage and keep radicalisees' emotions 'constantly on the boil' (grw 797). This is particularly pertinent if radicalisers themselves display strong emotions and appear to be physically enraged by the grievances. If the radicalisee has no, or very little, historical knowledge of conflicts and associated grievances then the theatrical actions of the radicaliser will reinforce their arguments:

'When people don't have knowledge they tend to judge the truth based upon how good it makes them feel, how loud the guy is screaming, how brave he seems to be' (grw 971)

As strong and emotionally evoking as these images and videos are, first-hand accounts from those who have experienced these incidents are equally as, if not more, compelling and an important conversion tool. The ability to see, first-hand, the emotions on people's faces and hear it in their voices will strengthen the message through adding a personal touch. Further, they are able to ask in-depth questions which they cannot do with DVDs, for example. This was personally experienced by a former extremist from the West of England:

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<sup>96</sup> See previous quote from the same respondent (gee 997) on page 146.



'I know people from Bosnia who have seen horrific things in the Bosnian war and it really touches deep, like when you hear them talk about how they can't sleep at night because they see visions of things...' (exe 999)

The arguments presented in this section, thus far, relate to wider academic studies, such as the 'sociology of emotions'. There exists a plethora of literature which pertains to the emotions which affect radicalisees and radicalisers. These include a unified sense of identity and pride (within the group) (Scheff, 1994), an evocation of their morality (Turner and Stets, 2006), and anger (Schieman, 2006). Within the various accounts of SMT, the sociology of culture and emotions plays a pivotal role with theories such as 'framing'. In addition, as discussed within Goodwin and Jasper's (2006) analysis of SMT literature, academics like Gamson (1992) point to the importance of 'injustice frames', where certain emotions may arise even prior to blame being allocated. There can also be a deeper understanding of how extreme ideologies are internalised by looking at the work of prominent sociologists such as Goffman (1958, 1983), who stresses the importance of scripts (or reactions to), theatrics, settings, and interactions within the study of emotions and culture.

At this point the radicalisee's perception of self and social identity is fast changing. They may have started off as a confused young individual in the UK trying to find their way in life, but they now have a dominant identity in the form of Islam, one that has a new moral compass. They are now part of a collective, a cohesive group that has global aspirations and provides them with the belonging they desire.

In order to maintain commitment of the radicalisee, the extreme group must compound their dominant position. Almost all, if not all, extreme groups, at least in the UK, consider themselves to be the 'vanguard of Islam'. They all claim to be the 'market leaders' and only legitimate authority. With profound conviction they will inform their followers that they are the true voice and defenders of Islam. By instilling this conviction to their cause they attempt to dispel any confusion and uncertainty the individual may have, not just about the group, but within their own lives and direction. From the opinion of the radicalisee, they want to be employed by the best organisation in the market to further their career. A former extremist from the North East of England argued that the group:

'...offers you absolute certainty, plus uniqueness. You are the only people in the whole world who are doing this... 'cos in there you'll see that vanguard is a key thing here, [and] the idealism which comes with [it]... So, you've got a sense of absolute certainty, "we are absolutely right, everyone else is wrong and we are unique, we are the only ones who do that". Now you tell me what that equals? It equals individuals who will see themselves as special and significant in society' (gee 796)

As stated in the quotation above, this in turn facilitates the view that the extreme group is right and all others are wrong. Those who do not subscribe to their ideals are considered to be, on most occasions, part of the problem rather than the solution. This view, importantly, also extends to the other extremist groups, with some asserting that these alternative groups pose a direct threat to Islam:

'...anybody outside the group is worth less than people within the group... so you're taught that "you are right, you're group is right, everybody else is wrong and anybody who challenges that is themselves satanical [sic]... They don't realise it's the other way round. [They tell their followers] "don't listen to them, they're wrong" (gee 459)

Some of these extreme groups even claim that all Muslims who do not subscribe to their particular ideologies are part of the problem. This was stated by Adam when outlining the message propagated by the Algerian extremist group he had affiliations with:

'...they used to preach the ideology for us to be against the Muslims at first, and say "90% of the Muslims in [location name deleted] were not Muslims", that's what they were saying... "they're all Kaffirs"...' (Adam)

It is important at this point to pick up on one important argument. It was mentioned above that each extremist group in the UK consider themselves to be the vanguards of Islam and in a sense special from the rest of society; which has parallels to Becker's (1963) research on 'outsiders'. Those that do not agree with their ideals, including other extreme groups with differing ideologies, and in fact even other Muslims, are classed as non-believers. On the other hand these groups claim to be fighting for the safety and security, amongst other aspects, of Muslims and Islam. This in itself highlights the complexity, as it almost appears as if they pick and choose to take whichever stance

works best for them at the time. This also begins to show the contradictions that exist within their approach. In order to make a strong statement to the West, so to speak, they claim to be protecting Muslims globally, but to achieve mortification and social distance they assert to the radicalisee that Muslims who do not buy into their ideologies are also non-believers and in many instances part of the problem.

Finally, as found within most research on radicalisation, it is clear that those who go through the process of conversion will be larger in numbers, as compared to those that internalise extreme ideologies. Thus, they can 'successfully' be converted or they may revert back to their former lives, for example. However, they may remain 'extremist by association', or pretenders, and still join because of subcultural reasons or to be close to their friends; but not internalise their extreme ideologies.

There can be similarities drawn between this and Goffman's (1961) concept of 'primary and secondary adjustments'. Those who have a 'primary adjustment' are 'transformed into a cooperator; [they become] the "normal", "programmed", or built-in member' (ibid: 172). These individuals are considered to have taken on Goffman's 'fourth mode of adaption', i.e. "conversion: [where] the inmate appears to take over the official or staff view of himself and tries to act out the role of the perfect inmate.' (ibid: 63) Those with 'secondary adjustment' may appear allude to the norms of the group or the organisation; though will participate in certain 'underlife' activities. Goffman argues that those having secondary adjustment have the potential to eventually destabilise the organisation, and in the case of extremist groups may, as a result, be left behind.

Within the context of conversion, there are numerous reasons why individuals may not make the transition from secondary to primary adjustment. As outlined in the previous empirical chapter, there may be contingencies that restrain some people from becoming radicalised, such as an in-depth knowledge of Islam, and contingencies that facilitate others, such as the generational gap with their parents and imams. Further, those who do not become radicalised may not have felt all of the strains at the personal, local or global levels, and so radicalisers are thus unable to frame-align with these arguments to resonate with their own ideologies.

In addition, those who are committed to the group, as opposed to those affiliated in order to satisfy certain social and subcultural needs, are normally deeply affected by the moral outrage element, which in turn motivates them to partake in some form of activism. That is not to say the latter will not also feel the social and subcultural pulls. Although it did not become clear in the empirical data why some are deeply affected by moral outrage whilst others are not, it can be said that they are influenced by the depth of their affection with the concept of the Ummah, and thus how much they identify with those being killed abroad as their own blood relatives.

#### 6.4 The Radicalisee's Career

Although it may be the most likely outcome, it should not be assumed that the first group the radicalisee becomes affiliated with is where they want to progress their career. The radicalisee's career will be dependent on numerous factors, such as who they know and the choices made by their friends. Those they are in contact with, through their social networks, will influence which type of extremist group they initially join, or even move on to.

There are a plethora of extremist groups, organisations and movements within the UK<sup>97</sup>, including many that have been proscribed by the British Government<sup>98</sup>. Some will have regional links to others with similar ideologies, whilst other groups have some form of international connectedness. The goals for the different extreme groups in the UK have many underlying similarities, i.e. to end the suffering of Muslims globally, to resurrect the ideas, traditions, culture and dominance of Islam, and to win the war against the West. Where these groups differ is in their strategies towards achieving these goals and much of this depends on the particular ideologies they adopt.

Providing an analysis of the different extreme groups in the UK<sup>99</sup>, including the variations on their ideologies, whether small or drastic, is an exhaustive task with no benefit to this particular thesis. It may, though, be suitable to provide an extremely elementary analysis

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<sup>97</sup> For a more detailed list of groups, see: Simcox et al. (2010).

<sup>98</sup> For a detailed list, see: Home Office (2012).

<sup>99</sup> For a detailed discussion on differing ideologies, see: (Change Institute, 2008a).

and loosely discuss the most commonly known types of organisations in the UK<sup>100</sup>. Within this, there can be a brief inclusion of their particular ideologies and how they relate, if at all, to violence and terrorism.

The types of groups within the first category are organisations like HT. Their active intent of establishing a global Caliphate and implementing Sharia law in the UK is considered to be extreme by mainstream society, though in the UK, at present, this does not amount to any type of illegal activity. They are very conscious of public perceptions towards them and reiterate their non-violent stance in many of their published materials (Hizb ut-Tahrir, [n.d.]: 3). HT in the UK allegedly has, however, links to many sister organisations around the world, whose opinions on violence and terrorism are far more complex. Some even argue that HT in the UK are not, as they state, completely against the use of violence. They are thought to be pragmatic and believe the current use of violence to be of little value. However, once the establishment of a global Caliphate is achieved the use of violence, through a united and strong global 'Muslim army', will be more fruitful, as a former HT member outlined, 'What the HT believe is we should take power and then use violence' (gee 709). He continued to explain the complex beliefs of HT:

'...So HT as a group don't organise violent attacks. The individual members will not be involved normally in terrorism or violent attacks. What they do advocate is two things...they'll advocate and support what would see as legitimate jihad, which is anywhere where a non-Muslim authority is in a Muslim land. So they would see it's a legitimate jihad to fight against the current Iraqi regime because it's been propped up by Western powers...And [second] they believe in infiltrating military regimes and getting them to overthrow the regimes, and if that involves violence then so be it, but technically they don't organise it, so that's their kind of clause out.' (gee 709)

There are then groups whose ideologies towards violence and terrorism are even more difficult to identify. These groups are constantly being proscribed by the government only to be organised under a new name with the same personnel<sup>101</sup>. Within the Terrorism Act 2000, an organisation or group can be banned if it:

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<sup>100</sup> Those recently labelled in the UK as 'non-violent extremists' have purposefully been omitted from this analysis. However, they have been discussed in brief in the Methodology chapter, and in more depth in the 'Theory, Practice and Policy' and 'Conclusions' chapters of the thesis.

<sup>101</sup> For an example of this, see Footnote 21.

“...commits or participates in acts of terrorism; prepares for terrorism; promotes or encourages terrorism (including the unlawful glorification of terrorism); or is otherwise concerned in terrorism.” (Home Office, 2012: 1)

One of the better known groups within this category is AM<sup>102</sup>. One similarity between AM and HT is their aim to establish a global Caliphate (Wiktorowicz, 2005). In terms of terrorism, the media are quick to highlight AM's ties, with Gilligan (2010), for example, arguing that ‘at least nineteen terrorists convicted in Britain have had links with al-Muhajiroun’. However, a deeper analysis shows that the situation is a lot more complex than this. Within the data, certain respondents explained that although groups like AM may incite violence and tacitly support it, they will not involve themselves in it physically. The difference between AM and HT, is AM's propensity to be more public and outspoken with their condoning of violence and terrorism. Elements of this may refer to previously made arguments about perceptions of generational subculture, social status, ‘militancy’ and masculinity. This affiliation to terrorism was outlined by a former extremist:

‘...they're the ones that like to sort of glorify themselves when any terrorist activity takes place...they'll incite violence, they'll incite hatred...but that group itself will not get involved in terrorist activities’ (gee 997)

Within these groups there are further differences in ideologies and approaches, in terms of condoning violence and terrorism, to achieve their goals. Certain groups in this loosely defined category will condone violence in Muslim countries so long as it falls in what they deem to be a theatre of war, or ‘conventional war’. This remains true even if it involves violence against Western coalition forces. This is due to a belief that Muslims countries under ‘attack’ or occupation have the right to defend themselves using whatever means required. Global Muslims are able to join the fight as they are part of the Ummah. These groups, however, condemn, or at least do not condone, terrorism in the West as they

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<sup>102</sup> Although the term ‘AM’ is generically used to describe this type of group, it must be noted that AM itself was not proscribed by the government before it disbanded. It was proscribed by the government in 2010 and 2011 as part of a wider network. A list provided by the Home Office states, ‘The Government laid Orders, in January 2010 and November 2011, which provide that Al Muhajiroun, Islam4UK, Call to Submission, Islamic Path, London School of Sharia and Muslims Against Crusades should be treated as alternative names for the organisation which is already proscribed under the names Al Ghurabaa and The Saved Sect.’ (Home Office, 2012: 6) For further information, see Footnote 21.

believe Muslims living there are under a 'covenant of security' which forbids them from attacking their hosts. When AM was originally conceived it was considered to subscribe to this type of ideology. Since then, this has caused factions and splits in the group. In fact, Omar Bakri Mohammed, who originally formed and led AM, even claimed one of the reasons he dissolved the group was because he did not want to be associated with the emerging faction within the organisation which permitted the use of terrorism in the UK (Raymond, 2010). However, there are many contradictions within the official statements given by the leaders of these groups in regards to their support of terrorism (ibid).

The stance held by the aforementioned groups on violence and terrorism becomes even more complex when considering their wider views. Certain groups will condemn violence either abroad or in the UK, due to ideological differences, for their own members, though do not condemn other groups' use of it. Referring back to the example of HT, one former member explained:

'...we used to believe is that the only other valid alternative is jihadism because they are religiously inspired, and even though we don't agree with it, we consider God will reward the individual. Because for them it falls into the classic paradigm of as long as you are sincerely trying to interpret the text, you should be rewarded by God for the sincerity of your interpretations...' (gee 709)

Finally, there are those directly involved in violence and terrorism, either in the UK or by conducting 'jihad' on the frontline in Muslim countries with 'Muslim armies'. A quarter of the informed informants labelled them as the 'jihadis'. They remain quiet and stay under the 'radar' as much as possible to avoid them gaining the unwanted attention of the police and security services. One grassroots worker from London described them as:

'...real violent extremists. These people are very quiet; you wouldn't even hear about them, something would just happen' (grw 927)

#### 6.4.1 Gravitation to Violence

There are several ways people can become part of 'jihadi clusters' in the UK. More often than not, clusters are organically formed by groups of friends<sup>103</sup>. It is not uncommon for some members of the cluster, potentially all, to have once been a part of other groups in the UK, such as HT or AM, at one point in their extremist career (hri, 707). If this is the case, the former groups will provide a certain level of radicalisation for these individuals. There will also be those clusters that are organically formed, though the members were not once part of another group; however, it is interesting to focus upon those who were.

As discussed, extreme groups in the UK hold contempt towards those who are critical of their ideologies. However, this is not to say that certain members will privately differ in opinion on the legitimacy of some of their ideals; such as not supporting violence and terrorism as a tactic. They believe that their current group is not achieving anything with prayer and non-violent activism alone. They also find some of the group's goals to be unrealistic, such as the establishment of a Caliphate which can take many decades, or even longer, to implement. They believe that the situation facing Muslims and Islam is so urgent that immediate action needs to be taken. This is assessed in an extremely simple manner; the longer it takes to establish a Caliphate, the more Muslims around the world die, and the more of a stronghold the West has over Islam:

'[They] turn to violence because they come to the conclusion that non-violence political action as well as non-violence religious activities [are] ineffective at changing the world and bringing it to that end state that they want a Caliphate. So they're rejecting the non-violent political activism of the HTs, the AMs, all those groups...they believe that they are ineffective and essentially look down upon them' (hri 707)

There is much contempt held for these non-violent groups, with a belief that they simply 'run their mouths' with no measurable benefits or achievements:

'...they say "ah look these guys have been active for 50, 60 years now and where have they got? Nowhere, they're idiots!"' (res 985)

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<sup>103</sup> For a more detailed discussion on organically formed terrorist groups, clusters and cells, see: Sageman (2004); Silber (2011).



Those individuals who come to countenance violence or terrorism have no faith in any alternative processes and believe it is the only viable method at their disposal to alleviate their grievances and achieve their goals. There is little, or no, trust in the UK's – and the West's – political system. In addition, certain interpretations of extremist ideologies are opposed to fundamental democratic values and the notion of democracy itself. Thus, it is felt that although their current extreme group may subscribe to ideals that are in line with their perception of Islamic principles and core belief of what they believe the Caliphate should bring, i.e. a dictatorship, they believe that the group are contradicting themselves by resorting to democratic means to attain them. This causes further anger and some begin to feel like the only way to achieve their goals is to use the same tactics employed by their enemies, i.e. violence:

'...a lot of them they see it to be the only way they can really make a point. No one listens to somebody with a placard as far as they're concerned. They see the only way people will stand up and listen to them is if they use violence, if they start spilling blood' (grw 320)

For those individuals part of non-violent extremist groups, which may or may not have been proscribed by the government, this acts as a 'stepping stone' towards flirting with differing ideologies, some of which allow and encourage the use of violence<sup>104</sup>. However, this **should not** be interpreted as these groups acting as 'conveyor belts' towards violent extremism. If moral outrage is deep and their emotions are sufficiently evoked, then these clusters will completely detach themselves from their original group.

This was confirmed within the empirical data by a variety of respondents including former high-ranking police officers working in counter-terrorism, grassroots workers and those who were former extremists, both non-violent and violent. For example, one informed informant told of his experience working at the grassroots level:

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<sup>104</sup> This can also be seen in wider accounts of radicalisation and in various media reports. For example, the 'Crawley bombers' were thought to have met through their links with AM (Gardham, 2007). However, certain former prominent members of the organisation, such as Mohammed Babar, have stated, "...al-Muhajiroun was a joke...Most of us had belonged to al-Muhajiroun and left and had serious differences with them" (Gardham, 2007). These 'serious differences' may be explained through their differing ideologies, some of which relate to violence (Sageman, 2008). Various reports emerging from other former members of AM go to confirm this, where it is explained that due to AM's stance on the 'covenant of security', they left to pursue extremist careers which allowed for an attack on Britain to be considered as legitimate (Taseer, 2005).

'...that may be al-Muhajiroun...but the kind of person that they create is an angry young person who finds that they're only shouting and hollering, and then he doesn't want to be with them, he wants to go somewhere more stronger to do something' (gee 997)

This is not to insinuate that all of those that breakaway and form their own counterculture are potentially committed jihadis. Some will be moving towards this stance, whilst others within the cluster will break off with them due to, as discussed in the previous empirical chapter, certain group pressures or simply to remain close to their old friends<sup>105</sup>. Whatever the reasons, they have all now essentially become self-employed. As long as some of the members remain committed to taking some form of direct violent action for their cause, they will eventually take out a franchise, either officially or ideologically, with a larger organisation such as AQ, Jaish-e-Mohammed or Lashker-e-Taiba, for example.

There are of course other ways they could become affiliated. The argument presented above merely represents one method into violent extremism or the potential for it. How prevalent this is, the empirical data unfortunately did not illuminate. However, those who have conducted in-depth analysis of terrorist cells in the West claim it to be a common occurrence (Silber, 2011, 2012).

There is one further consideration which can illuminate the transition between low- and high-risk activism. This has been highlighted within the research conducted by McAdam (1986). He analysed data from the Freedom Summer movement which sought to register as many African American voters in Mississippi as possible. The mainly White students that participated in the movement were fully aware of the physical dangers to them, including death, from various groups and organisations, ranging from local police officers to members of the Klu Klux Klan (sometimes these two groups overlapped). McAdam analysed all the applications submitted by those wishing to participate in the movement including those accepted, rejected and dropouts.

Interestingly – as has been briefly touched upon and will be discussed in detail later in respect to AQI extremism – gaining acceptance into the movement was very selective which gave people more impetus and desire to become involved. McAdam found that

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<sup>105</sup> For a wider discussion on these issues, see: Helmus (2009).

ideology and a commitment to the cause was evident with those who did apply and were successful, and also with those that were accepted but dropped out. Although McAdam does not question the role these factors play, the difference between the two groups was that activists had greater numbers of organisational affiliations, higher levels of prior civil rights activity and more strong and extensive ties to other participants; as compared to those who were accepted but dropped out. This can be related to the arguments made in the previous empirical chapter regarding social identity and the value of friendships. The point McAdam stresses is that there needs to be the existence of both structural and individual motivational factors in high-risk activism. In the context of AQI extremism in the UK, whilst some may have an ideological commitment to the cause and feel a strong sense of moral outrage, they may not have the social networks and ties in place. In the same way, those that may have the social networks and ties may not feel this moral outrage or have internalised any extremist ideologies. Therefore, as McAdam explains, the ideological identification acts as a 'push', whilst the 'microstructural' factors act as a 'pull'.

## 6.5 Personal and Psychological Preparations for Violence

Prior to discussing the various types of violent activity some members of the cluster may come to participate in, it is important to outline the cognitive involvement required in order for someone to conduct an act of violence. This is in the context of this particular study. The use of violence is directly linked to the emotional strain caused by those arguments outlined in relation to moral outrage (i.e. the suffering of Muslims globally, and the West's perceived war against Islam). This is also robustly supplemented by the attainment of personal benefits.

### 6.5.1 Morality and Religion

The cluster will, more likely than not, have an ideologue attached to them. They will be in contact with them either through their social networks, or in some digital capacity such as the internet. The ideologue will advocate that it is the cluster's moral and religious duty to protect their Muslim kin, who are the victims of Western oppression, through any

means available. Essentially, 'they feel it is their Muslim and their human responsibility to do something' (grw 502), and are made to feel guilty for not doing so. They are reminded of the fortunes they have had in their lives and the misfortunes of others. They are told, as one grassroots worker from the North East of England explained, '...that they're just sitting here in their cushy lifestyle, in their three bedroom semi[-detached house] doing nothing...' (grw 358).

This guilt is linked to the idea of 'us vs. them', where they are told, '..."you're either with these guys or you're with us. If you're a true Muslim you're with us"' (rmc 737). If there is not a complete internalisation of extremist ideology by the individual at this point, then it places them in a very difficult position. Some members will genuinely feel like the West is at war with Islam. Also, the deaths of countless Muslims around the world is a very real occurrence; sometimes due to the military actions of the West<sup>106</sup>. In addition, they may have previously been part of another extreme group, who they now have some sort of animosity towards, and they do not want to revert back to this position. They do not want to be 'one of them', those they detest and perceive to be evil; whether this is the West or other extreme groups. There is a strong desire to be part of the righteous.

The guilt they feel is also attached to God. Many religions believe what happens after we die depends on the actions taken in life and this argument is used by the ideologue. This emotional tactic makes the individual feel both guilty and fearful of the consequences of not adhering to the 'cry for help' from their Muslim kin. This was outlined by an informed informant, who even went as far as describing it as 'emotional blackmail':

'...[they are] using language which says "what will you say to God? If you saw these things happening and you didn't do anything about it, how will you stand before God and say this?" Its emotional blackmail you see.' (rmc 321)

When these individuals accept what they believe is the decree of God, they feel like they are reaching a higher plane. They have transcended from ordinary mortals to those who are directly undertaking God's work:

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<sup>106</sup> For further information, see Footnote 64.

‘...he believes it’s a good thing what he’s doing because he’s actually doing something that’s going to change the world for the better...So not only are they going to create a change in this world, but this is what God has obliged them to do...’ (gee 709)

However, it must be considered that the radicalisee has more than likely been socialised through their life to believe that violence and killing others is morally and legally wrong. Though at this point they are seriously challenging, or have changed, their worldview. There is a polarisation of what is right and wrong and between what is good and evil; though their previous conceptions of wrong may still act to inhibit accepting the personal use of violence. Religion is not important in the early parts of the radicalisation process, though it may be present<sup>107</sup>. It cannot be considered as a radicalising agent or something that drives radicalisation. However, it is imperative in justifying the use of violence to the individual through a misconstrued religious context, which goes towards alleviating any moral or religious concerns they may have.

In order to make sense of how religion can supply a justification to loosen normative constraints for behaviour it is possible employ the aforementioned theory of ‘techniques of neutralization’ (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Within the Literature Review chapter, four of the five methods were deemed to hold importance when understanding radicalisation: i.e. ‘denial of responsibility’; ‘denial of victim’; ‘condemnation of the condemners’; ‘appeal to higher loyalties’. When this is combined with previous arguments regarding perceived religious requirement, this moves the radicalisee closer towards violence. This was put into context by a former extremism from London:

‘Those thoughts and convictions make up the worldview and then there’s a latent behavioural shift that happens as a result, and then from there when you bring in the kind of theological dimension, the religious scripture, all of those things which justify these set of acts...’ (gee 709)

The real importance of having a religious justification can be seen through the difficulties experienced by grassroots workers when trying to de-radicalise these individuals, as compared to those who only hold emotional grievances:

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<sup>107</sup> This is particularly in reference to identity formation and facilitating shared belonging.

‘From an emotional perspective you can tackle that issue...but those individuals who actually believe from the scripture it tells you, that’s a lot more challenging in tackling because you have to go back to principles, you have to go back to principles on how you understand the Quran and the Hadith’ (grw 179)

### 6.5.2 Personal Gains

As mentioned, many believe the actions we take in life determine what happens after we die, in terms of finding salvation in the afterlife. One explanation for radicalisation is the absolution of sins if the radicalisee partakes in ‘jihad’<sup>108</sup>. The empirical data found that this is not necessarily linked to criminality<sup>109</sup>, but more about the personal perception of not leading one’s life in accordance to religious requirements. This argument becomes especially relevant when considering the possible view of certain extremists, that British laws are man-made and therefore not relevant to them; especially as some extremists actually promote the engagement of criminal behaviour<sup>110</sup>. Nevertheless, a former extremist from London held similar sentiments. The absolution of sins was not a causal factor for him to travel to Afghanistan to engage in combat with the Mujahedeen, but contributed to the justification of putting his life in danger:

‘...[you think] I’ve got lots of mistakes that I have made in my life, I’ve committed a lot of sins, and if I do die, you know, then I’m going to be a martyr’. So it was that kind of mentality at that time...’ (gee 997)

It was discussed in the Literature Review chapter how radicalisation can be considered in two different ways. First, is the emotional and cognitive state which leads an individual to the point of violence. Second, is both the emotional and rational choice of committing an act of violence or terrorism that more authors, especially those employing SMT, are adopting into their theories (Pisoiu, 2012). Once again, it should be considered that this

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<sup>108</sup> This can be seen in wider studies, such as the failed female suicide bombers in Palestine (Bloom, 2005).

<sup>109</sup> There are those, such as Sageman (2008a), who argue that most of those involved in violent extremism have no criminal background. However, Bakker (2006) argues that within the sample he analysed, the levels of criminality were relatively high, in his opinion, at almost a quarter of the sample.

<sup>110</sup> For an empirically based analysis on the links between crime and extremism, see: Lakhani (2015, forthcoming).

is not just about rational choice, but also about the wrap around social control exerted by radicalisers, such as the cluster's ideologue. Although it can be argued these positions are fundamentally opposed, it can also be said that the human psyche is far more complex than being driven by one causal factor.

It would be extremely difficult for those about to commit an act of violence to not consider the personal costs involved. This includes the moral aspect of taking the lives of others. However, as mentioned, the worldview of the radicalisee is fast becoming polarised, with their perceptions of right and wrong, and good and evil undergoing a dominant shift. A further cost is being convicted of the crime, losing their freedoms, and spending time in prison. This is assuming that the attack does not include the use of personal suicide, or if it does then the risk being arrested before the incident takes place or the attack failing in some way<sup>111</sup>. Finally, one of the biggest costs is losing one's own life. This will of course be dependent on whether the attacks, again, involve suicide, or if the attackers are killed by police officers at the scene.

With the costs come a number of benefits for the potential violent extremist. One benefit concerns the individual attaining their social and subcultural desires (this is discussed further at a later point in the chapter). Another benefit for the individual is to do with altruism, i.e. helping their Muslim kin globally and working towards resurrecting Islam to its perceived rightful dominant stature in the world. However, some argue against the existence of pure altruism, and insist that there is always the presence of some type of underlying personal motivation<sup>112</sup>. This is also the case with violent extremism.

This personal motivation, or reward, is primarily in the form of acceptance into heaven. In Islam this promises many things, including salvation, eternal bliss, and all the wants an individual may desire. This is a very strong incentive. The use of violence, more so dying in battle as a 'martyr', helps to facilitate this entry into heaven. There is the belief that the time-span of life is nothing compared to eternity, and the sacrifices given in life will be comprehensively outweighed by the rewards in heaven:

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<sup>111</sup> An example of a failed suicide attack is with those who attempted, unsuccessfully, to detonate devices on London's underground network on 21 July 2005.

<sup>112</sup> For an example of this type of argument, see: Dawes (1980).

'Because ultimately if you're a believer it is the afterlife which is more important, or the higher things which are more important...and heaven is the ultimate goal and you're told that just going and fighting somewhere and being killed its gonna get you straight to heaven...' (gee 459)

This section has thus far outlined the cognitive requirements needed to shift radicalisees towards legitimising the use of violence. The personal benefits available have also been discussed. It is important at this point to understand the role these play within facilitating someone towards violent extremism as opposed to those that may be exposed to similar influences and circumstances, though do not partake in violence.

This becomes clearer when comparing the responses of Adam and Omar in this context. As outlined in the prologue to this chapter, Omar embraced 'jihad', and more importantly he welcomed death as this for him fulfilled all of his duties and bought with it rewards. On the other hand, Adam wasn't as keen as Omar, and this became clear when he outlined how he had once been asked to attend a jihadi training camp abroad:

'I was in Pakistan [and] I heard there were camps in Afghanistan at the time and people were going over the border to train and my friend said to me "let's go". I said "no way am I going there"...you had to go through the mountains, walk through ice. I thought "I aint doing that!"...you'd probably fall off and die...' (Adam)

This demonstrates that some people do not progress through the process of conversion where they feel it is their moral and religious duty to participate in 'jihad', and simply are not concerned about the perceived rewards. On the other hand, some fully embrace the notion of 'jihad' and their duties to perform it within the context of violence. The effect of moral outrage also holds much importance. It may be useful, then, to revisit the three different types of career paths outlined at the end of the last chapter. Thus, some will remain pretenders, whilst others will progress to become drifters. One further reason to why some internalise violent ideologies whilst others do not, even though they may be exposed to the same information, is that the ideologies need to be delivered by trusted sources that are deemed or perceived to hold religious authority. This is the focus of the next section.



### 6.5.3 Trusted Sources and Personality

Kelman (1958: 53) found that one of the processes of influence and its acceptance is the 'relative power of the influencing agent'. Through varying this antecedent, defined as 'the extent to which the influencing agent is perceived as instrumental to the achievement of the subject's goals' (ibid: 54), Kelman found that an authoritative figure could induce the long-term commitment of an individual. In terms of this thesis, for members of the cluster to internalise the arguments presented in this section the message needs to be delivered by a trusted source. Thus, their ideologue should be considered to be, in the perceptions of the cluster, a 'religious authority'.

In many types of situations, authority, or its perception, has the potential to 'encourage' individuals to engage in acts, psychologically and/or physically, they may not previously have considered. This is particularly pertinent in Islam, as many sects within the faith do not have an overarching religious authority, like there is with other religions. There is a much flatter structure where the imam or ideologue holds much power, as explained by a former extremism from London:

'In Islamic tradition the scholar holds weight, the scholar is the theologian who has the right to interpret scripture' (gee 709)

There are numerous ways in which ideologues can create a sense of religious authority with their followers or potential followers. One method is to outline their religious training. Many extremists have relatively little knowledge regarding the ideological arguments and look to 'epistemic' ideologues for guidance<sup>113</sup>; something that relates back to the lack of Islamic knowledge argument. Some of these extremist ideologues have studied under the guidance of 'respected scholars' in Saudi Arabia and this holds much weight with the radicalisees.

The ideologue must also be fluent in Arabic. This is regarded highly – as the first Quran was written in 'classical Arabic' – especially by those radicalisees that cannot speak it themselves, or only have a loose grasp of the language. They must then refer to, or in

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<sup>113</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the role of 'epistemic' ideologues within terrorist groups, see: (Kruglanski and Fishman, 2009: 22).

most cases rely on, others for translations and meanings of religious texts. This makes it very difficult to question what they are being taught, as argued by a former MI5 'asset':

'If I am [an extremist ideologue] I will try to explain it how I want...these British Muslims that are born here, their biggest problem is the Quran is in Arabic...so you have to rely on 'me' to explain it to you.' (gee 234)

Once again, the argument pertaining to radicalisee's having a lack of Islamic knowledge becomes essential at this point. This is especially important when deciphering where and when, and also in which context, 'jihad', violence and suicide are permissible. Having a fluency in Arabic and subsequent ability to draw quotations from the Quran and Sunnah becomes imperative. As a former extremist from London explained:

'...they can actually quote texts and they can actually give verses of Quran and Hadith...and that's what made it attractive for me' (gee 441)

It is also important for the ideologue to demonstrate they are leading by example when convincing others to partake in violent extremism. The ideologue could repeatedly put their own security and freedoms at risk by closely associating themselves with those that have committed or are planning to commit acts of violence or terrorism. A more pertinent argument is made by those who have risked their lives to participate in 'jihad' in the form of fighting abroad in various countries such as Bosnia and Chechnya, for example<sup>114</sup>. The people that display a large propensity to take risk and are deemed to be most extreme, in line with the group's mutual orientation, are afforded more admiration. This is consistent with wider concepts pertaining to 'social comparison theory' (see for example, Levinger and Schneider, 1969). As a former extremist from the North West of England confirmed:

'...there are individuals over the years who are veterans of Afghanistan, eight, nine, ten years. They have a lot of impact, a lot of credibility amongst a certain group of people...' (gee 796)

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<sup>114</sup> Wider examples of this have been outlined in certain media reports (see Carter, 2011, for example).

In addition, it is also beneficial for the ideologue, and in fact other influential members of the cluster such as the 'ringleader', to display certain personality traits. The empirical data found that these traits had the potential to further solidify the 'identification' between the radicalisee and radicaliser. One of the widely cited qualities highlighted in the data was charisma. As one informed informant, and former extremist, from London outlined, 'I've met [extremist ideologues], they can speak well, they're very charismatic [and] people like to be around them. I felt that experience myself...' (gee 897). Further, though society generally views these individuals with negativity, certain respondents commented on how some ideologues have 'warm personalities'<sup>115</sup>. A former extremist commented on a particular extremist ideologue he had once met:

'...[he's a] very charming bloke [and] you get enticed by him. I can see why the youngsters chased him, because he used to speak nicely to them. (exe 283)

Finally, for the extreme ideologue and cluster ringleader there needs to be overt displays of fervour, as well as strong and interesting articulation of speech. They need to have, as one respondent put it, the 'gift of the gab' (gee 459). They are essentially like showmen, who have the ability to both rile and entertain their audiences. In this regard, there is little difference between them and Christian evangelical preachers or the front-men in rock bands. One former extremist from the West of England stated how passionate preachers on the internet, specifically YouTube, contributed to his radicalisation:

'...cos you see them angry and it makes you angry. You know how like a pep talk, like a coach might "psych" up his boxers. It kind of feels like that...' (exe 999)

## 6.6 Violent Extremism

The arguments made in the previous section will resonate with certain members of the cluster; specifically those with a strong sense of moral outrage. The value moral outrage holds cannot be stressed enough, where those who become committed activists can be separated from those who remain affiliated for social and subcultural reasons. However,

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<sup>115</sup> Having 'warmth' in character is akin to one of Howell and Frost's (1989) 'traits' of a charismatic leader.

this should be considered in conjunction with the arguments made in reference to McAdam's (1986) aforementioned research.

The committed activists that have internalised the use of violence as a legitimate tactic must now decide the best course of action. This does not insinuate they will necessarily believe conducting an act of terrorism in the UK is the best way to promote their agenda. As outlined by Silber (2011), they may decide that they can be of most use by travelling abroad to ascertain what groups like the Mujahedeen require in terms of supplies and resources. More likely, they will travel to a conflict zone and receive paramilitary training to join frontline fighters. However, once again, much of this is determined by the specific type of ideology they have internalised and where they deem they can add most value.

General public perception of AQ and AQI terrorist organisations primarily affiliates them with terrorist attacks in the West. However, there are relatively large numbers of people who travel abroad to participate in 'jihad'; which concerns more conventional methods of warfare. As with suicide terrorism, there is a belief that dying in conventional warfare will also bring with it the status of 'martyr'; which affords the same benefits discussed above.

There needs to be a consideration of how the landscape has changed post-9/11. Before this point, it was deemed easier to recruit Muslims in the West to fight in conflicts abroad. As mentioned in the Introductory chapter, some even claimed the UK government turned a blind eye to this type of activity as long as it did not become a target<sup>116</sup>. Post-9/11, the situation has changed where it has been far more difficult to recruit fighters from the UK, where this activity has been pushed underground:

'Late '80's, early '90's which was really when I came into the whole thing...it was so easy to go to a camp. There were droves of people who [went] to camps...and we had handlers...who we go through and we'll go to [the] Kunar province in Afghanistan, do two weeks training there on arms training, small arms training and basic military training, you know what, everyone turned a blind eye, totally actively done...Then [in] the late '90's things start changing...' (gee 796)

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<sup>116</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see: Laqueur (2004); Briggs et al. (2006); Phillips (2007).

Although recruitment may have become more difficult and numbers may have reduced, this does not mean it has stopped altogether. The British domestic Security Service, MI5, estimated in 2009 that around 4000 British Muslims had travelled to the Af-Pak region for military training (Sengupta, 2009; Razaq, 2009). Some argue that the trend is shifting to the Maghreb, the Horn of Africa, and other states such as Syria, where there are thought to be growing numbers of British and European fighters involved (Zelin, 2013; Pantucci, 2013).

There has already been a discussion, in the previous section, relating to the factors and influences which are critical in moving the radicalisee towards violent extremism. There also needs to be consideration of the wider influences on them. This primarily concerns these radicalisees, through violent extremism, satisfying both their subcultural desires and masculinity needs.

#### 6.6.1 Subculture, Social Identity and Masculinity

Considering Howard Becker's (1963) seminal work on subculture, it can be determined that those labelled as 'outsiders' have a need to hold a distinct identity and be original. Even though much of radicalisation may well be about social networks and the other common cited issues covered in this thesis, at its core it is about individuals changing how they present themselves. It is also about how they construct their perception of their public and private 'self', as discussed by Goffman (1961). In addition, this concerns the impact of acquiring a set of motivations where extremists believe they are right with their cause and, as with Becker's musicians, better than the rest of society.

With the group's cause also comes a sense of honour. Much of this is derived from the belief that as well as saving the lives of fellow Muslims, they are also rescuing Islam from the tyranny of the West. Within this, there also needs to be the serious inclusion of subcultural and masculinity considerations. Being part of an underground group taking on the 'mighty West' is extremely appealing to some, and they believe they are in a 'David and Goliath' type situation (ex. 283). Being fearless is considered to be highly admirable and this goes towards strengthening both their message and ideals. A former

extremist outlined how they, the extremists, see the various Muslim 'armies' around the world as brave heroes:

'...to fight for Allah, you feel they're holy warriors, they don't fear death. I mean that's an admirable thing...They're marching in with rags on their heads fighting against the latest military technology...If they die then they're in paradise...So you feel real great respect and want to be part of that...' (exe 999)

In the previous chapter, some of the grassroots workers discussed the role of 'militancy', though in the context of generational interpretations as opposed to the more commonly accepted definition. As well as the connotations this has with masculinity, their affiliation with violent extremism also arouses the radicalisee's sense of excitement; mentioned by over a third of informed informants, including three former extremists. This excitement is attached to certain physical activities. It is about being grouped with likeminded people in military type environments which offers the chance for adventure. When this is coupled with the prospect to handle powerful military hardware it becomes especially appealing to certain people. This featured strongly in Omar's account and contributed towards his search for 'jihad' in Afghanistan:

'I was very similar when I was nineteen, there's a chance for adventure...I got some military action and we fired guns, Kalashnikovs, M16s, hand grenades, 36mm canon and all this stuff, incredibly exciting. It would give you an adrenaline rush...' (Omar)

This excitement is also attached to being part of a group which offers these individuals with some sort of escapism from their previously normal and mostly predictable lives. It is not difficult, without sympathising or empathising, to see the appeal young individuals may have with becoming involved with extreme groups. It may be as simple as one day having a conventional life which is about university, work and family, to then being part of a 'revolutionary' network which has global aspirations.

In addition, being part of a covert group which attempts to evade police and intelligence services is appealing for some. They attend clandestine meetings where conversations

focus on how to destabilise the West. This was experienced by a former violent extremist from London:

'...many meetings took place, we went to many places, clandestine meetings, very secretive, very private...after a while it became exciting to the point where it was adventurous, you know, something different...it was like basically what we were looking for.' (gee 997)

This, and some of the other emotional dynamics mentioned within this thesis are also discussed by Jack Katz (1988) in his book, 'Seductions of Crime'. Katz argues that in the case of 'sneaky thrills', criminals may not just be involved for the end product, but also to escape from their normally mundane lives (ibid: 74-75). Further, he stresses that the emotive attachments to crime must also be considered. Within this context, it can be understood that the radicalisee goes through some strong emotions. First, this concerns anger and sadness, from watching fellow Muslims being attacked through various digital outlets, or from the first-hand accounts of those who have personally experienced some type of distress. These emotions then become happiness, joy, a sense of revenge and jubilation when they witness videos of Muslims blowing up Western tanks, for example. Finally, they shift to excitement when considering themselves to part of a very select and covert group which is, as stated by the respondent above, 'taking on the might of the West'. Similarly, Ferrell (1996) outlines the significance of 'risk' and 'danger' in shaping participation and membership in deviant and criminal subcultures, which 'seduce recruits into continued sub-cultural participation' (Ferrell, 1999: 404).

## 6.7 Terrorism in the West

As a consequence of some of the arguments presented in the thesis so far, some cluster members will travel abroad to participate in 'jihad'. As discussed, this has become an increasingly difficult task, and it is now about 'who you know' through social networks. These groups are more cautious since the 'War on Terror' began and only accept those they know and trust. One respondent even referred to it as an old boys' network' (res 985). Those that do make it there may find themselves fighting on the frontline with likeminded individuals. However, there is also the possibility they will be informed that

there are enough 'soldiers' to fight and the best way to support the 'cause' is to go back to their home countries in the West, where they have a depth of familiarity, and conduct their own missions<sup>117 118</sup>.

This will appeal to some, but make others rethink their stance on extremism; as was reflected in Omar's journey to the tribal regions of Afghanistan. He resigned prematurely from his career in violent extremism due mainly to a change in ideology – which started to legitimise the killing of innocent Western citizens – by some of the ideologues he was affiliated to in Afghanistan. This was conflicting to the ideology he and his friends had internalised where they believed it was morally and religiously acceptable to participate in the Afghan War as it represented conventional warfare though did not legitimise killing civilians. A former extremist raised similar sentiments:

'I didn't agree with killing civilians really. But fighting against an army, I've never heard of any religion in the world that condemns fighting against an army...I know Islam says you can fight war, democracy says you can fight war, that's why we've got troops in Afghanistan and Iraq right now.' (exe 999)

The attacks on 7/7, which were in Omar's hometown, compounded his concern of killing civilians. His opinions on participating in 'conventional warfare' also started to become reassessed. This, Omar explained – and agreed upon by other former violent extremists in the study – was due to him personally witnessing the horrors of war and death:

'...because I'm a little bit older now I can say that, young people don't see that, especially if they had an easy upbringing in this country...[I have] been through war and seen how terrible it can be...Because the kids here have no idea of history or haven't seen war or death first-hand...'. (Omar)

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<sup>117</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see: Silber (2011).

<sup>118</sup> This was also deemed to be the case with Mohammed Sidique Khan. In the home video recordings he made for his baby daughter before his departure to the Af-Pak region, Khan talks in a way which infers he would not see her again. This implies that he originally went abroad to conduct 'jihad', rather than planning an attack on the West. It was reported that the original plan changed within days of Khan arriving in Pakistan (BBC News, 2011). The videos can be seen at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoL\\_e9jAe8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoL_e9jAe8) and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12621381>.



These respondents deeply believed in the 'covenant of security' paradigm which acted to prohibit them even considering attacking civilians in the UK. This is a concept members of the cluster could have internalised and is something their ideologue, either in the UK or abroad, needs to remove. The most common argument used by the ideologue which 'legitimately' overrules the 'covenant of security' belief is the concept of 'Dar ul-Harb'<sup>119</sup>. As a very brief explanation, Dar ul-Harb refers to a 'land of war' or 'state of war', where countries like the UK are considered to be legitimate targets due to their involvement in conflicts within Muslim lands. When this is combined with a misconstrued understanding of the Ummah, they believe that if war is declared on one Muslim state then this is a war on Islam itself. Therefore, if Muslims reside in certain Western states then by default these places become legitimate battlefields. This is combined with the distortion of other Islamic belief such as self-defence; as a community member from the West of England explained:

'In Islam there exists basically a law where it is explained in the Quran, there is a strong calling to self-defence and some people they distort the meaning of that.' (cms 385)

Another told of an additional doctrine misconstrued and used by jihadis:

'...the Quran comes and tells you that [recites an Arabic phrase], "you can fight those who fight you" and these people are fighting [recites an Arabic phrase], "fight them as a whole as they fight you", collectively and you fight as a whole so you need to have an Islamic unity.' (gee 709)

However, they also need to overcome the moral concern of killing innocent people. Much of this can be reduced through some of the concepts outlined within Sykes and Matza's (1957) 'techniques of neutralization' theory, and the rest through religious scripture. The radicalisees are, as explained by Sageman (2008), reassured through religious doctrine that the innocent victims that die as a result of their attack will be rewarded in paradise. A former extremist from London outlined these concerns:

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<sup>119</sup> For a more detailed discussion on 'Dar ul-Harb', see: Baker (2009, 2011).

'...inherently people know that killing women and children is wrong...That mindset has changed in the individual who's gonna take radical actions. He removes the natural moral criteria he has, he's not immoral, he's not a bad person, he's amoral in the normal sense because he doesn't have normal morality. He only has scripture to tell him what is right and what is wrong... (gee 709)

Conducting an act of terrorism will resonate with those who are not able to counter the arguments presented to them. They will travel back to the West with these intentions and attempt to convince the other cluster members, who did not travel with them, that this is the best way to further their cause. They will specifically target those they feel will be the most open to this type of action. Within the research conducted by Simcox et al. (2011) on British terrorists, it was found that although only 28% had attended training camps in countries outside of the UK, at least one person in six out of the eight major terrorist cells they analysed had done so. In addition, it needs to be considered that there is also the possibility that likeminded people from the same country in the West will meet on these trips abroad.

Finally, as mentioned before, there will be instances where the individual or cluster has already conceived a plot to attack a Western target. They may then go abroad in search of direction and/or training (e.g. bomb making). They may even be looking to attain some type of funding; similar to Dhiren Barot who was convicted of plotting an attack in the financial district of New York. Interestingly, Silber (2012) likens these people to 'venture capitalists'. Whichever route they take, those who are part of a cluster and agree to attack the West will form a 'cell'. Those that do not internalise the religious and moral legitimisation given to them will cease to become affiliated.

#### 6.7.1 Jihadi Cell Formation and Active Support

The formation of a 'jihadi cell' plotting to attack a Western target can comprise of three of four different types of personnel. The first is the inner core of the group who will progress to carry out the attack. Some of them will have been part of the original cluster. They may have been friends for many years, have become acquainted at university, or met through their former extremist group and remained together due to their convergence in

similar ideologies. Silber (2011) provides the analogy of a cell with a nucleus and argues that within this inner core is the 'active core'. These are the one or two people who are fundamental to the particular plot and without them it does not necessarily take place. They are the ones that have travelled abroad and received instructions to attack the West, or who have been at the centre of conceiving these types of plots. They are the ringleaders of the group.

Surrounding the inner core is the outer core, or the 'inner circle and outer circle' as one former extremist described it (gee 459). They give tacit and tangible support to the inner core, such as providing money or organising logistics. The cell's ideologue, whose role has been discussed previously, also sits at this level. This structure was confirmed by a grassroots worker from the North East of England:

'...the structure of jihadist groups in the UK where basically you had the emir, you had some "daees", which are callers...you had followers...' (gee 796)

It is important to focus on a point made by a respondent when discussing the role of the cell's ideologue. It is generally thought that the ideologue provides guidance, in whatever form, all the way through to the implementation of the attack. However, this interviewee, a senior intelligence official from the US, made a very interesting argument from his vast experience of dealing with AQ and AQI terrorism in the West. He explained how the ideologue is present during the initial formation of the cluster, though as it progresses and moves towards becoming a cell the ideologue is discarded as their knowledge is shown to be minimal. This role is taken on by another member in the group, possibly the ringleader. This may occur at any point and therefore some of the tasks undertaken by the ideologue, as discussed in various points previous, may have been completed by the person who took over this role. Similarly, although the term 'ideologue' is continued to be used in this chapter, it may refer to the old ideologue or the new one, which is dependent on the particular situation of the cell:

'The pattern that I have seen time and time again is that the ideologue ends up being a person around who the cluster might form...[then] certain members of the cluster begin to challenge if not surpass the ideologue in terms of their knowledge...and the ideologue becomes increasingly sidelined and most importantly when the group begins to move towards an operation, in most cases...the ideologue is left out of the operation.'  
(hri 707)

He continued:

'They had already adopted that ideology, so they no longer needed the validation from these other individuals and they may be even perceived as having some kind of operational liability' (ibid)

Moving on, these 'followers', or supporters, do not engage in violence and remain on the periphery for many reasons. For one, they may not be deemed to be 'committed' enough by the rest of the cell (see 796). More often than not, these supporters in the outer core will be close friends and family members of the inner core and will do everything they can to help their friends and loved ones through the emotional ties they have developed. Though, this does not necessarily infer they agree with their violent ideologies, or are even completely aware of the plot. They may simply be helping a friend out and might know something is going on:

'...there [are] guys who have come up from places like Burnley, Blackburn and other places, guys who have come up from London because they were getting harassed by intelligence or Counter-Terrorism Units...So they leave London and come up to the North and people are helping them out and putting them up and that sort of stuff...' (grw 894)

If they are aware of the plot, they may support it due to them identifying with the strains and grievances discussed in the early chapters of this thesis; though have not gone through the same process of conversion as those who will go on to enact violence. Those who support these terrorist activities through some form of economic or logistical support are given specific roles by the ringleader and failure to adhere to them will result in the plot not occurring. This is similar to many types of organisations, where different

members of the team, from the cleaners, IT technicians, up to the MD have their own roles to play and without them the running of the organisation may suffer in some small or major way. One former violent extremist from London stated how those within jihadi cells are, 'signposted to do [a] job' (gee 997), with another grassroots worker adding:

'...people recognise you in the group as either having the most knowledge or the most fervour or the most, you know, the best fighter...' (gee 796)

There are then those who were part of the original cluster, before it became a cell, who do not completely buy into the notion of 'self-sacrifice', as they may not have internalised the 'us vs. them' argument in its entirety, or are not as affected by the moral outrage argument as others. They may still be affiliated with the cell, in some way, in order to maintain previous relationships and to continue to satisfy their social and subcultural desires. If they haven't fully internalised the ideologies and do not completely agree with the use of violence, they may also remain affiliated with the group as they do not want to be seen as disobedient. Disobedience is quite a difficult task once people get beyond certain stages and have various factors impinging on them. Milgram (1974: 26) argues that the person's 'moral concern' shifts away from the actions, to 'a consideration of how well he is living up to the expectations that the authority has of him'<sup>120</sup>.

The idea of disobedience, not only to authority but also the movement and its ideologies, can be applicable to any member of the cluster, cell, or even the ideologue themselves. Although this was mentioned only by a couple of respondents it merits the need to be briefly discussed. One grassroots worker from London explained how he suspected certain extreme preachers he had personally encountered did not fully agree with the extreme ideologies they were espousing. He argued, 'it might have even been the case that some of them didn't even fully believe some of the things that they said' (grw 662). This was confirmed by a researcher from London who explained how he had been informed by four personally respected independent sources that Abu Hamza al-Masri believed the 9/11 attacks were 'wrong' and against Islamic principles. It was claimed that Hamza felt extremely aggrieved that Islam was considered to be a religion that targeted

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<sup>120</sup> For an interesting discussion of authority and obedience, see Hannah Arendt's (1963) account of Adolf Eichmann.

innocent women and children. However, he kept his thoughts relatively private as he did not want to appear as a defector. The researcher explained:

'He actually said 9/11 was wrong, and he continues to say it. But he wouldn't say it out publically because he doesn't want to be splitter in that sense, he doesn't want to be a traitor. He says theologically its wrong...the fact of the matter is most of these guys are religious people and they don't want to think that their religion justifies killing innocent women and children...and most of them are troubled by this...' (res 985)

There also needs to be consideration pertaining to the 'sequential nature of the action'. It is clear from this thesis that radicalisation is an incremental change in belief and action. There is no immediate shift from 'normal' to 'extremist'. Those small increments in change are justified in the mind of the participant and they gradually move towards a more extreme stance. This involves the build up of prior actions in order to conduct the next which creates binding conditions. Breaking off would insinuate that everything the individual has done until that point to be wrong, and if they decide to continue, then reassurances are provided by past actions for future ones (Milgram, 1974). This was also represented in the empirical data:

'...you would hardly be in a group where [any of] them were saying "yeah we're wrong. What were we doing for the last five years or six years? It was a waste of time", you know, they're gonna bring in that safety mechanism. So psychologically that's gonna try and reaffirm or try and console in their mind...' (grw 502)

Similarly, some of these individuals may have dedicated much time and resources to their particular group and cause. This may have included sacrificing their social ties with friends and family, and possibly even their careers. Similar arguments can be found when referring back to Erving Goffman's (1961: 25) account of 'mental patients', where, 'Although some roles can be re-established by the inmate if and when he returns to the world, it is plain that other losses are irrevocable...It may not be possible to make up, at a later stage of the life cycle, the time not now spent in educational or job advancement'.

Finally, these individuals may agree with others' use of violence, though might simply be scared of becoming involved in it themselves. They know that participating in 'jihad' on

the battlefields abroad may bring with it a large chance of them dying, or a certain death if they become involved in a suicide mission at home. As demonstrated with the case of Adam and Omar, Omar embraced death and considered 'jihad' to be a privilege, whilst Adam, on the other hand, was deeply concerned about the loss of his own life. Although Adam had not reached the same point of radicalisation as some of the cell's associates have, they may not accept the ideologue's claims of rewards in the afterlife as there is no tangible evidence to prove this. There is also the possibility that although they give the impression of being so, they are not as religious or believe in God as much as others do. They do not want to therefore risk their lives on something they cannot guarantee. They could still feel some of the strains and some sort of moral outrage and want to be of service, though maintain enough of a distance to the actual plot; either through personal choice or something enforced by the cell itself. This goes to explain why so many people on the periphery, including on many occasions the cell's ideologue, will not be charged under any type of terrorism offence as there is not enough evidence to convict them (Silber, 2011).

#### 6.7.2 Organisational Headhunting

Jihadi cells are fully aware of the importance of having a complete and capable skill set in order to effectively conduct their proposed attack. This could relate to their ability to conduct reconnaissance missions without detection or being able to build certain types of devices due to their specific education, such as a degree in engineering, for example. This is particularly important if they are planning to use explosives as part of their attack. A former high-ranking police officer interviewed during the data collection alluded to this very concern:

'Let's say 7/7, clearly it was successful because the skills were sufficient, not just the bomb making skills but the whole [plot]...and 21/7 was unsuccessful and yet maybe the skills around 21/7, maybe they only just fell a little bit short...[so] you've high calibre figures who are interested in people's skills...' (hrp 740)

Once a jihadi cell has been established, if there are gaps or vacancies available then it is possible that the cell will 'headhunt' potential employees. This normally occurs through a

search within their existing social networks. However, if this does not yield any positive results, they may look further afield for potential recruits.

Around twenty percent of informed informants outlined how they had witnessed, through their own work at the grassroots level, members of groups such as HT and AM being 'headhunted' by jihadi recruiters. Jihadi 'head-hunters' will attend meetings, events and conferences held by other extreme groups in order to pull certain individuals into their networks. They favour going to gatherings held by extremist groups, as opposed to the ones attended by the general Muslim population, as they understand that the members of extreme groups will have reached a certain depth in their radicalisation. As has been alluded to at numerous points in this thesis, simply because someone is Muslim does not make them more susceptible to extremism. Further, attending gatherings held by normal Muslim communities also poses the risk of them becoming identified and being reported to the police. Thus, it can be said, in order to find the most suitable employee, they look for certain qualifications and experience:

'What happens is sometimes some of their people in their group would go to al-Muhajiroun meetings to look out for certain individuals, right, that maybe don't want to be there [and] want to be somewhere else. [They are], sort of, bringing them into their own networks... the younger guys they'll get pulled out into different networks...so he'll be talent spotted by certain people and then be pulled out and taken for training...' (gee 997)

If the jihadi recruiter has never met the individual they may have little way of identifying if they will subscribe to violent ideologies. From the informal conversations held between various informed informants and the researcher, it was claimed that jihadis will look out for certain types of behaviour when at these events. These potential recruits are usually selected from those that ask questions about violence and terrorism and are confident enough to publically challenge their current group's ideologies; as the jihadis may have once done themselves. The jihadi recruiter will approach the individual after the event and strike up a conversation. If they are deemed to hold enough potential to join the cell they will be invited to certain 'closed circle' meetings with the group and their ideologue. At this point the jihadis will not mention anything to do with violence, but simply attempt to gauge the individual's long-term potential. This is exciting for the individual, something



that also massages their ego as from their perception, as with normal careers, it is very satisfying being headhunted by another organisation.

However, the jihadi head-hunters are extremely cautious about who they bring into their network, whether this be new recruits or old friends. Although the majority of the cell's inner core could be formed organically, there is still a selective process in place. Simply because they are close friends with someone does not necessarily immediately facilitate them into the inner core of the cell. The situation is very serious at this point and they are fully committed to participating in some form of action. There has been a considerable move away from non-violent activism which they participated in with their former extreme group. All of the cell's members are required to show a strong devotion to the cause, a commitment to the use of violence if necessary, a depth of intelligence, and a level of maturity. If a member of the cell is immature and are affiliated for subcultural reasons and to improve their social status, they may give away the plot or cause undue attention to the cluster by bragging about their involvement:

‘...the one who's not speaking, not too vocal, is quietly working away in some little corner in a room somewhere is far more dangerous, in my opinion, than the mouthy youngster, eighteen or twenty [years old], who's walking down the street...’ (rnc 737)

This alludes to a wider argument which highlights the animosity between these different types of groups. It also demonstrates that contrary to public perceptions of these types of groups working together, they are actually in rivalry with one another; as mentioned at various points of the chapter. This is particularly the case with the jihadi cells, as there is a belief that they are involved in actions which have a real potential of yielding tangible results. They perceive these types of groups to simply be ‘loudmouths’ and a ‘joke’<sup>121</sup> (gee 897), with no identifiable way to achieve their goals. They also believe that these other groups are simply hungry for media attention, which leads to an enhancement of counter-terrorism funds. Consequently, this increases the chances of the jihadi cell being detected:

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<sup>121</sup> For further information, see Footnote 104.

‘...there are many people that I work with right, that have been involved in violent extremism and potential terrorist activities that say we would run a mile when we have Hizb ut-Tahrir or al-Muhajiroun, because they are attracting too much attention’ (see 997)

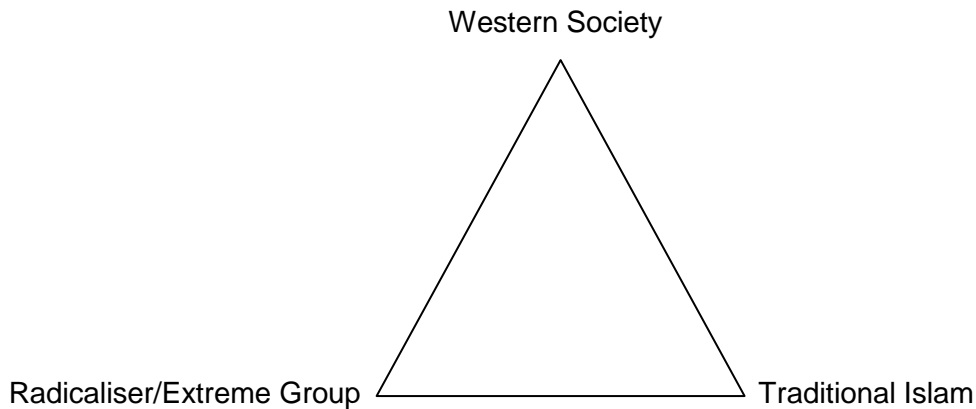
This rivalry was brought into sharp focus by a researcher from London. After conducting his own ethnographic research on the 7/7 bombers, he discovered that a member of HT was allegedly physically assaulted by Mohammed Sidique Khan’s group:

‘...I heard a HT guy went to Beeston and got beaten up by Mohammed Sidique Khan’s guys...’ (res 985)

This further strengthens the argument regarding the difficulty for outsiders to join the cell or cluster, as they are extremely selective in their choice of who they feel is suitable and trustworthy. Even internally, those members that do not pass the stringent commitment requirements will be dropped. This can be linked to Goffman’s (1961) aforementioned theory of ‘primary and secondary’ adjustments. Thus, there will be those who are simply affiliated to satisfy their social and subcultural desires. On the other hand there will be others who have internalised the extreme ideologies, are fully committed to the cause, and will do whatever is necessary to achieve their goals.

## 6.8 Concluding Remarks

Prior to the conversion process of radicalisation it can be assumed that the radicalisee is pulled by two competing forces; this being Western society and the traditional Islam their parents practise. Though, during the conversion process there is also the pull exerted by the radicaliser and/or extreme group, as represented in the diagram below:



### **Diagram 2: Competing Forces**

The radicaliser's aim is to remove the influences of the other competing forces, and this is undertaken through instilling a form of wrap around social control. It is at this point that conversion can effectively start to take place. This primarily occurs through mortification and reconstruction of the radicalisee's self and social identity, which is carried out by the radicaliser. The conversion process does not imply there to be no individual action or resistance, nor does it imply that this process is deterministic no matter who the person is. Individual agency does matter, and radicalisees are able to interact with this structure and attempt to negotiate with this position. Goffman's (1961) account of moral career occurs in a total institution where social isolation can be maximised and enforced to a high degree. However, as violent extremist radicalisation (of the type being explored in this study) does not occur within the confines of a total institution, there are no physical barriers and so the social distance caused by the radicaliser will more often than not have some sort of limit. As a result, there is always the opportunity for outside influences to affect the radicalisee; whether this is an influence which brings them away from extremism, or in fact takes them in a different direction. Without this, there would be no opportunity for de-radicalisation to take place, for example.

The radicalisation process described until this juncture is generic for most, if not all, extreme groups within the UK. The pool of recruits at this point will be of varying sizes dependent on the type of extreme group they are a part of. The empirical data showed, with the supplementation of wider literature, that certain jihadis in the West start off their careers in extremism in groups like HT and AM. They then begin to gravitate away from that group's ideologies and increasingly towards supporting the use of violence as a

legitimate means for achieving their goals. Thus, they form and grow organically through friendships and a commonality in ideology and form their own cluster. Some members of this cluster – if they internalise the relevant ideologies and reduce both their moral and religious concerns regarding the killing of civilians – will form their own cell which will be committed to conducting an act of terrorism in the West.

As one of the central themes in this thesis concerns the value of culture in radicalisation, it is fitting to end this empirical chapter on this note. Although the other topics discussed in the thesis are of critical value, the subcultural arguments are largely under-researched and need to be pushed to the fore. Thus, this is not just about the radicalisee adhering to their religious and moral duties towards ending the suffering of their fellow Muslims; or even just about the eternal rewards available to them as a result. It is also not just about them reacting to the emotive feelings from the moral outrage they are affected by. This is also about the excitement of being part of a covert group that is ‘taking on the might of the West’, feeling the honour of protecting Islam, and giving fuel to their own particular perceptions of masculinity. Being part of a group or network with global aspirations not only gives the radicalisee a strong sense of identity they so desire, it also provides them with the opportunity to leave behind their normal predictable lives. Within this extreme group they feel capable of achieving anything they set their hearts and minds to. In their own perceptions, they are the saviours of Islam, the protectors of Muslims, and ‘world-savers’.

## Chapter Seven: Theory, Practice and Policy

This thesis has outlined a process of radicalisation derived from the empirical data. It is important to now bring together these arguments and discuss them in the context of how they apply to theory and practice. It is also critical to understand the role played by policy within this context.

There are three career paths a potential radicalisee can engage in. These career paths are by no means deterministic and radicalisees are able to navigate through them like they would with any 'normal' career. This is one of the critical findings of the research. The first career path involves those who can be labelled as the 'seekers'. These are the people who fully know and understand what they are getting into and actively search for extremist groups and networks.

The second career concerns the 'pretenders'. The individuals in this group are affiliated to extremism, though not because they necessarily identify with extreme ideologies. It is better to consider them as being 'extremist by association' to satisfy certain social and subcultural desires. However, this is not to assume that they do not identify, on some level, with certain extremist ideologies and causes. Alongside this social and subcultural affiliation, pretenders can be considered as 'free-riders' to reap the various benefits offered by extreme groups (Wiktorowicz, 2004, 2005). These include, as mentioned in previous chapters, a sense of belonging and identity, amongst others.

The third career path refers to those individuals who are considered to be 'drifters', and are lulled and pulled into extremism. This group have been the primary focus of this research as they are the ones who are most affected by the strains discussed in the first empirical chapter, facilitated by the contingencies in the second, and identify with the arguments surrounding frame alignment proposed in the third. This is not to insinuate seekers will not have the same influences. The difference between the seekers and the drifters (and pretenders to some extent) is that the drifters are lulled and pulled into extremism through various influences, pressures and a form of wrap around social control. It is extremely important to consider that there is always the possibility that the

drifters could well have progressed to this point from being pretenders, or will have been influenced by the same social and subcultural considerations.

These career paths represent different social processes of radicalisation. They need to be considered in relation to wider CT policy and how policy has developed and articulated the issue. The primary CT strategy of value within this context is the 'Prevent Strategy' (Prevent), which was conceived and implemented by the Labour government in 2003. The inclusion of Prevent, a 'softer' approach within the UK's wider CT strategy, can be deemed as somewhat innovative.

The Prevent Strategy's most notable change was in 2007 as a direct response to the growing threat of home-grown terrorism in the UK, and also as a reaction to the 7/7 terrorist attacks in London (HM Government, 2007). Prevent was purportedly 'based on a better understanding of the causes of radicalisation (the process by which people become terrorists or lend support to violent extremism), and [sought] to provide a coherent response' through five main objectives<sup>122</sup> which were supplemented by an additional two sub-objectives<sup>123</sup> (HM Government, 2009: 12). The strategy's principal aim was to implement a 'community-led approach to tackling violent extremism' by winning 'hearts and minds' and through the empowerment of local groups and communities to 'stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism' (HM Government, 2009: 11). This sentiment was felt more widely with certain commentators strongly believing communities to hold 'the long-term solution to terrorism' (Briggs, 2010: 981).

The strategy was delivered by key central government departments, local authorities, local community stakeholders, NGOs, and a multi-layered police response from a range of forces and departments (Innes and Thiel, 2008; Spalek et al., 2008; Kundnani, 2009). In terms of funding allocated to the strategy, around £51m was earmarked for selected local authorities to run their own projects (Kundnani, 2009). Many of these projects were

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<sup>122</sup> (i) To challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices. (ii) Disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate. (iii) Support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists. (iv) Increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism. (v) To address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting (HM Government, 2009: 12).

<sup>123</sup> (i) Develop supporting intelligence, analysis, and information. (ii) Improve our strategic communications (HM Government, 2009: 12).

in partnership with, and provided funding to, 'non-state actors' (Briggs, 2010: 971). Non-state actors were also funded directly through central government departments, such as the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism.

Around two years after the release of the strategy, given the chance to understand how it was functioning, it received a swathe of criticism<sup>124</sup> which primarily concerned how it was being implemented (Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2009; Spalek and Lambert, 2008; Bartlett and Birdwell, 2010; Khan, 2009). In addition, certain empirically based studies analysed 'grassroots' perceptions of the strategy (Lakhani, 2012; House of Commons, 2010; Kundnani, 2009<sup>125</sup>). Communities' concerns about Prevent (perceived or otherwise) have the strong potential to have a counter-productive effect on the strategy. Therefore, as well as analysing the effects of Prevent on radicalisation and vice-versa, it is also vital to understand how CT policy affects normal Muslim community members, as this will also have some impact on radicalisation.

In this regard, the data found there to be a number of key issues relating to CT policy, though three were of particular prominence. This concerned how the strategy was being funded, the confusion between CT and community cohesion, and how it was accused as being a tool for spying on communities and collecting intelligence. This will be the focus of the second section of the chapter. At this early juncture, it must be noted that the empirical data discussed in this chapter relates to the version of Prevent released by the Labour government in 2007.

Since the collection of this data took place, the Coalition Government released a revised version of the strategy in 2011. As with its predecessor, this version is not without its own issues and criticisms. These will be discussed in greater detail in the third and final section of this chapter through an in-depth analysis of the strategy and from drawing on wider literature. It is important to note, however, that some of the underlying arguments concerning Prevent 2007 will be applicable within the current context. These will also be considerations for future CT (and similar) policies and strategies.

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<sup>124</sup> This refers to the more public criticism of the strategy, where in reality discussions of this nature were occurring before this point.

<sup>125</sup> Kundnani's (2009) research was widely deemed as initiating the more public debates around the issues.

## 7.1 Extremist Careers

The data strongly suggested there are three careers radicalisees can navigate through. The first career path consists of the seekers and concerns those who actively search for an extremist group, network or movement. This is not a feature documented within the empirical data or framework, but is a career pattern that has been identified based upon readings from the literature. One example of this, as demonstrated within the Literature Review chapter, concerns those individuals that become disenfranchised with something in their lives and seek new direction, which could eventually, depending on other factors such as social networks for example, be extremism (see for example Wiktorowicz, 2005; Silber and Bhatt). As with the other career paths, the seekers can be influenced by some similar issues.

The second career path relates to those who are pretenders and are simply affiliated to extremism in order to satisfy certain social and subcultural desires. Therefore, it can also be said that these individuals are 'extremist by association'. Those considered to be following this career path may or may not have any direct contact with other extremist individuals or groups.

The third and final group have been labelled as the drifters and refers to those who are lulled and pulled into extremism through a combination of influence, social pressure, and subcultural and masculine desire, amongst others. It is important, once again, to mention the possibility that pretenders are able to progress to becoming drifters. In fact, there also exists the strong potential that some drifters are affected by both the social and sub-cultural elements of extremism.

The most pertinent example of subculture within the empirical data related to extremism being seen as a trend by certain Muslim young people in the UK. The data demonstrated that youths were forging links between extremism and developments in youth culture, or subculture (Becker, 1973). Those considered to be extremists were also perceived to be 'cool'. There is then the implication of some youths being pretenders or 'extremist by association', rather than being genuinely interested, at least initially, with some type of extremist cause or ideologies. Thus, in order to maintain this 'satisfying self-defining'



relationship they alter and develop their self and social identity depending on what they perceive others expectations to be.

It must then be considered whether radicalisation is a unique social issue facing the UK and West more widely. Throughout history, every generation in society has encountered problems and concerns with its youth. The issue with radicalisation may then not be exceptional and the empirical data goes some way to demonstrate this. A number of the strains, grievances and contingencies discussed within the thesis are applicable to youth across the board, not just Muslim.

There have been, throughout history, many instances of the rise and fall (and sometimes re-emergence) of youth cultures considered to be deviant. Pearson (1983), for instance, outlines many examples of deviant subcultures which have emerged at different periods, only to be forgotten once they cease to become popular, or when a new one emerges. The past is therefore seen as the golden era where the moral and social fabric of society was never as threatened as it is by the most current issue.

In the UK, two of the most well-known youth subcultures to emerge were the 'Mods and Rockers'. The two groups' violent clashes across some of Britain's most popular seaside resorts in the early to mid-1960s featured heavily in the media's headlines and caught the attention of the public. This was the inspiration of Stanley Cohen's (1972) book, 'Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers'. As a result of this, the term 'moral panic', although not conceived by Cohen, became widely used to describe various events, occurrences and developments in history.

With certain Muslim youth in the UK being 'pretend' extremists, it can be determined by drawing from Cohen's research that although society may be worried about their actions, they are also just as concerned about their identity, place in society and their outsider statuses<sup>126</sup>. The extensive media coverage on the situation, according to Cohen, gives the subculture, in the minds of those involved, credibility and authenticity, and it also makes their activities seem important. Cohen explains that those in this situation actually prefer negative coverage. This ties in with the arguments made in the previous chapters

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<sup>126</sup> For a detailed discussion on 'outsider' statuses and society, see Becker (1973).

which concern perceived masculinity and being Muslim, and more recent understandings of the terms 'militant' and 'militancy'.

As a brief side issue, an interesting point is that although the role of 'moral entrepreneur', provided by Cohen (1972, 2002) and Becker (1973), is usually reserved for those within society who are opposed to the subculture, it can also be used, on occasion, for those within the subculture. In order to radicalise, those within extreme groups need to create a 'moral panic', similar to what society has done over the decades. Generally speaking, a large proportion of society considers the West to be the force of good whilst the terrorists are seen as evil. However, radicalisees' viewpoints on what is perceived to be good and evil are polarised. This relates back to the regularly cited quote, 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'. In regards to morality, these extremists believe they are striving for good, whilst most of the rest of society and the world are seen as a hindrance to this, or even evil.

Reverting back to the conversation on certain Muslim young people being pretenders, Goffman (1951) alludes to similar arguments within his paper on the 'Symbols of Class Status'. In this regard, Muslim youth are moving towards taking on particular stylistic traits without adopting the core ideals of extremism. Goffman's paper is concerned with the different statuses people hold within society and how they 'visibly divide the social world into categories of persons' (ibid: 294). Goffman is especially concerned with the discrepancy between perceived and actual statuses, and '...the pressures that play upon behaviour as a result of the fact that a symbol of status is not always a very good test of status' (ibid: 295). Similarly, those who are pretenders are by no means representative of those who are extreme. However, it is once again important to reiterate the possibility of the pretenders being able to progress to becoming drifters.

The 'drifter', or the 'pretender', is in direct contact with a radicaliser or an extremist group through their social networks. Those deemed to be committed, or show potential, are now distinct from those who will simply remain 'extremist by association'. However, it is important to note that this is not as clear-cut, as non-violent extremist groups in the UK will be plentiful with those who seem to be committed to the particular cause, though are only involved to satisfy certain cultural, social and subcultural needs. Thus, Kelman's

(1958) 'compliance' and 'identification', rather than 'internalization', concepts hold much importance here, as do Goffman's (1961) 'primary and secondary adjustment' theories.

What is common across the different career paths is, similar to Becker's (1973) work on 'outsiders', being part of an extreme group allows individuals to forge an identity which defines themselves as being different to others. This links into the empirically made argument regarding each extreme group considering themselves to be the vanguard of Muslims and Islam (Wiktorowicz, 2005; Sageman, 2008; Werbner, 2004; Mirza et al., 2007). This needs to be considered with them feeling better than all others and the rest of society, and in fact other Muslims and extremist groups.

Sunstein (2002) explains that with members of a group with a shared sense of identity, especially one that diverges from societal norms and is considered as deviant, there will be an increase in 'polarization', i.e. from mainstream society. Through the use of various concepts like 'categorisation', 'social identification' and 'social comparison', the group adopts a 'we' stance and favours members of the in-group, and express discrimination, negativity and hostility towards the out-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). If the individual remains committed to just one group and relies on them for their 'self-concept' and 'self-esteem', they will do whatever they can to retain membership (Stahelski, 2004).

In terms of the drifters, or those progressing this way from being pretenders, the process of mortification and reconstruction is critical with persuading them that an 'us vs. them' scenarios exists. Goffman (1961: 57) describes this 'reorganizing influence' as a 'fraternization process, through which socially distant persons find themselves developing mutual support and common counter-mores in opposition to a system that has forced them into intimacy and into a single, equalitarian community of fate.' Therefore, 'A sense of common injustice and a sense of bitterness against the outside world tend to develop...' (ibid: 58).

In the 'Concluding Remarks' of the 'Contingencies Chapter', it was discussed that those who will remain pretenders are separated from the drifters. The analogy was used that, in essence, 'the men are separated from the boys'. On reflection, this may have been used prematurely as there is the possibility of, as mentioned above, non-violent extreme groups containing those who are simply attempting to maintain a social and subcultural

position within their lives. This analogy may be better used to describe those radicalisees who are part of non-violent groups and become disenfranchised with the group and their strategies, and therefore gravitate away from them and adopt a more violent stance. It is, of course, dangerous to label these violent extremists as ‘the men’. It must be made clear, then, that this is not to give them some level of maturity, but more to highlight the difference between those willing to participate in non-risky activism, or that with minimum risk, with those who are prepared to risk and sacrifice their lives for their intended cause. Within this, differing ideologies and in how much depth they have been internalised plays an active and important role. However, if they have adopted a non-violent stance, this ideology can be questioned and dropped if they feel like it is not achieving any tangible results. The research showed this to be a decision point in the career of the extremist; though not necessarily a conscious one.

These disenfranchised individuals may then gravitate towards an ideology that is violent in nature. This appears to predominantly affect those who are the most aggrieved by the moral outrage element of the conversion process. Thus, the data found that rather than groups like AM and HT being directly involved in acts of violence and terrorism, they are more likely to be stepping stones towards an ideology that espouses the personal use of violence for its adherents. However, once again, this should not be confused with these groups acting as conveyor belts to violence. Thus, some of those that do not agree with their current group’s ideologies will break off into their own clusters and gravitate towards the use of violence as a legitimate tactic to achieve their goals (Silber, 2011).

In this regard, an original<sup>127</sup> key finding from the research is that the newly formed cells may ‘headhunt’ new ‘employees’ when there is a specific vacancy available. This was particularly the case when they were plotting an attack against a target in the West, and deemed their knowledge and skill set to be insufficient in some area. This headhunting was accomplished through recommendations within their social networks and from also attending meetings and events held by other, usually non-violent, extremist groups in a bid to talent spot. Although this only occurs in a small number of cases, it is important to consider, as it can affect the way radicalisation is understood.

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<sup>127</sup> Certain instances of ‘talent scouting’ have been briefly mentioned in context to Germany where individuals have been approached when attending an ‘Islamist mosque’ (Schindler, 2007: 62); rather than being recruited from other extreme groups.

Thus, for an individual to be involved in the use of violence or terrorism, they need to be part of a group that espouses these types of ideologies. Even if they are considered to be what is widely termed as a 'lone wolf', they still need to adopt an ideology that allows and justifies the use of violence or terrorism. It is therefore imperative for any account of radicalisation to appreciate the role of ideology, including the vast differences and small nuances between the types adopted by various extreme groups.

The empirical data also found that moral outrage and ideology alone are not enough for individuals to move between a non-violent and violent mindset. There was also the need for them to relieve their religious and moral concerns through the justifications given by their spiritual ideologue. In addition, they also need to feel like they are adhering to their moral and religious requirements.

Focussing on the religious aspect, the use of Goffman's (1961) moral career framework proved essential with moving the discussion away from religion driving radicalisation, to one that actually focuses upon it being a social process and a change in the individual's identity. Therefore, an important point highlighted within the data was that although the radicalisee may embrace religion at any point of their extremist career, radicalisation is not fuelled by religious ideology and thus it cannot be considered as a causal factor. The value of religion can be seen with forming the foundation of a new identity and creating a sense of belonging (Choudhury, 2007; Taseer, 2005), when compounding the notion of moral outrage (through utilising the concept of Ummah), and, importantly, misconstrued religious identity provides the justification for committing terrorism (Githens-Mazer, 2010; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Wiktorowicz, 2004a, 2005; Toft, 2007; Sageman, 2008a).

In terms of understanding the moral justification of violence further, the thesis found much merit with incorporating certain sociological concepts. For example, the use of Sykes and Matza's (1957) 'techniques of neutralization' was important to determine how moral concerns about deviant behaviour can be counterbalanced. They argue there to be a number of ways by which deviants attempt to neutralise their moral concerns, as they are aware of their moral obligations to adhere to law and societal norms. Through these 'techniques of neutralization' the individual is 'freed to engage in delinquency without serious damage to his self image. In this sense, the delinquent both has his cake

and eats it too, for he remains committed to the dominant normative system and yet so qualifies its imperatives that violations are “acceptable” if not “right”.’ (ibid: 667).

Taking a slightly wider perspective, one important finding of the research was the value of subculture, social identity and masculinity with further understanding violence within this context. Thus, the use of violence is not simply just about attempting to save the lives of their fellow Muslims. There is also much excitement involved, especially if the individual is affiliated to a group that has been proscribed by the government, or even more if they are part of a jihadi cluster or cell. This inevitably provides escapism from their predictable lives and can be seen as ‘glamorous’ (Trevelyan, 2012; Secret, 2012).

As briefly outlined in the Literature Review, certain research on violent crime and cultural criminology (more widely) shows the value of excitement (Ferrell, 1999; Katz, 1988). The emergence of concepts in cultural criminology, such as ‘edgework’, can further highlight the importance of adrenalin and masculinity within acts of crime and violence (Lyng, 1990). Although earlier ideas regarding the concept were heavily criticised by feminist criminologists (Ferrell et al., 2008), the core of the theory may still yield some interesting insights. For example, it can be argued that people engage in extreme high risk taking in search of danger and excitement (Lyng, 1990). Importantly, researchers have found that those partaking in these acts are not ‘out of control’ nor do they possess a ‘death wish’ (Ferrell et al., 2008: 72).

This subcultural affinity with extremism serves to quench the radicalisee’s thirst for a desire to adopt a masculine position, and also provides them with a narcissistic outlook. These individuals go from being Muslim, which sets them apart from the rest of society (Kraft et al., 2007), to part of a select and covert jihadi group which is trying to save the Muslim world from the tyranny of the West. Those who have trained abroad using military hardware come back to the West and talk about the adventure and excitement they have experienced. As Whittaker (2004) argues, the terrorist is orientated through action and stresses their keenness to find excitement. They even describe fighting with and for their Muslim kin as ‘romantic’ (Silber, 2011). This gives these individuals a sense of global importance and a purpose in life; one that has been provided to them through divine networks. This is something that constantly feeds their ego and makes them feel special.

However, this is not to insinuate that committing an act of violence or terrorism is easy. Collins (2008) found that even if an individual has strong motivations to conduct an act of violence the 'micro-situational evidence, to the contrary, shows that violence is hard' (ibid: 20). Further, it 'is not an easy or automatic process, and it takes a lot to trigger it' (ibid: 375); a notion agreed upon by others in the field such as Grossman (2001). The ability of human beings to conduct violent acts against one another depends on the 'social pressure and support in the background that pushes them into this situation', with those with social support being the most likely to conduct acts of violence (Collins, 2008: 77). However, there needs to be an understanding that social pressure and support alone will not be enough to convince the radicalisee to partake in violence. This notion needs to be considered in conjunction with the empirical findings pertaining to violence and terrorism within this research, as discussed above.

When it comes to using suicide terrorism as a tactic there are various other elements to consider<sup>128</sup>. It needs to be asked whether suicide terrorism<sup>129</sup> against civilians is easier to conduct, as compared to other forms of terrorism, such as the Mumbai attacks in 2008 or the Westgate Mall attacks in Kenya in 2013? As outlined above, the use of violence is not an easy task to undertake but psychologically removing oneself from the action somewhat makes it easier. Therefore, is killing oneself so not to face the legal and moral consequences of one's actions also a consideration, and one which is rational? In this regard, morally accepting the use of violence is one matter, but dealing with the psychological consequences after the act has been committed is very different. Does the use of suicide give these individuals a way to achieve their goals, attain their social and subcultural desires and gain their personal rewards in an instant, without having the guilt of conducting more commonly undertaken acts of murder?

Thus, although suicide may initially appear to be the more psychologically difficult option, it may actually be one of the easiest. Collins (2008: 441) argues this by stating that,

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<sup>128</sup> The reasoning behind why suicide is legitimised as a tactic has been outlined in various research, see: Pape (2006); Atran (2006); Hoffman (2006); Bloom (2007); Munir (2008); Taarnby (2003), for example.

<sup>129</sup> Although suicide attacks account for a small minority of all terrorist attacks, they are 'responsible for the majority of all terrorism-related casualties', and this phenomenon has grown exponentially globally (Atran, 2006: 127). Some argue that this may be due to the tactic being 'inexpensive and reliably lethal' (Hoffman, 2003). There are also those who argue that suicide terrorism can be rationalised in an attempt to achieve the goals of the group (Wintrobe, 2003).

'Suicide bombings are...psychologically the easiest to carry out as far as confrontational tension is concerned since there is not even a need to concern oneself with facing an audience while making an escape afterward'. Collins stresses how this explains why only a small minority of individuals are violent; as there is much difficulty in overcoming this confrontational tension/fear. They, of course, realise they are going to potentially take lives, though also know (whether subconscious or otherwise) that they will not have to deal with any confrontations or repercussions after the committing the act. This can be considered as a 'buffer', where Milgram (1974: 175) argues that there is 'nothing more dangerous to human survival than malevolent authority combined with the dehumanising effects of buffers.'

However, there also needs to be a consideration of these other types of attacks, such as in Mumbai in 2008. What is interesting about Mumbai, though, is that elements of the attack have parallels to the findings of this thesis. For example, Ajmal Kasab, who was the only surviving perpetrator of the attack before his execution, allegedly claimed during his first interrogation, "It [jihad] is about killing and getting killed and becoming famous" (Henderson, 2013). Kasab's idea of 'becoming famous' relates to the social and sub-cultural arguments made within this thesis, specially linking in to the 'glamorous' element of radicalisation (Trevelyan, 2012; Secret, 2012). Kasab's words also indicate that he expected to die as part of the mission, which alludes, at least in his mind, to it being a suicide attack.

More recently, there was the brutal murder of Drummer Lee Rigby in London. His killers demonstrated that the nature of the threat may be shifting from the globally connected type of planned attacks to ones that are organised more locally. Although the details of the incident are yet to be fully determined, it can be said that the nature of the Rigby murder had the hallmarks of a plot which was planned in a short space of time and only needed a widely available kitchen knife; as compared to the more sophisticated attacks on 7/7, for example. Thus, much of this may well have been attributed to a build up of feeling which led to it being more of an unplanned and emotional attack; something akin to certain theories presented by Katz (1988).

Although the Mumbai attacks appear to have been far more planned than the murder of Rigby, for example, both still could represent the evolution of the threat. There are those



who feel there is a shift from transnational organised groups, to more self-starters and lone wolves, and smaller groups. These people are harnessing the internet<sup>130</sup> as a tool to radicalise and using their own less sophisticated equipment; as outlined within a recent report published by David Anderson Q.C., an Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (Anderson, 2013).

However, others throw caution to claims of future threats arising more locally and coming from self-starters. In a recent article in *The Economist* (2013b), it was argued that there has been a resurgence of AQ around the world of late. In fact, the article claimed that 'the terrorist network now holds sway over more territory and is recruiting more fighters than at any time in its 25-year history'. Thus, the argument that the 'fight' is much more local in the West may in fact be 'mistaken'; with this resurgence of AQ suggesting that there could be a return of the type of threat we have been more used to (ibid). It may be important to consider both perspectives when attempting to understand and combat the threat; especially as there may be various overlaps. Both pose real risks to the UK and should be given due consideration.

This section has outlined the three different career paths radicalisees can engage in and navigate through (i.e. the seekers, pretenders and drifters), where there is a potential for the seekers and drifters (including those who progress from being pretenders) to engage in acts of violence and terrorism. There has also been a brief discussion on how these careers relate to violence and where it is thought the threat is evolving to. These careers need to be considered in the wider context of CT policy and its implementation. This includes how it affects the nature of how and why people come to adopt an extreme position. Within this, it should also be considered how the shortfalls of certain CT policy can fail those who are susceptible to radicalisation and also the grassroots workers who are trying to counter the threat.

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<sup>130</sup> It must be considered that although the prominence of the internet insinuates that these individuals are isolated from their immediate communities, it also provides the presence of an 'imagined community' (Innes et al., 2007: 55-56).

## 7.2 Policy Considerations: The Prevent Strategy 2007

Within the empirical data collected for the research, there was an overwhelming negative perception of the Prevent Strategy. Much of this alluded to how the strategy had been implemented. As well as giving their personal opinions, many of the respondents claimed this was also the feeling held by the 'majority' of the communities they represented. As a grassroots worker explained:

'...they [the government] are calling it preventing violent extremism, but behind it is something else which can be of harm to the Muslims. This is something which is engraved into the minds of the Muslims, the majority of Muslims in the UK...' (grw 927)

From the analysis of the empirical data, these concerns were found to gravitate around a number of different grievances. One issue related to how the strategy was being funded. Looking across the empirical data, there was a clear pattern evident where many respondents felt funding from Prevent had been 'wasted'. In particular, money allocated to local authorities, some of which were used to create and fund partnerships with non-State actors, was questioned. There was a general perception that many of the funded projects were far removed from the overarching aims of Prevent (that is, preventing violent extremism (PVE)), and were more concerned with general community cohesion type work. There was a distinct fear that projects of this nature misdirected effort and resources away from those who posed a threat to national security. For example, a former extremist from London who had allegedly met Germaine Lindsay, one of the 7/7 bombers, on a number of occasions, argued:

'...you wouldn't get Germaine Lindsay going to a community day...so these people who are wanting to be helped, they are not the activities they are into.' (gee 897)

These sentiments were supported by a young White convert from the West of England who was once part of both a far-right extreme group before his conversion to Islam and an AQI extreme group after. He argued that the strategy would not have made an impact on his radicalisation or extreme beliefs:

'I even wanted to go to jihad at that point and if someone said to me "you know we've got this really good government organised Prevent thing"...that is no way gonna bring me away from extremism...' (cms 722)

This notion of 'misuse' of funding by largely irrelevant projects was due, according to the data, to a number of reasons. One of these was to do with the perception that there was a lack of knowledge and confidence within local authorities on how to allocate funding for projects run by non-State actors. Further, the local authorities were accused of funding groups with whom they already had established networks, regardless of whether these organisations had the capacity, knowledge or experience to achieve the aims of Prevent. There was a feeling that local authorities were opting to fund projects which seemed to be the safest, easiest and most risk-averse. This view was articulated by a researcher in London:

'...local government don't feel nervous about doing that kind of stuff...[which] therefore allows local officials to do the stuff that's easiest to do rather than stuff that's gonna have the most impact...' (res 492)

Much of this concern stemmed from the local authorities' lack of previous experience with this particular agenda. In addition, the data suggested disconnect between local and central government with a lack of specified guidance from central to local. As one senior local authority employee from London argued, 'one of the big challenges we've had is that, [it] is the large element of just making it up as you go along...' (lgc 700).

Further, there were concerns that central government failed to assist in tailoring specific approaches with local authorities. The same employee continued, 'the stuff that comes down centrally is a one size fits all expectation' (ibid). This concern has been raised at various points throughout the thesis, where it was mentioned that a major issue with studying radicalisation was to do with the 'one-size fits all' approach so many working in this agenda appear to favour. A CT strategy adopting this approach will ensure there is a failure to appreciate some of the wider factors at play. There is much more complexity with understanding radicalisation than was depicted in this particular version of the strategy. For one, it does not appreciate the potentially different ways in which

individuals become affiliated or involved with extremism, i.e. as a seeker, pretender or drifter.

Some of the blame for wasted funding, however, needs to lie with the Muslim groups and organisations that applied for Prevent funding with either no previous experience on the issue, or little or no intention to use the funds for PVE work. Just under a quarter of those interviewed raised concerns about various ‘bogus Muslim groups’<sup>131</sup> who applied and successfully attained funding as they knew how to ‘tick the correct boxes’. These groups may have been active in some form within their local communities, but the interviewees felt that they lacked credibility on many occasions with this particular agenda and in a sense refocused their organisational aims in order to qualify for the funding. On the face of it, this is not an issue as many organisations constantly change their overarching aims in a bid to keep up with evolving trends. However, many respondents were concerned<sup>132</sup> that these groups were doing so primarily to receive Prevent funding, when they simply did not possess the experience they claimed to have with de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation work. One informed informant from the North East felt that these Muslim organisations have:

‘...come up from under the woodwork for the money. They don’t know how to deal with it, they’ve never done it before in the past...’ (grw 831)

Thus, certain respondents generally agreed that problems with funding cannot simply be blamed solely on the government as some Muslim organisations were simply leading them to believe that they knew how to achieve the set aims. As one grassroots worker from London explained, these groups ‘write a damn good bloody bid . . . but this is not the fault of the OSCT or the Home Office, ‘cos they’re being led to believe that they know what they’re talking about...’ (gee 997). There was, however, a general concern that the government wasn’t stringent enough with its assessments for allocating funding.

This runs much deeper than simply the issue of wasting money. These groups were tasked with conducting important de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation work at the

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<sup>131</sup> Certain groups were mentioned to the author, ‘off the record’.

<sup>132</sup> It must be noted that some of this ‘concern’ was due to reasons other than PVE, such as religious or personal conflicts between various grassroots groups. This has been discussed in more depth within the Conclusions chapter.

grassroots level, and failure for them to achieve the aims of PVE may have had detrimental consequences. This concern is particularly accentuated when considering initiatives that work alongside Prevent, such as the 'Channel' programme. Channel is described, in the current Prevent Strategy, as a 'multi-agency programme to identify and provide support to people at risk of radicalisation' (HM Government, 2011). One of the modes of support, something that was particularly employed by the previous Labour government, was to use grassroots groups and individuals. Thus, agencies such as the police, for example, were identifying those they felt were at risk of becoming radicalised, or had become radicalised<sup>133</sup>, and referring them to these grassroots groups for support (which could be in the form of de-radicalisation or counter-radicalisation).

There then could have been the risk that those needing help did not receive it as the grassroots groups were not capable of providing it. On many occasions this funding was allocated, as mentioned, to those who had existing relationships with local authorities. The risk here was that projects could have been run by organisations that were not necessarily in touch with those susceptible to radicalisation or those who have become radicalised. Further, they may not have been able to connect with current youth issues or culture particular to the UK. They may well not have understood, or have even been aware, that some youth may be pretenders and have the potential to progress to becoming drifters. As a result, there may be a similar story to what was described in the empirical chapter, 'Contingencies', where Muslim young people have some disconnect with their elders, which in turn pushes them further away from mainstream society.

Another issue regarding funding raised within the data was a feeling that the government were 'throwing money at the issue'; a concern held by around a fifth of the interviewees. Although this may not have necessarily been the case (at least in all accounts), it was a representative concern which was accentuated by the global economic downturn. Many of the informed informants, answering as British taxpayers as well as those countering extremism, felt the funds were being misused, and in some cases abused, which would not help to alleviate the issues. As a community representative noted, 'I do not believe

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<sup>133</sup> If the individual or group identified through Channel has committed some sort of crime, then they will of course be dealt with through the criminal justice system. However, there is the possibility that grassroots groups would also be used as a supporting mechanism.

simply throwing money at the problem solves the problem' (rmc 737). This was also reflected by certain community members, as one individual commented:

'...they're throwing money at a problem thinking the money will get rid of the problem...how is that going to prevent those kids from becoming terrorists the next day?' (cms 987)

Regardless of whether the funds were being used directly for PVE work, the money was still, largely, being used to develop elements of Muslim communities. However, many of the Muslim respondents interviewed were anxious that if the money was not being used for PVE work then it subsequently caused confusion with the overall aims of the strategy, not only in the eyes of Muslims, but also wider society. The strategy outlined that it aimed to support both de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation work, though respondents felt that certain projects did not reflect this. The interviewees found it difficult to see any obvious correlations between the some of the commissioned projects of which they were personally aware and the end goal of PVE. This was predominantly attributed to the perceived blurring of lines between broader community cohesion type projects and what they understood to be CT work; a concern which was also outlined by the Home Affairs Select Committee (House of Commons 2010: 52).

Although one principal aim of the Prevent Strategy was to increase the resilience of local communities to violent extremism (HM Government, 2007), the confusion stemmed from the involvement of certain central government departments. For example, respondents were very clear that there was no place within discussions around a CT nature for the Department for Communities and Local Government. An informed informant working on a youth project in the North East of England raised similar concerns. He argued that the government 'have been doing it all wrong because their main focus is on community cohesion...it's not dealing with the issues.' (grw 831).

The terminology used under the Prevent banner also contributed towards the confusion. Terms like 'terrorism', 'radicalisation' and 'violent extremism' were frequently being used, when, in reality, many projects had very little, if any, meaningful connections with these issues. The respondents believed that this led to certain projects, which were of course geared towards Muslims, coming under scrutiny from wider society where there was an

assumption that those involved had some affiliation to extremism, even though this may have not been the case. As a grassroots community worker from London argued:

‘...when the government gives money to other community organisations to open up the youth centre...nobody bats an eyelid...[but] if the money came from Prevent and the youth centre is geared for Muslims then all of a sudden it has different connotations.’  
(gee 697)

The interviewees did not, though, object to this type of terminology when it was detached from broader community cohesion type projects. Neither did they generally have issues with the ‘Prevent’ label, as long as it concentrated on immediate and targeted CT work. If it were not to, one possible consequence is the creation of a ‘suspect community’ which can occur through the use or misuse of various CT strategies and legislation. During the height of the Northern Ireland conflicts, this concern was raised by Hillyard (1993) who argued that Irish communities, especially those based on the UK mainland, were treated as ‘suspect’ and were frequently subject to fewer civil rights than others, not only by the state, but also elements of the media and sections of wider society. Similar issues have been discussed in relation to Muslim communities in previous chapters. The arguments have resurfaced in relation to the AQ and AQI threat, where Pantazis and Pemberton (2009), for example, claim Muslims are being labelled as the new ‘suspect community’. Although there are potentially distinct differences, as argued by Greer (2010), between the ‘suspect community’ Hillyard (1993) discusses, and the ‘new’ outlined by Pantazis and Pemberton (2009), there may also be some important similarities.

In fact, as outlined in previous chapters, the majority view of the interviewees was that Muslim communities were being criminalised as a whole for the actions of a very small minority, with whom they had no real affiliations except that they happened to share the same religion. What is clear is that criminalising whole communities, or the perception of this, has the potential to be counter-productive in terms of CT work, and could potentially make individuals more ‘vulnerable to radicalisation’ through ‘frustration and alienation’ (House of Commons 2010: 11). In the previous chapter, ‘Susceptibility’, it was outlined that one element which helps to ‘push’ Muslim youth away from mainstream society and acts as a ‘pull’ towards extremists is at the local level, i.e. how certain CT legislation is seen as specifically targeting Muslims. In fact, if these youth believe they are perceived

as being deviant or suspect by wider society, it can also affect them at the personal level. Further, integrating community cohesion type projects with CT can be counter-productive within both agendas (Spalek and Lambert 2008).

This fear was considerably accentuated when considering the widespread accusations of Prevent being used as a tool to gather intelligence and spy on Muslim communities. This concern was also felt by respondents within this research. This type of clandestine intelligence gathering, perceived or real, has the potential to alienate communities and become 'a disincentive for that public to volunteer intelligence' (Innes and Thiel 2008). It also lends further strength to the notion of 'suspect communities'.

These concerns were widely reported at the time (see for example, House of Commons, 2010; Kundnani 2009). Although this study's empirical data reflected a number of similar findings, discussing these would simply be repeating previous arguments. It is deemed better to discuss how these allegations have been extended to Muslim communities and informed informants themselves. This further affected their perceptions of Prevent and had consequences with their relationship with the state. This in turn had a direct impact on inhibiting de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation at the grassroots level.

The data strongly suggested that parts of Muslim communities were looking inward at one another with suspicion, causing an element of distrust and apprehension<sup>134</sup>. This was reflected by a prominent community representative from the Midlands:

'...the issue of spying has caused a lot of tension within Muslim communities; anybody could be a spy now in the mosque, yeah, so everyone is viewing the other with suspicion.' (rnc 321)

This had inevitably also extended to the informed informants themselves, with certain community members accusing them of being 'puppets of the government' and 'toeing the government agenda' (grw 927). As a result, around half of the grassroots respondents admitted that they regretted receiving Prevent funding in the first instance, had refused

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<sup>134</sup> This has also been raised as a potential concern within wider research (see Khan 2009, for example).



it, or had attempted to conceal acceptance from their communities. As one informed informant from the North West of England quipped:

‘I wouldn’t tell anybody I am funded through Prevent!’ (gee 796)

It is important to consider that this grassroots worker felt that receiving Prevent funding not only amplified grievances felt across his local community, but also claimed that it was proving to be counter-productive towards his own PVE work. Several interviewees were very concerned, due to the negative connotations associated with the strategy, that their ‘credibility’ would be damaged. They felt this would consequently distance themselves from the youth they were aiming to support. As one grassroots worker from the North East of England explained:

‘...our credibility is more important than money...So, it might make our work counter-productive, so it might push people further into radicalisation...’ (grw 831)

These views were of course not representative of all of those involved with the strategy. Although in a very small minority, there were certain grassroots groups who believed that many elements of the strategy were crucial to their work which enabled them to provide a stronger support structure for susceptible individuals. As an informed informant from London noted, ‘...it allowed us to give a support network stronger than the [extreme] recruiters would give...’ (gee 997). However, from the data gathered for this thesis, and from an analysis of wider research on this issue, it is reasonable to argue that the negatives of the strategy comprehensively outweighed the positives. Further, even if the informed informants did rely on Prevent funding to continue their work, they preferred, as mentioned above, to conceal this money from their local communities and the youth they were aiming to support.

This section has discussed the issues related to the Prevent Strategy released in 2007. However, the strategy was reviewed by the Coalition Government and a revised version was published in 2011. The new strategy attempted to alleviate some of the concerns held with its predecessor. Though, it is not without its own criticisms. Some of these relate to the underlying issues discussed within this current section, and throughout the thesis as a whole. This will be the focus of the final section of the chapter.

### 7.3 Policy Considerations: Prevent Strategy 2011

The revised version of Prevent was released by the Coalition Government in 2011; and stands as the current edition at the time of writing this chapter<sup>135</sup>. The new strategy has three principle aims: challenging the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it; protecting vulnerable people; and supporting sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation occurring (HM Government, 2011). There is a noticeable shift with this version where it is more in line with David Cameron's infamous use of the term 'muscular liberalism' (Cavanagh, 2011). The strategy also focuses upon addressing some of the concerns raised in relation to its predecessor; some of which were outlined in the previous section. After a deeper analysis of the strategy, however, it can be said that the current version raises more compelling questions than it answers.

One of the main criticisms, as mentioned in previous chapters, is with whom the strategy considers to be an extremist (Soria, 2011; Spalek, 2011; Jackson, 2011; Hasan, 2011a; Bartlett and Miller, 2011). It can be understood that this label is attached to those who do not fully subscribe to certain core values of the UK, such as democracy and tolerance towards other faiths and homosexuality, for example. The strategy defines '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. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas' (HM Government, 2011: 107)

Many of the grassroots groups that were once at the core of implementing the Labour government's CT strategy now fall under this category and have been removed from any current and future plans<sup>136</sup>. There is a fear that their departure from the arena has left a

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<sup>135</sup> It must be noted that, at the time of writing, the Coalition Government are rethinking the strategy. Its direction will be determined post results gained from the newly formed 'Tackling Extremism and Radicalisation Taskforce' (TERFOR), which was set up in the wake of the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby in London in May 2013.

<sup>136</sup> A number of these groups follow the Salafi sect of Islam. For a more detailed discussion see the Methodology chapter of the thesis.

vacuum (Bartlett and Miller, 2011; Soria, 2011), and there are concerns over who will fill this 'void' (Spalek, 2011). Soria (2011) outlined that those working at the 'hard edge' of Prevent find that these groups may be best to offer solutions, and may follow previous methods of taking a pragmatic approach to working with them (Choudary and Fenwick, 2011).

Although the definition of 'extremist' provided by the Coalition Government is fraught with complexities and differing interpretations, their concerns should not be dismissed without any discussion. A number of these groups were interviewed as part of the empirical research and their ability to contribute positively to this agenda – at least in the context of countering extremism – cannot be denied. However, many of them did not subscribe to some of the core ideals of a free, fair and democratic society. Though it needs to be considered whether this is something that should be punished, or is it simply part of the foundation of this country, i.e. freedom of speech and choice? Do their beliefs really matter so long as they are not breaking the law or posing a security threat? Yet others may argue that some of the ideals they hold are in parallel to certain extreme groups and working with them may in the long term cause more issues than it solves. This research did not provide answers to these questions and this may be seen as a limitation with the thesis. However, rash decisions on this could have severe long-term implications, and it may well be an issue that is posed for future research.

What the data was sure about is that radicalisation needs to primarily be countered from the grassroots level. One key reason for using grassroots groups is due to the trust they have built up with Muslim youth in their local areas and communities. Further, almost all, if not all, of these grassroots workers have been born or brought up in the UK, and, as a result, have experienced similar strains and issues. Not only are they socially and culturally in tune with the youth, some of them were former extremists and are able to identify, through experience, with the problems these youth are facing. Critically, they have the potential to 'de-glamorise' extremism (Bartlett et al., 2010); something that links in with the subcultural element argued within this thesis.

The use of grassroots groups is not only prevalent within de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation strategies. It has been a proven approach taken in wider examples, like female domestic violence for example (Robinson, 2009; Krishnan et al., 2012). Here,

grassroots groups were a requirement due mainly to the social and political institutions being dominated by men<sup>137</sup> (Jones and Cook, 2008). Though, as with radicalisation, these types of domestic violence grassroots groups can only offer limited assistance and need to be supported by the government (Robinson and Hudson, 2011). Thus, Duneier (2001) argues there to be a ceiling with the contribution informal social control voluntary organisations can make. It needs to be appreciated that value can also be added from certain government agencies, namely the police<sup>138</sup>.

It may be that the government needs to soften their stance to find an agreeable way to work with these groups who fall under the non-violent extremism category. This is not to say that all effective grassroots individuals and groups fall in this definition. The research found there to be some very good grassroots workers who did subscribe to what are generally considered to be the core ideals of the UK, as outlined previous. Though, there were just as many that appeared not to and this cannot be ignored.

However, working together and achieving effective cooperation is a skill which is difficult to undertake (Sennett, 2012). In his analysis, Sennett outlines two modes of practice: 'dialectic' and 'dialogic'. He argues that dialectic should be understood from Hegel's perspective as a power struggle between those who are dominant and subordinate. It can be said that the Coalition Government have taken more of a dialectic stance when they should adopt more of a dialogic one. Further, rather than opting for an assertive mode with no space for conversation, i.e. a declarative mode, there needs to be a shift towards a subjunctive one where space is opened up for discussion through ambiguity. This enables people to interact, and to do so much more productively. Sennett argues that dialogic collaboration is far more complex and difficult to achieve, but one that may yield the most positive results for achieving a mutual desired end goal. This is about working with people unlike you, those you do not understand, or those you do not necessarily like. This will result in an appreciation of one another's differences where there is not always necessarily going to be agreement, but there can be a way to accommodate them to work together and solve the problem. Thus, Sennett asserts the need to understand 'the other' in order to achieve complex cooperation.

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<sup>137</sup> The author would like to thank Dr Amanda Robinson at Cardiff University for this distinction.

<sup>138</sup> However, there must be caution with this as some Muslim youth, as outlined in the previous section, are reluctant to work with grassroots organisations that have strong affiliations with, or have been funded by, the government.

Although both versions of Prevent have their own distinct problems, there is one clear commonality between them. That is their inability to effectively balance a top-down and bottom-up approach to countering extremism within the UK. The previous version was criticised for giving too much power, control and flexibility to grassroots and community groups running government funded projects. As Sennett (2012: 20) writes, 'A dialogic conversation can be ruined by too much identification with the other person'. On the other hand, the more recent version in 2011 can be criticised for going too far the other direction by moving away from the community-led approach on which it was founded, to something which is too in line, as mentioned, with David Cameron's use of the term 'muscular liberalism' in Munich in 2011. There needs to be a determination of how formal social control can articulate with informal social control.

However, there needs to be a consideration of the issues raised in the previous version of Prevent. There were ongoing debates regarding who should be funded. This is a very difficult and complex task, as determining which organisations should be funded, whilst considering the often varying perceptions of them has proven to be difficult. The issue of 'bogus groups' applying, sometimes successfully, for Prevent funding was also raised. If groups are being funded, then there needs to be procedures put in place to be able to understand how to assess and monitor their work. This is of course not straightforward as setting out the benchmarks and criteria for assessment will be extremely complex and difficult. This cannot just be about turnover, i.e. how many young people they support, as the youth will all be at different levels of radicalisation. Further, as they are dealing with human beings, some will take longer than others to de-radicalise. The reviewed Prevent Strategy somewhat recognises this, but there is a real lack of clarity to how assessment will be undertaken. The strategy outlines that it will focus on qualitative outcomes (such as attitudinal and behavioural change) rather than a quantitative assessment (Soria, 2011). Though how are attitudinal and behavioural changes assessed? What are they assessed against? Realistically this can only be measured on an individual basis when you are able to compare pre and post state. Is it realistic, logistically and economically, to be able to do this with every person? In fact, is this measurable and viable when considering all those that will be assessed will have their own individual tendencies, opinions and factors affecting them? Finally, who will assess these people? Will they be experts on radicalisation and de-radicalisation techniques? How does one determine

who is an 'expert'? These are extremely difficult questions, though are important and need to be addressed.

This is assuming that these grassroots groups want to work with the government and receive funding. As demonstrated in the previous section, many shunned this funding or concealed it to avoid creating a distance between them and the youth they were aiming to support. The distinct advantage some of these grassroots workers have, i.e. being able to relate to these radicalisees on different social, cultural and political levels, could become threatened, as the empirical data demonstrated, due to their affiliation with the government. There needs to be exploration of how these types of groups are supported, both financially and otherwise, without necessarily showing a strong affiliation with the government; though still maintaining the same accountability and transparency.

Although de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation did not feature in this thesis, that is not to say there were no discussions on the topic during the data collection. It was not uncommon for grassroots workers to have differing approaches to undertaking this type of work. Some argued that it should be conducted primarily on an ideological level, whilst others focussed their attentions on the social and cultural aspects. Others felt it should be a combination of the two approaches and appreciated the complexity of radicalisation and the requirement of a multi-faceted approach to implement a successful strategy.

In this regard, another concern with the Prevent Strategy<sup>139</sup> is its lack of understanding of how the process of radicalisation actually occurs. Although it cites some of the core components of radicalisation that were also found in this thesis, it appears to not understand, or even attempt to understand, how these components fit together. The strategy needs to draw on groundbreaking research in this arena and use this as a framework for the problem and work backwards, rather than viewing the problem through one particular lens (Hutter and Power, 2005). As with its predecessor, this version of Prevent has not grasped the different ways people can become affiliated to extremism, such as the career paths discussed at the fore of this chapter.

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<sup>139</sup> Although this argument is presented in terms of the Prevent Strategy released in 2011, it is applicable for the 2007 version also.

The flaws in the recent Prevent Strategy have the potential to be counter-productive and damage the long-term approach to countering violent extremism in the UK. These may be somewhat alleviated by considering some of the findings of this thesis. There are a number of areas within this strategy which need to be either seriously rethought or more vigorously outlined and defined. There are important omissions from the strategy like the links between youth subculture and extremism, which is something that this account of radicalisation has found to hold great importance.

#### 7.4 Concluding Remarks

At the fore of this chapter, three career paths were outlined which radicalisees are able to navigate through (i.e. the seekers pretenders, and drifters). The careers were an amalgamation of the different arguments and considerations from the first three empirical chapters. The empirical data highlighted a number of important and interesting key findings across the thesis. Although these were wide-ranging, there was much focus upon the role of culture, subculture and social identity within radicalisation. This is not to say the other topics raised do not merit the same importance. It is to highlight that the value of culture, subculture and social identity within radicalisation studies have been neglected in most accounts to date, or not been provided with the depth of discussion they deserve.

These career paths were then considered in the context of relevant CT policy in the UK. It was argued that when the government attempt to solve the problem through legislation alone, they may actually be fuelling the issue. In terms of extremism in the UK, this type of legislation can create an outsider status, which is then viewed as 'cool' and part of a subcultural trend certain youth want to be involved with. Cohen (1972) similarly argues that deviant youth subculture is fuelled by drama. With the example of the 'Mods and Rockers', the media amplified the problem and kept it burning. As Cohen explains, it was the drama that attracted the youth there in the first place.

It must be said that although there appear to be a number of critical deficiencies in the current Prevent Strategy, it has noticeably progressed as compared to its predecessor. It has tried to grasp some of the core elements of understanding radicalisation in further

detail and considered some wider aspects; though it does not attempt to understand how they fit together. Further, the strategy has begun to understand the evolution of the threat and has placed much emphasis on certain key sectors within radicalisation, such as the role played by the internet.

However, it is important to consider that although changes in policy may restrict certain ways to extremism, it by no means closes them off altogether. Further, it shows that the threat may not completely diminish, but evolve to produce new alternatives. Thus, there may be a shift from those more motivated actors to the more vulnerable and susceptible individuals whose attacks may be far harder to predict. In fact, as discussed, there are different opinions on where the threat currently is, and where it is evolving to.

This shows that the threat is constantly changing dependent on how policy is reacting to it. As Hacking (1995) explains in his chapter entitled the 'looping effects of human kinds', people have agency, where they are able to react, interpret and adapt to the new set of circumstances they find themselves in. In order to counter this threat, it can be argued that we need to address the symptoms as well as dealing with the 'disease'; something the current version of Prevent has been accused of not doing (Awan, 2011; Soria, 2011). It is not an issue we can simply arrest our way out of. Molotch (2012) explains that post-9/11, society is increasingly more likely to look to technology or legislation to resolve our security issues. However, the decisions to use these tactics are not always based on evidence showing them to be the best approaches to countering the threat of terrorism. It may be more aligned with the fact that we do not entirely understand how to solve the problems we face. We need to be seen to be doing something, and although this is not necessarily the right solution to solve the issue, it is the most obvious one. Therefore, as Molotch argues, these precautions against terrorism have the potential to be counter-productive and increase the risk of the threat. There is still a need for technology and legislation; however, the argument is that these factors alone cannot solve the issue of extremism. Through the various examples provided in his book, the common thread is that security is most effective when these problems are solved by humans and informal social practices.



## Chapter Eight: Conclusions

This thesis has focussed upon how and why some people become radicalised to a point where they accept violent acts of terrorism as a legitimate means to attain their particular objectives. The study was devised on the basis that the phenomenon is relatively under-researched, where much of the current work is not supported by empirical data, robust research designs, or clear conceptual framings (Horgan, 2005; Nasser-Eddine, 2011; Wiktorowicz, 2005; Borum, 2011). Consequently, many accounts are informed by what Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) describe as 'conventional wisdom'.

Most critically, the majority of accounts focus their attention on the causes and workings of radicalisation in the specific context of Islamic extremism, but fail to appreciate that the process is similar to a number of wider examples. Thus, many accounts do not take a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the phenomenon in more depth. This thesis has shown, similar to various other accounts, that radicalisation may well be about grievances, strains, social networks, for example, but most importantly it is about a shift in people's perceptions of self and social identity. The employment of a robust and flexible sociological framework like Goffman's (1961) moral career allows radicalisation to be depicted as a change in one's identity. Through locating several wider sociology, criminology and social psychology theories within this framework, this research has remedied some of the critical shortcomings in much current work on radicalisation. This has been underpinned by empirical data collected from those with experience, expertise and a vested interest in countering violent extremism in the UK.

### 8.1 A Summary of the Research

Prior to discussing the key empirical findings of the research, it is important to provide a reminder of the research questions this thesis has engaged with and a brief summary of the key issues and findings that were addressed in the empirical chapters:

1. How do people become radicalised?
2. Why are some people rendered susceptible to radicalisation and why do some go on to commit forms of violence but others do not?
3. What is the perception and reception 'on the ground' of counter-terrorism policies and strategies amongst those who are, in many ways, the focus of such attentions?
4. What are the wider implications of the findings of this research for policymakers, practitioners and academics?

The first empirical chapter of the thesis answered the first and elements of the second research questions outlined above. It alludes to Goffman's (1961) prepatient phase of moral career where individuals' past events and relationships, including those with the state and society, take on a new meaning. The chapter outlined the different strains and grievances affecting Muslim youth within the UK, and were represented at three levels: personal level (i.e. identity and belonging); local level (i.e. within both their local and national geographical area concerning relationships held with the state and authorities – including the implementation of counter-terrorism strategies); global level (concerning political decisions which directly affect Muslims in terms of their wellbeing and safety in the form of military conflicts or civil unrest, specifically as a result of foreign policy).

The chapter on 'Contingencies' argued there to be a number of contingencies which either help to facilitate an individual with becoming radicalised, or enable them to bypass this fate. Goffman (1961) argues there to be just as many, if not more, people in society considered as 'mentally ill' who have not been admitted to 'mental hospitals'. Therefore, he asserts that patients do not suffer distinctly from mental illness, but more from contingencies, where it is the decision and choices of other people which help determine their career direction. The career advancement of the radicalisee works in a similar way. Within this account of radicalisation these contingencies were strongly affiliated with culture, subculture, social identity, and social interactions and bonds.

The next chapter, 'Conversion', outlined the process by which certain radicalisees move on from feeling the grievances, strains and contingencies discussed in the first two

empirical chapters to internalising extremist ideologies. This empirical chapter answered both the first and second research questions outlined above. In essence, the process of radicalisation is a change in someone's beliefs, attitudes and actions. This in turn leads to a change in their perception of self and social identity. In order to explain how this occurs, the chapter drew upon Goffman's (1961) inpatient phase of his moral career framework, particularly focussing on the mortification and reconstruction process.

The final chapter of the thesis provided an opportunity to bring together theory, practice and policy. The first section of the chapter outlined the three distinct career paths which radicalisees were fully able to engage in. These careers are by no means deterministic, and radicalisees are able to navigate through them like they would with any other career. The career paths consisted of the seekers, pretenders and drifters. The chapter then empirically analysed grassroots and community perceptions of the Prevent Strategy (the version released in 2007). This specifically addressed the third and elements of the fourth research questions of the thesis. There was a particular focus on how the career paths, outlined in the previous section, related to the way in which policy has developed and articulated the issue. The final section of the chapter took this a step further and analysed how the most recent version of the Prevent Strategy (released in 2011) has changed and evolved from its predecessor.

## 8.2 Theoretical Contributions to the Field

Accounts of radicalisation vary and differ in their approach to understanding the issue<sup>140</sup>. A number of these endorse their own perceptions of the causal factors of radicalisation. Finding mutual agreement with these is one of the most critical and challenging issues within the current theoretical approaches in the field.

The use of Goffman's (1961) moral career framework helped to overcome this by being able to temporarily strip away the commonly discussed causes of radicalisation which in turn provided a blank canvas. This was achieved through the identification of key phases in terms of how self and social identities are de- and then re-constructed through distinct processes of conversion. From this, a picture of radicalisation can be constructed which

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<sup>140</sup> For a detailed discussion, refer to the Literature Review chapter.

considers those factors suitable to the particular context, e.g. dependent on differing environments, cultures, situations, and states, amongst others, which some argue is vital to studying the phenomenon effectively (COT Institute, 2008). This ensures there will not be an attempt to provide a 'one size fits all' approach to understanding the issue, but allows for more flexibility. Thus, this research has been able to confirm certain relevant existing theories with radicalisation, whilst still providing the necessary space to discover those factors which haven't previously been considered, or been given the necessary importance or depth. Within this thesis, these topics have mainly concerned issues of culture, subculture and social identity.

The use of this framework also allowed the analysis to move away from considering the strains felt at the 'macro-level' as causal. This is particularly apparent as there are large numbers of people who experience exactly the same strains though do not become radicalised. The research found that rather than acting as causal factors, these strains and grievances created an 'enabling environment' (ECEGVR, 2008). From this, other important considerations, such as micro-level factors and subcultural contingencies, are able to be applied and considered within the framework. This enables an appreciation of how they articulate with other elements of radicalisation and how they mutually reinforce and drive one another through. Peter Neumann argues that there is currently good knowledge of the 'ingredients' of radicalisation, but a limited understanding of how to 'cook the recipe' (House of Commons, 2012: 10). Goffman's (1961) moral career provided a useful framework to go some way to achieve this.

Many authors, some more successfully than others, have also attempted to 'cook the recipe'. Although there are a number, albeit small, of important accounts of radicalisation in the field based on empirical findings, almost all of them have one particular shortfall. This relates to the sociological underpinnings of radicalisation. There are of course those authors who explain that at the heart of radicalisation is the process of socialisation, or resocialisation, which is facilitated through various avenues of learning, such as lectures and study groups, for example. But this by no means outlines how this process of socialisation actually works. Critically, Goffman's (1961) theory provides real insights into the process of identity change by employing concepts of mortification and reconstruction of the self, which in turn helps to inform how conversion occurs.

Another benefit of using this particular framework is its ability to allow the incorporation of wider multi-disciplinary theories, as discussed earlier, to explain certain phenomenon, such as group solidarity or violence for example. It must be noted, however, that there are limitations with the account of violence presented within this thesis due to empirical data collected on the topic being thinner than the other sections. This particular account has provided a version from the viewpoint of the individual, where some people argue the benefits of gaining insights from group dynamics and that group dynamic motivations are stronger than rational self-interest (Atran, 2006; Sageman, 2008). It merely attempts to explain one theory of why people engage in violence and does not claim to be a generic process. However, it does provide an in-depth understanding of the moral, religious and subcultural factors at play on the individual which can go some way to further understanding the phenomenon.

One of these theories incorporated into the wider framework was RCT. In fact, Goffman himself discusses concepts in his account of moral career, like 'primary and secondary adjustments', which allude to the notion of RCT. As discussed in depth in the Literature Review chapter, radicalisation can be divided into two parts; i.e. moving to a position of violence, and agreeing to and engaging in violence or terrorism (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009). The data found that RCT is not involved in the radicalisation process which leads to violence but does play a part, however small, when it comes to engaging in violence. It can be argued that committing an act of terrorism, especially involving suicide, can be considered as a large sacrifice, and this is potentially where Kahneman's (2011) 'System 2' starts to become more important. Certain factors such as the desire for identity, attempting to fit in with subcultural trends and satisfying cultural needs seem to be based on rationality.

Though, the fact that these individuals have developed some form of susceptibility and have been primed by their emotions cannot be denied. Radicalisation cannot simply be defined as a grievance based account, nor can theories around persuasion, ideology, or religion be enough to understand this phenomenon. Using concepts like SMT, tied in with other previously mentioned frameworks and theories, goes some way to alleviate this. Thus, as with certain other authors (Pisoiu, 2012), this thesis has taken the relevant elements of SMT and combined them with RCT to attain a more balanced perspective.

This was represented through various instances in the empirical data. However, the account of one particular former extremist epitomises this. This individual had travelled to Afghanistan to participate in what he perceived to be 'jihad'. As outlined in the relevant empirical chapter, he argued that on the one hand he was fully aware of his decision to travel and fight. He even contemplated his own death and offset this against the belief that he had sinned in his life. On the other hand he also strongly asserted that during his radicalisation his emotions were, as he put it, 'abused'.

Thus, it is important to have an appreciation of the wrap around social control element and the value SMT can play with framing arguments, whilst not discounting the pertinent and relevant RCT considerations. As Crenshaw (2012: 106) correctly argues, 'Terrorism is neither an automatic reaction to conditions nor a purely calculated strategy'. The difference with this particular research is that these theories have been encapsulated in a wider theoretical framework, i.e. moral career, in order to make more sense of them, and to be able to better apply them within the current context.

One further value of using Goffman's (1961) framework is that it allows the opportunity to apply theory to a wider context than just the physical boundaries of total institutions. As has been demonstrated within this research, moral career as a framework can be applied to understand issues faced within normal society, i.e. radicalisation. However, the change in people's self and social identity also occurs on a daily basis and in numerous contexts, from whom they vote for, supporting various causes (which do not necessarily have to be deviant per se), and, as discussed earlier, stopping smoking and paying taxes. Thus, once again, wider concepts such as nudge can be incorporated into the bigger picture to increase clarity.

Finally, and potentially most critical, although Goffman's framework enabled the context to be UK specific for this particular study, it also provided the flexibility to be theoretically applied in a number of different situations globally. This is something that also has the ability to transcend the confines of terrorism and criminology. Whilst most accounts of radicalisation attempt to explain why people become terrorists, using Goffman's theory allowed the discussion to focus upon it being a change in people's identity. That is, in its most simple understanding, radicalisation is about a change in perceptions of self and social identity, which in turn has the potential to alter beliefs, attitudes and actions. Thus,

although this research is not the first to study the concept of radicalisation, it is one of the first to use a framework such as Goffman's to understand the phenomenon to engage with those gaps in the research and identify factors which were either not previously considered or given much importance. This provides a higher level of abstraction than many of the current accounts of radicalisation available.

### 8.3 Research Implications

There are a number of considerations for the current research. As much of this has been covered in depth in the previous section, the conversation here focuses more on the methodological limitations of this particular research and what lessons can be learnt. The section concludes by outlining where future research in this area should be conducted.

The research engaged with respondents who have not always been given a platform to share their knowledge and experience. Only recently have they started to be recognised as important data sources (House of Commons, 2012). This includes those, part of the 'informed informants' data set in this research, working at the grassroots level with youth who are susceptible to radicalisation, are becoming radicalised, and/or those who have become radicalised. Based on a wealth of knowledge and experience, respondents were able to provide very real and crucial insights about radicalisation. As many of them were once part of both non-violent and violent extremist groups, their personal experiences were also crucial to the research.

As outlined in the Methodology, the informed informants included, as well as grassroots workers, former extremists (though some of these were also grassroots workers), youth workers, and religious leaders. When designing the research there was an assumption made, although not a predetermined hypothesis, that there would be wide-ranging contrasts between these different respondents, and they were purposefully sampled in this way. This was mainly due to the perceived differences in their work, backgrounds and experiences. Although this proved to be true to some extent, it became apparent during the data collection that their views were generally more similar than different. This was in the context of understanding the causes and process of radicalisation and due to the fluidity and wide-ranging approaches they took towards their work. As a result, the

terms 'grassroots worker' and 'informed informant' were used interchangeably. Similarly, certain youth workers and religious leaders also had roles which crossed the boundaries of their job titles. This is an important point to focus upon as it alludes to one of the core findings of the thesis. That is, radicalisation should be understood through the complex combination of social, political, cultural, subcultural and religious considerations. In order to be able to effectively counter the threat, those at the grassroots level, in whichever capacity, need to identify, understand and adhere to the wider needs of the youth they are working with.

In terms of recruitment, there were difficulties encountered with gaining the participation of community members<sup>141</sup>. It became apparent that much of this was due to the media's negative (perceived or otherwise) portrayal of Muslims and their apprehension towards outside research as a result. Studies have shown that reporting of terrorism has strong adverse effects on viewers (Jenkins, 1981), let alone with those communities who are deemed to hold some connection with the perpetrators of terrorism. Although potential respondents were informed at the beginning of the conversation that this was a doctoral study being conducted by an academic, there appeared to be concerns with the validity of this statement. According to the informed informants, the community members would have suspected that this was an undercover attempt by a journalist or intelligence officer to gather information. This is not surprising when considering previous research which outlines the depth of knowledge Muslim communities generally have with relevant CT policy and the strong claims of it being used as a vehicle by the police and the security services to gather intelligence (Lakhani, 2012).

On reflection, this can be cited as a finding of the research rather than simply a setback. It highlights the concern held within Muslim communities towards how society perceives and treats them. It is an issue experienced by many other researchers in the field (see Githens-Mazer et al., 2010: 18; Shibli, 2010, for example). There is one other positive to emerge from this setback even if the outcome was not intentional. If recruitment with the community members had been successful, the average age of community respondents would have risen drastically. If the focus of the research was upon older community members who may not have been born or brought up in the UK, then there might not

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<sup>141</sup> There were also many challenges faced when attempting to gain access to, and collect data from, the informed informants. For a detailed discussion, see the Methodology chapter.



have been the potential to fully understand the issues affecting Muslim young people, such as those pertaining to identity and belonging. In addition, interviewing young community members helped to further illuminate certain Muslim youth's subcultural relationships with extremism and their affiliations with masculine social identities.

Moving forward, there are three recommendations for future empirical research. The first addresses one of the limitations of this particular study by aiming to determine why some people are perpetrators of terrorism whilst others remain supporters. This is not about those who tacitly support the use of terrorism, but concerns people on the periphery of jihadi clusters and cells who do not become involved in the use of violence themselves. As discussed within the empirical data, this is not a simple task as people often hold complex and often contradictory understandings and viewpoints. This will not only depend on their attitudes towards violence, but also on maintaining social and emotional ties with friends and loved ones. Only when qualitative empirical research is conducted can the balance between ideology, commitment, moral outrage, social bonds, group pressures, culture and social identity be determined.

Second, an interesting element to emerge from the empirical data was the link between crime and extremism in the UK. The data has been used for a book chapter which is due to be published in 2015 (see Lakhani, 2015, forthcoming). This is not just about terrorist funding per se, but more about certain individuals in the UK embracing extremism in an attempt to morally justify acts of crime, ranging from drug dealing and robbery to murder. There is also the possibility of those already espousing extremist ideologies beginning to commit acts of criminality. Future research in the area would understand how strong and widespread these links are, and determine the parallels between this and the issue of subculture and social identity.

The third recommendation for future research is the development of Goffman's (1961) moral career framework. As discussed, the use of this framework for the research was not only instrumental in understanding radicalisation more deeply, but also in viewing it from a wider perspective; i.e. a change in someone's self and social identity. It is strongly believed that the theory of moral career can be applicable in understanding far wider examples of extremism, and in fact deviance. Only when applied and rigorously tested in different scenarios can it be determined if this hypothesis holds any weight.

## 8.4 Practitioners' Implications

This section outlines the implications for practitioners in terms of their partnerships with the state<sup>142</sup>. Within the previous empirical chapter, there was an in-depth conversation on how there should not be an underestimation of the value grassroots workers and non-State actors can bring to the PVE agenda. As with the conversation around policy, there will be much complexity in collaborating at the practical level and it will be fraught with many difficulties. However, partnership is essential with moving the agenda forward.

One issue presented in the previous empirical chapter related to how certain groups in the UK fall within the definition of 'extremist' in the most recent version of the Prevent Strategy (HM Government, 2011). In order to achieve our common goals, there needs to be some type of mutual relationship developed between them and the state. In fact, after the definition of extremism was released, the police continued to work, even if it was at a basic level, with some of these types of groups as they understood the value they could add<sup>143</sup>.

What the data was absolutely clear about is that radicalisation needs to primarily be countered from the grassroots level. These people are best placed to implement organic de-radicalisation strategies and are influential within counter-radicalisation and elements of disengagement<sup>144</sup>. Thus, the state needs to find ways of working with these groups at the practical level as they can be effective. As outlined in the previous chapter, these grassroots groups are more often than not socially, culturally and politically in tune with the youth they are working with. They have established long-standing relationships based on trust with these young people. Further, and critically, they are the ones that have much access to those considered to be susceptible to becoming radicalised or have become radicalised.

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<sup>142</sup> It is understood that this discussion should naturally involve policy implications. There is a complex interaction that takes place between policy framings and the problems that they seek to solve. The ways in which policy has developed and evolved may have influenced the kinds of challenges we face in the future in terms of radicalisation. However, this conversation has been omitted from this chapter as many of the pertinent arguments were covered in the final empirical chapter of the thesis.

<sup>143</sup> This information was given to the author during informal chats with two different grassroots groups who have had their 'Prevent funding' cut.

<sup>144</sup> For further information, see Footnote 9.

These grassroots groups may have a clear idea of the problem and how to best address it. Though the state needs to work out how they are going to listen to that message and whether the information is going to always be accurate. One of the only ways to ensure the right people are included is by having frequent and open dialogue with them which is based on trust and transparency. This should not be about engaging with the 'usual suspects' (Briggs et al., 2006), but ensuring that wider communities are represented<sup>145</sup>. Listening to a wider, and more diverse, selection of people ensures information can be assessed and challenged. Though, the risk here is that consulting with too many people may become confusing. There needs to be a balance of whom the state speaks to, based on how likely the non-State actors are to positively influence the debate. This is not going to be easy. However, there are certain indicators which can be used, such as their previous record of PVE in terms of working with the police and through the Channel project. On many occasions the state may have to take a leap of faith, though this does not mean funding groups they are not entirely sure of, but giving them an opportunity to contribute to the discussions.

This will, however, be an extremely difficult task to undertake as different people, often those with some type of influence, will have conflicting viewpoints. For example, there are those, like Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010), who feel that certain Salafi groups in South London are at the forefront of PVE work. However, other organisations, such as the Quilliam Foundation, as intimated in a leaked document, consider them to be part of the problem. It was claimed that this report included a list of 'extremist' groups in the UK the government should steer clear of. However, the list included certain Muslim groups who are deemed to be peaceful (Dodd, 2010). Thus, this argument is deepened by organisations, like the Quilliam Foundation, apparently encouraging the government to adopt this viewpoint both behind closed doors and in the public sphere (Maher and Frampton, 2009). Whether these types of organisations' views are due to real concerns, conflict, or personal benefit is not completely established.

Thus, one non-State actor's views of another may differ across the spectrum. Although this was not represented in the thesis, when conducting the interviews, many grassroots workers were overt in communicating their negative viewpoints of other similar groups.

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<sup>145</sup> Similar arguments can be found in wider examples, such as honour based violence and violence against women (see Adelman et al., 2003, for example).

They claimed this was solely based upon the other groups' lack of influence, experience and knowledge within the PVE agenda. However, after this concern was discussed with wider respondents, it was revealed that the issue runs deeper, and cultural and religious differences have some sort of influence within their viewpoints. Thus, one sect of Islam may have issues with another, and they were using the Prevent agenda to raise these concerns. This is an issue the government needs to be careful of as they do not want to be seen to be excluding some from the debate purely based on hearsay. In addition, not including certain groups for this reason can have consequential implications for PVE, especially if a potential violent extremist 'slipped through the net' and conducted an act of terrorism, where something could have been done about it if a grassroots group with access would have had the correct support, or were part of the dialogue.

This notion of dialogue is extremely important. Wider examples in society demonstrate this very point. For instance, an official report found that the torture and tragic killing of four-year-old Daniel Pelka could have been prevented if the various authorities in contact with him and his family had shared information with one another (Lock, 2013). In relation to PVE, if these grassroots groups are not a part of the discussion, especially after previously being involved within it, they may feel like their opinions have little value and may be more reluctant to report those they think are a potential danger to the UK. They can, of course, continue to engage in the de-radicalisation work they have already been involved in, but it needs to be considered that once their funding was stopped many of these groups now rely on donations to keep their work going. Some of the groups interviewed for this research are running with limited resources, with closures occurring frequently. There is also the wider argument to consider here where it is their moral and civil duty to report people they suspect of being involved in violent extremism, or the potential of it. However, it is important to consider the arguments made previous about how there is a concern of wrongful arrest and people having their lives ruined. Whereas before, these groups may have been much more comfortable in discussing all individuals they thought could pose a threat in an environment based on trust, they may now feel limited with this as those informal relationships with local authorities could have ceased to exist.

What is clear is that this is a multi-faceted problem which the state, police or grassroots groups are not going to be able to solve on their own. There needs to be an emphasis

on strong partnerships across these three groups. The value of working together can be seen from the concept of 'co-production'. The term was thought to have been originally conceived by political economist Elinor Ostrom during the late 1970s when asked why she thought neighbourhood crime rates had increased in Chicago when the city's police started to use patrol cars more than 'feet on the ground' (Stephens et al, 2008). Ostrom's argument rested on the notion that the police need the community as much as the community need the police; something which is normally overlooked. In fact, the theory behind co-production has been used to describe a number of situations, from health, the economy, and, as mentioned above, crime. The underlying argument within all of these accounts is that society's problems cannot be solved by the state alone. In order to really effectively counter them, there needs to be co-production between the government and her relevant agencies, communities, neighbourhood, family and civil society. The issue of radicalisation works in much the same way. This will by no means be an effortless or uncomplicated task. However, if these partnerships are achieved, then the rewards will be plentiful.

## 8.5 Concluding Remarks

Radicalisation is not just about structural strains or social bonds and interactions. It is not just about the excitement of being involved with a deviant group within an increasingly defined and 'attractive' subculture in society, and in fact globally. It is not just about their perceived moral and religious duties to protect Muslims, or to maintain, and increase, the position of Islam in the world against the tyranny of the West. It is actually about all of these factors when aligned in the mind of the radicalisee. When this is compounded by a radicaliser or extreme group it becomes especially pertinent. This goes to explain why there may be many people who are affected by all of the factors mentioned within the thesis, but why only a very small few go on to become what we define as terrorists.

This thesis has shown that radicalisation is far more complex than much of the current research in the field alludes to. More importantly, it has been demonstrated that it is not a standalone process that is unconnected from the rest of society or its problems. The fact that religion is not a causal factor speaks volumes, as this problem is regularly cited as a Muslim or Islamic issue (Lakhani, 2013). When deconstructing the issues discussed

in this research it is clear that if terms like 'extremism' and 'radicalisation' were removed then this thesis may well be about a number of youth issues. This is not to downplay the importance of religion but to highlight the 'normality' of radicalisation. By 'normality' it is not to make light of the topic or suggest that it is not a deviant activity. It is used to show that the building blocks of the process are not alien to society, which importantly means that they can be effectively countered.

Many of these young British men are no different from various others in society. This is not to sympathise or empathise with them or their agenda. It is to highlight that in order to find resolutions to the problem there needs to be an understanding not only from the traditional method used to interpret radicalisation, but also from one that considers the radicalisee as a human; one that has desires and needs like anybody else in society. It is therefore fitting to conclude the thesis on the idea that radicalisation may well be about all of the issues discussed within this research, though at its core it is about a change in an individual's perception of self and social identity.

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## **Appendix 1: Research Information for Respondents**

### **Who is doing the research?**

My name is Suraj Lakhani and I am conducting research to further understand radicalisation and violent extremism as part of a PhD within the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University.

### **What is the research about?**

The aim of the research is to understand what radicalisation is and the process behind it in more detail. The title of the thesis is 'Violent Extremism in the West: A Social Analysis of Radicalisation in the UK'<sup>146</sup>. It is envisaged that the results from this research will increase academic knowledge on the topic and provide a stable foundation for future research. The research is broken down into three main sections which are outlined below:

- Understanding the core components of radicalisation and what it actually means.
- Understanding the stages of the radicalisation and how it works as a process.
- Understanding Muslim communities' opinions on certain counter-terrorism policy.

### **How can you help and what is involved in the interview?**

The reason you have been invited for the interview is because I feel you may have relevant and interesting knowledge and experience on the subject which could prove to be extremely useful. The interview will be a very informal chat between the two of us. The interview will be semi-structured which means that there are a few questions set out by myself, though the interview will take a natural course depending on what is felt to be of importance.

Participation within the research is not compulsory and you are free to withdraw from the research at any point you feel necessary, any information up until this point will not be used unless full authorisation is given by yourself. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions throughout the interview and may take breaks whenever you require. It is envisaged that the interviews will take an hour and will be carried out at a location of comfort and convenience to you. If you are uncomfortable with participating in your local area the interview can take place at a location more suitable and your travel expenses will be reimbursed.

### **Confidentiality**

Interviews will be recorded and fully transcribed. All the recordings will be stored on an external hard drive and these, along with the hard copies of the transcriptions, will be kept in a safe and locked environment in adherence to the Data Protection Act. Access to the external hard drive and hard copies of the transcriptions will only be accessible to me, and my two PhD supervisors. No names will be mentioned throughout the interviews and all referrals for respondents, such as yourself, within the thesis and in other relevant publications or presentations will be in the form of Respondent 1, Respondent 2, for example. Locations, times and any other identifying factors will also remain anonymous. Both the information on the external hard drive and the hard copies of transcriptions will be destroyed 5 years after completion of the PhD.

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<sup>146</sup> This was the original title of this thesis, which later changed to the current title.

### **How will the results be used?**

The data from this research will be used for:

1. The PhD thesis.
2. Academic research papers and presentations.

If you would like to be made aware of future results and outcomes of the research, and where you can find copies of the thesis and any relevant publications or presentations, please write down your email address in the relevant section of the attached consent form.

### **Language**

All interviews will be conducted in English. If you require the interviews to be conducted in any other language, arrangements for a suitable translation service will be provided.

### **Legality Information**

If the respondent discloses any information which is deemed to be of an illegal nature, the researcher is under legal obligation to disclose this information to the relevant authorities. Whilst respondent confidentiality will be respected throughout the research process, under UK law researchers may in limited circumstances be required to reveal the content of interviews to the UK security authorities where it is believed that new information has been disclosed about acts defined as terrorism in law.

### **Contact Information**

If you would like more information on the research or for any other query please contact:

Suraj Lakhani  
[number deleted for thesis version]  
[email addresses deleted for thesis version]

Alternatively write to:  
Cardiff University  
Cardiff School of Social Sciences  
Glamorgan Building  
King Edward VII Avenue  
Cardiff  
CF10 3WT

If you are concerned about any aspects of the research or how it is being conducted you can contact the School Ethics Officer who is also the Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee for the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. The contact details are provided below:

Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee  
Cardiff University  
Cardiff School of Social Sciences  
Glamorgan Building  
King Edward VII Avenue  
Cardiff  
CF10 3WT

## Appendix 2: Consent Form for Respondents

Name of Researcher: Suraj Lakhani

### **Respondent**

I ..... confirm that I have read and understood the 'Information for Respondents' sheets enclosed and have had any questions about the research answered to my satisfaction

Signature .....

Date:

I ..... give my consent to take part in this research and understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time

Signature .....

Date:

If you would like to be made aware of future results and outcomes of the research and where you can find copies of the thesis and any relevant publications or presentations, please write down you email address below:

Email: .....

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### **Researcher**

I Suraj Lakhani will abide by all ethical and confidentiality standards stated in the 'Research Information for Respondents' sheets

Signature .....

Date: